

Learning by Example

I. Introduction

A. Illustration

1. Saw person getting requested bread then called and asked “can you get me some of that bread I like? Do you know the kind I am talking about?”

B. Review: How we understand the will of the Lord

1. No more, no less
2. Generic and Specific authority
3. Commands and Direct Statements
4. Necessary Inferences
5. Approved Examples

C. Definition

1. “A description of the conduct or activity of people in the Bible, primarily New Testament disciples, that acts as a pattern that we may imitate or avoid.” – Maurice Barnett p. 39
2. Not commands or direct statements
3. “Show” rather than “tell”
4. Most of the Bible is a mixture of these two
 - a) Examples require different handling
 - b) Different than direct statements or necessary inference.

D. Plan of Study

1. Good and Bad Example and their purpose
2. Different categories of examples and determine what kinds of examples bind us and which do not

II. Good and Bad Examples

A. Bad

1. 1 Cor. 10:6, 11
2. Other bad examples
 - a) Demas (2 Tim. 4:10)
 - b) Simon (Acts 8)
 - c) Paul rebuking Peter (Gal. 2:11-14)

B. Both Bad and Good – 3 Jn 11

1. Do not imitate the bad
2. Do imitate the good
3. Direct command to apply the examples of scripture, both positive and negative, to our faith and practice
4. The question is for each example, “What does it teach?”

C. Good

1. Approved example – “descriptions of the conduct or activity of New Testament disciples that we must or may imitate.” – Maurice Barnett p 40
2. 1 Cor. 11:1
3. 1 Cor. 4:16-17

III. Classes of Examples

A. Examples with limited application

1. Command with limited application – “Greet the brethren with a holy kiss”
2. Miracle working (Acts 19:11-12)
 - a) Not all could perform miracles then (1 Cor. 12:29)
 - b) Miracles were limited to the first century (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-13)
 - c) Though this is an approved example, we cannot “follow the example of Paul” today and are not obligated to
3. Observing OT customs (Acts 21:18-26) Pays for the purification of four Jewish Christians in the Temple
 - a) Appropriate for Jews, but not for Gentiles (1 Cor. 7:18-20)
 - b) Paul adapted to either culture (1 Cor. 9:20)
 - c) Circumcision
 - (1) Spiritually fatal if practiced or bound as a spiritual obligation
 - (2) Timothy circumcised – Acts 16:3
 - (3) Titus was not – Gal. 2:3

d) Paul was able to defend his actions (Acts 28:17)

B. Examples used to teach a lesson

1. James 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:21 – Suffering while serving God
2. Jn. 13:15 – Humble service, not foot washing
3. Lk. 10:29-37 – Go, do like the good Samaritan
4. James 5:16-18 – Elijah exemplifies faithful, effective prayer
5. Heb. 11 – What is being taught? Not the specific deeds, but the faith behind them.
6. In each of these cases, the lesson is binding, not the specific example itself

C. Authoritative examples of fulfilling specific instructions (Exclusive, binding example)

1. If the specific instruction is binding upon us, then the specific example is also binding
2. Church benevolence
 - a) Specific commands behind it (1 Cor. 16:1)
 - (1) Obeyed (Rom. 15:25-28)
 - (2) Was carried out in such a way that the autonomy of individual churches was preserved (1 Cor. 16:3-4)
 - b) Additional example (Acts 11:27-30)
 - (1) Chosen representatives
 - (2) Given to the specific congregation(s) that had the need
 - (3) Church with more than enough gives to church with not enough
 - c) Sponsoring church arrangement violates this example
 - (1) Does not preserve autonomy (1 Cor. 16:3-4)
 - (2) Churches with less resources give to churches with more resources (2 Cor. 8:13-15)
 - (3) Leaves open an avenue for blame that is to be avoided (2 Cor. 8:18-21)

3. Partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week
 - a) Specific command behind it (Luke 22:19; Matt. 26:29) "that day" indicates a particular day left unspecified
 - b) Acts 20:7 - Disciples at Troas fulfill the command
 - c) Demonstrates which day "that day" is
 - d) First day is binding upon us by example

D. Examples of making generic choices

1. Examples of Generic choices are not binding on us
2. Great Commission Obeyed
 - a) Land
 - b) Sea
 - c) Chariot
 - d) Are we bound to one of these, or just these today? No!
 - e) The command "Go" leaves many generic options
 - f) We may choose others
3. Command to assemble obeyed (Heb. 10:25)
 - a) There are many generic options
 - b) Acts 20:7-8 - gives one example of the options chosen by one group at one time
 - (1) Upper room
 - (2) At night
 - (3) Once on Sunday
 - (4) No bible classes
 - (5) Long sermon
 - (6) Lit by oil lamps/candles
 - c) This example is no more binding than the examples of which modes of transportation to use
4. We will discuss this point in more detail in the next lesson.

IV. Invitation

A. Example of the Ethiopian Eunuch