



Is It a Sin If I...? (Part I)

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.*



Technology, medicine, communication and interdependence allow a previously unimaginable world of seemingly unlimited possibilities of societal advancement and personal fulfillment. Our communication is instantaneous, and our collective demands for entertainment and happiness have never been louder. While some of this has been a blessing, Satan, as this world's master of confusion, has blurred the lines of morality, resulting in our discovery of new methods for old ways to sin. Our focus as Christians is to please God and obey His righteous laws as outlined in the Bible. We already know God considers murder, lying and

pride as sinful, but what about all the contemporary situations the Bible does not directly address? Do we face gray areas now that never before existed? How can we know what God considers sinful?

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We receive questions from listeners who message us through the Christian Questions app or email us at inspiration@christianquestions.com. Many are behavior and lifestyle questions that fall into this gray area.

On this episode, we will talk about wearing makeup and nail polish, cross-dressing and gambling. Watch for more questions answered in Part II, Episode 1241. We will be addressing various questions about sexuality. We plan on making this a series, so please write to us with your questions.

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Let's first set our foundation.

Here is the plainly stated scriptural basis upon which we will build this episode:

Romans 5:12: (GNT) *Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned.*

We have this blanket statement that sin enters the world, and no one is exempt - sin is everywhere. This is our basis.



The two Old Testament words most often translated *sin* are:



Sin: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2403 *chatta'ah*; an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty, occasion, sacrifice, or expiation (meaning an offering for sin); also (concretely) an offender

Sin: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2398 *chata'*; to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin; by inference, to forfeit, lack, expiate, repent, (causatively) lead astray, condemn



A brief look at the New Testament words for *sin*:

Sin: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #264 *hamartano*; properly, to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), i.e., (figuratively) to err, especially (morally) to sin:
- for your faults, offend, sin, trespass

Sin: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #265 *hamartema*; (from #264) a sin

Sin: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #266 *hamartia*; (from #264) sin: offence, sin(-ful)

Anything less than the “bullseye” is missing the mark.

For example:

Matthew 18:21: (KJV) *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother **sin** <264> (in other words, how often shall he miss the mark) against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

Jesus' answer was to stop counting.

Now, let's look at the Greek word for *offence*.

Offence/Offense: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3900 *paraptoma*; a side-slip (lapse or deviation), i.e. (unintentional) error or (willful) transgression

How can the same word mean both an unintentional error and a willful transgression? This does not necessarily mean at the same time, but it can apply to both.

As an example:

- 1) You purchase car insurance but are angry at the insurance company, so you intentionally let the policy lapse.
- 2) You purchase car insurance but forget to pay the premium for the policy. Coverage lapses, even though this was not your intention.



Both resulted in a lapsed policy (an offense), but one was intentional and the other was unintentional.

With the Strong's definition, the offense can happen either intentionally or unintentionally, but both result in the “side-slip,” lapse or deviation.

Romans 5:15: (KJV) *But not as the **offence** <3900>, so also is the free gift. For if through the **offence** <3900> of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*

Whether the offense was intentional or not, it is still “off” - it is still “missing the mark.” This is what we are looking at as a basis for sin.

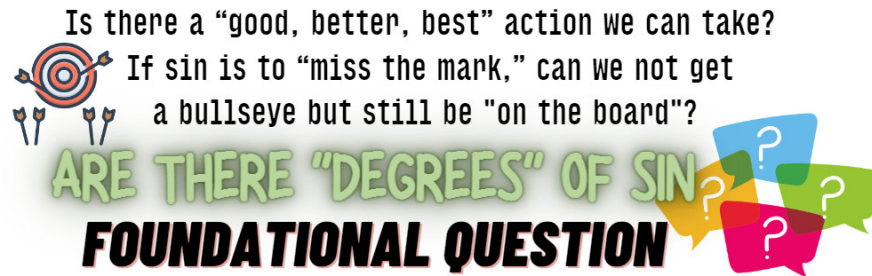




Sin brought the human race out of favor with God and under the rule of Satan:

Ephesians 2:1-2: (NASB) ¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (a description of Satan), of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

