

The Whole Counsel of God

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www.thegoodnewsofgod.org

**"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."**

Acts 20:26-27, NKJV

From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 JAN. 2025

It is with great joy we present the third edition in our second volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We are very thankful that God has blessed us with another new year. He continues to bless us far beyond what we deserve (**Psalm 103:3-5, 10**), and all praise and honor belongs to Him for His goodness (**Psalm 103:1**).

As with recent editions of the journal, we have included an article emphasizing some basic principles of Bible authority, which is something I have found brethren of my generation scoffing at in recent months. Despite lax attitudes which see the demand for Bible authority as mere “church of Christ tradition,” we must never let up in demanding book, chapter, and verse for everything we believe, teach, and practice (**Col. 3:17**). At the same time, we must not bind specifics when God has permitted generalities in certain matters. The article titled “*Generic and Specific Authority*” seeks to address both sides of this very important subject.

Additionally, in a previous edition of the journal (Vol. 1, No. 5) we included an article on foot washing. We now would like to present an article that exists within a similar sphere by discussing the “holy kiss” that is referenced throughout the New Testament. Many Christians have questions about the implications of the statement “greet one another with a holy kiss,” so we hope you will consider the author’s thoughts on the subject.

Lastly, we have included two articles addressing the subject of modesty. Specifically, these articles both focus on women’s attire. One article answers the question “*Are Leggings Modest Apparel?*”, while the other article examines whether or not God demands women wear dresses and skirts. Many conservative Christians hold the conviction that women are not permitted to wear other attire, such as pants, so this article seeks to find the Bible’s answer on this important matter.

As always, we greatly appreciate all the encouragement that you provide. We hope that the new year brings continued blessings and opportunities to do the Master’s work.

(DTS)



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“Greetings!”

ANDY DIESTELKAMP | ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES

PUBLISHED OCT. 2024 IN **THINK ON THESE THINGS** (VOL. 55, No. 4)

It is common courtesy in communication to extend greetings to those with whom we interact and even to those with whom we may only briefly intersect. It was typical of Paul in his letters to the churches and to individuals to have some opening and closing remarks which included some form of greeting. For example, at the close of his letter to Titus he wrote, “*All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith*” (**Tit. 3:15**). To the churches in Rome, Paul closed his letter with an extensive list of greetings to specific brethren and then passed along the greetings of other specific co-workers in the gospel as well as the general “*the churches of Christ greet you*” (**Rom. 16:16**). The word that is translated “greet” is the same word that in other contexts is translated “rejoice.” A greeting is something that is generally positive and expressed with joy and a desire for the recipient of the greeting to have joy.

In Paul’s time, a common form of greeting face-to-face was with a kiss (which would have been much like a brief embrace). Many are familiar with Paul’s admonition to “*greet one another with a holy kiss*” in some of his letters to the churches (**1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:26**). However, the emphasis of Paul’s command is not on the kissing part but on the need for it to be holy. Since kissing to greet was already a cultural norm in ancient times, Paul’s concern was with its holiness. Since our culture generally associates kissing with more intimate relationships, we might assume that Paul is concerned with keeping those

common greetings morally pure. While certainly, Paul would want to encourage holiness in that sense, this is probably not what was foremost in his mind. Paul wanted their greetings to one another to be sincere and genuine in their joyful expressions. That greetings might be insincere is no better exemplified than in Judas Iscariot’s kiss of Jesus. “*Greetings, Rabbi!*” he said with feigned loyalty and affection as he kissed Him (**Matt. 26:49**). This was not a holy kiss! So, regardless of the mode of greeting, we ought to be holy and sincere in our greeting of one another as brethren. We Christians ought to be holy greeters to all we come in contact with because we are also admonished to be hospitable (**Heb. 13:2**); hospitality begins most simply with a holy and sincere greeting.

When strangers venture into our assemblies, the least we can do is greet them, acknowledge their existence and their presence, and welcome them by showing a holy, genuine interest in them. When we leave such greetings only to others (the preacher, elders, extroverts, etc.), we are failing to be hospitable in this most basic and simple way. Granted, some visitors may find greetings awkward and uncomfortable (as many of us do when interacting with strangers). However, a sincere welcome generally will be appreciated, and a failure to be greeted will be noticed. So, let’s greet one another with a holy sincerity and also be aware of and joyful toward outsiders who courageously venture into our assemblies. Introduce yourself with joy and rejoice at the possibilities that may come from a simple holy greeting.

Genesis 1: Literal Days or Long Ages?

GREG GWIN | TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES

PUBLISHED NOV. 2024 IN THE COLLEGEVUE CHURCH OF CHRIST BULLETIN

The “Day/Age” Theory argues that each of the days in **Gen. 1** were actually long ages of time. This, of course, is an attempt to harmonize Biblical teaching of a young earth with the false claims of some scientists who claim our earth and universe are billions of years old. Here are some simple affirmative arguments to prove that the days of creation in **Gen. 1** were literal 24 hour days rather than long ages of time:

(1) God defined His own terms in **Gen. 1:5**: “*And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*” A period of light followed by a period of darkness constituted a day. Unless someone wants to argue that it stayed light for long periods and then stayed dark for long periods (which, of course, poses huge difficulties), we will have to stand upon this clear statement and conclude that the days really were literal 24 hour days. Furthermore, **Gen. 1:14-18** mentions the sun and moon and stars, and says they were made to be “*for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.*” If we are to believe that the days were actually long ages of time, then what were the seasons and years?

