EXPEDIENCY

A. Definition:
   a. In English, the word “expedient” means that which is “useful for effecting a desired result; suited to the circumstances or the occasion; advantageous; convenient; means of attaining an end.”
   b. There is also a negative sense in which the word is used (such as getting gain for oneself regardless of what is right or just), but the basic meaning of the term is that which gives advantage.
   c. The English word “expedient” is found seven times in the King James Version (Jn. 11:50; 16:7; 18:14; 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23; 2 Cor. 8:10; 12:1). The Greek word sumphero (συμφέρω), from which “expedient” is translated, occurs in nine other places. It is translated “profit” (1 Cor. 7:35; 10:33; 12:7; Heb. 12:10), “profitable” (Mt. 5:29-30; Acts 20:20), “better” (Mt. 18:6), “is [not] good” (Mt. 19:10), and “brought...together” (Acts 19:19).

B. Biblical passages that relate to expediency:
   a. "All things are lawful for me but all things are not expedient (helpful): all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12). Again "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient (helpful): all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" (1 Cor. 10:23)." Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give judgment, as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy" (1 Cor. 7:25)." But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment: and I think I also have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 7:40).

C. Two truths about “expediency” must be realized.
   a. First, no unlawful action can be done expediently. That is, there is no circumstance that God allows one to advantageously do something unlawful (cf. Rom. 3:8).
   b. Second, merely because an action is lawful does not mean that it is always expedient. All lawful actions do not necessarily edify (1 Cor. 10:23 cf. 1 Cor. 8:1-13; tongues of 1 Cor. 14).
   c. Furthermore, the unlawful pursuit of a lawful thing constitutes bondage, and that results in sin (1 Cor. 6:12 cf. Rom. 6:16).

D. In most authorized actions there are areas of expediency. For example, the Bible authorizes Christians to partake of the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week, and that unleavened bread and “fruit of the vine” are to be used (Mt. 26:26-28; Acts 20:7). However, the Bible gives no exclusive pattern as to what time on the first day of the week the Lord’s Supper must be served. Thus, the time of day on the first day of the week is a matter of expediency.

E. Actions may be authorized but not expedient
   a. Paul’s advice to those contemplating marriage.
   b. The Lord recognized expedient judgment with the man demanding that his brother divide his inheritance with him, the Lord did not legislate in such matters but left it to the brother (Luke 12:13-15).
   c. Ananias and Sapphira were not required to give ALL their possessions, not even a specific amount. It was theirs before they sold it and it was theirs after they sold it. It was their judgment, expedient action, but they could not lie about it (Acts 5:1-11).
   d. For any action to be expedient it must be shown to be authorized, lawful.
   e. An expedient action is subordinate to the action it is expediting.

F. An authorized action may be performed in different ways and or times, BUT the action itself must not be changed.
   a. The Lord's supper may be taken at different times of the Lord's day, but the taking of the supper is not authorized to be taken on any other day.
b. Baptizing a person may be done at different locations, but the act of immersion in water the remission of sin to a penitent believer cannot be changed.

G. The principle of expediency applies as follows. All actions must have Bible authority (Col. 3:17 cf. 2 Jn. 9-11). The Bible authorizes by its explicit statements, revealed examples, and implication. These avenues of authority must be ascertained by “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Charting authorized action and expediency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ACT</th>
<th>AUTHORITY</th>
<th>OBLIGATORY</th>
<th>EXPEDIENCY (OPINION)</th>
<th>NO AUTHORITY</th>
<th>BINDING OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAPTISM</td>
<td>Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 6:4-6; Acts 2:38</td>
<td>Belief, Repentance, Burial in water for remission of sins</td>
<td>Baptistery, Water temperature, Running water, Statement made at time of baptism</td>
<td>Infants, Sprinkling, Pouring, Omitting baptism</td>
<td>No baptistery, Running water only, No heated water, Specific statement must be made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHING</td>
<td>Matt. 28:18,19; 2 Tim. 2:2; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 4:15; 2 John 9-11</td>
<td>Apostles doctrine, The Bible, Teach the truth in love</td>
<td>Teaching aids, Paid preachers/teachers, Classes</td>
<td>Creeds of men, Less than and/or more than the Bible</td>
<td>No aids, No paid preachers/teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGING IN WORSHIP</td>
<td>Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16</td>
<td>Each one sings, Is a specific act, Teaching, Kinds of songs, to God, to the Lord</td>
<td>Training class, Song leader, Song books</td>
<td>Mechanical Instruments, Choir, Solo, Quartets</td>
<td>No song leader, No song books, A particular song book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LORD’S SUPPER</td>
<td>1 Cor. 4:17; 11:23ff; Matt. 26:26ff; Acts 20:7</td>
<td>Manner, Elements, Day, In memory of the Lord, Proclamation, Communion</td>
<td>Containers, Place, Time, Serving the congregation</td>
<td>Substituting for the elements, Changing day, Private observance</td>
<td>Only one cup, Only fermented juice, Only taken in morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENEVOLENT WORK</td>
<td>2 Cor 8:9; Matt. 5:43-48; 23:31ff.; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 5:16 Jas. 1:27</td>
<td>Do good to all Specific: Widows, Orphans, Elderly, Our own, Neighbors</td>
<td>Specific need, Individual, Congregation, Homes</td>
<td>Benevolent societies, Raising funds through sales and concerts</td>
<td>Individual action only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION

1. It is important that any act under consideration be carefully considered in the light of the total teaching of the Bible in order to avoid acting without authority or binding human opinion as though it were bound by God. With any and all acts there must be Biblical authority (Col. 3:17; 2 John 9-11; 1 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 22:18-19).

2. In every authorized action there are matters of obligation, matters which may not be changed or omitted. Among the passages which need to be considered relative to acting without authority are 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19; Matthew 15:9; John 4:19-24.
3. In every authorized action there are areas of expediency (matters of human judgment). An expedient is that which gives advantage to carrying out an authorized action. Among the passages which need to be considered relative to binding human opinion are 1 Timothy 4:1-5; Matthew 15:3-6; Acts 15; Galatians 2. With regard to the local congregation, an eldership has authority in matters of expediency (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7, 17) provided it does not go against scripture.