

You Are A Role Model
(May 10, 2020 1 Corinthians 10:24-11:1)

**You Are A
Role Model**

— 1 Corinthians 10:24-11:1 —



Charles Barkley was a great basketballer – but often in trouble. In March 1991, the NBA suspended him and fined him after he tried to spit at a racist heckler seated courtside – but it ended up hitting an 8-year-old girl.

Nike saw an opportunity and developed a series of advertisements where Barkley declared – “I am not a role model”.

“Just because I dunk a basketball doesn’t mean I should raise your kids.”

He didn’t like the idea that just because he was a famous sportsman – that meant he had to be a role model – someone to emulate.

Or consider the famous meme of Melania Trump soon after the 2016 election that makes her say – “All I wanted was a sugar daddy and what – now I have to be a role model and solve world peace?”

Many Christians feel the same way. I signed up for heaven not to be a role model.

I am a sinner – look at Jesus – not at me.

Paul would say – read the fine print.

Jesus called us to be salt and light – to let our light shine before others so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.

In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul says:

Therefore, we **are** ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us.

If you are a Christian – you **are** a role model, an ambassador, a living emissary of Jesus Christ.

The world is meant to see Jesus in you.

And that comes with a responsibility.

The moment your co-workers, your neighbours, your fellow students realise you are a Christian – they file that away – and they watch.

Every one of them has an idea of what being a Christian should mean. How you should act. What you should watch. The language you use.

You and I know it is a totally unfair standard. It is often an arbitrary standard. But it is there.

Oh – I heard him say – he watched *Spring Break* – bit too racy for Christians I would say – what a hypocrite.

Oh – I heard she said about Sarah – gossip – hypocrite.

Whether we like it or not – we **are** ambassadors for Christ – we **are** role models.

So what does this mean in terms of the decisions we make? In our passage this morning Paul tells us:

Make decisions that glorify God to the world

Make decisions that glorify God to the world

As Christians we should live our lives in such a way that the world sees our good works and gives glory to our Father in heaven

We are working our way through the book of 1 Corinthians where Paul's answer to every issue is:

Cross-centred wisdom for flawed saints.

Wisdom about how should we act in view of our love for Christ and obedience to the cross.

Introduction 1:1-9

Response to reports 1:10-6:20

Response to questions 7:1-16:9

Conclusion 16:10-24



We are in the long section from 7:1-16:9 where Paul writes responses to a number of questions.

This morning we continue to look at his answer to the *third* question the Corinthians asked – what do we do about food offered to idols?

We have seen that in 1 Corinthians 8-11 – Paul gives us principles concerning how a Christian should make moral decisions. Here is how I see this section laying out:

Use your rights to love others and glorify God

In grey areas (8:1-11:1)

Chapter 8:1-9:27 Use your rights to love others

8:1-13 Example 1 – Food sacrificed to idols

9:1-27 Example 2 – Paying spiritual workers

Chapter 10:1-11:1 Use your rights to glorify God

10:1-23 Example 1 – Israel's Choices

10:24-11:1 Example 2 – Conscience Choices

In black and white areas (11:2-34)

11:2-16 Example 1 – Women and worship

11:17-34 Example 2 – The Lord's Table



The overall principle: Use your rights to love others and glorify God.

In chapter 8 – we saw that Christians had a right to eat meat that had been offered in a pagan Temple.

The knowledgeable ones knew it was just meat – so you could eat.

BUT – Paul then went on to say – but just because you **can** eat – doesn't mean you **should** eat.

Exercising their rights might cause a brother to stumble.

Then in chapter 9 we saw that this principle of laying down your rights to serve others applies in many areas of life.

Now here in chapter 10 – Paul urges us to use our rights to choose the path that will glorify God by staying as far from sin and temptation as we can and by making choices that will enhance the gospel before a watching world.

So please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10:24:

No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person.

Who is this other person?

I think it does apply to how we deal with our fellow Christians – we are to seek the good of other believers.

But, in the context, Paul is primarily thinking of our unbelieving neighbours.

We are to live our lives seeking the good of others.

