

# Do We Really Need Standards

By Dr. Kenny Baldwin

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## **Crossroads Baptist Church**

5811 Hoffmans Lane

Bailey's Crossroads, VA 22041

**Website:** [www.ourcrossroads.org](http://www.ourcrossroads.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/ourcrossroads](http://www.sermonaudio.com/ourcrossroads)

Romans chapter 14, if you would, Romans chapter number 14. I really need to read this entire chapter, so I won't have to repeat it in the message, ok? So I am going to read rather quickly. You follow along with me.

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and

things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.<sup>1</sup>

I told you this morning I want to deal with the subject of do we really need standards? I would like to draw you attention, as we close this text, to some very poignant statements made by the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

“Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”<sup>2</sup>

By way of clarification we are not talking about anything in this text that is obviously wrong. We are talking about grey areas, areas where there is no clear, concrete, biblical evidence as to what is right. And it is saying, “Happy is the person that doesn’t condemn himself or that which he alloweth.” In other words, someone who is willing to allow something that he may not do because he doesn't want to condemn someone that does.

But verse 23:

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.”<sup>3</sup>

Do you see that? So you are doing something that you are not sure of whether or not you should do it, so you do it in speculation. And Paul says you are damned, you are punished for that, because it is not of faith. And if it is not of faith, it is of sin.

I would like to challenge you in this area in the context of standards. Be careful about doing things that you are not sure are absolutely right. I mean by that be careful about being married to things in the Christian life that you demand to have to be able to be when there is no solid level of faith given by God to ensure to you that what you are doing will bring glory to him and not hurt somebody else.

*Father, would you give us your help and your direction? We need your Word to speak to us. We are needy people. So help us, Lord, in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

I have preached in a lot of churches, been to a lot of churches and I am uniquely familiar with a lot of churches. One of the most controversial areas in churches today is the issue of standards. In a little bit I am going to define the word because one of the reasons for the great controversy in this area is an ignorance of what the terms actually mean. So

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 14:1-23.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 14:22.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 14:23.

tonight in just a moment I am going to define what those terms mean. But I will take a few moments tonight and preach to Crossroads Baptist Church.

If you are a member of this church, would you raise your hand? Ok, so primarily I am addressing you. All of you that are here that are not members of this church you are more than welcome to embrace everything I say. But primarily I am speaking to our church.

Here is why I am preaching this message. Number one, because we do have standards. There is no more reason why I am preaching. Here is number two reason and it is probably pretty close to being number one. We are going to keep having standards. So that is why I am preaching this message. I don't want to do something here at the church just because I said we are doing it. I want to make it very clear to you that we don't have standards because the pastor enjoys wielding his opinions on the members. We don't have standards because I am embodied in my authority and when I can control what you do, I feel more superior.

The idea of standards in the church came from the Bible. So we are going to take some time to establish tonight: Do we need standards? Does Crossroads Baptist Church need standards? In other words, is it ok for us to decide for everybody to do what he wants to?

Let's go directly to the body of the message. I want you to write down this word, first of all, point number one. Our beliefs, write that down. Our beliefs. By way of proof text, could I give you this statement from the Scripture?

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”<sup>4</sup>

Now, by way of interchanging, using the word conviction as the same word as belief. Let me define it. A conviction is something I am absolutely convinced of and not willing to change. Say it again. A conviction is something that the word conviction comes from the word convince. Ok? So I am convinced of this. We use the word my convictions. Often times the word conviction is used when describing preferences, pet peeves, things that I like to do or rules that I set. By way of the purest sense of the word, the word conviction is equivalent to belief. What do I believe?

Write these three things. Our beliefs must be scriptural. Listen to me. We do not base our convictions on our opinion, on philosophy, on politics. We base our conviction on the Word of God. How many of you know that there are things that we used to be convinced about, non spiritual things that today we are not convinced of them any more? The reason why is because the basis or the foundation on which we base those things we were convinced about change. The world is a changing place. There are things economically, things politically, things intellectually, things educationally, things emotionally and all kinds of other ways that change in our society. The reason why conviction must be based on the Word of God is because the Word of God does not change. So when I base what I believe on the Word of God, I never have to wake up one day and go, “Oh, I need to make an adjustment to that,” because the Word of God is timeless, amen? It is

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 14:5.

immutable. It is eternal. It will never ever change. Watch me now. If anything was ever wrong and if anything was ever right in the Bible it still is. Ok, so conviction. It has to be Scripture.

