

Your Questions Bible Answers

Why do we do what we do? (Part 3)

Binding ourselves to examples

We will take the Lord's Supper today (Sunday, the first day of the week). We took the Lord's Supper last Sunday and the Lord willing we will again next Sunday. In fact, we take the Lord's Supper every Sunday? We teach that this is what God wants us to do, but how do we know? Some might be surprised to learn that God never **commanded** the church to take the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. Jesus certainly instituted the supper and commanded that we "do this in remembrance of Me" (1Cor. 11.24-25), but He never commanded that it be done on the first day of the week. So, why do we do it every Sunday and teach that it should be done this way?

Because of **example**. We have the example of the church observing the Lord's Supper from the earliest days of the church (Acts 2.42), but it isn't until Paul's arrival in Troas that we learn the church partook of the Lord's Supper on the 1st day of the week (Acts 20.7). We bind ourselves by an example. But should we? And should we bind others to follow those same examples?

The relationship between commands and examples

1. The complaint of some is that examples (and inference) has been elevated to the level of command
2. The fact is that examples are not commands and there is a difference that must be respected. The importance of this distinction is that IF examples were commands, then we would be obligated to follow each one.
3. However, they are CLOSELY RELATED:
 - A. Commands must be obeyed! Matthew 28.20
 - B. Examples show how commands were obeyed:
 - i. We are commanded to be humble (Phil. 2.3-4). Jesus' sacrifice (Phil. 2.5-8) and washing the feet of the disciples (John 13.5-15) provide examples of HOW.
 - ii. We are commanded to observe the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26.26-28; 1Cor. 11.23-26). We have an example of WHEN and WHERE in Acts 20.7-8.

The role of examples in establishing authority

1. As stated above, approved examples show something to be permitted (i.e. authorized). I.E. these are God approved means of keeping His commands. Hence, the exhortation within Scripture to follow examples, John 13.34-35; 1Cor. 11.1; Eph. 5.1-2; Phil. 3.17.
2. However, examples do not prohibit, they merely show what is approved. It is silence that prohibits (1Corinthians 4.6).
3. How then do we establish authority for our practices? God's commands (whether regarding love, salvation, worship, etc.) show what must be done. We then take all that is revealed about these (statements of Scripture and examples) to determine how they should be done (the process of deducing or inferring, same as James did in Acts 15).

These statements and examples comprise what we know to be authorized and our practices should be limited to that which we find to be authorized. Anything else will find us operating in silence, and at best one would be in questionable territory, i.e. you wouldn't know if you were operating within God's authority or not.

4. Applied to Acts 20.7-8.

- A. When should the Lord's Supper be observed? All the information we have points to the first day of the week.
 - i. No specific day is given in Acts 2.42. If that was all we had to go on we must conclude that any day would be acceptable.
 - ii. 1st day is specifically mentioned in Acts 20.7. Adding further significance to this is the statement in vs. 16 that Paul was "hurrying to be in Jerusalem" coupled with the statement in vs. 6 that Paul tarried in Troas for 7 days. Why tarry in Troas for 7 days when hurrying to Jerusalem if not to partake of the Lord's Supper on an appointed day, the first day of the week?
 - iii. No date is given for Paul's instruction in 1Cor. 11.17ff, but we know that the purpose for their coming together should have been to observe the supper. Combining this with 16.1-2 should we not conclude that it was the first day of the week when they were to come together in observance of the supper?
- B. Where should the Lord's Supper be observed?
 - i. Taking Acts 20.7-8 and coupling it with the fact that Jesus instituted the Supper in an upper room we see that an upper room is an authorized place to observe. Is it the only?
 - ii. Not when considering the fact that the Supper is tied to the assembly, 1Cor. 11.20, and we see that the early church assembled in many places: upper room (Acts 20.7), temple (Acts 2.42), private home (Acts 16.40), etc.
 - iii. Hence, we conclude that any place where the church comes together is an authorized place to eat the Supper.

Is this process binding?

- 1. Let's answer this on a personal level.
 - a. Should I follow approved examples? The Scriptures indicate "yes"
 - b. Should I stay within the bounds of what is written? Again, the Scriptures indicate "yes"
 - c. Should I place greater emphasis on the practice of divinely inspired apostles then on my personal opinion of matters? Remember, apostles received the Spirit that would guide them into all truth (John 16.13). It was under their direction that the faith and practice of the early church took place. Again, the Scriptures would indicate "yes".
 - d. It would seem our answer is "yes", we should consider ourselves bound to stay within what God has authorized through His word. At best, practicing things outside of the divinely authorized pattern is existing in a question mark.
- 2. Can I bind this process on others? No, I cannot.
 - a. Why, because it is God that binds, not me. It is my duty to recognize that which God has bound, follow it and teach it.
 - b. Even when it comes to moral principles (fornication, homosexuality), I cannot bind (i.e. force others) to a certain mode of behavior. It is God who binds and I can live

within those principles, teach them and not fellowship those who refuse to abide by His will.

- c. Hence, I cannot bind observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. I can respect what God has authorized in the Scriptures, observe it, teach it and exhort others to do likewise. I can choose to not fellowship others who choose to not remain in what God authorizes, but I cannot bind.