

MORAL CLARITY ON THOSE SHADES OF GRAY - BASED ON GODS WORD

By Jesse Romero (Catholic Evangelist) ©2020

Throughout the course of our life, all of us have to make difficult decisions about issues which good people could disagree on. I am going to provide moral clarity with charity about making those 'hard decisions easy.' Here are 10 principles from the Holy Bible that will facilitate our ability to make clear prudent decisions.

The Holy Bible is very clear on matters of sin. If you want to know what it is that God forbids, just start with the Ten Commandments & the 7 Deadly sins. The Lord lays out those behaviors which He does not permit. Moreover, there are positive things which God commands us to do and if we don't do those things we are guilty of 'sins of omission.' Sacred Scripture is very clear about sin and vice. We know what's right & what's wrong because God has given us a moral compass which is a well formed moral conscience based on Gods Word.

I don't want to talk about what is explicitly right and wrong according to Sacred Scripture, I want to talk about what falls in the middle, because that's what poses the difficult problems when it comes to making a prudent decision. E.g., if somebody proposes that you to break 1 of the 10 commandments that's obviously not acceptable. If somebody proposes to you the idea of reading the Bible, praying, sharing your Christ centered faith with someone, that's a good thing and totally acceptable.

However, there is a large category of things in the middle, which the Bible doesn't explicitly address? For example, there are:

- *Some people who say that there are certain foods we should eat and certain foods we should not eat.*
- *Some people would tell us that you can drink certain things and not other things. And if you drink certain things, that's sinful, and certain other things are not.*
- *Some people believe that sports are sinful, other people disagree, to them it is the center of their life. And they bow down and worship sports at every opportunity they get.*

- *Some people believe television is a sin and have smashed it with a baseball bat. There are other people who stare at that box like mind numb robots. It doesn't matter what's on, even a test pattern tickles their ears and gives them a liver quiver.*
- *Some people say that if you go to a movie you've committed a sin, your accused of participating in ungodliness. Some people say if you buy a ticket to go to a theater - you are supporting the godless, movie-producing industry.*
- *Some people say, "Well, movies are just a diversion, there recreational and entertaining and the graphics are beautiful," and so forth.*
- *Some people think that if you do anything on Sunday other than sit and read the Bible and pray, you've sinned.*
- *Some people think that you can't play cards because its sinful and no self-respecting person would do so, others believe you can, its simply recreation and harmless.*
- *Some people believe that certain games are sinful, such as "Monopoly" because it teaches materialism. Some believe that there should be a game called "Humility and Poverty" for those who really want to pursue true Christian spirituality.*
- *Some people say that if your hair is too long, that's a sin, if it's too short, that's not a sin. Or are you just 'anal retentive' (personality characterized by meticulous neatness).*
- *Some people believe certain clothing styles reflect our culture of death. I admit, certain fashions today are immodest. Personally, I believe God is symmetrical. This is what I mean in case you don't understand. He likes the same thing on both sides of your body. Gee whiz, I see clothes that seem like patchwork, they go every which way. There is no order or symmetry in the crazy fashions of today. I think God is a God of symmetry and order, that's my opinion.*
- *Some people debate about how much sleep one should get. Sleep is not wrong, sleep is good. I try to get an 8 hour sleep at least once or twice a week. I'd like to do it more than I'm able, but there's nothing wrong with sleep. In fact, there's nothing wrong with sleeping in. Do you ever look forward to a morning when you can sleep in? Sure you do, that's a wonderful thing. Sleeping in and collecting your physical strength is good, however, if done too frequently, it's not spiritually profitable because it will cultivate sloth. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with sleep, but in excess, it creates a habit of laziness which is not to your benefit.*

- *Some people who feel that certain musical styles and genre's are sinful, even demonic. Some may go so far as to say that if it's not church music it's all sinful.*
- *Some people have no problem with boys and girls swimming together. Yet there are some people who believe that it's a sin. They refer to it as "mixed bathing" and that is not allowed.*
- *Some people believe going to Las Vegas and playing the slot machines is sinful, others disagree.*
- *Some people believe using medical marijuana is sinful, others disagree.*

These are classic examples of things that enter into the area where the Holy Bible is silent and really does not address these issues with specificity. Now there are many things like that in life as I have just enumerated. As disciples of Christ, how do we make decisions about those kinds of things. I am going to give you ten biblical principles whenever you are faced with making a decision that isn't black or white. As you learn to apply these principles, you will grow in "the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18) and you will know what it means to be *free in Christ* (cf. Galatians 5:1), yet obedient to His divine will.

