

Approved Apostolic Examples

Ken Kalies

Not all examples are to be followed. Some like the one of Simon in Act 8 are to be avoided. If it was an example that was approved by Jesus or his apostles: we follow it, as it shows how a specific command, which comes first, was followed. (Php 3:17) Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. (NKJ)

(Php 4:9) The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. (NKJ)

Not every activity recorded as kept by the first church has a corresponding direct statement recorded for it; and yet, they were certainly commanded to do it. What we have are the examples of them following those commands of the inspired apostles. The apostles were told to teach the early Christians everything that Christ had taught them. (Mt 28:19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (NKJ) (Mt 28:20) "teaching them to observe all thing that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, {even} to the end of the age." Amen. (NKJ)

Not all examples are binding such as traveling by foot wearing sandals. How do we know the difference? Here are some rules that may help: Examples do not limit generic authority even as they show details about a specific command. Acts 20:7 gives us the day Jesus spoke of in Mat 26:29, but no more. Generic authority for the place to meet are not limited by examples of the upper room, Act 20:8, since there is no specific instruction given as to the place per John 4:21. Examples of running water for baptism do not limit us since there is generic authority under the specific command to baptize in water allows for any type of water.

But how do we know if the example is restrictive or just an option of generic authority? For instance, there is a consistent example of sending funds to elders, teachers and preachers for benevolence and spreading the gospel. Was this an example of a specific command or just options of generic authority to help other Christians? If the former, we are limited, if the latter, we are not.

a. Uniformity - all applicable teaching on the subject must be consistent. (No other day of the week given to worship)

b. Harmony - all of the examples must be in harmony with the other examples or teachings of the New Testament. (Churches may exist prior to having elders appointed) Tit 1:5

c. Essentials and incidentals - example must be essential to the teaching and practice, not just a custom. (example of the upper room in Mar 14:15, Act 20:8, but John 4:21 - place not important)

I. Essentials are matters of divine revelation: (2Pe 1:3) as His divine power has given to us all things that {pertain} to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, (NKJ)

II. Essentials are given to us through words expressed to convey the thoughts of the Holy Spirit: (1Co 2:13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (NKJ)

III. Incidentals are those things that are incidentally related to

God's will; matters of custom.

The example of the "holy kiss" (Rom 16:16) Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. (NKJ) Compare with Gen 29:13, Laban; 3:4; 2Sam 20:9 in the Old Testament. The kiss and its use as a greeting was common before Paul spoke of it to the churches.

The example of "foot washing" (Joh 13:14) "If I then, {your} Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (NKJ)

a. How they understood it. Was this understood as a specific thing to practice in their worship or was it an example of how they were to serve one another? The answer to this is to find out what they would have thought about His example.

Peter objected to the Lord serving him. He did not understand it as the establishment of a new religious custom. What did they practice with regard to washing feet? They either washed their own feet or had the servants do it. Luk 7:44 Simon's example or Abigail's example is shown in (1Sa 25:41) Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." (NKJ) Foot washing was an act of courtesy, not a new religious observance.

b. Limited application - the teaching of the example can only be applied to the same set of facts or circumstances to which the Holy Spirit first made the application.

1 Cor 14:17 - tongues example - not binding today since no one has the gift.

c. The rule of competence - the evidence alleged from the example must support the claim made for it. It is not enough to make a possible inference. Some claim that since not a bone was broken in Jesus body, we may not break the bread for anyone else in serving the Lord's supper.

If there is only a possible inference and not a necessary one, it is not a competent reason to bind the example.

Applications to illustrate an approved apostolic example

Time when to eat the Lord's supper (Act 20:7a) Now on the first {day} of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,...

Appointment of elders in every church - Acts 14:23

The conditions under which churches received from other churches

Acts 11:27-30 They received relief for their physical needs.

Conditions under which churches sent to another church in need - Rom 15:25,26 Macedonia and Achaia sent to Jerusalem

2TH 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (KJV)

Brethren, we need to study how we study in order to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. 2Ti 2:15

As we apply principles of reason to our study, there will be challenges. God tells us:

Pray for wisdom Jam 1:5

Study, be diligent 2Ti 2:15

Not human wisdom 1Co 1:20, 2:6

Taught by the Holy Spirit 1Co 2:13

Spiritually discerned 1Co 2:14