This is the Great Commandment – we love our neighbours – even our enemies.

And the greatest good we can do is to live our lives in such a way that they see Christ in us – that they warm to the reality of the gospel we proclaim – and come to a knowledge of salvation.

Here is how Paul fleshes this out:

In private – choose what will not offend you vv. 10:25-26

In public – choose what will not offend others vv. 10:27-11.1



In private – choose what will not offend you vv. 10:25-26

In public – choose what will not offend others vv. 10:27-11.1

Basically he says – there are some choices which are fine for a Christian to make – and feel free to make them when you are alone – but when the world is watching – you may make different decisions for their sake.

We begin with this first point: **In private – choose what will not offend you.**

Verses 25-26:

Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, without raising questions for the sake of conscience, since **“the earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it.”**

As we have seen over the past few weeks:

- There are decisions you simply can’t make – you can’t watch porn or get drunk.
- There are decisions you should not make for your spiritual health – don’t push the moral envelope – don’t watch stuff that is too racy – don’t put yourself in situations of temptation.
- But – that leaves a lot of decisions that are morally neutral and you can choose one of a number of paths.

In regard to idol meat – as long as your conscience is not affected – as long as it does not bring back memories and associations with idolatry – what you do in your home is fine. Eat the meat – don’t eat the meat.

It is just meat.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in in it.” This is a quote from Psalm 24:1.

This is the passage the Rabbis used to support the contention that a blessing must be said over every meal. Since everything in the earth belongs to God one should bless God for giving us food.

All the bounty on this earth – fish, prawns, lamb, beef, fruit, chocolate – all from God.

And now that the food restrictions have been lifted under the New Covenant – all of it is good for us to eat.

Back in chapter 8 those with knowledge in Corinth had argued pretty much this point.

God created this world and all the animals in it for man. Even if meat has been offered in a pagan Temple – it is just meat – you can eat it.

Whether it was blessed by a pagan priest – had a bit sliced off it and offered to the gods – or not – it is just meat.

A slab of rump or a rack of lamb – these are provided for us to enjoy by our good God. Offering it to an idol or having it involved in a pagan ceremony does not change it into something that is not good. It is not filled with demons – it doesn’t become intrinsically unclean – in and of itself it won’t contaminate a Christian.

As Paul put it in Romans 14:14:

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself.

Look at verse 25 again:

Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, **without raising questions for the sake of conscience.**

What does Paul mean by this?

It seems Paul is saying – look if it is just you involved – don’t complicate things – by investigating where the particular piece of meat before you has been.

If your theology tells you – it is just meat – it remains meat even after being to a Temple – just eat it.

Paul knows that if you go and ask – is this particular piece of meat – idol meat – then even though you know it’s just meat – you might look at those bits differently and struggle to eat them.

So don’t complicate things.

Don’t raise questions about the history of the meat. You are not obliged to be religious meat inspectors.

Let me put it in our context. It would be unusual if every few months or so – someone in the church didn't email me and ask – hey Craig – I just found out something about this particular company – should we be using products they make?

For example – when we decided to one particular company recently – I was asked if I knew that that two years it was one of over 150 that endorsed women's reproductive choice?

So does that mean we should stop using it?

Look – if that is an issue for you – by all means – don't use it.

For me personally, I would say if a company very publicly and vocally endorses something that Christians find offensive – then many Christians would probably choose not to give them their business.

But here is the problem – if you investigate – you would be hard pressed to find a company of any size that does not in some way endorse gender rights, women's rights and other issues Christians take offense at.

There are few if any major grocery chains, banks, airlines – let alone the tech companies we use every day that do not have policies on this.

Our world is so interconnected if you only use Christian-policy oriented companies – you would just about have to live in a self-sufficient commune, not use credit cards or banks, have no investments or superannuation and turn off our technology.

In the same way – in Corinth – you would be hard pressed to buy any meat that had not been offered at the Temple.

So for Christians who like their meat – unless they formed co-ops, bought cows, had Christian shepherds – Christian butchers – Christian merchants – you could not guarantee that any meat you bought in the marketplace had never been offered to an idol at some point.