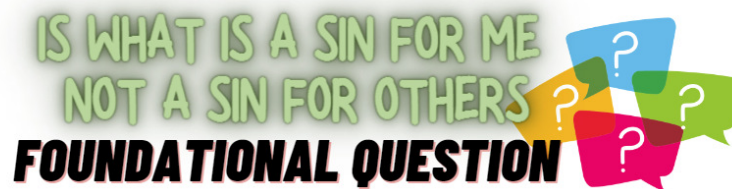
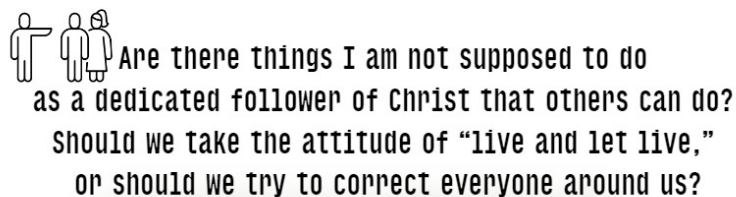
Whether they realize it or not, those who are doing Satan's bidding are classified as *sons of disobedience*.



I have the opportunity to attend a Bible study, but I choose to go out to dinner with my friends. I "missed the mark" because the better choice would have been to study the Bible, but instead I did something else that in and of itself is not sinful.

Much of this depends on motivation. Did you go out to dinner because you did not want to go to Bible study? Or was this a singular opportunity to meet up with friends that could not be done at another time? We have to be careful about stating such an example to be a black-and-white situation. Even though sin is missing the mark and sin is always against God, we can learn to grow in righteousness over time.

Maybe you went to the dinner and felt later that it was not the best choice. Perhaps you pray, *LORD, please forgive me; I have learned something through this experience*. Yes, it might have been a sin in this case, but it was a valuable experience from which to grow. We should look at our sins as growing experiences allowed by the LORD rather than, "I am doomed because I sinned."



Galatians 5:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Now 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.



There are some obvious sins on this list but also some more subtle like *enmities, strife, dissensions and factions*.

For this episode, we are addressing Christians who profess to be footstep followers of Jesus. For us, these deeds are ALL sins. For those who do not claim Christianity, we have to allow them to be who they are - we cannot hold them to our standards. They do not recognize, like or want our standards. In the previous Ephesians verses, they were called *sons of disobedience*. We cannot heal others' sins because they are blinded by Satan.

When it says, *those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*, does this mean they will have no place in God's future kingdom?

These verses are written to the called-out Christians who are working towards a heavenly calling in God's kingdom. However, we know that Jesus died for everyone, no matter who they are, when they lived or what sins they have committed. The "everybody else" will have their resurrection on earth, but they are prevented from entering the heavenly call going out to Christians in this age.



These finer points on sin are not going to matter to the average person, or even to the average Christian who goes to church on Sunday but does not really think about God the other six days of the week. These points are for a Christian with extreme dedication.

Is it sinning if it does not bother my conscience?
'you do you' Is having Christian liberty the same as
 "I can do what I want as long as I am not hurting anyone"?

TO WHAT EXTENT IS SIN DEPENDENT
 ON OUR PERSONAL CONVICTIONS
FOUNDATIONAL QUESTION

There is the famous debate in Acts 15 and 1 Corinthians 10 over whether or not it was wrong to eat meat offered to idols, and how it violated the conscience of some. If it bothered their conscience, it was sinning.



Do we decide what is labeled "sin" for us? This seems like sin is subjective based on what we say it is or is not.

No, we do not decide what sin is for us.



Romans 14:5-6: (NASB) ⁵*One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.* ⁶*He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*

This is specifically referring to the debate about eating meat previously sacrificed to idols. The Apostle Paul is unequivocally saying that as a high-level Christian principle, eating such meat is NOT sinful. However, there were many Christians who had a hard time with this, as many came from a Jewish background and this would be a heinous act to them. He goes on to say that while it is not inherently sinful, if you are in a situation where it FEELS SINFUL - **DO NOT DO IT!** Further, if you are in a situation where it DOES NOT FEEL SINFUL - **DO NOT DO IT** in front of those whom you might offend.

This is not about US deciding what is sinful and what is not; it is not situational ethics. We have a high standard. If we can manage that high standard but someone else cannot, we need to be compassionate towards them. The high standard is set by Scripture, not by our decision of what is sinful or not.



