

# A Question of Ethics

## SESSION 10 Christian Motivations for Ethical Decisions


### 1. A PROCESS FOR CHRISTIAN MORAL DECISION-MAKING

- Gather the facts.
- Determine the ethical issues.
- Determine what Christian principles and virtues have bearing on the case.
- List the alternatives.
- Pray, seeking God's will.
- Consult those whose lives embody Christian principles and virtues.
- Compare the alternatives with the virtues and principles.
- Consider the consequences of the decision.
- Make a decision.
- Implement the decision.
- Evaluate the decision.

### 2. CHRISTIAN MOTIVATIONS FOR ETHICAL DECISIONS

#### Why do I want to do the right thing?

- Wrong motivations (doing the right thing for the wrong reason)
  - Egoism (selfishness – It benefits me.)  
*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* Philippians 2:3
  - Competition (It helps me win or get ahead.)  
*“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”*  
Mark 8:36
  - Being “a good human being”  
*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.* Romans 7:18

- Fearing God's judgment  
*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*  
Romans 8:16
  - Earning God's favor  
*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*  
Galatians 5:4
  - Mere obedience to laws/commandments  
*I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!* Galatians 2:21
  - Conformity to the culture  
*You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.* 1 Cor. 7:23
- 
- Right Motivations (doing the right thing for the right reason)
    - Gratitude for what God has done for me in Christ (Gospel motivation)  
  
*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. <sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.* Colossians 2:6-8  
  
*We love because he first loved us.* 1 John 4:19
    - Accountability in my relationship with God  
*Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, <sup>7</sup> and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" <sup>8</sup> But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. <sup>9</sup> No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* Genesis 39:7-9
    - Being like Christ  
*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...*Philippians 2:3-5
    - Bringing pleasure to our Lord  
*<sup>9</sup>For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup>And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...*Colossians 1:9-11

### 3. CASE STUDIES

- Based on a true story:  
Tommy Slamdunk was an advertising executive in a major agency in New York. As a Christian, Tommy was committed to doing his work honestly and working hard "as unto the Lord." His wife and six children were proud of his accomplishments and thankful for the stability of their lives.

A large corporation engaged the firm to put together a national campaign for their new product, and Tommy was given the assignment. They wanted different packages that would be appropriate for several different national magazines, especially including, as Tommy discovered, *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines.

Tommy Slamdunk struggled and prayed over the issue. His brow furrowed. He called his friend, John Paul, who was also a Christian, who counseled that he should, "out of conscience, refuse to complete the project, even though this would seriously cast doubt on his loyalty to this employer, hinder his chances for advancement, or even get him fired." He called another Christian friend, Billy, who said he should to ahead and do the project with a clear conscience because, "You're not responsible for how and in what magazine the ad is eventually used." He called yet another Christian friend, Jerry, who asked, "What are the other alternatives?"

Tommy Slamdunk was even more confused. All he knew was he didn't like what *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines stood for, but also didn't want to lose his job. The phone is ringing. Tommy's on the line. He wants to know what you would do. What will you tell him?

- You are in charge of a church's mission efforts in a developing nation. Your church has assembled a large and expensive shipment of medical supplies for a Christian medical clinic in this developing country. But the shipment is stuck on the dock because a government official has insisted on a bribe before releasing the cargo. All attempts to pull strings in order to release the cargo have failed. Do you pay the bribe?



Pastor Dean Nadasdy  
Woodbury Lutheran Church, Woodbury, MN