

# Implied Principles for Making Moral Decisions

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Every time we encounter temptation to do that which would violate our moral scruples, we must make a decision to resist or yield. When thus tempted (whether by money, pride, sex, et al.), we will have a better chance of doing what is right if we apply certain principles. Besides providing some explicit principles, the Bible also implies some additional ones, which may be couched in the following questions:

- **“How will this affect me?”** Paul exhorted, “Take heed to yourself” (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:16). Will drinking alcohol, consuming illegal drugs, using tobacco, etc., preserve my health for the service of God and of my family. One should also ask if a given practice would corrupt his mind or weaken him spiritually. If the practice will harm, weaken, or corrupt one physically, mentally, or spiritually, it is folly to do it.
- **“How will this affect others?”** Even those least known influence someone or ones. Paul urged Timothy to be an example for others in word, manner of life, love, faith, and purity (1 Tim 4:12). Jesus said that the fate of one who causes a child to stumble would be worse than being weighted and cast into the sea (Mat. 18:6-7). To carelessly disregard the effect of our behavior on others is the height of selfishness.
- **“Will this pass the ‘publicity’ test?”** Would I want to hide these words or this act from public view (Why are most crime, mischief, and evil done at night or in dimly lit places [John 3:19-20]?) Those who have nothing to hide and are not ashamed of their behavior do not sneak around or seek the cover of darkness for their deeds. That a teenager does not want his parents to learn what he has done or plans to do is a danger signal. Would I want my wife/husband, best friend, or children to know what I am doing?
- **“Will it pass the ‘universal’ test?”** Many behaviors are universally commendable, wholesome, and beneficial (Mat. 28:18-20), but what if everyone on earth did what I am thinking of doing? Would I want my parents or children to do this? Would I respect my preacher if he did this, and what if his wife wore this clothing? Would what I am about to do make the world better or worse?
- **“Will it pass the ‘prayer’ test?”** Can I ask God’s blessing on what I am thinking of doing? Can I ask Him to go and be with me where I am tempted to go (Mat. 6:13)? Deliberately engaging in something for which one cannot ask God’s blessing is a bold and reckless affront to Him.

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