



## CALL TO WORK\*

## INTRODUCTION



**Getting a job** is a natural process of life. Many of us are excited with the whole idea of **graduation** but are not too keen about getting a job. Will life ever be the same? Gone were the days when we could sleep late, have lots of time mingling with friends, go to the movies in the afternoon and so on. This list is endless. We are now embarking on a journey of responsibilities and commitment. Soon we will become taxpayers. Soon our lives will be tied down with responsibilities of our job.



List down the reasons why you need to work. What would make it enjoyable? What would make it hard?



## GOD CALLS MANKIND TO WORK (Genesis 1-2)



The Bible begins with the actions of God as a worker. He is creative and detailed in His work of creation. In Genesis 1:26, He makes man and woman in His own image. In terms of work, how does this knowledge that you are made in His image excite you?

What was God's mandate to Adam in terms of work? (vv2:15; 19-20)

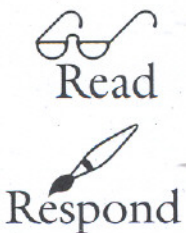
\*For a detailed definition, please refer to the article on Resource Page 1-2.



God created everything. Yet He entrusted Adam with these tasks. Why do you think He wanted Adam to do these things when He could have done it Himself?

Imagine you were Adam. You have been entrusted with work in the Garden of Eden. What would be your daily work? What are some challenges you think you would have in doing these tasks?

God provided Adam with food, water and also a companion as he went about his tasks. What does this tell you about God even as He calls Adam to work?



### **PAINFUL TOIL (Genesis 3:17-20)**

In Genesis 3, we read that Adam failed in his work as he did not follow the instructions given by God. Instead of being joyful harvest, sin has caused work to become 'painful toil'. Adam would need to work hard all his life because of sin. In what ways do you see these effects on work today?



Even though Adam was banished from the Garden of Eden, he was still required to work in his new home (v23). Why did he still have to work?

### JOYFUL LABOUR (Colossians 3:22-24)

Regardless whether you are at peace or happy with what you have discovered so far, chances are you can't escape from work for a large part of your life.

Question is, how would you want to go through working life? What quality of life do you want to have? You may choose to resent, drag yourself through work, dream of a filthy rich guy or gal to bail you out one day. On the other hand, you can learn to celebrate, to toast to the privilege of being called to work. To be a worker as our Heavenly Father Himself is one!

Read Colossians 3:22-24. What are the other pointers given here with regard to attitude towards work?



eg. called to be a conscientious worker



### FOOD FOR THOUGHT - A LITTLE HOMEWORK

1. Think about your parents, grandparents or someone you know quite well. Apart from material gain, what could be some good this person received / experienced as a result of working? What difference would it make to this person if he / she had never worked before?



2. This week, try going around and taking a good look at working people. They may be the foreign worker at the construction site; a bank teller or the 'mak cik' who sells you 'nasi lemak'. Try to discern the joy or struggle in them. And then come back and write down the qualities of a worker you want to see in yourself. Write down a prayer to God as you begin to think about going into the workplace.



## LIVING OUT THE CALLED LIFE

### KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES



Today we live in a world where many things demand our attention. Busyness is often mistaken as a good thing. If you are busy, you must be important and doing something worthwhile with your life. Material wealth is valued above all things. So, we keep ourselves busy while working hard to earn all we can.

In order to avoid being trapped into such striving, we need to be clear about what is important to us and what we finally want out of our lives. When we are sure of these, we can be selective and choose what we will give our time to.

*The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it, but rather what he becomes by it.*

*"It is our choices ... that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."  
J. K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.*

#### SHARPENING YOUR SAW

*There is a story told of a man who was working feverishly to saw down a tree. Along came a stranger who asked, "What are you doing?"*

*"Can't you see," replied the man impatiently.*

*"You look exhausted!" the stranger exclaimed. "How long have you been at it?" "Over five hours," the man answered, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."*

*"Well, why don't you take a few minutes break and sharpen that saw?" the stranger inquired. "I'm sure it would go faster."*

*The man retorted, "I don't have time to sharpen the saw. I'm too busy sawing!"*

*Since a dull axe requires great strength, sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed. (Ecc 10:10)*

Like the man in the story, we are usually too caught up with whatever we are doing, rushing along with our busy lives. We don't realise there is a better way, and more important things to attend to. Is life always to be like this? Constantly 'putting out fires'? Instead of always attending to what is urgent, why not stop from the fast-paced life and attend to more important things that may just give us an advantage?

***"Just because you are fast does not mean you are going anywhere."  
Yvonne Bowers***



What are your priorities in life?



