



Can Good Things Ever be Bad?

1 Corinthians 10:31: (NASB) *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*



As Christians, we face the potential for deep trouble each and every day. Why? We live in an age of knowledge, choice, technology and accessibility. This would all be thoroughly awesome, except for one thing - these opportunities come with a healthy dose of what we will call an “entitlement of excess.” Because we can, we therefore feel we must. Many of the myriads of things available to us are good and healthy. We can learn online to garden, sew and carve wood. We can be part of several social communities without the disadvantage of distance. We can learn about other cultures, appreciate art

and music from anywhere, read, absorb and watch to our heart’s content. How much is too much? Where should we draw a line, and more importantly, why should we draw lines?

This question came from a listener about time traps because we are bombarded with information from all directions all the time. She wanted to know if seemingly unharmed temptations are okay or should they be avoided. We are going to go talk about different activities that come up in life and see where they might fit within the limited amount of time we have in each day.

This is a self-directed podcast episode. This means that while we do not have an answer for everyone’s scenario, we will present some of the tools the Bible gives us so that individually we can evaluate what decision is best for each of us.

Here is a seemingly simple command to direct how we are to handle all things in life:

Colossians 3:17: (NASB) *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

While this text is a good place to start, it is by no means a complete set of guidelines. For example, it does not tell us what NOT to do, for example.

Figuring out when good things can become bad things has everything to do with weighing whatever the thought, word or action is against our highest life commitment.

Our quotes this week are from *Success Magazine, November/December 2019, by Trent Shelton, “Win With Your Mind.”*

The first key trait of a winning mindset is the ability to stay loyal to what you said you were going to do long after the mood you said it in has left you.

—Trent Shelton, regarding commitment

What seems so simple is not. We need to be clear regarding the depth of our Christian commitment:

Luke 9:57-62: (NASB) ⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to him, I will follow you wherever you go. ⁵⁸And Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. ⁵⁹And he said to another, Follow me. But



he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. (Meaning, let me take care of my father until he dies; not that the father had just died and required burial that day.) ⁶⁰But he said to him, Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God. ⁶¹Another also said, I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home. ⁶²But Jesus said to him, No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

These are difficult sayings from Jesus, but we have to remember Jesus was in a weeding-out process, discerning their hearts, knowing who will not stay committed to the cause. Following his direction would take incredible action - they were not ready to follow through.

No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back - we have to be committed just like Jesus, even unto death (Revelation 2:10).



WHY am I motivated to do this?
WHAT do I hope to accomplish?

Taking care of aging parents

Jesus lays out a seemingly harsh answer for this:

Luke 14:25-26: (NASB) ²⁵Now large crowds were going along with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶If anyone comes to me, and does not **hate <3404>** his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Hate: Strongs #3404 *miseo*; to detest (especially to persecute); by extension, to love less.

This gives us the order of things - Jesus first and others next. Following Jesus is the highest, hardest commitment of our lives. He is preparing those who are following him for that truth. In other words, "Love your family less than you love me." This is a sacrificial love. Jesus put everything on the line to serve his Father.

Is Jesus telling us to ignore our parents and family? NO! He did not do that himself. We see this at Calvary:

John 19:26-27: (NASB) ²⁶When Jesus then saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved (John) standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold, your son! ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, Behold, your mother! From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

Jesus would never have burdened the Apostle John with something that was not spiritual. He trusted John to care for his mother.

Taking care of aging parents should never be a bad thing. As Christians we are obliged to check our attitude in this action as in every other action:

1 Peter 4:11: (NASB) *Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*



Of course everyone will agree taking care of our seniors is scriptural. But how should it be done - keep them in their own home, move them into yours or have them live at a facility? Home care requires SPACE, TEMPERAMENT, TIME and FINANCES. Not everyone has all of these, especially when specialty or advanced care is required. The average person is unable to take a leave of absence from work for years at a time to provide that care. This makes people feel guilty over the choices they have to make. COVID-19 has caused horrific stress with families not able to visit their loved ones.



For some, could the time and stress it takes to become a caregiver make their Christian walk temporarily suffer? Do we put that aside and do it anyway?

These are hard questions. Everyone is not cut out to be a caregiver, especially with parents living longer with more complex diseases.

Our CQ host, Jonathan, and his wife, Jewel, are a classic example of people with the ability, talent and focus to take care of their parents at home. Taking on the role of caregiving, we are responsible to do our very best within the confines of what we have. God can make up the difference. Do not do the best that *someone else* can. We need to have a clear picture of our capacity for caregiving. Is our motivation to be like so-and-so? Or are we making choices that will best honor our parents? We cannot look down upon someone else who cannot do what we might be able to do.

Many people are more interested than they are committed. — Trent Shelton



Keep the highest things the highest things! Keeping focused on good things would not be so hard if our sinful minds would stop trying to make it selfishly all about ourselves.

**Taking care of aging parents should be a no-brainer.
Is it as simple when taking care of ourselves?**

There is a world of difference in these two examples. Whenever we are focused on others, it is generally easier to separate that which is good from that which is excessive. When I am the subject of my own decisions, discerning that which sounds good but is actually bad, can become mysteriously blurred! Suddenly the excess of ME is shining brightly, and that is never a good thing.