Applying Christian time management in an information-filled world

In our theme scripture, there is a seemingly simple command to direct how we are to handle all things in life:

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

This tells us how we need to be living close in prayer and be on hyper alert to be God-honoring. Our only hope to do the right thing in the difficult moments is to have that close connection. If we are not God-honoring in our moments, how are we really walking in the footsteps of Jesus?



The biblical definition of sin is missing the mark, which means that anything less than perfection is sin. We are therefore stuck in sinful lives, and this accentuates our need for Jesus. While sin does have degrees of intensity and intention, let's remember it is all still sin before God. Let us therefore always seek a path that leads as far away from sin as we can get!

Sin is everywhere and we cannot hide from it. Knowing what makes something sinful is a good start to keeping it away from us.



**I know it is not supposed to be “all about me,”
but is it a sin of pride if we just want to look our best?**

This is a really good question, especially in our world here and now. So much of what we experience on social media is about making an impression. As Christians, the impression we are supposed to make on others is one of Christlikeness. We need to figure out the balance between how we dress and discipleship.



Let's first put some biblical principles in place and then deal directly with this and other related questions.

Biblical Principle: Godliness for every true Christian should always be our highest objective in everything we do.

1 Timothy 2:9-10: (English Standard Version) ⁹likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.



Just this weekend we received a message from a listener who was confused as to whether or not this scripture meant she should not wear a pearl necklace and earrings her mom gave to her before she died. We explained how there is nothing inherently sinful with pearls and gold, and in fact both are used in Scripture to represent beautiful pictures, such as the Parable of the Pearl in [Matthew 13](#) and several scriptures that compare the refining process of a Christian's character to that of pure gold. See [Revelation 3:18](#), [1 Corinthians 3:11-13](#), [Proverbs 17:3](#), [Malachi 3:3](#) and others.

These 1 Timothy scriptures cannot be taken out of context and universally applied. It is important to remember the apostles' audience - newly converted wealthy Christian women of the first century. They and their husbands had just come out of Paganism. Many of these new Christian women were apparently constructing elaborate hair designs using wire frames. They wore flashy clothes and expensive gold jewelry, in an attempt to outdo the other women.



The principle is to hold godliness as our highest objective. We should dress to honor God, NOT to impress ourselves or others.

- Women are to *adorn themselves...with good works* and not be distracting to others or themselves.
- Going against this principle could make us subject to vanity; unspoken competition with other women/jealousy/backbiting - causing others to sin, or inappropriate attention from men/soliciting sexual interest.

When people look at me, do they see a reflection of Jesus in my behavior, or do they see fancy clothing and jewelry? We can quickly cross a line of what is appropriate, causing us or others to act sinfully.



Even if we think it is not a sin for us, but it is too much for the environment, then we must ask, *Am I drawing attention to Jesus or to myself?*

1 Timothy 6:6: (KJV) *...Godliness with contentment is great gain.*

Let's flip the conversation:



This is becoming more common in our society. How should we respond? And this leads us to the question of cross-dressing. Some churches say it is a sin if women wear pants, especially while in church.



These are valid questions in present-day society. Once again, let's put a biblical principle in place before we answer with specificity:

Biblical Principle: We are bound to follow God's order and not mix that which should stay separate.

Genesis 1:27: (NASB) *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

Matthew 19:4: (NASB) *And he (Jesus) answered and said, have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.*

We have the creation account, and Jesus verifying that creation account and the many New Testament writings that build on adhering to and celebrating the differences between men and women. God created male and female - He created a difference between the two. The Bible is full of the principle of keeping things appropriately distinct.

This is the only scripture that appears to directly address the subject of cross-dressing:

~~X~~ Deuteronomy 22:5: (NASB) *A woman shall not wear man's **clothing** <3627>, nor shall a man put on a woman's **clothing** <8071>; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.*

The English words translated *clothing* here are actually two different Hebrew words.

