

Expedients

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Introduction: In 1 Corinthians 8, we read of a situation that often leads to confusion. Paul relates the ability of any Christian to eat meats offered to an idol but forbids eating the meat if another is offended. Not because it is wrong to eat meats offered to idols, but because it is not expedient to do so given the situation.

Our lesson will concentrate on this concept of expedients. We will look at scriptures that will help us to define this term and learn its meaning.

I. Definition.

A. According to Vines, expedient means “to be an advantage, profitable... (not merely convenient).” Notice how true this is in the following verses:

1. John 11:50; Jesus dying on the cross was not convenient, but it definitely was advantageous (expedient).

2. 2 Cor. 8:10; Paul gives his advice as advantageous (expedient). Though his advice might not have been convenient.

3. Matt. 19:10; The disciples conclude it is not good (expedient) to marry. Though many people marry for the convenience of the arrangement.

4. Matt. 5:29-30; It is expedient (profitable) that one member perishes than the whole body should perish. How convenient is it to carry out church discipline?

B. The NKJV also uses the word “helpful” to express this concept.

C. Therefore, an expedient is a spiritually advantageous (profitable, helpful) method for carrying out the Lord’s revealed will.

1. 1 Cor. 10:23; 1 Cor. 6:12; notice a lawful matter may not be expedient nor edifying. For example, drinking alcohol is lawful by our civil government but it is not profitable, helpful, advantageous or edifying to do so. We realize it is not expedient to lose our soul if we practice such things (1 Cor. 6:9-10)! The same could be said of fornication or any other matter that this world finds permissible.

2. Expedients is a broad topic. Even in the services of the Lord, many things may be lawful (permissible by our standards) but are not expedient. Issues such as song leaders, song books, bible classes, pitch pipes, water fountains, kitchens or even the church building. Are these things expedient?

II. What qualifies a practice as expedient? Anything that works, is easy or convenient?

A. It must meet the definition of expedient. It must be something spiritually advantageous, profitable, or helpful toward carrying out God's will.

B. It must be lawful. While recognizing not all lawful things are expedient.

1. For example, Mark 16:15 tells us it is lawful to teach all nations about Christ. But is it expedient if I trick someone into baptism (John 6:44-45)? In the Philippines, there are those who offer money or a sack of potatoes in exchange for "obedience" in baptism.

2. For example, it is lawful for us to have elders that oversee the work of the Lord (1 Pet. 5:2). But is it expedient for an elder to oversee the work in another location? You might have heard of the "One Nation Under God" campaign years ago sponsored by a church in Oklahoma. The elders of that church took upon themselves the work of many other congregations to administer this campaign.

C. It must edify. While recognizing that not all lawful things edify.

1. For example, if we held worship serves in an atmosphere of chaos as many Pentecostals. Does that edify (1 Cor. 14:40)?

2. For example, if we allow a Christian who sows discord to teach class or make decisions for the church. Would that edify (Prov. 6:16-19)?

D. It must not lead others to sin (1 Cor. 8). Paul points out there is nothing wrong with eating meats offered to an idol. However, it is not expedient if it causes another to fall (1 Cor. 8:13).

E. It might not be convenient. In fact, it might be quite inconvenient!

1. Many early century churches assembled at daybreak because many members were slaves.

2. Our evening assemblies could be said to be inconvenient since we come together again for the benefit of one member.

F. It must not violate the atmosphere of peace, joy and love in righteousness (Rom. 14:17-19; 1 Cor. 8:1).

III. Concerning present day expedients.

A. Song leaders, song books, pitch pipes (Eph. 5:19; Col 3:16). These things are used to provide an orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:40).

B. Church building (Heb. 10:25). Is the building itself expedient?

1. Kitchen would be expedient **IF** we had a command to eat at the building. However, the opposite is true (1 Cor. 11:20-22, 34).

2. Water fountains are as profitable to have in the building as a toilet or sink.

3. Overhead projection devices, bible classes and class materials help teach.

4. Moving the worship time is expedient if it allows more members to attend.

5. If we had a baptistery, it would be because we realize how helpful that would be to the conversion of a soul.

Conclusion: There are many expedient practices in the Lord's church. We assemble multiple times in a week because we recognize the advantage (expedient) in doing so. It is also expedient that we take this time to offer an invitation.