

“The Bible Doesn’t Say Not To” Mentality



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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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Introduction

A. Imagine taking your car to the service center and ask for an oil change and routine servicing. But, you are later given a bill for thousands of dollars. When you ask why the bill is so high, you are told they not only did those things, but also put on new tires, changed the brakes, installed a new alternator and battery, changed the transmission, and painted it a different color. Although you insist you did not authorize these repairs, the manager says that you did not tell them *not* to do these things.

B. Or, imagine the next time you go to McDonald’s, you order a Quarter Pounder meal with fries and a drink. But, you are told that you owe over \$200. When you ask why the bill is so high, you are told that your order includes at least one of everything they sell – four Big Macs, seven double cheeseburgers, two Fish Fillets, etc. Although you insist you did not order these items, the manager says that you did not tell them you did *not* want them.

C. While we should all recognize the failed logic in these examples and would not accept such practices, this is exactly how many people approach the Bible. For some reason, many people think it is a good argument to say, “The Bible doesn’t say *not* to.”

D. Purpose: To learn respect for the authority of God as expressed through the Scriptures and appreciate God’s silence.

1. What Is This Mentality?

A. Defining this mentality

1. This mentality recognizes the authority of the Bible regarding things God has forbidden. If there is a “thou shalt not,” this mentality recognizes the need to stay away from it.

2. However, this mentality demands a “thou shalt not” or direct prohibition against everything God does not want us to do. If there is

no such prohibition, this mentality assumes it is then authorized and/or of no real importance to God.

B. What this mentality accomplishes

1. This mentality does not view all of God's words as equally important. Only God's prohibitions are particularly important. Yet, all of God's words are equally inspired by God – both the prohibitions and the affirmations (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

- Romans 13:9 demonstrates how the affirmative command to love your neighbor encompasses many prohibitions (i.e. adultery, murder, stealing, coveting). Therefore, to love your neighbor requires not doing *anything* that would fail to demonstrate love!

2. This mentality only recognizes one half of sin. Sin is anything that violates God's law (1 John 3:4). This involves doing what God has said not to do – and failing to do what God has said to do (James 4:17).

- The Bible teaches that whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Since faith comes through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17), this implies anything we do not have God's approval for cannot be from faith – and is, therefore, sin.

3. This mentality ignores the power of God's silence. It treats God's words without a "thou shalt not" like they are insignificant. Yet, Leviticus 10:1-2 demonstrates how two priests were killed by God because they violated His authority by failing to observe His silence!

- Think about Noah when he built the ark. God told Noah to build an ark using gopher wood (Genesis 6:14). God did not say anything about pine, oak, cedar, etc. Yet, in specifying the wood to use, it automatically forbade any others.

C. Some questions this mentality asks

1. Here are some examples of the kinds of questions this mentality will ask (although we may not phrase these questions quite so bluntly in our minds).

2. Examples: "Why can't I do 'x' if God has never said not to?"
"How can I justify my desired action so I can prove God is okay with

it?” “Who do ‘those people’ think they are to forbid something God has never directly forbidden?”

3. This mentality is either misinformed or rebellious about how to apply the authority God gives. Ultimately, this mentality can focus more on what you want than what God wants.

2. Areas In Which This Mentality Is Manifested

A. Worship

1. God has given a blueprint for how He desires to be worshiped today within the pages of the New Testament (John 4:23-24). Local churches are authorized to worship God in their assemblies through singing, praying, teaching God’s word, the Lord’s Supper, and the collection.

2. Consider music in worship. God has authorized singing in worship (Colossians 3:16, as well as all other New Testament passages on the subject). Yet, one common argument used to justify the use of a mechanical instrument in worship is, “The Bible doesn’t say not to use them” (and this is true). Still, the Bible does not say they should be used either.

3. Consider the Lord’s Supper. God has authorized the Lord’s Supper to be taken on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). Yet, some insist on taking the Lord’s Supper at times the Bible never authorizes (i.e. Thursday, Saturday, etc.) and fail to take of it every week (i.e. once per month or year), claiming that the “Bible doesn’t say not to” (which is true). Still, the Bible does not authorize such either.

B. Work of the church

1. God’s word has given a blueprint for the work local churches are to be involved in. This three-fold work involves preaching the gospel to the lost, edifying the saved, and showing generosity to needy Christians.

2. Consider church-sponsored social and recreational activities (i.e. dinners, plays, sports leagues, field trips, etc.) that are organized and paid for by the church. One argument made is that the Bible does not say the church cannot be involved in these works (though it does say if anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, 1 Corinthians 11:22, 34). Still, the Bible does not authorize these works either.

3. Consider churches supporting human institutions. For example, churches often send money to missionary societies, colleges, preacher schools, etc. One argument made is that the Bible does not say the church cannot financially support such human institutions (which is true). Yet, the Bible does not authorize these arrangements either.

C. Personal holiness

1. God instructs every person who desires to follow Him to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). However, many people accept the standards of the world rather than God's high standards. If God has not directly forbidden whatever it is, they feel right to practice it.

2. Consider a person's clothing. Some feel comfortable wearing short shorts, low-cut tops, revealing bathing suits, form-fitting clothing, clothing with suggestive words/pictures, etc. And, part of the justification is that God has never specifically forbidden such. Yet, God has given a standard for a person's clothing (1 Timothy 2:9-10) and has given us some idea about how He wants people to be covered (i.e. Genesis 3:7, 21).

