

PRINCIPLES ABOVE PRACTICE

FRUITFUL PRINCIPLES

If we were to ask people from different cultures what a house is, they would all give very different answers. For someone that lives in the Amazon jungle it will be a sort of hut, no glass on the windows, no doors. Fresh air and protection from rain would be priorities, and there wouldn't be interior decoration. For a European, on the contrary, temperature isolation would be vital. Decoration, furniture, garden, would be priorities. In other cultures safety would be more important than illumination or hygiene.

Nonetheless, besides all the differences, there are some basic principles that would define such buildings as houses, like safety, protection, alimentation, family life, among others. In order to meet those principles, the ones responsible for the household will need to choose the right set of priorities according to the circumstances. In places with cold weather, warmth. In places with hot weather, ventilation. In places with high crime rate, safety. In places with poor cleanliness and health care, hygiene.

In the same way, the Bible shows us a lot of different universal principles that define what the church of Christ must be like. They are to be followed by everyone everywhere, but not in the same way. For example, the apostle Paul was radically against the practice of circumcision in the Gentile churches, and he was very clear about it in the letter to the Galatian communities:

You foolish Galatians! Who put you under a spell? Was not Jesus the Messiah clearly portrayed before your very eyes as having been crucified? I want to learn only one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the actions of the Law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started out with the Spirit, are you now ending up with the flesh? Did you suffer so much for nothing? (If it really was for nothing!) Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you because you do the actions of the Law or because you believe what you heard? Galatians 3:1-5

As for me, brothers, if I am still preaching the necessity of circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish that those who are upsetting you would castrate themselves! Galatians 5:11-12

These people who want to impress others by their external appearance are trying to force you to be circumcised, simply to avoid being persecuted for the cross of the Messiah. Why, not even those who are circumcised obey the Law! They simply want you to be circumcised so that they can boast about your external appearance. Galatians 6:12-13

Surprisingly, on another occasion, ironically while in the very province of Galatia, he chose to circumcise one of the disciples:

Paul also went to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish wife whose husband was a Greek. Timothy was highly regarded by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to go with him, so he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who lived in that region, because everyone knew that Timothy's father was a Greek. Acts 16:1-3

Why the contradiction? The priority was to expand the Kingdom of God. The Galatians were getting circumcised because they took it as a requirement for salvation, while Timothy was circumcised strategically just to avoid problems with the Jewish community in that region.

There are many examples of this line of action in many other stories in the New Testament in matters of wives submitting to their husbands, of conduct within the churches, places of reunion, mutual servanthood, the caring of the poor, etc. Being all of these universal principles, the way they were supposed to be kept was different according to the circumstances in order to be able to reach the same goal.

This manual will present a specific course of action fit for the Western-European culture. The principles behind the action recommended will be often explained, so that the reader will be also able to adjust it to his or her own cultural context and circumstances, keeping in mind that those principles can come out only from the Bible.

TEST BEFORE BELIEVING

This ministry aims at helping disciple-makers and ministers of the gospel to better focus their efforts so that the fruit of their work can be good, remaining, and abundant, as the Lord Jesus intended it to be (Matthew 7:16-27; John 15:1-17).

The goal of the instructions and suggestions given here is to build up communities of disciples similar to what we see in the New Testament model: organic, in the power of the Spirit, self-multiplying, based on discipleship. Persecuted though unstoppable. Structured, but not hierarchical. Organized, but not an organization. Dependant on God, not on leaders or personas. Therefore, the basis upon which every idea, tip and method in this manual is presented will be the Word of God, revealed through the Bible.

That is the reason why I encourage you to **not believe** what is taught in here, but rather to **test it**. Not everything you will read here is an absolute truth, many things are revelations and ideas coming out of experience and revelation—always in full agreement with Scripture—to strengthen and equip the Body of Christ based on biblical principles. It is therefore of uttermost importance that you make sure that any action you will do to expand the Kingdom—either following this training or not—is spiritually, practically, and doctrinally correct, coming out of the Lord's heart and not from modern marketing concepts, and fitting with the work the Holy Spirit is already doing in a determined people group.

OBEDIENCE VS. KNOWLEDGE

It is really important to take into account what the Lord Jesus sent His disciples to do in Matthew 28: “teaching them [every person who believes in the good news and gets baptized] **to obey** everything I have commanded you.” The Lord sent His followers to make from all people groups His disciples by **baptizing and teaching them how to carry out all of His commandments**. That means that the twelve showed **how to put to practice** everything Jesus had commanded to the ones they led to the Lord, and encourage them to do the same. That is how the gospel expanded throughout the whole world, survived centuries of persecution, and has come to our lives in these days.

This makes clear that the good news is to be believed AND obeyed, and that we as followers of the Lord are supposed to do what He commands. So, after reading this manual, testing it with the Scripture, and finding out what your next step is in the work of the Kingdom, take action and do what you read.

This manual is not for attacking others or creating parties, but simply to build up His Kingdom through bearing good, lasting, and abundant fruit.