Now write this down underneath the word Scripture. In that we get A) a precept, that is a command, a clear command, thou shalt not or thou shalt. Or we bet a principle. Where the Bible does not clearly state I can't do something or I must do something, but there is a biblical principle that overlyingly will show me obviously that certain things don't need to be done.

For instance, the Scripture never says thou shalt not smoke. But the Bible does say that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you and which you have of God. You are not your own. So therefore even though the Scripture doesn't say I shall not smoke, the principle in the Word of God is there that says if God is inside of me and my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and the body is the instrument that God has enabled me to use to serve him, it is wrong for me to tear my body down if it is the vehicle of service to God. And we could give you 50 of those if we had time.

Precept, thou shalt not. I will give you some of them. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not lie. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Right? Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. Be ye angry and sin not. Amen. Lie not one to another. Thou shalt not steal. Amen. So these are precepts from the Word of God. These are how I base my convictions.

So my conviction must be scriptural. My conviction must be settled, amen? I can't wake up next week and go, "Oh, I don't have a conviction any more," not if I am based on the Bible, because the Bible did not change. A conviction has to be a clear, established, biblical truth. Ok? It must be scriptural. It must be settled. Write this down. It must be stimulating. Amen. It must be stimulating. Can I have you write down a fact that I would like you to engage your mind in? Belief is only that which moves us to action. Say it again. Belief is only that which moves us to action. Anything else is masquerading belief. In other words, to say I believe something and to be unaffected by it is not real belief. James makes it very clear.

"...faith without works is dead..."<sup>5</sup>

You say, "I will show you my faith with my works." I am simply saying you show me your faith by your works." You say you will show me your faith without your works. James says, "No, no, no, no. Faith without works is dead." Now watch now. If you say you believe something from the Word of God, the true, immutable Word of God will always affect your life.

Why is it that people that once believed something don't believe it? They never truly believed it. You are writing down, right? Our beliefs.

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<sup>5</sup> James 2:20; 2:26.

Write down number two. Our boundaries. Use the word boundaries interchangeably with this term standard. A belief is what I am convinced about from the Word of God.

Now watch me. Eyes here. A boundary is what is set in my life to help me maintain that belief. Say that again. A belief is that which I am convinced about from the Word of God. A boundary or a standard is what is set in my life to make sure I live according to that belief. Here is a fact of life. You will not maintain your belief without boundaries.

Now let me give you some things about boundaries. I will give you some practical truth. Write the outline down. When we have boundaries set in our life, number one, we need to be considerate. Considerate of what? Of our purpose, number one, of our propensity, number two. That is where we are bent towards, by way of propensity, of our problems, number three, that is our weaknesses that we don't like to admit. And then of our place, our position, ok? We need to be considerate of our purpose, our propensity, our problems, our place or position. Secondly, we need to be complicit, that is, agreeable.

Write these things down underneath complicit. Imposed versus invited. I will define them in just a moment. We need to be considerate. We need to be complicit. Thirdly, we need to be consistent. That means not up and down and wishy washy with our boundaries. And then, fourthly, we need to be committed. That means we need to be selfless and serious when it comes to our boundaries.

Now let's look at considerate. Now this is what I am saying. You go to the Word of God and tell me what you believe is right and what is wrong.

Now, I hate to bust your bubble. There is no ground for debate on these issues. Now we can debate about boundaries, but we can't debate about beliefs, because we don't establish beliefs. We put our faith in the beliefs that have already been established by God.

Now I am trying... I am not preaching a storm on you tonight, but I am preaching the truth, ok? So the Christian is not to invent beliefs. The Christian is to agree with God on what he says.

“... but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”<sup>6</sup>

So the difference between the Christian that grows and the Christian that goes nowhere is that they have the same Bible. One agrees with God and one agrees with himself. Ok? So my beliefs have to merge and gel with God's word. So there is no ground for debate when it comes to belief. But here is where standards come in place. Standards are what are set in my life to make sure I obey those beliefs, ok?

Now let's give a practical example of that, just the one everybody goes to. Women should dress modestly. In fact, if you agree with that say amen. Most Christian people

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<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 4:2.

don't disagree with that. Women, according to the Word of God in like manner adorn themselves in modest apparel. Ok, that is in the Bible.