3. Consider a person's entertainment choices. Some feel comfortable watching television programs, listening to music, looking at websites, reading books, etc. that involve many sinful things (i.e. sexual activity, immodesty, profanity, etc.). Yet, part of the justification is that God has never said we can't watch/listen to/read/etc. such things – as long as we don't do them or desire to do them. Yet, God has given some clear instructions about what we should allow into our minds (Philippians 4:8) and how we should view sin (Romans 12:9).

3. The Importance Of Having Bible Authority

A. The Bible reveals the mind of Christ

1. How can we know what God considers to be right and wrong? It is not by our own experiences, consciences, feelings, traditions, opinions, cultures, etc. Rather, it is impossible to know what God thinks about something apart from what you read in the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)!

2. Whenever the Bible says something must not be done (a "thou shalt not"), we can know God does not approve of that thing.

And, whenever God says something He desires, we can know that He approves of that thing!

B. The Bible completely equips you to live for God

1. God's word tells you everything God wants you to believe, every change He wants you to make, how to make every correction, and everything He wants you to do in His service (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2. If all you do is follow the "thou shalt nots," you ignore much of what God says! And, if you ignore these other things, you are not complete and equipped for every good work!

C. The Bible commands you to do everything in Jesus's name

1. God directly commands you to do everything in Jesus's name (by His authority, Colossians 3:17). Therefore, you must have Jesus's approval for everything you do and say. You find His approval in the pages of the New Testament.

2. Rather than just avoiding things God forbids, you must actually find approval in the Bible for whatever you do (i.e. for how you worship God, for the work a local church does, for how to clothe and entertain yourself, etc.).

D. The Bible will be your criteria for Judgment

1. Jesus's words will judge you (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). You will not be judged by any standard other than His words revealed in the Bible (specifically, the New Testament).

2. On the Judgment Day, Jesus will compare what you have thought, said, and done with what He has instructed in the Bible – and this does not just include the "thou shalt nots." If you want to be welcomed into eternal life in Heaven, you must live according to His authority!

4. How To Establish Bible Authority

A. Direct command/statement

1. Whenever God directly commands or says something, we know it is true and according to His will.

2. For example, we know it is right to love our enemies because Matthew 5:44 gives the command that we do so.

B. Approved example

1. Whenever God shows us an example that He approves, we know that the thing is right and pleasing to Him.

2. For example, we know it is right for Christians to partake of the Lord's Supper with the local church on the first day of the week because Acts 20:7 shows an approved example of this.

C. Forced conclusion

1. Whenever God forces us to make a certain conclusion (based on what is said and/or shown to us in the Scriptures), we know it is right.

2. For example, we know it is right to be baptized by immersion in water because Acts 8:38-39 forces us to the conclusion that this is how the Ethiopian man was baptized.

D. General vs. specific authority

1. When we establish Bible authority, we should consider whether God gives general or specific authority for the thing.

2. General authority includes options for how something is to be carried out. For example, when God told the apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15), He gave them general authority concerning how to go. So, they had the options of walking, riding on an animal, taking a boat, etc. to do what God said. Sometimes the authority God gives to us is also general in nature, which leaves us with options.

3. Specific authority is detailed and precise about how something is to be done. For example, when God speaks about music in worship today, He specifies singing (Colossians 3:16). When God is specific, we are only authorized to do what He specifies (like the wood God specified for Noah to use). Sometimes the authority God gives to us is also specific in nature, and we must only do it in that specific way.

5. Seeing The Results

A. Selfishness

1. Before: "Why can't I do 'x' if God has never directly said not to?"

2. After: “Rather than insisting on my own way and desires about a thing, I’m going to be content with what God has revealed and focus on pleasing Him!”

B. Self-justification

1. Before: “How can I justify my desired action so I can prove God is okay with it?”

2. After: “I am not looking to make myself feel better about a decision I have already made. Rather, I am only interested in making sure that God is okay with what I do!”

C. Judgments

1. Before: “Who do ‘those people’ think they are to forbid something God has not forbidden?”

2. After: “I now recognize that people are right to oppose anything and everything God does not authorize – and want them to do so!”

D. Bottom line

1. Before: “How much can I do that is not directly forbidden by God?”

2. After: “I want to honor Jesus in everything I do, think, and say – and will make sure He is pleased with whatever I do before I do it!”

Conclusion

A. Are you guilty of “The Bible doesn’t say not to?” mentality? If so, I hope this lesson has challenged you and opened your eyes to the failure of this mindset.

B. I hope you are now fully committed to demanding Bible authority before you act. This is the only way you can know that what you do pleases God!

Study Questions

How do we recognize the failed logic behind this mentality in other areas of life?

1. What Is This Mentality?

Define the “The Bible doesn’t say not to” mentality.

List three things this mentality accomplishes.

(1)

(2)

(3)

Give some examples of questions this mentality asks.

2. Areas In Which This Mentality Is Manifested

How is this mentality manifested in worship?

How is this mentality manifested in the work of the church?

How is this mentality manifested in personal holiness?

3. The Importance Of Having Bible Authority

What does the Bible reveal – and why is this important?

What does the Bible equip you for – and why is this important?

What does the Bible command you to do in Jesus's name – and why is this important?

What will the Bible be the criteria for – and why is this important?

4. How To Establish Bible Authority

How does a direct command/statement establish Bible authority?

How does an approved example establish Bible authority?

How does a forced conclusion establish Bible authority?

What is general and specific authority? When God specifies something, what does this mean for everything else?

5. Seeing The Results

Give some results from changing this way of thinking.

What is the bottom line regarding this change of mindset?

