**WHY THIS AND NOT THAT?**

One of the things which distinguishes faithful churches of Christ from all other churches is their insistence on being Biblical. With us, “being Biblical” is no mere slogan – we actually mean it! We study the text of Scripture to determine its message. In those studies, we also learn the principles of “how” all instruction is given (e.g. statements, examples, and necessary implications). In other words, a serious attempt is made to both *know* and *do* the revealed will of God.

Those who are less serious about this endeavor often question our conclusions – which is actually a good thing! All humans are fallible (including members of the church of Christ), so it is incumbent upon each of us to “search the Scriptures daily, to find out whether those things are so” (Ac.17:11). And this brings me to my topic for this article: *“Why this and not that?”*

Many times, in discussions centering on whether or not the Bible authorizes a particular practice, we are asked questions like this: *“Why do you allow things like church buildings, pews, classrooms, microphones, and parking lots; but yet will not allow things like instrumental music in worship?”* That is a completely fair and understandable question! To answer, let me use a simple illustration from everyday life.

Remember when we were teenagers, and first got our driver’s licenses? Oh, how eager we were to drive everywhere! Our mother might approach us and say, “I want you to go to the grocery store and buy two pounds of hamburger, some hamburger buns, and a gallon of whole milk.” In carrying out that directive, we have some things that are optional, and some things that are not. Let’s break that down a little further.

In “going” to the store, I have several options. I can walk to the store, ride my bike – or I can jump in my car (yes!) and drive to the store. Mom did not tell me “how” to get there! Further the “grocery store” is also an optional thing. For instance, will I go to Kroger, Wal-Mart, or Meier? Mom did not tell me “which” grocery store, so that is optional. On the other hand, “two pounds of hamburger, some hamburger buns, and a gallon of whole milk” is a bit more restrictive! “Two pounds” does not mean one, three, or five; it means two. “Hamburger buns” does not mean hot dog buns, or a loaf of bread. And “a gallon of whole milk” does not mean a half-gallon, skim milk, nor Pepsi. Yes, it’s just that simple – and yes, you CAN understand this! Now let’s apply that to our question.

When God said for us to *“assemble”* (Hb.10:25), He did not specify where or how. We could assemble in someone’s home – OR, we could rent, buy, or build a building for this purpose. Such a gathering place might include places to sit (pews), places for special studies (classrooms), ways to better hear preaching (microphones), and even a place to park our cars (parking lot). Since God did not get specific about this matter, such things are open to judgment. On the other hand, the kind of music God wants in worship is a little more specific. *“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”* (Ep.5:19). Notice that the kind of songs are specified. “Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” does not mean patriotic, country, rap, or the blues. “Speaking... singing and making melody in your heart,” does not mean “playing a piano, guitar, or drum.” Yes, it’s just that simple – and yes, you CAN understand this! That is the answer to our question: “Why this and not that?”

Those who are serious about learning the will of God will “rightly divide” that word in order to determine exactly what God wants (2Tm.2:15). They will be sure to do ONLY that which is authorized (Col.3:17). They will NOT add to God’s word, nor take from it (Dt.4:2; Rv.22:17-18). And, as I said at the beginning of this article, it is this very effort to be Biblical that distinguishes us from every other religious body on the face of the earth; it is what makes a church that is truly “of Christ” (cf. Ep.5:23-24).

Questions such as the one addressed in this article are fair and legitimate. We hope we have clarified this matter for you. And we hope that you will join us in our quest for truth!

--Lanny Smith