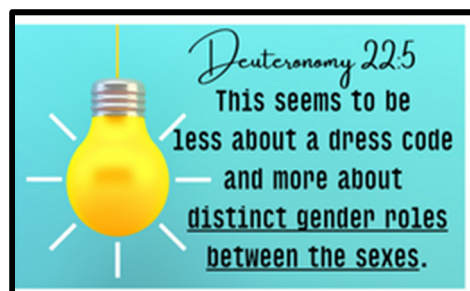
Clothing: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3627 *kliy*; something prepared, i.e. any apparatus (as an implement, utensil, dress, vessel or weapon): armour(-bearer), artillery, bag, carriage, furnish, furniture, instrument, jewel, that is made of, one from another, that which pertaineth, pot, psaltery, sack, stuff, thing, tool, vessel, ware, weapon, whatsoever

In other words, the gear, tools, weapons, etc., carried by a man.

Clothing: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8071 *simlah*; (feminine noun) a dress, especially a mantle: apparel, cloth(-es, -ing), garment, raiment, a garment

It is thought to come from another Hebrew word that implies a cover that assumes the shape of the object beneath. One could tell whether the person was a woman or man based on that shape.

The scripture then, is not about men's clothing versus women's clothing, but more about not switching the apparatus a man might use or carry versus the clothing of a woman.



Tempers run high when people talk about gender roles today, but we are looking at this from the scriptural perspective of a dedicated footstep follower of Jesus.

In this case, the King James Version seems to be more accurate:

Deuteronomy 22:5: (KJV) *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man (in other words, men's gear), neither shall a man put on a woman's garment (in other words, robes made for a woman): for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.*

There would not have been a lot of fashion choices among the ancient Hebrews. But there obviously was some distinguishing between robes and tunics worn by women and those by men. Today, Scottish kilts or sarongs in Asia or Africa worn by men are not considered female clothing even though they may seem dress-like.



Why would this be an *abomination* to purposefully cross-dress? Again, we are looking at this from the standpoint of a dedicated follower of Christ.

One probable explanation is that the surrounding Pagan nations worshipped a very popular deity, Astarte. As with all of the laws He gave to His chosen people, God was addressing how the Hebrews could stay pure and uncompromised by dishonoring the Pagan practices around them. God gave His people certain behaviors to keep them separate and distinct from those Pagan practices.



Comparing the core values of Paganism with biblical Christian principles

There was widespread worship of the goddess Astarte in Greece, also known as Ashtoreth and Ishtar in Babylon, Asherah by the Philistines and Inanna by the Sumerians. She was worshipped by the Canaanites and Egyptians, and was the principle goddess of the Phoenicians. She was eventually equated with Aphrodite in Greece.

- Bible commentaries say this is likely the goddess referred to as *the queen of heaven* in Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:17-19.
- Even Solomon worshipped her through his foreign wives in 1 Kings 11:5,33. Also read about Manasseh's carved image in 2 Kings 21:7.
- She was associated with fertility, sexuality and war.
- She was symbolized by a lion, horse, sphinx, dove, bee and the planet Venus known as the morning star.
- She was said to be able to change a man into a woman and is sometimes represented with a beard.

(Source: Clarke's Commentary on the Bible) "...The worship of Venus, to which that of Astarte or Ashtaroth among the Canaanites bore a striking resemblance, the women were accustomed to appear in armor before her and men in women's clothes."

The worship of her apparently included purposely dressing as the opposite gender. We can see why God declared that He had created male and female distinct, and the Hebrews were to abide by these differences. It is interesting to see how Pagan worship picked apart the clarity of Scripture whenever possible. This example specifically shows how this practice subverts the differences between male and female. God created male and female to complement and cherish one another.



For Christians, the biblical principles of godliness being first in our lives and adhering to God's order of things - rather than humanity's whims - are a solid foundation for choosing how we physically appear to others. When presented with choices for clothing and any adornment we might desire, these principles should direct our decisions.

We are not talking about a fashion choice, but a choice to follow principle. If we claim to be a footstep follower of Jesus, then we need to follow his footsteps! We are to live the principles that are godly and higher, even if everyone around us chooses to not follow such principles anymore. We cannot make them do these things, but we can say these are our principles and this is how we choose to live our lives as followers of Christ.

It should be very clear to everyone that God is NOT arbitrary when it comes to what He wants His children to do and NOT do.



With sound, godly principles in place, how do we deal with the practical part of 21st century choices of dress and style?