So Paul says – just eat it.

If you are at the meat vendor and you ask – is this idol meat – and the vendor says – yeah – of course – nothing has really changed – it is still just meat – but something at the back of your mind starts gnawing away – should you buy this cut of meat, should you eat it?

Look – every time I receive an email about a company – unless they are really vocal and public in their stance – I still use their products – but it does make me stop and think.

In the last few years alone Christians have organized boycotts of Target, Starbucks, Disney, most of the big banks, Qantas, Nike, Apple, Paypal, Facebook, Amazon, American Express, Visa, Mastercard – most car companies – even the Muppets.

There is not much left.

So unless a particular company makes themselves into a vocal champion for something terribly abhorrent – my choice is to just use their product. But if I have been specifically told about them – sometimes my conscience does give me some trouble. I do look at their product differently.

I have no doubt that if I looked at what Google stands for as a company – endorses – how its product is used – the way they use my data – I might struggle to use it.

I like sport. But I know there is not one major code that doesn't have policies I object to. There is not a movie or TV company that does not have some policies I oppose.

If you are in line at the grocery store and you Google the company behind almost anything in your trolley to find their views on abortion, homosexuality and religious discrimination – you might feel like putting it right back on the shelf.

Your trolley will be pretty empty quickly.

Paul says – look – if you are not going to offend someone – if it is just you – use everything that is sold, without raising questions for the sake of conscience.

If your conscience is not stirred up – don't stir it up.

What this means is that if something is not clearly sin – you don't have to investigate everything. If your conscience is OK with it – if you are not offended – if there is no one else that might be offended – make what choice you want.

Then Paul gets to the issue he is far more passionate about.

In private – choose what will not offend you vv. 10:25-26

In public – choose what will not offend others vv. 10:27-11.1



In public – choose what will not offend others vv. 10:27-11.1

At home – when no one else is involved – you need to search the Scriptures to see if this is morally acceptable and then make a decision that does not violate your conscience.

But add in others – in particular unbelievers – and now you need to make decisions that do not offend them – that do not label you as a hypocrite.

Something may be theologically, morally and conscience-wise acceptable to you – but because of your witness – you don't make that choice anyway.

Verse 27:

If any of the unbelievers invites you over and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, without raising questions for the sake of conscience.

Now the scenario moves and involves unbelievers.

An unbeliever invites you for a meal. Great! It is a good bridge building opportunity so you accept.

They bring out the main course – roast pig and veges. Smells unbelievably good.

But the pig won't have a little sign around its neck – certified idol free – or certified offered to the god Pan. You just don't know.

Paul says implement the don't ask don't tell policy – just eat the meal and thank the hostess for the delicious meal.

If the unbelievers there say nothing – if your conscience is OK with that – just eat.

If it is morally neutral and the unbeliever doesn't have an issue don't make it an issue.

If you are OK with a glass of wine and an unbeliever says – would you like to join me in a glass – fine. No one is offended – the gospel is not tarnished.

But, verses 28-29:

If someone says to you, "This is food from a sacrifice," do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who told you, and for the sake of conscience. I do not mean your own conscience, but the other person's.

There are interpretive questions here. Is the one who offers the information the non-Christian host or a third person? If it is a third person – are they a Christian or non-Christian?

While we can't be sure – the way Paul structures this – the grammar and the language used make it most likely he is picturing a third person – who is also a non-Christian letting you know – hey this is idol meat.

So what is the scenario Paul is envisaging?

You are invited over to a non-Christian's home for a meal. Other non-Christians are there. They all know you are a Christian.

The evening is going great – the unbelieving hosts are thinking – wow these Christians are almost normal – not as self-righteous as I thought.

The wife has slaved over the roast pig all day.

The meal comes out – you are salivating. You are thanking God for the earth and all that is in it – getting ready to tuck in.

You pick up your knife ready partake and then it happens. One of the other neighbours – who knows you are a Christian – and knows this particular pig just came from the Temple – wants to see how you react. He looks at you and says – by the way – you know this piggy was offered to Zeus this morning?

The implication is they are not looking out for you – just letting you know so you don't eat something that will offend you.

