

Scriptural commands. So look at this list and determine which ones are actually Biblical practices, which one are *not*, and which ones are only *traditions* of our particular congregations, upbringing or the Church in general.

- Baptism for remission of sins and birth into the Body of Christ
- Divorce is acceptable for *numerous* causes
- Divorce is acceptable for certain specific reasons
- *Congregational* sponsored benevolence to *anyone* who asks for help
- *Congregational* sponsored benevolence only to members of the Body
- Assembly of the saints for worship on the Lord's Day
- Assembly of the saints for AM worship on the Lord's Day
- Assembly of the saints for PM worship on the Lord's Day
- Assembly of the saints for AM *and* PM worship on the Lord's Day
- Mid-week assembly of the saints for Bible study
- Church sponsored picnic once each year
- Male leadership for the Church
- Requiring that specific qualifications be met to serve as an Elder or Deacon
- Tuesday Bible study for the women of the congregation
- Pot luck dinner two times each year
- Marriage is *only* between one man and one woman
- Marriage is for life except in very specific circumstances
- A cappella *only* singing in worship assemblies
- "Sanctuary" or a special holy place designated for assembly of the saints
- Communion *every* first day of the week
- Communion only once each quarter of the year
- Communion on days other than Sunday
- Saturday evening assembly of the saints instead of Sunday assembly
- Use of incense or candles, to enhance the worship experience for the saints
- Use of mood music in a worship assembly to help feel closer to God
- Mandatory communion for Christians who are shut ins
- Special ceremonies to dedicate newborn babies to God

This is just a beginning of the topics that might come up for discussion by new Post Modern Christians who have just begun to study the Word in more depth than ever before *and* — for the first time in their lives with the conviction that it *is in fact* the very Word of God. They may ask to be shown the book, chapter and verse that allows or forbids certain beliefs and practices. So as we go forward into the fields that are white for harvest, it is imperative that every one of us is *prepared* to not only give an answer for the hope that is within us but also be prepared to give an answer to questions concerning all of our other practices and beliefs.

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DILIGENCE

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11

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"Look ... the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35 ESV)

There has never been a time in the history of mankind when the fields were *not* white and ready for harvest. Even as the harvest is being carried out, there is ground continually being readied for the new seed. We read in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-23) that the planting of the seed yielded results that were relative to the soil, the climate and the preparation of the soil for planting. Today, this God given assignment to plant the seed of the Gospel is entrusted to Christians who accept the charge to go and teach.

In the previous eight issues of *Diligence* we spent a lot of time discussing the emergence and impact of Post Modernism on society as well as on the New Testament Church. This major shift of paradigms in today's culture has dramatically changed the soil in which Christians plant the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Near the conclusion of our discussions of that subject, we suggested a method that Christians might use to condition the "soil" in order to make it more receptive to the Word.

If you recall — in the mind of the Post Modernist — beliefs are constructed from biases that have been handed down to us from parents and/or other prominent figures in our lives as well as events each of us has experienced. While the Post Modernist allows this concept to overtake all logical thinking, there *may* be *some* degree of accuracy involved when it comes to the way each of us accepts the Gospel. Let's think of it this way. If the children of Christian parents embrace the belief of their parents without *themselves* coming to an acceptance of the Gospel *as a result of* knowledge and understanding of the Word, their *personal* knowledge of the Truth *is* quite possibly little more than a blind acceptance of the views of another era. Would this then not mean that the Post Modern way of thinking might actually be somewhat accurate in this particular circumstance? Wouldn't an individual who actually accepts the Gospel in that manner be inclined to think that was *also* the case with his or her parents as well as all of the generations prior to them? When we, or our children embrace a belief without *personally* studying to *know* whether or not it is in accordance with the Word of God, we are not only vulnerable to accepting something that is in error, but the faith that results from that acceptance will be shallow and have no roots.

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“As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root” (Matthew 13:4-6 NIV)

Those who fail to see the need to intently study the Word will be unable to defend their belief when called upon to do so. They will therefore be *easily* swayed *from* their belief *even if it is* according to God’s Word. There is *no substitute* for knowledge of The Word to mature our faith. And that knowledge can *only* be acquired and absorbed through *personal* study of its contents.