This is not a simple question to answer as we are faced with broad, sometimes daring and even vile approaches to presenting ourselves before the world around us. To get to the bottom line on these things it is extremely important that we consider each and every question with our best personal application of the mind of Christ. Simply, when Jesus says, *Walk this way* - my response is, *Yes, Sir!* The reason is because I honor the Lord Jesus, who honors the Father.

Let's begin with the issues of dress and adornment from a female perspective:

1 Peter 3:3-4: (NASB) ³Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

We already read the Apostle Paul's caution in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, and here we have the Apostle Peter with a similar message. They are not forbidding women for all eternity from wearing jewelry or braids. Instead, they were instructing women to concentrate on good works and a right attitude rather than trying to impress others with an immodest, inappropriate or gaudy appearance.

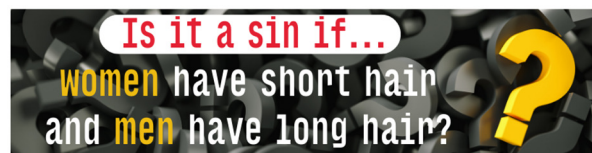
So, is it a sin if women use nail polish and wear jewelry and makeup? No. It is a personal choice as long as it is appropriate to the setting, such as a polished look in a business setting, and not distracting or used to show off. But overall, is our appearance to please God or to please ourselves and the world? 1 Corinthians 10:31 which we will talk about further says, *Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*

Makeup and nail polish on men is more popular today as a form of self-expression. Is that sinful? It is a disturbing trend. We have established the biblical principle of separate and distinct creations of man and woman.

1 Corinthians 11:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

(Source: Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Whole Bible) The apostle arguing, that as the male and female sex are artificially distinguished by garments, and it was the will of God they should be so, so they should also be distinguished by the wearing of their hair; and it was no less shame for a man to wear his hair like a woman, than to wear garments like a woman.

Does not even nature teach you - there are some things that should just make sense to us, including the differences between men and women.





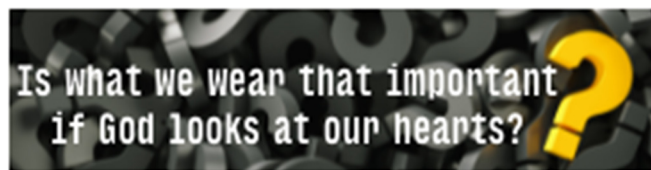
Hair length is not necessarily the point. If a woman looks like a woman with short hair, or a man still is obviously a man with long hair, this is not a problem. We realize this scripture is addressing the cultural status of women in Corinth, but we see its principle for today. When the intent is to confuse gender, we start treading into a sinful area. Godly principles are never principles of confusion.

~~X~~ **Deuteronomy 22:5:** (KJV) *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.*

The chapter of Deuteronomy 22 also includes rules on not muzzling an ox, not mixing linen and wool, and instructions not to plant two kinds of seeds in your vineyard. Doesn't this context pertain to Israel's culture at the time rather than all cultures throughout all of time? Our present culture includes the acceptance of androgynous clothing and appearance.

This is Old Testament Law, without question. This is part of the Old Testament ceremonial Law (i.e. mixing wool and linen). And while the moral Law (i.e., to love God supremely) applies eternally, the ceremonial and judicial parts of Israel's Law no longer applies. However, there are still principles we should adhere to, as the New Testament supports significant male and female differences. It is pushing the envelope to think that we should write off part of that scripture since it applies to ceremonial Law. That fact does not negate the New Testament support of male/female distinctions. There are many verses that show how the role of men and of women are different but complimentary, and how they build one another up when understood appropriately.

This shows why it is important to study the Bible topically. If we pluck out this one scripture, it does not give us the whole picture. It does not, by itself, apply to the Christian any more than not being allowed to wear a shirt made of linen and wool, or to not eat shrimp. Those were cultural and dietary rules for a specific purpose in the day they were written.



1 Samuel 16:7: (ESV) *For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but he LORD looks on the heart.*

One might ask: If this was that important to God, would it not be mentioned all over the New Testament, especially with all the paganism going on at the time of the early church?

Cross-dressing likely was not an issue in the early church like it is today. If it was, we would expect the Apostles Paul and Peter to call it out like they did with so many errors they saw.



