

What Should I Do Now?

by Bill Aumack

Have you ever been reading your Bible and you come across something that seems to conflict with something else you read in the Bible? Right. I read that over there. I thought I understood that over there. Now I'm reading this. But this doesn't seem to jive with that. They seem to conflict. And now I don't know what to do. I'm stuck, confused, Right? It's frustrating.

So what do we do? Sometimes we go ask for help. Maybe we have a mentor or somebody we trust. Maybe we go ask our parents, the pastor, the head elder. Don't ask that guy. Now, whenever I do that joke, I worry if you're new here today and you've never been here before. I'm the head elder, so I'm not making fun of the head elder. Me and the head elder are tight. We're good. It's all right. Except now I feel like we have multiple personalities. But we're good. We're good. It's just a joke, okay? But we get stuck and we don't know what to do.

And there's lots of places in the Bible where that can happen. I'm going to look at a couple real quick. We don't have time to go real deep on these, but I just want to give you a couple of the kind of prominent examples that people might use for this. So get out your sermon notes, get out your Bibles.

The first one is the **dietary rules**, right? And we know some of the dietary rules in the Old Testament about eating clean meat, non clean meat, and what you're supposed to eat and what you're not supposed to eat and how you're supposed to cook it. I mean, Leviticus, there's two chapters. Deuteronomy, there's two chapters. It's full of the stuff, right? And we have all that stuff.

And a lot of times God doesn't give us an explanation of why certain meat is clean and unclean. He just says, you can eat this and don't eat that. And we might stand there and go, well, why? Sometimes it makes sense. Don't eat vultures. Why? Well, they eat roadkill. Don't eat that. Makes sense. Other times it doesn't. Right? We don't know what to do.

But then we get to First Corinthians. Let's go to First Corinthians. Okay, First Corinthians. You all have to bear with me today because I just got this new Bible, I mean, like just this week, and I wanted a Bible with bigger print. You know, I'm getting younger every day. And so I wanted a Bible with bigger print and boy did it come through. I can read this bad boy from across the room. The problem is everything is really far away. You gotta flip for days to get to the next book in the Bible. Okay, so I'm still learning how this one works, so bear with me. All right, so First Corinthians 10:23. *It says I have the right to do anything you say, but*

not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

See, I can do whatever I want. Everything's okay. I'm not sure that's exactly what that means. Let's take a different example. Suppose you want to be a world class athlete. I'm not sure that a diet of pizza and chocolate cake is going to get you to where you want to be. Now you can try it, it's permissible, but it might not be all that beneficial. Right. So you can do whatever you want to do, but maybe you're not going to get to the goal you want to get to. Right. And if we look in that chapter at the beginning of chapter 10, let's just say at the top, warnings from Israel's history. You can't do all these things. Look at some of the things that Israel did wrong and how it went wrong and don't do these things of, you know, and how their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Right? Yeah. You have freedom to do what you want, but it doesn't always end up good. Right.

Let's look at another one. The justice. Right. **Old Testament justice.** Good Old Old Testament. Right. Eye for an eye. Right. And that's exactly what Exodus 21 says. If we were to go look at that, I'll leave that for you later. But it's talking about if people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely, but there's no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the husband demands. And the court allows that. Court allows. That part is important. *But if there's serious injury, you are to take a life for a life. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a burn for a burn, a wound for wound, and a bruise for a bruise.*

So that means if Annette hits me and gives me a bruise, I get to hit her and give her a bruise? No, no, you don't get to do that. See, they had a court and what they're saying is you take them to the court. And the court will exact an appropriate judgment against them. That will be an eye for an eye. Not necessarily. Hey, he gouged your eye out. We're going to gouge his eye out. Not necessarily.

Okay, we see this today. Sometimes you see somebody that commits a crime, it's all over the news. It was horrible. It was terrible. And then they get like six months probation. And we're like, that's not fair. What do we call that? He got a what? Slap on the wrist? That wasn't fair. And what this is saying is we're going to be fair. We're going to be fair about this. Not necessarily that you get to go around and, you know, somebody punches you, you get to punch them back. That's not what he's saying.

