

## **Gospel or Culture/Tradition**

Adapted

This is an attempt to assist in clarifying one's concept of restoring New Testament Christianity. As an active member of the Family of God, individuals are obligated to separate the gospel from its cultural/traditional barnacles. No one has the right to de-culturalize or impose ones traditions on another if he wishes to reach them for Christ. Therefore it is critical that we discover what is "gospel" and what is cultural so that we convey only that which is GOSPEL.

In the restoration of New Testament Christianity, we want to hold fast to the "essential" or the "universal" or the "gospel" and restore this, but also allow freedom in matters of culture/tradition or nonessentials.

### **SECTION ONE**

Listed are 55 practices and commands that appear in the New Testament. In a sense all are "scriptural." The question is: Which are meant to be Gospel (**G**)? Which are merely Cultural (**C**)? If you have any doubt on some or are not sure, take your time and shift them from category to category until you are sure or more or less satisfied. Only when you have completed the list go back and check your answer against scripture.

#### **DEFINITIONS.**

**Gospel** means: those elements (commands or precedents) that God wants all men in all ages and in every culture to practice. Whether it comes before or after conversion, if God wants this done we shall call it Gospel.

**Cultural** means: Those commands and practices used by men of God, but not commanded by God. That which is cultural may have some validity in one situation but not in others. It is not that God is opposed to these "cultural" matters, but they are optional depending upon circumstances.

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|---|---|-----|---|
| G | C | 1.  | Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom.16:16)                              |
| G | C | 2.  | Dare go to law before the unrighteous (1 Cor. 6:1)                          |
| G | C | 3.  | Do not eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29)              |
| G | C | 4.  | Be baptized (Acts 2:38)   |
| G | C | 5.  | Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)  |
| G | C | 6.  | Women ought to have a veil on her head (1 Cor.11:10)                        |
| G | C | 7.  | Right hand of Fellowship ( <i>or left hand</i> ) (Gal.2:9)                  |
| G | C | 8.  | Laying on of hands ( <i>for ordination</i> ) (Acts 13:3)                    |
| G | C | 9.  | It is indecent for a woman to speak in the assembly (1 Cor.14:35)           |
| G | C | 10. | Fixed hours of prayer { <i>third hour of prayer</i> } (Acts 3:1)            |
| G | C | 11. | Sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col.3:16)                           |
| G | C | 12. | Abstain from eating blood (Acts 15:29)                                      |
| G | C | 13. | Abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29)                                       |
| G | C | 14. | Observe festivals, new moons and Sabbaths (Col.2:1)                         |
| G | C | 15. | The Lords Supper (1 Cor.11)   |
| G | C | 16. | The first day of the week beginning on Saturday night (Acts 20:7)           |
| G | C | 17. | Anointing with oil (James 5:14)   |
| G | C | 18. | I permit no woman to teach men (1 Tim.2:12)                                 |
| G | C | 19. | Prohibit women from wearing braided hair, gold or pearls (1 Tim.2:9)        |
| G | C | 20. | Meet on the first day of the week (Acts20:7)                                |
| G | C | 21. | Preaching two by two (Mark 6:7)   |
| G | C | 22. | Abstain for drinking wine ( <i>possibly intoxicating wine</i> ) (1 Tim.3:8) |
| G | C | 23. | Eat what is set before you asking no questions (1 Cor.10:2)                 |
| G | C | 24. | Speak Greek in the assembly   |
| G | C | 25. | Do not keep a slave (Col.4:10)  |
| G | C | 26. | Are you free from a wife, do not seek marriage (1 Cor.7:27)                 |
| G | C | 27. | Be circumcised (Acts 15:5)  |
| G | C | 28. | Do not eat anything that creeps or any reptile (Acts 10:12)                 |
| G | C | 29. | Have self-employed staff (2 Thess.3:7, 8)                                   |
| G | C | 30. | Drink communion from a single cup (Mk.14:23)                                |
| G | C | 31. | Take formal religious vows ( <i>shaved head like Paul</i> ) (Acts18:18)     |
| G | C | 32. | Speak in tongues and prophesy (1 Cor. 14:5)                                 |
| G | C | 33. | Sing without musical instruments in the assembly (Col.3:16)                 |
| G | C | 34. | Take collections in the assembly (1 Cor.16:1)                               |
| G | C | 35. | Have missionary or benevolent societies (1 Cor.16:1-4)                      |
| G | C | 36. | Meet in homes for the assembly (Rom.16:23)                                  |
| G | C | 37. | Wives be subject to your husband's (Col.3:18)                               |
| G | C | 38. | Work with your hands (1 Thess. 4:11)  |

- G C 39. Eat no man’s bread without paying (2 Thess.3:8)
- G C 40. If a man will not work let him not eat (2 Thess. 3:10)
- G C 41. Lift your hands when praying (1 Tim.5:9)
- G C 42. Support no widow under 60 yrs. old (1Tim.5:9)
- G C 43. Urge younger widows to remarry (1 Tim.5:11-14)
- G C 44. Pray before meals (Luke 24:30)
- G C 45. Say “Amen” at the end of or during public prayers (1 Cor.14:18)
- G C 46. Fast for spiritual reasons (Matt.6:17)
- G C 47. Fast in connection with ordination (Acts 13:3)
- G C 48. Use unleavened bread for communion (Lk.22:13, 19)
- G C 49. Cast lots for church officers (Acts 1:26)
- G C 50. Sell property when one becomes a Christian (Acts 4:37)
- G C 51. Owe no man anything (Rom.13:8)
- G C 52. Have seven deacons in any church (Acts 6)
- G C 53. Don’t own dogs (Phil.3:2)
- G C 54. Meet as a church on Saturday (Acts 13:14, 42,44)
- G C 55. Give to those who beg from you (Mt.5:42)

## SECTION TWO

Upon what principle did you separate these?

Now is the hard part. BE HONEST. What is your real principle? It sometimes happens that one will verbalize a principle but actually be operating from another. It is not uncommon for one to have a “blind spot”, and thereby actually be following his/her own stated principle. One may be making selections on the basis of pure prejudice.

Your principle may read something like this: *All commandments and practices that \_\_\_\_\_ are gospel, and all commands and practices that do not \_\_\_\_\_ are cultural.* Use the bottom of this page to write your principle(s) of Biblical interpretation.

### **SECTION THREE**

Which of these in the gospel list is important enough that you would “cause a fuss” separate from a congregation or start a new congregation or find another “church home” if people will not come to your point of view?

Which would you consider to be an issue of fellowship?

On the other side of the coin, which of these in the “cultural” list would you tolerate for the sake of unity and fellowship even though you would prefer to do things another way?

### **SECTION FOUR**

To be sure, there is no universal agreement among Christians about either the principles or the specific applications. But here are some questions that may help a beginning to developing principles of permanence.

1. Does the context of the whole Bible support or qualify this command?
2. Does the command deal with a form or an underlying meaning?
3. Is the practice actually commanded or merely recorded as a description of what early Christians did?
4. Are the commands related specifically to Jewish life?
5. Are the commandments central to the core of the gospel?

This material has been adapted from multiple sources over a long period. It is only intended to be a tool to help individuals bring clarity to their own thinking and understanding of scripture. This is not a theological paper nor is it intended to establish doctrine.

Prayerfully Jeff