

Necessary Inference

The last aspect of Bible authority we want to consider is that of **necessary inference**. Some people also use the term “forced conclusion” to describe the same principle. According to the American Heritage dictionary of the English Language, Inference is defined as: “The act or process of deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true.” The idea of “necessary” means that we cannot reasonably come to any other conclusion based on the facts presented. Some like to say the facts result in a forced conclusion. In this lesson we will examine this third method for establishing Bible authority.

Based on the definitions above, it is important for us to realize that something inferred is not spelled out directly like a command. When something is inferred, we are drawing a conclusion based on a truth that is either stated or understood. For instance with the Lord’s Supper, we know that in Matthew 26:26-29 Jesus instituted it and taught his disciples that they should partake of bread and the fruit of the vine. In Acts 20:7, we are told that Christians came together on the first day of the week to “break bread.” Even though it is not specifically stated that they also partook of the fruit of the vine, we can infer that this was done because it was part of the command that he gave them. Sometimes we can make inferences from a command. For instance Paul commanded the churches of Corinth and Galatia in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” Because this command was given to the “churches,” we can infer that the same applies to us today. We can also conclude that they were to give on the first day of each week as every week has a first day (Sunday).

Another way that we can draw an inference or conclusion is based on the facts stated in scripture. In Acts 8:26-39, we are told about the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. In verse 35, we are told that Philip “preached Jesus to him.” In verse 36 the Eunuch ask “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” This statement allows us to infer that “preaching Jesus” by Philip included the need to be baptized. We can also conclude this because the Eunuch by asking this question demonstrated that he understood the need to be baptized.

Putting it all Together

Sometimes, we will be able to use all three methods of establishing Bible authority for a given truth at the same time. The Lord’s Supper is one area where this is illustrated. In Matthew 26:26-29, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper with his Apostles by giving them a **direct command**. In Acts 20:7 we see an **approved example** of the disciples coming together on the “*first day of the week*” to “*break bread*”. In 1 Corinthians 11:18 Paul says, “*when you come together as a church*” (which tells us why they came together) and when we match that up with verse 20, we see that he rebukes them because when they did come together “*it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.*” The issue here was they were not waiting for one another (verse 33) to partake of the Lord’s Supper as a church. Their key point here is that we can infer or conclude by these passages that they came together as a church, it was on the first day of the week and it was for the purpose of the of partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, we must conclude that we as a church should do the same as the church in the first century. By using all three methods for establishing Bible authority, we can be positive that what we are doing is authorized.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the definition of “inference” and what does the term “necessary” mean? _____

2. In Matthew 3:16 we are told that “Jesus came up immediately from the water.” What can we infer from this statement? _____

3. In John 20:1-2 what did Mary incorrectly infer about Jesus? _____

4. In Hebrews 10:25, we are told not to forsake the “assembling of ourselves together.” What can we infer from this statement? _____

5. Read Matthew 22:31-32. What can we infer from this point Jesus was making? _____

6. What two things can we infer from 1 Corinthians 16:1-2? _____

7. What inference or forced conclusion did people make when they saw miracles performed by Jesus? Can you site any examples in scripture where this conclusion was stated to Jesus (think of one who came to Jesus by night)? _____

8. What inference did Peter make when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles in Acts 10: 44-46? _____

9. In the examples below, list what type of Bible authority would apply: Express Command (EC) Approved Example (AE) or Necessary Inference (NI).

- a. ____ “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” Acts 2:44-45
- b. ____ “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” Matthew 22:37
- c. ____ “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” Titus 1:5
- d. ____ “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” Acts 22:16
- e. ____ “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” 1Corinthians 11:27
- f. ____ “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” Acts 14:23
- g. ____ “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossians 3:16

10. Challenge question: In 1 Corinthians 15:27 what can we infer from what is “plain” (ESV) or “evident” (NKJV)? _____