Paying attention to my personal needs and desires

WHY am I paying attention?
WHAT will I do with the results of this attention?

We have to understand the WHY of everything - what is our motivation? We fool ourselves with our WHY all the time, giving ourselves a rationalization as to why this or that is a good thing. Often it is not what our true WHY *should* be. As Christians, our true WHY should be really focused.

Get good at saying no to the things that do not move you toward your yes.
—Trent Shelton, regarding discipline

We are now talking about our free time after we are done with everything we HAVE to do. If we polled 100 Christians on how our free time should properly be spent, we would likely get 100 different answers, which is again why this is a self-directed program.



What about hobbies? Cooking, travel, gardening, making or collecting things, playing an instrument, bird watching...

What about exercise? Playing sports, running, workouts...

All of these could take considerable amounts of our time. God gave us a big world out there along with brains that love learning new things in order to stay healthy. Is the ideal to sit in our room and read the Bible every waking moment?

At what point does our commitment to sacrifice our own desires and preferences in exchange to do God's will apply to these perfectly noble activities?



There is no right or wrong answer because we are all wired differently. Some of us need more downtime than others. Some of us are able to sit and study every waking moment of our day.

Again we go back to our motivation. Why am I doing these other things? What is the value they will bring to me that will glorify God?



Let's start to look at this as a Decision Tree in order to have a roadmap to know how to scripturally evaluate ourselves. Please see the Bonus Material for the full Tree. The overarching top of the tree is our theme text:

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 (NASB)

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

With that set in place, now what? What is our first move?

Our first approach to this question should be one of caution:

Galatians 5:16-17,19-21: (NASB) ¹⁶*But I say walk by the spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.* ¹⁷*For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

These are in opposition to one another - there is no middle ground between walking in the spirit and the desires of the flesh. A decision is needed to go in one direction or the other. Be cautious and make sure we are walking in the appropriate direction.

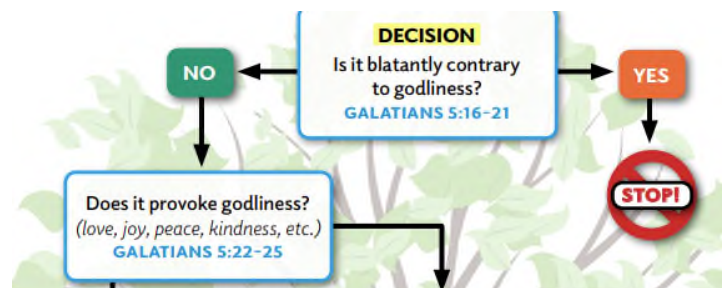
Our second approach should be to (as best as we can) ENTIRELY weed out any desires that are blatantly contrary to godliness:

¹⁹*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

This is a list we all need to sit with when deciding how to put our lives in order. Could the thing I want to do blatantly or indirectly bring me to an area that is contrary to godliness? There are really broad words in here that might seem they do not personally apply, like sorcery. Of course we are not going to practice witchcraft in the name of Jesus to advance our Christianity. But idolatry is anything that replaces or diminishes our worship of God. We need to be hypersensitive to things we have or might want to do that could somehow replace or diminish our worship.

Immorality, impurity, sensuality - these are at the beginning of the list for a specific reason. We have to be incredibly careful about what we do and how we do it; what we think and how we think it; what we allow our minds to observe and mislead. These things are contrary to the will of God - **SHUT THEM DOWN**. Do not say, "Well, these aren't so bad." Desire provoked by inappropriate sensuality (such as a married person looking elsewhere) should never be fed.

Our first decision on our tree is to examine if the thing I want to do is blatantly or indirectly contrary to godliness. If the answer is yes, STOP and do not do it.





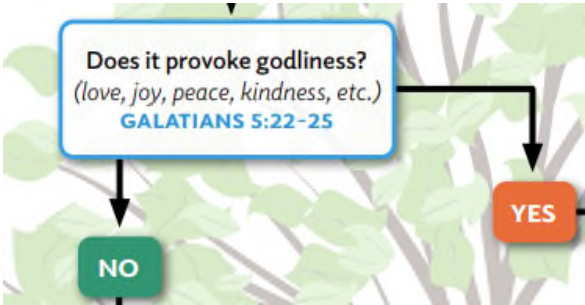
When we discard ungodly behaviors, we want to invite righteous behaviors to fill the void. If our decision is not contrary to godliness, what is the next step?

Our third approach should be to invite in all thoughts, actions and desires that provoke godliness:

Galatians 5:22-26: (NASB) ²²But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, **self-control <1466>**; against such things there is no law. ²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit. ²⁶Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Self-control: Greek-English Lexicon - the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites

The next step in our decision tree is: Will our decision invite thoughts, actions or desires that provoke the characteristics of godliness - love, joy, peace, kindness, etc.?



 **Check out our CQ Kids video:**
WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?
christianquestions.com/youtube

Here is how our friend Vicki remembers the Fruit of the Spirit:
(Hey, whatever works!)



