

## Attitude and Action

- Churches have had great difficulty deciding how to handle the descriptions of the actions of the early church. Their various conclusions have led to much division.
  - Sacraments: Different churches have different lists of actions that are necessary. All of these common rites are described in varying levels of detail in the New Testament, but none is specifically prescribed as an “essential” action. Rather, most of these practices are described in terms of their motivations. Some are not well defined or arose to solve a problem introduced by a previously adopted sacrament.
    - Baptism
    - Confirmation: Churches that practice infant baptism generally also affirm the commitment of each church member after the member reaches maturity. The New Testament contains no allusion to this practice. It became “necessary” after infant baptism became common practice, but fails to close the gap between the symbolism of baptism and common practice.
    - Communion
    - Confession: (Confessing sins, not confessing Jesus as Lord) James 5:16, 1 John 1:9, Matthew 3:6, Mark 1:5
    - Anointing: (also known as Last Rites): James 5:14 – 15
    - Marriage: Ephesians 5:22 – 33
    - Clergy: Ephesians 4:11 – 16, 1 Timothy 3:1 – 13, Titus 1:5 – 9, 1 Peter 5:1 – 4
  - Organizational practices:
    - Silence of the Scriptures: Some limit the activities of the corporate church to examples explicitly given in the New Testament based on the mistaken notion that the Scriptures use this sort of logic. Rather, the Scriptures use the principle of mutual exclusivity, not silence. The silence argument can be maintained only by arbitrarily determining that some unaddressed actions are expedient whereas other unaddressed topics are essential:
      - Instrumental accompaniment of congregational singing
        - Examples: psalms (although psalms were often accompanied by instrument), hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody with the heart, no clapping, no choir, no performances (although teaching by one person without song is acceptable)
        - Expedient: song leaders, song books, harmony, instrumental accompaniment not during “the worship”
      - Expenditures to and from the church treasury:
        - Examples: widows who do not have family, orphans, famine relief, preachers, free will offering
        - Expedients: facilities and associated expenses, tithes, fund-raising activities, church treasury
      - Design and use of church facilities
        - Examples: no kitchens, no gymnasiums, no classrooms, no restrooms, no weddings, no funerals, no steeple, no cross
        - Expedient: all of the above

- The “expedient or essential” argument can be avoided by focusing on attitudes.
  - The “heart” is the focus of Jesus’ teaching
    - Matthew 12:34 For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks
    - Matthew 15:18 Those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart
    - Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good...
    - Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also
    - Luke 16:15 God knows your hearts
  - The “heart” of the early church is described
    - Acts 2:46 They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart
    - Acts 4:32 Those who believed were of one heart and soul
    - Acts 15:9 Purifying their hearts through faith
    - Romans 2:15 Who show the work of the law written in their heart
    - Romans 2:29 Circumcision is that of the heart
    - Romans 5:5 The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit
    - Romans 6:17 You obeyed from the heart
    - Romans 8:27 He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is
    - Romans 10:8 – 10 The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart
    - 1 Corinthians 4:5 Reveal the counsels of the hearts.
    - 2 Corinthians 3:3 Written not with ink...but on tablets of flesh, of the heart
    - Ephesians 6:6 Doing the will of God from the heart
    - 1 Timothy 1:5 The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart
    - Hebrews 4:12 The word of God...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart
    - Hebrews 8:10 I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts
    - Hebrews 13:9 It is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods
    - James 1:26 If anyone thinks he is religious...but deceives his own heart
  - Examples (Acts 2:42 – 47 and 4:32 – 34)
    - Those who focus on practices must keep some and dispose of some, resulting in different lists. In contrast, adopting their attitudes resolves the resulting division and allows the same attitude to be played out in an infinite variation of situations.
      - Am I characterized as continuing steadfastly to the apostles teaching?
      - Do I value fellowship?
      - Am I devoted to prayer?
      - Of what am I fearful?
      - Is the Lord’s Supper important to me?
      - Would I be willing to share at this level? (cf, Acts 11:29, Philippians 4:11)
      - Would I be willing to suspend normal life in favor of daily instruction?
      - Is my faith characterized by simplicity and gladness?
      - Does my faith result in having favor with all the people?
      - Do I display great power?
    - (Acts 11:18) Do I change deeply held beliefs when I see a miracle?
- The purpose of Biblical miracles was to change deeply held beliefs.