

Two Learning Activities for UNIT ONE of *The Five Smooth Stones: Essential Biblical Principles for Ministry* by Robertson McQuilkin.

Developed by Roy King, 2007. www.royking.org .

After reading Unit 1 take out your Bible and take some time to practice coming to it as the functional authority to being a based for practices in ministry.

Instructions for the Reader (1 hour)

Upon completion of this study the participant should wholeheartedly value the Bible, the whole Bible, and the Bible alone as his or her ultimate standard in Christian work.

He or she should be able to evaluate activities and programs by the Bible and should have developed some skill in applying this principle, both to existing situations and in looking to the future—whether plans (how to invest time and money), expectations (preferences, styles, emphases), or outcomes (goals, definitions of success, values).

This study centers on the use of two flow charts that follow. One is for the analysis of a particular passage of Scripture. The other is for the analysis of an activity or ministry practice.

Approach to determining AUTHORITY OF A PASSAGE

All Scripture is inspired and therefore trustworthy and of profit for the believer. But not all Scripture is authoritative for present day obedience. Christ himself and the Apostles in their writing set aside much of the Old Testament as not having continuing authority. The ceremonial law, for example, was fulfilled in Christ and should no longer be obeyed. Furthermore, much Bible teaching is directed to a specific, not a general audience, to a specific condition, not of universal application. The command to take no change of clothes and money, given to the disciples, was later set aside, for example. How, then does the interpreter decide what teaching is authoritative for contemporary obedience? Here are some questions to guide in the decision:

1. Does Scripture itself, either in the context of a teaching or in subsequent teaching, set aside or disallow a given teaching? For all the illustrations above, the answer to this question is “Yes, the Bible itself sets them aside.”
2. Is the command or teaching addressed to an individual or specific group? If so, it is not binding on the contemporary Christian. God’s command to Moses to take off his shoes was not intended as a universal requirement, for example.
3. Does a teaching appear to be in conflict with other Bible teaching, especially later, more persuasive and clearer teaching, and (esp. in the New Testament)? Preference should be given the later, more persuasive, clearer teaching.
4. Is the teaching based on an historical event or example? This does not have authority in and of itself. To be made authoritative it must be based on direct commands or stated principles. Only then does history set a precedent for demanding obedience. Much of Acts, for example, falls in this category. Just because the disciples or even Apostles did something doesn’t make it mandatory for others unless Scripture, either in context or elsewhere, says so.

[For greater detail in determining the authority of a passage, see *Understanding and Applying the Bible*, op cit, chapter 19, pages 279 ff.]

Approach for evaluating an ACTIVITY or MINISTRY Practice

Here are the questions the ACTIVITY flow chart reflects:

1. What is the **basic idea** (presupposition, objective, etc) behind this plan (program, method, activity)?
2. Is this activity or objective commanded in Scripture? (Reference)
3. If not commanded, is it obviously required by clear biblical **principle**? (State principle)
4. If not required by Scripture, is it **permitted** by scriptural teaching, compatible with Scripture?
5. Have I brought this activity into **alignment** with ALL biblical data that might be related either directly or indirectly?
6. Does the emphasis represented by this activity **maintain balance** with all other related biblical truth in such a way as to maintain the biblical emphasis?
7. If this activity is extra-biblical, am I careful to make this fact clear and **divest it of ultimate authority** both in my own thinking and for making demands of others?

DO NOT OMIT THE FIRST STEP: **DEFINITION OF THE ISSUE**. If there is more than one possible definition in the public mind, run each of the major views through the flow-chart separately. If, in the process, you discover a controversial or problematic passage of Scripture (either for your choice or against your choice), run that passage through the flow chart for applying a Bible passage, explaining briefly the reason for your choice at each stage.

Go back to Learning Exercise #1. Look at the two lists that came from items with widespread scores. A common reason for the difference in score could be differences in DEFINITIONS or EXPECTATIONS. Practice taking some of these through the flow chart.

If you are not able to do Exercise #1 practice taking the following ideas through the chart.

For each of these terms state a definition.

- a. Church Growth
- b. Seeker friendly church
- c. Purpose-driven church
- d. Self-fulfillment
- e. Globalization
- f. Emerging church
- g. Missional church

