

Module Five: Authority and Truth- Talk Outline

1 Orthodox Basis of Authority

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Scripture

Church Fathers

Councils

Liturgies

"The Church" decides the Truth

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Continuity with the Early Church

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Orthodoxy is the Guardian of the Holy Spirit's "Truth"

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2 God's View of Authority

1 God reveals, rules and relates through his word

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2 God is the Bible's Author, *not* "the Church"
eg 2 Tim 3:16, Heb 4:12, 2 Pet 1:21, 1 Pet 1:10-12

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3 God's word creates the Church: 2 Cor 3:2-3

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4 True Apostolic Succession: 2 Tim 2:2

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Module Five: Authority and Truth- Group Time

The Orthodox View of Authority and Truth	What do our Orthodox friends need to hear?
• There are multiple sources for doctrine • "The Church" is the final authority • "The Church" is the author and steward of truth • Mystical experience is the path to truth	Discuss what you would say to them

1 God's Word on Tradition

You should be selective in reading the following passage with our Orthodox friends as it is quite a confronting criticism of the place of human tradition. Reserve it for those who are beginning to accept the authority of the Bible.

Read Matthew 15:1-9

The Pharisees and Scribes created a large body of regulations to be followed by those serious about obeying God. So, in verse 2 they challenge Jesus by asking why he doesn't follow their traditions.

Jesus explains the problem with their traditions by giving an example. God makes clear the obligation of children to care for their relatives. However, in verse 5 the Pharisees' tradition allows them to instead commit that support to the Temple.

1 Why would that rule have been created? What are the Pharisees hoping to demonstrate?

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2 The aim of the Pharisees' rules is to make them look zealous for God. But what does Jesus say is the reality in v3 and vv6-9? Who are the Pharisees actually serving?

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3 What is the danger in following these human tradition teachers? (vv8,14)

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4 According to Jesus, who is the author of the Bible ? (vv4,6)

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5 What is the danger if traditions overrule God's commands? see vv3,6,8,9,14

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6 According to Jesus how can we assess traditions or what other people teach?

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2 Exercise: Share your Experience

It is common for our Orthodox friends to rely on "what I have always been taught" or consult their priest.

In pairs, practise speaking with your friend and discuss the role of tradition and teachers. Address what is valuable about traditions and teachers, what are the limits to their authority and how you assess them.

3 Prayer

In small groups pray that God would change your friends to recognise the authority of His Biblical Word above all other teaching.

Before Session Six

The study questions on Matthew 15 above can be used with your Orthodox friends to discuss the relationship of human tradition to the authority of God's word.

You will find some answers to questions about Biblical authority in "A Word about Tradition and Authority" in *Certainty for Life: An Invitation*

In *Certainty for Life: Questions, Answers and Guidebook*, Chapter 6 "God Makes Himself Known," I consider how God has revealed himself in the Bible. In Chapter 7 "The Bible is Clear and Reliable" I discuss how the Bible has been accurately passed down to us.

Module Five: Authority and Truth– Leader's Notes

The Orthodox View of Authority and Truth	What do our Orthodox friends need to hear?
• There are multiple sources for doctrine • "The Church" is the final authority • "The Church" is the author and steward of truth • Mystical experience is the path to truth	Discuss what you would say to them 1 God relates to us through His word 2 God is the author of the Bible 3 God's word created the Church 4 The Bible gives us continuity with the Apostolic Gospel

1 God's Word on Tradition

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The Pharisees and Scribes created a large body of regulations to be followed by those serious about obeying God. So, in verse 2 they challenge Jesus by asking why he doesn't follow their traditions.

Jesus explains the problem with their traditions by giving an example. God makes clear the obligation of children to care for their relatives. However, in verse 5 the Pharisees' tradition allows them to instead commit that support to the Temple.

1 Why would that rule have been created? What are the Pharisees hoping to demonstrate?

It made them look pious for giving to the Temple and so devoted to the worship of God (What made this abuse worse was that the money did not actually have to be given- it only had to be committed to the Temple at some future time, say in a will, maybe never to be enacted.)

2 The aim of the Pharisees' rules is to make them look zealous for God. But what does Jesus say is the reality in v3 and vv6-9? Who are the Pharisees actually serving?

The word of God was clear- honour your Father and mother, but their rule resulted in them side-stepping that responsibility. Their actual intention was to avoid obeying God. They constructed rules to minimise their obligation to God. They were serving themselves, obeying their own rules rather than God's. Their interpretations overruled the clear word of God.

3 What is the danger in following these human tradition teachers? (vv8,14)
*they themselves don't know God as they are "far from God" (v8)
so they and their teachings cannot lead people to God
therefore they cannot see where God is so cannot lead them there
so anyone following them will only be led into the same pit as them, far away from God*

4 According to Jesus, who is the author of the Bible ? (vv4,6)
*v4- "For God said"
v6- "the word of God"*

5 What is the danger if traditions overrule God's commands? see vv3,6,8,9,14
*v3 break God's commandments
v6 nullify the word of God
v8 heart far from God
v9 worship God in vain
v14 end up in the pit*

6 According to Jesus how can we assess traditions or what other people teach?
according to whether they agree with God's word

2 Exercise: Share your Experience

It is common for our Orthodox friends to rely on "what I have always been taught" or consult their priest.

In pairs, practise speaking with your friend and discuss the role of tradition and teachers. Address what is valuable about traditions and teachers, what are the limits to their authority and how you assess them.

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