

Standards of Authority

I. Introduction

A. As the original source of all authority (John 19:11), God has the right to delegate authority as He deems appropriate. This is true with civil and family authority, but it's also true with spiritual, or religious, authority. Consider some "standards" of authority many look to in determining what is religiously and morally right and wrong, and what God says about each of these.

II. One's Conscience

- A. Some look to their consciences as a guide in religious matters. This viewpoint is "if it feels right deep down, then it must *be* right." Consider, though, how following one's conscience affected Saul of Tarsus. **Acts 8:1-3; Acts 23:1**
- B. While one's conscience must be considered (1 Cor. 8), a conscience that is not *properly trained* can actually lead a person to go *against* the will of God.

III. One's Opinions

A. A similar but somewhat different "standard" some look to in religious matters is one's *opinions* of right and wrong. Opinions that are based on one's own ideas of right and wrong (instead of God's) must not be bound on others. Opinions that *conflict* with God's will must be outright *rejected*. **Romans 14:3**

IV. Societal Norms

A. Another "standard" some look to in determining what is morally and spiritually right is the "normal" practices of a given society. Not only is this a shaky standard to use, but it is a recipe for eternal destruction. **Matthew 7:13-14**

V. Family

A. A fourth "standard" that some look to for determining what is right and wrong in religion and morality is *family*. While God emphasizes the good influence family members can be on one another, He also shows us that we must at times *reject* the views and practices of family members. **Matthew 10:35-37**

VI. Fellow Christians

A. The same principles hold true as it relates to our *spiritual* family. Christians ought to be a positive influence on one another, but unfortunately, not all Christians are living upright lives. *Each* of us must personally choose to be true to the Lord regardless of how other Christians behave. **Revelation 3:1, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:10**

VII. Men's Traditions

- A. Another "standard" some use is traditions established by men. Traditions that God permits but does not require can be *followed*, but must not be *exalted* to the level of His commands. Traditions that *conflict* with the will of God must be outright *rejected*. **Mark 7:7-9**
- B. The traditions Scripture commands us to hold fast to are *divinely* established. **2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6**

VIII. God's Word

A. This alludes to what is the correct standard of authority – the Word of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Matthew 17:5; John 12:48**

IX. Conclusion

A. May we heed this perfect, fair, and unchanging standard, and may we not be deceived by the false standards so commonly looked to.