

END-TIMES ISSUES



#51 Commandment #1 – Honoring God in all things: Examples (1).

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ONE OF THE WAYS WE FULFIL THIS COMMAND IS BY HONORING GOD IN ALL THAT WE DO.

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."
Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

And **whatever you do**, in word or deed, **do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
Colossians 3:17 (BSB)

So whether you eat or drink, or **whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.**
1 Corinthians 10:31 (NET)

Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people ...
Colossians 3:23 (CSB)

... **in all your ways acknowledge Him**, ...
Proverbs 3:6a (BSB)

HOW? Let's look at some EXAMPLES!

BUT FIRST, A REMINDER: THE NEED TO PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME!

⇒ If we aren't willing to find out what Scripture says, we will be **less prepared** for the decisions we need to make.

- ✦ We might even be *blind* to our lack of preparedness; because *only Scripture* can open our eyes to a true understanding of reality.

⇒ This is a lifelong journey of **growing in the knowledge of the way of Christ**.

- ✦ We *will* make mistakes along the way; but we can trust God to use even our mistakes to *ultimately* cause good in our lives. (We won't always see good immediately.)
- ✦ Mistakes? YES – just like in any other area of life. Any learning, skill or ability requires *growing* – and mistakes always occur during the growing process.

⇒ What if I make a mistake?

- ✦ People who *don't* let Scripture influence their choices *also* make mistakes! *More* of them!
- ✦ **The unsaved person** may, at times, make *good* choices; and we should encourage it. But in eternity, those choices will be of no benefit.
- ✦ **The saved person** may, at times, make *bad* choices – ones that bring regret. But increased understanding of Scripture will reduce such occurrences. And in eternity (and sometimes before that), God will use even those *bad* choices to accomplish *good* in their lives – Romans 8:28+.
- ✦ Since we live in a world influenced by sin, *good* choices won't always be well-received by others. But it is better to suffer for doing *good*, than for doing *evil* – 1 Peter 2:20; 3:17; 4:19.

⇒ Considerations, when studying Scripture: Things that will help us when we need to make decisions. (A reminder of things mentioned at previous times.)

- ✦ **The Ten Commandments** represent ten *categories* of commands – various actions, attitudes and motives; "negative" commands also imply "positive" conduct; etc.
- ✦ **Order of priority** ("hierarchy") in moral issues – Love for God first, then love for neighbor, then other legitimate conduct; sin never allowed.
- ✦ **Principles** for making decisions: Some may be directly stated. Others can be observed, as we compare the various teachings of Scripture. (This is helpful when Scripture makes no *direct* statement about something.)
- ✦ **Opposites** – whether contradictory (= *cannot* have both) or complementary (= both go together, sometimes as boundaries to keep us out of sin). Pay attention to them!

(Considerations... continued)

- ✦ **The concept of "freedom"** – as well as the necessary restraints that prevent it from turning into sin (Galatians 5:13). Freedom does not give us permission to ignore obligations to love God and neighbor first; but it gives us many ways to do what is *right*.
- ✦ **"Parallel" concepts**, such as sovereignty and responsibility. These go together, but must be kept "side-by-side," not attempting to merge them together.
- ✦ **"Good-or-evil" concepts** – can be morally good *or* evil; but the context determines which they are. (Example: Boasting about self or sin = normally evil; boasting about God = good.)
- ✦ **Half-truths** – must be avoided. This includes *any* situation that is related to more than one principle, concept or issue. When one of the factors is being downplayed or ignored, in the long-run, it will *always* result in error and sin.

⇒ When evaluating something, *several* issues will often need to be considered, before reaching a final conclusion.

👉 **Example:** *If* we know that, ① laziness is a sin, and ② we are sinning if we encourage others to sin (or to continue to sin) ... then we may be more inclined to *not* do things that encourage a person to keep committing the sin of laziness. (Example, Paul says to *not* give food to a lazy person – 2 Thessalonians 3:10.)

👉 **Example:** *If* we are dealing with something that Scripture says is a matter of freedom, there may be other issues to consider. There could be many legitimate reasons to *not* exercise our freedom.

- What effect will it have on *others*? Will it be detrimental to them?
- What effect will it have on *us*? Is there any value in it? Will it become a controlling habit? Even matters such as life circumstances or medical issues might limit which choices are *wise* choices.

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⇒ **WARNING:** People will not always reach the same conclusions. This may be for a variety of reasons.

👉 People may make a **wrong conclusion**. This could be due to willful sin or to not paying attention to all the issues. It might also be a matter of needing more spiritual growth (something that we all need, *throughout our lives*).

