

Jan 11, 1986 A.M.

THE MOOD RING VS. ETHICAL DECISIONS

I Cor. 6:12-20

The other day I had the privilege of trying on a mood ring. And found out that I was a person of enthusiasm. The ring gives perfectly marvelous results. Before your eyes, the effective colors appear. And the ring reports some good traits of character.

Now this mysterious ring makes (some decisions) with ease. And believe you me, in this tangled, complex world, this is one of the hardest things that we have to do. Make decisions.

But this ring will tell you in a minute whether you are (relaxed), whether you are (honest), or whether you are a (disturbed) person. What revelations!
Mood - Feelings - Expressing -

When it comes to making moral decisions there are some white zones, some black, and some gray ones. And we have an uneasy feeling when we make these decisions.
11 yr Airl - cloth for Doll own - How much owe - How keeper - That be one Kiss - Well, Grandma said she would do by tomorrow + pay you -
Quite often whatever decision we make, may be wrong in some way. Or may be good in another way.

The pastor of (Riverside Church) in New York City, once gave (six ways) to tell right from wrong. It was sort of like a road map as you thought of it.

- 1. The test of (common sense). Like Chico Marx in his question, who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?

So one might come through the spider web by his own genius - common sense.

2. The test of (sportsmanship) Like the golden rule. Is this the way I would like to be treated if things were turned around. This is a secular kind of decision.
3. The test of our (best selves) And this is a more-far reaching test than simply our conscience. It is one's view of what the world is about. It is about your own self. You are going to be true to yourself.
4. The test of (publicity) Something I will be willing for other people to know.
5. The test of our most (admired personality) What would be his or her reaction if they knew.
6. The test of (foresight) - to what other events or consequences is this likely to lead. Good or evil?

Ethical decisions then might be carried out along the lines that he has suggested.

Paul says there was even a better way. Phil.4:8 - Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever is just is pure. Is lovely, gracious. If there be any excellence, if there be any thing worth praise - think on these things. This would be an excellent way to make that choice.

There are (few) things that we need more in our modern world than some (guidelines)

for hard ethical decisions. And it will take more than a mood ring to give us the guidelines for making these decisions.

Luke 13:29 says, and men will come from the East and West, and from North and South, to sit down in the kingdom of God. It was a dramatic way of saying that men of all ages, and all races, and all cultures will find their way into the doorway of God, of hope, peace, and reconciliation, and find the secret of abundant life.

In Col. 1:17 - In Jesus all things hold together.

(If) we know where North is - it is easy to find South. And then East and West. Without a reliable reference point to begin with, through some landmark, should the rising or the setting of the sun - we have some familiar piece of evidence. It helps us to know where we are. And how to make a decision as to how to get out of this complex situation.

Jebb Macgruder, on being sentenced to prison, in the Watergate investigate said to judge Gessell, "I lost my ethical compass."

Ethics is a small word but it becomes a big word when we think of it in our language of recent times. It is taken from the Greek word Ethos. Which is translated (habit or custom). The word ethics however, has come to mean much more than that. It is the science of right and wrong. Of morality. Conformity to the will and purposes of God.

Dr. Masterson - Test of Secrecy - Universality - Prayer -

In the Old Testament God revealed himself. He was interested in justice, honesty in business, family life, treatment of employees, responsibility towards neighbors, the problems of the poor. And with the coming of Jesus, ethics takes on a new meaning. That builds the foundation upon the law of the prophets. The Ten Commandments and the plea of Isaiah 1:16-17 - Wash yourselves, cease to do evil, learn to do good.

Someone preached a sermon once, "The Sin Of Average Living" If you love those who love you - what reward have you. Do not even the tax collectors do the same. If you salute only your brethren - what more are you doing than others.

Now this is a total mystery - the love of God.

Are you one of these people who says - I don't think we can be sure about what is right or what is wrong. Because the state of constant change is going on in the world.

You think today of the changes that are taking place. Young girls in mini-skirts. Older women in pants suits. Just about every where except in the (Amish villages). People are no more upset about divorces. They no longer think about military heroes. And sin gets to be glorified.