Now the word modest means appropriate, well arranged, well ordered, aligned properly, ok? At Crossroads Baptist Church we believe that women should dress modestly. Now in order to encourage modest dress amongst our women that are leaders we have standards.

Now you say, "Pastor, I don't agree with the standards."

Church member, I don't agree with 55 miles an hour, but it helps keep us safe on the highway. By the way, so are you telling me if I violate a standard I am not spiritual? That makes no more sense than telling you that driving 65 makes you reckless. You are not a bad driver because you drive over 55. No, you are just bucking the system. You are not a bad driver because you drive over 65, but you would be in a bad world if everybody drove over 65. So the standard has been set. What is the standard? What is the conviction here? That safety is what should happen out on the highway. What is the standard? We set a speed limit, because if we didn't have a speed limit, listen. You know how many accidents we have with a speed limit? Imagine no speed limit. I would like these police officers in here to give me some sort of confidence that if we got away with the speed limit that this world would be a safe place to drive. No way.

Now, tell me. Do you really think that if there were no standards on how we dress that we wouldn't have a lot of problems {?}.

You say, "How do you know, pastor?"

Because we have already. And we have standards. Amen. {?}

If I am a woman in pants am I immodest? Not necessarily. As a matter of fact, you can be a woman in pants and be more modest than a woman in a skirt. I have seen a whole lot of immodest skirts. And be honest with you, some of them would have been better off in that. Yeah, is said that on the webcast.

And, by the way, just because one pair of clothing got you to be improved from the last pair of clothing, doesn't mean that both of them wasn't good for you, but that was free. But what I am saying for you, at some point you have to set a standard. And standards are never because every instance is wrong. But what it is, is it is a guideline that will help me maintain the belief that I do know is right or wrong. Are you following me?

Ok. So when I said be considerate and consider your purpose, my life has been given to me by God to bring glory to him. So when I am considering standards in my life, here is my first question has to be: Not do I like it? Does it help me bring God glory? And, too, I have to consider my propensity. That means naturally I am always headed the wrong direction. I am going to say it again. Naturally I am always headed the wrong direction.

And the only way to keep a person who is naturally always headed the wrong direction is to set boundaries in his life that will keep him from going outside of where god wants him to be even though he is leaning that way. Amen? Have you ever tried? I was in Colorado preaching several years ago, about 10 or 11 years ago and I was driving up the mountain every day in a 15 passenger van. Of course it was, I mean, high elevations in Marvel, Colorado.

You say, "Where is Marvel?"

It is a place you don't want to be in a 15 passenger van, ok? But this is where I was. I make no bones about it. I can't stand heights. I was driving up there. I stayed at the bottom of the mountain because that is where my bed and breakfast was. It was absolutely immaculate. The food was great. The problem was I had to drive up to where the retreat was every day in this 15 passenger van. I went around sides of the mountain, no way. I am serious. And when I hit brakes, the van would naturally kind of skid a little bit.

Now regardless of how safe of a driver I think I am or how good the breaks are on that van, do you know I was bumping up against the side of the mountain?

You say, "What about that church van?"

What about my life?

Now you know what would have kept me a whole lot more comfortable? Rails. Because if my human fallacies caused me to make a mistake while I am driving, at least there is something there to catch me. That is a standard. Ok, so we don't have rules around here for how women dress because we want to run their lives. No, when you lean the way you naturally lean we want something there to catch you. I am preaching now. I am telling you.

"But, pastor, I wouldn't put them there?"

That is ok. When you pastor you can decide what you will put there. But I am going to stand for God. And I am going to stand for God as to how fleshly people managed to live spiritual lives in a wicked world. And when the world is wielding its standards on us why in the world should the church be forced to back off?

I was in the store the other day and it disgusted me that not only are they selling immodest clothes, but they are shaping and displaying the mannequins to look like that. It is designed, folks, it is calculated. Do you understand what I am saying? And we are naturally bent that way.

You say, "Pastor, are you telling me that you are bent to go the wrong direction?"

Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely.

By the way, the standards set for leaders in this church are lower than the standards I set for myself, lower, lower. What we require of you is, to me, is not enough for me to require of myself. And there is a whole lot of stuff I have never done. Guess what? I am not interested in doing it before I die.

