

**The Ease of Decision Making: Edification**

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:23

Code: B130409

How do we make decisions about issues and activities that are not clearly spelled out in Scripture? How do we develop criteria to make those kinds of decisions in a way that honors God and benefits us, causes the Body of Christ to grow, and makes the gospel believable and attractive to the unconverted?

When it comes to matters of Christian liberty and gray area decisions, it's not about what we can get away with while causing minimum damage. We're not looking for high-risk Christian living—to see how close we can get to the fire and not get burned. There are too many people who use their freedom to live on the edge yet hope to avoid disaster. That's misguided thinking.

When confronted with choices in one of life's gray areas, rather than asking how much we can get away with, we need to ask, *Will this activity produce spiritual benefit?*

In 1 Corinthians 10:23, Paul explained that “all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.” Some people in the Corinthian congregation were exercising their Christian liberty without any regard for the spiritual good of others, or even their own good. Paul corrected that thinking by reminding them that unless something is spiritually profitable—unless it builds up a person spiritually—it's not worth doing.

So based on Paul's exhortation, believers should ask themselves, “Will doing this activity enhance my spiritual life and the spiritual lives of others? Will it cultivate godliness in me and in them? Will it build us up spiritually?” If not, then is it really a wise choice?

I'm not looking to invest my life in the things that don't return a spiritual dividend. If it doesn't promise to give me some positive spiritual benefit, then why would I engage in it? Will it assist my spiritual development? Does it cultivate godliness? All things are lawful if they're not forbidden by God, but the world is filled with things that promise absolutely no real spiritual advantage.

You could ask a question about, for example, sleeping. Taking time to get proper rest is certainly not forbidden in the Bible. But sleeping too much is obviously not to your spiritual advantage.

It's really a question of expedience. Is that particular activity—whatever it is—expedient for your spiritual growth and the good of others? Will it promote, encourage, or stimulate spiritual growth?

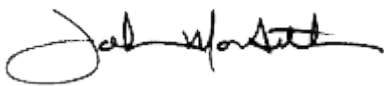
Whenever gray-area decisions come up, ask yourself, “If I go there, if I do that, if I view that, if I experience that, if I engage myself in that relationship, will it have immediate and long-term spiritual benefit?”

There are a plethora of ways, of course, in which we can build up others in the faith, and in which we

ourselves can “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). But at a foundational level, edification is fairly basic. It primarily comes from studying the Word and hearing it taught (cf. Acts 20:32; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-17); showing true love to believers as you fellowship with them (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1; Hebrews 10:24); and obediently serving the local church (cf. Ephesians 4:12).

Make decisions that stimulate your own edification, and offer you opportunities to edify others. And guard against the inclination to complicate your decision-making process. If you need to devise a complex system of causes and effects to manufacture a distant potential for spiritual benefit, it’s a good indication that the activity you’re trying to excuse isn’t truly beneficial.

When it comes to the gray areas of life, we should always begin by asking if the choice we are about to make is spiritually profitable, both for ourselves and those around us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

(Adapted from [\*Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong\*](#).)

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