

Problem Of Discerning Between Good And Evil

Introduction

1. One of the problems of the Christian life is the "Problem of Discerning Between Good And Evil."

a. The sincere Christian wants to please God and do right, but he struggles, at times, to discern between good and evil.

1) Some sins are clearly set forth in the word of God, but not all sins are specifically name.

2) Some sins not specifically enumerated are:

Child beating	Viewing pornography	Rape	Wife beating
Abortion	Sex acts with beasts	Gambling	Worshiping graven images

b. The man who has a seared conscience does not struggle with good and evil.

1) He can do evil and feel no remorse.

2) He can call "good" evil and "evil" good. (Isa. 5:20).

ISA 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

c. Many others, who have a seared conscience, do not worry much about good and evil.

1) They do what feels good and what promotes their happiness and welfare.

2) They do what is right in their own eyes. (Judg. 17:6; Prov. 14:12).

2. The Christian has a struggle with good and evil.

a. He wants to please God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; Gal. 5:16).

b. He wants to walk in the light. (1 Jn. 1:5-7).

c. He wants to be a good example. (Matt. 5:13-16).

d. He wants to avoid things that hurt himself and those he cares about. (1 Cor. 10:31,32).

e. He wants to live in such a way that he will be able to say. (Psa. 119:63).

PSA 119:63 I am a companion of all those who fear Thee, And of those who keep Thy precepts.

f. He wants to go to heaven and avoid hell.

3. The Bible teaches Christians must be concerned about good and evil.

a. Discerning good and evil is a sign of maturity. (Heb. 5:11-14).

HEB 5:11 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

HEB 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

HEB 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

HEB 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

b. Evil (not doing the will of God) will damn our souls. (Matt.7:21).

c. Satan often appears in "sheep's clothing" or as "an angel of light." (Matt. 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15.)

4. Let's look at some things that will help the Christian to discern between good and evil.

Does The Bible Command, Encourage Or Promote The Activity?

1. The Christian should always pay careful attention to what is commanded, encouraged and promoted by the scripture.

2. The Christian is one who is intent on doing God's will. (Matt. 7:21; Jn. 14:15).

Does the Bible condemn it by command or principle?

1. Some things are explicitly condemned. (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-12; Col.3:5-9; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rom. 1:18-31; 1 Tim. 1:8-11; Rev. 21:8). 1

2. Some things are condemned by principles. It is a mistake to conclude something must be explicitly condemned to be wrong. There are many things that are condemned by principle. See Introduction 1. a.

a. Love condemns

1) Wife beating

2) Cheating widows

3) Child abuse

b. Thinking on good things condemns (Phil. 4:8).

1) Pornography

2) Unwholesome books and magazines

3) Filthy conversation

4) Learning how to cheat and exploit people

3. Some things are condemned because they are not authorized.

a. Offering animal sacrifices - No scripture says, "You shall not offer an animal sacrifice."

b. Lord's supper

1) Adding meat and potatoes to supper.

- 2) Changing the fruit of the vine to Pepsi
- 3) Remembering Moses instead of Christ.
- 4) Adding additional meanings to the Supper or removing some of its meanings.

c. Praying in the name of Paul, Apollos, etc.

- 1) We are not forbidden to pray in their names in the form of a commandment.
- 2) We are forbidden because we do not have authorization to pray in their names.
- 3) We are only authorized to pray in the name of Jesus. (Jn. 14:13,14).

d. Preaching self. See 2 Corinthians 4:5.

2CO 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

Does it enhance my example?

1. We are to be good examples. (Matt. 5:14-16 ; Phil. 2:15).
2. We must not cause others to blaspheme our God.
3. We must not cause others to stumble. (1 Cor. 10:31,32).

Will the activity promote harmony and peace or discord in the body of Christ?

1. The Christian is to be a peacemaker. (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; 14:19; 1 Pet. 3:10-12).
2. He must not be factious. (Tit. 3:10,11).
3. Each Christian should search his soul to determine if he is a peacemaker or a troublemaker.

Would I sin by refraining from the action?

1. There are some things we are commanded to do, and it is sinful to refrain from them.
2. We have been commanded to assemble, pray, sing, do good, give, help orphans and widows, preach the gospel, etc.
3. These are not optional actions, and we sin if we refrain from doing them.

Will it make me a better person?

1. Will it strengthen me as a Christian or make me weaker?
2. Does it arouse the indecent within me?
 - a. Movies, music, reading matter, jokes, conversation, etc.
 - b. Christians are to be pure. (Phil. 4:8; Matt. 5:8).

3. Does it weaken me spiritually due to association with the wicked? 1 Cor. 15:33

Could it be played or shown to the Christian assembly?

1. Some Christians listen to music or attend movies they would not want played or shown in the assembly.
- 2 They know it is not right, but they still do it.

Could I lead a prayer before I do it?

1. We sometimes do things we know are wrong or questionable.
2. Seldom, if ever, would we want to begin the activity with prayer.
3. **If an activity cannot begin with prayer, it is evil.**

Will it injure my health?

1. We should discriminate between recreation and dissipation.
2. Recreation contributes to health, but dissipation destroys it.
3. It is sinful to destroy the body, for the body is the temple of God. (1 Cor. 6:19,20).

Does it violate my conscience or the conscience of those I influence?

1. Conscience is not always right..
 - a. Paul had lived in good conscience. (Acts 23:1)
 - b. His conscience had been very wrong.
2. The Christian is warned not to violate it. (Rom. 14:23).
3. We must not cause others to stumble by violating their conscience. (1 Cor. 8:11).

Do We have examples of Christians being commended for the activity?

1. There are many activities praised by scriptures.
2. We can be confident that what was commended by Christ and the apostles is a good course for us.

Is it possible for me to engage in the activity without offending others?

1. The Christian is one who has rights. (1 Cor. 8:13).
2. He is willing to forgo rights if it causes his brother to fall. (1 Cor. 8:13; 10:31,32).

Do I have to rationalize to do it?

1. Here is how we sometimes rationalize.

- a. "It is no worse than what he or she is doing."
- b. "Everyone is doing it."
- c. "It's not too bad."
- d. "No one will know."
- e. "I know it is questionable, but it is for a good cause."
- f. "They do a lot of good."

2. These rationalizations are weak recommendations for a Christian who is seeking to please God.

Would I be ashamed to tell God's people about the activity?

- 1. The Christian should conduct his/his life in the light. (Eph. 5:8; Matt. 5:14-16).
- 2. If we are ashamed of the action, we should stop it.

Is it on the edge of evil?

- 1. The Christian is to "abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thess. 5:22).
 - a. "eidos" [**ay** dos] means "form, outward appearance, kind, sight."
 - b. The idea is that Christians should "abstain from every kind of evil."
 - c. KJV has "all appearance of evil."
- 2. The Christian should not see how close he can get to evil.
 - a. Dress
 - b. Movies
 - c. Things that are questionable ethically
 - d. Gambling

Could Jesus do it with me?

- 1. Jesus is with us and in us. (Matt. 28:20; Gal. 2:20).
- 2. Many things we do and say would be avoided if we would ask the question, "Could Jesus do it with me?"

Conclusion

- 1. The Christian who asks these questions will be able to discern between good and evil most of the time and will find himself or herself being deceived less and less.
- 2. Let's strive to be able to discern between good and evil.