

20 Days of Trouble

Topic #1 - OBLIGATION

Textbook Def:

Something by which a person is bound or obliged to do certain things, and which arises out of a sense of duty or results from custom, law, etc.*

Real-Life Look:

“Fine, I’ll do it,” you grumble as you reluctantly flip your hand in the air. Did anyone see you roll your eyes? Gosh, you sure hope not.

What are they going to do if I don’t contribute financially? How will they eat? Pay their bills? Survive? Guilt overwhelms your thoughts and heart.

This has got to be the fifth wedding I’ve been invited to in just a few months. I love the bride and groom dearly, but I am completely wedding’d-out. Unfortunately, I just can’t say no.

“I’ll stay late,” you offer to your boss as you think about the phone call you’re going to have to make to your wife. This will be the second time in a row you missed your daughter’s volleyball game.

I have absolutely no doubt that Aunt Mabel will be in nasty-mode and make it a point to criticize her sister’s kids, at least once. The little ones will be unattended and running amok, guaranteed Eddie will be drunk and belligerent (and might even smell!), and there are a few snooty, cold relatives who always sour a room. It’s a recipe for disaster that I really wish I could avoid, but it’s Christmas and it is my family after all.

Sword of the Spirit:

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.” Romans 8:12-13

“Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.” Romans 13:7

Breaking It Down:

I started with one of the most difficult 'Trouble Topics', intentionally, so we could tackle it right out of the gate. Why? Because as you can see from God's Word, not all obligations spell TROUBLE.

It's interesting that when we think of obligation, we generally reflect on that which we dread committing to, not necessarily our Godly obligations. This is precisely what happened when I thought of 'Real-Life' examples.

We must carefully distinguish, however, between what is superfluous and what is necessary; what is choice and what is honorable.

For instance, it is NOT Un-Christian to Say NO to volunteering at another school event. Your duty is first to God and your family. If volunteering cuts into precious time or you dread doing it, it has become an unhealthy choice. What about cutting off a destructive relative? Is this allowed? You betcha! You don't have to tolerate Aunt Mabel's poor behavior time and time again but when your paths do cross, you can treat her with courtesy and respect. Prayer, of course, is always appropriate.

Consider, though, what a necessary obligation looks like? The commitment to provide for, equip, and love the children you bring into this world, keeping a promise, being loyal to your spouse, holding up your end of a bargain, following God's Commandments, etc. Obligations for sure, but so very important.

Unfortunately, sometimes there is a fine line between choice and necessary and you may be frustrated with what feels like a no-win situation. When this happens, arm yourself with the 'Sword of the Spirit' to keep your perspective. Do what is right in the eyes of God and, as challenging as it may be, worry not about the world's standards.

The Benefit in Decluttering Trouble:

Decluttering unhealthy obligations in your life will bring a host of positive benefits. You'll enjoy less regret, frustration, stress, conflict, and wasted time. And in the same stroke, you'll have more time, energy, and heart available for the healthy obligations in your life.

*dictionary.reference.com

@2016 www.actionplanministries.com Permission granted to reproduce this document providing website is not removed.

