

END-TIMES ISSUES



#53 Commandment #1 – Honoring God in all things: Examples (3).

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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!

TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS, YOU HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU'RE GOING TO ACCEPT WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS.

⇒ If Scripture says something that you disagree with, or that goes against the popular opinions of society, how are you going to respond? *

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- ✦ Oppose (or ignore) what Scripture says? Claim that the Bible is full of errors? Say that it's a mistaken opinion of the prophet or apostle, or that it's "culturally bound" and irrelevant to modern society?
- ✦ Accept it, because the prophets and apostles spoke *God's* words... and that *God's* words are totally without error.

* (The greatest controversies of the day are *not* related to obscure, difficult-to-translate, isolated passages, but to *clear* statements that can be easily recognized as going against the prevailing views of modern society.)

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⇒ You will have to decide whether or not to accept what Scripture says about itself.

All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is **useful** for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 (BSB)

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

Every word of God is **flawless**; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and prove you a liar.
Proverbs 30:5-6 (BSB)

... Scripture **cannot be broken** ...
John 10:35b (ESV)

>> NOW FOR OUR FINAL GROUP OF EXAMPLES! <<

These are generalized examples; your situation may have other factors for you to take into account.

⇒ **"What types of religious activities do I need to do?"**

FIRST, we have a definition issue:

What is "Religion" (or "religious activities")?

- Many people define "religion" as the things they must do, if they want to "go to heaven."
- In this matter, there is *nothing* you can do and succeed. You will always fail. You have to rely on *God* to save you.
- Then you can view "religion" as an expression of *gratitude* toward God – as well as an act of *obedience*, springing from a heart of *love*.

Various words often translated as "religion/religious": *

- A general reference to being **devoted to God** (or to a god) – Acts 17:22.
- A reference to **what a person believes** about God – Acts 25:19.
- Specific **activities related to Judaism** (and groups associated with Judaism) – Acts 26:5.
- Certain **expressions of devotion that were invented by people** (not required by God) – Colossians 2:18 ("worship"); Colossians 2:23 (= pretentious and self-made).
- The need to connect "believing" and "behavior"**; if there is no connection, your "religion" is worthless – James 1:26.
- Defining **"religion" under the New Covenant**: love for God and neighbor – James 1:27.

* (Words referring specifically to "religion" occur only in the New Testament (Acts 17:22; 25:19; 26:5; Col. 2:18; 2:23; James 1:26-27). However, the New Testament does describe various Old Testament activities as "religion.")

☞ The Old Covenant activities – what significance do they have for us?

- The Old Covenant *sacrifices* are not a part of the New Covenant requirements. They were a "picture" of what Christ would do, and were fulfilled in Christ, once and for all time. (Note the contrast between the two, in Hebrews 10:11-12).
- Certain other Old Covenant obligations were given to the Jews, and appear to be intended as a "picture," to teach the distinction between good and evil, to illustrate purity, etc. Some of these "pictures" are practical instructions (useful even today); but they are not part of the New Covenant.

• EXAMPLES:

TEACHING ABOUT MORAL ISSUES;
ALSO QUITE PRACTICAL, WHEN
FARMING WITH ANIMALS.

POSSIBLY JUST INTENDED TO BE A
VISIBLE "PICTURE" OR REMINDER
OF THE NEED FOR MORAL PURITY.

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.

Deuteronomy 22:10-11 (BSB)

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- Though the Old Covenant *practices* are not for us, the *concepts they taught* (such as purity and the distinction between good and evil) *are* for us.

• EXAMPLE #1: UNEQUAL YOKE.

OLD COVENANT TEACHING:

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey **yoked together**.

Deuteronomy 22:10 (BSB)

NEW COVENANT APPLICATION:

Do not be **yoked together** with unbelievers.

For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?

Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?

Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

2 Corinthians 6:14-16a (NIV)

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• EXAMPLE #2: "CLEAN" VS. "UNCLEAN" FOOD.

OLD COVENANT TEACHING: A distinction was required. It was to be a reminder that they themselves were to be *distinct* from the world.

"You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—**those that I have set apart** as unclean for you.

You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I **have set you apart** from the nations to be my own.'

Leviticus 20:25-26 (NIV)

Under the New Covenant (= where we are today):

- For **JEWS**: Doing this is now *optional*, not necessary. (Those who do it are not to consider themselves as better than those who don't do it.)
- For **GENTILES**: It's *not necessary*. Nothing is gained by doing it. It does not result in God's approval or increased spirituality.

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NEW COVENANT APPLICATION:

"Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (**Thus he declared all foods clean.**)

And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Mark 7:18b-23 (ESV)

It teaches us about sin; and also about the salvation of Gentiles.

Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord! ... I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

"Do not call anything impure that God has **made clean**."

Acts 10:13-14, 15b (NIV); see chapters 10-11.

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☞ What about New Covenant activities?

- There are some activities (which people often call "religious") that *are* requirements for us.
- **EXAMPLES**: Baptism and communion, prayer, assembling together for worship and encouragement (when other Christians live in the area), etc.
- Some of these activities are unique to the New Covenant. They were *not* required under the Old Covenant.
 - ✓ Under the New Covenant, they are *commanded*. *As such, they are NOT optional, or something that can be ignored.*
 - ✓ Even so, they are not the *cause* of salvation, but the *fruit* of it.

WRONG!

IF I DO THESE THINGS, MAYBE GOD WILL SAVE ME!

RIGHT!

I DO THESE THINGS, BECAUSE GOD SAVED ME AND I LOVE HIM!

