



**Yes . . . no . . . maybe so . . . making decisions in life can be so hard.**

**TR: And for the Christ-follower this can be especially true in dealing with the gray areas of life.**

# **ADIAPHORA**

**Activities neither  
commanded nor forbidden  
in Scripture.**

**These have been called the . . . READ SLIDE . . . “matters of indifference”**

**TR: Last week we grabbed hold of the overall personal strategic plan for all believers.**

I do it all for the sake of the gospel,  
that I may share with them in its  
blessings.

ESV

It was summarized by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:23 .

.. READ SLIDE

-- The RESULT was . . . and the PRIORITY to reach that result was . . .

TR: But to make the kind of decisions that God wants us to we need more.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

A Personal Strategic Plan  
RESULT ← PRIORITY

A Policy on Personal Choice

In addition to a personal strategic plan, an overarching RESULT ← PRIORITY, we need a POLICY on personal choice.  
-- At first this may sound way too “corporate” but I believe we all have some policy on making choices.

TR: The question is whether they are biblical or not.

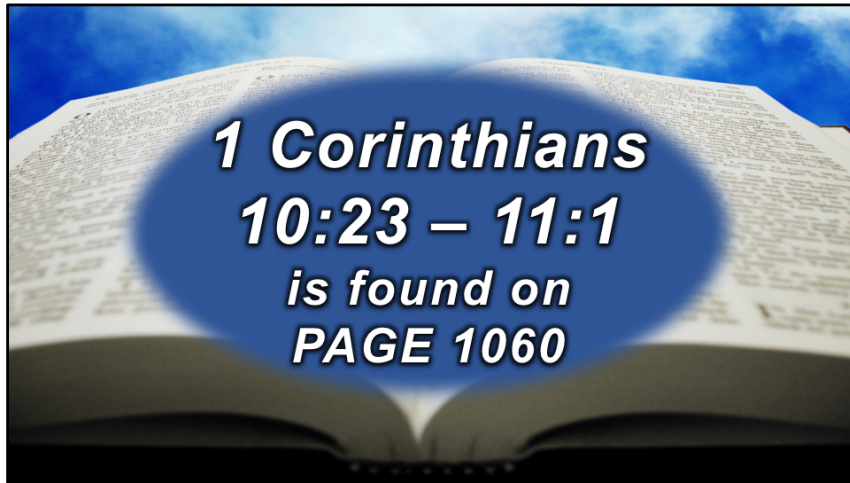
# **ADIAPHORA**

5

**A policy  
as a deliberate system of  
principles to guide decisions on  
issues of personal choice.**

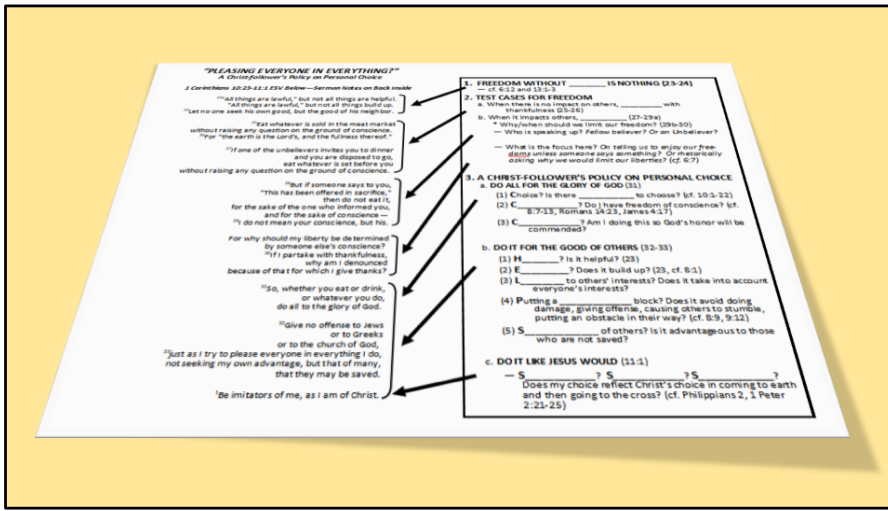
**A policy is just . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: I believe we can boil down such a deliberate system from  
the Scriptures.**



**Specifically, I'm thinking of . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Like last week, I've doubled up our sermon notes . . .**



. . . so that if you open the worship flier, you'll see the text on the left and the notes on the right.

