

## The church in the apostolic age is a pattern for us today

So many people these days have the idea that truth can be anything we want it to be that, when it comes to religion, many of these same individuals believe that the church can be anything we want it to be. Many of the fastest growing churches in the country are those that promise, with no apology at all, to be whatever their “customers” desire them to be.

The concept that we ought to follow the New Testament as God’s authority for what He wants the church to be has come to be looked upon as quaint and old-fashioned. It is often classified as the mentality of a bygone era when people were not as spiritually enlightened as we are today. Even among those who in the past have pled for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, there are now many who question whether there is any first-century pattern that we must go by today. Advocating a “new hermeneutic,” these re-interpreters of the Scriptures argue that New Testament “truth” is a mostly subjective concept and that we are free to mold the church into whatever we think meets the needs of contemporary culture.

But if the Bible teaches anything it teaches that God’s authority must be taken seriously. It is highly presumptuous for us to think we can determine what pleases God by the use of nothing but our own reason. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8,9).

In the Old Testament, when the tabernacle was being constructed Moses was warned by God, “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Exo. 25:40). The Hebrew writer says that these things were a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hb. 8:4-7). If it was necessary to adhere to God’s pattern for the “copy and shadow,” can we afford to be any less careful with the reality and substance that these shadows were pointing to? Paul warned, “Stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2:15). *The church in the apostolic age is a pattern for us today.* If we want to help our local congregation to be “of Christ,” we will have to follow His instructions.

### Monday: Hebrews 8:4-7

**Key Idea:** It is no less important now than it was in the Old Testament to follow God’s instructions.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What warning was Moses given about the items that were to be made for the tabernacle? If this warning applied to the “copy and shadow of the heavenly things,” what care should we exercise today in the things that these shadows were pointing to?

**Wisdom for the Day:** Proverbs 19:29.

## Tuesday: John 18:36

**Key Idea:** The church in the apostolic age was a spiritual relationship, not a temporal kingdom.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are some differences between a kingdom that is “of this world” and one that is “not of this world”? Of these two kinds of kingdoms, which is the nature of the kingdom Christ established? Consider [Col. 1:13](#).

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:1](#).

## Wednesday: Acts 11:19-26

**Key Idea:** The Lord’s church is a family relationship, not a corporate institution.

**Questions for Family Growth:** How would you describe the nature of what came into being in this passage? Were there any of the characteristics of what we would today call an “institution”? What do we learn in texts like [1 Pt. 2:9,10](#) about what the Lord’s church was meant to be?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:2](#).

## Thursday: Romans 16:16

**Key Idea:** The Lord’s church is not a denomination.

**Questions for Family Growth:** What are the defining characteristics of a religious “denomination”? How can there be “churches of Christ” and these congregations not be a denomination? If we use the phrase “churches of Christ” today, what should we mean by that expression?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:3](#).

## Friday: John 17:17-21

**Key Idea:** “Restoring” the church of the apostolic age means preaching the truth the apostles taught.

**Questions for Family Growth:** If the church in the New Testament was neither an institution nor a denomination, how can we today “restore” what existed then? On this question, what do we learn from [Jn. 17:17-21](#)? In [Eph. 4:1-16](#), what produces the unity of the Lord’s church?

**Wisdom for the Day:** [Proverbs 20:4](#).

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