New York City which was known as sin city, every sin known to mankind - a place of bright lights. It is now bankrupt. Where we do all of the things that we want too - and when we want to do them.

Ethics remain and Christ remains - and the Holy Spirit remains as Jesus put it. To guide us into all truth.

What are the guidelines that we might use - if a mood ring will not do the job - then where are we going to turn. I want to suggest three places.

I. THE FIRST GUIDELINE - IS IT HELPFUL. I Cor. 6:12.

Effect on others

Paul writes, not all things are helpful. Now this is an interesting guideline to say the least.

First, it is a test of the social situation, in the life of the church at Corinth. These Christians converted from pagan religion, some of them made a clean break with the faith, worship, and practices of the other religions. They burned their bridges behind them. They didn't want any of the old practices brought into the new way of life. And immediately, they had the problem of meat.

If you had been in Corinth in 50AD - and visited the meat market at 11 o'clock you would have found some of the finest meat for sale. That had been sacrificed to God's in the pagan temple earlier in the day. Paul thought nothing of eating from a cut of this meat. He had learned from the Lord that there is nothing outside a man that is going into him that can defile him. Mark 7:15. But it was kind of harmful to others and the answer was no, he says, it injures - it is not helpful.

The second thing about this guideline is that the Christian faith has an urgent ethical and social concern. That your decisions can be helpful or hurtful.

The first question to Cain - where is Abel, your brother. Cain replied, I do not know. Am I my brothers keeper. Gen. 4:9. But no matter how strongly he denied - he was still his brother's keeper.

And the Christian faith - and the question comes - where is he? Is he well, properly fed, clothed, sheltered. Sin is injurious to people. Now God can take care of himself. But you can hurt others.

We should not forget that we hurt other people not only by what we do, but what we fail to do, and how we make these decisions, in life.

A Jewish Rabbi the story is told of his son, who came weeping to his father from a game of hide and go seek. Why are you weeping, the father asked. The son explained,

he had hidden but his playmates had not bothered to look for him. We are all like that boy. Not all things are helpful, he says.

II. THE GUIDELINE - DOES IT ENSLAVE - V. 12

Effect on us -

Paul said, but I will not be enslaved by anything. First he had mentioned about whether it was helpful or harmful to other people. Now his decision that he makes, he says, will effect his own life. As well as the lives of others. As he thought about his choice.

Your choice can rob you of your freedom. My choice and behaviour can paralyze my freedom. It can strike at the very center of my personhood. Our freedom makes us responsible. Saving us from a kind of fate.

When we come to an intersection many people are like toy soldiers, controlled by a wound up spring in their backs. But this is not the way to make ethical decisions. We do not have unlimited freedom. There are many things that condition limits and determines for us.

In V. 9-11 - Paul gives a terrible catalog of sins which the Christian church at Corinth was growing up in. There was fornicators - a male prostitute - an unpleasant word. Idolaters, there was the goddess of love. There were thieves and robbers. Their houses were being destroyed by those who would come in and steal. There was drunkenness. And it describes that they were giving over more and more to greed and to lust. And it was not right. They were looking for appetite to be satisfied. They were aggressive in getting. They were grasping. They were following the unnatural sin to the end. This sin was practiced by the emperors. The unnatural vice, of homosexuals. 14 out of the first 15 Roman emperors practiced unnatural vice. And the very time that

Nero was emperor. He had taken a boy called Sporus. He had them married in a full marriage ceremony. Took him home to live as a wife.

Paul shouts - now such were some of you. But the truth of Christianity is that these decisions that you are making now with your freedom can bless your life. Or you will become enslaved.

We need to remember that men become addicts of alcohol and of drugs. And this will take away their freedom. There are men that have more power than they need - that they can use - and yet they drive to acquire greater and greater power. And they get hooked on power and they become power addicts. There are people who are addicted to work - they do not take time to rest, relax, play, laugh. They are always doing something. They feel guilty if they are not working. They are work-a-holics.

These things can become a status symbol. They are like spurs - they dig into people. They drive them on without mercy. And they work their fingers to the bone to get these things. They sacrifice their integrity, their decisions are made in the light of a cruel master. That will enslave them.