(2) **Rom. 1:20** says, “*Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made*” (NIV). This verse claims that someone has been here to see and understand God’s power ever since the creation of the world. This poses no

problem to those of us who believe that man was created within the same actual week that everything else was created. But, those who want to believe that each day represents a long “age” have a problem. If man was created eons after the other elements of creation were formed, then this makes no sense. This line of reasoning is confirmed by Jesus’ own statement in **Mark 10:6**: “*From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.*” The day/age theory places man at the end of millions or billions of years of geologic time. In light of these verses, it cannot be true.

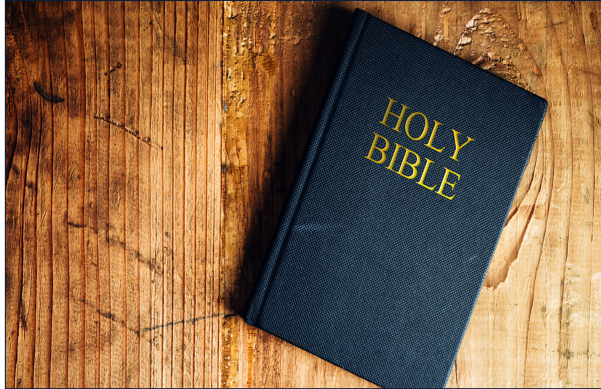
(3) If the days were actually long “ages”, then we have the wrong chronological order of events. For instance, plants were created on day three, but insects were not created until day five or six. But many plants depend on insects for cross-pollination, etc. How did plants survive for long “ages” without their needed counterparts in the insect world? Other similar problems of chronological order exist that strongly argue against the day/age theory.

We know that this day/age theory is commonly held by many who teach the false doctrine of theistic evolution. It is not true, and is actually an unnecessary attempt to compromise the truths taught in the Bible with the unproven claims of some scientists. They teach that we live in an ancient universe, while in actuality we live in a relatively young universe that was created in six literal days by our omnipotent God.

Generic and Specific Authority

MIKE JOHNSON | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

PUBLISHED FEB. 2020 IN SEEKING THINGS ABOVE



Many have failed to understand the concept of generic and specific authority. These people may realize the need for a direct command or statement, approved example, and necessary inference for Bible authority. However, confusion can undoubtedly result if they do not understand the concept of generic and specific authority, along with the principles of aids and exponents. Moreover, a failure to understand these concepts can cause people to become frustrated in applying essential principles of Bible authority.

DEFINED

Generic authority is “a command authorizing the performance of some act without giving directions as to the manner or method of its performance.” In contrast, specific authority carries with it the manner or method of its performance. Thus, generic authority includes while specific authority excludes.

SOME ILLUSTRATIONS

Consider this simple illustration regarding generic and specific authority based on an article that appeared some years ago

in a book by Maurice Barnett called, “Understanding Bible Authority.”

A man steps into a room full of people and says, “Go get some bread.” The man specifies locomotion with the word “go.” Also, he specified that “bread” was wanted, but beyond these specifics, there are several things not stated which are essential to fulfilling the command. First, the man did not specify who was to get the bread, so anyone in the room could go. Second, he did not explicitly say where they were to get it or even how to obtain the item. It could be bought or borrowed, and someone could go to any store: close by or across town. Next, the man did not specify when the bread was wanted (although one might assume it was wanted in a short time) or how much bread he wanted (a small amount or many loaves). The man also did not specify what kind of bread to get so a person could get wheat, white, rye, or any type. Although those in the room had to do, what the man specifically told them (get bread), there would be many unspecified options left for them to decide, they would be free to choose. This story illustrates generic authority. Suppose, on the other hand, the man went into the room and said to a particular person, “Here is the money; take my car right now; go to the grocery store on the next corner; buy one loaf of fresh, thin-sliced, white, sandwich bread, and bring it back to me.” This statement illustrates specific authority. There is much less room for choice in this statement.

Consider a few more illustrations. Suppose someone told another, “Go and climb a tree.” This command would be generic as to the kind of tree to climb. Any tree would do — a person climbing an oak, pine, or maple would obey the command. However, the command would be specific because the person could only climb a tree. Thus, someone could not climb a ladder and fulfill this command. Suppose someone is commanded to offer an animal sacrifice. This command would be generic in that any animal would do. Offering a sheep, horse, or cow would be acceptable. However, the above command is specific in that only animals could be offered — vegetables as an offering would not be permitted. If the command were “offer a four-footed animal,” then the command would be specific in that only quadrupeds could be offered (a bird would not do), but it would be generic from the standpoint of any four-footed animal being acceptable.



OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Consider the Old Testament case of Noah. God told Noah to build an ark of gopher wood (**Gen. 6:14**). If God had told him to make an ark of “wood,” he could have constructed the ark out of any wood. This command was specific, but God told him “gopher wood,” so the imperative eliminated all other kinds of wood. If there were dif-

ferent kinds of gopher trees, then the command would have been generic from the standpoint of the type of gopher tree Noah could have used. Noah could have used small or large gopher trees and precisely done what God told him. Also, aids and expedients (means) were needed to carry out God’s command. Noah probably used hammers, ropes, and oxen to carry out the instructions to “*build an ark*.” If so, would these have been authorized? Yes, they would have been aids. But, in using these aids, Noah would have still been precisely doing what God said to do when He said to build an ark.

In **Num. 19:2**, the Bible shows that the people were to offer a “*red heifer*.” A red heifer was a specific kind of animal. Since it was specified, this eliminated all other animals; all heifers, which were not red heifers, were excluded. If the command stated, “Offer a heifer,” a heifer of any color would have been acceptable. If God said, “Offer an animal,” the instructions would have been generic to the kind of animal. Thus, they could have used a rabbit, horse, or other animal type. Again, the worshiper could have used aids and expedients to carry out the above command.

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

In **Matt. 28:18-20**, Jesus spoke the Great Commission to his apostles. He said, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” From these verses, we can make several observations. First, “go” is a generic command; it specifies movement,

but Christ did not tell them “how” to go. Thus, they were free to choose any means of locomotion. They could have traveled by boat, chariot, animal, or walking. Also, today, we can go by automobile, plane, bicycle, or bus. Next, there is the command to “teach.” Specific arrangements for teaching are authorized. We can teach by sermons, classes, radio, television, or the internet. Also, we employ aids and methods in carrying out this command, such as blackboards, charts, PowerPoint, and public address systems. Whether one teaches a group or individuals, by radio or in person, the teaching command is still being obeyed. There is also the command to “baptize.” Carrying out this command necessitates a place. For example, a person could be baptized in a river, pool, or lake. The water can be warm or cool, or it can be inside or outside. A baptistery, for instance, is authorized as an aid in carrying out the command to baptize. However, remember that the Great Commission specifies that the “gospel” is what we teach, eliminating human traditions and philosophies. Therefore, these would not be aids or expedients but additions.

We also learn that the church is to assemble (**Heb. 10:25**). This command is generic concerning the place. The Bible does not tell us where to gather. The church could get together in a home, a tent, or a meeting-house. Some say we do not have the authority for a church building. This statement is

wrong, as the church has generic authority to spend its money on a meeting place. The church is to assemble; we are to gather for worship — a site is necessary. A building expedites the carrying out of the command to assemble.

The Bible also teaches Christians to “give” as they prosper on the first day of the week (**1 Cor. 16:1-2**). This command specifies how the church is to take in its money. A church taking in money by raffles, suppers, or operating a business has added to God’s Word, not respecting the silence of the Scriptures. Baskets, or plates, to take up the money are aids in carrying out the command to give. When a church uses a basket or a plate, it is still merely giving, just as God said.

The Bible also specifies the kind of music that Christians are to use in worshipping God (**Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15**). These New Testament passages, and others, say we are to sing. Since God specified the kind of music — singing — all else is eliminated. If God had said, “Make music,” He would have given a generic command, and we could use any form of music we want. However, God specified “sing,” so all other kinds of music are excluded. We may use expedients and aids in carrying out the command to sing. Using a songbook, song leader, and four-part harmony would not be wrong. When these are employed, the church is still precisely doing what God said to do — sing!



The song leader sometimes uses a pitch pipe to get the right pitch. This item is not a different kind of music but an aid. Sometimes people argue that an organ or piano is just an aid like a public address system, a blackboard, songbooks, and lights, i.e., it is an aid in singing. An instrument is not an aid; it is a different kind of music in the same way beef would add another type of food if added to the Lord's Supper. The instrument is an addition to God's Word.

Aids must be subordinate, not coordinate (equal). For example, if a person is ordered to "walk," he cannot use a car to aid in walking, as walking and riding are coordinates. Riding would be a different kind of transportation. On the other hand, a cane is an aid to walking; it is not another kind of transportation. A person who walked, employing a cane, would still be precisely doing what the command said. If a person told a tailor, "Stitch a suit for me by hand." The tailor could use a needle, thread, scissors, and a thimble. These would be subordinates and would be acceptable. However, if he used a sewing machine, he would be using another way to make a suit and would have violated the order. A sewing machine would be coordinate to hand-stitching the suit. In like manner, singing and playing are coordinates. They are two different kinds of music.

The Bible also specifies that the church has a three-fold mission. It teaches the lost, teaches its members, and relieves needy saints (**1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 11:28-30**). This work is specified; thus, no other work should exist. The church is not to provide for entertainment, recreation, and secular education. Its job is not to provide for medical clinics or anything else that does not fall under its God-given work.



