LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

1995

What Is Right?

Elmer L. Towns

WHAT IS RIGHT?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES *for* DECISION-MAKING

TEXTBOOK

ELMER TOWNS

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Biblical Principles for Decision-Making

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Sunday School Dynamics
A Division of Church Growth Institute

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Introduction

America is in the midst of a moral revolution. After a generation of being told there are no moral absolutes, people are beginning to question the wisdom of that presupposition. The new revolution in American society is beginning to recognize absolutes in different areas. Sometimes, these absolutes relate to political and/or economic principles. At other times they relate to issues of public safety. Individuals are also beginning to ask "What is right?" in matters of personal morality.

This book deals with areas of great concern to Christians today. It addresses several specific issues, in which Christians are asking, "What is right?" It is written with the presupposition that the Word of God tells us what is right.

The things that concern Christians today are often related to the body. Some of these things relate to our mouth, knowing what is right in the use of language. Others relate to our eyes, knowing what is right in videos, television, and movies. Still others relate to our ears, knowing what is right in music. Then there are issues which relate to our entire body, knowing what is right in dancing.

Other issues discussed in this book deal with larger social issues in society. The Bible has very specific things to say about America's largest drug problem, alcohol abuse. It also has much to say about another important social problem today, racism.

The purpose of this book is not to list right and wrong behavior, but rather communicate biblical principles you can use to help you determine what is right. When God made people, He made them rational, thinking beings in His image. That means each of us can apply biblical principles to situations facing us and determine what is the right thing to do or say. This book deals with principles rather than methods. The principles explained in each chapter are listed in the appendix at the end of this book for quick reference in your own decision-making.

Methods are many, principles are few. Methods may change, principles never do. May God help each of us consistently apply the principles of God's word to every situation and do what is right.

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Chapter 1: Presuppositions and Principles

Decision-making is an integral part of our daily lives. We make choices about the foods we eat, the books and magazines we read, the music we listen to, and the places we go. Often, these decisions are based upon personal preferences at the time. When we go out to eat, the choice of restaurant depends largely upon whether we would rather eat pizza, tacos, Chinese food, chicken, steak, or fish, and so on. Our preference in foods may even change from meal to meal.

Other decisions we make are more complicated. These decisions involve more than personal preferences. They also involve moral and ethical considerations. The family and cultural values we have adopted as our own help us make these kinds of decisions. For Christians, Christian ethics and biblical principles are also involved in making ethical choices.

When we make an ethical choice, we may choose to do something different than our friends or family members may do. Each person makes his or her own ethical decision based upon his or her own unique presuppositions. Presuppositions are self-evident truths. They are the principles and means by which we determine what is right and wrong.

Foundational Biblical Presuppositions

There are several foundational biblical presuppositions that are the basis for the ethical decisions we make. These self-evident truths guide us through the maze of determining the rightness and/or wrongness involved in our choices. They represent core values at the ethical center of our being.

The first of these presuppositions may be summarized in the statement, "God is the source of right." Adjectives like "truth" and "righteous" describe attributes so characteristic of God that they appear in various names and titles of each member of the Trinity. Our God is "the true God" who stands unique from all other contenders (Deut. 32:4). Jesus described Himself to His disciples declaring, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit at work in our lives is called the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14:17). Even the word of God may be characterized by truth (John 17:17).

Our second presupposition is that the opposite of right is sin. The concept of sin is described in Scripture in several ways. According to the Bible, sin may be both active and passive. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. Just as certain activities may be *wrong*, not engaging in *right* behavior may also be described as sin. Also, sin may be known or unknown. In our courts, a plea of ignorance of the law is not an acceptable excuse. In comparison, ignorance does not exempt us from moral responsibility in the area of sin.

People develop their own concepts of sin based on the moral values at work in their society. As the end of the twentieth century approaches, one of the core values of American society is that of good health. Our society believes in "survival-of-the-fittest" and is opposed to that which may be harmful to the health and well being of others. Lobby groups that understand this core value in American society have begun to change American behavior by appealing to their core value of health and well-being. Although churches preached against behavior like smoking and drinking, real social change was not affected until these groups appealed to the social conscience of Americans. Today, smoking in public places and driving under the influence of alcohol are strongly opposed in many American cities. As a result, these new laws are

changing American behavior in a way the sin taxes never did. Christians concerned about other social and moral problems like homosexuality and abortion may not be able to change society until they can demonstrate how these activities impact our quality of life in a negative way.

Our third presupposition concerns God's motives in calling for ethical behavior. The motive of right behavior and attitudes is love. God cannot make principles to harm me. Nor can He cause principles to mislead me. He is, by nature, "a rewarder" who is more interested in our welfare than we are ourselves (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, God will not introduce principles to withhold me from that which is good. He does reserve the right to allow circumstances, His laws, and various trials to become part of our experience to mold us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28, 29).

The purpose of right attitudes and behavior is to glorify God. The first question asked in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is, "What is the chief end of man?" The correct answer to that question is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Doing and being right is not an end in itself, but rather a means by which we accomplish the end of glorifying God.

Sometimes people talk about certain crimes as "victimless crimes," meaning that although the behavior is regarded as illegal, no one is really hurt by them. In light of our purpose in life, the concept of a victimless crime is a misnomer. An activity like cursing may be viewed as a victimless crime by many, but cursing offends God who should be glorified. If the purpose of right is to glorify God, there is no victimless crime.

Fifth, the priority of right is people. God does what He does for people. The eighth psalm asks the question, "What is man?" (Ps. 8:4). The answer is that people are created beings, created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Even after the fall of the human race, people retained that image of God. Violence against people is viewed by God as violence against God Himself (Gen. 9:6). When we understand this principle, it becomes obvious that people are God's representatives on this earth.

A sixth basic biblical presupposition is the assurance that one can know what is right. God did not make people to be a tin soldier or sculpture. Rather, He made us with the intellectual capacity to think, analyze, and reason. Nor did God make us like an android, programmed to respond in a predetermined manner. God has also given us a will. This is a self-evident truth confirmed in the experience of every parent. They know experientially that even a two-year old can think and has a will. People are made in the image of God with personalities that allow us to think and respond independently.

God sustains this world by establishing specific principles by which it is governed. These principles of God are self-evident. We can know things to the degree that we can observe. All mankind is given some power of thinking and knowing. We accept the logical and reject the illogical.

Biblical Principles for Making Ethical Decisions

These basic presuppositions are expressed in a wide variety of biblical principles for making ethical decisions. The appendix summarizes many of the principles reviewed throughout this book. These various principles have specific application in different situations in which we find ourselves. In light of the presuppositions discussed above, there are eight biblical principles which provide a general guide for making ethical decisions.

The first of these principles may be described as the principle of obeying light. This means we must be ready to obey that which has been clearly revealed to us as correct in attitudes and behavior. The Bible teaches, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deut. 29:29). This principle may be illustrated in the problem of taking God's name in vain. One of the Ten Commandments is expressed, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). This biblical statement, and others like it, make very clear God's attitude toward using His name in vain. God expects us to obey the light He has given us.

A second biblical principle involved in making ethical decisions is the principle of following rules. This principle was expressed to Joshua when he was directed to "observe to do according to all that is written in it" (i.e., the law) (Josh. 1:8). Joshua was directed to obey the rules he learned through meditating on the Scripture. A specific illustration of this principle is apparent in Paul's advice to the Corinthians concerning sexual immorality. He asked, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). Because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are to glorify God in our body and not engage in activities which are harmful to the body.

A third biblical principle is the principle of clear thoughts. This principle recognizes that sin may be expressed as an attitude long before it is expressed as an action (James 1:14,15). The principle of clear thoughts is at the heart of the tenth commandment. "You shall not covet your neighbor' s house; you shall not covet your neighbor' s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Ex. 20:17). Jesus applied this principle throughout His Sermon on the Mount when He contrasted murder with anger (Matt. 5:21, 22) and adultery with lust (Matt. 5:27, 28).

A fourth biblical principle that should be applied in making ethical decisions is the principle of respecting others. This principle is implied in the first question ever asked of God. "Am I, my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). The teaching of Scripture is a resounding yes. Throughout the New Testament, this principle is emphasized in the various responsibilities Christians have to one another. Paul applied this principle when he counseled the Corinthians concerning eating meat offered to idols. Even though Christians might have liberty to do so, Paul cautioned, "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak" (1 Cor. 8:9). He reminded them, "But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:12).

A fifth principle to consider in making ethical decisions is that of following Christ's example. This principle was stated by Peter in his advice to Christians concerning how to respond to suffering. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). In his classic, *In His Steps*, Charles Sheldon tells the story of a church and community that was transformed by asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" to guide them in their decision making. Although Sheldon' s story was a fictional account, adopting this principle in real life makes good sense.

