

### 1 Cor 10:33-43

23 “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. 24 Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 25 Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. 26 For “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” 27 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. 28 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— 29 I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else’s conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, 33 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.

In football, when a quarterback sees a change in the defense that would cause the play that he has chosen not to work, he calls what is called “**an audible**”. It is a last minute change in plans due to a circumstance not expected.

This morning I am calling an audible. And it is either Jon led or Spirit led. We will find out which in the rear view mirror.

Let me tell you how this change in focus came about.

Most Decembers I take a hard look at my life. What I am looking for are those things that are either **outright wrong** that I **must stop**, outright **right** that I **need to do**, or those things that are **lawful** but not **helpful**, or **helpful** but **not required** by the law.

I start with the question, “What am I here for?” Why do I exist? Why does God have me breathing air.

Do you often think about that?

Do you often examine what your life is really for?

It is so easy to get lost in our **obligations** that we forget to look at the **bigger picture**.

What am I for?

Fortunately our text answers that question.

Paul is writing to the Corinthians. They are full of problems. And even the ones that have the **best** and **strongest** theology, they have the **most** freedoms, even **they** blow it because they don't **love** their brothers. They get caught up in saying, "I have **this right** to do **this thing**. It does not **violate** any of God's laws. God **permits** it. So I am going to do this thing and I don't care what you think about it. I don't care how it affects you. You are not going to take away my freedom."

Paul says, no. You **still** aren't right. You need to put your brother's needs **above** your own. That is love 101. That is what Christ did for us.

And then Paul reduces it down to its core. And it is also the core of **every other single thing** in our lives. It is that **one thing** that we should be doing, like Jesus told Martha. What is it?

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

In our text's context he is talking about **indulging in lawful liberties**. But we could apply this to everything. It is our core purpose, to glorify God.

In the Westminster Catechism- The first question is this:

**Question. 1.** What is the chief end of man?

**Answer. 1.** Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

They got that right.

You and I and everyone born were created with an **obligation** and **purpose** of glorifying God by **submitting to His leadership** over our lives and **becoming conformed** to the image of Christ, who **perfectly** glorified God. And included in this process is **our enjoyment**. Glorifying God is our source of **deepest pleasure**, our **deepest joy**. Whoever wrote that catechism put a lot of thought into it. Our purpose isn't just to live a human life as God designed it to be lived, but it is to live it in a way where **we regard ourselves** as being **blessed beyond imagination** while we do it.

You and I will not perfectly glorify God until we are in our glorified bodies. But that is what you and I are for.

So most Decembers I start there. That is my purpose. That is why I breathe air.

That is what I am for.

Then I work my way from there. I look at my life. I want to improve. I want to do better. And I have found in my life this usually happens by **very little changes** that happen **habitually**.

Have you ever noticed that you do not get in shape by taking a one time, 20 mile walk? No, it is much better if you take 20- 1 mile walks. It is even better if you develop a habit of taking a one mile walk 20 times per month. That ends up in

240 miles walked per year. That is from here to Hagerstown and back. The habit will change your life much more than an event will. And if you have to start with a 100 yard walk, start there and keep doing it.

That is how the Christian life is.

So I look at the end results I want to get to and I look at my habits.

The primary question is, or at least it should be, how can I glorify Christ **more this year than I did last year?**

Are we all together on this?

Is this what we all want? I know most of you enough to believe that it is what we want.

As I thought about our body and a new year, I thought it would be very good if we start off this year with a challenge.

I think, from talking to you, that **glorifying God better** is truly what you want.

From the youngest Christian here to the oldest, this is what we **must** want. How can I glorify Christ better and enjoy Him more? I mean really, why wouldn't we want this? As afraid as we might be that we that we might **fail again**, isn't it what we want?

This sermon is for you here who are like me. It is for those who are dissatisfied with our progress. It is for those who yearn to live in a way that pleases our Lord even more than we please Him today.

Now to help us a little more, let's look at the broad overarching commands we have in scripture. We won't break them down into the small parts like we often do. We will stick to the big things, the general guiding principles.

Let's relook at this one that Jesus gave us.

Matt 22:35-40

**35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 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. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

OK, we want to look at our lives to see how we can **grow** in glorifying God. Let's start at a very **high level**.

All obedience, all faithfulness, breaks down into two things.

**First is loving God with everything we've got.** Loving God is different than loving people. God has no needs that we can commit ourselves to meeting. But He does have a **will**. There are things **He wants** from His creation. And we love Him

by **committing ourselves** to what **He wants from us**. He wants us to **trust Him**. He wants us to **run to Him** with all our concerns. He wants us to **ask Him** for what we need. He wants us to **praise Him** by growing in our **knowledge** of who He is and having a **deeper appreciation** for who He is. He wants us to **thank Him** in the midst of all the situations he places us in. He wants us to **obey Him**. He wants us to **pour ourselves** into living for those things that **matter most** to Him.