MISUNDERSTANDING GENERIC AUTHORITY

There have been divisions over the years because some have misunderstood the concept of generic authority. Many years ago, the church split over the Missionary Society issue. The Missionary Society was a separate organization from the church set up to preach the gospel to the lost. Its support came from money sent to it from various churches. The argument was that the Missionary Society was simply a method employed by the church to preach the gospel. However, the Missionary Society was not a method of preaching the gospel but a separate organization that used means and methods. The church is its own missionary society. It is to oversee its work of evangelizing, and it is not to turn that work over to some other organization, thus becoming just a money-raising organization. Brethren used the same argument many years later to justify the church's support of benevolent societies. The contention was that the orphan home was just a method for the church to carry out its work of benevolence. Again, these organizations are not merely methods but separate organizations which employ means and methods themselves. Just as the church is its own missionary society, it is also its own benevolent society. The church is to oversee

its own benevolent work. It cannot become a fund-raising organization for human institutions. The question was not how but who in the two controversies mentioned above.

Sometimes we might ask for authority for a particular practice. When authority from God's Word is not produced, people sometimes respond by saying, "There are a lot of things we do for which we have no authority." For example, when asked for the Biblical authority for the church to build what they often call fellowship halls (i.e. recreation buildings), some say, "You endorse song-books, restrooms, and drinking fountains not mentioned in the Bible but oppose kitchens in the church building and recreation buildings not mentioned either." This argument is trying to show inconsistency, but proving inconsistency does not disprove another's position; it only proves inconsistency. We must realize, however, that a water fountain is not the same as a recreation building. Under generic authority, there is authority for water fountains, lights, and heating and cooling units. The church is to assemble; this necessitates a place, and a place to gather would include the above items. If the Bible tells the church to "provide recreation" (being involved in the "social gospel"), then, under generic authority, a building and equipment are authorized to carry out this command. Since providing recreation is not revealed as a mission of the church, there is no authority to provide facilities to carry out this work. The church can provide facilities for anything, which is its work, but recreation, based on the Scriptures, is not the work of the church.

We must have authority for all that we believe and practice. It is essential, however, to understand the importance of generic and specific authority. Failure to do so can result in error and confusion.

THINK ON THIS

"Meditate on these things"
(Phil. 4:8, NKJV)

After Jesus was betrayed and arrested, and on the night that Peter denied Christ, someone identified Peter as one of the Lord's disciples by recognizing the unique way in which Peter spoke. In other words, Peter's speech gave him away. The Lord's apostle was told, *"Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you"* (John 18:18, 25; Matt. 27:73). Although in Peter's case it appears that it was his unique accent that gave him away, our speech can also *"betray"* us today in more spiritually condemning ways.

Jesus taught that our words reflect what resides in our hearts (Luke 6:45), so when we speak vile, corruptive, and sinful language, we reveal the condition of our hearts. Therefore, in order to prevent our speech from betraying us and causing us to lose our souls, we must clean up our hearts. Jesus explained, *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things"* (Matt. 12:34-35). We must set our hearts upon God and serving Him faithfully. In so doing, our speech and the examples we set may lead others to say of us, *"They [have] been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13). Remember - our faith is useless if we allow our speech to betray us (James 1:26)! (DTS)

Preaching Too Much On Baptism

PAT DONAHUE | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES
PUBLISHED SEP. 2024 IN **DOCTRINE MATTERS**



No doubt we should preach on the importance of baptism, and its relation to salvation (**Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21**), but there can be problems with preaching too much on baptism.

DECLARING ALL THE COUNSEL

If we preach too much on any one subject, we can't help but violate the teaching in **Acts 20:27** that we are to preach the whole counsel of God. What if I were to spend time in the last five minutes of every lesson on the "*blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*" (**Matt 12:31-32**)? I might justify it by reasoning that this is the most important subject because it is the only sin that a person cannot be forgiven of. But my human reasoning notwithstanding, the Bible only deals with that sin in three or four places, so it wouldn't be right to include it in every sermon. If I did that, I couldn't help but neglect other Bible topics.

As a general rule, we probably should preach on every Bible subject in an amount in direct proportion to the amount of time the New Testament spends on it. Modifying that, I agree we should probably spend more

time on subjects like baptism to counteract the extra amount of false teaching that is being done in the denominational world on the subject, but we can grossly overdo that.

The following is speculation, but if we had emphasized **Matt 19:9** a tenth as much as **Mark 16:16** through the years, maybe we wouldn't have all the false views on divorce and remarriage (MDR) as we have today. There is probably an equal number of verses on MDR as there is on the necessity of baptism, and probably more people who claim to follow the Bible take a false view on MDR (e.g., stay in whatever marriage you are in) than on baptism. In the case of MDR, a majority of members of churches of Christ take the false view, while in the case of baptism, almost all members of churches of Christ take the correct view. Yet, I am guessing we preach on baptism about fifty times as much as we preach against divorce and remarriage. Does this show we hate the sin of leaving off baptism more than we hate the sin of divorce? As far as I can tell, God hates the sin of divorce just as much as he hates the sin of leaving off baptism. To God, all His commands are essential. Any disobedience is disrespectful to our divine/supreme authority.