We already saw in [1 Peter 3:3-4](#) that what we wear is the outward manifestation of our reverence for God. We should honor God in our behavior and in our appearance. The way we present ourselves should not show reverence for a social construct or self-promotion, but reverence for God Almighty. Cross-dressing does not meet a reverential criteria.

[Romans 1:18-19,22-23](#): (NASB) ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

These verses show God's anger against those who do not acknowledge there is a Creator. When we look around us at the miracle of creation, we see the incredible miracle of DNA and earth's interwoven eco-system, each element supporting the other. This could not have happened by chance. This recognition of creation applies also to recognizing the differences in men and women. Our society has tried to deconstruct the differences which has opened up a whole new way to sin. We are disregarding what God created. These texts in the book of Romans help us to see that the New Testament principles are sound in upholding that which is ancient and reverent.



Dressing like the opposite sex has been used throughout history for disguise, comfort, comedy and self-expression.

[Romans 1:25](#): (NASB) *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

Many who participate in rebellious actions towards God MAY do so with a measure of ignorance. They may see it as a cultural statement. While this should help us to be compassionate, it does not remove the fact that their actions comply with Satan, the father of lies. It is an act of rebellion even if those participating do not realize it, because ultimately, God rules. It is His judgment they will eventually have to face - they will learn reverence in His kingdom.

Biblical Principle: The Bible as a whole gives us clear dividing lines between those who follow God and those who follow false gods. It is our responsibility to only choose following God in all aspects of life.

[Exodus 20:3](#): (KJV) *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*

We can have all kinds of gods even if we do not believe in God. We can have the god of fashion, the god of popularity, the god of inclusion, the god of daring and excitement and more. All of this is about walking away from the true God, and as Christians, we cannot do that. We have to stay above the controversy.



If someone who cross-dresses came into your church congregation, how would you fulfill Jesus' commandment to love one another?



I would want to behave this way: I would ask who they are, how they heard of us and why they were here. Then we would have our Bible study. Then I would request we sit down and talk. I would listen to their “why” about how they dress and who they believe they are. I would listen first and then explain from a Christian perspective (as they would be attending a Christian church) the roles of men and women as defined in the New Testament. I would address the idea of Christian liberty, and how dressing in this way was a dramatic misapplication of that liberty. We often feel like the Bible allows us to have this liberty, but we have to be careful with it.

Romans 14:13-14: (NASB) ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. ¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

This visitor may quote this and tell me I am putting an obstacle of stumbling before him because he does not believe what he is doing is unclean. But the “unclean” in this scripture is about eating meat first offered to idols. It is not about dressing differently or purposefully making a statement of self-expression. As Christians, the expression of our self should be way in the background. We should be expressing Jesus Christ first by what we say, what we do and how we dress.

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

DO ALL
to the glory of God

Regarding the way we present ourselves, what is our deep, personal motivation? Why do we dress the way we do?

- Are we dressing or accessorizing a certain way in order to get attention? Does this take away the attention towards God and Jesus in our lives?
- Are we doing this to rebel against what is expected of us from parents, friends or society? God and Jesus know if we are rebelling.
- Is it a preference, or a compulsion or fetish we cannot seem to stop? We may need to seek professional help.
- Are we valuing clothes or things more than our relationship with Jesus and being his footstep follower?
- Are we suffering from gender dysphoria, which is a much bigger issue?

We need to keep our lives in scriptural order. Find the value, see the reverence and follow what is godly.



As Christians, we simply do not have the liberty to do what everyone else does. Someone once said, “When truth is blurred by lies and misinformation, perception becomes reality, and all is lost.” God created humans to be male and female. Our Christian responsibility is to honorably uphold the sanctity of what God created.

How we present ourselves as Christians is not about making a fashion statement; rather, it is about making a discipleship statement.

How we choose to look is one thing. Are there specific guidelines for Christians when it comes to any kind of gambling?

The depth of tragedy an issue like this can cause is scary. Before we panic, we first need to define what we are referring to. For Christians, some situations in which we subject our money to a measure of risk can be very appropriate. However, there is a wide variety of other circumstances that are better left alone!



What if this includes...