But you came from Lou Baldwin and Jeannette Baldwin. No, I came from Adam and Eve by way of Lou and Jeannette, all right? So what I am simply saying is despite who I think I am, I have to have things in my life that keep me from going a direction I will end up in without even trying.

So I have to understand my propensity, my purpose. The third thing I gave you is understand your... huh? Something before that. Your problem. Ok? Where you are weak. Tell me the areas of your life where you struggle with things you know are wrong.

Are you listening to me? I am saying to all you fellows that struggle with the wrong websites, what are your standards? I am saying to any lady who struggles with knowing what is appropriate. What standards do you have to set? Accountabilities. I am talking about people who struggle with their language. What standards are they? With their temper. What standards are there? I am talking with wandering eyes of lust. What standards have you?

You say, "Pastor, my life before I was a Christian was very much involved in the wrong kind of music."

I am asking you. What standards have you now set for yourself?

Do you realize that there are certain places and certain malls that I go to where I only enter at a certain entrance? Why? Because I know that the other entrance is close to Victoria's Secret.

Is it wrong for me to walk in the mall next to the entrance of Victoria's Secret? No, but it is stupid if I know that is the entrance there. It is really dumb. Why is it dumb? You know, because I love my wife. I love my wife. If you love her, you won't look. I have no intention of looking, but if I love her, I won't look for an opportunity to look, either. Huh? Amen. And I never have. And I don't intend to. And because I have set standards she is not worried while I am out of town at whether or not I am. Right, honey?

You have to remember your place. Now what do you say about this? What are my standards? {} You have to remember that just because you are your own person doesn't mean that someone else doesn't have to give an account for you. Ok? That means just because you are your own person doesn't mean that someone else doesn't have {} for you. That means for a child you are in here tonight. Mom or dad, this is not what I feel you should make me do. Here is the problem. Mom and dad have to give an account for what they let you do.



If your wife... honey, this is not what I feel we should do. But your husband has to give an account for the home. If you are a church member, this is not the way I would lead the church. According to Hebrews I watch for your soul. And the way you respond to my watching determines what kind of account I give to God about you with joy or with grief.

So when I pillow my head it is not just about my own dress and my own attitude, it is about the direction I lead this church. And if I know we are a church full of sinners that are prone to wander, let me tell you what I am trying to do. Set high standards, high standards. We are never going to all agree on standards unless we are on this. We all have them.

You say, "What do you mean? We don't have..."

If we didn't have standards about dress we would all be naked in here tonight, ok? So we all have standards. Some are higher than others. So you are not against the concept of standards. You are just against the way sometimes they are carried out. Guess what? Join the club. How many of you have a rule on you job that you think is silly? Raise your hand. How many of you know that you opinion of the silliness of that rule is not going to change, raise your hand. How many of you know that you are not the only person on the job that they are concerned about? How many of you know that there may be some viable information that shows that something happened that made them put that rule together that you don't know about? How many have quit your job?

Now I ask you a question. Why did you quit your ministry? Tell me when you have every had a job where you agreed with everything. You ain't going to find one. I mean the folks who work here don't agree with everything and we are a church. But guess what? They will be here tomorrow if they want to get paid. And guess what? If you want to get paid at the judgment seat you will keep serving and you will not let a hymn or an item or a guideline or a restriction keep you from serving God unless the guideline is forcing you to sin. Listen. There is a whole... listen. You will never be a good Christian if you only do what is right and only not do what is wrong. Let me say that again. You will never be a good Christian if you restrict your actions to only doing what is right and only not doing what is wrong. Nobody has ever been a good Christian by only being sure on the right and the wrong.

By the way, you won't be a good athlete if you only do what is right. That means if you come when practice starts and when practice ends and if you do everything the coach says, you won't be a good athlete. Good athletes go beyond the call of duty. They stay after practice is over. They come before practice starts. They... listen to me. That is why I have them... you have to have the complicit attitude. And I have written down there impose or invite. Here is the issue, imposed standards means somebody is making you do it. All right?

Let me tell you what imposed standards does. It makes me mad. Watch this. You are robbing me of my freedom. Now let me tell you what invited standards do. They keep you safe. Wait a minute, even if I didn't come up with them? Why? They are going to

help my wandering flesh stay out of trouble. But what if they are higher than what I would set for myself? Better than being lower.