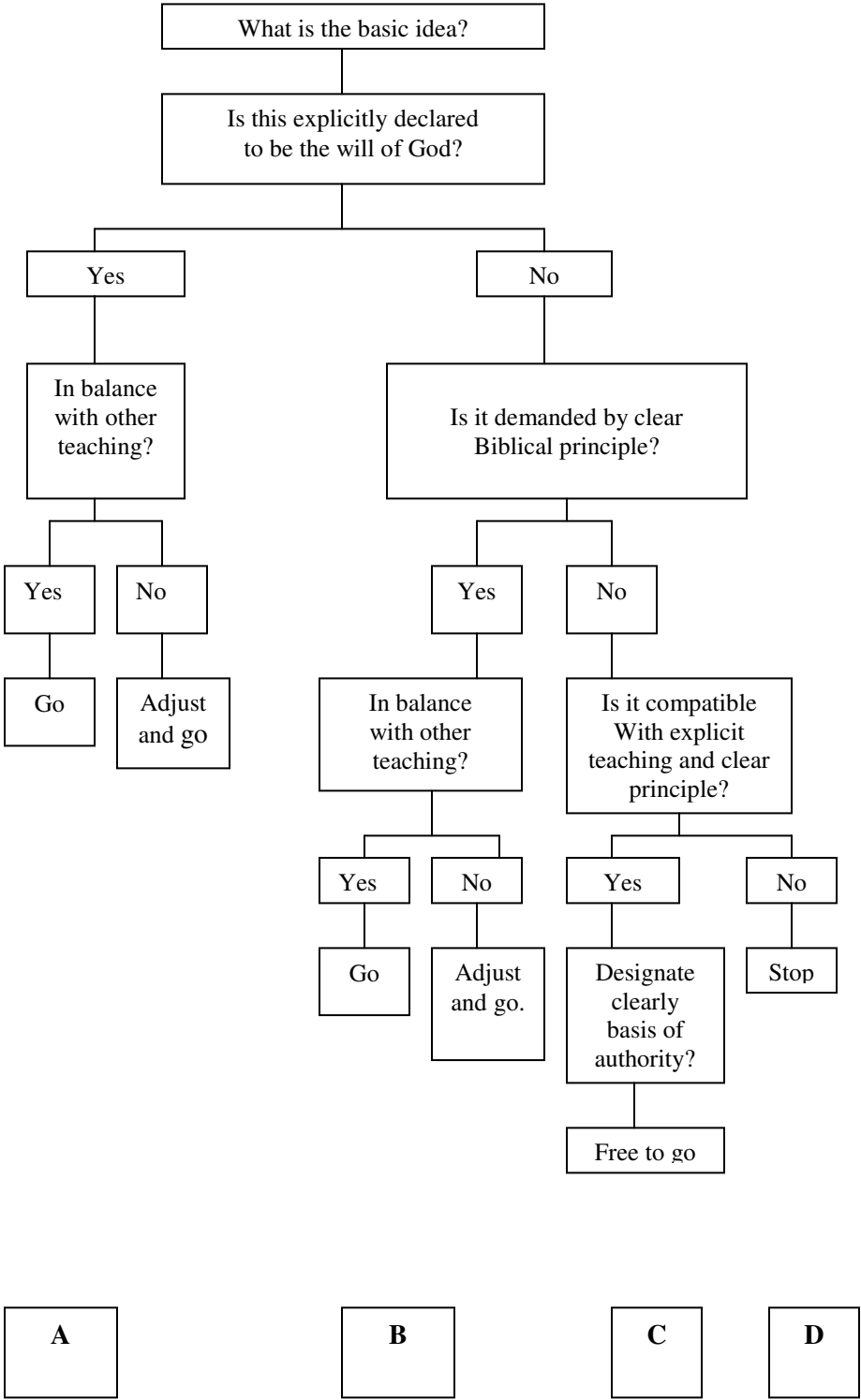
Did you have some difficulty getting a precise definition that you can evaluate against biblical truth? When a congregation is in conflict or confusion about an approach to ministry accurate and shared definition becomes a very important part of the process.

Here are some suggested definitions that might be of help.

- a. Church Growth – “Every congregation should experience steady conversion growth.”
- b. Seeker friendly church – “Examine and modify language used in public services to clearly communicate with those visiting who have little or no church background.”
- c. Purpose-driven church – “Every activity a church practices should be measured by God’s purposes for the church to determine if it is effective.”
- d. Self fulfillment – “People will be more motivated to serve and will remain in a place of service if they find it fulfilling God’s design for them.”
- e. Globalization – “Because it is now possible, every congregation should partner through visits and financial support with a church in the 2/3 world.”
- f. Emerging Church – “21st century church must take on new language and expressions relevant to a post-modern mindset in order for the Gospel to be understood and embraced.”
- g. Missional Church – “Every congregation must develop strategies for outreach and church multiplication that flow from approaching their community or city with principles commonly used by missionaries in penetrating new cultures with the Gospel.”

There are other legitimate definitions for these terms. The point is to reach a common consensus of agreement on what is being proposed before proceeding.