Principle#1. Ask yourself this question. Will it be spiritually profitable?

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 6:12 (RSV) Notice verse 12, read it carefully. "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything.

Let me qualify this verse by saying, all things that are not unlawful are lawful. That's what this verse means. There are some things in Sacred Scripture that are clearly said to be unlawful or sinful. The Apostle is not talking about those things. What the Apostle is referring to in this verse is that sort of middle ground, those neutrally moral areas are lawful for me. Yet he adds, "but not everything is beneficial for me," now this word literally means "to my advantage." Certain things are not to my spiritual advantage, they don't profit my spiritual life.

The question the apostle is posing is: Will this action or behavior enhance my spiritual life? Will it cultivate holiness? That's a good question. Will it be profitable to me as a Christian? Will it be to my advantage as a Christian? Will it cultivate godliness and virtue?

We shouldn't look at the above issues I have listed from the standpoint of, man oh man, can I do this and get away with it? On the contrary, we should ask ourselves, *is it expedient for my spiritual growth?*

Principle #2 - Will it build me up? In other words, will it put me on the path to greater spiritual maturity? 1 Corinthians 10:23 (NAB) "Everything is lawful" - that is, all things that are not unlawful are lawful. "Everything is lawful, but not everything is beneficial." Moreover, here is the clincher. "Everything is lawful, but not everything builds up." What? That's right, 'not everything builds up!'

So, we have to ask ourselves the question, will it build me up? The word is "*oikodomeō*," it means "to build a house." In other words, will it add to my present life things that will increase my spiritual maturity, interior life and growth in holiness? 1 Corinthians 14:26 (NAB) says, "Everything should be done for building up." St Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:19 (NAB), "*In the sight of God, we are speaking in Christ, and all for building you up, beloved.*" Lets go back a few chapters, in 1 Corinthians 9:24 (NAB), Paul says, "Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win." Every man that competes in athletics is temperate, moderate and in control of his passions especially in the use of alcohol, the athlete exercises self-control in all things. Why? Because he wants to win. Verse 27 (RSV) says: "but I pommel my body and subdue it. Literally, he says, "to strike under the eye" (Greek – hupópiázó), which means *to give yourself a black eye*. I give my body a black eye for the purpose of keeping it under control, so that this self-imposed mortification may be beneficial to me in the long run.

Lets be honest and admit that most of us are slaves to our bodily desires, that's a fact. We basically respond quite readily to our carnal and disordered appetites. That's why, when it comes to becoming a self-disciplined person, you have to train yourself in discipline, it doesn't come naturally.

Here are a few practical tips that I use which helps me. #1 - always do the most difficult task – first, this helps you to learn self-discipline. #2, be punctual, be on time. That indicates you can pull the pieces together and manage them. That shows your in control. #3, learn to say "no"

when you have every right to say “yes.” In other words, when you have a right to go out and just have a great big huge meal and top it off with, let’s say, a banana spilt with hot fudge sundae. Just say “no” so you can say to your body, “See, I’m still in charge.” Cultivate self-control. When you control your carnal desires with your renewed mind, you gain mastery over your passions and train yourself to become holy.

Principle #3 - Turn to Hebrews chapter 12. Let’s ask this question. Will it slow me down in the race? The Christian life is a race, as 1 Corinthians 9 says, if I’m running to win the prize, if I’m running to obtain the prize, then I have to ask myself if this will slow me down. Notice Hebrews 12:1, we are in a race, the race of faith. We have seen in chapter 11 a host of Old Testament saints who lived by faith and they are living witnesses who live with God and are cheering us on. They are the cloud of witnesses who pray for us as we run our own race of faith towards heaven.