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” (Ephesians 4:14 NASB)

Several years ago, when we first began this publication, we were faced with not only the *questioning* of — but also the *abandoning* of various practices and teachings in the congregation we attended at that time. A number of things were being challenged by “framing” them as nothing more than “church *traditions*” — rather than practices and belief based on Biblical facts and teachings. In a subtle way this was our first encounter with Post Modernism at work in the Lord’s Church. Many in the Church at that time were referring to those who were attempting to make such adjustments as “change agents.” We were unaware at that time that the questioning of those practices and teachings was actually the result of a Post Modern influence reaching into that congregation by way of those who were falling victim to the Post Modern culture. They were then, and are *now* indeed “change agents” but that entire trend reaches much further than just attempting to abandon important Biblical teachings within the New Testament Church. The efforts made by those individuals was even *more* destructive than we imagined at that time. Their intentions were far greater than “re-visioning” the Lord’s Church. Their intentions were to “re-invent” and “re-create” the Church and make it into something far different than prescribed in the Word of God — something that would “better suit” *their own culture* and way of life — something without any rules that would convict sinners and therefore cause their self esteem to suffer.

Now, some six years later, it has become even *more* evident that a lack of knowledge of God’s Word *allowed* that Post Modern influence to take hold of those in the Church who were seeking to “re-create” it. As this re-creation effort *continues* to move forward today, the need for an understanding of God’s Word is even *more* necessary and valuable than ever before. Today — more than ever, Christians, *must* have sufficient Bible knowledge to ward off the “re-creation” of not only the Church but also of the very Word of God.

When we as Christians, share the Gospel with those of the Post Modern mindset

— which may indeed include even our own children — it is important that we impress upon them the *necessity* of adhering to the teachings *of the Scriptures*. When we do this however, it will mean that those who *do* accept the Biblical plan for salvation and truly desire to know and understand the Word of God will — if we have properly ingressed upon them the need to do so — become *serious* students of the Bible. We should therefore *expect* those new Christians to question and perhaps even *challenge* almost every practice within our congregations — especially those practices that *seem* to be binding — but are *only traditions*. Remember, if we have properly done our job in teaching them, they now accept that the Word of God — and *only* the Word of God — *is the authority* for all beliefs and practices. To put it bluntly — if it’s in the Word, we had *better* be doing it and if it is *not* in the Word, it’s probably a tradition and is not a *required* or *binding* practice. In other words, it may be something we *like* doing or something we *enjoy* doing or even something that our particular congregations have done for many, many years — but we *cannot require* the participation of those new Christians in such practices since it would be impossible for us to show them where it is commanded in the Scriptures — and *that’s* where they will look. That’s where they *should* look if we have taught them properly.

Don’t misunderstand where we are going here. We certainly have no intentions of undermining any eldership concerning practices or events that they propose or implement within the congregation for which they are responsible. But — be assured that — as we evangelize Post Modern individuals, we will be working with those who have in the past accepted the belief that there are *many* paths to God. When they *abandon* that belief and accept that Jesus Christ is the *only* path to God, questions will arise as to why we feel the necessity to insist that they participate in events and practices that appear to be nothing more than a tradition of the group of Christians with whom they worship. Those Post Modern converts who *are* serious Bible students *will demand* that — if indeed we teach and believe that the Bible is our *only* guide — the basis for requiring *their* participation in any given practice *must* be found there. Even though *we* may not think of it in such a way, Post Modernists *will refuse* to participate in a “get your ticket punched to prove your Christianity” atmosphere — they will see that as “playing church.”

So exactly what is it that we’re getting at here? Well, consider the following random thoughts as possible questions that may come up if and when a new convert with a Post Modern mindset challenges the presence of *or* the absence of certain beliefs or practices in our congregations. If we consider them to be a bit radical and unconventional, determine if we *can* tie down the reasons for doing or for *not* doing each item on the list using *only* a book, chapter and verse mentality. Some may appear frivolous and silly, but realize that some of them *may indeed* be *bound* on believers by *other* believers as though they were