A sixth principle in making ethical decisions is the principle of following your conscience. God has given us a conscience to help us discern right from wrong. Paul explained this principle when he observed, "for down in their hearts they know right from wrong. God's laws are written within them; their own conscience accuses them, or sometimes excuses them"

(Rom. 2:15, LB). Sometimes this principle is expressed in the popular statement, "If in doubt, don't!"

Closely related to this principle is the principle of internal integrity. If you think an activity is wrong and you do it, that activity is wrong for you whether it is wrong for others or not. Paul also expressed this principle in his Epistle to the Romans. "But anyone who believes that something he wants to do is wrong shouldn't do it. He sins if he does, for he thinks it is wrong, and so for him it is wrong. Anything that is done apart from what he feels is right is sin (Rom. 14:23).

The eighth principle involved in making ethical decisions is the principle of physical integrity. Our commitment to Christ involves yielding our bodies to God (Rom. 12:1). Therefore, activities which are harmful to our bodies are wrong to engage in. Paul used this principle in urging Christians to avoid sexual immorality. "That is why I say to run from sexual sin. No other sin affects the body as this one does. When you sin this sin it is against your own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

The Christian who is committed to glorifying God in every area of his or her life will be careful to make ethical decisions to help him or her live consistently. Various Christians may disagree over specific behavior or issues, but it is of utmost importance that each of us has a standard by which we live our life. As you seek to determine what is right in your life, be careful to apply these and other biblical principles to the issues you face.

Discussion Question

What happens to believers who don't have a biblical basis for separation?

Chapter 2: Videos, Movies, and Television

During the last half of the twentieth century, video media has become a dominant force in American society. In 1948, there were only a few thousand televisions in American homes. Four years later, there were 15 million. Today, the average American watches four to five hours of television daily. The average American family watches seven hours of television daily. It has become the most preferred leisure-time activity in the country.

With the growth in the popularity of television, there has also been an increase in the number of people watching movies. In the early days of the movie industry, people tended to watch a movie once. Today, it is not uncommon for people to repeatedly view the same movie. As a result, movies have become more influential in society than they were in the past. Aggressive advertisers commonly coordinate the theme of a major advertising campaign with the theme and/or characters of a major motion picture release. The popularity of new movies has given rise to a new industry, the home video market.

The influence of media is evident in the fads and trends of modern society. When Disney released the film, "Davy Crockett," the demand for raccoon skin hats became America's first fad. Hundreds have followed in the years since. Often, popular hairstyles, fashions, and expressions are those featured prominently in film. Even public values and opinions are being shaped by the video media today.

Indications are that television and the video media will continue to influence American culture in the immediate future. We find ourselves today in a period of transition. The traditional

three-channel option provided by the major television networks is becoming obsolete. Satellite and cable technology now makes it possible to offer American homes over five hundred channel options. Specialty channels offering news, sports, weather, music, and video games are already in place in many cities.

Where Is America Moving in Television?

Over the years, television and the video media have changed focus from reflecting society to changing society. In the past, movies and television broadcasting were largely based on the perceived norms within the viewing audience. Andy Griffith was Opie's caring father. The Beaver was a normal child trying to figure out life. Even the Beverly Hillbillies were an extended family. Today the media is moving from reflecting society to changing social values. While doing research for this book, I asked several people, "What do you think is the major contribution of television and movies to American society?" Their answers were interesting. I was told television was a powerful entertainment media that can show positive values. When I asked these same people, "What do you think are the major negative influences of television and movies?" they told me the constant portrayal of sin and violence as norms tended to desensitize people to sin, introduce twisted values into the home and eat up family time.

Problems with the Media

The entertainment media has had its share of critics in recent years. Their evaluation of the media has identified a number of areas of concern. They confirm the incredible influence of the media in our life today and suggest this influence is not always being used in the best interest of society. One problem area with the media may be described as "learning problems." This problem identifies the role of the media in modeling. Children learn by mimicking the behavior they observe. When children spend long hours in front of the television, it tends to undermine their creativity. Also, the behavior they mimic tends to be destructive rather than positive. Further, even though television communicates vast amounts of data, children are not assimilating what they hear and see. The learning that takes place tends to be dysfunctional.

Social problems are a second area of concern with the media. Programmers tend to use the media to communicate their social agenda. Eighty-nine percent of businessmen portrayed by the entertainment media are corrupt. Government officials are typically obtrusive. Professionals are portrayed as self-centered. Minorities tend to be guiltless victims. In a typical year, television portrays 1,400 sexual incidents. This kind of programming is eating away at the foundation of traditional American values.

The media also has a real problem with truth, accuracy, and fairness. It portrays a world that is not real. In television, about half of the people portrayed as living together are not married. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only three percent of Americans have that kind of lifestyle. Seventy-five percent of television murders are by middle-age men, and 90 percent of murderers are white. In contrast, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that 60 percent of murders are committed by men under 30, and 47 percent of murderers are black. In television, Hispanics are involved in twice as many crimes as other groups, but crime records suggest they are really only involved in about 20 percent of crimes. Television programs also tend to favor women in feminist roles. Seventy percent of television women have feminist roles, and only

seven percent are cast in traditional roles. Also, television consistently fails to show the consequences of violence.

Crime is a fourth problem area in the media. In recent years, the major problem of children under 15 has changed from theft to sex crimes. Comedian Flip Wilson made famous the line, "What you see is what you get." We are beginning to reap a harvest from the bad seed which has been sown in the media. Programs like *The Simpsons* tend to teach disrespect toward authorities. The increase in violence in television tends to desensitize people. I don't take the death of someone killed in a show seriously, but I may be bothered by a reported death in a news program.

The problem of violence in the media has long been recognized by many observers. Violence in the movies targets the seven to 12-year-old male who is the main "moviegoer." Violent crimes in this demographic group are up 700 percent in recent years. Violence in children's programming like *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* is so extreme that broadcasters in Australia and Canada have chosen not to air that program despite its popularity.

There are also religious problems associated with the media. Typically, ministers are portrayed as ineffective do-gooders, immoral philanderers, and social misfits. Churches are portrayed as anti-progress, legalistic, archaic, and boring. When evangelicals objected strenuously to the release of the blasphemous film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, their concerns were largely ignored by the media.

How to Solve the Media Problem in Your Home!

While doing research for this book, I asked several people, "What are the rules in your household concerning movies and television?" Several positive suggestions were made. Some Christian families attended movies occasionally, but only after the values of the movie had been approved by the parents. Also, parents trained their children to turn off offensive commercials and walk out of a theater, or turn off the television or video if it became offensive. Parents also consulted the ratings system in making their decisions. A general rule of thumb was, "if you don't like it, don't watch it."

How should a Christian respond to the problem of the media? Ultimately, each person and family must make their own decisions about each specific situation. Christians that agree on other things may disagree on the media. As I survey the situation, there appears to be seven different approaches taken by Christians relating to the media.

Some Christians engage in consumer boycotts in hopes of getting advertisers to pressure the media into producing more acceptable entertainment. Commercial television networks and stations rely on advertising revenue to underwrite their expenses and make a profit. When customers refuse to buy a product because the company sponsors offensive programming, the company will often reconsider the decision to advertise during that program. When the funding is withdrawn and the cost of producing the program is no longer underwritten, the program is usually dropped by stations and/or networks.

Many Christians make decisions about the media based on the rating system. This works best when parents explain to their children why only certain kinds of programming are acceptable in their home. Even when using the rating system, it is advisable to include other factors such as choice, morality, and harm. A G-rated movie may be about a subject in which you have no interest. Also, many "family videos" contain subtle humor or minced oaths which

you may not want communicated in your home. Many comedies use slapstick humor which may be more violent than you want influencing your young children.

A third approach may be described as the educational approach. When watching television or a video together as a family, it is advisable to take time to discuss what has just been seen. Parents can encourage children to follow the positive example of a hero and help other families by recommending the program or video to them. Also, take time to communicate the consequences of evil that may have been portrayed in the program.

A fourth approach to the media problem is to practice censorship. A parent may "censor" the videos that are purchased and/or rented in the home, but beyond the family unit itself, censorship raises a number of problems. Who should do the censoring? What standard should be used to evaluate programming? Christianity is always tolerant of others even though it is wrongly attacked for intolerance.

A fifth approach to this problem is to separate oneself from exposure to the media completely. A person does not have a problem choosing which movies are acceptable and unacceptable if he or she never goes to the theater. In 1954, the then president of Moody Bible Institute advised Christians they should not own a television set. He argued that the god of this world controlled the airwaves; therefore, Christians should not participate in that media.

Scripture teaches personal separation as a discipline of the Christian life. "Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17). When Christians are convinced that something is intrinsically evil, they have no choice but to separate themselves from it. Those who believe Christians should separate from the entertainment media argue that Christians have no right to assume entertainment will reflect our values. Instead of attempting to salvage what is perceived as not needed, they argue that Christians should support and enjoy the Christian arts and/or media.

For some people, stewardship becomes the primary issue in making media decisions. There are only 24 hours in a day, 168 hours in a week. This means decisions must be made on the basis of available time. Some people choose to limit their television time so they can engage in other activities which they value more.