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

1 Sam. 15:22 ("*obey is better than sacrifice*") shows it is possible to emphasize the conditions of forgiveness to the point of neglecting actual obedience. That is what King Saul did. As Christians, perhaps we need to learn the lesson that it is better to obey God in the first place, so that we won't

need forgiveness. When we are preaching to non-Christians, maybe if we stopped over-emphasizing baptism and started emphasizing commitment and obedience to God's other commands a little more, perhaps we would get better follow-through on the part of the average Christian after he is baptized.

THE MILK AND THE MEAT

Heb. 5:12-6:3 teaches that over the course of time Christians need to leave the “*first principles*” / “*milk*” (but not completely), and move on to the “*strong meat*” in order to mature properly. But a lot of Christians keep demanding milk, and want as little meat as possible. Possible reasons for this are:

- They don't want to work to grow (**2 Tim. 2:15**).
- They don't want to be made to feel guilty, thus challenged for sins they are involved in (**2 Tim. 4:3**). Instead, they want to hear about things they have already done, not what they need to do (**1 Pet. 2:2**).
- They want to avoid controversial subjects, which are demanded to be studied by the requirement to preach the whole counsel (**Acts 20:27**).
- They don't want others to be offended (**Acts 7:51-60**).

On the other hand, others want meat (they are hungry to learn), but are being starved by so much preaching on the first principles, like if you kept feeding an adult milk only.

PROBLEMS WITH TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON BAPTISM

To some, baptism does more than become the occasion for remission of all past sins. It magically provides a license to sin, that is, to be excused for future sins.

The position is that a sincere non-Christian is never excused for ignorance, but once he goes through scriptural baptism, his sins of ignorance will be overlooked by God as long as he is sincere.

I think this idea has been helped along by preaching so much on baptism that it is elevated to a point that it becomes a semi-automatic way to get to heaven. It helps with future sins somehow, not just past sins. It becomes that magical act that allows Christians more leeway than non-Christians in how they live. But passages like **Prov. 14:12** (“*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*”) and **Matt. 15:14** (“*if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*”), which are used by all to show non-Christians will be responsible for their religious ignorance, apply equally to Christians as well. Baptism is elevated so high in some people's minds that all other commands from God are unconsciously viewed as unimportant enough that God will overlook them so long as one has been scripturally baptized. **James 2:10** flatly denies this position when it asserts that if you violate one command, you are guilty of all.

I am confident you have heard Christians say, in effect, “A non-Christian's sins don't matter, after all they are not saved anyway.” This is not what the Bible teaches, and leads to many false conclusions. I might retort, “What difference does it make if they get baptized unless they are willing to correct their sinful lives?” This approach confuses why people are lost. In actuality, it is their sins that have caused them to be lost. Their lack of baptism is not the cause of them being lost, but is simply their failure to accept the cure. **1 Cor. 6:9-11** teaches that even before becoming a Christian, idolatry was still

idolatry, adultery was still adultery, etc. **Acts 2:23** shows murder was still murder, even when committed by non-Christians. In **Mark 6:17-18, 27**, John the Baptist was beheaded for telling people who were not saved children of God (as far as we know) that they were in an unscriptural marriage.

As an example of how this view leads to false practices, consider that many Christians would not go to the wedding of two Christians getting married (if the couple had no right to each other), but they would think nothing of going to a wedding of two non-Christians who clearly had no scriptural right to each other. Brethren, either case is being a partaker in other men's sins (**2 John 11**)! This idea (a non-Christians sins do not matter) is also helped along by preaching on baptism so much that it is elevated to a point that people aren't even really sinning before they are baptized. This thinking has also helped lead to people accepting Homer Hailey's doctrine that couples can stay in their unscriptural marriage when they are baptized. Baptism has become so important that it has taken on the role of making adulterous marriages legitimate. Of course, Jesus's teaching in **Matt. 19:3-9** goes back to the very beginning before there was such a thing as a Christian. It applies to all married people ("whosoever"), whether Christian or non-Christian.

CONCLUSION

All of us men, let's start thinking about preaching more to the people who are actually in our audience. Let's don't spend all of our time preaching to the Baptists and etc. when ninety-nine times out of a hundred, there is not a single Baptist in the house. In the vast majority of assemblies of a church of Christ, every person in the audience is firmly convinced baptism is nec-

essary to salvation, yet we, it seems, spend time on it in every public lesson anyway. The Bible certainly teaches we need to review the first principles on occasion, but when I was in calculus class in college, we didn't spend five minutes in every class reviewing simple addition and subtraction. Brethren, let's don't spend so much time preaching the necessity of baptism to folks who are already scripturally baptized, that we leave off preaching many things our audience is actually off on and in desperate need of!

DID YOU KNOW?

When the influential early 20th century gospel preacher David Lipscomb was asked to explain in his publication "The Gospel Advocate" what the Bible teaches about Christians fasting, Mr. Lipscomb penned the following response:

"I think the Scriptures teach very plainly that it is the duty of Christians to fast. The Savior, in the Sermon on the Mount, gives directions for giving alms (Matt. 6:1-4), for praying (v.5-15), and for fasting (v.16-18). The three duties are treated here exactly alike, as though they are equally binding. He does not here command either of them, but assumes that they will all be observed by his disciples, and gives direction as to how they are to be observed."

