

## Principles for Christian Decision Making

By Errol Hale

People, including many Christians, tend to prefer lists of “dos-and-don’ts” over principle based decision making. God, however, points believers toward principles in His Word and calls us to make biblically informed, thoughtful, principle-based decisions. This is, in part, what Paul was communicating in Galatians 5:22-23.

*<sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

The Apostle’s point is that when we are walking in the Spirit, making decisions according to the Holy Spirit’s direction in scripture, we do not need anyone telling us, “*You must do this, or you better not do that.*”

The chart on the next page is a simple tool to help believers think through decisions before making them. These questions can (*should?*) be applied to every area of life, including, but not limited to: entertainment, fashion and grooming, education, handling money, and whatever other decisions we must make as Christians.

One of the important thoughts to bear in mind is that while some specific questions on the chart may be accurately answered “0”, there are virtually no decisions that are neutral. Every decision believers make matters.

There are two ways to use this chart. The first, and easiest, is to merely make a dot in the box that most accurately answers the question. Then draw a line connecting the dots to form a graph. Is your graph more on the right or the left of zero? More to the left is probably an indicator that the best decision is “no.” More to the right is evidence that the correct decision is “yes.”

The second way to use the chart is to assign a numerical value to each question. After totaling your numeric answers if your total is a negative number, you probably better say “no.” If your total is a positive number, it is likely to be safe to answer “yes.”

Like learning to tie your shoe or to drive, you will probably need to consciously use the chart, make your graph or add your score to be helped in making principle-based decisions. After a while however, in the same way you are able to tie your shoes or drive your car with less conscious thought, you will be able to think through the questions and arrive at principle-based decisions in a virtually second-nature manner. When you are able to do that, your thinking will have become based on a biblical worldview and you will be making principle—based decisions.

Having addressed the “*how-tos*” of principle-based decision making, let me offer a word about the “*why*,” as in “*Why is this important?*” When believers are making decisions that fall to the left of center on the chart, they are not only possibly failing to glorify the lord most effectively in their own lives, they are setting an example for other, particularly younger, believers that these questionable (inappropriate?) decisions are okay. Children, teenagers, and even young adults are influenced by the examples others set for them. If we are pushing the envelope, so to speak, on what is appropriate, we are encouraging others to follow suit. The next step is that once what was previously questionable has become mainstream, someone begins pushing the envelope just a little further. The process is repeated over and over until Christians are thinking and behaving in ways that were considered worldly not so awfully long ago. The result is a moral slide, not just in the culture, but even in the church. In the end (and I think we are there in many respects), the church, like ancient Israel is morally sedated and “has forgotten how to blush” (Jeremiah 6:15, 8:12).

## Principle-Based Decision Evaluation Chart

-3 Absolutely not	-2 Probably not	-1 Maybe not	0 Doesn't matter either way	1 Maybe	2 Probably	3 Absolutely
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Does this glorify God (as opposed to glorifying me or the world)?

Does this encourage others in their faith (yes) or cause them to stumble (no) (either by encouraging them to violate their consciences or by causing them to judge)?

Does this deflect attention away from me toward the Lord?

Does this serve others?

Do the origins of this come from God (as opposed to the world and/or those who oppose the gospel)?

Is this something that godly people would affirm (as opposed to being affirmed by worldly people)?

Does this encourage submission (as opposed to rebellion)?

Does this cause me to reflect the image of God (as opposed to worldliness)?

Does this promote and display beauty (as God defines beauty: holiness) and order (as opposed to distortion and chaos)?

Does this build up my testimony as a follower of Christ?