

More than “Do This . . . Don’t Do That!”

Obeying Paul’s Commands
in Ephesians 4 to 6

Ames/Des Moines CityChurch

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Paul's Letters

Jeff is in the midst of an extended series of Sunday morning teaching (related to the development of Mastering the Scripture booklets) on Paul's Letters (Early/Basic, Middle/Advanced, and Later/Perpetuating).

We are in the “middle” of the Middle Letter Ephesians.

“Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Most Christians have a tendency to treat biblical commands as simply “Do this” and “Don’t do that.”

Obey the 38 “rules” in Ephesians 4 to 6 and be a good Christian.

“Do This” and “Don’t Do That?”

Today, I want us to study Ephesians 4 to 6 and look for principles.

Rather than focus only on the 38 “rules” to obey, I want us to look for the handful of principles that help us be truly obedient and pleasing to the Lord.

“Do This” and “Don’t Do That?”

In other words, what are the principles that help you know the next 38 “rules” (or 1038), even if no one tells you what they are.

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Ephesians 4:28

“He who steals must steal no longer.”

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Ephesians 4:28

“He who steals must steal no longer.”

Conceivably, we could “obey” in a superficial, legalistic way and not be truly obedient and pleasing to the Lord.

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”

Much, much more than “Don’t steal!”

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

This is not surprising because Ephesians is a “Middle Letter” with “advanced” teaching to bring us to maturity and wisdom.

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Deep biblical foundation of
principle-based obedience:

The OT “Law” was never merely a
set of “rules.”

Matthew 5:38-39

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

Matthew 22:34-40

But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

Matthew 22:34-40

And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’

Matthew 22:34-40

On these two commandments
depend the whole Law and the
Prophets.”

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?

Ephesians 4 to 6

Today, we are going to function like a hermeneutical community.

- I've done a little study.
- Test the legitimacy of my own findings.
- Help us experience a simple exercise in Bible study (and theology in culture).

Ephesians 4 to 6

I want each table to take one section:

4:1-16, 4:17-32, 5:1-21, 5:22-6:9, 6:10-23

- Read the section.
- Write one short sentence stating the over-arching principle Paul is teaching.
- Write a few more “rules” that would help us obey the principle.

Ephesians 4:1-16

4 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

Ephesians 4:1-16

⁸ Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.” ⁹ (Now this *expression*, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

¹¹ And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-16

¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 4:1-16

Preserve the unity of the Spirit by taking seriously God's gifting for the church.

- Get a SIMA MAP so we all can know if you are a Jeff, Nancy, etc. and how you fit in our community.
- Come to church ready to help others make progress in *First Principles* and first principles.

Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. ²⁰ But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

Ephesians 4:17-32

²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ BE ANGRY, AND *yet* DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need. ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:17-32

³⁰ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:17-32

Engage deeply in growth in behavior related to maturity (wisdom).

- Don't tithe or give token offerings, but leverage everything God has given you for His purpose and plan.
- Don't "go to church," but be the church.

Ephesians 5:1-21

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children;
2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; **4** and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. **5** For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Ephesians 5:1-21

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴ For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.”

Ephesians 5:1-21

¹⁵ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Ephesians 5:1-21

Walk in love and wisdom as a community of children imitating God their father.

- Be very cautious about TV preachers and popular authors who are mostly interested in you sending them money.
- Sing the story of what God has done, is doing, and will do.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

²² *Wives, be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸ So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

²⁹ for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, ³⁰ because we are members of His body. ³¹ FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.

⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

⁵ Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

⁹ And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Align relationships as unto the Lord.

- Parents, raise your children as if they will be the parents of your grandchildren.
- “Grandparents,” be supportive of parents as they raise “grandchildren.”
- Be “aunts” and “uncles” to those in your churches.

Ephesians 6:10-23

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:10-23

¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷ And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..

Ephesians 6:10-23

¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,¹⁹ and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:10-23

²¹ But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

²³ Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible *love*.

Ephesians 6:10-23

Put on the armor of God and pray in the Spirit.

- Pray for the progress of the Gospel.
- Pray for the BILD team and BILD partners.
- Know what the Bible teaches so that you can pray intelligently and properly.

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Tonight, reflect on your statements of the principles in Ephesians 4 to 6, as well as your “new rules.”

Discuss how to keep aligned with the principles and not to get lost in the rules.

More Than “Do This” and “Don’t Do That!”

Discuss how these principles build
on the teaching of Ephesians 1 to 3.

Ephesians 1 to 3

Implications of our calling (our role, our station of life, one's status or position in life, vocation) This is part of being “enlightened”—fully understanding.

Ephesians 1 to 3

1. We have been given an incredible, eternal inheritance by being adopted into far more than an orphan into a rich family. We have been adopted into God's family with an inheritance of unlimited value, in this life and the life to come. Therefore, we need to see this as our core identity that shapes our life planning.

Ephesians 1 to 3

2. Each one of us has a special role to play and work to do. This has huge implications for our life planning (i.e.—LifeN and for shaping our identity).

Ephesians 1 to 3

3. In this confusing world, we are given the privilege and confidence of knowing God's plan, Christ's "grand strategy." This has huge implications for understanding the political world in which we live and the choices we all need to make as citizens in that environment.

Ephesians 1 to 3

4. Before we were not part of the “covenants of promise.” But now we are central to that plan and need to master the plan and play our part, as a lifetime stewardship.

Ephesians 1 to 3

5. We should expect God to demonstrate incredible power in our midst, far more than we could ever ask or expect.