



"It is not what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."

—Moliere

**13-Apr-12**

## **Count for Yourself**

Deuteronomy overflows with admonitions to be *careful* to observe God's words ([Deuteronomy 4:5-6](#); [5:1](#), 32; 6:1-3, 25; 8:1; 11:32; 12:1; 16:12; 17:19; 26:16; 28:13; 32:46). As an example, notice [Deuteronomy 12:32](#):

"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Additionally, [Deuteronomy 8:3](#) warns that we are to live by every word, a command [Jesus](#) repeats in [Matthew 4:4](#): "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" [God](#) demands that we take His words seriously, so seriously that we are to live by *every* one of them—*whatever* He commands.

To illustrate that every word is important, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, notice [John 17:23](#): "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that [the world](#) may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

The word "as" can be defined as "to the same extent or degree, equally." Equally—no more, no less. Consider the staggering meaning of Christ's

statement. Through this small, seemingly inconsequential two-letter word, He reveals that God loves us just as much as He loves His beloved Son—no more and no less. That is an awesome bit of information packed into just a simple two-letter word!

With all this in mind, notice an instruction God gives regarding Pentecost in [Leviticus 23:15](#): "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the [Sabbath](#), from the day that you brought the sheaf of the [wave offering](#): seven Sabbaths shall be completed."

This verse teaches how to count Pentecost, but it also reveals *who* should count Pentecost. Who is the "you" in verse 15? In verse six, "you" is the person who is to eat unleavened bread. So, this "you" is each one of us. The addition of "for yourselves" makes even more emphatic that *we* are to do the counting. It is not done by a calendar, not by the ministry, but "for yourselves." Just as the ministry does not eat unleavened bread for us because it says *you* are to eat it, it follows that they are not to count Pentecost for us either. We eat unleavened bread every year, so we should also be counting Pentecost *for ourselves* every year.

Does this counting seem to be a small thing? Yes, it does seem inconsequential, as does the word "as" to many. But we are to live by *every* word, not most of the words, that God gives to us. Notice a paragraph from John W. Ritenbaugh's article "Countdown to Pentecost 2001," in the December 2000 *Forerunner*:

We are to live by every word of God. However, I have learned through this Pentecost-counting test that has come upon the church that people consider certain areas as "little" and thus of no account. They dismiss them as not worthy of serious consideration. One might be tempted to think that all the points discussed so far are minor ones that God could easily overlook because Israel had such a sincere attitude at that point in their relationship with Him. Perhaps it is good to be reminded of God's reactions in other instances when people have set aside seemingly "minor points" in favor of some other way of doing things.

The article recounts examples that show what God thinks of those who dismiss the little things. Based on one flaw, God rejects Cain's offering. In [Leviticus 10:1-3](#), two sons of Aaron are instantaneously struck dead when they ignore one simple instruction about incense. David transports the ark in the wrong manner, and when Uzzah, probably involuntarily, touches it to keep it from hitting the ground, God strikes him dead. Ananias and Sapphira both fudge a bit by not telling Peter the whole truth, and God strikes them dead too. We should soberly consider these examples because they reveal the importance God places on His "minor" instructions. Yes, we are to live by *every* word God gives to us.

Why would God have each of us count Pentecost rather than just look at a holy day calendar—the way most people determine the day? At a glance, it does not make much sense to count, does it? But, that is irrelevant. What is relevant is that we do what God commands us to do.

Consider an experience Herbert W. Armstrong recorded in the May 1981 *Good News* article entitled, "Why Many Don't Understand Pentecost":

I had learned in my intensive, almost night-and-day study of the Sabbath question that we are commanded also to keep the seven annual Holy Days.

I DID NOT KNOW WHY! I knew only that God said, "DO IT!"  
My wife and I did—alone! For seven years!

We have his good example just to do what God tells us to do and trust that a God who loves us has a reason for what He commands, even if we are clueless as to why.

Should we not consider that God must have a special reason for determining Pentecost by a method different from all the other holy days? For all the others, God gives a specific date for each, so we have to look at a calendar to know when to observe them. But Pentecost must be counted, and as [Leviticus 23:15](#) commands, each of us must do the counting.

We really do not know why this difference exists. How many centuries did ancient Israel, and after them the Jews, keep [the holy days](#)? Yet, to this day, they still do not know the most important reasons behind them.

We have to remember Herbert Armstrong's example when he saw a command from God but did not know the why of it: "I DID NOT KNOW WHY! I knew only that God said, "DO IT!" My wife and I did—alone!" In this, he followed all those admonitions in Deuteronomy to be careful to obey *whatever* God commands.

Each of us counting Pentecost for ourselves each year does seem like a little thing and unnecessary because after all there are calendars, the Internet, etc. Even so, in [Matthew 25:21](#) Christ gives a glimpse into our future and what that future hinges on: "You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much" (Revised Standard Version).

As noted earlier, people died because they ignored God's "minor" instructions—everything matters. How careful are we about God's "minor" instructions? History shows that the answer could one day be the difference between life and death.

- Pat Higgins

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Do Little Things Not Count?](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Seemingly insignificant things to man are quite big things to God. Some well-meaning individuals, blinded by their pride, vanity, and clever sophistry, consider certain areas of the Bible to have little or no importance. They (1) fail to grasp the spiritual intent of the scriptures and (2) fail to separate the holy from the profane. Like Nadab and Abihu (offering strange or common fire) and Cain (offering an unworthy sacrifice), those who ignore the clear biblical instructions for the wavesheaf offering with its

unambiguous prohibitions (Leviticus 22:24-25 and Deuteronomy 12:10) risk the displeasure and judgment of Almighty God.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Little Compromises](#)**

by John O. Reid

Jesus teaches us in Luke 12:48 that if we are faithful in little, we will be faithful in much. John Reid tells the story of King Solomon's inability to be faithful in what he likely considered to be "little things." Scripture chronicles how Solomon's little compromises with God's law sent Israel down an idolatrous road leading to destruction and captivity.

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