

## DON'T CUT BEFORE YOU MEASURE (Eph 5:15-17)

- A. "Measure twice & cut once" is advice you would get from a carpenter.
1. The meaning of those words is that the more important the action, the more carefully it needs to be thought out.
    - a. Our first thought about something may be incomplete or inaccurate altogether.
  2. So it is better to be slow & cautious than quick & careless when we make life decisions.
    - a. It's better to act upon good, sound advice, or well thought-out reasoning, rather than to make an irrational & emotional decision.

[Especially is that true in our service to the Lord, we simply cannot be careless in considering what He would have us to do in every aspect of our lives.]

We dare not take any step in life without first praying to our Father & looking into His word; to not do so would be to ignore the carpenter's advice, which people do all the time, & many Christians do as well.

Today I want to show us three ways in which people cut before they measure (or act before they consider God's pattern for their lives).]

### I. IN THE MATTER OF RELIGION

- A. **It is incredible** that people speak so lightly of God, His word & the church of our Lord, in view of what Jesus taught (Matt 7:13-14, 21-23; Lk 13:24-30)
- B. **What happens** is that people are too quick to base their religious beliefs on preconceived ideas, family traditions, & faulty information.

1. Many will not take the time to really challenge the first thought they had about any Bible subject that relates to their salvation.
  
2. So, many people remain content in religious practices that God will not accept.
  - a. "VAIN" (Matt 15:7-9) – Worship that honors the traditions of men rather than the commands of God.
  
  - b. "IGNORANT" (Acts 17:22-23) – The worship of God in the absence of a knowledge of His will.
  
  - c. "WILL" ("SELF IMPOSED – Col 2:20-23) – Worship that has "an appearance of wisdom" but is of "no value" because God did not authorize it.
  
3. The Athenian philosophers' response to Paul sounds familiar today (Acts 17:32): some mock, while others want to talk about it later.

When it comes to religious matters, many people cut before they measure: they act before they have honestly considered the TRUTH (cf. 2 Pet 3:1-9).]

But another way people cut before they measure is...

## II. IN THE MATTER OF "CHOOSING A CHURCH"

A. How careful is the average person when it comes to "choosing" a church?

1. With most people it is an emotional decision based on many preconceived ideas.

B. If all seven churches of Asia were in our city, on what basis would we make our choice to identify with one of them?

*"Let's say you decide to go to the church in Ephesus & spend a little time with them. What might you say?"*

1. **Ephesus:** “I want to go to that church, they stand for the truth, they oppose false teachers, & Paul used to preach there!”

a. Yes, but Jesus accused them of leaving their first love (Him), & that if they didn’t repent He would no longer recognize them as His body.

b. Do you want to walk into a situation like that? Are you prepared to help them go back to their first love?

2. **Smyrna:** “I don’t want to go to that church; their members are poor & threatened with imprisonment, & their community hates them.”

a. Yes, but Jesus promised to give them crown of life if they would continue to be faithful to Him.

3. **Pergamos:** “This church is really open minded about sex outside of marriage.”

a. Yes, but Jesus warned them that if they didn’t repent, He would come quickly & fight against them with the sword of His mouth.

4. **Thyatira:** “This church has a strange mix of liberal & conservative. Some accept sex outside of marriage, they get involved in other religions & don’t condemn the beliefs of others, but other members disagree with those things.”

a. Yes, but Jesus said He would inflict these broad-minded liberals with sickness & great tribulation if they didn’t cease their rebellious ways.

5. **Sardis:** “I like this church; they have a great reputation in the brotherhood.”

a. Yes, but Jesus said as far as He was concerned they were dead – except for a few members who were walking with Him.

6. **Philadelphia:** “I won’t go this church; they work too hard to spread the gospel; their bound to get a lot of persecution for that. I just want a church were I can be unnoticed.

a. Yes, but Jesus promised to reward their active faith by keeping them from the hour of trial.

7. **Laodicea:** “Now this is the church for me, wealthy, prominent in the community, puts forth a professional image, they have a great pulpit preacher, ministries for everyone, a great youth minister & lots of activities for the young people.”

a. Yes, but Jesus saw them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind & naked.

b. He told them that if they didn’t consult His word soon, He would spew them out of His mouth for trusting their riches & their works instead of Him.

B. **How carefully** do we check the soundness or accuracy of churches against the authoritative standard of the New Testament?

1. “Looking For A Church Home” – a church of Christ on the building (respecting ownership); a church of Christ in the building (respecting organization, work & worship); a church of Christ outside the building (respecting our holy calling).

2. The question of whether or not a church is “sound” (true to God’s word) is no trivial matter, & it takes a lot of personal dedication to find out!

[Dealing responsibly with the problem of religious division requires that we have the attitude of the Bereans (Ac 17:11).

When it comes to “choosing” a church, some people cut after measuring with the wrong pattern, i.e. their feelings & what the kids want, rather that what God’s word has revealed about the Lord’s church.]

A final way people cut before they measure is...

### III. IN THE MATTER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

A. **In a world** so full of evil, there is no realistic hope of living acceptably before God without taking to heart the words of our text (Eph 5:15-17).

B. **Imagine your life** as a speech. What would it sound like?

1. A meticulously prepared speech where you carefully chose every word? Or an off the cuff speech; a talk that you just made up as you went along?

C. **The Lord wants** men & women who will consciously & carefully distinguish right from wrong, & truth from error (2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1)

[When it comes to a Christian's conduct & choices in life, some people measure once & cut many times: they act before they check the rule of life – so they mess up & have to start over & over again.]

### CLOSING

A. **Life's choices** are too far-reaching in their effect not to be very careful when making them.

1. Too often people make up their beliefs to fit their desired lifestyle, which reminds me of an illustration.

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A Marine recruiting sergeant happened upon an impressive sight while traveling the countryside one afternoon.

On this farm he saw targets painted everywhere – on the barns, fences & trees.

And exactly in the center of each target's bull's eye, there was a bullet hole!

He thought how the Marine Corps could use a marksman like that, and so he stopped at the farmhouse in hopes of recruiting this sharpshooter.

His knock on the door was answered by a gangling, barefoot lad who proudly admitted that he had made the targets & bullet holes.

The sergeant asked him how he managed to get a perfect bull's eye with every shot.

He drawled, "Aw, that's easy, Sarge. I jes' shoot first, an' then I paint the rings around the bullet hole!"

A lot of people make bull's eyes like that in religion too.

They “shoot” first by committing themselves to some religious position or affiliation, & then they seek to justify their decisions & actions by “painting” the target rings with their personal feelings or sincerity.

But all such efforts ignore the fact that only God has the right to make the “target” & that His word is the “bulls eye” for which all men are to strive.

Sin is when we miss *His* mark.

Coming to Jesus Christ for salvation is impossible apart from hearing & learning His will ([Jn 6:44-45](#)) & abiding in Christ means abiding in His teaching ([2 Jn 9](#)).

Therefore, all right relationships with the Lord involve a right relationship with Bible truth ([Col 3:17](#); [1 Pet 4:11](#)) – Dan Shipley "[After-Thought Authority](#)" (*Plain Talk*, July 1972)

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We cannot afford to cut first & measure later.

It is always best to consult the measurement of God’s word **twice** & then to cut out the plan of action **once** & right the first time.

We get one chance in life to construct our character; mistakes or sins can be disastrous & have eternal consequences.

Jesus warned us to “count the cost” ([Lk 14:25-33](#)) of being His disciple. We should also count the cost of NOT being His disciple, because it costs much more to not follow Him than it does to follow Him. Have you considered it?