How can we better glorify God by doing those things **this year**? That is not a rhetorical question. It is a question we owe it to God to spend time **answering it**. Don't just give a broad, I ought to pray more. Pick something you can commit to doing better and develop a plan to do it. Commit to a few small things that you can do daily this year that you are not doing. Or a few small things you can commit to **stopping** that you are currently doing. Do any of those things immediately come to mind? If not take it to God in prayer. He will show you. Carla sometimes asks me, "What can I do to make our relationship better." Those may not be the exact words. But that is basically the question she asks. And I usually have an answer after I think about it a little bit. And she usually has an answer if I have the bravery to ask such a question. Because, face it, we always have room to grow in our relationships. Well we can bet that there are things that impede our fellowship with God. Do we not think He would be quick to reveal those things when we are honestly ready to deal with them? Ok, the first thing we should look at to better glorify God is how we are loving God.

**Second is loving people like we love ourselves.**

How are we doing with that? It can be a little frustrating to any perfectionist that we are just going to have to accept that we will **never** do this **perfectly** in our lives, any more than we will love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. On **any day** any one of us could walk up to another and say, you don't love me as well as you ought. And **any of us** would have to say, guilty as charged. Now when that person starts defining **HOW** we are not loving them as we should, we might disagree with them. But there is only one debt in our life that scripture says we should remain in. Romans tells us that we have a continuing **debt of love** toward one another. **Rom 13:8 & Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.**

We will **always** owe each other **love**. We will never **love enough**. And that is ok. There is always another opportunity to meet another need, to pray another prayer, to spend another hour with someone, to check in on someone, to grant

some encouragement, to give some correction. We will never have loved enough. We can accept that and still strive to be more like Jesus.

We know it is God's will for our lives to be loving. We know it. What tiny step can we make this year, what little thing can we add to each day, that will improve our love for one another? That will improve our love for the lost?

The answers to that question will be as varied as we are. The Lord has different niches for each of us. He designed us **differently** to fulfill **different spots**. But for sure He has work for all of us. Meaningful work. Often **exciting** work when it involves people. What little thing can we change that could make a huge impact by Jan 1 2025? You do not need to figure that out now. Take it to the Lord this week, and I mean really **do it**, plan **when** you will do it, put it on your calendar, set a reminder, and **do it**. The Lord will show you that thing. Again, these are things that are **for sure** His will. He wants them done. He will help you do it. In fact He will empower it. **For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure**. But we must show up. We must do what He tells us. These changes are not likely to happen to us **by accident**. We aren't likely to **stumble into** these changes. They require intention and commitment.

Now let's look at one more "big picture" command that Christ gave us. These are the things that help us know **what we are here for**. It lets us know the **broad headings** of what Christ wants us committed to.

#### **Matt 28:16-20**

**16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

OK here is Jesus telling the disciples what He wanted them to do. We cannot get better than this if we want to know what **Christ's will is** for **His church**. And this has a direct bearing on every believer.

If you look at Acts 2 you will see that there were believers from all over the known world. It says there were "**devout men from every nation under heaven**." We know that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. And then persecution set in at Jerusalem so that these people were dispersed **throughout** the whole world. God had the "**going**" part largely taken care of even before Paul began ministering. But the Jews **that went** did not have a full understanding yet of just

how much this was also a message for the **gentiles**. Paul was given the ministry of **making that clear**.

Where verse 19 says “**Go, therefore**”, many scholars translate that differently. They translate it, “**As you are going**”. And that would make perfect sense. The large group of new converts were soon to be going throughout all the world. **Go** is not the primary command in this scripture. The central command is to **make disciples**. Everything else is a support to that command. All of us are going. Every time we leave our front door we are **going**. Every time we communicate with unbelievers, even digitally, we are **going**.

How do we make disciples?

Other places we are told to preach. We proclaim the same gospel we believed that saved us. We are witnesses to that gospel. So we speak that into the ears of people. When some respond, we bring them into the church with baptism. It is baptism where a person admits their unity with Christ, and in the book of Acts that appears to be the point that they are **brought into the church**. They had to **actively identify with Christ** before the church would really take them into the membership, although they probably did not have anything like an official membership like we do.