- Buying raffle tickets for my local school or charity?
- Buying state lottery or “scratch-off” tickets?
- Playing in-person slot machines? Here in the United States, they are becoming common in places like gas stations and restaurants.
- Physically going to a casino?
- Engage in online betting? In the United States alone, it is predicted to be an \$8 billion industry by 2025.



We can look at these things and “make a deal” with God. “If I win, I will give lots to good causes!”

After all, doesn’t this scripture encourage such behavior?

Proverbs 3:9: (NASB) *Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce.*

This is misapplying this text. Asking God to let us win is not what this means; rather, it is about giving from what you have and from what you yourself produced. We should not be making any deals with God about giving after we get what we want.



Remember the widow's mite in [Luke 21:1-4](#), where she gave all she had. Jesus said her gift was more valuable than the others. We need to think in those terms.

Some might say the Bible encourages gambling through the riddle of Samson in [Judges 14:12-13](#), where he gave the Philistines a riddle, telling them if they could solve it he would give them 30 days' worth of clothing. It was not about encouraging gambling, it was about using his wits and annoying the Philistines!

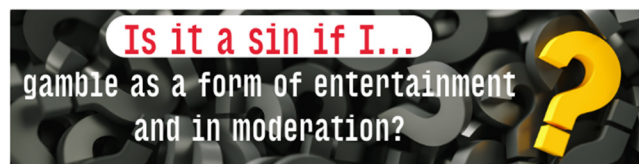
In [Mark 15:24](#) with Jesus hanging on the cross, the soldiers cast lots for his seamless outer robe so they would not need to tear it to divide it. Here Jesus is dying on the cross in torture, pain and suffering, and they are arguing and casting lots over who would get this piece of clothing. How sad. However, this is not like gambling as we know it.



Since the Bible does not specifically prohibit (or condone) gambling, is it that particular game that is bad (board games are okay but card games and horse racing is not?), the betting that is bad or gambling in excess and potential addiction that is bad? What is the sin?

[1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#): (NASB) ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit which is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

We take the principle from these scriptures and apply them to this situation. As dedicated disciples of Jesus, do we want to engage in ANY activity that has such dark and addictive potential? This activity might be simple and harmless, but in other circumstances it brings people to their ruin. With casinos, online betting, gambling boats, sports betting and others, inevitably we see all the ads for getting help for addiction. By participating in any of these, we engage in an activity that is known to bring people down. Do we want to participate in this even at a low level? Is this the way to go about our Christian lives?



[1 Corinthians 10:23](#): (NASB) *All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.*

This “moderate” participation involves a physical investment (money and time), an emotional investment (the excitement) and a spiritual cost - time we could have spent doing something more profitable in the LORD’s service.



Is it worth the cost, spiritually? The weight of the spiritual cost is much greater than the physical or emotional investment.

We have to examine this carefully to determine whether we are just finding casual entertainment, or we are going down a road that costs us spiritually. Humans love to rationalize. A true disciple of Jesus does not rationalize, but is honest with themselves when they start to stray.



Many charities and churches receive funding from lotteries and money raised helps support important causes. Is contributing to these causes by buying a raffle ticket wrong?

There are worthy causes that deserve our dollars. This is different from gambling.

1 Peter 4:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹Whoever 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.

Serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God - we have each received a gift which we administer as good stewards, picking the causes that seem worthy. We want to be able to help in the wider world around us as we can. This is not the main focus of a Christian at this time. Our focus is on the future kingdom to prove faithful in order to serve mankind at that time. But we cannot forget the needs of the world around us as we have opportunity. It is not about how much can I win, but how much can I give?



What is wrong with taking a small risk to win a big prize?

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (NASB) ¹Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

Am I being a servant of Christ and a dedicated steward of God? If we give our lives to God through Christ, our “contract” says we will serve God and Him alone. Are we taking our stewardship seriously if we act in this way? Why would we seek a big lottery prize? Do we not already have *treasure in heaven*? Shouldn't we be focused on THAT prize? Shouldn't we have THAT direction as our mindset? Gambling might generate some momentary excitement, but is this really serving God?