Perhaps the most balanced approach to this problem may be summarized in the expression "immunization, but not isolation." Families which take this approach strive to teach their children Christian values without isolating them completely from the influence of the world around them. The idea is to teach Christian principles so children can filter out the positive values available in the media.

One of the most significant challenges you will face in your family relates to the television in the family rooms of the nation. May God help you and your family do what is right in the area of television and the entertainment media.

Discussion Question

How big is the problem of movies, videos, and television?

Chapter 3: Music

There may be no area in which Christians disagree more than in the area of music. Each person has his or her own unique taste in music. To some, good music is always classical. To others, good music always has a country sound. Still others enjoy music that may be described as rock, rap, middle of the road, gospel, contemporary, or a host of other labels. Christians listen to, enjoy, and are edified by all of these kinds of music.

The problem is that Christians also find each of these musical styles offensive. Those who enjoy the opera do not usually get excited about attending *The Grand Old Opry* in Nashville. Those who find deep meaning and emotional expression in singing the great hymns of the church are sometimes uncomfortable with more contemporary praise choruses. The two most likely ministries in a church to be the center of controversy are the youth ministry and the music ministry. Sometimes both ministries become involved as people become concerned over the music sung by the youth group.

Perhaps the tension between Christians could be reduced if we understood the nature of music and knew why different people enjoy different kinds of music. In seeking to determine what is right in the area of music, it is important that we apply biblical principles to evaluate our music. Also, we need to understand there are some aspects of music that are neither immoral nor moral. Sometimes we like what we like because we like it. There is nothing wrong in that, but it can be very wrong to force others to adopt the same values in any area where there should be greater liberty.

Varieties of Church Music

Scripture describes three aspects of church music. Paul told the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). About the same time Paul wrote the Colossians, he also wrote an epistle to the Ephesians. On that occasion he called them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Each of these verses identify three aspects of music that may be sung privately or in the context of congregational singing.

The first of these aspects of church music is the singing of psalms. The book of Psalms has been described as the hymnbook of the Old Testament. A number of other portions of the Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments may have been originally written as hymns celebrating the greatness of our God. Throughout church history, Christians have sung the words of Scripture in a variety of ways. During the middle ages, much worship was limited to the Gregorian chants. Later, the singing of Scripture was prominent in the Scottish Psalter. Today, Scripture is sung in a variety of praise choruses reflecting several different musical styles.

The second aspect of church music identified by Paul is described as "hymns." This refers to the worship hymns which dominate the first part of many hymnbooks. These hymns help us focus on the character and attributes of God. This is reflected in titles like, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Great is Thy Faithfulness*, and *Majesty*. Each of these hymns, and thousands of others like them, cause us to reflect on specific aspects of God's character. As we meditate on who God is,

our most natural response is to worship Him. The worship hymns in our hymnbook are effective tools in prompting and expressing our worship to God.

The third aspect of church music is described as "spiritual songs." This refers to the gospel or testimony songs that tend to dominate the later pages of our hymnbook. These songs tend to celebrate our relationship with God and His mighty works, especially as they relate to the Christian life. They include songs like, *Love Lifted Me*, *Since I Have Been Redeemed*, and *Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul*. These songs are important because they help us share our deepest experiences in the Christian life. They encourage both the singer and those who hear the song to continue enjoying their relationship with God.

Even though there are three aspects to church music, not all three are used in every church service. Rather, different churches tend to emphasize one aspect of church music more than others. Scripture tends to be sung by youth groups or traditional reformed churches. Worship songs tend to be more often sung in Presbyterian and pentecostal churches. Gospel or testimony songs characterize the singing one might expect in a Baptist or Methodist congregation.

Four Parts to Music

Although there are three aspects to church music, there are many musical styles used by Christians today. In some churches, the use of musical instruments in worship services is restricted to some degree. Other churches may use a church orchestra. In the past, some church leaders opposed music in churches because it was viewed as immoral. Actually, music is amoral. It may be used for good or evil purposes. It is what we do to music that makes it good or bad. Before we can evaluate music, it is important to recognize that there are different parts to music. The first of these parts is the melody. Music begins with a melody. Melody refers to the dominant series of notes running through the song. Melody is usually tied to the words of a song and helps communicate its meaning.

The second part of music is harmony. Harmony is a simultaneous combination of tones, chorded structures as distinguished from melody and rhythm. Our emotions are affected by the harmony. When the harmony is written in major chords, the song helps us feel better. When the harmony is written in minor chords, the song tends to make us feel sadder.

The third part of music is rhythm. Every song has some rhythm. In some musical styles, rhythm is more dominant than in other styles. Some musical expressions such as rap are almost exclusively rhythm. Rhythm tends to affect us physically. It makes us want to move to the music.

The fourth part of a song is the words. Usually, the words and melody go together. The words of a song are the heart of the song. It is the message that is communicated in the song. Melody, harmony and rhythm relate to the words or message of the song. The music we enjoy most is that which is closest to our personal preference in music.

When asked, "What makes a good song?" my friend David Randlett uses a chicken as an illustration. In his illustration, the meat of the chicken is the melody, the barbecue sauce is harmony, and the salt is the rhythm. When you barbecue a chicken, the proper blend of chicken, sauce and salt is the key. Good taste makes good chicken and good music.

How to Test Your Music?

We all have different preferences when it comes to the way we like our meat cooked. The same is true in the area of music. In these areas of preference we should exercise tolerance of one another. But there are other aspects of music that should be evaluated on the basis of relevant biblical principles. There are at least seven tests we can apply to determine what is right in the music we sing.

The first test is the message test. This test examines the words of the song to consider its message. Does this song express the will of God? If we seek to glorify God in all we do, it is important that the message of the songs we sing be consistent with the known and revealed will of God. Second, we need to apply the association test. No song exists in a vacuum. The association test asks the question, "Does the song identify with things, actions, or people that are contrary to Christianity?" An otherwise good song may be rejected because of its associations. Christians once objected to the singing of certain revival songs because they were written to popular melodies sung in British pubs.

The third test is the memory test. We tend to associate our memories and experiences with significant songs in our past. This can be positive or negative. The memory test asks, "Does the music bring back things in your past that you have left?" A song which may be enjoyed by some Christians should not be used by others who struggle with past memories.

The next test is the emotions test. Music stirs our emotions. Both negative and positive emotions can be stirred by music. The emotions tests asks, "Does the music stir the negative or lustful feelings within you?" This test causes us to evaluate how music affects us emotionally.

A fifth test to apply to our music is the purpose test. Music affects our emotions. Determine whether the music is sad, joyful, uplifting or soothing. Music which may be appropriate at one time may not be appropriate at another time. When we apply this test to our music, we choose songs which reflect our emotions or are Likely to produce the emotion we wish to feel.

The understanding test seeks to determine the meaning of the song. Should we use music that we don't understand or have a difficult time finding the melody? Some people enjoy and understand classical music. Others enjoy and understand country. Applying the understanding test, those who appreciate classical music would find it easier to worship God listening to a recording of Handle's Messiah than that of a gospel quartet. The quartet might help those who appreciate country music worship God better.

The final test may be described as the music test. Does the song have a song within it? The music test looks at the song to determine its merits based on the melody. It seeks to determine if the song is singable, if it flows comfortably from one line to another.

The history of church music suggests that every generation has its own music. Today, many Christians express their worship to God in praise and worship choruses.

May God help each of us find the right songs to use in our personal and corporate worship of God.

Discussion Question

How empty would our life be without any music?

Chapter 4: Alcohol

The widespread use of alcohol in the United States has a significant effect on the quality of life in our country. Daily we hear reports of drunk driving, teenage drinking, and crimes of violence in which alcohol was involved. The problems associated with the alcohol industry has caused many people to ask the question, "Should alcohol products be banned from television advertising?"

The most significant drug problem in America is drinking alcoholic beverages. More people use and abuse alcohol than any other drug. The total cost of alcohol related crimes and health problems to America is estimated at 20 billion dollars a year. Some observers have suggested that if what is known about alcohol now was known during the prohibition, it is unlikely that prohibition would ever have been repealed.

Alcohol has a destructive effect in the lives of those who use it. During the Evangelical Revival, the Methodists used expressions like "finishing strong" and "dying well" to describe those who were faithful to the Lord to the end of their life. They recognized it was possible to start out strong in the Christian life but not finish strong. One biblical example of that is Noah. Before the flood, Noah preached against drinking, but after the flood he built a vineyard and became a drunk.

Alcohol also influences generations within a family. When a pregnant woman gets drunk, so does her baby. Alcohol in the woman's blood is passed on to a child. Researchers suggest this could give the children of alcoholics a physical predisposition to alcoholism. It is noteworthy that 52 percent of all alcoholics had alcoholic parents.

