

“What’s The Big Deal About The Do’s And Don’ts of Life?”

Deuteronomy 8

The presence of rules, the abundance of standards and the magnitude of policies make some people wonder if they can live up to all the spiritual and secular expectations. Restrictions and regulations are an essential part of our lives, and we must be willing to face this reality with a sound Biblical approach, not a reactionary independent spirit. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:15, “I (Paul) write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

I. What is meant when one refers to a “standard”?

A. A standard is basically a principle governing conduct or behavior.

It is used as a basis for judgment and implies a pattern for guidance, protection, order and evaluation.

- There are standards developed for government agencies (national and local), educational institution, places of employment, churches, families and individuals. Our lives are filled with an over abundant, ever-growing list of do’s and don’ts.

B. It is important to note that every person is subject to parameters or boundaries that have been imposed on them by others. (God, government, pastor, teacher, dad, mom, employer, friend, authority).

1. Principle #1: Standards are essential for order and harmony.

- 1 Corinthians 14:40, “Let all things be done decently and in order”
- 2. Principle #2: “The price of leadership is the restriction of privileges.”

C. There are generally 3 levels of standards for a Christian to consider:

1. Clear Bible command that govern our specific behavior.
- Deuteronomy 5: The 10 Commandments.
2. Bible principles the govern our general behavior.
- 1 Corinthians 13: Love.
3. Individual preferences that govern our optional behavior.
- Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8-10; general standards of conduct expected by authority; tastes and preferences; issues of non-relevance.

II. What’s the big deal about standards?

A. In everything we do there must be an attempt to demonstrate a desire to honor God.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

B. In everything we do we must diligently work to curb our natural tendencies to succumb to unbiblical and/ or inappropriate behavior.

- 2 Corinthians 7:1, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
- 1. We must take a reasonable amount of effort to examine ourselves to prevent ourselves from “slipping” or “falling away.” Romans 12:10, “Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Psalm 17:5 “Hold up my goings in thy path, that my footsteps slip not.”

2. God is concerned about the externals (“flesh”-immorality, modesty, etc.) as much as the internal. (“spirit” – pride, envy, ingratitude, bitterness, self-righteousness, unforgiveness, and judgmentalism)

C. In everything we do we must demonstrate Biblical love toward God and others.

- Matthew 22:35-40 “Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

D. In everything we do we must be absolutely certain that our direction is endorsed by God. We must be committed to align our lives with the dictates of scripture.

- **Man’s tendency:** Proverbs 21:2 “Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts.”
- **God’s Intention:** Proverbs 3:5,6 “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto their own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.” “The fear of God is the unceasing sense of the presence of God which weighs out in righteous judgment every word, thought and action we commit.”

E. In everything we do we must remove from our lifestyles those activities that are clearly forbidden in scripture and those actions or behaviors that would lead us to live a life of worldliness.

- 2 Peter 2:7,8, “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;
- 1 John 2:15, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
- Ephesians 5, “...don’t walk as the Gentiles walk...”

III. Principles regarding the subject of “standards”

A. Be cautious about equating spirituality with standards – “legalism”

- Legalism is the insistence that man-made rules produces spirituality. Sometimes traditions supersede God’s commands. Galatians 3:15; The “list” varies from church to church, circle to circle, region to region, country to country.
- **Two Kinds of legalism:**
 1. Salvation: I must do such and such to be saved.
 2. Sanctification: I must do such and such to be spiritual.
- “...Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart...”

B. Be cautious about equating spirituality with no standards-

#1 Issue: License”

- Many times, it isn’t an issue of license”, it is more of an issue of Christian Conduct. Standards are necessary.
- There are those who would have us believe that there are no demands placed upon the believer and that any standard is legalistic. “Legalism is not the absence of rules.”

- License presumes on God's grace, Romans 6:1 "cheap grace"; and it is a root of selfishness, Romans 15:1-2.