LOVE, JOY, PEACE + "PACKAGE OF FIGS"

"PKG:" PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS

"FGS:" FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL

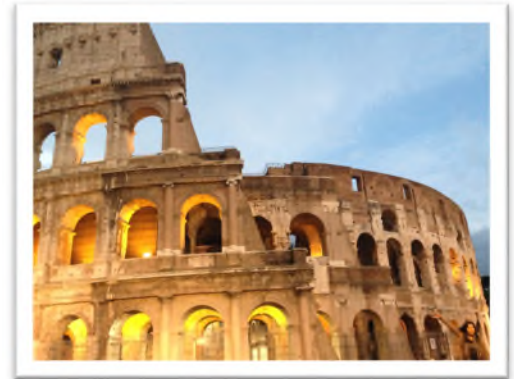
With these exercises of discipline in motion, we can better focus on positive actions:

Ecclesiastes 9:10: (KJV) *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

Once we find those right things to do, do them with our might. Be active in the service of God.



My husband and I went on a dream trip to Italy a few years back. We were both working extremely stressful jobs and to have such a different experience was one of the highlights of our lives. We rode bikes through Tuscany, we went on an 8-hour walking tour of Rome, we visited Pompeii. We saw artwork so precious it could make you weep. We had never experienced anything like this. It was romantic, exciting, full of learning and memories, and we were thanking God every step of the way. But trips like this don't plan themselves. It took months of finding the right airfare, learning the train system, finding tour groups, packing - it took a lot of my free time. And after we got back, I worked on the scrapbook of all the photos for about a year in my spare time. Was this a good thing or a bad thing to spend this much time on such a wonderful experience?



Rick's response: There was nothing morally wrong here, and this was a "once in a lifetime" trip. Sometimes such things serve as a memory and motivation, a grounding that can help us. Photos from the trip even found themselves in various CQ Rewind Show Notes over the years. It was a good thing to be able to be with your spouse, honoring and worshipping God as you see the beauty of these places. If this was going to happen every six months, we might need to talk about it. It might then be excessive.



There is a lot involved in a hobby. Think about cooking.

It can be a lot more involved than getting dinner on the table. It is learning technique, buying special tools, watching cooking shows and learning the science behind it all – it takes a lot of time to do anything well.



What about exercise? It can clear our heads and give us physical strength and energy. Some say bilateral exercise (using both limbs in unison to contract the muscles) helps to reset our brains.

When the mind is weary, exercise the body.

When the body is weary, exercise the mind.

When both are weary, go to sleep. - Joe Megacz

What about taking time away from Bible study to exercise?



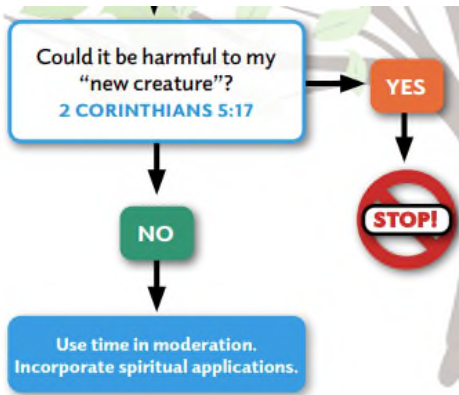
I enjoy exercising. I used to go to a gym but with COVID-19, we purchased a home gym and I make use of it five or six days a week. Exercise clears my head and gives me a fresh sense of things. There are times I will think through constructing a podcast while I am on the elliptical machine. Sure, there are also times I think about the New York Yankees, but it clears my





mind and gives me physical strength and energy I can pour into God’s word. For me personally, exercise is very important.

Perhaps there are activities that do not directly provoke godliness but would not be harmful to what 2 Corinthians 5:17 calls our new creature. Adding this to our Decision Tree, what might we do with the activities that fall into this category?



Consider putting a time limit on them.

Do things in moderation. Take care of the humanity we are blessed with, but we do not want to be excessive outside of our ultimate goal of godliness.

Maybe we can incorporate some spiritual applications. If I like to knit, maybe I can knit little hats for all the newborns in my church. If I like to play an instrument, I can share that gift with others. I can use my cooking, baking and gardening skills to be hospitable to others. It is great if we can build something spiritual with what we like to do.

All of the needs and desires we develop should bring us to attaining a gentle spirit which will bring us to the peace of God:

Philippians 4:4-7: (NASB) ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This peace is what everyone wants. If taking long walks or having pets helps us keep anxiety in check, even though they take time and money to care for, they may allow our *gentle spirit* to be visible to those around us. If we live with that spirit because we honor God in everything we do, we can have that peace.

Sometimes the best way to add to your life is to subtract from it. –Trent Shelton

All of the needs and desires we develop should bring us to dwelling on spiritual excellence:

Philippians 4:8-9: (NASB) ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

What am I committed to? If my highest commitment is discipleship (and as a Christian, it should be), then I should pursue having every other life commitment serve that discipleship. All of these other things can serve if our motivation, our WHY, is in the right place.

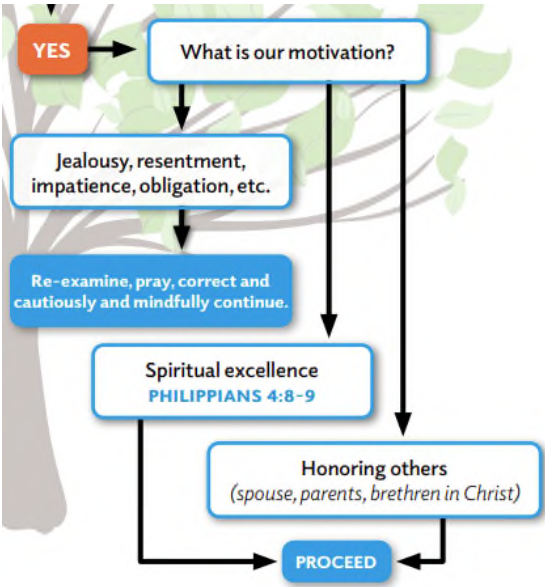




What is my **WHY?**

We left our Decision Tree at, "Does this action provoke godliness," but if the answer is yes, we are not yet done. Now we have to analyze our motivation. Is our motivation the "spiritual excellence" we saw in Philippians 4:8-9? Or will our action honor others like our parents? Honor our spouse? Will it help our children? If our action provokes godliness with the right motivation, then we proceed.

But we can do good things for the wrong reasons and have to pay attention. Are we doing something out of jealousy for what others are doing? Are we doing something good but secretly resenting having to do it? Are we irritated and just doing it because we have to out of obligation? We have to reexamine, pray and cautiously and mindfully continue.



Rick, when your grandchildren come over, do you tell them, "I'm sorry. I am studying the Bible right now. Go play outside."



Generally, no. They become the apple of my eye for that time. There are times when you have to enter into their world. A few weeks ago, my five-year-old granddaughter, Autumn, was here playing. There were things I could have been doing, but it was Autumn's time. For some reason, she decided I should be a princess. I was able to sense the joy of a 5-year old as she pasted little hearts all over my face. She was so excited and we had such a good time.

(Editor's note: We would have loved to add a photo of Rick as a princess here but have not been able to confirm any were taken.)



Keeping good from becoming bad regarding ME looks like it will need never-ending watchfulness and care!

Because my personal needs and desires are based in human nature and habit, they require strong attention as I weed out (to the best of my ability) all inappropriateness. Continued discipline in this process is a necessity, as the heart wants what the heart wants!





Enough about me!
What about understanding others in their beliefs and ways?
How can that be bad?

Imperfection can make anything that is inherently good take a bad turn. It is an enormous world out there, and understanding it can be an important factor in being a good witness for the gospel. However, proceed with caution! There is SO much in the world that can divert our attention and chip away at our commitment. There is little worse than to be focused on a serious commitment and then allow little things to chip away at it over time. The serious commitment becomes smaller with each chip. Although the damage may be imperceptible, over time it loses its foundational capacity. We do not want this to happen to our Christianity!



WHY are we seeking this knowledge?
WHAT do we hope to do with it?

Seeking knowledge

Seeking knowledge might include learning about other religions or belief systems, philosophy, psychology or even researching medical or political issues, and learning more about why people act the way they do. Are these good or bad things to do?

What is my WHY? What is the REAL reason? Not the one we initially tell ourselves, not the rational reason that helps us to fit in, but the REAL reason.

There is a lot out there in today's world on personal belief systems. People have come to believe they are their own god. They control and choose every aspect of their lives. Their beliefs are based on feelings and emotions, their wants, their egos. None of this is what genuine faith *should* be based upon. There are many people on the internet who are trying to tear down Christianity and undermine its principles as being antiquated and not keeping up with the times. This may be true of some religious cultures or practices, but it is not true of the real Christianity taught in the Bible. If we enter into this mindset, it gets faith-shaking very quickly. There is a difference between trying to understand a perspective and entertaining that perspective.

It is not enough to be committed and disciplined if you are not consistent.
 —Trent Shelton on consistency

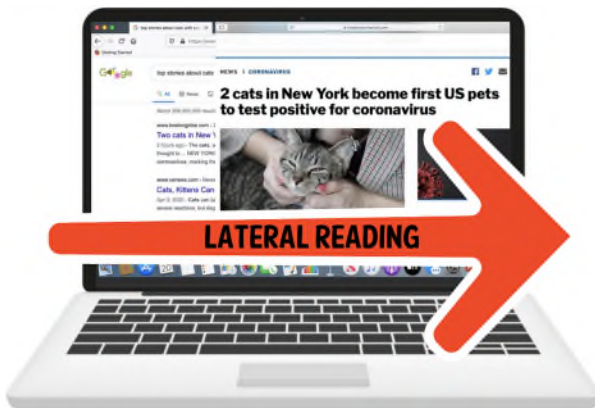


It seems that we have to be our own “experts” in many areas of life, since we are getting so much contradictory information about many issues of the day. For example, a hot topic right now is the COVID-19 vaccine. Should we take it or not? In the past, we could defer to experts to tell us which direction we should go. But now, both sides have their own experts and we are left to do our own research to find out which side is better supported. However, this takes time. How much time should we spend on this?