-- Our text for today is the closing or conclusion of a bigger section of Paul's thought, covering from chapter 8 on.

-- Before we get to distilling our policy's principles, let's get a bit of an overview in the first two points of the notes.

TR: Let's put out there a huge principle in dealing with the "adiaphora."

**1. FREEDOM WITHOUT LOVE IS NOTHING**



**READ SLIDE**

-- Freedom . . . that is, to make the choice without there being a black and white mandate from God's Word . . . is not without its limits.

**TR: 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 begins Paul's concluding thoughts on this subject.**



1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things are helpful.  
"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things build up.  
<sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good,  
but the good of his neighbor.

ESV

## READ SLIDE

**TR: This phrase, "all things are lawful," is accepted by most scholars as a slogan that the Corinthians were popularizing.**

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.

ESV

**We see the same slogan earlier in chapter 6 . . . READ SLIDE  
-- We really aren't "free" to not be hurtful or to tear down or  
to allow anything to dominate us.**

**TR: As we seek the good of our neighbor, we must use our  
freedom WITH LOVE**

**1 Corinthians 13:1-2**

**If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.  
²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.**

ESV

**A few chapters later, we read about the use of spiritual gifts .**

**.. READ SLIDE.**

**-- Whether using our spiritual gifts or our spiritual freedoms .  
.. all must be constrained by love for others.**

**-- Let's do a bit more background work as we consider collating the principles for our policy on personal choices.**

**TR: In our notes, let's move down to . . .**

1. FREEDOM WITHOUT LOVE IS NOTHING
2. TEST CASES FOR FREEDOM

. . . the specific **TEST CASES** that the Corinthian believers were actually struggling with at that time.

-- The issue may seem as distant to our lives as one can imagine, but the principles will hit close to home.

TR: Verse 25 . . .

**Eat whatever is sold  
in the meat market  
without raising any question  
on the ground of conscience.**

**<sup>26</sup>For "the earth is the Lord's,  
and the fullness thereof."**

*ESV*

### **READ SLIDE**

- The specific issue for the believers in Corinth was meat offered to idols.**
- Historical findings point to the existence of a meat market that would sell what had been butchered and offered in worship to idols by pagan priests.**
- Some have suggested that almost all the meat sold would have such a background.**
- What was the believer to do? Paul makes clear in a previous chapter that there is freedom to each such meat.**
- Here he addresses buying meat in the market . . . quoting Psalm 24, he says we can eat with thanksgiving, not even raising the question.**

**TR: Verse 27 then looks at a different situation.**

**If one of the unbelievers invites you  
to dinner  
and you are disposed to go,  
eat whatever is set before you  
without raising any question  
on the ground of conscience.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- The situation is not buying meat ourselves but in responding to a dinner invitation by an unbeliever.
  - Paul doesn't demand that we go, but says we are free to accept the invite.
  - How different from a Jew who was under the law and probably not have eaten in a pagan's home nor risked eating non-kosher, that is, ceremonially unclean, food.
  - Paul's instruction is to just eat it and don't bring it up.
- TR: So, our test cases tell us . . .

## 2. TEST CASES FOR FREEDOM

- a. When there is no impact on others, **partake** with thankfulness

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 28 points to a different outcome when they accepted a dinner invitation at an unbeliever's home.**



1 Corinthians 10:28-29a

But if someone says to you,  
"This has been offered in sacrifice,"  
then do not eat it,  
for the sake of the one  
who informed you,  
and for the sake of conscience—  
<sup>29</sup>I do not mean your conscience, but his.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: The test case makes it clear that . . .**

## 2. TEST CASES FOR FREEDOM

- a. When there is no impact on others, partake with thankfulness
- b. When it impacts others, **refrain**

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Those who read the Word carefully will certainly have a follow-up question.**

\* Why/when should we limit our freedom?

— Who is speaking up? *Fellow believer? Or an Unbeliever?*

### **READ SLIDE**

-- Verse 28, “But if someone says to you . . .” . . . who is the someone?

-- Two major options: A fellow believer who has a weak conscience, probably because he or she came out of pagan worship before they trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

-- The second option: A unbeliever, probably NOT the host, who is trying to understand Christianity and thinks a person committed to following Jesus shouldn't have anything to do with meat that has been previously offered to a pagan god.

TR: It could be either, but . . .

\* Why/when should we limit our freedom?

— Who is speaking up? Fellow believer? Or an Unbeliever?