#2 Issue: "liberty"

1. I must be convinced myself, Romans 14:5, 22-23
2. I must be confident before the Lord, Romans 14:6-12
3. I must be considerate of my brothers and sister in Christ, Romans 14:13-21
4. I must be concerned for unbelievers, 1 Corinthians 10:27-33

C. Every "standard" or "issue" can be approached effectively with these elements in mind:

1. **Avoid Extremism; Find Balance. Etc. "Food", Pharisees.**
 - Mark 7:1-7 "Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him. Why walk not they disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."
2. **Recognize and respond to issues; avoid reacting.**
3. **Agree to disagree. Realize that some believers take "Bible Principles" and draw varying legitimate conclusions as to the application of that principle. "This, perhaps, is where most disagreements occur."**
4. **Where "Individual Preference" is present and/or a differing application to "Bible Principles" exist, we have 4 options:**
 - a. **Attack the standard.** – create division/cause contention/ criticize stand – the cause is pride. Realize that those who are unwilling to understand or comply with standards often do so with an accompanying negative spirit.
 - b. **Appeal the standard.** – create legitimate conversation.
 - c. **Adopt the standard.** – You acknowledge that my response to authority is much more important than my pursuit to aggressively defend my perceived personal freedoms/rights.
 - d. **Abandon the standard.**

Negative Abandonment: Demas and Saul, David and Achan
Positive Abandonment: Jesus
5. **Learn to apply the principle of deference.**
 - a. Deference-to respectfully yield to the opinion, will, judgment of another.
 - b. Deference is easier to apply to "Individual Preferences" than to "Clear Bible Commands".
 - c. Deference has its application in the principle of love. "...without love you are nothing..." and "...love edifieth...".
6. **Learn to apply the principle of authority.**
 - a. Every individual needs to recognize the authorities in his life.

- b. Every individual needs to be committed to willingly place himself under authority.
- c. At times we might have to submit our individual preferences and varying applications to Bible principles under the auspices of our immediate authorities as long as in doing so we do not violate one of God's absolutes or our individual consciences/convictions.

IV. Our response to standards are important because:

A. It tests:

- 1. Tests our obedience (Deuteronomy 8:2 "...humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, weather you would keep His commandments or not...")
- 2. Test our commitment ("...Deny yourself and take up your cross...")
- 3. Test our compassion ("...If you love me, you'll keep my commandments...")
- 4. Test our character (1 Peter 2:18-24, "... obey your masters, weather they be good or harsh...")

B. It reveals:

- 1. Our response and sense of duty toward our responsibilities.
- 2. Our response toward our individual priorities.
- 3. Our response toward our perspective of order.

V. Standards become conflicts when:

- A. They confine us
- B. They confuse us
- C. They inconvenience us
- D. They convict us

VI. A word about developing standards

A. Let's confine our opinions or statements to biblical revelation. (James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...")

B. Consider the input of godly counselors

C. Bear in mind the positions your authority has taken

D. Love God with your "whole heart". Deuteronomy 8:1 tells us to obey God's commandments. We do this by obeying God with...

- 1. *Our Heart*: by loving Him more than any relationship, activity, achievement, or possession.
- 2. *Our Will*: by committing ourselves completely to Him.
- 3. *Our Mind*: by seeking to know Him and His Word, so his principles and values form the foundation of all we think and do.
- 4. *Our Body*: by recognizing that our strengths, talents and sexuality are given to us by God to be used for pleasure and fulfillment according to His rules, not ours.
- 5. *Our Finances*: by deciding that all of the resources we have ultimately come from god, and that we are to be managers of them and not owners.
- 6. *Our Future*: by deciding to make service to God and man the main purpose of my life's work.

Conclusion: As we live among the rules, standards, policies and regulations we must remember that God's Word is relevant and reliable and sufficient. The scriptures are sufficient to speak confidently concerning the issues of today. One must study the Word of God carefully, prayerfully, and practically.

Luke 12:48 "For unto whosoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."