And this is only one issue. We are asked to be our own experts in many other aspects of our lives. How deeply do we investigate everything? How relevant are the details? Should we just make an educated guess and move on, trusting God will take care of the rest? Or does having a spirit of a sound mind mean we should look deeper into things to know what is harmful or beneficial for our families?

Though researching important topics is good, we have to realize that there is no best answer with most of the things we deal with. There are *better* answers but no *best* answer. Specifically with the vaccine, none of us know how our particular bodies will respond. It likely will be different than the person next to us.



Do the research, but again, put a time limit on it so that it does not dominate our life. Consider reading laterally. Go to your normal sources, and then go to sources that seem to say something different, a source you would not normally read, and compare the two. Make a decision and work with the decision. We cannot exhaustively research every little thing or we would have no time for anything else. This is not beneficial. Do the research, asking for God's providence to guide you. Make a decision with maturity after prayer, move forward and God will be praised.

There is a difference between trying to understand a perspective and diminishing the truth to entertain that perspective:

1 Timothy 6:3-10: (NASB) ³*If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,* ⁴*he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,* ⁵*and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*

These texts are about motivation.

Anyone advocates a different doctrine - such a person is not interested in the words of our Lord, but *has a morbid interest in wrangling with words to stir up controversy and cause envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction*, hoping to profit from appearing to be godly while promoting his own thinking. Paul is warning Timothy not to allow this in the church. Scripture should not be looked at for profit, monetarily or physically. It is only for profit spiritually!

Any investigating and research into various approaches and stances in life must be done with our feet firmly planted in the solid foundation of truth, the *sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ*.



If your feet are planted in truth, it will be hard to wander from it:

⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. (An “aha!” moment) ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Money here is the symbol for gain, greed and coveting. It is easy to be greedy in our world. With information so readily available, it is easy to covet whatever we see. Good things can easily become bad if we are looking at things that are too attractive to us for the wrong reasons. What is my WHY?

Godliness with contentment is our gain, not these harmful desires.

It is good to want to know and understand others’ viewpoints, and to seek out the knowledge that God gave us in this world about so many things. However, that “good” can easily teeter on the edge of prideful gain and action.

Imperfect humanity seems to always be looking for the next new thing. We seem to forget that the old things, the biblical things, are founded on what are the most important things in the written word of God! Let’s keep our perspective on what are the most important things.



The misconception is that you may think you have a consistency problem when actually it is your lack of commitment. - Trent Shelton

If we find ourselves being sidetracked over and over, maybe our problem is our commitment. It may be that we are not committed enough. If it is that easy to be sidetracked, we have to revisit what the most important thing is for us.

Our commitment should be shining through our lives every day, the top of the Decision Tree, do all to the glory of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 (NASB)
Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.



WHY are we seeking entertainment?

WHAT are we doing with our leisure time?

Seeking leisure time and entertainment

We now face the danger, which in the past has been the most destructive to the humans: success, plenty, comfort and ever-increasing leisure. No dynamic people has ever survived these dangers. —John Steinbeck



(Source: 2018-2023 Entertainment & Media Outlook by PriceWaterhouseCoopers) The largest industry in the world is the U.S. media and entertainment (M&E) Industry, expected to reach \$825 billion by 2023. That includes movies, television, streaming content, music, radio, book publishing and video games.

What are we *supposed to do* with all of these *things to do*? How do we make sure entertainment is a life-enhancer and not a life-driver?

That is the core of the matter. Entertainment is a good thing - in its appropriate place! Out of its appropriate place, it *drives* our lives. We know when entertainment is driving our lives if we are taking an honest look at our life's habits. How do we stop that trend? Entertainment should enhance our lives, providing moments of relaxation so that our brains and emotions can regroup in order to re-engage on more important things, and with more vigor.



For me, I need time off. I run a business, we have Christian Questions every week, I am a minister in our church, my wife and I have three children and five grandchildren, I counsel various individuals in my pastor role - there are just so many things I need to make decisions about.

How do I cope? I sometimes need to walk away. That's how I cope. On Friday nights, my wife Trish and I go out for dinner. Occasionally, we have grandkids with us. It is just that time away. We stop, put everything aside, and then relax and just be together for that period of time. It is so wonderful and helps me go back to "the work." And the important part is that it enhances the work.

We do watch TV or a movie. Entertainment is a part of my life, but it does not drive my life. I am really careful about that. It is like exercise; if I "get off the train" for a few minutes, I can get back on and work harder, better and more clearly to honor God.

We have everything we need to follow that which is "good" and keep it from becoming "bad":

2 Peter 1:3-10: (NASB) ³seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.



His divine power has granted to us EVERYTHING pertaining to life and godliness. We do not need more, it is here. We just need to decide that it is the most important thing and make use of it. Principles, examples, inspiration and promises are all at our fingertips in the Bible. If we keep these things in front of us, we keep good things good. If our WHY for what we do is to be a disciple of Christ, and we do it through scriptural study and understanding, the other things will fall into place.

*⁵Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, ⁶and in your knowledge, **self-control <1466>**, and in your **self-control <1466>**, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, ⁷and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We get what we focus on. This is a picture of consistency that is based on commitment. It is easy to be consistent if our commitment is sound. It is hard to be consistent if our commitment is not. Keeping good things good means we need to focus on our commitment. Everything else will come into harmony with that focus.

