

Following the Apostles' Example

Acts 20

Lesson 30 in a Series about the 1st Century Church

Submission and humility toward our Lord is vividly seen in the ministry of the apostles, their lives and example. Chapter 20 of our study in Acts is an excellent opportunity for us to discuss the example the Lord has given us.

When it comes to Sunday worship and the Lord's Table, I am often asked,

“Where does the Bible say we must worship on Sunday?”

“Why don't we regard the Sabbath holy as the Lord commanded?”

“Where does the Bible say we must have the communion every Sunday?”

The short answer: there are no commands in the New Testament regarding Sunday worship or the weekly observance of the Lord's Table.

Most of us acknowledge that to be found pleasing to the Lord, submission through obedience to a direct command is required. What I hope to reveal through our lesson today is the importance of expanding our understanding of submission beyond direct command. Complete obedience includes...

Learning Submission to Example

In February of this year we went through the “chain of communication” through which we receive our direction from the Lord. This discussion can be found in Lesson 4: ***“The Promised Holy Spirit Arrives with Power.”*** There are copies at the back for you to take home.

**God sent Jesus—Jesus sent the Apostles
Apostles & Prophets wrote the New Testament—New Testament directs us!**

Acts 20

7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

This example shows us what the early church was doing, another picture for God's Photo Album. The church at this time is under the direction and example of the apostles. They were assembling on the first day of the week, not the Sabbath, to break bread. Common meal? The context doesn't support a common meal because it was the purpose for which they assembled. Even in the early church it was not the practice to assemble for a common meal. You can see the direction of the decision to assemble for the breaking of bread (communion) in 1 Corinthians chapter 11.

Apostles Really Served with Humility

Acts 20

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Jesus left an example of how we should conduct ourselves as His disciples through the ministry of the apostles, serving in spite of severe trial to accomplish the task given them by the Lord.

Apostles Really Followed Jesus' Example

Acts 20

22 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

Apostles Really Cared About Relationships

Acts 20

28 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

36 When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

You can only care about others in this way when you have the heart of Christ. You may wonder why I would say this. Consider how many times individuals have disappointed you. You still love the way Christ loves. Consider times when things have been said that hurt you and your relationship with someone, you still choose to love the way Christ loves.

That's what serving by example teaches us. Who is most important in your life? If decisions are made to choose to love others in spite of testing, in spite of hurt feelings, in spite of ourselves, we have put the Lord on the throne of our lives.

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

If you are here today and this message prompts you to submit to the Lord and His example, we are prepared to assist you in making your obedience complete. I hope the song Marc has selected for this time will encourage you to make your need known by coming to the front at we stand and sing.