

November 7, 2021 @ FBC Lorena

[Living in the Spirit]: "Every Don't Has a Do" Ephesians 4:25-32

Take Home: [Ephesians 4:32]

Intro

[Welcome Donnie & Sheryl! and Thank You-Pastor Appreciations]

-Have you ever made God mad? This might be hard to answer, because we can usually tell when we make people mad! But God? Can we tell when he is mad?

-Let me ask another question: Have you ever made God sad? In our Bible Study groups this morning, we talked about "grieving the Spirit," which makes it sound like we are capable of making God sad.

-When it comes to "religion," which is how you do what you believe, people for years have done all they could do to not make their god mad.

-EX: The Greeks would give offerings & sacrifices to Zeus, Poseidon and others so that the gods would not get mad at them and smite them!

-In Christianity though, it's way different. We don't want to make God mad or sad, but not out of fear; instead we want to love him like he loves us.

① -[TURN to Ephesians 4:25-32; PB #949] Paul's letter to the Christians at Ephesus is a big picture of moving from "living like the world" to "living like Jesus." It is very practical. Last week we looked at 1:13-14, where the Spirit (God everywhere, all the time) is the promise that God is with us now & forever! Today we are looking at the nuts & bolts, the meat & potatoes of what "living like Jesus" looks like.

-Just like in every religion, there are things you do & things you shouldn't do.

-Christianity has those too, but it's all about loving God like he loves us [READ].

Movement 1: The don'ts & do's

-There is more here than I could say or explain in one message. So let me approach it this way: the message is called "Every Don't Has a Do," and here's what I mean. When it comes to doing what you believe (religion), it is easy to focus on "don't do this, don't do that," but these verses show that for every "don't" there is an alternative "do."

-Vs 25: don't be false; do be true! Get rid of falsehoods, and start speaking truth.

-Vs 26-27: don't sin when you're angry (it doesn't say don't get angry), but when you get angry don't sin & do get over anger so Satan won't have opportunity.

-Vs 28: don't steal (like 10 commandments); do work & share.

-Vs 29: don't speak unwholesome words; do speak wholesome, helpful words.

-Vs 30: don't grieve God; which implies do make God smile! How?

-Vs 31-32: Things in vs 31 grieve God; things in vs 32 make God smile.

-I mentioned that this is a practical letter, and it's true! You and I could take every "don't" & "do" from these verses alone, and spend years trying to grow in them. And that's only a few verses...there are plenty more to read & learn from!

-Here's the point you and I should see: Doing Christianity, living in the Spirit, following Jesus is not just a list of "don'ts," because for every one thing you should NOT do, there is something you SHOULD do!

-In other words, don't be so focused on what you shouldn't do that you forget what you should do.

-Not only should you not steal, you should share instead! Not only should you not say harmful words, you should say helpful words instead. For every sin you say "no" to, there is an action you should do.

-Discourage the bad stuff & encourage the good stuff! ⁽²⁾

-EX: Think about how when it comes to how you live, you have "positive reinforcement" and "negative reinforcement." P.R. is about when you DO something good & you get encouraged. N.R. is when you DON'T do something good & you get punished.

-If you don't clean up your room, you get time out; if you do clean up your room, maybe you get a piece of candy.

-If you don't make your sales quota, you lose commission; if you do make your quota, you get commission and perhaps a bonus!

-Try to find that balance between focusing on what you should not do as well as doing on what you should do. Because every don't has a do!

Movement 2: Sum it up

-Scholars say that chapters 1-3 are Paul's teachings, and chapters 4-6 are the practical applications. Paul started this by saying vs 4:1: live your life worthy of God's call on your life; he finished this section by saying vs 32.

-To sum it up, there are so many things we must stop doing: stop being fake, stop holding to anger & sin, stop giving Satan an opportunity, stop stealing, stop speaking unhealthy words, stop making God sad, etc.

-If those are some of the DON'Ts, then what is our overall DO?

-Kindness, Compassion, and Forgiveness. These 3 things together will overpower every "don't" we should not do.

-These are CENTRAL to Christianity: God shows his kindness, compassion, and forgiveness to all people all the time!

-So let's memorize vs 32, and then talk about WHY this matters [practice memorizing together]. If you want to make God smile, then [say Vs 32].

-An older translation says "tenderhearted" instead of "compassionate," and that speaks to how your heart changes when you make Jesus your Savior. Your heart becomes as tender as his that you forgive like he forgives. Michael Allen said, "Tenderheartedness is so significant to kindness...the only person who will bear that sort of cost willingly will be the one who does so with a genuinely 'tenderhearted' disposition toward others."¹ It'll cost you to forgive like Jesus.

-In a world that does all the don'ts, you and I should [say vs 32].

-EX: N.T. Wright wrote, "Kindness is one of the purest forms of the imitation of God."²

-Kindness doesn't save you, but being kind & compassionate shows you are living life to be like God. Doing good things doesn't save you, but it shows the world that you are living life to be like God who has saved you.

Closing

-God is calling you and me to be kind, compassionate & forgiving. That's our DO!
When you and I do this, we will make God smile, and we will love him like he loves us.

-I can agree with all of this, but I want to be the first to say I struggle with this.

-It is not easy to be kind, compassionate & forgiving. These are not easy things by themselves, and they sure aren't easy to do all at the same time.

-You and I will struggle sometimes a little & sometimes a lot to be kind...to be compassionate/tenderhearted...to forgive.

⁴-We were made to walk with God. To walk with God, to live in the Spirit, it means that once Jesus is our Savior, we try to live for him & live like him, which means we need to repeat this over and over [say vs 32].

-*Why repeat it?* Because it ain't easy, and it's a struggle to love people like God loves people. So keep saying [vs 32], and God will help you with it.

-EX: Yesterday, we needed some "Jesus Chicken" from Chickfila for breakfast, and I exited New Road for some reason instead of going Hwy 6. As we got to the light, I saw a homeless woman with a little sign that said, "Need a Blessing." It made me think of the Giving Tree/Reverse Offering we did, when we took \$10 to bless people with. I remembered that because of the Lorena game Friday night, I had a \$10 bill in my pocket. It would've been easier to keep it for myself, but since I've been learning Ephesians 4:32, I got out of the car (nearly scared her), and gave her the \$10 and said, my church has been blessing people, and I'd like to bless you with this.

-I struggled a bit with the Spirit, and had several excuses to not get out of the car and give her "my money," but God reminded me that this was what I should DO.

-What is God asking you to do? What will he ask you to do?

-It will be a struggle, but the more you say it, the more you think it, the better you'll hear the Spirit lead you to [vs 32].

-Giving your life to God is more about what you DO than what you DON'T do. Love him like he loves you, and then love others like he loves you.

[Pray]

Table Talk:

1. Have I ever made God mad or sad?
2. How can I balance focusing on what I should do & what I should not do?
3. What will I do to practice God's kindness to others?