

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/2/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 3 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those who live in foster homes. Ask that they might find the love and acceptance we all desire and deserve. Pray for those who receive those who have lost parents or families that they will care for their charges in ways show the value we all have in GOD'S eyes.*

It can be tempting, and many people give into this temptation, to find things in the Bible that condemn what other people do. It is a way of feeling better about myself because, "I'm not them." For centuries, people have used the Bible to bludgeon others without looking at all of what the Bible says. Particularly, it is easy to ignore the things the Bible prohibits that I do, in favor of what the Bible prohibits that others do. Here's a list of just some of the things the Bible condemns that you perhaps may find yourself doing to help put things in perspective:

An instruction for men: "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip of the edges of your beard." – Leviticus 19:27 Did you shave today?

"Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material." – Leviticus 19:19. Check the tag in your shirt or blouse.

"And the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you." – Leviticus 11:7 No bacon? Of course, Peter received a vision where GOD told him to eat whatever he wanted.

"Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and streams you may eat any that have fins and scales. But creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to regard as unclean." – Leviticus 11:9-10 There goes clam chowder and grilled shrimp.

"Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or course joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving." – Ephesians 5:4 No swearing or dirty jokes.

"Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death." – Exodus 21:17 Ever get mad at Mom or Dad? Of course not. You wouldn't be here if you had, right?

For the ladies: "I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes." – I Timothy: 2:9 So much for trying to look nice.

"Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence." – Psalm 101:5 No gossip. Or listening to gossip. Or reading those gossipy magazines. Or...

"Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them." – Leviticus 19:31 No fortune tellers or horoscopes or the like.

And there are plenty more. Lots more that we are to avoid. Tattoos. Covering your head or not covering your head. Premarital sex. Extramarital sex. Eating fruit from a tree that is less than five years old. (Have you checked?) Eating meat with blood still in it. The list goes on and on.

And none of this, “Yeah, but...” when you read the list above. It’s either true for all or it isn’t.

So, why do we focus on the behaviors of others and not our own. Again, it makes us feel better if we can find some bad behavior or worse-than-us behavior in others. I remember as a child being told that when you point at someone else, there are three fingers pointing back at you.

What then are we to do? Clean out our closets and change our diet. Well, yes, if you feel that is a way of glorifying the LORD. But one of the reasons JESUS died on the cross was to free us from the need to earn GOD’S love by behaving in certain ways. We are free from that guilt and can live, instead, in ways that we believe give honor to GOD. But if we want to claim that for ourselves, then we also should recognize that freedom for others. And we should even encourage others to also be freed from the guilt and shame that others have placed on them and know that they are loved and accepted by GOD. JESUS wanted to free us from the rules about how to earn GOD’S favor and just know that GOD loves us. All of us. It’s either true for all or it isn’t.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey