

How Do I Glorify God in the Gray Areas?

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 5:13

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As a pastor, I have the privilege of teaching people God's Word, explaining its implications in their lives by clarifying a passage of Scripture or a point of doctrine. Among the common concerns people raise, I can't remember anyone ever asking me if it was wrong to cheat, steal, lie, commit murder, commit adultery, or covet. Nor can I recall someone wanting to know whether a Christian should read the Bible, pray, worship God, or tell others about salvation in Jesus Christ. God's Word is unmistakably clear about those things.

What people do often ask, though, are questions regarding issues or activities that are not specifically addressed in Scripture—matters that fall somewhere between what is obviously right and obviously wrong. The issues aren't black and white but involve aspects of Christian liberty that fall into the "gray areas."

What sort of entertainment is acceptable? What kind of music is OK? What about what you wear, where you go, or how you spend your free time? How does the Bible speak to those issues?

Some would say, "The Bible doesn't address them. I can do what I want to do. I'm free in Christ!" But Paul has a warning to believers who would exercise their freedoms to the hilt: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12; cf. Galatians 5:13).

You might know believers who abuse their freedoms. Their lives are routinely bombarded by temptation—often it's temptation they've unnecessarily heaped upon themselves through their own choices. And the closer they get to the line between sin and liberty, the harder it is to stay on the right side of it. Over time, that kind of lifestyle is an invitation to moral shipwreck.

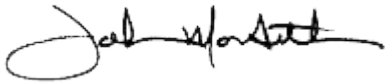
On the opposite end of the spectrum from unbridled Christian liberty is *legalism*. In that camp are believers who want to make hard-and-fast rules about matters on which Scripture is silent.

I attended a college where we didn't have to struggle through decisions on gray areas because everything had already been decided for us. There were rules about what time we got up, what time we went to bed, what hours we studied, and whom we could talk to. There were even rules about how far we could walk with a girl beside us before we had to separate—right down to the number of feet! There were rules for just about everything. And while those rules simplified life on a superficial level, they also made it hopelessly complicated on an internal level.

The biblical pattern for dealing with life's gray areas isn't found in either of those extremes. While it is true that the Bible doesn't specifically mention every possible decision you might face, it provides general principles and parameters that help you make decisions that honor God.

Over the next few weeks we're going to look intently at those principles, and how they offer the kind

of spiritual balance not found in extreme legalism or liberty. The goal is to help you apply biblical principles to the gray areas in your life, allowing you to make decisions with a clear conscience to the glory of God.

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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