Investing in (not playing) the stock market with a little bit of education means you are investing money into ownership of one or several companies. The idea is to share in that company's value or profit. When done correctly, it is a thought-out process by which money can make money over time. While there are certainly risky areas to avoid in the stock market, it is not the same as trusting to the throw of dice or a card game.

Biblical Principle: As Christians, we need to accept that all we have, all we are, all we accomplish and all we waste are reflections of our diligence in the stewardship with which we are entrusted.

When we stand before God and put the books in front of Him - will they be in balance or out of balance? Will they reflect our maturity in Christ or not?



"PRO" Arguments

- Gambling is a form of entertainment. It can be a social activity that brings us closer to others.
- Gambling proceeds might fund worthy charities.



"CON" Arguments

- Gambling can quickly and easily become addictive. Professional gaming such as casinos and online gaming is designed to keep us losing money.
- Redeem the time! Even if we do not lose money, we most definitely lose time that could be best spent doing things more closely aligned with the LORD's work. Our job in life is to follow Jesus.
- The desire for more can be all-consuming and lead us to sinful behaviors.
- Ultimately this is a personal decision with potentially dire results. Riches are not to be pursued; our relationship with God through Christ is our most important path.



As Christians, let's observe that the whole environment of gambling does not lend itself to sanctified behavior. To contribute to worthy causes is one thing, but to engage in something that easily spurs on greed and obsession is not likely a good spiritual choice for a true disciple of Christ.

Romans 3:23-24: (NASB) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

It is never okay to sin.

When we see we have fallen short or perceive we might be in one of these gray areas, we ask for guidance and forgiveness through prayer:

Hebrews 4:16: (NASB) *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*



The specific issues and broader Christian principles we have discussed all come down to this: How we are reflecting godliness in everything we say, do, think, wear and participate in? Following Jesus is what is important.

*So, is it a sin if I...? (Part I)
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on August 8, 2022
Ep. 1241: Is It a Sin If I...? (Part II)

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.

Study Questions follow

Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1240: Is It a Sin If I...? (Part 1)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1240-is-it-a-sin/>

See:  CQRewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What is the New Testament definition of “sin”? What is the New Testament definition of an “offense”? Explain how an offense can be both intentional and unintentional. How does sin or an offense change our relationship with God? Who are the “sons of disobedience”? Could that description ever apply to Christians? (See Matthew 18:21, Romans 5:12,15, Ephesians 2:1-2)
2. Determining whether we have “missed the mark” depends on what? How can what others do become one of our own sins? Why are some people not held accountable at this time? What will their fate be in the future? (See Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 2:1-2)
3. Is sin subjective, meaning based on how we feel? Are we free to do as we wish if we do not sin within our own understanding? How should we handle it when we know someone else (another Christian or non-Christian) will be bothered by our actions? (See Romans 14:5-6, Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 6:12,10:28)
4. What is at least one biblical principle that should underlay everything we do? How might this apply to how we dress? What is the context of 1 Timothy 2:9-10? How does that affect how we apply it?
5. What does the Bible say about men and women and their roles and dress? What is a possible explanation of why Deuteronomy 22:5 says it is an “abomination” to purposefully give the appearance of the opposite gender? (See 1 Timothy 6:6, Genesis 1:27, Matthew 19:4)
6. Is it a sin if I wear jewelry, nail polish and makeup a sin? Does the answer change for females and males? Can the length of our hair be a sin? When do such things cross the line for Christians? How could these practices be acts of rebellion against God? (See 1 Peter 3:3-4, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 11:14-15, 1 Samuel 16:7, Romans 1:18-25)
7. What are five things we should consider about dressing or accessorizing? Instead of making a fashion statement, what should we aim to make? (See Romans 14:13-14, 1 Corinthians 10:31-32)
8. In what way can gambling cause tragedy in our lives? What three things does even moderate participation in gambling require? What could even casual entertainment gambling cost us down the road? (See Proverbs 3:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20,10:23)
9. Are there worthy causes where we can contribute through a gambling-type game (like a lottery or raffle)? What is required of us as good stewards of our finances? Where should we look for our treasure? (See 1 Peter 4:10-11, 1 Timothy 5:8, Acts 20:35, Colossians 3:23, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2)
10. Will we always succeed in avoiding sin? What do or should we do when we fail? (See Romans 3:23, Hebrew 4:16)