Questions Answered by Lipscomb and Sewell, p.228-229 (1921)

Must Women Wear Skirts and Dresses?

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

WWW.THEGOODNEWSOFGOD.ORG



Many conservative religious people operate under the presumption that women are not permitted to wear pants but, rather, must wear skirts/dresses. For instance, the Holiness denomination is well-known for its female members wearing long skirts in addition to having what, no doubt, can be easily identified as long hair (**1 Cor. 11:15**). Apart from denominational groups, many conservative Christians also claim that women must wear skirts/dresses. A couple reasons are usually provided: (1) “modesty” and/or (2) “distinction between the sexes.” It is my experience that distinction is the most often provided reason rather than modesty. However, does the Bible actually teach that women must wear skirts/dresses for modesty or to distinguish them from men?

NO COMMAND

First, let’s establish that there is no direct command anywhere in the Bible for women to wear skirts/dresses, neither due to modesty nor distinction of the sexes. Such is the case both under the Law of Moses and under Christ’s perfect law of liberty. However, just because there is no direct command (“women shalt wear skirts”), this does not

necessarily mean the Bible absolutely never teaches that women should wear skirts through implications or approved examples. So, does the Bible teach that women should wear skirts/dresses via these other methods of establishing Bible authority?

NO EXAMPLE EITHER, BUT A NECESSARY INFERENCE?

To my knowledge, there are no examples in the Bible of women wearing skirts/dresses that would lead anyone to the conclusion that such attire is therefore required for women today. On the other hand, some have stated that a few passages found in the Old Testament should lead us to necessarily infer that when God views women, He has made a divine distinction among the sexes by seeing women adorned in skirts. For instance, in **Jer. 13:22, 26**, while speaking through His prophet pointing to the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem, God said, *“And if you say in your heart, ‘Why have these things come upon me?’ For the greatness of your iniquity your skirts have been uncovered, your heels made bare . . . Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face, that your shame may appear.”* In this passage, God figuratively depicts Judah and Jerusalem as women and states that, as result of their pride, He would bring them down and punish them by exposing their nakedness via lifting up their “skirts” (see also **Isa. 47:1-3**). To some, this passage serves as proof that God expects women to wear skirts since, while figuratively describing Judah and Jerusalem as women, He expressed that they wore skirts rather than some other

attire. However, if we go back to **Gen. 3** and examine Adam and Eve we will see how this inference is unsound.

A “NECESSARY INFERENCE” PROVEN UNNECESSARY

While I in no way support the transgender movement which has sought to destroy the clear distinction of the two sexes identified and created by God, and while I also agree that men and women should respectively dress like men and women (this was especially clear under Law of Moses [**Deut. 22:5**]. Under Christ’s New Covenant, **1 Cor. 11:2-16** teaches this point in principle), the idea that women must wear skirts/dresses as a matter of distinction simply is not supported by the scriptures. When God clothed Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness in **Gen. 3:21**, He clothed them both with the same type of clothing - “*tunics*” (**NKJV**). A tunic is a loose article of clothing that typically covers the shoulders and hangs down to the knees. Depending on how it is cut (we’ll have more to say on this momentarily), a tunic looks like a long, baggy shirt or a three-quarter-length dress. When God clothed Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness, he covered them both in this same type of clothing. If God really has made the distinction that He views women in skirts and, therefore, necessarily views men as wearing something different (e.g. pants), He sure did miss a prime opportunity to clothe Adam and Eve in two altogether different types of attire, don’t you think?

Although God clothed Adam and Eve with the same type of attire in **Gen. 3**, we know that eventually under the Law of Moses God commanded the Israelites, “*A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment*” (**Deut. 22:5a**). From this com-

mand, we can easily understand that God expected there to be some sort of distinction between men and women’s clothing. Even still, the specific types of clothing were never specified, which makes sense considering how historical records prove that for hundreds (maybe even thousands) of years, the attires of men and women were essentially the same, consisting of tunics, robes, and cloaks. Such remained true during the first century when Jesus walked the earth (see **Matt. 5:40; Luke 22:36, ESV**). As with our clothes today, a key difference between women’s and men’s tunics, robes, and cloaks is in how these articles of clothing were cut and fashioned. For example, men and women today both wear button-down shirts, but it is easy to identify the difference between a men’s button-down versus a women’s button-down shirt by how they are cut. Men and women also both wear tee shirts today, but how these shirts are cut around the shoulders, chest, and waist vary greatly from one sex to the other to accommodate our anatomical differences. I suspect this is what happened in **Gen. 3:21**. Although God clothed Adam and Eve in the same type of clothing, I imagine these tunics were cut differently for each sex, maybe similar to how one artist pictured differences between men’s and women’s tunics below.



The men and women in this picture are both wearing tunics, but how the tunics are cut is ultimately what makes the difference (distinction) between sexes clear.