👉 People may make a **right conclusion**. A person may examine all the relevant issues mentioned in Scripture, as well as all the circumstances related to his own life situation, and (eager to do God's will) make the best possible choice.

👉 It may be a **right conclusion for one person, and a wrong one for another**. We each have different abilities, interests, goals, values, commitments, responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses. When there are a number of legitimate options, these matters may result in different people making different choices. We need to be careful about condemning those who choose differently, because of their different situations!

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NOW FOR SOME EXAMPLES!

Note: These are generalized examples. If you find yourself in a similar situation, there may be other factors for you to take into account.

These examples do not necessarily *tell* you what to do.

Their purpose is to get you to *think* – to illustrate how you can think through your own life situations.

⇒ "I made a rash promise. I now regret it, and want to break it."

Things to consider:

- There are two issues in this matter: ① Making the promise, and ② keeping the promise.

👉 From the Ten Commandments:

- "Do not bear false witness" represents the *category* of obligations regarding truthfulness and lying.
- How might the various principles implied by this commandment apply to this situation?

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👉 Love for God and neighbor:

- Remember the "hierarchy" – the order of importance. Normally, there will be no conflict between these two expressions of love. But if you made a promise that involves *sin*, you *must* obey God, and refuse to sin.

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands.

1 John 5:3a (NIV)

(We "keep" God's commands, when we hold on to them, pay attention to them, *obey* them.)

- In this situation, there may be consequences you have to bear. But it's better than the *eternal* consequences of denying Christ.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10:28 (BSB)

THIS IS THE "WORST CASE SCENARIO"!

- If these two obligations of love are *not* in conflict, what should you do? What if you *don't* do it?

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👉 Romans 8:28:

- Whatever the outcome, we can be encouraged by the fact that God will use it to bring ultimate good to our lives. (This applies *only* to people who love God, and are willing to follow him.)

And we know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (BSB)

- God does not guarantee that the *immediate* results will be pleasant – they might or might not. But the *final outcome* is guaranteed to be good – when we are *glorified* in his presence.

For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30 (BSB)

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(Romans 8:28 ... continued)

- One of the ways this good can be accomplished in our lives *now* is for us to use this rash promise as a "learning experience." It may be too late for *this* situation, but we can be more careful in the future.
- Caution: If your goal is to "break your promise and get away with it" ... and excuse your action by quoting Romans 8:28, you need to consider whether or not you *really* love God.

👉 Principles, commands, etc.:

- There are *many* verses that focus on making promises and keeping them. From these, we can learn *principles* that we can apply to our situation. These various principles will also be a reflection of the commandment about not bearing "false witness" – which, in Leviticus 19:11 is expressed as:

Do not lie.

Leviticus 19:11b (NIV)

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(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- A warning about making promises to God. As a principle, this could also apply to making promises to *people*.

Don't make rash promises, ...

When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it. Don't let your mouth make you sin.

Ecclesiastes 5:2a, 4-6a (NLT)

(The extended passage focuses on the attitude we should have toward God – Ecclesiastes 5:1-7.)

- The attitude of a person who wants to dwell in God's presence.

[They] keep their promises even when it hurts.

Psalms 15:4b (NLT)

(Under the New Covenant, the attitudes described in Psalm 15 become the desires of the saved person's heart.)

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(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- Consider the person who *isn't* characterized by truthfulness:

"... all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Revelation 21:8b (NLT)

- You can try to get out of your commitment. Success is not guaranteed, but it might be worth a try:

... if you have been trapped by the words of your lips, ensnared by the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, to free yourself, for you have fallen into your neighbor's hands:

Go, humble yourself, and press your plea with your neighbor.

Proverbs 6:2-3 (BSB)

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(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- Consider also the many examples of God's faithfulness to his promises, and how *his* example should influence our attitude toward *our* promises.
- As you learn more about God's Word and how it applies to life, you will grow in understanding how to deal with such matters – and how to prevent them.

- Scripture has something to say about *everything* in life – either *directly*, or *indirectly*. For many things, *if* you have let Scripture renew your thinking (Romans 12:2), right responses will become "automatic."
- An example of Scripture speaking *indirectly* on a matter: Computers. Though "computers" are not mentioned in Scripture, it says much about values, purpose in life, moral obligations, etc., which will impact how we use (or don't use) them.

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⇒ "My employer prohibits me from having Christian symbols in my work place. [Example: a nativity set.] How should I respond?"

