



When Is an Example Binding?

The Bible is a book full of examples. Are we obligated to follow all of them? How are we to determine which examples are binding and which are not?

God authorizes many practices through examples. In our case, we are given authority through “approved apostolic examples” (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 11:1; Philippians 4:9). We say “approved” because some examples in the Bible are disapproved. Some examples should not be imitated. An “approved” example is where no direct statement or command from God exists, but God has shown us by recorded actions that certain things can be done or not.

Does Every Example in the Bible Both Bind and Limit?

- No. We don’t have to follow every example in the Bible. Neither are we restricted by every example.
 - Must we always take the Lord’s Supper in an upper room every first day of the week (Acts 20:7-8)? Why or why not?
 - Must we always go and preach the gospel by ship (Acts 17:14)? Why or why not?
- By rightly dividing the word, we can determine which examples in the Bible are binding and which are not necessary to God’s will.

Some Factors To Consider With Binding Examples

- The Rule of Harmony
 - We must get all the facts about a matter (Matthew 4:6-7).
 - We must never conflict passages. An example cannot be binding if it causes us to do something that would conflict with other verses.

- The Rule of Uniformity
 - The matter must be uniform (the same) in all examples for the things to be binding.
 - Why can there be no right example for going out to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15)?

- The Rule of Universality
 - An example must be able to be applied in every case to be binding. The saints went out from Jerusalem, spreading the gospel (Acts 8:1-4). Do we also have to go out from Jerusalem?
 - Explain your answer given above.

- The Rule of Materiality
 - An example must have a material connection to the thing under consideration to be binding. Some cases contain things that are merely incidental to the matter.
 - Must we have someone fall from a third loft and die in every worship assembly (Acts 20:9-10)? Explain.

Applying the Principles

- Acts 20:7
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week pass the test of harmony?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week pass the test of uniformity?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week pass the test of universality?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week pass the test of materiality?
 - What can we conclude from this?

- Acts 20:8
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in an upper room pass the test of harmony?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in an upper room pass the test of uniformity?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in an upper room pass the test of universality?
 - Does taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week in an upper room pass the test of materiality?
 - What can we conclude from this?

- Romans 16:16
 - Does greeting one another with a "holy kiss" pass the test of harmony?
 - Does greeting one another with a "holy kiss" pass the test of uniformity?
 - Does greeting one another with a "holy kiss" pass the test of universality?
 - Does greeting one another with a "holy kiss" pass the test of materiality?
 - What can we conclude from this?