You know, back there at the beginning, verse 4, “By faith Abel...by faith Enoch...by faith Noah...by faith Abraham...by faith Sarah...by faith Isaac, by faith Jacob...by faith Joseph...by faith Moses.” And it goes on to talk about by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, by faith the harlot Rahab and then Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, on and on, and on. Men and women all living by faith.

Now, with so many Old Testament saints praying for us, this should truly inspire us to answer the call to holiness. It’s as if these saints are sitting in a stadium as spectators cheering us on as we were running a race of faith. We must live by faith and obedience to run the race of faith well. Now, in order to do it successfully, notice verse 1 (RSV), “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Now here is key passage that I want you to notice, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin.” Now what conclusion can we draw from that verse? Notice, the weight is different than the sin. We are told to lay aside the sin and we’re also told to lay aside the weight. So, what’s the difference between these two? To run in this ‘race,’ *agōn* (*greek*) from which we get the word

“agony,” indicates that its tough, arduous and demanding. The life of faith requires determination, perseverance, self-discipline, but in order to accomplish these things, we have to lay aside every weight as well as sin.

Now what does “every weight” mean in this verse? The word is *onkos* (in greek), it simply means “bulk.” Moreover, let me state that bulk isn’t sin, It’s just the needless stuff that weighs us down, demands our attention, diverts our priorities, sucks our energy dry and kills our enthusiasm for the things of God.

Here is a classic example, let’s take an athlete who is going to compete in the 100 meters race. The night before the race in this world class event, he stood out late, got drunk and committed sins of unchastity, and then came to the event in the morning and tried to run. He would be running without having set aside ‘sin.’ By sinning against his own body he sucked out his strength. Here is another scenario, let’s assume that he trained perfectly and did everything he was supposed to do in preparation, he was in top physical shape, his training regimen was on point everyday, his moral life was pure, he didn’t abuse his body with alcohol, excessive food or unchastity, however, he came in and decided to compete in combat boots and a wool overcoat. This wouldn’t be sinful, but it would be pretty foolish. That would be unnecessary ‘bulk,’ it would weigh you down.

Let me simplify this for you. Do you think it is sinful to go on a Saturday night dinner date with your wife, and then drive to the beach and sit in front of the moon as you tell your wife how much she means to you and how much you love her. After this beautiful evening you get home at two o’clock a.m.? Is that a sin? No way. Some of you are saying, “I wish my husband would do that.” But, let me change the scenario a bit. You have a Men’s retreat at 8 o’clock Saturday morning and you are assigned to share your testimony at 8:30 am. Having stayed out late the night before with your wife is not sinful, but it just added unnecessary stress that will have an impact on your witness talk the next morning.

Life is like running a race. You must admit, there are some things in our lives that we should not do for the simple reason that it would slow us down in the race to heaven, correct? That’s why for any Christian, Saturday night is a very sacred time. It is a “do nothing” time to spend with

those you love, however, you still have to get up the next day and go to Church, lector, usher, hospitality minister, prison ministry, visit the sick and help out with the Church breakfast.

There's lots of forms of activities I will call 'bulk' that needlessly waste your time and sucks your energy and negatively impacts your priorities. Ask yourself this simple question, will this activity, slow me down in the spiritual race? I will not do anything that affects my ability to serve Christ, I just won't do that. It might be something in and of itself that is not intrinsically evil, but for me it becomes a needless weight to bear. We can call this the principle of excess.

Principle #4. Will it bring me into spiritual bondage? 1 Corinthians 6:12 (RSV) pay attention to this. "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything.

Of - what? "of anything." I will not be brought under the power "of anything," simply means 'I will not allow anything to master me.'

Some 'created thing' thing should never become our master. Think of it, man, is the king of creation, according to Psalm 8:4-6 (RSV), which says. "what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet..." Notice how Man rules the beast, the fowl, the fish, the land by divine decree. Man is sovereign upon the earth. But isn't it amazing how man gives up his sovereignty to the stupid little things in the created order? Man allows himself to be mastered by created things.

