

# Motivational Seeker

## Using Glorifying Reasoning

November 14, 2021

Today we're looking into why we do what we do. So, let's jump right in and answer this:

**Why are you here?** There *is* a reason. You've got one. There's a *reason* for everything we *do*, ever... *always*. So, what ultimately drove you *here* even though couches, football, and snacks were options? *It must've been pretty good!* And as Christians, I assume God must have been behind your reason... but I looked and couldn't find the verse that said, "November 14<sup>th</sup>, Burlington, His Place Church – *Thou shalt be there!*" So why *did* you do it?



Well, last week Bruce pointed out **Jesus didn't give us a comprehensive list of do's and don'ts** to guide us, it's "worse". **He gave us a set of principles.** And they're "worse" because principles apply to every human situation across all time and space. They *create* an *infinite* list of do's and don'ts because **principles are the foundational, non-negotiable truths that we build our beliefs and behaviors on through reasoning.** And probably, my favorite simple example of a principle comes from Dwight Shrute: *Whenever I'm about to do something, I think, "Would an idiot do that?" And if they would, I do not do that thing.*

**Laughably simple, infinitely applicable.** That's how principles work! And Paul pointed out the principle at play right before the big *do and don't* discussion we've been reading in Romans, regarding how to handle weaker believers and disputable matters. He says:

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other **[do-not]** command there may be, are summed up in this one **[principle]** command "Love your neighbor as yourself." - Romans 13:9 NIV

And from that simple principle, the next chapter reasons out a list of subsequent *do's and don'ts* for our beliefs and behaviors. Here's some highlights:

- [Do]** Accept the one whose faith is weak – Romans 14:1 NIV
- [Do]** be fully convinced – Romans 14:5 NIV
- [Do not]** not judge one another anymore – Romans 14:13 NKJV
- [Do not]** put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. – Romans 14:13 NKJV
- [Do not]** by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. – Romans 14:15 NIV
- [Do not]** let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. – Romans 14:16 NIV
- [Do]** make every effort to do what leads to peace – Romans 14:19 NIV
- [Do not]** destroy the work of God for the sake of food - Romans 14:20 NIV

But these *do's and don'ts* – *do not* take the place of principles. **They are examples of the more specific beliefs and behaviors contained within principles** that are unpacked with reasoning.



And *do or don't* rules *without* a reason are incomplete and vulnerable to corrupting their principle intention. Because **a rule without a principle is legalism and literally, unreasonable**. Do you know *why* Paul wrote chapter fourteen? Because, as a former Pharisee, he intimately understood the allure of legalism. It's what kept them in business – because you can deliberately keep your convicting conscience out of *your* judgment, by measuring your heart with the limited letter of the law instead. Like Bruce said, “*Don't murder? Check! ...good thing they didn't ask if I cut their brake lines!*”



**Kids are a great example of our default legalistic leaning.** Think of the violated principles those little lawyers stack up when “following rules”. *Don't touch that*, “I used a spoon”; *Hang on a second*, “One one-thousand...”; *Eat your dinner*, “Cupcakes are food...”

But Jesus tried to teach the Pharisees (and the children) that **the motives that drive our individually unique faith must be dynamic principles like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**. *They reveal real reasons!* While legalism just lists our rules and regulations, without purpose, intentions, or motivations; which is why legalism *can't* renew the heart. And as one of the reasonable ones, Paul finally got the message.

We have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. – Romans 7:6 NIV

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith ... Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. – Colossians 2:6-10 NKJV



**A world according to humans, prefers legalistic lies and empty gestures because we can conceal our true nature and avoid being vulnerable.** But that only delays the inevitable – when our conscience lays it all on the table in our day of judgment! So, if we'd like that to be a better day, we *must* walk in that *new* way and **cultivate our own convictions, according to Christ and conscience**. And that means a good, hard look at the real reasons *behind* our beliefs and behavior; *and* making ongoing adjustments as we mature in Christ. And that's the point Paul hopes will help diffuse disputes in the new *Jew and Gentile* church.



**[Paul recaps for us:]** One person **[still building on old rules of law]** considers one day more sacred than another; another **[now building on new principles of Christ]** considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. – Romans 14:5 NIV

But hang on, what *exactly* should we be "fully convinced" *of*? Because that old tattle-tale, *the conscience*, is just dying to spill *your* guts, whatever they may be! Well Paul continues:

[referring to believers] Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they *give thanks to God*; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and *gives thanks to God*. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. [y'know, since we're all believers] – Romans 14:6-8 NIV

**We need to be fully convinced that our reasons are sound and our motives are pure.** And as self-centered, rule-bending, babies – we need to outsource that judgment! Whatever I choose to eat or abstain from, to enjoy or avoid, or to believe or reject, **I must be fully convinced that I am expressing genuine trust, obedience, and gratitude to the Lord!** As Paul says a few verses later:

*I am convinced*, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus – Romans 14:14 NIV



And being *fully convinced* we're "in the Lord" protects us from being taken "captive" by the convictions of other Christians. **You shouldn't be held hostage by my beliefs.** I'm *not* to "fully convince" myself that mine is the *only* way to honor God, but that it's the best way for *me*. And doing *that* promotes a posture of sensitive humility for all of us.