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE LAW OF CHRIST

Although both the Old Covenant and New Covenant teach the necessity of distinction between the sexes, neither covenant implemented any law specifically indicating that women must wear skirts/dresses. Under the Law of Moses, **Deut. 22:5** simply taught that neither sex could wear anything pertaining to what the opposite sex would wear. By implication, the Law of Christ demands that women dress like women and men dress like men (**1 Cor. 11:14-15**), but the exact details of what constitutes female attire (like skirts/dresses) versus male attire (like pants) is never specified. What the law of Christ does specifically require for all women to wear today is this: *“in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing”* (**1 Tim. 2:9**). Are there immodest or improper pants that women might wear? Absolutely. But that does not mean pants in and of themselves are immodest and improper but, rather, those specific cuts of pants are immodest and improper and, therefore, should not be worn. I know plenty of men who wear immodest pants; everyone would agree that pants themselves aren’t the problem for men but the type (cut) of pants these men wear is the real problem. We ought to apply the same logic to the issue of women and pants since the Bible nowhere commands nor implies that women are unauthorized to wear pants. Women, like men, need to make sure that whatever they choose to wear is modest and cut for their respective sex.

CONCLUSION

I applaud any Christian fighting the good fight against immodesty and the blurring of lines distinguishing the sexes. That said, no matter how many reasons might be provided to answer why a woman should choose to wear a skirt/dress, ultimately, it is just that – a choice (option) a woman is at liberty to act upon or ignore. The choice (i.e. matter of conscience) of wearing a skirt/dress or wearing pants should never be bound authoritatively as law onto others since God has never provided that law in His holy book and, specifically, is not required under New Testament law; God has provided liberty in this matter. Are there certain types of pants that women shouldn’t wear? Yes. Are there certain types of pants that men shouldn’t wear? Also yes. But that doesn’t take away from the fact that there is nothing inherently wrong with either sex wearing pants. We just need to choose to wear the right types of pants. As one gospel preacher and friend succinctly said, “Dresses on women are like make-up on women. They can do it, but they don’t have to.”

SWORD SWIPES

**“Shun profane and vain babblings”
(2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV)**

**It’s impossible to be pleasing to God
when we have one foot in Him while
keeping the other foot in the world.**

**“Do you not know that friendship
with the world is enmity with God?
Therefore whoever wishes to be a
friend of the world makes himself an
enemy of God” (James 4:4).**

(DTS)

Are Leggings Modest Apparel?

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As to the question of whether Christians are to adorn/dress themselves modestly, there can be no doubt: *"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing" (1 Tim. 2:9)*. However, it seems the matter of modesty has fallen into the realm of indifference with far too many Christians. It reminds me of another Bible subject that has also become a matter of indifference - short hair on men and long hair on women (**1 Cor. 11:14-15**). By "leggings" I'm referring to the elastic close-fitting garments worn over the legs typically by women. They have become the new fashion fad in the last few years. By their very definition, the answer to the question of this article is already answered if and when leggings are worn as the sole article of clothing on women from their waist down. What are we using to think with if we believe that elastic material worn from the waist down without anything covering them can even remotely be modest? Elastic is form fitting and reveals the form and curvature of the hips and thighs in great detail. They leave hardly anything to the imagination.



People of the world have no problem recognizing the revealing aspects of leggings worn without anything else but somehow many Christians don't. Heather Taylor, a principle at Stratford, South Carolina High School made this statement: "[Leggings are] meant to wear underneath a long shirt that covers your heinie, or a long sweater of some type, or a dress. It is not meant to be your actual pants, and if you have a shirt that comes to here, then you are showing everything. Yes, everything!"

If you try, as some do, to justify leggings as pants on the basis they are not sheer that still is ignoring the fact that they are skin tight. While I'm sure that leggings are comfortable and can keep a person warm in cold weather, let's keep them modest by wearing a modest length dress or tunic that God made Adam and Even which reached to the knees (**Gen. 3:21**). If leggings worn by themselves are not immodest, then someone needs to explain to me what is. Ladies, wear your leggings but make sure they are being covered from your hips down past your thighs. The revealing of the curvature of your thighs is nakedness in God's sight (**Isa. 47:2-3**). But then there are the age old arguments and "come backs" to be heard. Such as: "I'll wear what I want because I like it," "You can't tell me how to dress, that's oppressive," "It's comfortable," "If a man is lustful, that's his problem," or "It's the man's job not to look." All that these arguments have ever amounted to are attacks against modesty itself. When anyone responds in this manner, they are denying the very premise of modesty. They are beyond help and hope.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).

Let Not Man Separate!

CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR.

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There are a number of things of which we read in His Inspired Word that God has “*joined together*,” grace and obedience (**Eph. 1:5; Heb. 5:8f**); faith and works (**James 2:21-24**); baptism and salvation of the alien sinner (**Mark 15:15-16**); the saved and His church (**Acts 2:38-47**); etc. But in this study I want us to consider what we might think of as His first such command/warning.