The implication is that this is a test. They want to see what you do.

It might be a bit like the non-Christian who invites you over puts out a couple of glasses and bottles of wine and says – so are Christians OK with the demon drink or not?

They want to see what you do?

It happens so often. If people know you are a Christian – they have an idea how you should live and act and they want to see if you live up to their ideals.

They watch you, they test you – they measure you against some perceived standard they have.

Paul says – now that the question of idolatry has been raised and is hanging in the air – **now** things are different.

Morally you could eat – tell them – I'm fine with idol meat.

But for the sake of their conscience and your witness Paul says – probably best if you put your knife away.

Say – thank you for telling me. Don't eat the pig. Stick to the veges and foods that didn't go to the Temple.

Why?

Out of consideration both for the one who told you *and* for the sake of the conscience of the unbelieving host.

If the unbelievers point out – this is idol meat – clearly they think Christians should have an issue with it. They are testing you.

If you say – that's no problem and eat it – that might raise a whole slew of questions in their mind.

I doubt you could explain – Oh – since this isn't a Temple meal – and demons can't live in the meat – this is fine.

The non-Christians just can't make those distinctions.

It would raise questions:

- Do Christians think worshipping idols is fine?
- Is he also a worshipper of the gods?
- Is Jesus just another God?
- Is this particular Christian just a hypocrite without the courage of his convictions?

In this scenario, confusing Christ with idols, blurring the line between the gospel and the world – is a **greater** danger to the unbeliever coming to Christ than them thinking you are self-righteous or picky.

In this case – don't eat the meat – even though it is just meat and you have every right to eat it.

Basically, Paul is saying – Christian living is hard.

When you read chapters 8, 9 and 10 – one question – what should we do about meat offered to idols – Paul gives a series of principles.

There is no easy answer to this question.

Making moral choices is hard.

Every decision has to go through a grid – change the scenario a bit and your decision changes.

He is asking us to think through how each action we take might help or hinder our spiritual walk, the spiritual walk of others and the gospel as it goes forth.

This is not neat – black and white stuff. But this is real world difficult decision making.

The people you work with might organize to go to a movie. As far as you know the morality of the movie is acceptable. It is probably not something you would go to otherwise – but you think it is a good bridge building opportunity.

Then your coworker – who knows you are a Christian – says – fair bit of language in this – is that a problem for you?

Your 18-year-old is invited to a party with school friends – great!

But the Dad says – I know your family are Christians – and there will be alcohol there – it's not a real party without some alcohol – that isn't a problem for you is it?

You are being tested by a perceived standard.

You have to decide – what decision will glorify God and make the gospel the most attractive. For the sake of their conscience – it might be best to graciously decline.

These are not easy decisions. Some Christians just withdraw from the world. They don't mix with non-Christians – they don't let their kids mix with non-Christians. It is easy and neat – **and as a black and white principle – it is wrong.**

Some Christians say – we have to be all things to all people – and indiscriminately mix with the world. Again – **as a black and white principle – it is wrong.**

You must not sin. You must not cause a brother to stumble. You must not turn a non-believer from the gospel. You must not allow a non-believer to think that there is no separation between Christ and the world.

And getting the balance right is plain flat out hard. Paul takes three chapters to explain one simple question. And frankly sometimes I think I have not done the best job making wise choices.

But that doesn't mean I don't try hard.

Then we come to the end of verse 29 and verse 30:

For why is my freedom judged by another person's conscience? If I partake with thanksgiving, why am I criticized because of something for which I give thanks?

This is a great question.

Back in verse 25 – Paul said – if you are alone and your conscience is clear – just eat the meat.

Would it be sin to give thanks to God for the provision of this meal and eat the meat in your home? No.

Would it be sin to give thanks to God for the provision of this meal and eat the meat in the unbeliever's house? No – **but** it might stop him listening to the gospel.

Would it be sin to have a glass of wine in your home with your meal? No.

Would it be sin to have a glass of wine when you are out with your co-workers? No. But depending on how they react – it might put a barrier in front of the gospel.

Why?

Because of what it does to the conscience of the unbeliever.

