

**Wise Decision–Making in a Wicked World  
(God’s Guidelines for the “Gray Areas” of Life)  
Part 6**

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.

**#9) Will this action honor my body which belongs to God?**

*Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body. – 1 Cor. 6:19-20*

We touched on this principle in an earlier post, but let’s look at it again from a slightly different angle. In these verses Paul declares that we are not our own and have been bought with a price. Therefore, we should honor God in all we do with our bodies. Chuck Swindoll says our bodies are: 1) a physical extension of Christ, 2) a moral illustration of the Lord, and 3) a spiritual habitation of God. John Piper says 6 things are true because Jesus bought your body:

1) God is for the body not against it. 2) The body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. 3) The body will be resurrected from the dead. 4) The body is not to be mastered by anything but Christ. 5) The body is not to be used for any immorality. 6) The body is to be used for the glory of God.

What is the result? “Use your body in ways that will show that God is more satisfying, more precious, more to be desired, more glorious than anything the body craves” (John Piper, “You Were Bought with a Price”). I don’t know about you, but I like this. Use my body to show how satisfying God is? Now that’s a life in the body worth living!

## **#10) Will this action glorify God?**

*Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory. – 1 Cor. 10:31*

This climatic and over-arching principle has been called “the joyful duty of man.” It is right in its God-focus for He is the most beautiful and valuable person in the entire universe. It is right in its human perspective for it makes clear why we are here: to live for God’s glory. John Piper is right: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him!” (John Piper, *Desiring God*, 9). No part of life is exempt from this principle. It is comprehensive and it is satisfying! So, seek His glory, and do it with passion!

## **Putting Our Ten Principles into Practice**

When making ethical choices, world Christians will not wed their cultural and personal preferences to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They will vigorously keep them separate and distinct. They will not insist on their rights or their special interest that could cloud the beauty and purity of the gospel. How can a devoted Christ follower stand beneath the cross of their Savior and insist on their rights? To give up our rights for the spiritual and eternal blessing of others will be a joy and not a burden. It is our calling in Christ (Mark 10:35-45).

How will this influence the way we live as Christians? I believe the following theological paradigm applied to the Corinthian correspondence can give us some additional guidelines to consider. Several years ago, when I served at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, my good friend Al Mohler and I often discussed how the church should worship. He developed the following model that also provides insight for how the church should live out the gospel in today’s cultural context.

### A Theological Paradigm for Being the Body of Christ

– Bad Church (Christian) + Good Way	+ Good Church (Christian) + Good Way
– Bad Church (Christian) – Bad Way	+ Good Church (Christian) – Bad Way

Obviously, we want to be in the top box on the right. We want to be a good Christian in a good way. It is not difficult to discern a good Christian, because we have a perfect manual called the Bible to instruct and guide us. We can go to the counsel of the Old and New Testaments and discover God’s ideas for gospel ethics. Some things are non-negotiables. Some things are transparent. However, being a good Christian in a good way is not always as easy to discover. The good way is more subjective in nature. Cultural context plays a significant role at this point. There are many gray areas in life that are not always clear. How can we discover the good way? I believe the ten principles found in the Corinthian correspondence, provide tremendous help. Complementing them with six affirmations or axioms that take into consideration our 4-fold paradigm, I believe we can gain some insight into how we can find the “good way.”

#### Six Guiding Axioms for Finding the “Good Way”

- 1) Love will regulate liberty.
- 2) Love will rein in legalism.
- 3) That which detracts from the gospel will be avoided.
- 4) That which distracts from the gospel will be avoided.
- 5) Follow the witness principle.
- 6) Follow the wisdom principle.

In my last article in this series I will present a test case in which we can apply these principles. I suspect it will get your attention: the issue of alcohol.