This is where my Christianity as a young man took its leaps and bounds. When I began to invite standards that always seemed imposed. You know, there was stuff we couldn't do as kids that I thought was silly. I mean, real silly. We couldn't watch any kind of show, nothing, except a game show or news and some sports games. I thought that was silly. At least the Cosby show. Mike and Deedee sneaked and watched it one time. I told on them. They violated the standard, carnal siblings.

But anyway, we have guests in here that want to know who my carnal siblings are. The music director that is my brother there. He is one of my carnal siblings. Deedee? And there is my carnal sister over there. There she is. I just wanted you to get a good face with the carnality that has joined us.

I though they were silly. Ten year later I was in a hotel room all by myself with HBO and Cinemax and the opportunity to purchase movies that nobody would know about. I had a man tell me this week. I don't know one guy my age who has not struggled with pornography. And I am not bragging, but I promise you I am not bragging. I have never ever looked at pornography.

“Are you bragging, pastor?”

No, I am not, but I am going to tell you this. I am not tempted by it. I am not tempted. I am never sitting at a computer by myself, which I rarely am.

You say, “Why, because you are accountable?”

No, because I hate computers. By anyway I am rarely at a computer by myself. But when I am, I am never tempted to go to a bad site. I am not tempted. I have never been tempted to drink alcohol. It doesn't appeal to me. Those that drink it are enough to show me why I don't want it. But I am not taken by that. I am not tempted to go to a club. I have never been to one. Why am I tempted?

“Do you have your temptations, pastor?”

Yes.

“What are they?”

None of your business. But anyway, those are ones I am not tempted about.

You say, “Why?”

Because I invited standards a long time ago.

“You mean to tell me that the reason why you are not tempted by standards is because you are a preacher’s kid?”

No. I can give you a list of 20 of them. {?}. I have preached it. I have counseled it. And I can give you 20 more who the kids aren’t and the daddies are. And the daddies are the preachers.

What happened? No standards. I isolated time on the internet. I don’t understand why when we talk about standards everybody starts talking about the way women dress. That is not the only way we have standards. It is just the visible spot that we can all see. There is a whole lot of other...

“Well, pastor, you preach what is right in this church. And I agree with you, but what about this standard stuff?”

Figure it out. You read the Bible and figure it out. Go figure it out. Start with the ones we have and then go find about 29 of them.

But consider the ones we have as a jump start to catapult you into the business of setting them for yourself. Why? Because you are not going to keep your convictions without them. Are you listening to me? I am trying to tell you. I have heard people say, “I don’t agree with that standard, but I am still {?}.”

You say, “What does this mean?”

They didn’t set out to do that. They didn’t say, “I am going to dress as provocatively as I possibly could.” It just happened, because I know what is in me and in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

By the way, you men, you are all, too. Amen. We have standards set for our men. Amen. Why? Because we are here to serve the king.

“Well, you saying if I don’t keep the standard I am a bad man?”

No. No. I just think that you are objecting to things that could make you a better man. That is all. Well, who in the world would want to go to a church where they are challenging men to be the best they can be? Amen. Do you realize that there is a whole lot of stuff that we as pastors don’t do that aren’t wrong?

My wife is on me a lot but she {?}. I am always {?} to put on a pair of jeans {?}. Anything wrong with jeans, guys? Nothing wrong. But I don’t wear them hardly ever. Why? We just went out to a hospital, no, because I want to set a standard when I go into a hospital that a pastor looks like a pastor. Isn’t that... I am not against jeans. I have 12 pairs of them. Probably ought to give them away. I wear them on vacation. {?} That was the day I ran into somebody in ... where did we go on vacation? Oh, that was last... that was when we went to Williamsburg or Hershey.

“Brother Baldwin, I know you.”

I am not lying. Walmart, Kmart. We were in Williamsburg. I said, “I know I shouldn’t have worn those jeans.”

I don’t wear jeans to men’s prayer. I don’t wear jeans to church activity. Why? Nothing wrong with jeans, because I want our men in this church to see their pastor set a high standard.

“Well, pastor, we won’t look at you any worse.”

Well, {} but there is something self conscious about leadership that is casual that makes everybody else want to be more casual. Is anybody following? Are you picking up what I am dropping?

That was funny. He said, “I am stepping right into that.”

