

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Ephesians 4:2-3**

## Store In My Heart

### 2Corinthians 5:7

for we walk by faith, not by sight

For we walk by faith [we regulate our lives and conduct ourselves by our conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, with trust and holy fervor; thus we walk] not by sight or appearance. (The Amplified Version)

As evidenced in the Amplified Version's rendering of this passage, because we belong to God, our life is directed by our belief in God. We focus on Him and His Word. Our every action is controlled by this belief. It is not what we see around us that determines our way, only what God desires and what will bring us closer to Him.

Directing our walk by changes in the world will bring difficulty and confusion. Keeping our focus on God will help us navigate the difficulties and struggles in this life.



# Coercion and the Pattern

## Matthew W. Bassford

I might as well out myself. I believe that through study of the Bible, we can discern a pattern, a singular way that Christ wants His disciples and His churches to behave. The first Christians received this pattern. They followed it, though imperfectly, and it is the path that any who wish to follow Christ must take. I do not believe that any disciples or churches today follow this pattern perfectly either, but I am committed to the great project of its imitation regardless.

Adherence to the pattern has many advantages, some obvious, others less so. One of the latter is the protection of the Lord's people from human coercion. When all the authority rests with God, churches and church leaders cannot use their own authority to oppress the flock.

Let me illustrate how this works. Consider the command to sing. If we believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, the divine origin and authority of this command cannot be disputed. God's people must sing. If I don't like to sing, too bad. If you think that the church should not sing in its assemblies, tough cookies. God has spoken. If you don't want to submit to Him, His church is not for you.

By contrast, it is the practice of some to use musical instruments in their assemblies. God has not commanded this for His New Testament people. It is not part of the pattern, nor is it necessary to please Him.

If, then, a church decides to adopt the instrument, from where does the impulse come? Not from God. It comes from humans who have taken upon themselves the authority to direct the church. In this case, it is the command of humans that must be obeyed.

Let's say I am a member of this church. I am conscientiously opposed to the use of the instrument in worship. Is my conscience honored, my freedom to worship God according to His word? It is not.

Instead, the leaders of the church are bending me to their will. If all assemblies of my church now involve the instrument, I cannot assemble without participating in that which I find repugnant.

Having a separate instrument-only service does not solve the problem. As I contribute to the Lord's work at that church, I participate in all the works the church does. I cannot escape involvement.

Thus, even though I have done nothing wrong, I am faced with a stark choice. Either I trample my conscience and fall in line with my church leaders, or I must leave my church. I may have been a member for decades and have many dear friends here, but no matter. No matter either that I am a blameless Christian with the right to belong. I am compelled to go elsewhere because of a decision that leadership didn't have to make.

Though I couch this story in hypothetical terms, it is no mere hypothetical. I worship with people to whom it has happened. It is ugly, it is coercive, and it is the result of departing from the pattern. Following the pattern never oppresses the righteous. Only leaving it behind by speaking where God has not spoken does.

It is fashionable these days too sneer at "pattern theology", to scoff at the notion that there is one right way to worship and serve God. Some suggest that the church should adopt an ethic of inclusion instead and follow that wherever it leads. Ironically, following these new ideals often leads to excluding those who only want to worship according to the ancient order.

Many brethren find the study of Bible authority to be hopelessly abstract. In reality, it is anything but. It provides the foundation for congregational unity and ensures that all who wish to seek the Lord according to His word will be received and treated fairly. Inevitably, as respect for the Lord's authority recedes, those who wish to be lords in the church crowd in. They pursue their lofty plans and goals while dismissing the misery they inflict on brethren who disagree with them. Omelet, eggs, etc.

It has ever been thus, but let it not be so with us. Let us reject the notion that we are wise enough to direct our own steps and cling to God's pattern instead, not least because it will protect us from ourselves. When we seek for and follow His guidance alone, not one of His children will be made to stumble.

## Contact Us

We want opportunities to speak with others about the Lord.

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## For Our Information

Paula Laubach may have poison ivy around her eye.

Brenda Keisler's knee replacement surgery is scheduled for Tuesday.

Ruben Keisler has a procedure scheduled on his lower spine next week.

Vickie McNeas is still dealing with nausea following a procedure to help her stomach issues.

John Ragsdale did not need to get blood this past week. He does tire easily.

Bill Venable's brother, John, has had some raw blood in his mouth recently and may need to return to St Louis.

Dottie Henderson, Dan's Mom, has been in the hospital much of the past week. Breathing treatments have helped her shortness of breath. Bronchitis has been the diagnosis. Dan & JoBeth plan to go to AL to see her on Monday and return Tuesday.

The Simpson family is in Star City this weekend.

Sunday Evening study - **2Kings 22**. Wednesday Evening - **Hebrews 13:10**



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!