First, just think for a moment of the arrogance of any mere man who would dare to, in any way, tamper with God’s arrangement of anything! A number of times, at the conclusion of His creation and arrangements, He concluded with, “*and it was good*” – that is, it was JUST AS HE WANTED IT TO BE! But He who desires that “*all things work together for [our - CGM] good*” (**Rom. 8:28**) knew that men (“*considering themselves to be wise*”) would come along and dare to rearrange things - to “*separate*” - in order to make them more pleasing to them! And so it has become so commonly accepted in our society, that most - even religious men - think nothing of obtaining, granting, and approving separating that which God has joined together, and particularly in that which is under consideration in our text!

“*In the Beginning*,” God, who “*made man from the dust of the ground*” (**Gen. 2:7**), “*in His own image*” (**Gen. 1:27**), arranged what was “*good*” for man and woman (**Gen. 2:18-24**). He then declared them to be “*one*

flesh” (**v.24**). Jesus Christ, who was with Him in that “*beginning*” (**note John 1:3**), was enlarging upon that when He stated, “*So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. THEREFORE, what God has joined together, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE*” (**Matt. 19:6**).

We observe on every hand expressions of “deep concern” and the “wringing of hands” from the religious and the non-religious about the “breaking up of homes;” that it is “one of the greatest curses of our society!” According to common statistics, more than half of all marriages come to be broken by divorce! This means that most children of our time will grow up without the benefits of a home as God designed it because “men” HAVE assumed the power to “*separate what God has joined!*”

At the heart of this problem is a profane attitude toward marriage, as God ordained it! HEAR HIM: “*A wife is bound by law to her husband as long as her husband lives*” (**1 Cor. 7:29**); “*For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law [of God - CGM] to her husband as long as he lives, so then if while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called [by God - CGM] an adulteress*” (**Rom. 7:2-3**). Marriage is a THREE-WAY covenant! That is, between a man and a woman and GOD, their Creator and to Whom they must give account for their conduct in that marriage!

A couple was asked what had kept them together for 60 years; the reply by the woman, “WE MADE A VOW!” Hear Almighty God: *“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay”* (Ecc. 5:4-5).

In **Mal. 2:16** we read that *“the Lord God of Israel says that HE HATES DIVORCE,”* and so He says, *“A husband is not to divorce his wife”* and *“let her not divorce him”* (**1 Cor. 7:11-13**). A divorce that comes about *“except for sexual immorality”* (**Matt. 19:9**) often causes one, or both, persons involved in that sin to add to that sin the sin of adultery, and causes someone else to *“commit adultery”* (**Matt. 5:32**)!

God’s wrath against this prevalent sin is seen in His warning; *“Do you not know that . . . neither . . . adulterers . . . will inherit the kingdom of God?”* (**1 Cor. 6:9-10**), and in **Gal. 5:19ff** it is listed among those *“works of the flesh”* which will keep one out of *“the kingdom of God!”* Then, in addition to those scriptures, we read in **Rev. 21:8** that the ultimate reward for adultery is *“the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!”*

HEAR THE CHRIST: *“I say to you, WHOEVER divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and WHOEVER marries her who is divorced commits adultery”* (**Matt. 19:9**). Those words from the Savior are not difficult to understand! Whether one “understands” those simple statements by Jesus is likely to be determined by whether they have reverence for Him and what He has spoken unto us (see **Heb. 1:1-2, 2:1-3; Psalm 119:128**). Indeed, *“WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE!”*

MYTH BUSTERS

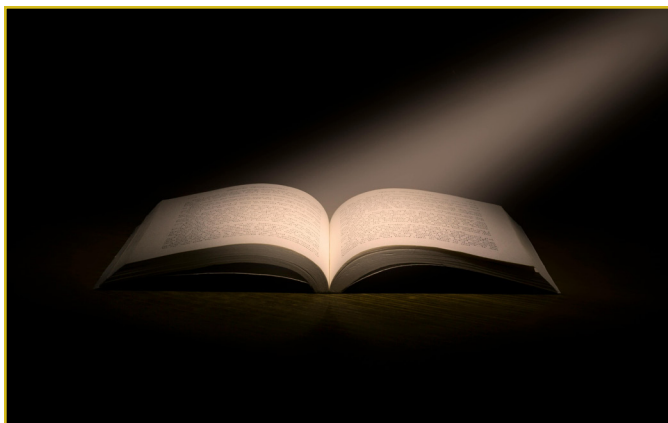
“They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths”
(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

Not all false teachers are genuine and sincere in their faith. Many false teachers genuinely believe what they teach, yet many others are motivated by personal gain and power, so they deceitfully carry out wicked plots to lead people astray (Eph. 4:14). While many in our society find it deplorable to imply that a religious teacher would purposefully spread error, the New Testament repeatedly affirms that we must beware of those who intentionally mishandle God’s word:

- *“For we do not market the word of God for profit like so many. On the contrary, we speak with sincerity in Christ, as from God and before God”* (2 Cor. 2:17, CSB).
- *“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)”* (Gal. 2:4).
- *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* (Matt. 7:15).

Sadly, when people are led away by false doctrine it is not always a case of the blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14); the religious world is filled with people who can see the truth clearly yet deliberately choose to lead the blind into eternal damnation.

(DTS)



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