

## HOW MAY I DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT?

This is an exceedingly practical question. And it is not always easy to tell the difference between right and wrong. It is not nearly so easy as some people would have us to believe.

We are living in a new era. This is a day when the moral assumptions of centuries are being questioned. Every kind of authority is on trial for its life. It is the very mood of this age. We are reminded of the Spanish story in which a gipsy was asked by a priest if he knew the Ten Commandments. The gipsy replied: "Well, Father, it's this way. I was going to learn them, but I heard talk that they were going to do away with them."

As to our subject, HOW MAY I DETERMINE WHAT IS RIGHT?, I propose to discuss it with practicality to my own soul and to yours. We find ourselves in need of some practical and directive help amid the confusion of competing ways to tell us where to turn. We have been told quite frequently to "Do right!" But we have been left with the responsibility of determining what right is. How shall we go about doing it? What are we to do when we find ourselves confronted with a question of conduct which perplexes us? Submit it to one of the following tests: --

### I. The sensible test.

Suppose that some one should challenge you to a duel. What would you say? If you had good common sense, you would say, "Don't be silly!" As a matter of historic fact, dueling, which was once a serious point of conscientious honor, was not so much argued out of existence as laughed out. The common sense of mankind rose up against it, saying, "Don't be silly!" Suppose somebody offers you a drink of liquor! Don't be silly enough to take it. Be sensible enough to let alone that which has absolutely ruined millions of others.

### II. The personal test.

Ask yourself the question, Will doing it make me a better or a worse Christian? What will this thing do to you personally? Physically, is it healthful? Will it make your body a cleaner and more worthy temple of the Spirit? I challenge you to apply this test to the indulgences you are tempted to permit yourself to enjoy. What will be the result on your personality? Can you lie without losing that crowning jewel of life, self-respect? Can you cheat and still be happy with yourself? A lady had a four-year-old nephew who was disobedient and then tried to lie out of it, but failed in the attempt. A little later he said, "I wish I could get over this lying business!" The aunt replied, "Yes, people won't like you if you lie." The little fellow came back quickly with the reply, "I don't even like myself!" God pity us when we start carrying about a self which we secretly despise. There is scarcely anything more pathetic.

Take your secret ambitions up to the tribunal of your finest and best self. There is something in us like a musician's taste, which discriminates harmony from discord. There is something in us like a bank teller's fingers, which distinguish true money from counterfeit.

.....To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

### III. The practical test.

Ask yourself the question, Will doing it likely bring desirable or undesirable results? Submit the matter to the test of foresight. Where is this course of behavior coming out? Discipline your clamorous and importunate desires in the light of a long look. Every person who picks up one end of a stick picks up the other also. To choose one end of a road is to choose the other also. Every course of behavior has not only a place where it begins, but a place where it comes out.

### IV. The social test.

Ask yourself, Will doing it influence others to be better or poorer Christians? Whatever you do that elevates and enriches the lives of others is right. Whatever you do that degrades and impoverishes the lives and the development of others is wrong. Whatever weakens the reason, impairs the tenderness of conscience, obscures the vision of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things is wrong.

### V. The scriptural test.

Is it expressly forbidden in the Word of God? If so, it is wrong for you to do it. If it is forbidden, even by implication, you should not do it.

### VI. The missionary test.

Will doing it likely help or hinder the progress of the Kingdom of God? Be exceedingly careful not to do the things that will hinder the progress of the work of the Lord.

### VII. The exemplary test.

Would your hero approve the thing about which you are confused? Every normal person has in the picture-room of his soul the faces of those living and dead who have meant much to him. If you are perplexed about a question of right and wrong, submit it to the test of your most admired personality. Carry it up into the light of the life which you esteem most and test it there. Carry your behavior up into the presence of the Galilean and judge it there. Ask yourself this question, "What would Jesus do if He were in my place?" We know His attitude, His spirit, His disposition, and the direction of His thinking. In the average situation it is not difficult to imagine what His reaction would be. Apply His principles and you will not have any trouble in determining what is right or wrong. Let the mind and spirit which were in Christ be in you.

### VIII. The publicity test.

Are you willing to let the world know about it? Jesus once said, "Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light." You will always find wickedness under the blanket of night's darkness, in the black corners of secrecy. Beware concerning that thing you are taking pains to conceal. If you turn hot and cold when you think of anyone's finding it out, you may be sure there are good reasons for your not doing it.

What if everybody knew what you are proposing to do? Suppose your family and your friends knew about it. Imagine it publicly talked about whenever your name is mentioned. Picture it written in the story of your life for your children to read. Submit it to the test of publicity. If it is questionable, carry such conduct out into the open air. One who does not question his practices is not fearful of publicity. Things that cannot stand the sunlight are not healthful.

IX. The universal test.

Are you willing to have it become a common practice for all? Universality is one of the best tests. Do not take for yourself special favors which you would deny others. Beware that day when you begin to ask for special privileges, which you would not grant to all others. Would you like to see your mother, your father, your sister, your brother, your companion, your sweetheart, your pastor do the same thing? Would it lessen your respect or admiration for them? Could this thing be adopted universally without harm to society? Suppose the whole community did likewise. If everybody acted on the same principle, would it be well for all?

Kent said, "Act only on that law whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Simply apply the Golden Rule. It says, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matthew 7:12. That is the grand test. Act toward others as you would have them act toward you. If you are a child of God, then act as a child of God should act.