. . . the likelihood is that it is a fellow believer or at least a serious seeker, not just a random unbeliever trying to make trouble for the believer.

-- In either case, Paul says that we should refrain from eating if the other person's conscience is violated by eating such meat.

TR: That brings us to the crux of understanding this passage, seeking to know the author's, Paul's, intention.

1 Corinthians 10:29b-30

For why should my liberty  
be determined  
by someone else's conscience?  
<sup>30</sup>If I partake with thankfulness,  
why am I denounced  
because of that for which  
I give thanks?

ESV

**Beginning in the middle of verse 29 . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Again, there are two schools of thought about what Paul is getting at.**

\* Why/when should we limit our freedom?

- Who is speaking up? *Fellow believer? Or an Unbeliever?*
- What is the focus here? *On telling us to enjoy our freedoms unless someone says something? Or rhetorically asking why we would limit our liberties?*

**What is the focus here? READ SLIDE**

-- The difference is that some think Paul is pushing back against others limiting our freedom . . . keeping us from being so-called legalists.

-- It is true that “making absolute what the Bible does not” has made Christianity unnecessarily “stink” in the noses of unbelievers . . . thinking that we are basically a bunch of self-righteous jerks who are more known for what they don’t do than what they do.

-- But, the context of chapters 8 through 11 speaks against that.

TR: It is more likely that it is a . . .

\* Why/when should we limit our freedom?

- Who is speaking up? *Fellow believer? Or an Unbeliever?*
- What is the focus here? *On telling us to enjoy our freedoms unless someone says something? Or rhetorically asking why we would limit our liberties?*

. . . rhetorical question that summarizes the who section.

-- As we work toward a policy of decision-making in the areas of freedom, the adiaphora . . .

-- . . . WHY should my liberty be limited by someone else's conscience?

-- WHY can't I just partake with thanksgiving and let someone else's problem be someone else's problem?

TR: And that rhetorical question leads us to trying to develop a policy on decision making in the gray areas.

1. FREEDOM WITHOUT LOVE IS NOTHING
2. TEST CASES FOR FREEDOM
3. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE

**What should be our policy on personal choice when the Bible does not clearly command or forbid?**

**TR: Allow me to use verses 31 to 11:1 are the foundational source of these principles, supplementing them from other statements in the context.**



**So, whether you eat or drink,  
or whatever you do,  
do all to the glory of God.**

*ESV*

**10:31 certainly gives us an overarching policy statement . . .  
READ SLIDE**

**TR: So, we have an first principle in our policy . . .**

**2. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE****a. DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD****READ SLIDE**

-- But we need to ask for clarification because we can misuse this line.

-- “We pray before we have premarital sex and therefore we are doing it for the glory of God” is not what Paul is intending us to do.

**TR: This is the first principle . . . assuming that . . .**

**2. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE****a. DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

(1) Choice? Is there **freedom** to choose?

**. . . READ SLIDE**

**-- In other words, this is really an issue that is “adiaphora.”**

**TR: The Corinthians did NOT have the choice about eating meat offered to idols with the pagans in their temples as part of their worship.**

1 Corinthians 10:21-22

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.  
<sup>22</sup>Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

ESV

**Back in chapter 10 we read . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: This first principle, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, has also to be clarified by another question . . .**

**2. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE****a. DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

- (1) Choice? Is there **freedom** to choose?
- (2) **Conscience?** Do I have freedom of conscience?

**READ SLIDE**

-- If we have a weak conscience and we think something is wrong, then we can't partake.

**TR: Dealing with the meat offered to idols issue in Romans, Paul writes . . .**

Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. <sup>23</sup>But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- So, even if it is a gray matter and we have freedom to make a choice . . .
- IF OUR CONSCIENCE does not have freedom and we can't do it from faith, then it is sin for us.
- "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."

**TR: So our first principle has been clarified by asking CHOICE? CONSCIENCE? And, finally . . .**

**2. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE****a. DO ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD**

- (1) Choice? Is there **freedom** to choose?
- (2) Conscience? Do I have freedom of conscience?
- (3) Commend? Am I doing this so God's honor will be commended?