Here is the other side of the issue:

⁹For he who lacks these qualities is blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

Is this not reassuring? If we lack these qualities, if we are blind or shortsighted, we have forgotten! This happens to all of us, and it is okay. We will need to reorganize, reorder and put things back into perspective. We can replace some “not so good” things that have gotten too dominant in our lives so that we replace them with good things. A lack of development of these qualities is an invitation for “good” to become “bad.” Let’s not go down that road.

***You are consistent in those things that you have given a bigger reason.
You are consistent when you know the cost of not doing what you need to do.***
—Trent Shelton

This comes down to understanding what we are committed to. We can keep good things good as long as we put time frames on the things that are sort of “in the middle.” We keep the things of our lives in order of importance, reassessing on a regular basis as to what is most important. We make decisions and move on. It can be done!

Do not let simple curiosity or desire for entertainment become the director of your life. Consciously limit time spent that is not directly supporting our highest goals.

**DOING THE NEXT
RIGHT THING**



This has to be a conscious decision. If we leave it to our instinct it is not going to work so well. There is so much available for us to learn about our enormous world and its people, and there is so much caution we need to use.



Jesus told us we are in the world but not of it. Does that mean we are to ignore the people around us?

Here again we need to be sensible. If we ignore those around us, what kind of witness for Jesus would we be. On the other hand, if we become like the people around us, what kind of witness for Jesus would that be? Let's do what Jesus said - be *in* the world but not *of* it. It is simple but not easy!



Why are we engaging in these activities?
What are we looking to achieve with these interactions?

Interacting with people

This might include co-workers, neighbors, friends and acquaintances who are not interested in our Christianity. This definitely includes time spent on social media!

Jesus prayed for us that we might be *in* the world, but not *of* it:

John 17:14-15: (ASV) ¹⁴I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.

What does this mean? Do we shun others in the world? Keep our distance? Is it a good thing or a bad thing to interact with people in the world who have little or no interest in Christianity? It goes back to our WHY. WHY am I engaging in these activities? WHAT am I looking to achieve with these interactions?

Champions understand that the process must be trusted... Many people will start something and within a month, they throw in the towel and give up because the result is not instant and apparent. —Trent Shelton regarding faith

We have to have faith in the process of development. As we are talking about having our WHY in place and in keeping good things good, we might feel discouraged because of our many mistakes. It is good to realize this, but now, what are we going to do about it? How are we going to take the next small step, do the next “right thing” to change that trend?

Focus on the Decision Tree. It helps to identify where an activity belongs along the decision-making process, giving scriptural principles along the way.

Keeping “good” as “good” means we do not pollute it with evil influences. Tread carefully:

1 Corinthians 10:21-23: (NASB) ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we? ²³All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.



We have the world in the palm of our hands when we are holding our phones; what are we going to do with that? We must put it all through the filter of, *does it edify?* Does it bring us closer to God through Christ?

We DO have liberty, but it is NOT a license to act in a way that detracts from glorifying God:

1 Corinthians 10:27-28: (NASB) ²⁷*If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.* ²⁸*But if anyone says to you, this is meat sacrificed to idols, do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;*

The big debate was whether Christians should mingle with unbelievers. The Apostle Paul is talking about having a meal with unbelievers, and he is saying, if an unbeliever invites you and you want to go, do so. But he puts parameters on the event: make sure you are handling that experience in a godly, appropriate way.

This does not mean we should go anywhere a friend or acquaintance asks us to go, or do anything they ask us to do. *That does not fit with the Decision Tree. We have to satisfy those highest levels before we filter down to this level.* Paul is saying that we can be a witness in this way. Be involved, but make sure our involvement is within the parameters of godliness and appropriateness.

Paul is advocating choosing when, where and most importantly how to mingle with unbelievers:

1 Corinthians 10:31-32: (NASB) ³¹*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* ³²*Give no offence either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;*

Give no offence to anyone, people of Jewish heritage, people of pagan Greek heritage or to the church of God. Be that person of great integrity who has a purpose in life and lives it no matter where he or she is. We should be the same person wherever we are. If we are different with this group versus that group, we need to ask ourselves why? Have we taken something good and potentially made it bad? The bottom line is always the same: do what is right while firmly planted in godly principles.

Having good friends requires a big investment of time and energy. Having more friends means more of an investment of time and energy.



I have a handful of really great friends I have had for decades who are Christian in name only; one is Jewish. They aren't super interested in religion. I do put time and effort into these relationships and get a lot out of them in return. They know my position on things and respect my beliefs. I get to witness to them by my lifestyle, words and actions. Should we limit ourselves in our friendships?

We do need to be careful. It is wonderful to have great friends, but it takes a lot of time and effort. If a friendship is going to lead us down a road of



darkness, obviously that is a relationship we cannot have. If a friendship is going to lead us down a road of mediocrity, this is a friendship we have to question. It might not be worth our time because our time is better spent elsewhere. But if a friendship is going to lead us down a road of goodness that can bring glory to God, then it is worth cultivating and worth our time.