Giving the gospel the best chance to shine outweighs your freedoms.

Some decisions are not sin, are not wrong – but they might hinder the gospel.

If this is the case – choose not to use your rights and liberties. Their soul is more important than your freedoms and your rights.

We watch the coronavirus protesters saying – my rights are more important than someone else's life.

But as precious as a life is – a soul is far more important.

I am constantly asked – but why should another person's conscience determine how I act in areas of liberty?

Because – you are a role model – like it or not – and the world is watching.

God left you here to show the world Christ.

So what do they see when they look at you?

Does your life attract them to Christ or put a barrier between them and Christ?

Paul sums up his thoughts in verses 31 through to verse 1 of chapter 11:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Your decision – do I eat and drink or not – do I make this choice or that choice – has to be run through the grid of – not is this technically, biblically possible – but – will it glorify God – will it demonstrate the gospel to a watching world?

Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or the church of God, just as I also try to please everyone in everything, not seeking my own benefit, but the benefit of many, so that they may be saved.

Don't offend them – Jews, Greeks, fellow Christians.

Seek their benefit – their salvation – rather than your rights and your liberties.

We do this for one reason – that some may come to Christ.

There are many things you are permitted to do – but it might tarnish the gospel in the eyes of the world. So choose to lay aside your rights to see the gospel flourish.

Why should you curtail your liberties? To bring glory to God. To help the gospel penetrate hard hearts.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.

Even something as simple as what do I eat and drink can impact your testimony.

There are so many things we have a right to do – but if they might offend non-Christians – Jews, Greeks – or Christians – then we should not seek our own advantage – but we should do what will magnify God in our lives and might lead to the salvation of others.

Ask your non-Christian friends – what is it that stops you coming to Christ?

All too often they point to the Christians they know – including you. These Christians live lives little different from their own. Too much hypocrisy, selfishness, self-righteousness.

They have ideas about how we should speak, spend our money, treat others – what we should watch and do.

Their standard is often different from the real biblical standard – but is real to them.

How you live when the world is watching has to not only meet the biblical standard – Paul says – if the gospel is at stake – there are times were we have to exceed that standard to attract the lost to Christ.

We have to make choices we are not obligated to make.

We have to live in a way that promotes the gospel not turns the world away.

We have to choose not to do something we have a right to do – in order to win the lost.

Paul is asking us – in the way we live – in the decisions we make – in what we claim to believe – what do we convey?

Are we those who by the savour of our life – draw men and women to Christ or those who turn them away from the Lord?

Paul sums it all up in the first verse of chapter 11:

Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.

Paul says – I am a role model – because Jesus called me to be a role model – **but so are you.**

Imitate him as he imitates Christ.

You **are** a role model.

Be like Christ. Look, we will never reach that standard in this life. But that doesn't mean we don't attempt it.

We have to strive to live so the world sees Christ in us.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes you can come to a section like 1 Corinthians 8-10 – and it can seem flat out confusing.

Meat offered to idols is not in our frame of reference. The principles are not always spelled out as neatly as we might want.

Change one little variable and the decision is completely different.