You go look at the New Testament. Let's go to Matthew chapter five in the New Testament. Matthew, chapter five. Boy, the pages in this thing are still new. Matthew, chapter 5, verses 38 to 40. Now, if I say we're in Matthew 5, 6, or 7, what are we talking about? Sermon on the Mount. You should always know that. Matthew 5, 6, and 7, Sermon on the Mount. Exodus

20. What is it, Ten Commandments? Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is what? Sermon on the Mount. We always know that. So we're in Matthew 5. If you've got a red letter Bible, it's all in red. Jesus is talking here. So of course it's on the next page. Because Matthew 5 takes up three pages in this Bible. Okay? *You have heard it said there was eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek. Also, if someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles, give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*

Well, that doesn't sound like eye for an eye. In fact, Jesus says it's not eye for an eye. But if you look up the chapter a little bit and we go to Matthew 5:17, he says, do not think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. So God's Jesus is not getting rid of the law. He's doubling down. He's doubling down. And look what he talks about here. He talks about murder, divorce, oaths, adultery, all these things that it matters if you do them Right. So the law still matters.

The last one, **Sabbath keeping**. We're all familiar with the fourth commandment. What's it say? Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you should labor, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Right? And the Old Testament repeats this a lot. I didn't put it on there, but in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, those four books, they talk.... There's 12 unique passages, not just text, but passages, where they talk about this. Sometimes they repeat the fourth commandment almost word for word. What do we know when the Bible repeats something? What does that mean? It's important. Pay attention. It's important. And so it's important. And the Jews did that. They paid attention.

Isaiah 56 and 58. Israel's wandered away from God again. God's talking through the prophet Isaiah to the people. And listen to what he says at the beginning of Isaiah 56. *Blessed is the one who does this, the person who holds it fast, who keeps Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps their hands from doing any evil.* And he goes on in later verses to talk about how he will bring these people to their holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer and the things that he'll do for them. And then Isaiah 58, verses 13 and 14 says, *if you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the Sabbath's Lord's holy day, honorable, if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking out of words, then you will find your joy in the Lord. And I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast in the inheritance of. Of your father Jacob.*

So there appears to be a lot of things you have to do for the Sabbath, right? So then we get over. Let's go to Mark. Mark, Chapter two. I know I'm banging you around in your Bibles today, and so I can learn how to navigate in this one. Mark, chapter 2, verses 23 to 27. *One*

Sabbath, Jesus was going through the grain fields. And as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath? And he answered, have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?

And in the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread which is lawful Only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions. Then he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord of even the Sabbath. And we read that one sentence, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Well, it was made for me. Then I get to do what I want to do, right? It's made for me. And I want to go to Magic Mountain. And I'm going to Magic Mountain. If it's made for me and I want to paint my living room, then I'm going to paint my living room. It's made for me. I'm not exactly sure that's exactly what it means, but it seems to conflict with what we read in the Old Testament. So how do we deal with those things?

And I'm gonna stick to the Sabbath example a lot today only because we're starting a series on Sabbath next week and I hope you've all signed up for a group. We've got a lot of groups up there. We got a new group that's starting. It's on Tuesday mornings. If you work nights or if you're retired and you've got days free, or maybe you're independently wealthy and you don't have to work. I don't think we've got some of those. And if we do, I want to be your friend. But we've got a new group that meets Tuesday mornings at 11 o' Clock. Okay, so be sure to sign up for a group because I think a lot of the heavy hitting in this series is going to happen in our small groups. That's where we're going to wrestle with this topic quite a bit. Pastor's going to preach some great sermons. I'm doing two of them. Hopefully they'll be okay. But I think the small groups is where it's really going to be at.

Okay, so now usually when we hit something that we're not clear about, we do one of two things because we can't stay pat. It's too uneasy, Right? When there's conflict, it's uneasy. It's frustrating. We don't like it. So we do one of two things. One is we look at it, and we say, I don't understand this, so I'm going to. We need to do more. Keep more rules, do more things, work harder. We need to get back to the good old days. The problem is, I don't know where the good old days were. Was that Dad's days or Grandpa's days or Abraham Lincoln's days? Or 1st century Jesus and the disciple days, or King David, you know, where was the good old days? I don't know. I don't know how far to go back. But we do this, and I'm going to use some terms that I hate to use because they're overloaded and they have baggage and stuff, but hear my heart, because they're the only words I have. You get more conservative, right? And you get conservative and conservative and conservative. And eventually you're over there in ultra conservative land.