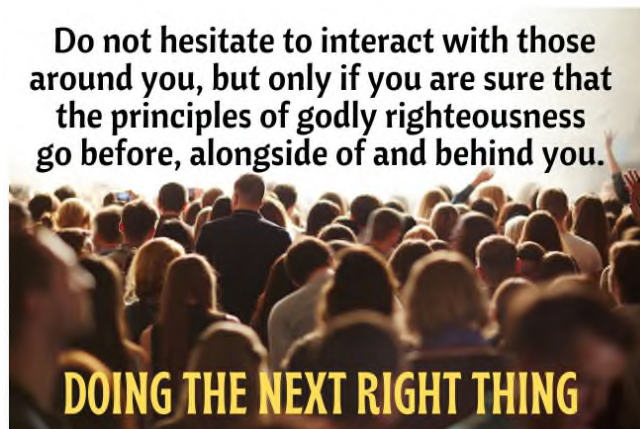
We need to make sure that our time spent is in the context of first serving God through Christ. Be an example of godly living when interacting with our friends, especially those in the world. Seek friends within our religious fellowship above all. Our online friendships also fall under these guidelines.

Peter gives a clear and unmistakable answer - leave the past and leave ANY sinful behavior behind:

1 Peter 4:1-4: (NASB) ¹Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ²so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. ³For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. ⁴In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;

Peter is saying, we were once NOT followers of Christ. We participated in who knows how much of this list? To whatever level we participated, our time for that is over. It is behind us. We must now leave that which is behind us, behind us. We need to focus on that which is before us in the direction we are going. We cannot let those things we left behind once again get in front of us.

Once we left that sinful lifestyle, we cannot let ourselves slide back into that entanglement. Our lives now are about something much bigger and more important. That is how to keep good things as good things. Things we are not quite sure of, we should consciously devote less time to things we are not quite sure of.



We should put a time limit on how much time we devote to mundane things, looking into various research, etcetera. If we find we are being drawn in more and more, and it is depleting our time with the Lord's things into a mediocre, lukewarm relationship with what should be *most* important, we need to ask ourselves, what are we doing? Is this making something good turn bad?



All of the human traits we have are expressible, as long as that expression is within the confines of discipleship. This may seem strange; we can express any of our human desires? Yes, but within the confines of discipleship. This may seem limiting. Yes, it is. By God's grace, goodness and providence, it is limiting us to only righteousness, goodness and godliness. We would not want to live life any other way because the rest is a waste of time. We see around us lives that are full of jealousy, spite and ignorance.

This is what and where we want to be:

Romans 12:2: (NASB) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

This is how we keep good things from becoming bad. We use that renewed mind, that spirit-driven mind, to help us understand the importance of things; putting them into proper order of importance. *We can use the Decision Tree to help us do this.*

Keeping good from becoming bad comes back to our foundational commitment. It always starts and ends with the same thing. Just like Jesus, we have to ask, what is the will of God in my life? Will I do that, no matter what?

The Apostle Paul writing about the power of the resurrection in Christ:

Philippians 3:12-14: (NASB) *¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

This one thing I do. This is what our lives are all about. This does not mean we cannot look for more understanding of the world around us. It does not mean we cannot have entertainment in our lives, or have diversions or be involved in the things around us. Paul says to forget those things that are left behind in our lives. Paul had been a persecutor of Christians. He pursued a course he thought was right, but he was doing evil. He turned his life around, pressing forward towards a higher calling, serving Christ Jesus. That means everything he did was for a good purpose, a righteous purpose, a scriptural purpose. It was godly. This should be the same for us.

The purpose of the Decision Tree is to determine the thousands of things in life we need to make decisions on pursuing. This one thing I do - if your activities do not support your highest goals, they are not that important. Find a good answer, try it. If you love to bird watch, cook, ride your bike, swim, whatever, make sure it is done in moderation so that we glorify God in our lives. Seek God's hand in all we see and do. Give thanks for those things we appreciate. Most of us really know if something is helping us or hurting us. We often want things to be a certain way. Which is why we must be honest with ourselves. How is this activity contributing to "this one thing I do"? When is the time we spend enough?

Analyze: Where does your mind always go? Do you try to rush through the important things so you can do the leisure things? If you feel guilty, then stop it and do not start it again until you can reason in your head that this is okay.



We should put all in perspective so that we can look at our lives and measure them day-by-day. Analyze, assess and measure honestly. If something is taking too much time, is too much effort, is too much of a distraction, we can either put these pursuits aside or put time limits on them. We need to remember that we will not find a “best” answer to most of our questions, but if we find a good answer, test it, put it to work, go back to it a month later to see how it worked, and then move forward with or without it.