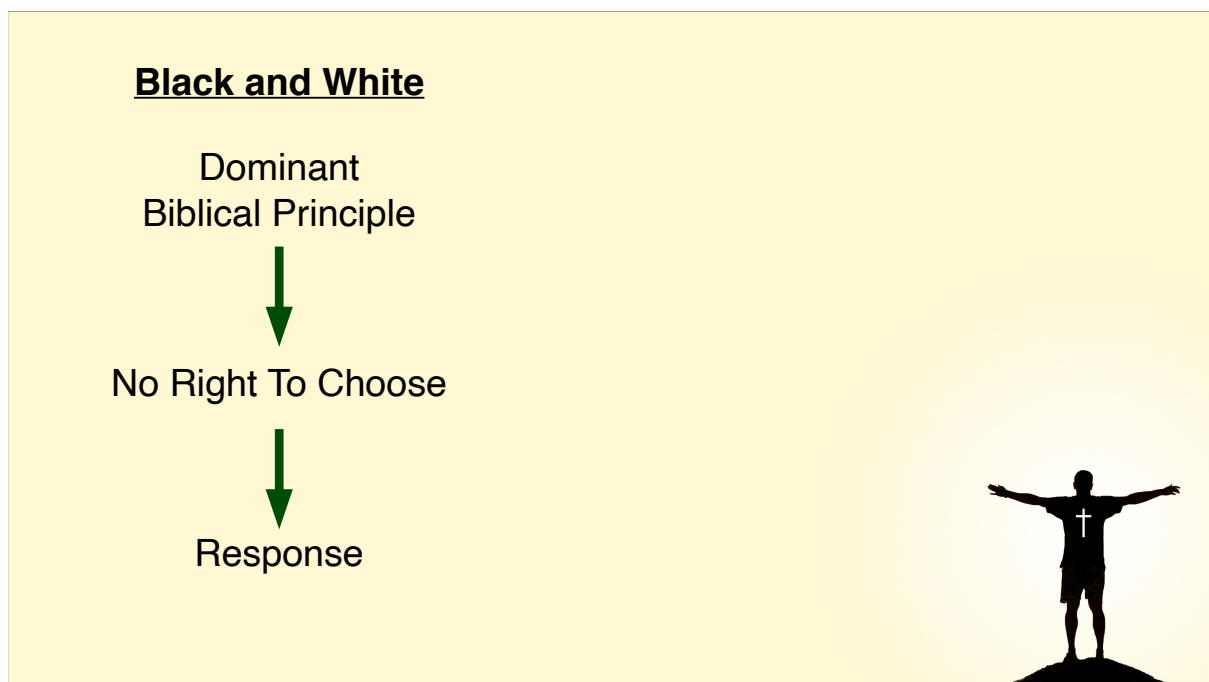
We like black and white answers – not grey ones.

We want – do I eat or do I not eat this stuff?

Have you watched those legal shows where the lawyer questions the witness – and asks a question and demands a yes/no answer – nothing else is acceptable? Well the truth is often the answer is usually not as easy as yes or no.

Life is like that. And so God in His wisdom gives us principles to help us make decisions that are wise.

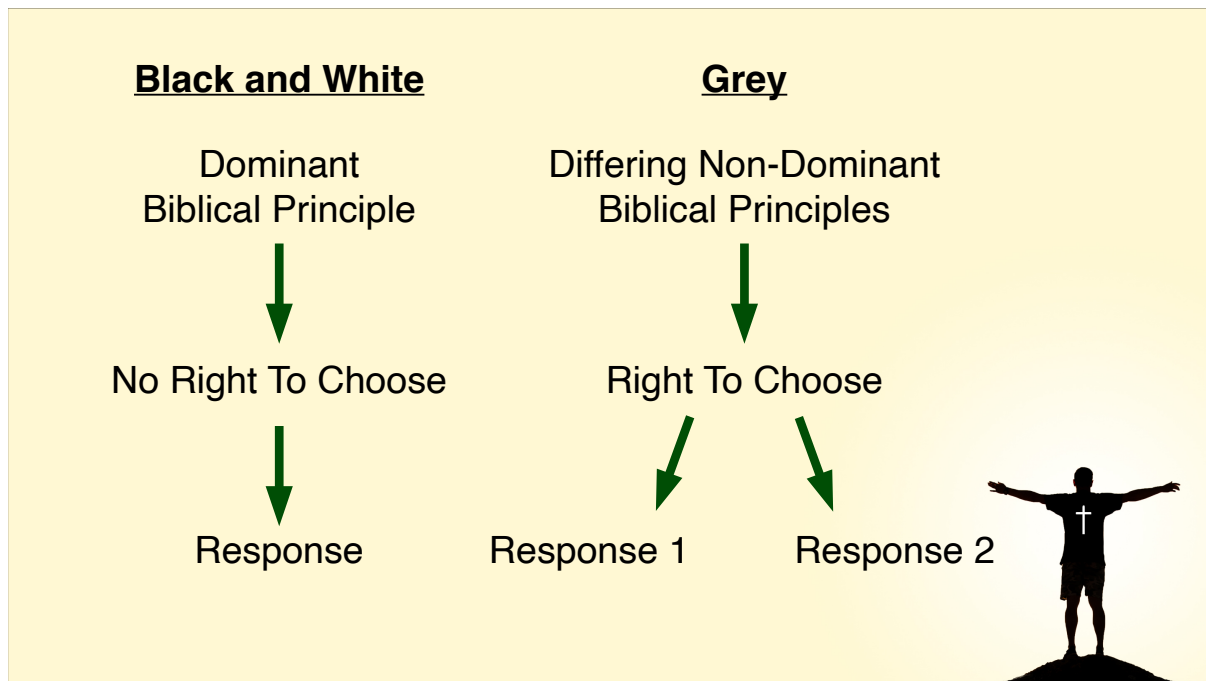
Over the last couple of weeks we have seen Paul ask us to filter the situation.