The Problem with Alcohol

Christians who oppose alcohol do so for several reasons. The first reason many Christians are opposed to drinking is because God rejects drunkenness. "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The Christian life is to be lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit rather than under the influence of alcohol. Drunkards are specifically identified in Scripture as individuals who will not "inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:10).

Long-term drunkenness has a destructive effect on the body. It is estimated about 30,000 Americans die annually from alcohol related physical disorders. The Christian is called upon to present his or her body to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). Also, the Bible teaches that the Christian's body is "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). It is your Christian responsibility to "glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:20).

Further, drunkenness destroys the morals and integrity of people. There is clearly a link between drunkenness and crime. This does not mean all who drink will commit crime. Rather, statistical research indicates most criminals drink excessively. Alcohol is directly involved in a significant number of crimes committed in America.

Drunkenness also destroys the self-control of people. People drink to "loosen up" and get rid of their inhibitions. Self-control is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). The movement against drinking in the early part of this century was known as the Temperance Movement because it advocated self-control or temperance over drunkenness.

Drunkenness is contrary to the example of Christ. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Five times the Bible claims that Jesus was without sin. Therefore, the Christian walking in the steps of Jesus will avoid the sin of drunkenness.

Alcohol is addictive. Those who become addicted to alcohol become compulsive in their thinking and behavior. No one is really certain why some people become addicted to alcohol faster than others. Many Christians avoid the use of alcohol completely, fearing that their first drink may be the one that begins a pattern of addiction in their life.

Should a Christian Drink Non-alcoholic Beer?

In recent years, beer makers have begun promoting a "nonalcoholic" beer to consumers. Actually, this product is only new in America. It has been available for years in other countries. In Britain, beer drinkers differentiate between a large beer and a small beer. Small beers, or "non-alcoholic" beers, have less than one percent alcohol content in the brew (usually about half a percent).

When I was researching this chapter, I asked several people, "Should a Christian drink non-alcoholic beer?" The general consensus of those I asked was no. They argued this product was designed to encourage kids to drink and may prove to be a stepping stone to drinking stronger alcoholic beverages in the future.

When the Scriptures describe wine drinking, two different kinds of wine are mentioned. Strong wine was wine with an alcohol content. Good wine or new wine was similar to grape juice. Good wine was used in the worship of God and could be offered to God as a sacrifice. The difference between these two kinds of wine was fermentation.

Fermentation is the natural result of yeast growing in the brew. When wine makers age wine, they are allowing yeast to grow in the wine barrel. The byproduct of yeast in wine is alcohol. When the winemaker decides the wine has been brewed long enough, it is cooled and bottled. Cooling the wine kills the yeast and ends the fermentation process.

Yeast, or leaven, is prohibited in Scripture in any aspect of the worship of God. Bread used during religious feasts such as Passover was made without yeast. Typically, yeast often represents sin. Six days before Passover each spring, Jewish homes are not allowed to have any leavened foods in them. The practice of "spring cleaning" has grown out of the efforts of Jewish women to cleanse their homes of leaven in preparation for Passover.

Did Jesus Condone Drinking Intoxicating Wine?

Sometimes it is argued that Jesus condoned drinking intoxicating wine. Generally, this claim is based on one or more of the three accounts where Jesus is linked to the drinking of wine. A closer look at each of these accounts will help us answer the question, "Did Jesus condone drinking intoxicating wine?"

The charge that Jesus drank intoxicating wine is sometimes based on Jesus' use of wine at the last supper with His disciples. The Greek terms used to describe good wine and strong wine are used interchangeably in the New Testament, so little help can be drawn from that source. However, there are strong arguments suggesting the wine used in the last supper was non-alcoholic. The first argument is the preparation argument. The observance of the last supper was

a Passover meal, and leaven was strictly prohibited during the Passover season. Without leaven, wine cannot be fermented.

Two other arguments tend to reinforce the conclusion that Jesus drank non-alcoholic wine at the last supper. The command argument suggests Jesus would not violate a clear prohibition in Scripture. Habakkuk cried out to the people of his day, "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk that you may look on his nakedness!" (Hab. 2:15). A second argument, the implicit argument, notes the Scriptures never describe the beverage used at that meal as wine but rather "the fruit of the vine."

A second occasion sometimes cited to prove Jesus condoned the use of intoxicating wine is His first miracle, the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Once again, there are strong reasons for concluding the wine used on that occasion was not intoxicating wine. The social argument reminds us that the wedding was a family affair and it was customary not to serve intoxicating wine on such occasions. The process argument notes that Jesus accomplished this miracle by speeding up the natural process of transforming water into wine; therefore, the time needed for fermentation did not exist. Again, the command argument suggests Jesus would not violate the clear teaching of Scripture. "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly" (Prov. 23:31).

The third incident used to argue that Jesus condoned the use of intoxicating wine comes out of an accusation describing Jesus as "a winebibber" (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). This charge needs to be understood in context. First, the charge came from enemies who called Him a devil (John 8:48). Also, the statement is made comparing Jesus' approach to life with that of John the Baptist, who was a Nazarite.

How to be Sober Life-Long

Sobriety is certainly a worthy goal for the Christian who is concerned about doing what is right in the area of consuming alcohol. The steps to' a life of sobriety begin with knowing right thinking. As noted above, strong drink is clearly prohibited in Scripture.

Second, learn to treat alcohol with respect. It is wise to be a little fearful about the effects and long-term consequences of alcohol use.

Next, follow the example of Christ. Jesus interacted with people in social situations without drinking alcoholic beverages. He was able to build relationships with the unsaved and convince them of His concern without splitting a six-pack with them. As we follow the example of Christ, we can also relate to others without using alcohol.

Fourth, make a commitment to your spouse to have an alcohol-free home. Alcohol has a destructive effect on family life, often leaving children struggling for years with problems associated with growing up in a dysfunctional family. Also, physical abuse in the home is often linked to drinking alcoholic beverages. Keeping alcohol out of your home will help you build a stronger family.

Promise yourself you will never take your first drink. If you have already used alcohol, promise yourself you will never take your next drink. Those who struggle with addiction to alcohol have learned the best way to deal with the problem is to not take the next drink.
Be careful of alcohol-influenced attractions. This is especially important for those who struggle with an addiction to alcohol. When invited to a party, meeting, or event in which large amounts of alcohol are likely to be consumed, your best response is always to decline the invitation.

Finally, bend over backwards when in an alcoholic environment to avoid the appearance of evil. When John Diefenbaker was Prime Minister of Canada, his reputation as a "teetotaler" came under the close scrutiny of the press. Observers noted the Prime Minister always arranged to have soft drinks available on occasions where alcohol was likely to be consumed. On one occasion when a television reporter spiked the Prime Minister's drink, Deifenbaker held the glass the entire evening without taking a drink. Being forced into an alcoholic environment by his office, Prime Minister Diefenbaker took steps to insure he would not be viewed as one who participated in drinking alcoholic beverages.

Most of us will never face that kind of scrutiny in our lives. Still, we should be careful to avoid the appearance of evil and do that which is right when it comes to consuming alcoholic beverages.

Discussion Question

How can we communicate our beliefs about alcohol to others?

Chapter 5: Language

One of the biggest struggles in the Christian life for many Christians is the tongue. James claimed, "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). He went on to add, "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell" (James 3:6). Then he lamented, "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8).

The wrong use of language is usually the first indicator of a Christian who is falling from God. "Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing" (James 3:10). This dysfunctional approach to speech is not compatible with the language that should be used by Christians. Paul told the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

The wrong use of language is widely practiced in contemporary society. Those involved with people in a work or school setting are likely to hear language used that would not normally be used in church. Because we tend to become like those we associate with, it is easy to pick up language used at work or school and incorporate it unconsciously into our speech patterns.

Varieties of Corrupt Communication

There are many expressions of corrupt communication or wrong language used by people today. These include swearing, cursing, blasphemy, filthy language, profanity, and slang. Each of these terms refers to a different aspect of wrong language.

Swearing involves uttering an oath or declaration with an appeal to God or a sacred object. When people swear, they are attempting to direct judgment or anger on people for mere emphasis.

Cursing involves asking God to bring harm or evil to a person or object. The result of cursing is to speak blasphemy. In Scripture, a curse carried its own power of execution. Cursing is the opposite of blessing.

Blasphemy involves directing curses or judgment toward God or His sacred object. The unpardonable sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, involved attributing the obvious works of God to the devil.

Filthy Language is speech which may be described as morally vile. Often it is obscene or foul language with reference to parts of the body to convey the idea of disgust.

Profanity bridges the gap between swearing and filthy language. Its purpose is to show utter disregard for God.

Slang is language markedly colloquial. It is regarded as generally below the standards of cultural speech. Slang expressions are born into the common language of the people when a phrase is coined, having meaning to those within the "in group."

Observations from Life

As we look at society today, several observations become apparent. One of the most startling is in the apparent increase in swearing among women. Swearing is no longer dominated by men. In previous generations, swearing was looked upon as a manly thing to do, especially by young boys. Today, women are as likely to swear as men. This is one of the results of an equalization between the sexes which has been taking place in our society.

