



# Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

Yesterday was one of those once-a-year, Kodak moment days. The morning-after Halloween - and the first day of Standard Time - was probably marked by more people arriving at church on-time (*because of the body-clock adjustment, resetting the daylight-to-wristwatch relationship*) than any other day of the year...

Except for the folks who grimaced at last week's **Point of View...** In our last episode - in case your spam filter kept my October 26th comments off your desktop - I advocated a "no-opt-out" standard regarding a Christian's commitment to a local church. Responses ran 10-to-1 in favor of my position; the minority feedback was based on claims of the virtual irrelevance of most churches (*as measured by the respondents*). For them, on-time-at-church is a functional non-issue; yesterday was just another Sunday, and brunch has no set start-time...

While I'm presently staking out potentially unpopular positions, let me add some that make me part of a growing minority.

**I don't smoke cigars.** My dad was a cigarette addict until he was 50; that's when a doctor told him that he had a tumor on his lung. That scared him into hanging-up-the-habit, cold turkey. He lived another 40 years, but the smell of the smoke for the first five years of my life remained repulsive, to me.



Fitting into a fundamentalist Christian world - where tobacco was verboten - was easy, for me. Fast forward to today: I frequently find myself among great Christian guys who "treat themselves" with a fine cigar, among friends. "Thanks, but no thanks," remains my response. I've tried them; to me, the risk exceeds the reward. *Too much to live for... and too many friends who have died with cancers that traced to smoke-in-the mouth, even if they didn't "inhale."*

**I don't drink alcohol.** I have family members who are alcoholics. I have friends who have lost jobs (*in ministry*) because of hushed-up DUIs. I know that 10% of the population packs a genetic code that predisposes them to uncontrollable substance addiction. If I ordered a bottle of wine every time I took my wife out on a date night it could increase the bill as if there was a third party. Iced tea, for me: I'll defend the biblical freedom to imbibe, but I'll leave that freedom unexercised, personally. *I can't afford the*

*downsides that come with a bottle of anything they had to card me to sell me...*

**I still go to church.** If it's programmed to serve people who are earlier-stage in their spiritual life, that's great. If the music isn't my first style choice, no problem. If the message wasn't the best I've ever heard on the passage under consideration, I still needed to hear it. *House church, or megachurch?* Your choice. *Church, or no church?* No way to make a biblical argument for the *no church* option.

*"Everything is permissible' - but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible' - but not everything is constructive."* (1 Corinthians 10:23) was Paul's strategic posture. I want to be like him: defend the freedom to make your own decision, but then make the call that serves a greater purpose (*one definition of "constructive"*).

Why give up your options to do your own thing? *"I do all things for the sake of the Gospel"* (1 Corinthians 9:23) was Paul's response. Athletes in-training set strict limits. Soldiers on duty have high standards. Pilots with a flight live differently than the passengers in first class. Examples are many...

Once you are headed for heaven through faith in Jesus Christ, there are lots of things you could be doing that are not sin... but, they're not strategic, either. Voluntary abstinence may look like religious legalism, but the reasoning behind it is profoundly different.

So, tell me: what *options* are you *avoiding*, to increase your Kingdom impact?

Bob Shank

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