How many us have made absolute fools of ourselves and become slobbering, blithering idiots because we cannot control what comes out of grapes? How many people have ended up dead because they can't deal with the proper use of drugs? How many people literally have their lives totally run by that idiot box called television, which is a bunch of plastic, metal, glass, tubes & wires that were invented by man, who is supposed to be the king of the earth? Man has become enslaved to the idiot box, now television is king & sovereign in the average household. What about drugs? They were invented & discovered by the ingenuity of man for the benefit of those in need of them. Drugs have now become the master of so many men & women.

God created us to be the stewards of creation, yet there are many things that can enslave us that come from creation. So you have to ask yourself the question, will this activity put me into bondage? Even something as healthy as sports can become addicting. I've seen a lot of people in this world controlled by a little round white ball. Imagine all the good they could do for Christian evangelization and become prayer warriors if they redirected their zeal for Christ, but that is the furthest thing from their radar.

Music has a powerful addictive component to it and it can consume your time and life. Just watch how young people are easily dominated by music.

I see people family members of mine who frenetically can't wait to get home and see the next edition of a soap opera or a TV series. There are so many things that Satan uses to bring us into bondage. This is a type of enslavement to creature comforts and it brings us into bondage. Even music has the potential of making us its slave, let call this the principle of enslavement.

Principle #5. This is a very practical one. Protestants can fall into this trap quit easily because of their "once saved always saved" doctrine. Am I simply trying to rationalize and hypocritically justify my sin? You ask, "What do you mean by that, Jesse?" Well, I mean this. Are you doing it in the name of freedom when the truth of the matter is, you're really pandering to your own disordered passions? Many Christians say, "Boy, I've got freedom in Christ. I'm free to enjoy this, and I'm free to enjoy that, and I can do this, and I can do that." Most people including Christians (both Catholic & Protestants) misunderstand 'freedom.' St John Paul II says "freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought." The truth of the matter is you are free in Christ (cf. Galatians 5:1), but a Christian should not use his freedom to offend God. Here is an example, a person who says, "Well, I'm free to go to Hollywood and watch that movie. I have that liberty and I'm very selective as to what I watch." But when he goes there, he goes with the purpose in his heart of having his own evil lustful desires pandered to by what he sees. He merely speaks of Christian freedom as a pretext for evil. Look at 1 Peter 2:16 (RSV) "Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God."

This is simply a veil to cover your evil intent. Be honest with yourself. Exam your conscience, is this really something that benefits me spiritually, do I spiritually profit from this? Is this something that will build up my faith? Is this something that is unnecessary bulk, is this something helpful to me? Is this something that will lead me into spiritual bondage? Here is a gut check, 'am I just making a pretext, or covering over my evil desire?' We must always look at our motive.

Here is a point of controversy amongst Christians. Some Christians say *you shouldn't dance*, others say *you can*. After all, David danced before the Lord. Well, one thing I know for sure, he didn't dance like Beyoncé, Madonna, Lady Gaga, Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira or Michael Jackson. So what's wrong with dancing you ask? Dancing is not intrinsically evil, but ask yourself the question. How are you dancing, is it consuming too much time, are you dancing to be the center of attraction, to show off and make people lust for you. Is the way you dance and the amount of time you spend dancing going to build you up spiritually? Do I justify the time I spent dancing recreationally in the name of liberty, in the name of freedom. Or is my real motive to draw attention to myself and make people lust for me? Even something as innocuous as dancing at a club, examine your conscience and ask yourself what is my motive.

The Bible say in, Galatians 5:13 (RSV) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. Notice, it's a very common thing to turn liberty into - what? - license. And you have to guard against that. This is called – EQUIVOCATION, which means to lie or falsify. There are people who literally falsify their motives, its common in politics & amongst suicide terrorist. These people say “Well, I'm free to do that. I certainly am.” Guess what, they're equivocating. They're lying. Their simply trying to cover their evil intent.