And this is why I can sincerely do something for God, and you can sincerely do the *exact opposite*, and we both have His approval! Aren't you glad our rewards aren't based on what *other* believers think?! **God examines the heart and judges the motives by Christ and conscience.** *But why not beat Him to the punch?!* We can examine our lifestyle, our conversations, our distractions, and our habits; and we can weed out whatever we're not *fully convinced* brings God honor from a grateful heart. Because **if we can't recount the good, God-glorifying reasons for a belief or behavior, cut it out!** Said even simpler:

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. - 1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV

Now there's a bracelet I want for each of us! **D.I.G.G. – "Does it glorify God?"**. That's a theological Swiss Army knife that always reveals your principle motive. "Should I go to the movie?" DIGG. "Should I buy these pants?" DIGG. "Should I apologize?" *C'mon*, DIGG. **It's such a beautifully simple principle it's embarrassing we struggle as much as we do.** Try it this week! You'll be surprised at how righteous your behavior becomes (or could've...). *But wait, there's more!* Before he closes the chapter, Paul's got more bracelet wisdom, this time for our *beliefs*:

Whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. – Romans 14:22 NIV

**K.I.T.Y. "Keep it to yourself!"** Paul acknowledges the *same* faith looks *different* in each believer's life, especially as we mature in understanding. And that can confuse others. Remember how Peter spent years eating like an immature believer until God straightened him out:

"Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." – Acts 10:15 NIV

Imagine church the very next Sunday: "Now, we eat *everything*...? Cuz Peter had a dream..."  
*I'll bet that overnight 180 raised a few eyebrows in the congregation!*



Ever know somebody who's totally into some health kick after they read an article and suddenly, they're an expert on macros and workout splits? And then they tell *you* why *your* cardio routine is for chumps and how intermittent fasting won't work for *you* because of *your* low-carb diet and blood type? You know how you think about how irritating they are when you step on the elliptical? Well, it's kinda like that, but with a spiritual twist!

Remember, unless God tells you otherwise, **listening is usually a better witness than telling.** Sanctification is a process; the Christian walk is a journey! And **your progress in practice can discourage those at an earlier stage.** Believe it or not – *I'm still working out in an effort to dunk a basketball... But I wanna quit every stinkin' time Collin does it after a good stretch and snack!*



So if you've got growth, great! But be aware, **your growth needs to be God-glorifying, too.** And there are two ways we undermine the spiritual maturity we've gained: First, **we flaunt it.** I like how The Living Bible translates verse 22:

Don't *flaunt* your faith in front of others who might be hurt by it. – Romans 14:22 TLB

It's very tempting to label a Christian who is more conservative than yourself, as being a "prude" or "ignorant", and then feeling justified acting in ways that upset or embarrass them. We can practice our more mature faith *without* parading it. **Enjoy your freedom, but don't flaunt it in a way that could confuse or compromise a weaker believer. That's a terrible witness!**



And the second way we undermine our mature faith: **We force it.** The Message paraphrases this same verse as:

Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't *impose* it on others. – Romans 14:22 TMNT

**I want people to say, "His Place is an army of encouragers!"** This doesn't mean that we shouldn't *instruct* one another, or have healthy discussions about our differing views. We're just not supposed to flaunt 'em or force 'em. It's like what Bruce was talking about last week; **there's no prohibition against teaching truth.** Truth is what liberates us from legalism, and sets our conscience free. We just have to make sure our progress doesn't hinder anybody in any way. **Don't knock 'em out with the life ring! That's a deadly witness!** And this goes for *not doing* what you think you should, as well as *doing* what you think you shouldn't. And Paul drives that home by wrapping up this chapter with this one more simple reminder:

Everything that does not come from faith is sin. – Romans 14:23 NIV

And *we* know that there are different *do's and don'ts* at the different stages of faith in each believer. But, let today's twist really sink in; whatever you are doing and believing *right now*, you MUST BE *fully convinced* it's for God. And that means a quick double-check: First, **check your reason; Does it glorify God?** And then, **check your witness; Should you keep it to yourself?**

Or... to make it simpler still, use the Shrute principle: **Whenever you're about to do something, think – to YOURSELF, "Does it glorify God?" And if it doesn't, do not do that thing.**