

It Is Written

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UNNECESSARY INFERENCES

By David Weaks

In human speech there is something called “inference.” This refers to a thing that is taught without being directly stated. A writer or speaker implies a thing and a reader or hearer infers it. In the context of Bible authority there are “necessary inferences.” These are conclusions one must reach in order to properly understand God’s word.

Inferences are so natural that we rarely think about them. Suppose, for example, that you read in the newspaper that the president of the United States traveled to Europe. The article might not specify how he got to Europe, so you conclude that he traveled aboard Air Force One. The writer didn’t have to include the detail about the presidential plane. You know the president didn’t swim the Atlantic, nor did he sail by ship. You put all things together and infer correctly that he traveled on the presidential plane.

The Bible is filled with “necessary inferences” of this kind. Matthew 3:16, for example, says that Jesus “came up out of the water” after He was baptized. You infer that Jesus first descended into the water, do you not? It is as plainly taught as if the text said it. Here is another: Jesus said that God is the God of the living, not the dead (Matthew 22:31-34). That means Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who died centuries earlier, still live. This is the conclusion the text is forcing you to reach.

Another great example of a necessary inference is found in Acts 8:35-36. Philip “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian eunuch. When they came to some water, the eunuch demanded baptism. We are forced to conclude that preaching Jesus includes preaching baptism. We do not need the full text of Philip’s sermon in the chariot, Luke’s narrative implies that it included baptism. Why else would the eunuch have insisted on being immersed?

Unfortunately, however, people sometimes read the Bible carelessly, and they make “unnecessary” inferences about important scriptures. Due to religious bias or careless study habits, people often conclude things about Bible verses which the writer never implied.

For example, liberal brethren read James 1:27 and infer that: “...visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” means the church should build children’s homes. Brethren, James teaches no such thing in this verse! He didn’t even hint at church support of social programs. Every pro-noun in the context refers to the individual disciple and his duty to God (see: vs. 23-26). In these verses, James uses words like “anyone,” “he,” “his,” and “himself.” The context has no-thing to do with the church at all. This is what disciples should do as part of their loyalty to God.

Liberals follow a similar path with Galatians 6:10. They infer that the command to: “...let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith,” means the “social gospel” is a work of the church. Nothing of the sort is taught in this text. In context, Paul is talking about “a man” (vs. 1), “you who are spiritual” (vs. 1b), and how “anyone who thinks himself to be spiritual” can be self-deceived (vs. 3). “Each one” must examine “his own work” because “each one shall bear his own load” (vs. 4). Then, “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (vs. 7). In this context the “us” who must not grow weary is a reference to individual disciples, not the church (vs. 9). Nothing in this text forces nor suggests the conclusion that the church must render aid to unbelievers through church funded agencies. This is an unnecessary inference which brethren continue to make in error to this day.

Paul said Bible students must “give diligence” to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Timothy

2:15). Carelessly reading the Bible and throwing out hastily conceived assertions is not the way to rightly divide it. Unfortunately, many people read the Bible with less attention to sense and syntax than they do in their private communication. If someone puts words in your mouth you might bristle and snap: "Listen to what I'm saying, not what you wish I'd said!" Yet, when many folks read the Bible, they put words into God's mouth which He never said. They make inferences which the inspired writers never implied.

When you study the Bible, be careful to observe the rules of language, context, word meanings, as well as good old common sense. Solomon was absolutely right, study is hard work (Ecclesiastes 12:12)!

I'm Not 18 Years Old Anymore

By Zeke Flores

I'm not 18 years old anymore

My body doesn't move as it did then; more things droop and sag, and more parts hurt and ache.

- At 18 I had very few responsibilities. I lived entirely in the moment making decisions solely based on my selfish desire for immediate gratification.
- At 18 I had far more leisure time on my hands and risked my life and health on dangerous activities and substances.
- At 18 I blew through money like I had a hole in my pocket and misused things I should have taken better care of.

No, I'm not 18 years old anymore

By God's mercy, I've had 44 more years added to my life (so far) and in that life, I've had the love of a good and wise woman added to me, along with the blessing of children and grandchildren who love me in spite of myself and my corny jokes.

- I'm not 18 anymore, and my decisions are now informed by a conscience that's molded by God's word and will, which helps me to see the longer road.
- I'm not 18 anymore, and though my body doesn't move like it once did, its actions are more certain and directed toward a clearer purpose.
- I'm not 18 anymore, and where once I lived in self-satisfaction, I see I have an obligation to others around me to whom I can offer myself in a variety of ways, all of which bring more satisfaction than selfishness ever could.
- I'm not 18 anymore, and though my hair is thinning and grayer, it represents a lifetime of joy, sorrow, and tough decisions which have hopefully made me wiser and instilled character and integrity.
- I'm not 18 anymore, and where once I had no definite plans for the future, now I see more distinctly than ever God's plan for my future and a clear way to get there.
- I'm not 18 anymore, and while I'm nowhere near the man I hope to be, by God's grace I'm not the man I once was.

No, I'm not 18 years old anymore.

"Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" (Proverbs 16:31).

"They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green, To declare that Yahweh is upright ..." (Psalms 92:14-15).