

Wise Decision–Making in a Wicked World
(God’s Guidelines for the “Gray Areas” of Life)
Part 1

Ethical and moral decision-making in the 21st century is confronted with many new and diverse challenges, and a radically biblical perspective is demanded. A genuinely Christian mindset is required. What is needed is what Don Carson calls a “world Christian.” What does he mean by that? Four things:

1. Their allegiance to Jesus Christ and his kingdom is self-consciously set above all national, cultural, linguistic, and racial allegiances.
2. Their commitment to the church, Jesus’ messianic community, is to the church everywhere, wherever the church is truly manifest, and not only to its manifestation on home turf.
3. They see themselves first and foremost as citizens of the heavenly kingdom and therefore consider all other citizenship a secondary matter.
4. As a result, they are single-minded and sacrificial when it comes to the paramount mandate to evangelize and make disciples. (Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry* 117.) [Underlining mine]

World Christians recognize that they are citizens of a different kind of nation, a different kind of kingdom, a different kind of community. And yet, they also recognize that they live in this world as well, a world that is not their home, but one in which they serve as royal ambassadors fulfilling the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). They are here as divine representatives to call men and women from this world kingdom into God’s glorious kingdom. This assignment calls for *wisdom* and *winsomeness*. It calls for *conviction* as well as *compassion*. It requires that we plant our feet in the *Scriptures* while keeping a watchful and discerning eye on the *culture*.

How can we live out this calling to be God's people in God's world? I want to provide, through a series of articles, a biblically based and theologically informed strategy for faithfully accomplishing this assignment, one that is transferable to any cultural context whether in North America or around the world. There are biblical principles that are true anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances that will help us communicate and "live out" the gospel more clearly. A great place to discover this strategy is found in 1 Corinthians. Here was a church gone crazy, a church in a titanic battle in terms of its moral and ethical decision-making. They were struggling, and struggling mightily, both inside and outside their community, and they had the awesome task of being the Church in a radically secular, immoral, non-Christian context. Maintaining a clear gospel witness was difficult and problematic. Therefore, Paul wrote this letter in order to instruct the Corinthians in how to live out a "gospel-centered ethic." Within 1 Corinthians 6:12-13:13, he sets forth a number of universal, non-negotiable principles that would enable them to engage the culture with integrity while staying true to the gospel of Jesus Christ both in what they said and how they lived. I have identified ten that speak not only to those who lived in the 1st century, but also those of us who are living in the 21st century as well. These principles will be the focus of our attention in a series of studies to follow.