A second observation relates to frequency rates at which people swear. Swearing is no longer an occasional outburst in anger or frustration. Surveys reveal college students tend to swear at a rate of one in fourteen words. These same studies suggest children swear at the same frequency rate as their parents. Swearing is becoming a significant part of the normal speech patterns of Americans.

The third observation relates to the legal arena. Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union represent people in court defending their right to swearing under the free speech provisions of the United States Constitution. These and other observations like them suggest the use of wrong language is becoming increasingly acceptable in society.

Biblical Observations

The popular view of using wrong language is in conflict with biblical teaching on this issue. The third commandment clearly states, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). The Hebrew word translated "vain" in this commandment means waste, disorder, empty and includes using the name of the Lord in a lie. When God promises He "will not hold him guiltless," He is affirming those guilty of violating this command will not be allowed to go unpunished.

In the fuller statement of the law in Leviticus, the penalty for the crime of blasphemy was death by stoning. Following the death of Moses, there was a dispute over the body of Moses. Michael the archangel, even though he was contending with the devil, chose "not to bring against him a reviling accusation" (Jude 9). In contrast, Peter used cursing in his third denial of Christ.

The Scriptures consistently teach the Christian response to those who curse them. Jesus said, "Bless those who curse you" (Matt. 5:44). The Ephesians were instructed to speak "neither

filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:4). Paul told the Colossians, "But now is the time to cast off and throw away all these rotten garments of anger, hatred, cursing, and dirty language" (Col. 3:8, LB). Christians should not be guilty of using wrong language.

Why Do People Use Wrong Language?

Studies have been done to determine why people use wrong language. These studies suggest several reasons for this behavior. Many people use wrong language to stir up authorities. Their swearing is an expression of rebellion against restraints. It is their way of expressing their desire for freedom or independence from those they view as oppressive.

A second reason why people swear is to express anger. When a worker hurts himself on the job, it is not uncommon for his first response to be an angry utterance of an oath or curse. People may also be prompted to express their anger in swearing when injured emotionally.

Equalization is a third reason why people swear. This is especially true with women. Swearing has become a tool of feminism to make sexes equal. Being able to "swear like a man" is perceived by some feminists as a necessary step in achieving the goals of their movement.

A fourth reason some people swear is to flaunt superiority. In some circles, the ability to swear is valued as a mark of superiority. This is especially true in what would be generally viewed as negative and destructive subcultures.

For many, swearing has become a habit. These people may have begun swearing for other reasons, but they have sworn so much now that it has become an integral part of their normal speech pattern. Sometimes, habitual swearing is the result of years of following poor role models. When a child hears his parents habitually swearing, that language becomes a part of his or her speech pattern also.

The final reason people swear and use profane language is as an expression of their rebellion against God. When Jesus challenged the scribes and Pharisees of His day for placing their traditions above the clear teaching of Scripture, He reminded His listeners, "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matt. 15:11). People who are angry with God and resisting His claim on their life often express that anger and rebellion in wrong language.

Twelve Steps to Proper Speech

In light of the biblical teaching on language, it is important that Christians seek to remove wrong language from their speech patterns and speak in a manner consistent with their Christian values. There are twelve steps that can help us deal with this problem.

To deal with the problem of wrong language, a believer must first realize his or her language is wrong. The decision to change one's speech patterns must be based on the conviction that the problem does exist in his or her life.

Next, Christians should be careful not to lead the way in changing bad words to good. Language is constantly changing and words that once had certain bad meanings may not have those meanings associated with them in the future. As society changes the meaning of words, it should not be Christians who are in the forefront of redeeming the language. If there is

any doubt concerning words which may be in transition from bad to good, wait until there is no doubt the transition has been made before you use the word.

Third, try to be proper in all things. If the desire to do the right thing permeates every area of our lives, speaking the right thing will come easier. When we strive to use proper language, we will not find ourselves constantly struggling with questionable language.

Avoid using bad language to be accepted by the unchurched. While it is important to build relationships with the unchurched as a first step in reaching them for Christ, the use of wrong language may stall your efforts. Rather, as you build relationships with others, be careful to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Fifth, realize wrong language interferes with growth and testimony. The key to the successful Christian life is to allow the life of Christ to live freely in your life. The use of wrong language places a barrier of sin between the Christian and the Lord, and hinders the Lord in accomplishing His will in that Christian's life. When this happens, sin should be confessed so our fellowship with God can once again be restored (1 John 1:9).

When Christians realize their speech is a reflection of their character and inner discipline, they will be more highly motivated to use correct language. That motivation will help them deal with inner disciplines and develop Christian character to help them overcome the habit of swearing.

In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Phil. 4:8,9). These verses identify two additional steps in dealing with the problem of language. First, stop watching unwholesome movies and exposing yourself to negative media. Second, pick out a Christian role model that does not have a problem in the area of language. When you have a question about using a word or expression, ask, "Would my role model use that language?"

A ninth step in dealing with wrong language is to get smart. Bad language is a dead giveaway of that person's ignorance. By building your vocabulary and expanding your learning, you will have greater resources to avoid using inappropriate language.

Don't separate yourself from people that curse, but be a testimony in their presence. As you bless those who curse you, they will be impressed by your consistent testimony. Replace evil speaking in your life by being "kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Be careful in all your speech. A good guideline is to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). Words are like a feather pillow shaken in the wind. It is impossible to collect all the feathers and take back words once they are spoken.

Finally, develop the discipline of memorizing and meditating on the Scriptures. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). As you consider these twelve steps, may God help you also to speak what is right.

Discussion Questions

Is language okay if we don't know it is wrong? How can we break the habit of using inappropriate words?

Chapter 6:Should Christians Dance?

Christian fathers and daughters have argued about dancing more than any other issue. This is especially true when fathers who are converted later in life discuss the subject with their daughters who are raised in the sheltered environment of an evangelical church. The issue quickly moves from a rational discussion to an emotional argument. Should Christians dance?

The dictionary defines dancing as a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements performed to music. This broad definition applies to many physical expressions to music other than what takes place at the Friday night dance in a local school. When the school band marches to music and when people clap to the rhythm of a gospel song, they are in the broadest sense of the word engaged in dancing.

To understand dancing, it is important to understand music and how it affects us (see chapter three). Music includes melody, harmony, and rhythm. The melody of a song is tied to the words or message. Harmony gives the song a broader sound, producing the feeling. Rhythm invokes the physical response. When someone dances to music, they are dancing to the rhythm of a song, not the melody or harmony.

As I was researching this chapter, several people drew my attention to the biblical account of David dancing before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14). Biblical dancing was an emotional and physical expression of the entire body in rhythmic movement to music for a specific purpose. Before we accept David's example to justify attending the school prom, three questions should be considered. First, "What is your purpose in dancing?" David danced to God. Second, "What are you expressing in your dance?" David's dance was art expression of praise. Third, "How are you moving?" The Bible describes David as "leaping and whirling before the Lord" suggesting positive emotions such as joy and enthusiasm.

When I began researching this chapter, I assumed the Bible would forbid all forms of dance. That has been the historical view of evangelical Christians. As I looked up every reference to dancing in" Scripture, I was surprised to find there is no clear pattern forbidding all dancing. Instead, some dances appear acceptable while others are definitely wrong. To make a decision about dancing, it is important to understand why these dances were or were not acceptable.

A Time to Refrain from Dancing

Scripture describes two occasions when dancing was definitely wrong. The first of these is the Old Testament record of dancing before the golden calf at Mount Sinai. The second is the New Testament account of the dance of Herodias' daughter, which ended in the beheading of John the Baptist. Each of these incidents reveals a reason why dancing may be viewed as an unacceptable behavior.

The first negative example of dancing took place at Mount Sinai. "So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he

cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain" (Ex. 32:19). This dancing was an expression of the people's rebellion against God.

The second example of unacceptable dancing in the Bible took place in Herod's palace on his birthday. "And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you'" (Mark 6:22). This rash promise by Herod resulted in the execution of John the Baptist. The purpose of this dance was that of seduction. When dancing expresses rebellion against God or attempts to seduce another person, it is clearly forbidden in Scripture.

A Time to Dance

In contrast to the two occasions when dancing was definitely wrong, there appear to have been other times when dancing was an acceptable behavior. Just as unacceptable dancing was associated with negative values, acceptable dancing in the Bible is related to positive values. There are at least four descriptions of acceptable dancing in Scripture.

First, dancing was an acceptable expression of praise in Scripture. "Let them praise His name with the dance" (Ps. 149:3). "Praise Him with the timbrel and dance" (Ps. 150:4). The worship of God in Scripture involved the whole body, not just the lips.

Dancing is also described as an acceptable expression in the normal cycle of life. Among the seasons of life, there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:4). This reference does not tell us how to identify the right time to dance.