Here's another example, a guy who says, “Hey, God made horses. I'm free to go to Santa Anita and enjoy God's creation. Those horses race, I'm entertained, I say, 'Thank you, God. Look at your beautiful horse run,' while I'm dropping money all day long.” What this gambler is doing under the cloak of liberty, is to cover the evil intent to gamble. Which, truth be told, is to take the stewardship that God has given and throw it into the air at the discretion of chance. That is a misuse of the talents that God has given you. That's the principle of equivocation. Am I

falsifying my true motives? The avarice and greed for money & my envy of those who have more than I do.

Principle #6. This is so important, will this compromise my relationship with the lord Jesus Christ? Will it violate my walk with the Lord? Let take a look at Romans chapter 14.

Listen to basic Christianity 101. Here it is, every Christian should live under obedience to the lordship of Christ. Every believer agree that all of us are to live in submission to Christ the King. No Christian disagrees. Here is my second point, not all of us will agree 100 % on what the Lord would have us do or not do? Christians disagree about what the Lord permits and does not permit, about what the Lord says is okay and not okay, about what is sinful and not sinful.

Now let's admit, the Scripture does not give us a question and answer list about all human behavior. There are people who interpret the lordship of Christ differently. Let's look at Romans 14:6-8 (RSV): "He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

Let me sum this verse up, if I choose to do something or not do something, it must be based on my well-formed moral conscience to the will of Christ my Lord and Savior. I don't want to violate that "for that is the sanctuary where God speaks to me" (CCC 1776).

Principle #7. This is pretty simple and straightforward. Will my action or inaction help other Christians? Will my example help other Christians or scandalize them? This is critical, we are "our brothers keeper" (cf. Genesis 4:9; Galatians 6:2; Matthew 25:35) and we really should live our lives in such a way to build up the faith of other Christians. 1 Corinthians 8:9 (RSV) explains what I'm saying. "Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak." What? "a stumbling block to the weak." Somebody sees me sitting in a bar pounding beer, watching the Playboy channel on T.V. and dropping 'F' bombs and making lewd comments about the immodestly dressed woman on the T.V. If someone just coming into the Catholic faith going through RCIA sees me, don't you think that my actions would affect his

weak conscience. I have just sinned against him because I have scandalized him and caused his faith to falter. I have also sinned against the Lord.

Here is an example of St Paul not wanting to scandalize the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 9:11-13 (RSV) “If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? [12] If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. [13] Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?” St Paul said I deserve to be paid for preaching the Gospel by those who receive the Word of God, nevertheless, if this scandalizes anybody, than he will preach and teach for free, no stipend no remuneration.

Romans chapter 14:13 (RSV) “Then let us no more pass judgment on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”

Verse 13 is admonishing us NOT to be a stone of stumbling to those brothers who are probably weaker in the faith. If your kids are scandalized by you (the Father) smoking medical marijuana, stop smoking medical marijuana. That’s what its telling us. “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (verse 19). Romans 14:20-21 (RSV) says “Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for any one to make others fall by what he eats; it is right not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother stumble.”

This is why I don’t drink in public, I don’t go to bars, gambling in Casinos or any other place that could cause a weaker brother to stumble since I am a public Catholic figure. I know people are watching me in order to draw strength and encouragement in their own faith walk, so I try to set the bar high with my personal and public demeanor. The pattern of my life must set an example for others. It’s such an honor to be able to limit my liberty and know that it will strengthen someone else because my visibility is certainly more prominent than most Catholics.

Those of us followers of Christ have to ask ourselves the question, will my way of life help other Christians? Am I setting a Christ like example for them? Even the little things in life, your

discipline, your habits, your virtues, heck, even the fact that you watch your diet, or your weight, or you have a certain time set aside for study. This speaks volumes to people who are looking to you for good habits to follow. These little things in life make a huge difference to the rank and file blue collar Christian.

A question to ponder, do I want weaker Christians in the Church to follow my pattern of life? Let's call this the principle of giving a good example. This brings us to....

Principle #8. Will your example of life lead others to Christ? Hmmm?

