



COVENANT CHURCH

Essentials – Do the Right Thing for the Right Reason

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Main Idea – God has defined the boundaries between right and wrong, and has given you His love to be your inspiration in life. In every circumstance, do the right thing for the right reason.

Doing the right thing for the right reason begins with love

- There are many conceivable reasons for an action you might take. If those reasons do not come from God's love inside you, you will likely be unproductive.
- **Matthew 22:35-40** – Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "*'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJV)
- **1 Corinthians 13:12-13** – For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (NKJV)
- "Hate destroys the hater as well as the hated . . . Because if you hate your enemies, you have no way to redeem and to transform your enemies . . . But if you love your enemies, you will discover that at the very root of love is the power of redemption . . . Any by the power of your love they will break down under the load." Martin Luther King, Jr.

What God's love inside you looks like

- Here is what you can expect to experience when you have God's love inside you.
 - **1 Corinthians 13:4-8** – Love endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious; love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant. It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured. It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail]. Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without

weakening]. Love never fails [it never fades nor ends]. But as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for the gift of special knowledge, it will pass away. (Amplified)

Employ God's love inside you as you do the right thing

- There is right and wrong. They have already been predetermined by God. "When you say there's too much evil in this world you assume there's good. When you assume there's good, you assume there's such a thing as a moral law on the basis of which to differentiate between good and evil. But if you assume a moral law, you must posit a moral Law Giver" Ravi Zacharias
- You, as a human, cannot determine your own standards for right and wrong. If you do so, you will almost always be too lenient with yourself while judging others.

Sin is what happens when God's moral standards are ignored

- There are similarities between Old Testament times and today. In the Book of Judges, the people of Israel had mostly become self-centered and unconcerned with God's moral standards. **Judges 17:6 – In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (NKJV)**
- Israelite society had become dysfunctional. Chaos resulted. For example:
 - **Judges 11:30-39** (a man sacrificed his own daughter)
 - **Judges 19:22-30** (a brutal rape)
 - **Ruth 1:1** (a famine)
 - **Judges 2:11** (idolatry was prevalent throughout the country)
 - **Judges 20:14-48** (civil war occurred between the people)
- That type of sinfulness is common to humanity. It even seems we are hard-wired to fall short of what is right.
- **Romans 3:23 – For everyone has sinned, we all fall short of God's glorious standard. (NLT)**
- **Romans 7:18-21 – And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life – that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. (NLT)**

The good news is that God has given you a conscience

- God has placed awareness of His moral standards in every person's heart. **Romans**

2:14-15 – Even Gentiles, who do not have God’s written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God’s law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right. (NLT)

- Even so, Jesus said it is still often difficult to do the right things. **Matthew 7: 12-14** – “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.” (NLT)

Take account of your motives

- When you are faced with a moral choice, stop and try to determine your motives in the situation. God will be observing and looking at your heart. **1 Samuel 16:7** – But the Lord said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (NLT)
Matthew 5:8 – Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (NKJV)
- A clean heart on the inside will result in love – and the proper actions – on the outside.
- A clean heart will happen if you allow yourself to receive God’s love to yourself, and then to express your love for Him. **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**
– If I [can] speak in the tongues of men and [even] of angels, but have not love (that reasoning, intentional, spiritual devotion such as is inspired by God’s love for and in us), I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers (the gift of interpreting the divine will and purpose), and understand all the secret truths and mysteries and possess all knowledge, and if I have [sufficient] faith so that I can remove mountains, but have not love (God’s love in me) I am nothing (a useless nobody). Even if I dole out all that I have [to the poor in providing] food, and if I surrender my body to be burned or in order that I may glory, but have not love (God’s love in me), I gain nothing. (AMPC)

John 15:13 – Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. (NKJV)

- Even though your motives for doing the right thing do not include getting a reward, God has still promised He will someday give rewards. (See **Matthew 5:12, 6:4, and 6:6.**)

- Don't worry about doing everything perfectly. When you make a mistake while trying to do the right thing, God will release His mercy and grace to your life.
- However, God leaves those who do the wrong things for the wrong reasons to the consequences of the natural environment.

Reflective Questions for Essentials – Do the Right Thing for the Right Reason

1. Life is often perplexing, with difficult decisions to be made in confusing circumstances. How does focusing on God's love inside you help to make the right choices more obvious?
2. In addition to God's love inside you, your own personal motivations must be correct in order to do the right thing for the right reason. Based on the Bible verses in this sermon message, what are some things that would represent correct motivations? What are some things that might be improper motivations?
3. Can you explain in your own words how – as you are trying to do the right thing for the right reasons - that God's grace will cover any shortcomings in your own actions? What comfort does that bring you?