BIBLICAL AUTHORITY FOR AN ACTIVITY



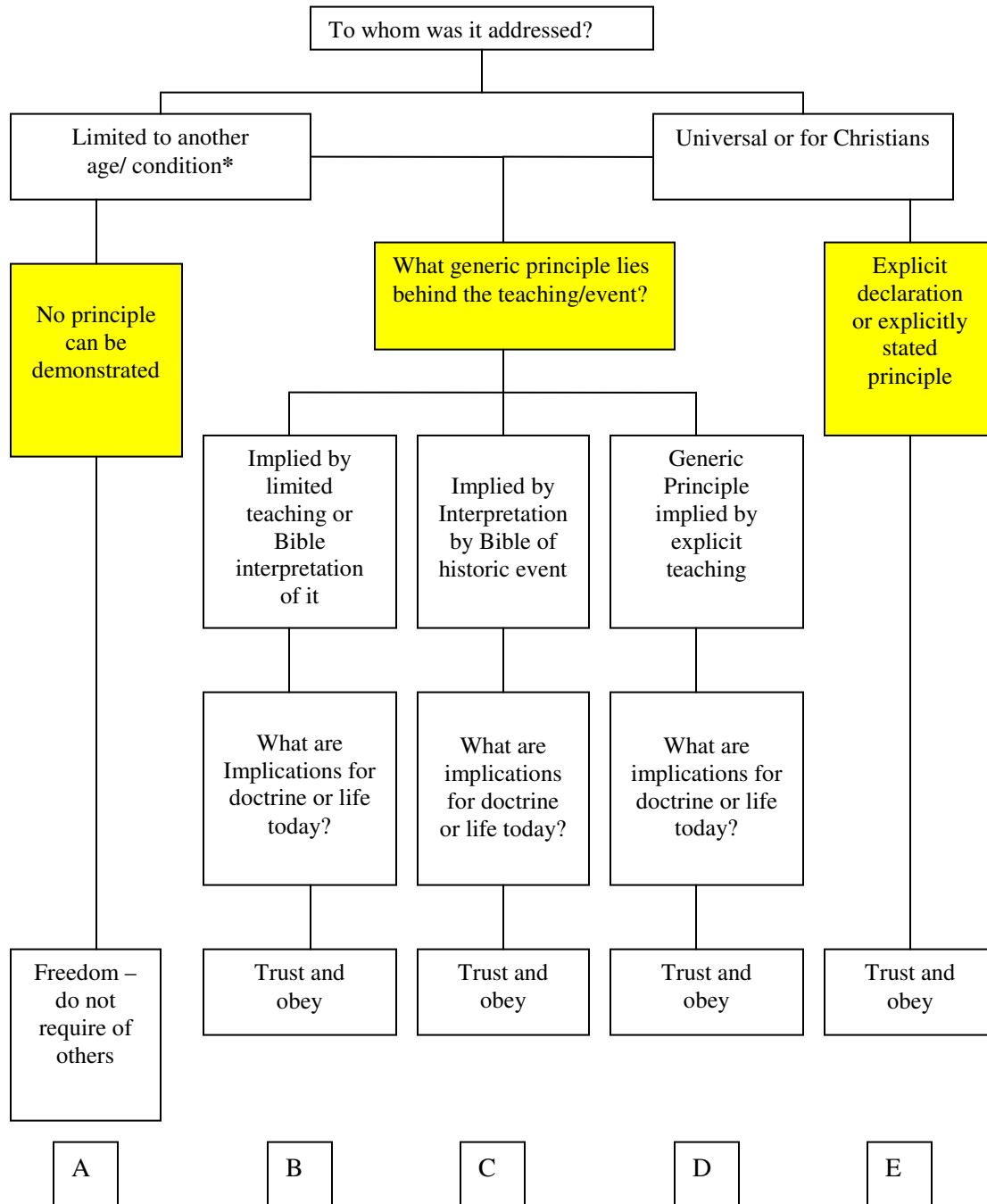
A

B

C

D

FLOW CHART FOR APPLYING A BIBLE PASSAGE



* See Robertson McQuilkin's *Five Smooth Stones* for additional help in discerning whether a passage is authoritative for all Christians.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Sometimes there are several biblical passages to consider related to a given practice of ministry. This chart helps you summarize what is learned from a synthesis of the related passages. This summary can then help you move through the flow chart on an activity (the flow chart in the other learning activity) with clarity.

Instructions for the Reader (1 hour)

Step One: Begin with defining the issue. Define the activity, practice, or issue so precisely that both advocates and opponents agree with the identification.

Step Two: Go on an exploration through the Bible to uncover all biblical material that is related. List all passages found in the first column. Your list of relevant passages would include:

1. What does God describe as the norm? (look for commands and principles)
2. What models, historical examples, or illustrations can be found?
3. What should be the motives or character-related issues to a given practice?

Step Three: Now make notes in the other three columns as you study each related passage in its context.

Practice:

Download the EVALUATION QUESTIONS for the five biblical principles. www.royking.org Choose one item that there is agreement the congregation should change or develop. Each of the twenty items relates to the corresponding chapter in the *The Five Smooth Stones* book. Review the related chapter and write a description of what change would be needed. Now go on your biblical exploration by using the questions listed above and summarize what you discover on the chart that follows. Summarize your findings into a one to two page description of an effective ministry application.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

References ↓	Passage is + or – to idea or practice	How the passage contributes to balances, limits or challenges the practice or idea	How does the passage assist in setting the level of authority of the idea or practice. Levels: Must obey, Compatible, Permissible, Forbidden
Commands 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.			
Principle Teaching 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.			
Historical Illustration 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.			
Figurative or Parabolic 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.			