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Let's Just Do What God Says

- by T. Doy Moyer

Religious division is a result of failing to do what the Lord says. It reflects an earthly mindset. The apostle Paul told the factious Corinthians: "for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3-4).

Look around. Hundreds of denominations exist. They call themselves after men or peculiar doctrines. They engage in a plethora of unauthorized activities because this is what they want. Focus is put upon the social or political. All of this is done supposedly in the name of Christ. However, the Lord says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Religion has become so feeling and emotion oriented that to suggest that there are those who are practicing lawlessness "in the name of Christ" is to be mean spirited and unkind. There is no such thing as false worship in today's society. "Tolerance" for all the various ways of "serving God" is the call of today. Shame on us for suggesting that there is a pattern of authority for the worship and work of God's people. Frankly, with an attitude like this, we might as well write our own Bible.

God's will is unity. We are to endeavor for it by following His plan in the Scriptures (Ephesians 4:1-6). We are not at liberty to toss aside any of the teachings of the Bible. Yet, in order for denominationalism and division to exist, tossing aside what God says is exactly what is being done. It's no wonder that the world has responded with disbelief (see John 17:20-21).

Let's just do what God says. That may sound simplistic, but it is still the key to pleasing God and maintaining unity among believers. Let's be just Christians. It can be done - it must be done if we are to please God. May we all examine ourselves, our practices, and our doctrines, and see if we are following God's will. It's in the Book.

Comfort Is No Excuse

Clay Soto

One night last year, Grayson stayed the night with a few of his friends and was the first one of the group to fall asleep. As good, mature 16-year-old boys do, they drew on his face with a magic marker. The next day, after my mom helped him scrub the marker off of his face, I started having some questions about the situation. I asked him "Grayson, did you not feel it when they were writing all over you." And he said, "actually, I didn't feel a thing. I was sleeping on a tempurpedic."

That line got me thinking. We are a people who enjoy being comfortable. We like our comfortable beds, our air-conditioned cars, and the best pair of tennis shoes that we can buy. But more than that, we like staying comfortable so much that we have these things that we call "comfort zones." We talk about them pretty often actually. When we have to do something new or something that we don't want to do, we say that it's just out of our comfort zone. But sometimes we will try these things and put ourselves in these transitional times of discomfort because we know that it's

good for us. If we're uncomfortable, we're growing; if we're stepping out into new territory, its because we need to, and if we're climbing out of our comfort zone, its almost always a good thing.

Complacency in Christianity can be scary. When we stop wanting to grow and change, we stay where we are simply because we're comfortable. We know that we should keep growing, and that we should be pressing forward, but its just seems too hard. So we start making excuses. We're a busy people. We work, we study, we exercise, we have obligations to our family and friends, we're constantly moving and doing. And in this life of duties and responsibilities, sometimes the greatest thing we forget is Who our true obligation is to and where our true citizenship is.

In Luke 14, Jesus tells a parable of a dinner. "A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.' And another one said, 'I have bought 5 yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.' And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.' And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the slave said, 'Master what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"

Last fall I took a class called Organizational Leadership, and my professor asked us to look at the excuses we make in our lives and challenge them. I had never thought about that before. Excuses are the way out. They're comforting and they make us feel better. But the reality is that if we don't challenge the excuses that we make in our lives, we'll never get better and we'll never get over them. We constantly play the blame game. People blame their background, their parents, their environment, their friends, instead of really focusing on what they truly have control over.

There's a long line of people in the Scriptures who could have made excuses for the things that they had done or the lack of things that they were given. They could have looked at their past lives and said that they just weren't fit for the kingdom of God. They could have made excuses to stay in their sin or to doubt God's will and power, but in each of their lives, God was in control. Abraham was too old, Joseph was abused, Moses wasn't eloquent, Rahab was a harlot, David was a murderer, and Jonah ran away from God. What's your excuse? We read all about these people and how God used them. We read the stories about His power, how He delivered Noah from the flood, how He brought down the walls of Jericho, how He rained fire down on the prophets of Baal, and how He raised His Son from the dead. And somehow, in times of trial and tribulation, we still let Satan whisper to us, "its just going to be too hard. You probably can't do it."

So I challenge you to come out of your comfort zone and grow in new areas in your service to God. "Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Anything less is just inexcusable.