

The Christian Arsenal

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GOD'S GUIDELINES FOR DECISION MAKING The Liberated Christian

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Part 3 of 4

INTRO:

Jesus wants every Christian in a lifestyle of freedom and not a lifestyle of bondage.

There's hardly a week that goes by that somebody doesn't come to me and say, "Can you be a good Christian and do _____?"

God wants us to build our lives not on petty rules but on great principles.

FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR DECISION MAKING

1. THE PRINCIPLE OR TEST OF IMPROVEMENT.

The Issue: How will it affect my life?

"Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible, but I will not be mastered by anything." 1 Cor. 6:12

TWO TESTS FROM THIS VERSE

- WILL IT MAKE ME A BETTER PERSON?

Is what I'm going to do constructive or destructive?

Is what I'm going to do a help or a hindrance?

Is what I'm going to do useful or useless?

There are many things that are not necessarily wrong, they are just not necessary.

Often the good is an enemy to the best.

- DOES IT HAVE A TENDENCY TO CONTROL ME OR DO I CONTROL IT?

Does it dominate my life or do I dominate it?

Whatever controls your life is your god.

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2. THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY.

Whether it is right or wrong, permissible or not, if it bothers my conscience, I'd better forget it for now.

"Live as free men, but don't use your freedom as a cover-up for evil." 1 Peter 2:16

A guilty conscience always tries to cover up by making excuses, rationalizing.

"Whoever covers up his sin can't prosper." Prov 28:13

Rationalization is making up an excuse in your mind for what you know is wrong in your heart.

"Whatever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF INFLUENCE.

Sometimes there is a legitimate reason to limit your own freedom so as not to hurt somebody else.

"Be careful however that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak." 1 Cor. 8:9

"When you sin against your brother in this way, you wound their weak conscience and you sin against Christ. If therefore what I eat causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again so that I will not cause them to stumble." 1 Cor. 8:12

TWO WARNINGS ABOUT THIS PRINCIPLE

- Don't use this principle as an excuse for legalism.
- Understand the meaning of stumbling block.

A stumbling block is any action or word that will cause other Christians to fall back into a former lifestyle.

It does not mean that someone disagrees or doesn't approve of what you are doing. It means your actions or words influence a weaker Christian to sin against his own conscience.

Paul explains this warning in Chapters 9 & 10.

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1 Cor. 9:1: *"am I not free?"*

1 Cor. 9:4: *"Don't I have the right to food and drink? Don't I have a right to have a wife? ... If others have this right of support from you shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right."*

1 Cor. 9:19: *"Though I am free and I belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To Jesus I become like a Jew to win the Jews. To one under the law I become like one under the law. To the weak I become like the weak, to win the weak. I become all things to all men that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel."*

1 Cor. 10:23: *"Everything is permissible to the Christian..."*

v. 24: *"No one should seek his own good but the good of others."*

v. 25: *"Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for the earth is the Lord's and everything in it."*

v. 28: *"But if anyone says to you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice,' do not eat it both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience sake ... the other man's conscience not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?"*

He's saying enjoy your freedom, but don't flaunt it.

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE.

"You my brothers, were called to be free. But don't use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature, rather serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Freedom is not: Self-indulgence
 Self-centeredness
 Selfishness

The bottom line in the Christian life is not:

What am I free from?
But what am I free for?

We are free to serve in love.

Book by Charles Sheldon: In His Steps

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Love, the Bible says, is to be the regulator of our liberty in issues that are unclear.

Picture a river with two banks:



SUMMARY:

1. The Principle of Improvement – Do an evaluation of my life.
2. The Principle of Integrity – If you doubt – don't do it.
3. The Principle of Influence – Voluntarily limit my freedom for the good of others.
4. The Principle of Love – Love your neighbor as yourself.