In black and white issues – there is a dominant biblical principle Christians are to follow. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery.

In these areas we don't have a right to choose to over-ride the principle. Our discretion is removed.

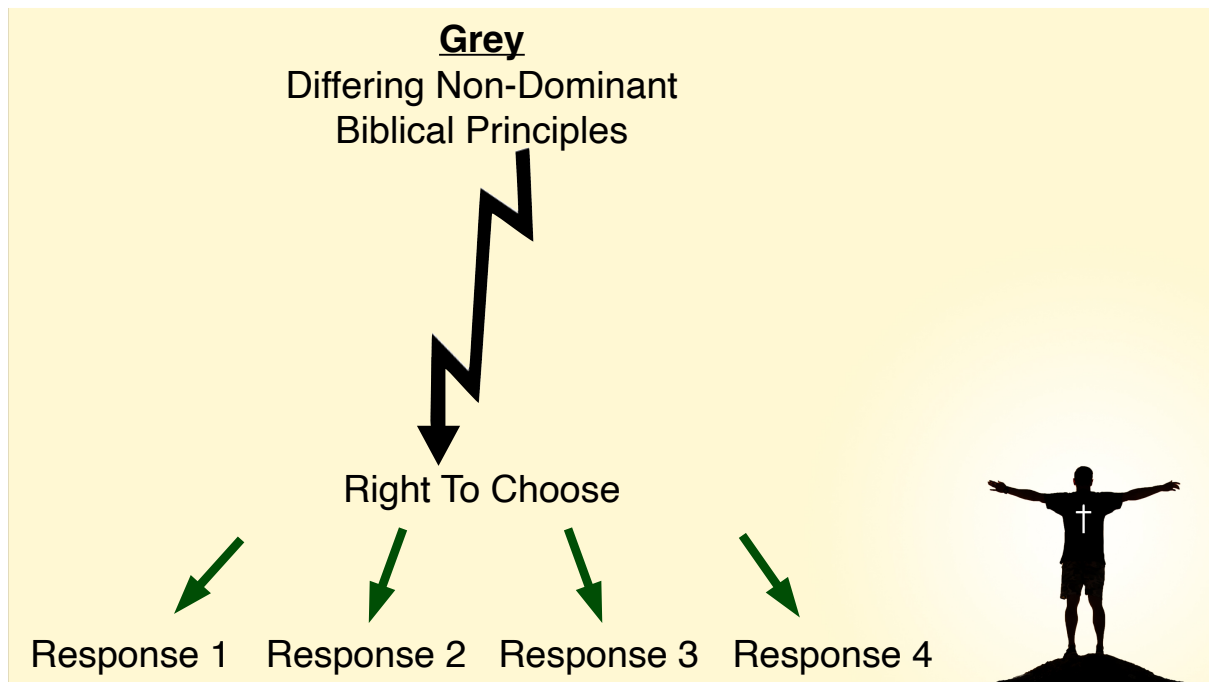
Do I have a right to satisfaction by committing adultery with my secretary or not? As Christians you only have one response – no!



But most decisions we make are not black and white – they are grey.

In grey issues – there is not one over-arching dominant principle. There are competing principles, differing circumstances.

