

## Recognizing Good and Evil

### Int.

1. Aim: To give some guidelines in how we decide what is right and wrong.
2. Heb. 5:13-14 "For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, [even] those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."
  - a. Discern = comprehend, understand - Mark of maturity
  - b. Good and Evil
3. Sinful human beings are ever attempting to blur the distinction between "right" and "wrong."
  - a. This inclination reaches far back into history. The Book of Proverbs declares: "He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, are both alike an abomination to the Lord" Prov. 17:15 ESV
  - b. Later, the prophet Isaiah affirmed: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).
  - c. Amos spoke of those who "turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth" (Amos 5:7).
4. "Right" and "wrong" exist.
  - a. This idea of "right and wrong" did not just evolve with mankind.
  - b. Nor are "right" and "wrong" determined by each person who functions as his own law-maker.
  - c. Rather, morality is to be measured by the laws and principles of divine revelation, as made known in the inspired writings of the Bible.

- d. Ultimately, morality is grounded in the very nature of God Himself. "As he who calls you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy" (1 Peter 1:15).
  - e. Though such a concept is almost wholly rejected by modern society, there is ample evidence to support it.
5. Principles for discerning right from wrong.

### Discussion

#### **I. "WRONG" IS NOT DETERMINED BY THE PERSONS MORAL SENSITIVITY TO AN ACT**

- A. A wrong act is still wrong whether or not the violator is aware of it, or whether or not he feels comfortable with the situation.
  - 1. Saul of Tarsus did not know that he was doing wrong when he persecuted Christianity, but he was violating the will of God nonetheless.
    - a. Acts 23:1 "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."
    - b. Acts 26:9 "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."
    - c. 1 Timothy 1:13 "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

2. Ignorance is no excuse (Acts 17:30). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:"
- a. In modern society, for example, many have entangled themselves in adulterous "marital" relationships.
  - b. Frequently it is argued that such relationships may be sustained because the parties "did not know" of God's marriage law when the unions were made.
- B. The logic is absurd. Will a similar argument eventually be offered to defend the concept of same-sex "marriages"?

## **II. "RIGHT" AND "WRONG" ARE NOT DETERMINED BY WHAT IS LEGAL.**

- A. In the Roman world of the Caesars, infanticide was legal, but it was not moral. Infanticide is the practice of intentionally killing an infant.
- B. In some ancient cultures, a woman was not a person; she was mere property to be abused, or disposed of, at the whim of her husband. There are few who would defend the ethics of this custom.
- C. Homosexuality is legal, but it is moral perversion - Romans 1:26-27
- D. The destruction of human life by means of abortion has the sanction of civil law, but the practice is abominable before the eyes of the Creator - Proverbs 6:17 "hands that shed innocent blood"

### **III. "RIGHT" AND "WRONG" ARE NOT GROUNDED IN WHAT A MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION "FEELS" IS ETHICAL.**

- A. Jesus Christ is a King; He has not implemented a democracy to determine, by majority vote, how human beings ought to live.
1. In the first place, man can never be his own guide. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."  
Jeremiah 10:23
  2. Second, fallible opinion, multiplied a thousand times, does not change wrong into right. Moses solemnly warned: "Thou shall not follow a multitude to do evil"  
Exodus 23:2
- B. It hardly is necessary to remind ourselves that the path of the majority is the way of destruction - Matthew 7:13-14

### **IV. "WRONG" IS WRONG, WHETHER OR NOT ONE IS EVER CAUGHT.**

- A. In the isolated environment of ancient Egypt, separated from his kinsmen, Joseph might well have rationalized an illicit relationship with Potiphar's wife on the ground that his indiscretion would never be known by his family. His reasoning, however, was: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9).
- B. There will be a time when the "skeletons come out of the closet" and "the chickens come home to roost."
- C. "be sure your sin will find you out" - Numbers 32:23
- D. Many things that have been perpetrated in darkness will be revealed in light, and secret evils will be proclaimed from the rooftops (see Luke 12:3).
- E. Secrecy does not sanctify!

**V. "WRONG" DOES NOT BECOME RIGHT BY VIRTUE OF PASSING TIME**

- A. It is certainly the case that the public's conscience sometimes becomes dull with the passing of years, so that what once was horrifying eventually becomes commonplace.
- B. But wrong still is wrong, though a millennium passes.
- C. Eventually, there will be accountability - 2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

**VI. PRINCIPLES TO DETERMINE RIGHT AND WRONG**

- A. Write down the activity about which you have a question. Then answer the following questions concerning this activity. Be honest with yourself and be willing to accept what the Bible has to say.

**B. Questions:**

- 1. Am I commanded not to do it? ..... Yes No
  - a. James 4:17 "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth [it] not, to him it is sin."
  - b. Some things are specifically condemned in the Bible
  - c. Rom. 6:6 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."
  
- 2. Can I do it to the glory of God? ..... Yes No
  - a. 1 Cor. 10:31 "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
  - b. Exalt and honour God in everything we do

3. Can I do it in the name of the Lord? .....Yes No
  - a. Col. 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."
  - b. Do as he directs - commands
  
4. Is it of the world? I Jn. 2:15-17 ..... Yes No
  - a. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eye or pride of life
  - b. These are things we must avoid
  
5. Would Jesus do it? .....Yes No
  - a. 1 Pet. 2:21 "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"
  - b. Follow him - W.W.J.D. ?
  
6. Does it have the appearance of Evil? ..... Yes No
  - a. "Abstain from all appearance of Evil" - 1 Thes. 5:22
  - b. Refrain - stay clear of this that appears to be evil
  
7. Is it a weight? ..... Yes No
  - a. Heb. 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"
  - b. Burden - hindrance - some weakness

8. Is it an example of a believer? - .....Yes No
- a. 1 Tim. 4:12 "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."
- b. Would a faithful Christian do this?
9. Is it a stumbling block? ..... Yes No
- a. 1 Cor. 8:9 "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak."
- b. Rom. 14:13 "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."
- c. To cause another person to sin !
10. Would you want your children to do it? Eph. 6:4 Prov. 22:6 ..... Yes No
- a. We as parents are to be examples to our children
- b. If we would not like for them to do it neither should we!
11. When Jesus returns, would you like to be found doing it or wearing it? . Yes No
- a. 1 John 2:28 "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."
- b. If not then we should no do it.

12. Is there any doubt in your mind? .....Yes No

a. Rom 14:23 NKJV "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."

b. If you do not believe it is right you should not do it

13. Will it make me a better Christian? I I Pet. 1:5-8 .....Yes No

a. Christian Graces are to be added to our lives

b. Will this activity make me better.

14. Will it help lead others to Christ? Mk. 16:15-16; Mk. 8:36-38 .....Yes No

a. Could this cause others to not want to become a Christian?

b. Will this hurt my influence with them for good?

## **CONCLUSION**

1. God's word must be our standard for determining right and wrong

2. Ps. 119:105 "Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

3. When deciding what you are going to do follow these guidelines in helping make your decision.

4. Ps. 119:11 NKJV "Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!"

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