Now the other approach is to look at these things and go, I don't understand this. I don't know what to do with it. If God had wanted me to understand this, he'd have made it so I can understand it, so it must not matter. I can do whatever I want to do. There's freedom in Christ and grace and mercy. So this doesn't matter. And that doesn't matter. And that doesn't matter. And you get more and more and more liberal until anything goes, okay?

Now both of those, in my opinion, are bad approaches, okay? Just like in politics. And I know, I know we like to talk about politics, but I'm going to try and keep it general, right? We get way, way, way off to this side. We get way, way, way off to that side. And what do you find when you get way, way out there at the edges? What kind of language do they use? Not good, Right. Hatred, explosive. It's bad stuff. And we don't like the people on that side, right? And they're what's wrong! And of course, they're saying the same thing about the folks over here. And one of the approaches is if I can call all the people on the other side some bad name. Those folks, they're the racists and the bigots and the Nazis and, you know, whatever bad label I can put on those people, then I don't have to deal with them because they're bad people. Right? I can just ignore them. I don't have to engage with them. I don't have to do anything with them. I can just doesn't matter.

Now, I've read this book [the Bible]. Well, not this one, but ones like it that had the same words in it. I just got this one, but I've read this book. I can't find where it's okay to behave like that. And it's hard to find love when you get way out there or you get way out there and Jesus is love. And if I can't find love, I can't find Jesus. I don't want to be somewhere where I can't find Jesus. So I've always said you need to be a centralist, a moderate. Now you can be fully Democrat or fully Republican and still kind of be in the center. That's all right. You don't have to be 50, 50. Myself, personally, I think the Democrats bring some great things to the table. I also think they bring some really awful things to the table. But I think the same thing about the Republicans. They bring some great things to the table and some really awful things to the table. I'm an equal opportunity hater and lover of both parties, okay? But nobody's 50% one and 50% the other, right? So we have to kind of be in the middle.

Now, the same thing can happen in church. We start getting more and more and more this way and more and more and more that way. And then we're like, well, those people are doing it wrong. No, those people are doing it wrong. It's not good. It's not good. Right? It's not good.

And we get to this. If we look at the conservative side for a minute and you get more and more conservative, you get to that ultra, ultra conservatism that leads to what I call legalism. And I know this because I grew up there. Okay? Most of you have heard my story.

My dad worked at boarding schools. He was a boys' dean at boarding schools. I lived my whole life, 20 plus years as a child. From before I was in elementary school to between my junior and senior year in college, we lived at boarding schools. Okay? Now I get when you have a boarding school full of high school students and you have 200 boys on that side of campus and 200 girls on that side of campus, you need a lot of rules, okay? Otherwise chaos, Right, I get that, but some of the rules we had were so crazy. And I know some of you had the same thing growing up, because I've talked to my friend Alberto about this a lot. And if we told our stories, you would think that we grew up as brothers. I mean, just the same house. If not the same house, we were neighbors. We grew up in different countries, okay? But it was the exact same story. Super, super, super conservative. And it gets into legalism.

Let me give you an example. The Jews as we know, got it very legalistic about Sabbath keeping. And Jesus kind of comes and rails about that. But I think they started they meant well, right? The Bible says don't work. So let's talk about what work is. Let's make some guidelines of how not to work. So they said, well, let's not carry things on Sabbath. Seemed like a good thing till you're in your kitchen making food and you can't carry it to the table to eat it. And so somebody says, well, if you're inside your private space in your house, it's okay to carry some things. You can carry your food. That's not work. You can carry your child to the bedroom and put him to bed. That's not work. Sweet. So now I come home from temple. It's a beautiful Sabbath. I want to go out in the backyard. I got a glass of lemonade, my scriptures. I want to sit up there in my chair and read, but I can't because I can't carry a lemonade and my Scriptures out to the backyard. So somebody says, well, if you've got a fenced yard, that's still your private space. You can carry a few things around.

Fast forward to today. You live in Manhattan, in New York. Who here has been to Manhattan? Anybody? Oh, a good number of us. Manhattan's pretty big place, right? I think it goes from First street all the way down to 126th. It's a big place, and it's heavy. Heavy Jewish population in Manhattan. And they had a problem because Sabbath morning, I go outside my door and I put my keys in the door and put them in my pocket. And now I can't walk to temple because I'm carrying my keys. I can't carry my child to temple because that's work. I can't put him in a stroller and push him, because that's work. So what do they do?

