

# Strange Fire: Who Do We Follow?

The purpose of this paper is to exhort you to study the Word on your own, and to act upon what you read as one who obeys God rather than the traditions of men.

When I conceived the idea for this paper, I thought that I was writing about the Church, and it was my desire to contrast what the Word says with the current practices of churches. By the time I neared the end of this article, however, I realized that we who claim to trust in and follow Christ tend to offer “strange fire” with many of our practices. We prefer the inventions of men to what God, in His Word, has instructed us to do. Even some who form house churches in protest of the “institutional church” have begun to promote their own traditions and practices. Some have promoted their own “experts” that they turn to when they want to know what God says, instead of going to the Word, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It has been said that one could prove anything from Scripture, if they are willing to take passages out of context and ignore other passages. This is why you will find the Scripture quotes here rather lengthy, as I try to include at least some of the context. Also, it is not my intention to interpret the Word for you; the Bible speaks for itself quite well, if we let it. I have listened to too many sermons over the years where a preacher spoke on one verse, like John 11:35, for over an hour, quoting Church Fathers, theologians and authors, providing anecdotes and six-point-acrostic application, when all the verse says is, “Jesus wept.”

What I’ll try to do is this:

1. Tell you about some things that have troubled me, increasingly, over the years.
2. Show you the Scripture passages that started me thinking.
3. Encourage you to look into these things yourself.

Of course, I know what convictions I have, and maybe I can’t keep my bias out of my words, but what I believe doesn’t really matter. If I ever heard that someone did something they thought was Biblical because, “Kevin says we should...” I’d want to pull my hair out! Here is a stock phrase we often used during a home Bible study whenever someone volunteered their personal opinion about what we were studying: “It’s nice to have an opinion, but what does the Word say?” It might be good phrases to keep in mind whenever you read or listen to anyone you think of as an “expert” in the Word. Why take this precaution?

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. - 2 Peter 2:1-3 NIV

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents,

ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. - 2 Tim 3:1-5 NIV

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. - 1 Tim 4:1-3 NIV

When The Lord wants men to do things in a specific way, He says so. Whether it entails building elaborate structures, manufacturing implements, wearing special clothing for worship, or performing rituals, God tells men exactly what he wants. Look at some examples taken just from Exodus:

"Have them make a chest of acacia wood--two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. - Ex 25:10-16 NIV

"Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked into them by a skilled craftsman. All the curtains are to be the same size--twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide. Join five of the curtains together, and do the same with the other five. Make loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and do the same with the end curtain in the other set. Make fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the other set, with the loops opposite each other. Then make fifty gold clasps and use them to fasten the curtains together so that the tabernacle is a unit. - Ex 26:1-6 NIV

"Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece, and overlay the altar with bronze. Make all its utensils of bronze--its pots to remove the ashes, and its shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. Make a grating for it, a bronze network, and make a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the network. Put it under the ledge of the altar so that it is halfway up the altar. Make poles of acacia wood for the altar and overlay them with bronze. The poles are to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried. Make the altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain. - Ex 27:1-8 NIV

"This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect. And from fine wheat flour, without yeast, make bread, and cakes mixed with oil, and wafers spread with oil. Put them in a basket and present them in it--along with the bull and the two rams. Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred diadem to the turban. Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. 8 Bring his sons and dress them in tunics and put headbands on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. In this way you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. - Ex 29:1-9 NIV

Read Exodus, chapters twenty five through thirty-one, and you will see the Lord God giving minutely detailed descriptions of what he wants done. He gives details concerning the construction of the tabernacle and everything in it, of the priest's consecration, his clothing and more. God details the altars and the ceremonies to be performed there, never leaving a single detail for the conscientious priest to get creative with on his own. In fact, try reading all of Exodus and Leviticus when you have a chance, and answer this question, if you would: Does the Lord leave it up to man to decide how He is to be worshiped? What I mean is, if the Lord wants us to do something in a specific way, the One who is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8) has shown us through His instructions to Israel that He will tell us *exactly* what He wants.

**Furthermore, Scripture makes it clear that God is less than pleased when we decide to worship Him in our own way, creating ceremonies and rituals that He did not specifically command:**

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. - Lev 10:1-2 NIV

Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it. - Ex 30:9-10 NIV

Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. - Deut 4:2 NIV

See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it. - Deut 12:32 NIV

Now, look at the way they said it in 1611:

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered **strange fire** before the LORD, which he commanded them not. - Lev 10:1 KJV

And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered **strange fire** before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father. - Num 3:4 KJV

And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered **strange fire** before the LORD. - Num 26:61 KJV

Need we mention Exodus 32 and the whole golden calf incident? Man, from the beginning, has sought to put his own imprint on God's command, and to approach God in his own way, and we're just talking about the worship of the one true God, and not the false gods invented by men. Look at Genesis 4, long before the Law of Moses. Cain invented his own way to make an offering, and rather than acknowledge that he was wrong for doing his own thing, and that Abel's offering was what God desired, he killed his brother in a jealous rage! I have personally seen so-called clergymen become almost that angry when their "offerings" were questioned.

When men have added to God's commands, and tradition has built up and confirmed these human constructs until they are obeyed as closely as God's own decree, the Lord has condemned the tradition as hypocrisy:

"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. - Matt 6:5 NASU

But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

"These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men." - Matt 15:5-9 NIV

So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

"These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." - Mark 7:5-13 NIV

My point is this: if God wants us to do something in a particular way, He will spell it out in great detail. If we decide that the way God has designed for us to honor Him doesn't "do it" for us, and we create our own rituals and requirements, which He did not command, where is the profit in that? The above verses should tell us that we might be *displeasing* to God: the very opposite of our intentions!

Now, consider a further question. We know how detailed God's commands were to national Israel, that there was a great deal of formal worship, ritual and ceremony involved, and that the Jews added their own traditions, often ignoring God's commands as a result. That was Israel, but what about the Church? What did God command that the Church do? Did He give detailed instructions such as, "Buildeth thineselves constructs of wood and stone and consecrate them unto Me. Maketh thee an Pulpit of acacia wood which standeth three cubits tall, one cubit wide and one cubit deep. Fashion thee pews facing

thine great Pulpit..." etc.? Did He tell us to create gigantic institutions such as Bible schools and colleges, seminaries, missions organizations, or so-called para-church ministries that do counseling, run TV networks, or indoctrinate pastors in everything from the latest church growth schemes to Reformation theology? Do all of these developments and "improvements" in and advances from what has come to be known as "primitive Christianity," fall under a Christian's liberty in Christ, or are they the Christian equivalent of the Jewish traditions, for which they set aside the command of God?

The most eminent Biblical scholars, along with the most well-respected Christian leaders of today, the Reformers and "Divines" and most "Church Fathers" of the past would, to a man, defend the "advances" in the Church. Most secular authorities would agree with them. Some of the Reformers, Divines, and Church Fathers would call anyone who spoke out against these hallowed institutions a heretic, and many would have thought him worthy of death. Does that make them right? They are trusted authorities, but are their opinions sacrosanct?

As far as I know, only the Word of God is God-breathed (*2 Tim 3:16 pasa =grafhlqeopneusto* - literally: All (every) Scripture (writing) God-breathed)

Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.  
- 2 Tim 3:16-17 NIV

Men say whatever they feel and think. They have their own biases, so that their proclamations are products of their own thoughts and ideas, and are fallible because of this (for we all share a fallen nature and our hearts wicked and incomprehensible by men – Jer. 17:9). Only the authors of Scripture wrote not by their own inclination but by the moving of the Spirit. Only the authors of Scripture - not the people they encountered or even those that the authors personally taught – were inspired.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. - 2 Peter 1:20-21 NIV

The phrase "own interpretation" might be better rendered "private disclosure" (Robertson – New Testament Word Pictures). It is clear that only the writers of Scripture were inspired in such a way that their natural human proclivities did not have any bearing on their writing. In general, humans enjoy a good ritual, with lots of color and formal pageantry, and hopefully a moving score. We love to organize everything around us, so we know what to expect. If no structure exists, no hierarchy, we'll design one, just so we can be sure of our place in it. Some of us like to lead. Some of us like to follow, and some of us don't care, as long as we get to play shortstop. For every person who is passionate about finding things out for themselves, you'll find a hundred (or a thousand) who want to be told what to do, what to think, and what to believe. God gave us His

Word, which is profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and for training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16.) He gave it so that the man of God can be complete (perfect) and perfectly furnished (complete, finished) for every good work. For my part, I will place my trust in Scripture rather than any man.

So, what does Scripture say about the Church? What is the Church supposed to do? Who is to lead? How are they to lead? How often is the Church to gather, and where? What is the organization or order of the Church's meetings, and what is the primary purpose for these meetings? Finally, when we compare what the Bible says to what we do, is it harmony with God's command that we find, or have we, like Israel before us, set aside the command of God for traditions of men?