There are so many ways to keep good things good and it is so easy to slip. Be focused, be committed, *to Christ in you the hope of glory!*

*So, can good things ever be bad?
For Jonathan, Rick and Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

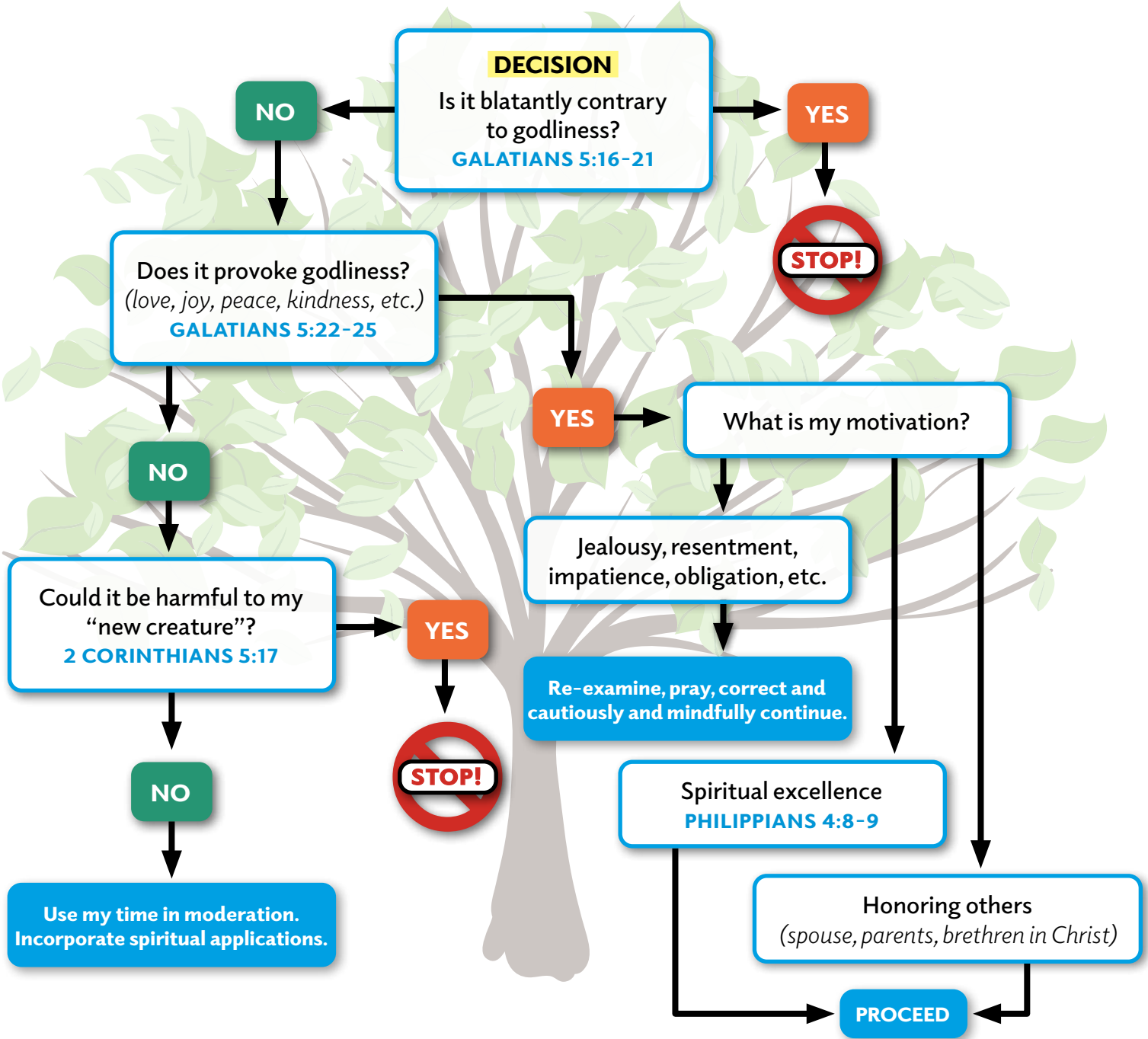


Join us next week for our podcast on March 8, 2021
Ep. 1168: Could God Convict ME of Murder?

Everything in excess is opposed to nature. –Hippocrates

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 (NASB)

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1167: Can Good Things Ever Be Bad?

<https://christianquestions.com/program/good-things-bad/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What does Jesus mean when he says we need to hate our parents and our families in order to be his disciples? What considerations should we have when faced with caring for elderly parents? (See Luke 9:57-63, 14:25-26, John 9:26-27)
2. What should we ask when trying to spiritually evaluate our actions and activities? (See Ecclesiastes 9:10, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Galatians 5:16-26, Colossians 3:22-25)
3. What are some activities that might be harmful to our “new creature”? How should we handle these activities? (See 2 Corinthians 5:17, Philippians 4:4-7)
4. What should the motivation behind our actions be? (See Philippians 4:8-9) Can we do good things for the wrong reasons? Why is this a problem if the good still gets done?
5. When can seeking to understand others’ beliefs become the wrong thing to do? Why can it be so dangerous? (See 1 Timothy 6:3-10)
6. How should we utilize leisure time and entertainment in our lives? Where is the danger in leisure and entertainment? How can we avoid the danger? (See 2 Peter 1:3-10)
7. What should we be careful of when we interact with others? What does liberty have to do with this discussion? (See John 17:14, 1 Corinthians 10:21-32, 1 Peter 4:1-4)
8. What questions are in the Spiritual Decision Tree? What can this help us achieve as Christians? (See Romans 12:2, Philippians 3:12-14)
9. What are some examples of “good” things becoming bad in your life? What did you learn from these experiences?
10. What do/will you do to make sure your actions do not become harmful to your spirituality?