**a third "C" word, COMMEND? READ SLIDE**

**-- It is not about us standing on our rights BUT pointing always to the honor and glory of God.**

**TR: Our policy on personal choice has a second big principle . . .**

**2. A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE**

- a. DO ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD
- b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Verse 32 . . .**



1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Give no offense to Jews  
or to Greeks  
or to the church of God,  
<sup>33</sup>just as I try to please everyone in  
everything I do,  
not seeking my own advantage,  
but that of many,  
that they may be saved.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: Wouldn't that be a good expansion of the core idea from the opening verses . . .**

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things are helpful.  
"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things build up.  
<sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good,  
but **the good of his neighbor.**

ESV

Here we jump back to verse 24 . . . **READ VERSE 24**

-- So, we have a second principle in our policy, **DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.**

-- Like with the first principle, we need some clarification.

-- Here are 5 questions we can ask ourselves to make sure it is for the good of others.

TR: The first is . . .

b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS  
(1) Helps? Is it helpful?

. . . the word HELPS? READ SLIDE

TR: We saw that in verse 23 . . .

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things are **helpful**.  
"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things build up.  
<sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good,  
but the good of his neighbor.

ESV

**READ Verse 23a.**

**TR: The second half of verse 23 gives us our second question**

...

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things are helpful.  
"All things are lawful,"  
but not all things **build up**.  
<sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good,  
but the good of his neighbor.

ESV

**READ Verse 23b**

**TR: So, in addition to HELPS, we have . . .**

**b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**

(1) **Helps?** Is it helpful?

(2) **Edifies?** Does it build up?

**EDIFIES? That is . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: Back at the beginning of this section dealing with food offered to idols, we read . . .**

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, **but love builds up.**

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

- This **KNOWLEDGE** of our freedom by itself only leads to arrogance and division.
- It is love that builds others up.

**TR: HELPS?, EDIFIES? . . . and . . .**

**b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**

- (1) **Helps**? Is it helpful?
- (2) **Edifies**? Does it build up?
- (3) **Looks** to others' interests?

**LOOKS** to the interest of others.

**TR: While it is impossible to please everybody, a Christ-follower  
...**



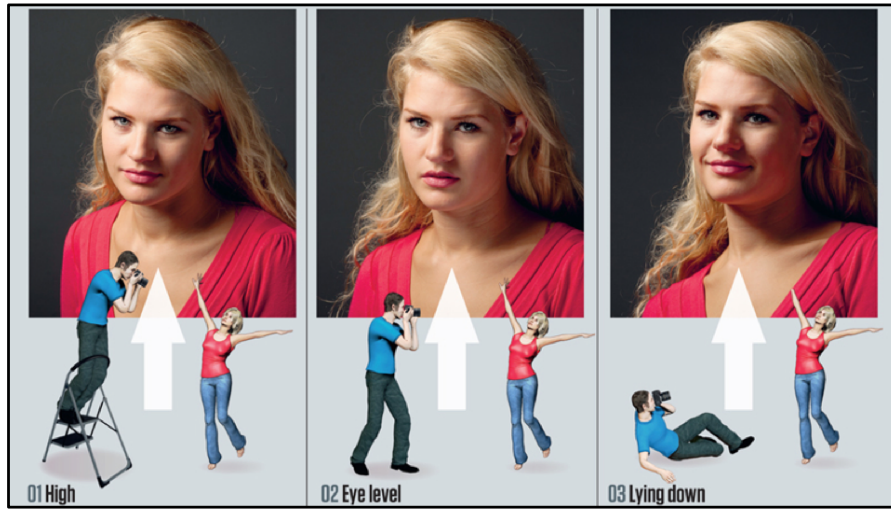
1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Give no offense to Jews  
or to Greeks  
or to the church of God,  
<sup>33</sup>just as I **try to please everyone** in  
everything I do,  
not seeking my own advantage,  
but that of many,  
that they may be saved.

ESV

... seeks not their own advantage but the advantage of others.

TR: In a sense, we are to work the angles for the benefit of others, like a good photographer does . . .



**. . . when they are willing to make themselves uncomfortable to create the best portrait angle for the subject of the picture.**

**TR: Two more clarifying questions . . .**

**b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**

- (1) **Helps**? Is it helpful?
- (2) **Edifies**? Does it build up?
- (3) **Looks** to others' interests?
- (4) **Puts** a **stumbling** block?

**PUTS? . . . READ SLIDE**

**TR: As we seek to do it for the good of others, we must ask whether . . .**

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

**Give no offense** to Jews  
or to Greeks  
or to the church of God,  
<sup>33</sup>just as I try to please everyone in  
everything I do,  
not seeking my own advantage,  
but that of many,  
that they may be saved.

