



reflecting Jesus

BETA

I can make all my moral decisions
using biblical principles **23**

?

did you know...

A compass in the Northern Hemisphere truly does point in a northerly direction, but not to the North Pole. Instead, the compass points to the North Magnetic Pole. In 1831, Sir James Clark Ross discovered that this is located at the northernmost point of the Arctic coast of North America. Similarly, a compass in the Southern hemisphere always points to the South Magnetic Pole, which is firmly planted south of Australia, in Antarctica.

The Northern Magnetic Pole chooses to move about in a 20 mile circle, and shifts its course between day and night.

(From http://www.myoan.net/facts/facts_compass.html)



photo: sxc digital_a

which way are your morals heading?



the facts of his story

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17, and 1 Peter 4:10. Write out a sentence which summarises the principle behind these three verses.

2. Read Matthew 22:34-40. Why do you think Jesus says that "all the Law and the Prophets" (ie the whole of the Old Testament) "hang on these two commandments? Why does love guide all other laws and principles?

In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom tells about an incident that taught her the principle of giving thanks in all things. It was during World War II. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, had been harboring Jewish people in their home, so they were arrested and imprisoned at Ravensbruck Camp. The barracks was extremely crowded and infested with fleas. One morning they read in their tattered Bible from 1 Thessalonians the reminder to rejoice in all things. Betsy said, "Corrie, we've got to give thanks for this barracks and even for these fleas." Corrie replied, "No way am I going to thank God for fleas." But Betsy was persuasive, and they did thank God even for the fleas. During the months that followed, they found that their barracks was left relatively free, and they could do Bible study, talk openly, and even pray in the barracks. It was their only place of refuge. Several months later they learned that the reason the guards never entered their barracks was because of those blasted fleas. (John Yates, "An Attitude of Gratitude," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 110.)



thinking it through

1. What is the most important idea you read in the texts, and why?

2. There are laws that we obey and then there are principles that guide us in how to live. What principles shape the choices you make today? Why have you chosen make your choices based on these, and not others?



habits for reflecting the will of Jesus ~ making moral choices

how do I know?

Have you ever wondered, "How do I know if I am making the right decision?" The Bible is clear about many things, but there are many other so-called "grey" areas where the Bible does not give direct answers. For example, the Bible does not talk about smoking or going to night-clubs. It does not tell us what music to listen to or what films to watch. And so on.

When the Bible appears not to give specific laws to direct our decision-making, we have to live by biblical principles. It is our responsibility to apply these principles to our own situation. This requires us to think carefully and prayerfully.

As we want to live safely inside God's kingdom, we are going to look at 7 biblical principles that will help us to make good, God-directed, moral choices. You can use these principles to help you answer any question that you have about these so-called grey areas.

building a safe-house with God

Here are the 7 principles to help us make godly decisions. Each principle is part of a building that creates a safe-house to live in with God.

the foundation

1. The Principle of a God-focused Life: *Because I choose to die to my own desires and ambitions, I will set both my heart and mind—my emotions and thoughts—on God alone.*

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

the two-sided roof

2. The Principle of Judgement: *My responsibility is not to judge others but to judge how I am*

following God's radical lifestyle myself.

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:1-4)

3. The Principle of Freedom: *My freedom is to be used to live for God, rather than only what I feel like doing.*

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

the four pillars

4. The Principle of Running Lightly: *I will not do anything that will slow me down spiritually.*

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

5. The Principle of Usefulness: *I will only do what benefits myself, others, and God.*

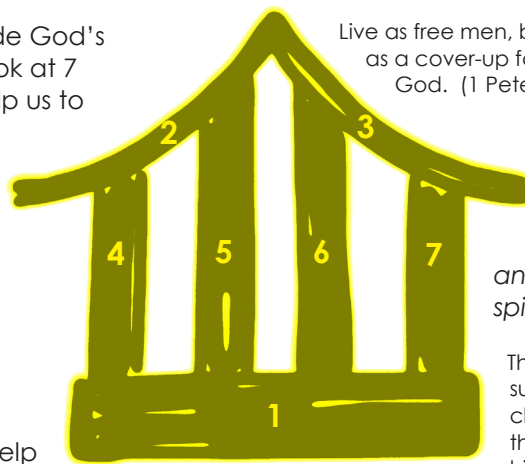
"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. (1 Corinthians 6:12a)

6. The Principle of Slavery: *I will only do those things in which I know the Holy Spirit can be my master.*

"Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12b)

7. The Principle of Example: *I will only do what can set a Christ-like example for others to follow.*

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your



brother's way. (Romans 14:13)

using the habit

When you have a question about a moral "grey" area, ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thinking and go through each of these 7 principles. Which one can you use in your situation?

You can use your Journal to write about the moral choices you face, and the biblical principles that will help you.

🔗 This material is based on material originally created by Dick Duerksen and is adapted with his permission.



putting the pieces together

In "the facts of his story" we looked at a number of texts from the Bible that emphasised that 1) every part of our lives is to glorify God. 2) Yet all of these different aspects of our lives are driven by love—love to God and love to our neighbour. This is because love is the very essence of the character of God.

In "thinking it through" you began to think about the principles that guide your own life. Some of them we are familiar with, but many we are not. The more aware we can be of the principles that are guiding us, the better prepared we are to make godly decisions.

In "habits for reflecting the will of Jesus" we looked at 7 biblical principles that can help guide us in making difficult moral decisions.



my time with God

Each day, consider one of the following moral issues and ask, which of the 7 principles would help me to come to a decision about what to do? (There may be some direct guidance in the Bible also on some of these issues.)

1. Are there any occasions when surfing the internet would become a moral choice?
2. What clothes would be appropriate or inappropriate to wear as a Christian?
3. As an employee in a food shop, is it ok to sell alcohol?
4. What activities are appropriate for me to on Sabbath, and which are not?
5. Out of the music that I own and listen to, which is honouring to God, and which is not?
6. If no-one asks, is it ok to take expensive purchases through customs without declaring them?



pass it on!

Can you teach someone the 7 principles that guide our decision making?



extra help

1. Right from Wrong: what you need to know to help youth make right choices, Josh McDowell.
2. The story of Solomon in the first five chapters of Prophets and Kings by Ellen White.