Amen. Hey, listen. I am trying to give you a heart of what? Because I think often times standards are so misperceived.

“It is like you are just trying to rob me.”

Nobody is trying to robe you. We are trying to keep you from robbing God. Are you listening? And we are never all going to agree. But wait till you have children. And see if you can get them to agree on every standard that you set for them and see how sensible of a parent you are when you adjust them just because your kids wouldn’t do that if they were the parent.

You know what Kobe told me that day? “Dad, I can drive.”

I said, “No, you can’t, son.”

“Yes, I can. Papa taught me...” Bethany’s dad, “Papa let me drive.”

Now what he is saying is papa sat him on his lap and he went down riding down in Atlanta somewhere and Kobe sat behind him and turned the steering.

I said, “Kobe, there is a whole lot more to driving than that.” I said, “You have got to push the accelerator and you have got to steer and you have got to know how to get over and you have got to use you blinker and there are a lot of buttons on the whole thing a lot of {}.”

“I can do all that.”

So do you know what I did? I gave him my keys, I started the car, I set him outside. I put him in the car and I told him what to do, told him to drive down the road to 7-11.

Are you out of your mind? If I did that you would turn me in to social services, because he told me could drive and I let him drive just because he said so.

“Pastor, you would be crazy.”

No more crazy than changing the standards because you don't agree with them. No crazy.

I think that is sort of harsh. I think standing before God and him telling me I led my church in a carnal way is more harsh than you being disagreeing with my standards. I go to bed with this stuff. {} selfish. You have heard me say I don't read a magazine unless my wife reads it first. I don't watch commercials. Is anything wrong with commercials? No. {}

So when you cut out commercials less chance for the devil to get at you.

You say, “Well, you watch shows.”

Yeah, but I know the show I am watching. Unfortunately Direct TV doesn't send me a list of every commercial we are going to see. They come out of the blue.

How many of you know you can be watching a very helpful documentary full of illicit commercials? So I cut them out, why? Because the devil found a way to get to me already. Why give him extra access? I am not telling you to go home and cut out your commercials. What I am saying if you made a commitment by conviction that you will set no wicked thing before your eyes, go figure it out. Come up with some standards.

I want to ask every single one of you. When you have ever failed in an area, tell me if you would have failed if you had set higher standards.

You know, it is kind of hard for a woman to accuse me of harassment or abuse or any type of inappropriate behavior with her if I restrict myself from being alone with her. Amen. It is hard for her to say, you know, behind closed doors we... if the door is not closed. Now that is a standard. I know. You thought standards only meant the way you dress. No, standards in everything.

Can you imagine playing basketball with no rules? Football, no rules. Everybody pick up the ball, throw the ball, drop it, run. Basketball, you want to dunk the ball, pick it up, run, jump over everybody, kick him in the head, punch him, spit on him, dunk the ball. And then they get ready to throw it in, go snatch it from them and dunk it again. Can you imagine that? Why in the world should God run his kingdom that way? Anybody

following me tonight say amen. I am almost done. I can tell by the fire in some of your eyes.

Listen. The beliefs... I am mixing this message with the anesthesia of humor so that you don't realize till you got home that you have... some things have been surgically removed.

Beliefs, boundaries and then, lastly, benefits. What is the benefit of having a standard? Number one, exalting reality. Here it is. Standards position me to give God glory. They help. They help me.

You say, "Not watching a commercial doesn't help you give God glory."

No, but it helps me be a better husband and that gives God glory.

"Changing what I wear doesn't have anything to do with my spiritual condition."

Yes, it does. And setting standards for what you wear insures you that you won't wear something that does have to do something with your spiritual condition. Are you following me? I am talking about where you go, what you listen to. Do you have any standards about what you download?

"Is a movie theater wrong?"

No. There is nothing inherently wrong about a movie theater, but there is a whole lot of junk in there that I can't control.

"So what do you do, pastor?"

I just don't go.

"Oh, I don't agree with that."

No, we ought to both agree with the fact that not going won't kill me. I am telling you. I have never been to one and I am still alive. I am not telling you every Christian that goes is a bad Christian. I am just simply saying it is a standard that I have set in my life so that I am not sitting there one day looking at something that I can't control.

And, by the way, you can say, "Well, then some people are going to buy the same movie."

That is just as wrong.