ESV

**. . . we will be giving offense to others.  
-- This doesn't mean that someone else doesn't like it or that  
it doesn't fit their preferences.**

**TR: But does it cause them to violate their conscience . . . or  
as chapter 8 says . . .**

But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a **stumbling block** to the weak.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- We don't want to cause someone else to be tempted to act like they have freedom that they don't have because they **CANNOT** do it out of faith.

TR: In chapter 9, Paul talks about giving up his rights as an apostle, that is, giving up his freedom . . .

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an **obstacle** in the way of the gospel of Christ.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- In our sermon notes we read, Does it avoid doing damage, giving offense, causing others to stumble, putting an obstacle in their way?

-- Like the oath of a doctor, to first of all not do harm, we must make sure that our personal choices do no real harm to others.

TR: Our final question, and by now you've figured out that the five questions spell HELPS, is the "S" ...

**b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**

- (1) **H**elps? Is it helpful?
- (2) **E**difies? Does it build up?
- (3) **L**ooks to others' interests?
- (4) **P**uts a **stumbling** block?
- (5) **S**alvation of others?

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: It certainly makes sense as we try to MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES that we make our personal choices . . .**

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Give no offense to Jews  
or to Greeks  
or to the church of God,  
<sup>33</sup>just as I try to please everyone in  
everything I do,  
**not seeking my own advantage,  
but that of many,  
that they may be saved.**

ESV

... READ HIGHLIGHTED PORTION OF SLIDE.

TR: What is interesting is our temptation to turn this all around.



**b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS**

- (1) **H**elps? Is it helpful?
- (2) **E**difies? Does it build up?
- (3) **L**ooks to others' interests?
- (4) **P**uts a **stumbling** block?
- (5) **S**alvation of others?

I've often had people get their knickers in knots because others aren't asking these questions on their behalf.

-- "What they did wasn't helpful to me. It didn't build me up but offended me. They didn't even consider my interests!"

-- Just like husbands shouldn't say to their wives, "You must submit to me!" . . . SO , we must remember that these our questions to help US fulfill the second principle of our policy, **DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS.**

TR: Our policy has one last principle . . .

**A CHRIST-FOLLOWER'S POLICY ON PERSONAL CHOICE**

- a. DO ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD
- b. DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS
- c. DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: What an unfortunate break in chapters. Remember, the verse numbers and chapter breaks were added later for convenience. 11:1 almost certainly part of Paul's policy on personal decisions on matters of freedom.**

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

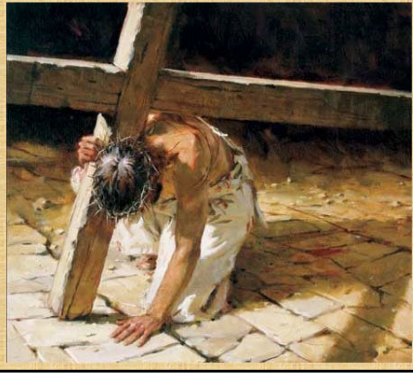
ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: As we DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD and DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS, we must always . . .**

c. DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD

- Servanthood?



**. . . DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD.**

**-- And that means, like a servant.**

**-- We won't turn to Philippians 2, but there we're told to have this mind in us that was in Christ . . . and not look only to our own interests.**

**-- Jesus came not to be served but to serve.**

**TR: Our choices need to be made taking the posture of a servant.**

**c. DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD**

- Servanthood?

- **Sacrifice?**



**And, certainly, with a mindset of sacrifice.**

**-- If we imitate Paul as he imitates Christ, we must be willing to sacrifice our rights for the glory of God and the good of others.**

**TR: DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD brings to my mind the old book, In His Steps, based on the end of 1 Peter 2.**

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

ESV

**READ SLIDE**

-- The context that Peter is addressing is Christian slaves who choose to do their work for the glory of God, even if their Masters are harsh.

TR: Following in Christ's steps, imitating our Savior would mean we look to His example . . .