Things to consider:

- There are two issues in this matter: ① Basic conduct in the workplace, and ② the display of religious symbols. The *first* is the more important issue.

From the Ten Commandments:

- "Honor your father and your mother" represents the *category* of obligations regarding one's response to authority.
- Scripture is filled with commands, principles, examples, etc., showing how this should be done.
- Even the teachings about master-slave relationships are *principles* that apply to employer-employee relationships – for both involve one person working for another (or for an entity).

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Love for God and neighbor:

- Based on the "hierarchy" (the order of priority) between these two commands about love, we see that obeying God, takes precedence, *if there is a contradiction between the two*.

But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than people."

Acts 5:29 (NET)

(This verse may have special relevance to this issue, since it is related to telling others about Jesus.)

- In most situations, there *won't* be such a contradiction. We will need to apply the *principle* we find in the following passage (which focuses on our relationship to governing authorities):

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. ... So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished.

Romans 13:1a, 2 (NLT)

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Principles, commands, etc.:

- In every situation where Scripture gives instructions about authority and those under authority, it *first* addresses those who are *under* authority. It is true that authorities often violate Scripture's commands... but don't use *their* sin as an *excuse* for committing *your own sin*! Besides, some of their sins might be a *response* to the sins of those under their authority!
- Yes, there *are* also instructions that apply to employers – "masters" – but those instructions always come *after* the instructions for the employees.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only to please them while they are watching, but with sincerity of heart and fear of the Lord. ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Masters, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Colossians 3:22, 24b; 4:1 (BSB)

18

(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- Regardless of your views about slavery, the *principles* found in the slave-master relationship apply to any work relationship that involves one person working for another person (or organization). The worker, who finds himself in a difficult situation, is to follow Christ's example.

Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but even to those who are unreasonable. For if anyone endures the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God, this is to be commended.

How is it to your credit if you are beaten for doing wrong and you endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His footsteps: ... [example described in verses 22-23].

1 Peter 2:18-21 (BSB)

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(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- Be aware that there are *greater* issues than your response to your employer (or master – whatever the case may be). God links your response to your *employer* to your response to *Jesus*.

Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Colossians 3:23-24 (BSB)

- God calls you to live in such a manner that people will acknowledge that you have done good – even if, *right now*, they falsely accuse you of wrongdoing. [Make sure their accusation isn't true!]

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

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(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- If you claim to be a Christian, and yet disobey God's commands and principles related to the workplace, you are in danger of being like these hypocrites, who claimed to be following God's Word ... and yet *they didn't obey it!*

You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Romans 2:23-24 (BSB)

My own observation: I once knew a person who claimed to be a Christian, who would spend *hours* of his work time "preaching" about Jesus... *instead of doing the work he was paid to do*. Yet he still wrote down on his timesheet that he worked the full amount of time. He had a "reputation" among the other workers, but that reputation was *not* good! He may have been "religious," but he was continually *disobeying God!*

21

(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- Now, what about the religious articles – in this case, a nativity set?**

- Under the Old Covenant, there were some items and actions that symbolized various issues, such as the contrast between sin and holiness, the need for purity, etc. These are not a part of the New Covenant.
- There is no command related to a nativity set. The command about "no images" pertains to the *invisible* Creator God. Most Christians do not believe it applies to representations of Jesus, as *a human*. [If you believe the command *does* apply, and still want a manger scene, perhaps you could represent Jesus in some other way – maybe with something that represented the brightness of his glory?]
- For our purpose here, the issue is the *presence* or *absence* of the manger scene. Most likely, we would conclude that manger scenes belong in the realm of "Christian freedom."

22

(Principles, commands, etc. ... continued)

- If this is a matter of "Christian freedom," you have to decide whether or not to have such a display. If your employer says "NO," do you plan to remove it, or to respectfully *refuse* to remove it (and bear the consequences, whatever they may be)?

🔗 **Other considerations:**

- We know that the devil's ultimate goal is to *silence* Christians, and to *remove* Christianity from all areas of public life. At some point, you may have to take a stand – even if it isn't on this issue.
- This silencing is the goal of many atheists and people promoting false religions. (The devil uses them.) However, the individual(s) giving you those restrictions might be complying to someone else's regulations – and perhaps might not even realize the significance of what they are requiring.

23

(Other considerations ... continued)

- Your options in a workplace may be different than at home.
- God-honoring moral conduct is more important than symbols – though it's not always an "either-or" situation.
- There is no command in Scripture about a nativity set; but there *are* commands about *honoring God* in the workplace. Are there other ways you can honor God?
- Are there alternatives to having a nativity set? This might not be a "battle" worth fighting, if you can find alternatives.
- There may be legal considerations, such as a requirement to treat all employees the same. If *you* are prohibited from publicly expressing your views, while *others* (with competing views) are permitted, your employer may be violating the law. [You would have to discuss this with someone who is qualified to give legal advice.]