Some people say, "Well, you say you don't go to the movie theater because it looks like you are in there watching the wrong thing. And you don't want people to see you coming out thinking what you were watching."

I agree.

“But you go to Blockbuster or Hollywood and people think the same thing.”

I don't go to Blockbuster for the same reason. It is a standard, because I don't want people to wonder why I am in a movie store.

“Well, that is a silly standard.”

Well, go figure out one that is sensible. But don't knock mine if you don't have it. I am trying to live for God. I am not trying to be weird. I am trying to live for God. I want to serve him. I want to be righteous. I want to glorify... Listen. Exult in reality.

Ensured, with an E. Ensured righteousness. I want to program my life to do right. I want to have a long marriage. How long? Till I die. Those are standards. Yeah. Standards about women texting, standards about women phone calls. Standards about ... some of you think that I don't have Facebook because I am just psycho. I don't have Facebook because for me it is another area of negative influence that I don't want to fool with.

“Is everybody on Facebook wrong?”

No, some of my dearest friends all over the world, some of the greatest men of God who I have the utmost respect for are on Facebook. But for me, it is a standard I invited in my life to keep... and, by the way, some of the people who didn't invite that standard got in all kinds of trouble. And some of you live in trouble on Facebook every week. How do you know? Because your friends on Facebook tell me. You say silly things. You have no conscience. Your fingers type what your mouth would never utter. And it goes into cyberspace and everybody who is nobody knows all your business. And then you come to church and you testify and your testimony in Church is utterly contradictory with your Facebook page. Are you listening? These fellows in here are some fellows in here that have been exposed to stuff over Facebook and Twitter and all these things that have scarred their lives.

They don't set a standard. Some of you men need to get ready for {?}. You need to set the internet with a password that your wife only knows. And you cannot get on unless her eyes are watching.

“That is a big deal.”

You are marriage, bucko. That is the big deal.

Parents, set... your kids aren't spiritual, set standards for them.

At what age does a kid get the right to have total privacy in the house? No age. Behind

you brother Bear. Move your head a little bit. Yeah. Amen, no, not your head, Pete. You keep yours straight.

He was 21 I was going through his phone.

“I think I can be on my own.”

Get your own house. The door had a lock on it, but {?}. Why? Because I want to be able to walk in there at any time. {?}. Amen.

“That means you know everything he is doing?”

No, but I am going to try to. Got him a good wife. Got a good ministry. Got him out of a mess and got him into ministry. Amen. It will help you. {?}

Edifying results. I want to build people up. And if I am never doing things that are questionable, Romans 14, I can call someone to stop it. I would hate for my preferential decisions to cause a young Christian to question my integrity.

“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.”<sup>7</sup>

Almost done. And my eternal rewards. We are going to stand before the judgment seat. What {?}. Are you listening? Do you realize that you will not get credit at the judgment seat of Christ just for doing things that are right. Let me prove it to you. The people who lived in the most righteous manner on the face of the earth are the Pharisees and they rebelled. They tithed. They are reckless Pharisees read more Bible in a month than some of you are reading in a year. Memorize. They were required. The Jewish child was required to memorize the law at a very young age. But he didn't get credit for it, not because what they were doing was bad, but because the reason they were doing it wasn't right.

So you better learn how to embrace right things not with just because they are right, but embrace right things with the right attitude.

{?} It lets people know you have standards.

Can I ask you a question? What if Balaam had a standard that I do not house people in my house who speak against my God? The children of Israel would have never been exposed to Moabitish women. Watch this. He never went and did what they said. He never prophesied or spoke a curse against Israel, but what he did is he exposed Israel to their idolatry and their immorality.

If when the very first time those people said, “Can we stay in your house until...?”

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<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:3.



By the way, they told him that they wanted him to come curse Israel and then he lodged them. What if he had standards about who stays over his house?

What if David had standards about skipping wars? I am the king. I am allowed to. It is not about what you are allowed to do, it is about what is wise for you to do? Do you realize that he wouldn't have lost a child? He wouldn't have had that mess with Absalom. He wouldn't have had that mess with Amnon. Do you really think your preference are worth losing your whole family? Come on, guys.

Well, be careful that you are not easily sucked in what you think is fine that you cannot even faith and allowing your preferences to sink or seek biblical questions. Why? Because at the end of the day {?} we do need standards.

*Father, thank you..*