After that they were to be **taught how to obey**, and the assumption is that we teach them to obey **like we obey**. This is probably not a sit down school lesson, although sometimes it might be. It is more like **life lived together**. We take someone into our lives and say, “Let me show you how a Christian man **loves his wife**, even when she is difficult. Let me show you how to **respect your husband**, even at times when he does not appear to deserve it. Let me show you how to **raise your children up** in the admonition of the Lord. I will show you how **I obey** commands to submit to the Lord in all things. I will show you how to handle when your life appears to suddenly be falling apart.” That is real discipleship. It has to be more than sermons and Sunday school. We can safely **pretend** in **those** social environments of church gatherings. But discipleship must also be done in real life, **where life gets real**.

And Christ promises, as we are about those things, His presence will be with us, empowering what we are doing. After all, won't **living** in Jesus's name be accompanied with the same power as **praying** in Jesus's name?

So what are you **here for**? What are you on planet earth breathing air **for**? Why are you in this church on January 21, 2024? What is your purpose? What can you focus on in 2024 that will bring more **joy** and **peace** into your life and others around you? This is opportunity, fresh opportunity. We have the chance to

please Christ this year even more than we do now. You might think, but I am already **so busy**, so **burdened**. But these changes I am talking about are things you will be **glad about**. As you see the fruit in your life grow, they will be the things you will look back and be glad about.

I am not going to go much further this morning. There is no need to. This is not so much a sermon as a **work assignment**. If you or I come back here next week and have done nothing with it, we **have failed** in the assignment. Every scripture agrees with what I am asking us to do. If you do it by a different method, so be it. If you have already done it, fine. If you are actively in the process of doing this, good. If you can find a reason that it is against God's will to do such a thing, show me. But if not, consider that you may be refusing a means of grace that God has given to you if you don't take this seriously.

Now some of you may find your lives in the midst of some crisis, so this introspection may need to wait. That is fine. Then put it on your calendar for a later date. But I believe this is the **Lord's will** for **all of us**. It is for His glory. And I want to ask one more thing.

We know that God's will for Ferndale Baptist is **Evangelism** and **Discipleship**. I want to hold this out as a challenge for every one of us for the year of 2024. This is something that will require little thought. Put this saying on your fridge. Put it on the door you go through as you leave. I would like us all to join in offering a 30 second prayer daily in 2024. The words don't matter but the idea does.

Again, if you are already doing this, then just keep doing it.

**Lord, please guide me this day to someone I can witness to and show me very clearly when I have the opportunity.**

I have thought about this a lot. I cringe when I think of barging into other people's lives and interrupting their lives in order to present the gospel. I have done a lot of that. And I have trouble drumming up the desire to do more of it. Maybe that shows a faithlessness on my part. But even when I did it, God did not seem to bless it much.

I have become more convinced, regarding evangelism, that what is needed most is not **more activity on our part** as much as calling upon God to move in a way that directs our efforts. It is He who adds to the church. We just lay out the message.

Well I would like to see 2024 be the year that God shows off what **He** can do at Ferndale. I am not suggesting any kind of evangelism program. I am not suggesting any effort **other than** praying this prayer and then being alert to what God is doing. I think God wants to see some of these seats filled with people that

He will draw to Himself and I think He wants to use the wealth of knowledge that we sit on to help some new Christians learn how to live in Christ. Knowing what kind of God we serve, I cannot imagine it otherwise.

I plan on putting the following in Slack and on Facebook.

**Application:**

Prayerfully ask yourself these questions. All of us.

Where is my life failing most to glorify God?

In light of the commands to love God and love people

And in light of the command to make disciples

What am I doing that I believe I should not do?

What am I not doing that I believe I should do?

What few things could I change daily to change that?

What accountability can I put in place to assure that I do these things?

Also:

**Pray something like this daily.**

Lord, please guide me this day to someone I can witness to and show me very clearly when I have the opportunity.

**In closing I would like to say this.**

I believe that the single most self-deceiving thing in many of our lives is our ability to interpret our **intentions** to obey as if it is the **obedience** itself. If we hear a sermon and we think, yes, I agree with that. I should do that. It is as if we think we get credit for doing it. It is as if we think **intending to do it** gives our life the benefit we gain by actually **doing it**. We might easily think that our enthusiasm in agreeing with what we hear translates into something good. But all it really causes, in many cases, is that we then think we are more spiritually healthy than we really are because of what we mentally agree with.

What would our lives look like if we actually **put into place** the changes that we have been convicted in the sermons that we should put into place?

What things, no matter how tiny, will we commit to **begin to change** this week due to what you heard today? Those things are how we grow in glorifying God. To make **no change** is to only fill ourselves with more information. Let's move beyond intending well. What will we **DO**? If you are already in the process of doing something like this, then just allow this sermon to provide some guidance. Again, I will post the questions on Facebook and Slack. The challenge has been given.