24

⇒ "How does a person 'eat' to the glory of God?"
[1 Corinthians 10:31]

Things to consider:

✚ From the Ten Commandments:

- The *principle* expressed by the commandment about "not coveting" would include a prohibition against *gluttony* – an uncontrollable *craving* for food. All Scripture passages that mention gluttony give it a negative connotation.

✚ Love for God / neighbor:

- We should receive food as a gift from God, to be enjoyed with thanksgiving.

... foods that God has created to be received with thanksgiving ...

1 Timothy 4:3b (BSB)

(This theme is mentioned several times in the book of Ecclesiastes – see 2:24; 3:13 etc.)

25

(Love for God / neighbor ... continued)

- It is sin to be unwilling to share, such as when having a fellowship meal. The Corinthians were committing this sin.

For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without sharing his meal. While one remains hungry, another gets drunk. ... do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? No, I will not!

1 Corinthians 11:21, 22b (BSB)

✚ Some basic issues:

- Under the New Covenant, we have freedom to eat *any* food. The "clean/unclean" regulations of the Old Covenant do not apply (Acts 10 and 11). *Spiritual* cleanness or uncleanness – which the Old Covenant regulations pointed to – are the more important issue (Mark 7:18-19).
- We are not to push our personal preferences and opinions on others. There are more important issues in life! (See Romans 14:3, 17; 1 Corinthians 8:8; Colossians 2:20-23; Hebrews 13:9.)

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(Some basic issues ... continued)

- We need to be content in our circumstances. This should influence our attitude toward the food that is available to us. It should also prevent us from being *ungrateful* for what we have, and making *demands* for what we don't have.

... I have learned to be content regardless of my circumstances. I know how to live humbly, and I know how to abound. I am accustomed to any and every situation—to being filled and being hungry, to having plenty and having need. I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:11b-13 (BSB)

- God provides what we *need*, not necessarily what we *want*. We should learn from Israel's *bad* example: They complained about the food God gave them – and many died because of their ungrateful attitude (Numbers 11:4-9 and 13-14; 14:4-9; 1 Corinthians 10:9).

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(Some basic issues ... continued)

- There may be times when our "freedom" to eat what we want could tempt others to sin. In those cases, we should limit our choices.
- Back then, the issue was often related to meat that was offered to idols, before it was sold in the marketplace. Today, there may be other issues, such as addiction to alcohol.

... make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to let his eating be a stumbling block. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything to cause your brother to stumble.

Romans 14:13b, 20-21 (BSB)

- Food preferences and/or allergies may also be issues to consider.

28

⇒ "Is it OK to eat pickles?"

Things to consider:

- [We have included this example to humorously illustrate the issue of *context*.]

My own observation: I know about a person who has the nickname "Pickles," because of some events that occurred in the individual's past. (It was given as a friendly nickname, not as an expression of hostility.)

- If "pickles" refers to the individual mentioned above, then the answer is "definitely not!" That would violate the command that prohibits murder! Genesis 9:3-6 and elsewhere.
- Otherwise, our observations concerning food (previous slides) would apply. It falls within the realm of "freedom" – though under specific circumstances, there might be reasons to *not* eat them.

29

Our mission!

We plan to look at more examples next time.
Our goal is to learn to apply the Bible to life!

- By now, it should be obvious that Scripture contains plenty of instructions, commands, principles, etc., to help us in making *good* decisions. The biggest problem is our ignorance of what Scripture says!
- But we know the problem... *and we know how to deal with it*. The question is whether or not we are willing to do so. *What is the desire of your heart?*

30

Being gracious when people who *want* to follow Jesus reach different conclusions.

Encouraging each other to pursue the spiritual maturity that God has called us to.

- **We are all growing; we will make mistakes.** None of us have arrived at complete perfection, so some of our conclusions might be less-than-perfect – and we will have to grow further in learning how to apply Scripture.

>> ON THE OTHER HAND: <<

- **There will be times when different conclusions are completely legitimate** – especially in matters within the realm of "freedom."
 ↳ These choices will be influenced by differences in our strengths and weaknesses, our imperfections, our gifts and abilities, our backgrounds, etc.

31

Romans 12:2 ...

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:2 (BSB)

... an exciting adventure!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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