1 Peter 2:22-23

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup>When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

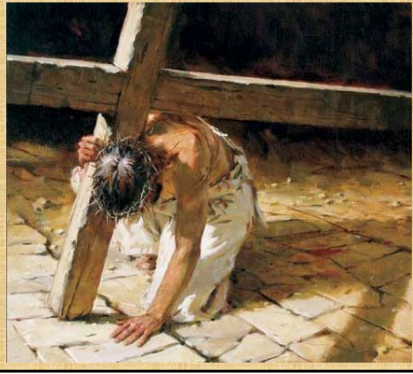
ESV

**READ SLIDE**

**TR: As we ask ourselves, What Would Jesus Do, we realize that His servanthood and sacrifice were done with . . .**

**c. DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD**

- Servanthood?
- Sacrifice?
- Silence?



**. . . SILENCE.**

-- Not absolute silence, since our Lord addressed others on the way to the hill of Calvary, even as He uttered the recorded 7 last words from the cross.

-- BUT, in silence, when it came to complaining, blaming, reviling, threatening.

-- BUT, in silence, not drawing attention to His choice to give up the freedom of a position of “equality with God”.

**TR: A personal policy doesn't do much good if we can't remember it.**



**DO IT . . .****ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD****C      ? C                      ? C                      ?****FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS****H      ? E              ? L              ? P      ? S              ?****LIKE JESUS WOULD****S                      ? S                      ? S                      ?**

I know you haven't had a chance to study the clarifying questions, but let's take a quick quiz to see how you do without referring back to your notes.

-- 3 C's, HELPS, 3 S's

TR: As we DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD . . .we need to ask . . . (pause)

**DO IT . . .****ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD****Choice? Conscience? Commends?****FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS****H ? E ? L ? P ? S ?****LIKE JESUS WOULD****S ? S ? S ?**

**Choice?**  
**Conscience?**  
**Commends?**

**TR: As we DO IT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS we ask (pause) . . .**  
**HELPS**

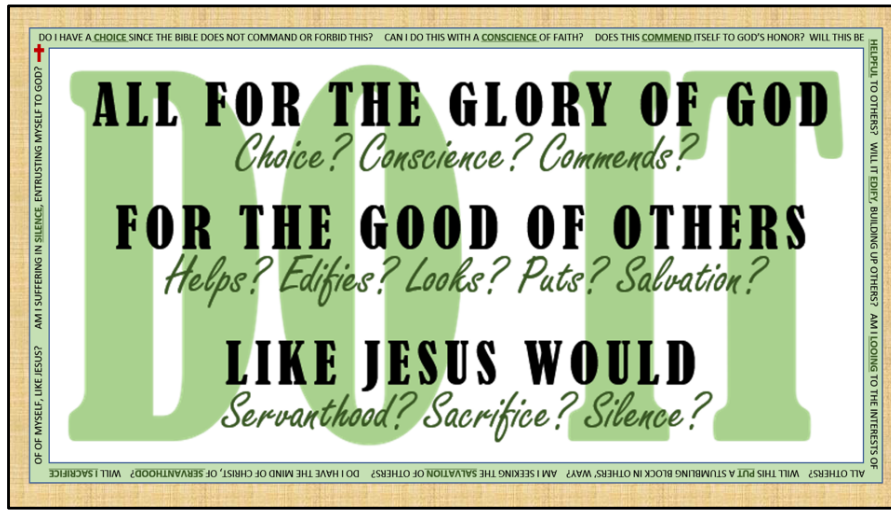
**DO IT . . .****ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD****Choice? Conscience? Commends?****FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS****Helps? Edifies? Looks? Puts? Salvation?****LIKE JESUS WOULD****S****? S****? S****?****HELPS, EDIFIES, LOOKS, PUTS, SALVATION****TR: And, lastly, as we DO IT LIKE JESUS WOULD, we ask . . .  
(pause)**

**DO IT . . .****ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD****Choice? Conscience? Commends?****FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS****Helps? Edifies? Looks? Puts? Salvation?****LIKE JESUS WOULD****Servanthood? Sacrifice? Silence?****Servanthood?****Sacrifice?****Silence?****TR: Why would we adopt this policy of personal choice? Why would we limit our freedoms?**



Because the night is coming when no one can work.  
-- Because we want to **CHOOSE THE BEST . . . IN ORDER TO  
MAKE THE MOST . . . IN OUR COMMUNITIES.**

**TR: Let's be obedient to what the Bible commands or forbids,  
but in all those areas of freedom . . .**



**. . . let's DO IT . . . READ SLIDE**

- I will be sending out a "Moment with Pastor Gary" this week that will include a picture of this graphic.
- I've printed it off and put it above my desk.
- But, what we really need to do is put Jesus before our eyes and then make our daily choices as acts of worship.