They get permission from the utilities companies to put a string all the way around Manhattan on the telephone poles. And actually, it's not a string. It's a fishing line. It goes almost all the way around Manhattan, like 99% of Manhattan. And now we say that's fenced and it's a private space. And they spend a lot of money on this piece of fishing line, putting it up. Every Friday. They drive around and check it, make sure it's right. If it's broken, they

bring in trucks and fix it and get rabbis to inspect it. They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year maintaining this fishing line.

And I don't like to speak bad about other people's beliefs. I'm very much a live and let live kind of person. But for me, when you got to make up loopholes to get around rules you made up that aren't in the Bible, you got a problem, right? That doesn't work for me. I've got Jewish friends, they're happy, God bless them. But for me, that doesn't work. Right? That's what that ultra, ultra conservative legalism gets you.

Now, the other side's not a whole lot better because we talked about nothing matters, Nothing matters, Nothing matters. Nothing matters until you know you've got chaos. Anybody know what this side is called? I didn't know either. I had to look it up. Legalism on that side versus **antinomianism**. That's like a \$3 word right there. Okay, so let's look at this. You got that nom in the middle. You say that like know, K, N, O, W. I know something.

Nom. ian like I'm an American, an ism, and you put an anti in front of it. Antinomianism. Let's say it together. Antinomianism. All right? If you didn't learn anything else today, you learned that.

And when you get way out there, that's just as bad because you can't say nothing matters because things do matter. Jesus said, I didn't come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. So somehow that still matters, right? Somehow that still matters.

So what do we do? We get stuck on these things and we don't know what to do with them. I know when it happens to me, sometimes I just default to right back there [points to legalism side]. That's where I was brought up. And as an adult, I very consciously have moved away from that and tried to be more central. You guys know me, I talk about balance all the time. I ride a motorcycle. Balance matters to me. Right? And I think we need to have balance. But sometimes you just default. Somebody says, well, can we do....?. No, you can't do that because that side just rears its ugly head and it's not good. Now, it's okay to be conservative Adventist? Yes. as a general group, we're pretty conservative folks, right? It's funny because I used to tell my friends at work that were Christians, compared to some of the other Christian denominations, I'm crazy conservative. But when I compare myself to other Adventists, I'm crazy liberal, right? So you know, it's subjective. It depends on who you're comparing yourself to. Right? And that's okay. That's okay.

But what do we do? How do we get the right answers? I'm going to tell you quickly about two studies that I saw about 20 to 30 years apart. And one of them I've talked to about before was from the Value Genesis study that our church did on why young people sometimes leave the church.

They did a huge study in the 90s study. They followed the parents, they followed the kids, trying to figure out what were the factors that make kids either stay in church or leave church. Massive study. And they did this thing where they put some of the beliefs together and people were supposed to rank them from not important to important. And some of those things were pillars of our beliefs.

Right. Sabbath, or we believe in the Trinity, or, you know, we believe in salvation by grace, whatever, Right? Pillars of our faith. Others were just kind of things we do sometimes. Like back when I was growing up, you didn't wear jewelry or you didn't go to the movies, or you didn't go swimming on Sabbath. You could only wade as deep as. Till your shorts got wet, right? Anybody have that? I was fortunate. I grew up in a day when short shorts ruled. So we got to go in deeper. Kids in the 90s only got to get their ankles wet. You know, we could go way in, right? And so we have these things that we did.

And they asked the adults, the parents, what do you think of it? And they said, you know, some of these things are important. Sabbath is important. Wearing jewelry, maybe not. So. And this is important. And this is really low, then important. And this is. And you get this jaggy line of their beliefs. Then they asked the kids the same questions. You get exactly the same line, just a little bit lower down. The parents said, this is really important. The kids said, it's really important. This was not so important. Yeah, this is not so important. This was more important. Yep, that's more important. And you get the exact same line, just lower down.

I remember looking at that graph going, this is a massive problem, because in three generations, that line is flat. Nothing matters anymore. Big problem.

Fast forward 20 to 30 years. Barna Research, who does studies on the Christian church, releases a study that says when a family is out of the church, they're not churched. They come into the church, they get baptized. In about three to four generations, that family's back out of the church, and you have to re-evangelize them again. Now, that doesn't always happen. Some families stay longer, some families stay shorter. But on average, about three to four generations, people are out of the church again. It matched exactly with that study 20 years ago.