Now you can exercise discretion – now you have a right to choose.



But the reality is the process leading up to your choice is not straightforward. You have to weigh principles, differing theologies and situations. You are affected by your background and understanding and the background and understanding of those around you. It is a jagged journey to the place of choice which means you can have different responses.

It is flat out hard.

What principles do we have to weigh?

Here are some Paul has given us.

Might my actions cause a brother in Christ to stumble?

There are things we are within our rights to do – have a beer – watch a movie – that other Christians might stumble over. They might have struggled with alcohol or porn. Don't do something that might impede them.

Might my actions cause me to stumble?

Don't go really close to the moral line. How often we step over the line. How often we draw the line in the wrong place.

Might my actions turn a non-Christian from Christ?

Might my actions draw a non-Christian to Christ?

Does it show love for others?

What will bring God the most glory?

I suspect that if we applied just this one principle to 99.9% of our decisions – the answer would be pretty clear. **What will bring God the most glory?**

Does it magnify Christ? Does it make God seem the most important thing in my life? Will it declare the holiness and majesty of our God?

Oftentimes a number of decisions are acceptable – but one *clearly* glorifies God more.

I see it in how we spend our money.

You earned it – you can spend it any way you want.

Option A – I have \$100,000. I can buy a \$98,000 Audi and buy the wife some kitchen utensils.

Option B – I have \$100,000. I can buy a \$35,000 Mazda. I can buy the wife the couch she wants. I can give \$20,000 to missions. I can come to the church and have some to bless the brothers and sisters in need.

Do I watch this movie or not?

Do I spend my leisure time in this way or not?

Use these principles to help you decide and in particular ask what will bring God the most glory?

Be imitators of Paul, as he also imitated Christ.

Even after salvation – Paul had a right to stay a wealthy, connected Jew leading the good life. But he laid it aside for the sake of the gospel.

Paul was willing to suffer for the gospel. Paul became a slave, a Gentile, a poor man – to reach some for Christ.

Paul consistently laid his rights aside for others.

He chose not to eat foods he loved and could eat. He chose not to accept payment he could rightfully claim.

Be imitators of him.

But more than that – Be imitators of Paul – **as he is of Christ**. Paul learned these principles from Jesus who chose to lay aside the privileges of heaven – assumed the form of a servant – suffered unjustly and chose to die for those who persecuted Him.

Jesus reached out to prostitutes, tax gatherers and Gentiles.

Jesus used knowledge filled with love.

Jesus never pushed the moral envelope.

Jesus never caused others to stumble.

Jesus' life drew men to Him and still does today.

Imitate Him. Make like decisions like Jesus.

If it helps ask WWJD? *What Would Jesus Do?*

Make decisions the way Jesus made them.

Be imitators of Christ and in this way bring glory to God – the only One who deserves it.

Making godly decisions can be difficult – but here we have the principles that will help us make decisions in integrity – decisions which will enhance the glory of God.

May we have the courage to make godly decisions all of our days that glorify God and see the lost saved.

May we be role models for Christ.

You Are A Role Model **(May 10, 2020 1 Corinthians 10:24-11:1)**

Main Point: Make decisions that glorify God to the world

General Questions:

1. What does it mean to be – ambassadors for Christ – salt and light?
2. Do you like the idea that you are a role model or not? Why?
3. What does your conscience have to do with the decisions you make?
4. How do you handle things when you find a company you use endorses policies you object to as a Christian? Does it change the way you think about that company to find this out?
5. What does the conscience of others have to do with the decisions you make?
6. Why should we care about the conscience of unbelievers?
7. How do we balance our rights and liberties against seeking the good (the salvation) of unbelievers?
8. Why is making moral decisions so hard?
9. What does it mean to be an imitator of Christ?

Application Questions:

1. Where should Christians draw the line concerning the policies and practices of companies and organisations in regard to supporting them or using their products?
2. What principles does Paul give in chapters 8-10 to help us navigate making wise moral decisions?
3. How does this principle – Asking – **what will bring God the most glory?** help us make wise decisions in most cases?
4. Are there areas of your life you can imitate Christ better?