Lest I be judged guilty of promoting my own ideas, let us look at what Scriptures says, first regarding direct commands to the Church concerning the activities of the Church:

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions. - 1 Cor 11:17-34 NIV

This is a long passage, but I would like to point out a few things. The occasion of this passage is the coming together as a church to eat the Lord's Supper. Problems arise because of the selfish gluttony of some. Many scholars point to this passage, telling us that Paul intends for the Church to discontinue eating a full meal together because of the problems it caused here, but is that what he says? The passage never says that coming together to eat a meal and celebrate

the Lord's Supper is wrong! Coming together selfishly is the problem. Paul finishes his argument by saying, "**when** you come together to eat." Would he say "when" if he didn't want them to eat? In fact, Acts 2:46 would seem to indicate that taking meals together was the common practice of the saints:

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, - Acts 2:46 NASU

While talking about the Lord's Supper, Paul is careful, as he relates what he received from Christ and passed on to the Corinthians, to include the circumstances of the supper's origin. Jesus broke the bread, they ate a meal, and then Jesus took the cup. What is so difficult about this? Paul tells them that it is shameful for some to get an early start and deprive others, when what they **should** have been doing was waiting for all to arrive, breaking the bread, eating, and then sharing the cup. He then indicates that the selfishness and division they have displayed is unworthy of those who would truly be gathered in remembrance of the Lord's sacrifice!

Search the whole bible, please, and find for me where we are told to bake special tiny wafers or break up crackers into little bits. Where are we told, in Scripture, that we are to pass out bunches of little plastic cups? In fact, the Bible makes it clear that we share in ONE CUP and ONE BREAD (or loaf!):

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. - 1 Cor 10:16-17 NASU

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. - 1 Cor 10:21 NASU

In these passages, as well as the gospel accounts and Paul's recounting of the supper, there is one loaf and one cup. Of course, this would not be at all practical in a large church or a cathedral, but then again, where are we told to organize and build either institution? Be patient; there is just a bit more on the Lord's Supper. Here are the events before our Lord's betrayal:

And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. - Luke 22:15-20 NASU

Would you please note that when He says, "this is my body" the disciples can plainly see his actual body. They were looking right at Jesus, so any thought

that the bread he broke had been magically changed into the Lord's physical body would have been ridiculous. When Jesus turned the water into wine at Cana (John 2:5-10), there was an obvious physical change (a change in appearance, taste and, presumably, odor.) If the bread had, right then and there, become Jesus' body, or Jesus' body had somehow become present with the bread that was being passed around, then He would not have had to go to the cross because his own hands had already broken his "body" and the disciples were eating his human flesh. The same goes for the cup of the new covenant. If, when Jesus Himself spoke the words they were not meant literally (the wine actually became blood – a thing He could easily have done), then it is ridiculous to imagine that any transformation would occur today, or that the meal is meant for anything more than what Jesus said it was: "in remembrance of Me."

The importance of this point is not merely as a refutation of the Transubstantiation of Roman Catholics or the Consubstantiation of the Lutherans. There are many in evangelicalism today who insist that there is a kind of power in the "sacraments" of the Church, which power is made effective when "duly ordained" ministers preside over them. They further believe that "the very words" determine the efficacy of the rites as a means of grace (See "[What About Bob? The Meaning of Ministry in the Reformed Tradition](#)"<sup>1</sup> by Michael Horton. Click on the link or type the URL in the footnote.) Show this to me in Scripture, please! Show me any of this! I have asked several "duly ordained" ministers, and none has shown me anything that hasn't entailed a long explanation of how, although it says **that** it really means **this**. There are no clear statements that a person without the benefit (or brainwashing?) of a theological degree would understand. These are some of the same men who will occasionally remind you that the New Testament was written in Koine Greek ("the Greek of the common man, not the Classical Greek of scholars,) and that God deliberately did this so that the common people could understand it! Yet, they read their convictions into some passages here and there, tell you that this or that authority and all their professors believe as they do, but can offer not one passage that backs them up in a clear manner.

Look at another extended quotation of a passage from Scripture:

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two-or at the most three-should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.modernreformation.org/mr97/marapr/mr9702whataboutbob.html>

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. - 1 Cor 14:22-40 NIV

This passage includes specific instructions for what the Church is supposed to do when gathered together. Tell me, if you have had experience going to a church building, one with a pulpit, pews, an organ, etc., have you EVER been to a regular “service” where “everyone” had a hymn, instruction, revelation, tongue or interpretation? Ever? Unless your group is related to the Brethren, you are not likely to be able to answer that positively (the Brethren are not free of traditions, either, by the way.) Here is what I have seen:

9: 30-10:30	Sunday School
10:40-12:00	Worship Service
	Call to Worship
	Announcements
	Choruses – Worship Team
	Scripture Reading
	Hymn - #148
	Missions Report
	Special Music
	Hymn - #45
	The Lord's Table
	Hymn - #220
	Pastoral Prayer
	Sermon – Satan Uses Visa – Pastor Pasteur
	Hymn - #35
	Benediction

Please note that this would be a very busy Sunday! In fact, in the last “church” I attended, the Lord’s Supper was reserved for the first Sunday of every month only! The order of service stays basically the same, pretty much forever. Why? Because “everything should be done in an orderly manner.” Funny, when I look at the verse, it doesn’t say “rigidly ordered manner” or “inflexible manner”, but just orderly, and the intent is clear in the context: that people be polite and not try to talk over each other, but take turns. I may be stupid, but that’s all I see! In fact, what Paul is describing doesn’t look anything like the pew-pulpit, actor-

audience thing that goes on in thousands and thousands of church buildings every Sunday!

So why do we do what we do? That is an excellent question, and I would like you to ask your designated clergy person that question today and every day until you receive an unambiguous answer from Scripture alone! We are to follow Christ through the teachings of the Apostles, which are contained in Scriptures. The Bible says nothing about heeding Clement or Ignatious or Polycarp or Origen, not to mention the Council of Nicea, Augustine or Francis of Assisi! Neither does the Bible tell us to memorize Creeds or Catechisms, the ramblings of scholars, the indoctrination of schools, or the proclamations of any synods, councils or boards. These things – all of them - have been added, layer upon layer, to the plain and simple teaching of the Word. The institutional “Christian Church” we have today is not much different from the Judaism of the first century. Instead of studying the Word, we buy books and commentaries so someone else can tell us what the Word says.

The Bible says:

But He answered and said, "It is written, "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD." - Matt 4:4 NASU

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. - Matt 5:18 NASU

If every word, every “jot and tittle” (don’t you just love that 1611 English?) is inspired and exactly what God wants us to know, why would anyone want someone else to condense and paraphrase the Word and feed it to them piecemeal? Some say they cannot understand it, and I have had a designated ministerial professional tell me this: “There is no way that you could compare what you know about God’s Word to the knowledge and wisdom of a professor who has spent thirty years devoting himself to the Word and to nothing else!” My response had something to do with asking if he meant Catholic theology professors, Baptist theology professors or Mormon professors (I hope you see my point.) I must apologize for being blunt, but the Bible doesn’t say that we should multiply teachers to ourselves, and that’s how we will get understanding (see 2 Tim. 4:3), rather we are told in unambiguous terms Who will lead us to understanding:

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. - John 16:13 NASU

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. - John 14:26 NASU

Ask your duly ordained clergy person about that, too (Isn’t the Holy Spirit supposed to teach us ALL things and help us remember ALL things?). I’ve heard

several answers the these kinds of questions, and each has told me a little something about who the clergy person is really following.

So what is the result of all this? Are the things we do the things we should be doing? Are we not doing things that we should be doing? Should **you** listen to **me** alone and follow what I tell you? The only question I will answer is the last one (and I won't even fool around and give you the obvious joke!) The answer is an emphatic **NO! Please don't ever take my word for anything!!** What you **should** do is study the Word for yourself! Many congregations say that the Word of God is the sole source of doctrine and practice. Even so, there still seems to be little relationship between what they do and what the Word tells them to do. Point this out and that's when you'll start hearing about Church Fathers, scholars, etc. It makes you wonder how the **"sole source"** could be supplemented so and still be the "sole source." If you would follow "sola scriptura" in fact, rather than in word alone, you must see the big hole in the claims of may a doctrinal statement! Do not be like that! If you have a question, take that question to the Word! Be like those in Berea:

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. - Acts 17:11 KJV

One final question, I promise. Let's say that you have studied, and you know what the Bible says concerning the practice of the Church. When you compare the practices of your current assembly with the Word, you cannot reconcile the two. You ask your leaders about the discrepancies and after repeated probing you find that the reasons for the congregation's practices lie in the traditions of men, rather than God's Word. You are given many assurances, but when you insist upon Scriptural support you are given some verses that you check for yourself later and find that they either do not support the church's practice when taken in context or do not relate in any way to the subject. You may even find that your zeal for the Word has made you unpopular with the leadership, brought rebuke, or caused them to patronize you, but you still do not receive answers that are in any way satisfactory. You are not, especially since you became a "trouble maker", in a position to change things in your assembly. OK, that was all lead in. Here's the question: do you stay or go?

Think about it.