

The New Testament Pattern

Ryan Goodwin

Replicating New Testament practices and doctrines in a consistent and logical manner is the only path to true unity amongst believers.

It is just as discouraging for me to see disunity amongst believers as it was for Paul when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 that many Christians had begun developing sects or divisions. The only way to attain to true unity is to make the objective, divinely inspired standard of the Bible our guide. Any interference by human reasoning only leads to our destruction. Notice the emphasis placed on the relationship between fellowship and adherence to sound doctrine in 1 John 1:3-7: *“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father...If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light (practice the truth) as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...”* Fellowship between Christians is based on a singular commitment to practicing truth, and the only way to know religious truth is to study the Bible. *“And by referring to this [what I have written], when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ”* (Ephesians 3:4).

Not only that, but in Christ's own prayer for the unity of His followers (John 17:20-21), our Lord precedes those sentiments with the affirmation that truth is found only in the Word. *“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). If we fail to abide by Biblical standards, we cannot have unity! *“If anyone advocates another doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing...”* (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

It was the expectation of the apostles that we follow their pattern.

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold to the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word of mouth, or by letter from us” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). *“Now I praise you because you remembered me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you”* (1 Corinthians 11:2). Apparently, the apostles intended for us to follow the pattern of work and worship they laid down in the first century. We defend this principle because it keeps us grounded in apostolic teaching. After all, if the way Christians lived and worshipped in the first century was good enough to please God, then what has changed? According to Peter, he and his fellow inspired workers received everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so what more can be added to that? If we have a faith that was “once for all” delivered through them (Jude 3) then nothing else can make it better or more complete. Clearly, the apostles believed their message was inspired by God, and valid for all time:

- *“The things which I write to you are the Lord's commandments”* (1 Corinthians 14:37);
- *“...Just as I teach everywhere in every church”* (1 Corinthians 4:17);
- *“...That you should remember the words... and the commandments of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles”* (2 Peter 3:2);
- Peter considered the writings of Paul “scriptures” in 2 Peter 3:16;
- Paul considered the writings of Luke “scriptures” in 1 Timothy 5:18.

When I make it my aim to replicate New Testament practices and doctrines, I honor God.

In Exodus 25:40, in the midst of a long, detailed description of the tabernacle and all its accessories, God warns Moses that he must make all of these things according to the pattern. Why? Why not just take quick look at the plans, toss them out, and then “wing it” through the rest of the fabrication process?

“If any speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God has given him, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11). That God may be glorified, I speak as the oracles of God, and minister according to the ability given me. My Savior and Creator ordained that we should keep His commandments in any and every age or culture, throughout the world, for His glory. I must check myself constantly to make sure I am living according to His standard! *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!”* (2 Corinthians 13:5).