

## Preferences or Convictions?

This subject is one of most importance, especially since we live in an era of relative truth. This era has even seeped into the church, by way of the word *preference*. A correct definition of *preference* will sum up any confusion and justification of worldly things that are allowed by Christians.

A common statement I often hear is “that is just your preference!” The person who says this, usually their motive is really to express my opinion based on personal tastes and not Truth. Though this may be the case sometimes, often it is not. You see, in the classifications of deciding what is right and wrong, every Christian should seek the God’s Word, as the Bible exhorts us:

*Ezekiel 44:23 “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”* For example, when it comes to Rock Music, I cannot find anything clean about it, and the destructive behaviors that surround those that are in it.

*Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”*

*2 Corinthians 6:17 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,”*

These are just a few of the verses that command us to choose what is right and wrong.

Now at times, God spells right and wrong clearly, by direct commands. “Thou shalt not” kill, steal, bare false witness, etc., etc. Likewise, God says to love our neighbor, be a witness, and read the Word. This is what I call Doctrine, which does not just apply to God and how I view Him, but how His Truth applies to me.

Then there are convictions which burn the heart to make decisions of right and wrong, based on a myriad of Bible principles, taking the whole Scriptural teaching and formulating a stand. These are worth dying for. Examples of these are abortion, sexual purity before marriage, gay marriage, drug and alcohol use, entertainment, etc.

Then lastly there are preferences. Preferences are things you like and dislike based on your taste. For example, I don’t like liver, and you may not like beets. I like penny loafers, and you may like sneakers. These would be issues which God does not address by principle or command, but gives us liberty to decide if they are right for us. 1 *Corinthians 10:23 “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not”*. God has a will in it for my life, but it may not be for someone else.

The problem is however, people continue to put convictions into the preferences category to make things acceptable. It is nothing more than moral relativism. What may be truth for you may not be truth for me. With this premise, you could justify anything you wanted to by putting convictions into the preferences categories. A great example of this is music. Most sensible Bible Christians would agree rock and pop music has destroyed much in the lives of young people. Today however, people have brought this music into our youth groups and churches, putting a few Christian words to it, and some male pronouns, and then calling it sacred. If you were to confront them about it, and ask them how they justify it, they would say that the Bible never says anything about Rock and Roll. The Lord doesn't talk about crack cocaine either. They have just moved a conviction into a preference category. The way they do this, is they justify and take a blind eye to the truth when they look at the crowds it attracts. Let's use their reasoning to justify other faulty methods. Go to the ghetto, and start a church and we will serve crack during the service, or jack daniels. Do you think the crowds would come? They would be at every service religiously. There is really no difference in ideology. God speaks much of music in the Bible. For example:

*Psalms 40:3* "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." (Notice the word SEE) This is a new song that I sang before the Lord delivered me, not a revamp of Christian music.

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Pop music, rap and rock, when you dissect these words of the above Scriptures, and apply it to today's worldly music, you would be hard pressed to apply them to meet this criteria.

Likewise principles such as *Titus 2:12* "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and also *2 Timothy 4:3* "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears"; Rock music feeds the flesh. That is why it came to be effective in reaching fleshly people. The problem is, you cannot feed the flesh and expect it to be satisfied. It is like feeding piranha. The Christian needs to remove himself from the flesh and yield to the Spirit. Now let's flip the coin. Let someone prove to me why it is okay to use worldly means to reach people. Other than pragmatism, this is just one illustration.

In the CCM movement and Southern Gospel it is common to see men with earrings, and long hair. The Bible says it is a shame for a man to have long hair and earrings have almost always been a female jewellery. The Bible states in *Deuteronomy 22:5* "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abominations unto the LORD thy God." So cross dressing or a lady trying to be a man, and making no distinction, God calls this an abomination.

Preferences in churches would be such as, some prefer a preacher that preaches loud, and others may like a preacher that preaches soft. I like a big church verses a small church. But there are convictions when it comes to things such as, the preachers style is not as important as his substance. You may have a choice when it comes to his style, but you should attend a church where there is true substance. Substance is the doctrine he holds to and preaches from. A big church can be a choice, but if the church is not biblically based then I have no choice when it comes to how big it is. If there are Biblical principles to back it up, and by principle God makes a determination, then you cannot put it in the preference categories. It is a conviction! If you don't want to do something I would respect someone just telling me I am not going to do it, rather than taking a biblical conviction and making it a preference for the sake of their own flesh. Interestingly, we like to put these issues in either category. But I have found that usually there are convictions and God gives us liberty within those convictions. It comes down to balance.

Here is a small list of preferences verses convictions that I think are in the Bible:

Convictions	Preferences Part
Worship and Music	Hymns verses chorus, baring that they are not worldly
Bible translation	What type of Bible, Scofield, Thompson
Entertainment	Ipod, TV, Radio
Dress (modesty and distinction)	Color, style, uniqueness
Abortion	No preference
Alcohol (Not getting a buzz)	For medicinal use, cough medicine

Also note that preferences are all through the Bible and cause problems many times. That is what Romans 14 is all about. Please read the whole chapter to get the full context, but here is the idea:

*Romans 14:2-3 "For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him".*

This is dietary preference. Some had not received the New Testament teaching that the dietary restrictions had been lifted. Jesus spoke clearly to Peter about this. It would be like someone today being a vegetarian and trying to make it a religious conviction. They could justify it with the fact that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we would be healthier. But this is not a conviction, but a preference.

Then there is:

*Romans 14:5 "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."*

Again this is preference

*Romans 14:5-6 "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."*

This is speaking of holidays, which the Bible speaks clearly here that they are a preference. These issues of the Bible God does not instruct us about in the New Testament, because they are not major points that need to be directed, other than they need to be dedicated to the Lord. If you read the rest of the Chapter, you will find out He says not to judge because of preferences. But when you read the rest of the Bible, God instruct us to judge when it comes to the doctrine people hold, and convictions about the Bible. *Matthew 7:20 "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."*

So in summary, if it is a preference don't make it into a conviction in order to try and force someone to be like you. If it is a conviction, don't make it a preference to make Christianity fit you. When the Bible speaks on a subject, let's find what the Bible teaches and live by it.