Why? Why? I think part of that is because we don't struggle with what we believe and why we believe it. We want somebody to tell us, is it okay to go swimming on Sabbath or not? Somebody make up their mind, right? Instead of trying to work through what's the principles and does it matter or not? And to be okay. If Ben says, I want to go swimming and Alex says, I don't want to go swimming on Sabbath, that's okay. I love that the Adventist church allows us to do that. Some denominations have creeds, and we believe this and this

and this, and there's no wiggle room. The Adventist Church has fundamental beliefs, which gives me a little bit of opportunity to come down a little bit differently than somebody else does. So we have to have grace for people that maybe a little bit different than us, think a little bit different about what's okay or what's not okay. But we've got to work through that.

The other thing we've got to consider is we're all one body, right? And if we're all one body, we all affect each other. You ever stub your little toe hurts? Does it affect your whole body? Yep. Because you walk like, what, right? Then your hip starts hurting because you're walking funny and your back starts hurting because you're, you know. And it's just your baby toe, right? We affect each other, right? We're all one body. And so it's, it's. Sometimes it's easy to say, well, what I do doesn't bother you. Do what you want to do. Imagine a church where we said, it doesn't matter whether we love people or not. They just come for an hour and leave anyway. So who cares? Would that be a good church? No, because what we do affects each other.

What you believe about Sabbath affects the rest of the body. What you believe about all these fundamental beliefs affects the rest of the body.

Now we're getting ready to do this series on Sabbath. At no time are we going to stand up and say, here's the list of things you can do on Sabbath and here's the things to avoid on Sabbath. And some of you are going like, darn it, I wanted that. We're not going to do that. We're not going to do that. What we want to do is work through the principles. Why is this okay? Why is that not okay? What's the principle? I'm going to give you a hint. We read it this morning. I think at least part of it. Isaiah 58. Are you chasing your own pleasures or are you chasing God? For me, that's the easiest way to tell, right? Am I doing something that I want to do or am I doing something that's going to bring me closer to God?

All right, reflection. I want you to evaluate how you're Keeping the Sabbath. Do you think what you're doing is pleasing God, or are you chasing your own pleasures? Think about how you're keeping the Sabbath. Don't worry about what I'm doing. Don't worry about what that guy back there is doing or what she's doing over there. Worry about what you're doing.

The challenge, and this challenge is way too long. But I was on a roll when I was writing it, so you get it. All right? Spend the next six weeks developing your beliefs. Learn how to get actual, real rest. A lot of times, when we get Sabbath, I'm gonna go home and take a nap. It's time to rest, and that's okay. I'm telling you, I love naps. Rediscovered the naps when you're retired. Boy, that's good stuff right there. Why did we ever cut that out? So naps are great, but how do you get rest for your soul? How do you get rest for the mess that's going on in here? [head] That's what I want. Learn the joy of keeping the Sabbath. And at the end of the six weeks, make sure you can articulate what you believe and why.

All right, That's a tough challenge. Okay, that's a tough challenge, but that's what I hope that we're gonna be able to do in this next six weeks. All right, I know I went long. I'm sorry. But the sermon was about two to three times longer than that. You'd have been here till suppertime, so we had to cut that down a little bit. But this is something I'm kind of passionate about because it's a problem that I've seen in my own life of being way too far to one side or the other. And I don't think it ends well. I think that somewhere in the middle there's good balance and there's room for us to be conservative or a little more liberal and do those things and still be one body and be of one accord and still be trying to follow what God says. Amen.

All right, let's bow our heads for prayer. Heavenly Father, we just ask that you be with us as we embark on this journey, Lord, and learn how to apply some of the principles in our life and not just end up with a thousand rules of what we can and can't do, that we don't stand a chance at keeping or not. Just to throw everything away and say nothing matters. Somewhere, Lord, there's balance. Somewhere, Lord, there's good values of things we should and shouldn't do. And, Lord, help us to find those things, Lord. But more importantly, help us to find you. Help us to be headed in a direction towards you. Like we talked about a few weeks ago. I want to be close to your hand, so when I start to sink, you're right there. Lord, be with us in this upcoming week. Bring us back again in Jesus name, amen.