The dancing of children is also described in Scripture as an apparently acceptable behavior. Jesus described children calling out, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you and you did not lament" (Matt. 11:17). There is no indication in this context that the dancing of children in the marketplace was wrong.

Dancing is also described in Scripture as a symbol of happiness. "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness" (Ps. 30:11).

Seven Ways to Judge Dancing

If dancing was both acceptable and not acceptable in Scripture, how does a Christian determine what is right in this area? The acceptability or non acceptability of dancing in the Bible was related to other factors beyond the physical movements of the dance. By applying a series of tests to a proposed dance, Christians can make an intelligent decision concerning whether or not they should be involved in that dance.

The first test to be applied to dancing is the thought test. Paul wrote, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8). When we apply the thought test to dancing, we ask ourselves, "Will this dance help me have the correct focus in my thought life?"

The second test is the message test. This test relates to both the song to which one is dancing and the dance itself. Are the words (message) of this song consistent with the values I

want to influence my life? Also, dancing itself communicates a message. When we apply the message test, we also ask, "is the message of this dance that which I really want communicated?"

The third test to apply to dancing is the desire test. Sin begins with desire. "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14, 15). When we apply the desire test to a dance, there are several questions to be answered. What does this dance do to my desires? Does this dance arouse my lust toward my partner? Does this dance lower my resistance so I may do something else?

The fourth test for dancing is the association test. Even if there is nothing wrong with the dance itself, it may be wrong for a Christian to become involved in light of some association with the dance. A Christian who was heavily involved in dancing before his or her conversion may wish to avoid dancing because of the sinful lifestyle associated with it in his or her mind.

The place test is a fifth test to be applied to dancing. Christians should avoid dancing in places associated with drug deals, underage drinking, and other unethical activities. Our purpose in life is to bring glory to God (John 17:5). Therefore, we should avoid placing ourselves in situations or environments where we cannot bring glory to God.

The testimony test is another important test to be applied to dancing. Even though we may have liberty to engage in certain activities, we should avoid doing so if our testimony could in some way hinder others. Paul warned the Corinthians, "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak" (1 Cor. 8:9). When making a decision about dancing, consider those who are likely to follow your example.

The final test to be applied to dancing is the music test. This test examines the music to which one is dancing. This test grows out of the principle of barbecue chicken (see chapter three). When you look at the music, harmony, and rhythm of a song, is this song in good taste? The music test is also related to the message test. Is the message of this song something I should be celebrating in a dance?

Remember our definition of dancing? Dancing is a series of rhythmic and patterned physical movements to music. Some of those movements may be not only acceptable but, preferable on occasion. Others may be inappropriate behavior for the Christian. As you work through this issue in your own life, may God help you do what is right as you move, or don't move, to the music.

Discussion Question

It seems that everything we do to music is dancing, so what is a believer to do?

Chapter 7: Lies

During a series of executive seminars over an eight year period, James Kouzes and Barry Posner asked over 15,000 managers to identify those characteristics they most admired in a leader. The results were surprising. Eighty-seven percent of those surveyed said that honesty was the quality they looked for most in a leader. The business community in America is looking for honest leadership.

Similar conclusions have been reached by political scientists who have studied polls to determine why people voted for particular candidates. While some people cast their ballots along

party lines or choose a candidate for his or her views on a particular issue, a vast number of voters make their decision on the perceived integrity of the candidate. If a candidate is perceived to be honest, the voters tend to be willing to give him or her an opportunity to represent them. If a candidate is perceived to be dishonest, voters will choose not to vote, or register their vote for someone else as a protest. The protest vote is increasingly becoming a factor in democratic elections.

There is a consensus in society today that integrity is a value to be appreciated in the lives of people. Unfortunately, many who value integrity attempt to produce the fruit without nurturing the root that produces that fruit. Telling the truth is not an isolated part of a personal lifestyle. People who tell the truth consistently are people of personal integrity. People who struggle in the area of lying are people who lack integrity at the core of their being.

Integrity is important to God. God affirmed our responsibility to tell the truth in the ninth commandment. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). Those who engage in lying secure God's displeasure. Among the seven things God hates, both "a lying tongue" and "a false witness who speaks lies" are listed (Prov. 6:17, 19). Because integrity is important to God, it should also be important to us. This means the problem of lying should be addressed by each of us.

When is a Lie a Lie?

There are at least three ways a lie may be expressed or practiced. The first may be described as an active lie. This is what most people think about when they think about lying. The dictionary describes an active lie when it defines lying as "to make an untruthful statement with the intent to deceive." Saying things to create deception in others is lying.

A second expression of lying may be called a passive lie. Those who engage in passive lying sometimes attempt to justify themselves, noting they did not "say" anything untrue. They are correct in that affirmation, but that is the definition of an active lie. A passive lie attempts to create a false or misleading impression. When a person attempts to convince someone of an untruth without stating it, he or she is engaged in passive lying.

The third kind of lie is an inner lie. An inner lie involves tolerating internal compromise with what you know is right. When a person obviously believes an untruth about us and we do nothing to convince them otherwise, we are engaged in an inner lie. The real danger of an inner lie is that we lie to ourselves. If this practice continues, we may be successful in deceiving ourselves into believing that lie.

Four Steps in Making a Lie

The practice of lying involves a process by which lies are produced. This process involves four steps. The first step begins with the liar when he or she determines to create deceit. Lies, like most sins, exist as attitudes before they exist as expressions. This is one reason why Jesus addressed the problem of attitudes when He discussed integrity in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:33-37).

Step two in the process of lying involves relaying dishonesty. In this step, the liar expresses an untruth in some manner. Lies may be spoken or written or expressed in some other way. As noted above, a lie may be expressed actively or passively.

Step three in this process is intending to misrepresent the truth about this situation. Liars know the truth but deliberately attempt to convince others differently. This intent to deceive is at the heart of lying.

The fourth step usually involved in lying is an attempt to avoid moral responsibility and cover up the lie. When a person tells a lie, he or she usually has to tell another lie to avoid being caught. One lie quickly becomes a series of lies.

Seventeen Types of Lies

Perhaps the real reason, so many people look for integrity in their leaders is related to the prevalence of lying in our society. People lie often in many different ways. Consider the following descriptions of seventeen types of lies. How many of these lies have you seen in recent weeks? How many of these lies have been expressed by you?

Perhaps the best known expression of lying is the "white lie." This lie expresses an untruth which is perceived good for both the liar and the victim of a lie.

Another common lie is the "political lie" or flattery. When a person complements on the attractiveness of a garment that they believe is unattractive, he or she is engaged in a political lie.

Gossip is another expression of lying. Gossip takes place when we tell what we know we shouldn't. Scripture describes the gossip or tale-bearer as one who reveals secrets.

A fourth kind of lie is the sinister lie. This involves passing on an untruth for an evil purpose. "An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue" (Prov. 17:4).

Perhaps the most commonly accepted form of lying is the "jovial lie." This involves lying in an obvious way, without malice as a joke. An example of a jovial lie is a lie about one's age.

A "half lie" involves telling the truth, but not the whole truth. In a half lie, one tells the truth with the intent of deceiving. When Abram went to Egypt with Sarai, he reported Sarai was his sister but failed to identify her as his wife. His half lie was told intending to deceive the Egyptians about their relationship.

Sometimes, an "excuse" may be offered as a lie. When a person uses an excuse, the reason given may or may not be true. Often an excuse is an attempt to misrepresent the truth concerning some failure on our part.

An eighth expression of lying is "hypocrisy." The Greek word translated "hypocrite" in the New Testament originally referred to the actors in a play who used masks and costumes to play the roles of others. This term came to be used widely of those who claim to be something they are not. The hypocrite attempts to deceive others into thinking they are someone different than they really are.

Some lies may be described as "justifying lies." These are lies people tell to justify their actions. Often, the purpose of a justifying lie is to convince others they would have adopted a similar behavior under the circumstances.

A similar kind of lie is the "face-saving lie." Sometimes people lie to avoid embarrassment. When Sarah was confronted with her laughing to herself when she heard the prophecy concerning her pregnancy, she immediately responded, "I didn't laugh." She lied to avoid the embarrassment of the moment.

Sometimes Christians use the expression "evangelistic lying" to describe the practice of stretching the truth. A pastor may exaggerate the size of his congregation or amount received in the offering. An evangelist may exaggerate the number of people responding to his invitations. In

the early church, Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives when they attempted to stretch the truth about their generosity.

A twelfth expression of lying is the "propaganda lie." During times of military conflict, it is common for those involved to report different results after a battle. Each side tells only the facts which best suits their purpose. People also tell propaganda lies when they tell their account to make their position sound more reasonable.

"Advertising lies" are another common expression of lying in our society. Advertisers may use words like "virtually" as a legal disclaimer as they attempt to deceive others of the merits of their product. People also use advertising lies to deceive others.

"Cheating" is another form of lying. When a student cheats on a test, he or she is attempting to deceive the teacher. A common expression of cheating occurs each spring as people complete their income tax forms.