I illustrate with Dr. William Glasser, a doctor. He talked about a boy, Aaron, who was 11 years old. His behaviour was undescribable. He would scream, kick, run, hide, withdraw, disrupt, and make everyone disgusted with him.

No one ever told him he was doing wrong! No one every (set any limits) on what he could do. The boy would have to behave reasonably, or be punished, the doctor said. And they began. He became well behaved, and his grades went to straight A's. He played constructively, and he quit blaming his troubles on his mother and other people.

Dr. Glasser said this is the greatest need of every individual. To realize that he is personally responsible for what he does, that is right, and what he does that is wrong! And this is the moral law. And this is the way to make ethical decisions.

III. DOES IT GLORIFY GOD v. 16, 19, 20.

effect on Cause of God

glorify God in your body. This is the spiritual guideline. We talked about the guideline in the social - is it helpful. The guideline that is personal - does it enslave. Now the guideline that is spiritual - does it glorify God.

This is the logical sequence of your faith. As you make your choices in life. The glory of God is his presence - where God is - his glory is found.

And this is what Paul is trying to get across. The Greeks always look down on the bottom - it was just something that was to be satisfied with appetite. The Christian man sees beyond that. But what is the body's way - the stomach they said was made for food - and food for the stomach. And they said sexual act was made for sexual act. And so let the desires of the body have their body.

Paul's answer is clear. The stomach and food are passing things. Both will pass away. But he says the body - personality will not pass away. He says what happens to a man when he abuses it.

He says the body is the temple - it is sacred. And the whole man belongs to God. Man is not free, to do as he pleases, with his body.

✓ In the 14th verse - Paul says there is going to be a resurrection of the body. And this adds weight to what he says about the dignity of the body. Paul does an unexpected thing - he says glorify God with your body. He says it is a temple. Nothing has ever been said that gives such worth and sacredness to the human body.

Now this sounds strange in a world believed to be human, evil, and physical.

We are tempted to feel that we glorify God only in the extra spiritual - rare experiences. But Paul corrects this. He says we glorify God in the most common place. The little situations in your life.

2XIX
from 69:17-24 sing with soul -
1-2 with trumpets

We sing, the Heavens are telling the glory of God. It would be better for us to sing - Contrite and humble hearts are telling the glory of God. The heavens are vast and impressive.

There is a story - sometime ago that appeared in the newspaper about a motorcycle rider. A man who worked as a druggist. Rode bikes for sport. In some competition in the desert, he made a wrong turn. And he wound up going around in circles hopelessly lost. Without food or water, or anyone to help him, he fell after several hours, and died in the sand.

We all need direction. Society needs it, the church needs it, and Christ is the one that gives us the answer. The mood ring will not answer when it comes to a decision as to what is right and what is wrong.

A Buddhist Monk who had made an intensive study with Christianity was asked what he discovered about the two religions.

I find there is much good in each of them - what seems to be the greatest difference is that the Christian knows what is right. And has both the desire and the power to do it! We Buddhists know many things are right but do not have the desire to obey our own laws.

Psalm 119:24 "My Testimonies are my delight & my counsellors"

This is the real answer then. The Buddhists like the mood ring. He may know a few good things - but here is the desire that is lacking.

Have light within - light without - light from above -

Mrs. John Grier said, we live less than a block from the church. My husband and I have a standing joke about which route we should take - the short cut to the side door, which I prefer. Or the long way, to the front door.

One Sunday morning the snow was about a foot deep - John left for church before I did. As he went out the door he called - I will make a path for you. As I came to the path he had tramped down for me - I smiled to myself. He had given me no other choice than to go his way. Of course, I could have taken my own way - but it would have meant floundering through the deep snow. So I took his way. And even so the walking was much easier.

Following Christ has some comparable aspects. If we accept his guidance - the going is going to be easier than if we try to make our own way. If we want to find out what is right and what is wrong - we will have to make our choices in this life.

Charles M. Sheldon wrote a book - "In His Steps"
Recommends to the Christian, at every time of decision, should ask,
"What would Jesus do?"
Searching question -