



## **WOW: Word Of the Week**

### **Nonnegotiable**

**November 12, 2025**

Justin Hatfield, preacher at the Fort Gibson church, recently introduced a sermon with a survey of examples of nonnegotiables. Attention-grabbing. I began thinking, wondering, doing what preachers do when preachers evaluate the sermons they hear!

Nonnegotiable. What came to my mind, not at all what Justin was describing, were nonnegotiable checks. Nonnegotiable checks, you know, those offers to buy your house for an exorbitant amount, but not really! Nonnegotiable. The word can mean noncancelable. nonadjustable. It can mean certain, unchanging.

Justin described some nonnegotiables—what I would call nonnegotiables of faith. Faith is certain, convicting, confident. Faith is not wishy-washy. Faith has foundations. Biblically, faith is expressed in certain nonnegotiable ways. Worship is nonnegotiable – God wants to be worshiped for who he is—according to his nature, not according to our human nature and preferences. As we read the Bible and hear God’s instructions, we come face-to-face with certain nonnegotiables. Faith does not sway in the wind of whim.

As I read the Bible, I identify another set of nonnegotiables—personal nonnegotiables, defined by conscience. Paul wrote to the Romans (Rom. 14) about our personal reasonings and logic. We read the same Bible, and when the application of the instructions is not specific, when we have to discern application, we often reach different conclusions. We have personal nonnegotiables. Perhaps they are merely preferences. But, since they are biblically informed, it becomes difficult at times to distinguish nonnegotiables of biblical faith from personal nonnegotiables.

As I thought of nonnegotiables, the phrase “frivolous nonnegotiables” entered my brain. I wondered how AI would respond to this phrase I made up.

“Frivolous nonnegotiables” is a contradictory phrase that combines “frivolous,” meaning not serious or important, with “nonnegotiable,” which means something that cannot be compromised. The term could describe an absurdly trivial demand that someone is unwilling to back down from.

As I finished dropping the last of the batch of cookies onto the cookie sheet to be baked, I offered our grandson the bowl. “Do you want to test the cookies?” He said, “I don’t eat anything with raw eggs in it.” A nonnegotiable? Perhaps. I only asked, “So you don’t eat ice cream?”

A preacher friend often remarks in his sermons about his dislike for green vegetables. A nonnegotiable? Perhaps, perhaps not.

When I read the AI reaction to my phrase “frivolous nonnegotiables,” I thought about one of life’s challenges. What happens if the trivial becomes important? Perhaps the great lesson in this word, nonnegotiable, is to make certain the things we consider important, significant, meaningful, consequential, serious, and essential really are.