Scripture also identifies "demonic lies." These are dangerous lies which have their source in evil spirits. A society which rejects the light God has given them will exchange "the truth of God for the lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator;" (Rom. 1:25). Paul warned the Thessalonians of a time when "God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (2 Thess. 2:11).

Sometimes the expression "putting a spin on the truth" is used to describe another form of lying. In this lie, people attempt to interpret the obvious facts of a situation in their favor. This often happens during election campaigns as politicians explain away negative pole results.

A seventeenth expression of lying may be described as the "plausibility of denial." Sometimes, people conspire to conceal their involvement by claiming they did not know what was happening around them. If it is likely to be believed, an individual or group may release an immediate statement denying knowledge of a situation and avoid being confronted about what they did know.

How to be a Truthful Person & Overcome the Habit of Lying

With so many different ways to lie, it is easy to see why so many people practice lying and become enslaved by the habit of lying. One of the biblical descriptions of the devil is "liar," so we should not be surprised when the world system he controls is given over to lying. But one of the descriptions of God is "truth," so Christians should be careful to build integrity into their life. There are ten things we can do to overcome the habit of lying and become a truthful person.

The first thing we need to do is look to our standard. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). If we want to become truthful people, we must look to the example of Jesus and seek to imitate His character in our lives.

Next, learn, to recognize the source of lies. Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is not truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Third, admit your human nature is deceitful. Never forget that you were born with a sin nature. "What comes out of man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:20-23).

When we recall our own sin nature, we should also recognize the ultimate consequence of lying. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Fifth, if you want to overcome lying you must adopt the lie-busting strategy proposed by Paul to the Ephesians. "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25). We will only overcome lying in our life when we fulfill our Christian obligation of telling the truth to others.

Next, determine to be a radical disciple. This means allowing discipleship to reach down to the root of your being. Jesus described radical discipleship when He said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Learn to walk in forgiveness rather than guilt. When Israel was guilty of lying to God, "He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Ps. 78:38). In the New Testament, we are reminded, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God never intended for us to live the Christian life in our own strength. That is why it is important that we ask for the strength that is needed to overcome lying. That strength is found in Christ. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

Ninth, make a decision to tell the truth. There is a power in decision-making that helps one accomplish the desired goal. When you decide to be truthful and announce that decision to others, you are making yourself accountable to them. Knowing you are accountable to tell the truth will help you to tell the truth.

Finally, resolve to be a person of character. The liar compromises his or her character when lying. Eventually, the liar erodes all self-trust and self-worth he or she may have had. Religious and financial compromise is also often involved when lying.

The world is looking for men and women of integrity today. The one people above all others that ought to practice integrity are Christians. May God help each of us to deal with the problem of lying and build integrity into our character.

Discussion Question

Are American Christians more truthful today than a generation ago?

Chapter 8: Racism

From the streets of Los Angeles to the battle fields of Bosnia, racism is one of the world's most significant problems. When we think of racism, we often tend to think about its practice in a specific context such as the apartheid policies which have dominated much of the history of South Africa and of the attitude toward the Jews in Nazi Germany. Actually, racism is far more widely practiced. It is safe to say that this week, thousands of people around the world were denied basic human rights on the basis of their racial or ethnic background.

In its mildest form, racism is expressed in subtle ways which allow one race to dominate the popular culture in a multi-cultural society. At other times, it is expressed in words ranging from unfair ethnic jokes to offensive graffito spray painted on buildings in ethnic communities.

In many countries, members of certain ethnic groups are denied benefits and opportunities widely available to others. In its most extreme form, racism grows into genocide attempts as one gang seeks to destroy another or one tribe annihilates another. Many of the world's minor wars represent little more than extreme expressions of racism.

While much has been said throughout the years about people of different races living together in harmony, the theory has not been expressed in reality. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are two of several nations which broke up in the nineties because significant ethnic groups within their borders determined they could no longer live in harmony. Numerous tribal disputes are threatening the national security of various African and Asian states.

Where Did Races Come From?

The Greek and Hebrew words used to describe races in the Bible may be translated races, nations, or gentiles. The first mention of distinct ethnic groups in Scripture is found in the table of nations (Gen. 10:5). This listing of 70 different ethnic groups describes each one as descendants of a specific patriarch. Each of these nations grew out of an extended family over several generations. While some Bible teachers have argued this list of nations is complete, it is more likely 70 nations were mentioned specifically for their numerological significance. The number 70 was often used by the Jews to represent the whole as in the 70-member Sanhedrin which represented the whole of Israel. Moses also identified at least one additional "nation" two chapters later when he recorded the call of Abram (Gen. 12:2).

The summary of nations in Genesis 10 makes it clear that all nations are direct descendants of a common ancestor. Scripture reaffirms this truth in other places where Adam is seen as the biological source of the human race (Rom. 5:12). If we are all descendants of Adam through the line of Noah, why are different racial characteristics apparent? At least possible answers have been proposed by Bible teachers to address this question.

Some Bible teachers believe God created the races just as He also created Adam: The name Adam means "red man," suggesting that he may have had an appearance similar to that of the native people of North America. Those who hold this view suggest specific racial characteristics may have been assigned by God to the descendants of Noah. One expression of this view argues that a darker skin color was part of a curse placed upon Canaan (Gen. 9:25).

A second view attributes racial characteristics to environment. This theory holds that racial characteristics tend to be adaptations over generations to environmental conditions. According to this view, the darker skin people of Africa had prolonged exposure to the sun and the long winters of Scandinavia resulted in a paler skin color for that people.

A third view argues that all the races were created in Adam and that distinctive racial characteristics existed embryonically in Adam. According to this view, various specific racial characteristics became more prominent as a result of generations of inbreeding within one's ethnic group as the tribal nations became separated after the confusion of languages at Babel. This third view is also consistent with genetic research which has identified racial characteristics such as skin color and a predisposition to disease in some races to genes transmitted from generation to generation in DNA.

A Theology of the Races

Although the Bible does propose a specific model for understanding the origin of the races, it does make it clear that God Himself is the source of these racial distinctions. God has made us all different. "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut. 32:8). This verse suggests every race is in some way related to the Jewish people. This is interesting in light of the wide expression of anti-Semitism in a world in rebellion against God. How odd of God to choose the Jews.

Some ancient texts and translations of Deuteronomy 32:8 conclude the verse with a reference to the sons of God, i.e., angels (cf. LXX; NIV). If that reading is accurate, nations are in some way related to angels. Perhaps each nation has its own guardian angel. In both readings and views, God is the One separating the races. Whether He did it with reference to angels or Jews, God is the source of each race.

When God made Adam, He created him in "the image of God" (Gen. 1:26). This expression does not relate to physical appearance but rather personality. God does not have a physical body but is spirit. When God made man in His image, He gave people an intellect, emotions, and will. When we look at human personality, we gain insight into the personality of God. We understand God better when we look broadly at the various races.

God cannot be limited to a specific race or ethnic group. Instead, traces of the personality of God can be found in every race. Dominant traits in an ethnic personality are often the brunt of ethnic jokes or other unfair caricatures. Instead, we should see in the strong dominant will of the German, the excitement of the Italian, the entrepreneurial spirit of the Anglo, the hospitality of the Egyptian, the exuberant joy of the Latino, and self-discipline of the Oriental insights into what God is like. Just as light passing through a prism separates into a rainbow of colors, so God has expressed Himself to us through the prism of race. Since these racial characteristics are expressions of the personality of God Himself, attacks against another race represent an attack against God. It is a sin to be prejudice against another race or ethnic group.

God loves people of all races. Jesus came to die for people of all races (John 3:16). In His commission to the church, Jesus directed us to plant churches for all races (Matt. 28:19). God is not willing any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Rather, it is the will of God for all races to experience salvation (1 Tim. 2:4).

Scripture suggests that our racial characteristics will accompany us throughout eternity. John saw the elders in heaven singing, "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). In describing those converted through the witness of the 144,000 Hebrew evangelists, John wrote, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9). He also described a river in the eternal city which was lined with trees whose leaves "were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2).

Five Steps Toward Racism

In light of the biblical teaching about races and God's attitude towards races, the practice of racism is something that should be avoided by Christians. Unfortunately, many Christians

struggle with racism. One reason they may find it difficult to dispose of racial attitudes is because they fail to understand the steps one takes on his or her way to becoming a racist.

The first step toward racism is inward. People begin this process when they tend to value their race as superior based on racial differences to another. They begin to think they are better simply because they belong to a specific group. Ethnic pride may quickly degenerate into racial attitudes.

This is followed by a second step which is more outward. Those who begin viewing themselves as belonging to a better quality race soon begin devaluing other people belonging to other races. In their minds, these people are second or third class. This evaluation is made, not on the basis of any specific knowledge about the individual being devalued, but simply because he or she is a member of a visible minority.

