

You Can't Have It Your Way

By: David Burruss

In today's world, we witness changes on many levels; morals, societies, churches, and individuals have all evolved over time. However, one thing remains constant: God's Word. It doesn't change, adapt, or bend to fit human desires. Despite this, many treat the Bible like Burger King. They think they can have it their way, thinking they can pick and choose what they want from it. This is dangerous thinking, as Scripture warns against altering or misinterpreting God's Word.

The Bible reminds us that all Scripture is inspired by God and has specific purposes: teaching, correcting, and guiding us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). However, in a world that increasingly promotes self-centered interpretations of faith, it's crucial to recognize that we cannot alter God's commands to suit our preferences. Galatians 1:6-9 warns about perverting the gospel, and Revelation 22:18-19 speaks directly against adding to or taking away from God's Word. These verses highlight the eternal seriousness of maintaining the integrity of Scripture. With that in mind, I want to discuss some of the top things that people think they can have God's word their way.

Baptism is Not Essential for Salvation: One of the most commonly debated topics in Christianity today is the necessity of baptism for salvation. Some argue that baptism is merely a work, and that salvation comes through grace alone. Others claim that asking Jesus into one's heart is sufficient for salvation. However, this disregards the clear teaching of the Bible regarding baptism. Mark 16:16 says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." This is a command from Jesus Himself. Many people like to quote John 3:16 as the "golden text" of the Bible, emphasizing belief as the sole requirement for salvation. However, the original Greek word for belief (*pisteuo*) also means compliance or obedience, suggesting that belief in Jesus must be accompanied by obedience to His commands.

Scripture teaches that baptism is essential. Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:20-21 all emphasize the role of baptism in the remission of sins and the saving process. These verses show that it's not simply a symbol but a direct act of obedience to God's plan for salvation. To dismiss baptism as unimportant is to ignore the clear teachings of Scripture, and such disobedience can have eternal consequences.

I don't have to come to worship services: Another area where people often want to "have it their way" is in their commitment to attending worship services. Some believe they can maintain their relationship with God without participating in the communal life of the church. However, this is like being married and never coming home, it doesn't work.

Hebrews 10:25 commands believers not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Attending worship services is not optional for Christians; it's a critical part of their spiritual life. Worship services are where believers break bread (Acts 2:42), give back cheerfully (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and edify one another (Ephesians 4:12). By neglecting worship, individuals miss out on opportunities for spiritual growth, fellowship, and encouragement. They also fail to fulfill their biblical responsibility to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).

Once saved always saved: Some people believe that once they have accepted Christ, their salvation is guaranteed no matter what they do. This doctrine, known as "once saved, always saved," is misleading

and dangerous. Salvation is conditional on remaining faithful to God's commandments, and Scripture provides numerous warnings about the need to continue in obedience.

In John 15:1-6, Jesus teaches that branches (believers) that do not bear fruit will be cut off and thrown into the fire. This illustrates that salvation is not automatic but requires continued faithfulness.

Similarly, Romans 11:19-22 warns that believers can be cut off if they turn away from God's goodness. Therefore, salvation requires a lifetime of obedience and commitment to God's Word. Even Peter, in 2 Peter 1:2-11, emphasizes the need for diligence in making one's calling and election sure. If we neglect this responsibility, we risk losing our eternal reward.

It's okay if I drink a little: Another controversial issue in modern Christianity is the consumption of alcohol. Some argue that moderate drinking is acceptable, especially since Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11). The Bible consistently warns against drunkenness and the negative consequences of indulging in alcohol.

Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." Romans 13:12-13 also advises Christians to cast off works of darkness, including drunkenness and revelry. Drunkenness is listed among the sins that will prevent people from inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21). While some may argue that drinking in moderation is acceptable, they miss the larger point: we are called to live holy, separated lives, free from the things that lead to sin. Jesus, being sinless, would not have condoned anything that led people into sinful behavior, such as drunkenness.

At the core of these issues is the fundamental misunderstanding that we can shape God's Word to fit our desires. Scripture is not a buffet where we can pick what we like and leave the rest behind. We must be obedient to all of God's commands, even those that challenge our personal preferences. Revelation 2:10 encourages believers to remain faithful until death, with the promise of receiving the crown of life. This requires not only faith but also obedience to the full counsel of God's Word.

We cannot have it our way when it comes to following God. His Word is clear and unchanging, and it demands our obedience. Whether it's baptism, attending worship, living a holy life, or rejecting false doctrines, the Bible provides clear guidelines for how we should live as Christians. We must strive to obey God's commands fully, not just the parts that are convenient or agreeable to us. In doing so, we honor God and secure our eternal salvation.

Sinners are welcomed at North Main church of Christ. If you're struggling, have any needs, or are simply seeking a loving Christian family, we invite you to come and see us.