

**Wise Decision–Making in a Wicked World**  
**(God’s Guidelines for the “Gray Areas” of Life)**  
**Part 5**

Ethical and moral decision-making presents a great challenge for devoted followers of Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century context. In 1 Corinthians Paul provides helpful guidelines for navigating what could be called “the gray areas” of the Christian life.

These biblical principles are true anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances. They are extremely helpful in leading us to be wise decision-makers as we live out a gospel-centered ethic.

**#7) Will this action follow the pattern of the life of Jesus?**

*Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ. – 1 Cor. 11:1*

To be like Jesus should be the goal of every Christian’s life. By God’s grace someday we will be (Rom. 8: 28-30; 1 John 3:1-3). However, until that day arrives, we should strive to imitate Him in all things with a holy passion and blazing zeal.

A while back I was listening to a lecture by N.T. Wright. As he raised the issue of Christian ethics he noted that a number of his British friends had poked fun at and dismissed the silly, shallow American phenomena of the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) bracelet. However, he then went on to note that several of his children were now making their pilgrimage through the teenage years. Suddenly, he did not find WWJD concept to be a silly and shallow consideration at all. In fact, he rather hoped his children might adopt such an ethic in this post-modern, anything and everything goes culture of the West. Of course, it is essential to KWJD (Know What Jesus Did) if asking WWJD is going to be of any benefit. In other words, this gospel-centered, Christ-centered ethic requires an immersion in the Scriptures. To live like Jesus you must know Jesus! To live like Jesus you must love Jesus.

Now, let me ask a question that should convict us all, myself being at the front of the line. If others imitate me, will they in some real and genuine sense be imitating Christ? To say it another way, can your children put on their wrist a WWDD bracelet (What Would Daddy Do?) or a WWMD bracelet (What Would Mother Do?) They should be able to, shouldn't they?!

**#8) Will this action show love to others?**

*If I speak the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so that I can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing. – 1 Cor. 13:1-3*

Love is a magnet that draws others to Christ. It is also the fulcrum that balances freedom and responsibility, theology and moral behavior in the Christian life. If our actions are not grounded in love, it does not matter what we say, how much we know or even what we do. Love cannot be prostituted! D. A. Carson is helpful in assessing this balancing act:

Strong Christians may be right on a theological issue, but unless they voluntarily abandon what is in fact their right they will do damage to the church and thus “sin against Christ” (8:12). To stand on your rights may thus involve you in sin after all—not the sin connected with your rights (there, after all, you are right!), but the sin of lovelessness, the sin of being unwilling to forgo your rights for the spiritual and eternal good of others. (Carson, *The Cross and the Christian Ministry*, 125).

I also like what John MacArthur says this crucial point:

Now a Christian who is truly well-rounded, positive, and effective, thinks and acts in two ways: conceptually and relationally. He has the ability to understand concepts and communicate to people. He has knowledge plus love and this is the way it should be in the church. Our knowledge needs to be balanced with love. The great fear is that with all our knowledge we would not have love and would therefore wind up being nothing. We have to be conceptual and relational. I think that in the name of liberty some of modern-day Christianity has violated the conscience of weaker brothers and created division in the body. Variations in behavior are the major cause of division in the body, not variations in doctrine.

These variations in behavior are not even necessary since we could restrict our liberty for the sake of the weaker brother and create unity. We must make sure that love is the response to knowledge. (MacArthur, *Giving Up to Gain*, 13).

Liberty regulated and guided by love for God and others in many ways summarized the 10 principles we are examining. Placing others ahead of myself, even at personal sacrifice and loss, is the way of Christ, the way of the cross, the way of love. It may involve short-term loss, but long-term gain. It may cause us to suffer now, but be blessed forever. This is not really a difficult call to make, is it?