



CAPITOL COMMISSION

How to Do What We Do

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Consider the reputation of your name. What would come to others' minds when they hear it? Here are some political nicknames from the past:

Charles the Simple, so called for his policy of making concessions to the Norse invaders rather than fighting.

Louis the Sluggard, who ruled in France from 986-987, was known for his self-indulgence.

Ethelred the Unready gained his reputation because of his inability to repel a Danish invasion of England.¹

Names meant much more in the culture of the first-century church than they do today. The name of the Lord is a central thought in this study's passage and the actions and words of His children may give the watching world their only conception of what His name means.

I. THE PERVASIVE ELEMENT OF WHAT WE DO

Colossians 3:17 – Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

What a huge concept this short verse is! The words are simple. No deep theological terms are used. The simplicity of the words could deceive us into believing that they are less important. But the command here is one no human can ever fully master in this life.

The pervasiveness is strongly felt in words like “whatever” and “all”. Stop and think of the scope of these words. All, everything you and I do and say, is to be done in the name of Jesus Christ. The implications are massive.

We make thousands of decisions and communicate thousands of words each day. Is it possible to choose one singular impetus to guide every action and word? According to this verse, it's not only possible, but it is required of those who truly follow Christ.

This begs a good question, though. If doing all in the name of Christ is **not** behind our actions and words, then what is?

Generally, humans make decisions based on what seems best to them and we have a natural aversion to being told what to do. That is how we're wired and that is the constant struggle for the Christian: how do we stop doing everything our way in order to do everything Christ's way? What does it even mean to “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

In the strongest sense, it is identification. We follow Him, let others know that and invite them to believe in Christ as well. There is also authority in the name of Jesus. Just as the governor's name makes a bill a law, the name of the Lord has all authority to carry out His purposes in all situations.

All that we say and do should be associated with the name of Jesus Christ. By our words and our works, we should glorify His name. If we permit anything into our lives that cannot be associated with the name of Jesus, then we are sinning. We must do and say everything on the authority of His name and for the honor of His name.²

II. THE PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE DO

Colossians 3:18-22; 4:1 – Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart. Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. . . Masters grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing you too have a Master in heaven.

The passage then lists several examples of what this looks like in real life. Family and employment relationships give us all many opportunities to live out the command to do all in Jesus' name. These are the people we're around the most and even though these aren't exhaustive commands for behaviors and attitudes, they show the principle of placing ourselves under the authority of God's way of relating to others.

The New Testament does not contain a detailed code of rules for the Christian. . . the son who has come to years of responsibility knows his father's will without having to be provided with a long list of “do's and don'ts”. What the

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New Testament does provide is those basic principles of Christian living which may be applied to all the situations of life as they arise.³

We shouldn't stumble over these verses due to controversies they have sparked in the past. The mention of slavery does not condone the practice, but acknowledges it as a reality in Paul's day. Many were coming to Christ who were either slaves or slave-owners, but all were taught they were equal at the foot of the cross and should conduct themselves justly within their employment responsibilities.

Similarly, the Bible's instructions for submission of wives is often misunderstood. No inferiority of women is intended here and, according to verse nineteen, is meant to be enjoyed in a loving home with a husband who cherishes and leads as Christ would.

III. THE PRIORITY ENERGIZING WHAT WE DO

Colossians 3:23-25 – Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

Again we see the words "whatever you do". The first time, the text commands us to employ a pervasive worldview in all we do and say – doing everything in the name of Jesus. This time the text provides the motivation energizing our work in the world. Instead of initially striving to please people around us, our top priority must be to seek God's approval first.

For the politician who knows and wants to please God, what does this look like? The constant pressure to please your constituents may conflict with your faith. Times like this require a strong commitment to these verses and to do that you must be immersed in God's Word and know what pleases Him.

FOR A POLITICIAN, THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE POSED IN THESE VERSES IS HOW TO PLEASE GOD RATHER THAN PEOPLE WHEN THEIR EXPECTATIONS CONFLICT.

Seek wisdom from God and His word when obeying Him would cost you professionally or politically. We must let God speak for Himself rather than project onto Him what **we** think He would want us to do. As the following example demonstrates, going against human conventional wisdom could lead to advancement from above.

CONCLUSION: THE EXAMPLE OF DANIEL

Daniel casts a long shadow as an Old Testament giant of faith. When it came to pleasing God rather than men, he consistently made the best choice. He lived at a time when Israel was in foreign exile under rulers who did not follow the One true God, creating some situations for Daniel in which he had to choose the authority of men or God.

One such dilemma arose when then district leaders approached King Darius to convince him to pass a measure that outlawed petitioning anyone other than the King. Daniel's response showed his first allegiance:

Daniel 6:10 – Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before His God, as he had been doing previously.

Daniel understood that everything in his life needed to be motivated by the name, identity and reputation of the Lord - even if it meant a date with some lions. God also expanded Daniel's political standing in Persia as He showed His favor to him. May God grant us the ability to think and act this way regardless of the man-made consequences.

¹ Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Col 3:17). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

³ Tom Constable. (2003; 2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Col 3:17). Galaxie Software.