

The Ease of Decision Making: Enslavement

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:12

Code: B130411

Life is full of gray areas—the daily matters, issues, and choices that aren't inherently good or bad, and to which Scripture doesn't specifically speak. How believers navigate those areas has a major influence on their spiritual growth, their testimony, and their usefulness to the Lord.

To help you develop biblical criteria for the gray-area decisions you face, we've been looking at some key instructions and exhortations from the apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians, Paul told his readers, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Again, the apostle underscored the fact that he wanted to do only those things that are spiritually profitable. Part of that entails avoiding those activities that might result in personal enslavement. Paul knew that his only Master was Jesus Christ, and he would not allow himself to be mastered by *anyone* or *anything* else.

The immediate context in this portion of 1 Corinthians 6 is sexual sin, which is uniquely enslaving. However, the principle extends beyond sensuality to any habit or behavior that might become life dominating or Spirit quenching. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commanded, "Do not get drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit." Though the context there is different, the idea is similar to what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 12: Don't allow yourself to become addicted or enslaved to that which is sinful or potentially destructive.

When faced with a gray-area decision, one of the questions we must train ourselves to ask is, *Will this activity bring me into bondage?* Will it develop such an appetite in me that it forms a pattern of behavior I cannot control?

It's ironic that man—the pinnacle of God's creation—can so easily be enslaved by such simple things as computers, televisions, sports, games, hobbies, and even food and drink. And yet, we don't seem to care—or even notice—that these insignificant things can so often and so easily gain complete mastery over our lives.

Smoking is a good example. From an objective perspective, what sense does it make to shove dry leaves into your mouth and light them on fire? What possible benefit could you derive from that? And yet countless people are enslaved to their smoking habits—it's an addiction that effectively runs their lives.

And while you and I might disassociate ourselves from the stigma of certain well-known addictions, the truth is we are equally susceptible to becoming just as thoroughly addicted to *anything* in our lives. Some people are addicted to entertainment, whether it is movies, music, or sports. Others are addicted to clothes and shopping—they're habitual consumers. Still others are addicted to a specific hobby or recreation, with all their time and resources going to fulfill and expand their ability to enjoy that activity.

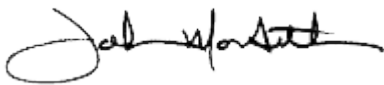
Paul wasn't merely warning his readers about *immoral* addictions. He wanted them to be on guard against anything that could take control or focus away from the Lord. And specifically, he is warning us against the kinds of activities that can become controlling desires that dictate and direct the rest of our lives.

And Paul was well aware that we are creatures *designed* for habits. Before we were saved, we were habitual sinners. And after salvation, we have to work hard to break those old, sinful habits and cultivate new, righteous ones in their place. In fact, in Ephesians 2:10, Paul says we've been saved for the purpose of good works. Through God's transforming work, we've been set aside for the purpose of righteousness. And as long as He allows, we need to put our maximum effort into building habits that fulfill and accomplish His righteous ends.

That also means we must guard against the kinds of activities that, even if they themselves are not sinful, could lead to a sinful preoccupation with them.

Personally, that means that while I might be free in Christ to do something, I'll nonetheless avoid it to confirm I am still in control of my desires (1 Corinthians 9:27). It's not that the activity is wrong—it's that I want to make sure I'm still able to turn it down. It might even be something as simple as a steak or a hot fudge sundae. Regardless of what it is, I don't ever want to allow myself to get into a pattern of not being able to say no to it. Not being in control of your body and mind—even in the most seemingly insignificant areas—always spills over into your spiritual life.

When it comes to life's gray areas, it's important to evaluate the long-term effects of the decisions you make, and how even the smallest, most unimportant things can exert control over you. If what you are considering can be sinfully habit forming, why pursue it? Don't allow yourself to fall into bondage to anyone or anything. You are a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone.



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

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