The Bible warns: "So do not let your good be spoken of as evil" (Romans 14:16 RSV). Is my lifestyle leading others to Christ or repelling them from Christ? This is HUUUUGE. Am I reflection of Christ to the lukewarm and the unbeliever. Is there something unique about my life that will draw others to JESUS? Let me give you a great illustration.

1 Corinthians 10:27-29 (RSV) "If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. (But if someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience' sake -- I mean his conscience, not yours -- do not eat it.) For why should my liberty be determined by another man's scruples?" Here is the background to this verse. There are two Christians, the first Christian is a very mature, very strong, lives in the freedom as a child of God. He can eat meat offered to idols. He knows what 1 Corinthians 8:4 (RSV) says is true - "an idol has no real existence..." Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 8:8 (RSV) says: "Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do."

Here is the historical backdrop, you're a Corinthian pagan that goes to some temple to worship an idol and you bring your offering, which is food. You place your offering on the altar and the pagan god (who is simply a myth) doesn't eat the food you brought (of course). Your food offering just sits there. Hundreds and hundreds of people keep bringing the food in but it just sits there. After a while the pagan priests take it away and they keep what they want to eat. Of course, they can't eat it all because there are far more people making offerings than there are pagan priest ready and able to eat the food offerings. So here is what happened, they ran a temple

butcher shop from the back door. What they didn't want or need, they simply took it out and sold it on the street at the best price because they got it for nothing. It was pure profit. So, if you wanted to buy cheap meat, you bought it from a pagan temple butcher shop.

Now let me explain the problem this passage describes. You've got an individual who's a mature Christian. He knows an idol is nothing, he doesn't believe in false gods, he's a steward of his money. He buys the meat lawfully, the price is right, the food is good and healthy. This Christian is not concerned at all that this food was once offered to a dead idol (that never existed anyhow). Now, he goes out for dinner with a brand new Christian convert who just came into the Church and renounced his former idolatrous religion. Remember, this new Christian just left pagan idol worship, temple orgies, temple prostitutes, the whole carnal, gross, immoral culture of licentiousness. If he was NOW told that he had just eaten meat offered to an idol, it would make him vomit. His Christian moral conscience would not allow him to do it. He's a new convert, he is a weaker brother who doesn't understand his freedom in Christ, you and I understand this because we are more mature in the faith but he just come out of that pagan practice.

So the two of them (the mature Christian and the new convert) have a friend in common who's not a believer. They want to win him to the Lord. So the friend who is an unbeliever invites the two of them to dinner and they go out to eat. That's the idea of verse in 1 Corinthians 10:27 (RSV). "If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience." In other words, you should not say, "Hey Pal, where did you buy this?" The Bible says: "eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience." Now, if your unbeliever friend voluntarily says, "Hey, I got this meat for a real bargain because it was offered in sacrifice to idols." The unbeliever says: "How do you like this delicious roast? Boy oh boy, is it good. Yeah, I got it for a real deal down at the temple butcher shop." Now, the new Christian convert seems to be perturbed.

The unbeliever gets up to go and to serve himself seconds. The mature Christian finds himself in a dilemma. The new convert says to him, "I can't eat unholy meat." The mature Christian says, "But if you don't eat that meat than we'll offend this unbeliever that we're trying to evangelize." But if both of them go ahead and eat the meat offered to idols in order to not offend

the unbeliever they're trying to evangelize, the new convert will be offended by the mature Christian. This compromise could cause the new convert to stumble.

So here is the quandary. Do you offend a new convert, or do you offend your unbeliever friend? That's the question.

Answer, if you're trying to evangelize an unbeliever you're better off offending the unbeliever, rather than offending your new convert Christian brother. Why? Because If you offend your new Christian brother, the unbeliever will say, "It's better to be an unbeliever than to be a believer because they offend each other, instead of offending me. There's no unity between them, I'll stay where I am, an unbeliever." Do you see the point?