Expression is the third step toward racism. At this point, the racist begins expressing outward actions to people of other racial and/or ethnic groups. These expressions may range from simple verbal insults to serious criminal actions taken against members of another race, including crimes of violence such as murder, assault, and rape.

These actions produce results that are detrimental to the offended race. Actually, the negative results of racism spread beyond the race attacked. The racist and his or her race also suffers the negative consequences of racism. Expressed prejudice leads to a segregation of the races. This means each race misses out on the contributions of other races to their quality of life.

The ultimate step in the racist path is a compromise in one's relationship with God. God instituted severe penalties for crimes against humanity because such crimes attacked one made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6). This suggests that God is offended when people are attacked. The individual with a racist attitude toward people of other ethnic backgrounds is offensive to God, who made that nation to reflect some special aspect of His personality. An attack on a race is an attack on God.

Why Do People Tend to Be More Racist Today?

Without question, race relations are disintegrating around the world today. Why do people tend to be more racist today than in previous generations? Several factors contribute to this problem. Race relations prosper when laws are applied equally to all races, but as America moves from a nation governed by law to a nation governed by precedent, members of visible minorities tend not to experience the same justice as people of other races.

Laws are an important factor in dealing with racism. Laws tend to subdue ancient hatreds, preventing them from being expressed in violence against others. This has become evident in the breakup of Yugoslavia. While there was much to be criticized in the oppressive communist regime that governed that nation previously, the enforcement of law gave that society stability and Serbs and Moslems lived in harmony. As the nation broke up, the absence of law allowed old animosities to flair up into a devastating ethnic civil war.

The decline of Christianity is another factor contributing to the increase in racism. The principles of Christianity are inconsistent with the practice of racism. While it is true Christians have been racist in the past, those who practice their beliefs consistently embrace others of different races and seek to reach them for Christ.

The media also has a role in racism. In an effort to get a better rating, incidents involving racism tend to be given more coverage than might otherwise be given to the incident. Also, racism is a common theme in the entertainment media.

Sinful human attitudes like pride and ignorance also contribute to the problem of racism. In World War II, the holocaust and internment of Japanese people living in North America were violent expressions of racism. Today, ethnic cleansings around the world and politically correct language is used to minimize racial attitudes.

What Is the Answer to Racism?

When one recognizes God as the Creator of the races, the practice of racism is totally inconsistent with Christianity. Unfortunately, cultural values have influenced many of us, so we struggle with attitudes toward visible minorities in general or a particular ethnic group. There are some things we can do to deal with the problem of racism at a very personal level.

First, remember the mark by which Christians are to be identified, that of loving one another. On the night in which He was betrayed, Jesus left His disciples with a new commandment and noted, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The importance of that "new commandment" is emphasized as it is repeated twelve times in the New Testament.

Next, follow the example of Christ. Jesus was no doubt aware of the cultural attitudes of His people concerning the Samaritans, but He overcame those values to communicate the gospel with members of that ethnic group. When Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman, the significance of His actions were not lost. She asked, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (John 4:9). Throughout that conversation, Jesus avoided engaging in the issues that divided Jews and Samaritans as He built bridges to reach a woman and a city.

Cross-cultural evangelism as practiced by Jesus on that occasion should be part of the norm in our Christian experience. Jesus gave His followers a commission to "make disciples of all ethnic groups" (Matt. 28:19, ELT). It is impossible to fulfill the great commission without cross-cultural evangelism.

The gospel which saves people of our race or ethnic background is effective in saving people of other races and ethnic backgrounds. This was a difficult principle for the early Christians to grasp. When reports of Philip's ministry among the Samaritans reached the church in Jerusalem, a delegation was sent to determine what was happening. Later, when God brought salvation to Cornelius and his network of friends and relatives, Peter was very reluctant to cooperate. Later, he found himself defending his actions to other Jewish Christians who struggled with the conversion of non-Jews.

Perhaps we could overcome racism if we considered the new position all of us have in Christ. In Christ, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all" (Col. 3:11; cf. Gal. 3:28).

There are some practical actions we can take to overcome racial attitudes. Begin giving to others, demanding nothing in return. Racial tensions are inflamed in a community when one group goes after special privileges denied to others. All of us can find people who are better off than we are, but take time to consider an ethnic group less fortunate than the one to which you belong.

Ask God for color-blind eyes. Learn to see people as individual human beings rather than members of a particular visible minority. We are all "one blood," having the same human characteristics. May God help us to live together in harmony with all the people of the world.

Discussion Question

What is the biggest racial problem or racial issue facing the church today?

Appendix: Foundational Laws of Separation

The following summarizes 27 foundational laws or principles of separation applied throughout this book. These biblical principles are useful in helping us make ethical decisions about the rightness or wrongness of our involvement in a wide variety of activities. Not every principle will be applicable in every situation, but it is anticipated that some principles in this list are applicable to each situation you are likely to encounter. The list is provided at the conclusion of this book to help you determine "what is right" in situations you encounter in life which are not specifically covered in the previous eight chapters.

1. The Principle of Addiction
   The principle of addiction states that a Christian should avoid any and all activity which might place him or her in bondage (1 Cor. 6:12).

2. The Principle of Appearances
   The principle of appearances states that a Christian should avoid the appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).

3. The Principle of Association
   The principle of association states that a Christian should not associate closely to that which is incompatible to living the Christian life (1 Cor. 6:14).

4. The Principle of Barbecue Chicken
   The principle of barbecue chicken states that a Christian should have good and balanced taste in artistic matters (1 Cor. 12:31).

5. The Principle of Clear Thoughts
   The principle of clear thoughts states that a Christian should have pure thoughts in his or her relationships with others (Matt. 5:28).

6. The Principle of Community Morals
   The principle of community morals states that a Christian should live beyond commonly accepted moral standards in his or her community (1 Cor. 5:1).

7. The Principle of Consequences
   The principle of consequences states that evil actions produce corrupt results (1 Cor. 15:33).

8. The Principle of Cultural Expectations
   The principle of cultural expectations states that our Christian life should be expressed within our cultural world view (Rom. 2:14).

9. The Principle of Effect
   The principle of effect states that Christians should consider the effect of an action upon them before engaging in that activity (Gal. 6:7).

10. The Principle of Financial Stewardship
    The principle of financial stewardship reminds Christians that they are stewards of God's resources entrusted to them (Ps. 24:1).

11. The Principle of Following Christ's Example
    The principle of following Christ's example states that Christians should pattern their lives after that of Christ (1 Peter 2:21).

12. The Principle of Following Your Conscience
    The principle of following your conscience states that a Christian should never violate his or her conscience (Rom. 2:15).

13. The Principle of Following Rules
    The principle of following rules states that a Christian should always obey the clear teaching of Scripture (Deut. 29:29).

14. The Principle of Incompatibility
    The principle of incompatibility states that a Christian is radically different and, therefore, should avoid engaging in a partnership with another who does not share his or her values (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

15. The Principle of Intent
    The principle of intent states that a Christian should question his or her motives in participating in a questionable activity (James 1:14, 15).

16. The Principle of Message Communicated
    The principle of the message communicated states that a Christian should be careful to live in such a way that the message of his or her life causes others to glorify God (Matt. 5:18).

17. The Principle of Obeying Light
    The principle of obeying light states that a Christian should act in accordance to the light he or she has on a matter (Acts 17:30).

18. The Principle of Personal Commitment
    The principle of personal commitment states that a Christian should express decision in a commitment to someone else (Ruth 1:16, 17).

19. The Principle of Personal Integrity
    The principle of personal integrity states that a Christian should avoid doing what he or she believes may be wrong whether it is wrong or not (Rom. 14:23). Sometimes. this is expressed in the maxim, "If in doubt, don't."

20. The Principle of Physical Integrity
    The principle of physical integrity states that a Christian should avoid activities which causes him or her to compromise their body (1 Cor. 6:18).

21. The Principle of the Place
    The principle of the place states that a Christian should avoid places where he or she is unlikely to bring glory to God (John 17:5).

22. The Principle of Respecting Others
    The principle of respecting others states that a Christian has a moral responsibility to be concerned for the welfare of others (1 Cor. 8:9, 12).

23. The Principle of Stewardship of Time
    The principle of stewardship of time states that a Christian should make good use of the time available (Eph. 5:16).

24. The Principle of the Stumbling Block
    The principle of the stumbling block states that a Christian should avoid any and all activities which might cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble in his or her Christian life (1 Cor. 8:9).

25. The Principle of Thinking
    The principle of thinking states that the focus of a Christian's personal thought life should be compatible with the message of the gospel (Phil. 4:8).

26. The Principle of Ultimate Objective
    The principle of ultimate objective states that the chief purpose of the Christian is to bring glory to God in all he or she does (1 Cor. 10:31).

27. The Principle of Values Education
    The principle of values education states that Christian parents have a God-given responsibility to teach biblical principles to their children (Deut. 6:7-9).

May God bless you as you continue, in the midst of controversy, to do for Jesus, every day and in every way, what is right!