WRONG!

I DON'T HAVE TO DO THESE THINGS, BECAUSE I'M SAVED!

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(As already noted...)

- The New Covenant concept of "religion" ① effects our *conduct*, and ② involves the *expression of love* toward God and neighbor.

RELIGION WILL INFLUENCE CONDUCT

EXAMPLE OF LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

EXAMPLE OF LOVE FOR GOD

If anyone considers himself **religious** and yet does not bridle his tongue, he deceives his heart and his **religion** is worthless.

Pure and undefiled **religion** before our God and Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:26-27 (BSB); see also vs. 19-25.

- ✓ **Orphans/widows** – The most helpless of people in their society, treated like outcasts; helping = an expression of love.
- ✓ **Moral purity** – One of the ways we express love to God.

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⇒ "Should I be the pastor of a church?"

Numerous qualifications and requirements can be found in Scripture; but there are also other issues to consider. Scripture uses several terms to describe spiritual leadership in the church – pastor, teacher, overseer, elder, shepherd, etc. Many of the requirements will be the same for them all.

- **First, do you want to be a pastor?** This does not guarantee that you *should* be one, but it is a consideration.

Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

1 Timothy 3:1b (NIV)

- ✓ Note also, that it is a *calling* by God – a *gift* to the church, for its building-up and its spiritual growth.

So Christ himself *gave* ... the pastors ... to equip his people for works of service, so **that the body of Christ may be built up** ...

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NIV); see v. 11-16 for others who are "given" ... and why.

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- **Are you qualified to be a pastor?** Several passages describe the type of person who is qualified to be a pastor. EXAMPLES: 1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9.

- ✓ These requirements describe what should characterize the life of the pastor. *It does not mean sinless perfection.*
- ✓ Some of these requirements imply the need for *spiritual maturity*.

- There are also *many warnings* about becoming a pastor.

- ✓ People who become pastors – or teachers, etc. – will be judged more strictly than those who don't.

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be **judged more strictly**.

James 3:1 (BSB)

- ✓ None of us are sinless... neither are pastors. But the qualifications given in Scripture must *characterize* their lives.

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- **What about the rest of us?**

- ✓ Many of these requirements are requirements for *all* Christians; but some are related to those having the specific gift or calling related to this position.
- ✓ God has given *each* of us gifts and abilities – which we must use for his honor and for the good of his people.
- ✓ *God does not save people so they can live for themselves!!* Instead, the presence of his love within us *compels* us to live *for others!*

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves, but for Him** who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (BSB)

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⇒ "What about participation in organized sports activities?"

In many situations, such activities would be in the realm of "freedom." But there are some *serious* matters to consider. Also, one's "participation" may vary from *active* involvement, to being a *passive* spectator.

- ✚ Be aware that freedom has boundaries. It will be of no benefit to you, if you turn sports activities into a snare that destroys your soul.

- ✚ These activities may fall into the category of "freedom," with no command directed specifically *against* them. But, as we have seen before:

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★ True FREEDOM has boundaries. ★

Things may be "lawful," but...

"All things are lawful for me"

—but **not everything is beneficial.**

"All things are lawful for me"

—but **I will not be controlled by anything.**

1 Corinthians 6:12 (NET)

"Everything is lawful," but **not everything is beneficial.**

"Everything is lawful," but **not everything builds others up.**

Do not seek your own good, but the good of the other person.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (NET)

- ❖ **Is it beneficial?** Is there any value in doing it – either for me (as in 1 Corinthians 6:12) or for others (as in 1 Corinthians 10:23)?
- ❖ **What effect will it have on me?** Will it control me? Will I become a "slave" to it?
- ❖ **What effect will it have on other people?** Will it build them up?

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✚ From the Ten Commandments: Potential dangers to avoid.

- **First Commandment:** For many, sports activities have become an **idolatry**. If this describes you, then you need to make some sort of change... or even stop participating, if necessary.
- **Fourth Commandment:** There are many who consider sports activities to be **more important than worshiping God**, following Jesus, etc. And in many cases, sports activities serve as a *replacement* for worship and fellowship with other Christians.
- **Seventh Commandment:** Organized sports activities are often associated with sin – **lust, body-worship**, etc.
- **Tenth Commandment:** An issue that is quite common in spectator sports – the matter of **manipulative marketing**, geared toward influencing people's views and spending practices, creating desires, etc.

✚ Love for God and neighbor:

- Does your participation in sports (actively or passively) prevent you from fulfilling your higher-priority obligations?

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Other considerations:

- **What are your values?** There is often lots of time and money involved in sports activities – both active and passive types.
- **What are your priorities?** *Physical* activity is good (and perhaps better than *passive* activity); but it has only *temporary* value. In contrast, godliness is better... and *eternal*.

... train yourself to be godly.
For **physical training** is of some value, but **godliness** has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.
↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.
1 Timothy 4:7b-9 (NIV)

IMPORTANT: We have focused on sports activities; but many other activities, hobbies, and endeavors can also be evaluated in a similar way. The examples we looked at should be sufficient to guide us in how to do so.

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Our MISSION:

- **Make it a lifelong goal to love God in all things**, as an application of those life principles related to the first commandment!

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

... and to love your neighbor, who is made "in the image (or likeness) of God"!

... people who are **made in God's likeness**.
James 3:9b (CSB); see also Genesis 1:26-27.

- Learn from these various examples, given in the past three presentations, so that you can apply Scripture principles to *all* of life – so you can glorify and honor God in *all things*!

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

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