However, if you offend that unbeliever and say, "You know, this meat offered to idols would really offend my new Christian brother so I can't eat it for his sake." That unbeliever would probably say, "Wow, that is real brotherly love, I would like to experience what they have." The attraction of your brotherly love may be the greatest testimony that you have in order to evangelize an unbeliever.

So, with this illustration, I ask the question, will it lead someone else to Christ? As we curtail our freedom, our motive should be win souls for Christ. The goal is to show the unbeliever and the new Christian convert a different lifestyle, a purity, an honesty, a love and an integrity that they doesn't see in the secular world.

In Romans 14:18 (RSV) it tells us, "...he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men." Notice, as intentional disciples of Christ, we are to live lives approved by men. In doing this, an intentional disciple of Christ is enhancing his / her opportunity for evangelism.

Principle #9. Here's another question you should ask when making a hard decision. Will this decision or behavior or action be consistent with being Christlike? To make it simpler, would Jesus do it? I've used that standard many many times. Would Jesus do this? Would Jesus say that? Trust me, your moral conscience will receive an answer immediately by the Holy Spirit.

Ask yourself, what would Jesus do? What would Jesus say? before, not after you take an action. That will prevent you from making a lot of mistakes and will really help you make a lot of wise decisions. Let's call that the principle of imitation. We want to imitate Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7). We want to imitate God (Ephesians 5:?). 1 John 2:6 (RSV) says, "he who says he abides in him (Christ) ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." If you say you belong to Christ, you should strive (by God's grace) to live like Christ lived. So, we need to ask ourselves the question, would Jesus do this? Is this consistent with being Christ like? That's such a thought provoking question. This is principle of imitation.

Principle #10, the last one is very simple. Will my actions, words or behavior glorify God? Many of the 10 principles I have provided kind of overlap. Yes, ask yourself, will this glorify God? I am referencing 1 Corinthians 10:31 (RSV) "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

This principle really sums up all the other 9 principles. "Will it glorify God?" This can be called the principle of exaltation.

As an intentional disciple of Christ we need to ask daily, "Is my life giving Him glory? Will my actions or words exalt God? Does my pattern of life lift up His holy name? Will my actions or words bestow honor to the Lord and adorn His holy doctrines? Will He be glorified, and honored, and praised as a result of my present actions, words or deeds?" That's the principle of exaltation in a nutshell.

Let me give you the cash value. Here is the point, we can all make the hard decisions of life easier if we use these 10 principles.

Principle #1. Will it be spiritually profitable?

Principle #2 - Will it build me up?

Principle #3 - Will it slow me down in the race (to holiness and heaven)?

Principle #4. Will it bring me into spiritual bondage?

Principle #5. Is my 'freedom' being used to cover my cloak of evil desires.

Principle #6. Will this compromise my relationship with the lord Jesus Christ?

Principle #7. Will my action or inaction help other Christians? Will my example help other Christians or scandalize them?

Principle #8. Will your example of life lead others to Christ?

Principle #9. Will this decision, behavior or action be consistent with being Christ like?

Principle #10, the last one is very simple. Will my actions, words or behavior give glory to God?

Remember, the goal in life is not to have a long list of earthly accomplishments Heisman trophy, UFC Hall of Fame, Baseball Football Basketball MVP of the year, Superbowl championship, Heavyweight boxing champ of the world. The goal is to be a saint. All those other things could have been a sort of idolatry, they will be inconsequential upon death. Even people that pride themselves in College degrees, BA, BS, MA, PHD, the only letters that matter is that ST before your name given to you by Almighty God at your particular judgment. Become a SAINT, that is what you were called to be the moment you were baptized.

Sign of the cross: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the principles you have given us through your Word that assist us in governing our behavior. You have not only given us these Biblical principles but You've given us the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life to assist us in living out these principles. So that we might live a life holy and pleasing to you. Lord, give us the wisdom to make right decisions based on these principles that come from your Holy Word. We thank you and praise you Lord God for the amazing grace & the divine mercy you give us everyday that we did not merit, earn or deserve. Bless us, protect us, shine your face upon us and keep us safe in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady seat of wisdom, pray for us - Amen.