## THE BALANCING ACT



The author of Ecclesiastes observed that there are many facets to living and that "there is a time for everything." (Ecc 3:1)

### ***Balancing The Roles We Play***

Living consists of playing different roles simultaneously. We are children to our parents; brother or sister to our siblings; niece or nephew to our uncles and aunts; a subordinate to our bosses; a co-worker, a friend, a Christian, a church member, an ambassador for Jesus, etc. All these different roles make up the person we are.

Therefore it is important to play each role well. To neglect any would affect our personhood (sense of who we are). When our personhood depends solely on a particular role, losing that role will mean losing our identity and the sense of worth. When one retires, is retrenched, or somehow loses one's job, one becomes lost and depressed.

### ***Balancing The Person We Are***

There are different aspects to our personhood too. We are made up of the body and the soul, mind and emotions (Lk 2:52). These different aspects of our being need to be cared for and nurtured in order for us to be a wholesome and matured person.

#### ☐ **Our Physical Well-being & Health**

- Watch what you eat and make time to exercise.
- Being healthy allows us to enjoy life, do things better and cope better with stress and difficulties.

#### ☐ **Our Mental Capacity**

*"The greatest tragedy that can befall a person is the atrophy of his mind"*

*Zhuangzi, 369-286 BC*

- Reading is a good habit to cultivate especially if you choose to read good books and magazines, which not only expand your horizon but also make you think.
- Exercise your mind by visualising, planning and writing.

#### ☐ **Our Social / Emotional Well-Being & Competence**

The world, which used to emphasize intellectual or rational intelligence, has finally realised the importance of our emotional intelligence.

- Emotional Intelligence can be divided into personal and social competence.
- Personal competence includes self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation while social competence includes empathy and social skills.
- So, make time for self-reflection and relationship building.

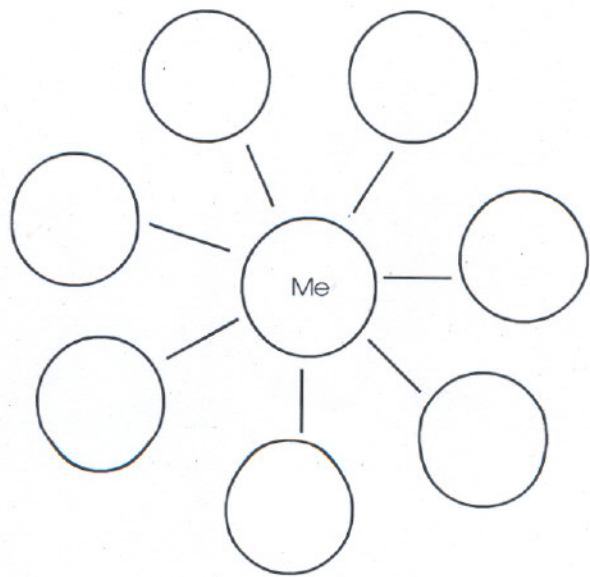
#### ☐ **Our Spiritual Welfare**

Consider this, "How do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose or forfeit your own soul in the process?" (Lk 9: 25)

- The building of spiritual maturity is most important because it helps us live meaningfully, giving us our sense of security and destiny.
- Do not neglect your spiritual disciplines.



List the different roles you have in life. Identify which roles you have neglected and wish to give more attention to.



What areas of your personal development need attention? What can you do? Be Specific.

- ☒
- ☒
- ☒
- ☒



MAKING PLANS THAT WORK

Planning is important because it helps us use our time and opportunity wisely and responsibly just like the Bible advises us to. (Ephesians 5:15-17; Colossians 4:5)

*Putting in the Rocks First*

An expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students. He showed them a big wide-mouth jar and put it on a table in front of the class. Then he carefully filled the jar with fist-sized rocks until he could not put in anymore.

*He asked the students, "Is the jar full?"*

*Everyone in the class said, "Yes."*

*He then took out a bucket of stones and poured it into the jar, occasionally shaking the jar so that the stones would work themselves down to the space between the rocks.*

*Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"*

*The students were getting him and one student said, "Probably not."*

*Next he took out a bucket of sand and did the same thing again. This time when he asked the question, the students shouted, "No."*





Finally he took out a pitcher of water and poured into the jar until it was filled to the brim. He asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One enthusiastic student said, "The point is no matter how full your schedule is, you can always fit in more things if you try hard enough."

"No," he answered. "The point is if you don't put in the rocks first you cannot get them all in."

From this story we learn the importance of setting priorities and putting them first into our plans. When you start working, a minimum of about 10 hours of your day will be spent at work as well as travelling to and from work. That leaves you with very little time for other things. Unless you plan the important things into your schedule first, you may end up not having time for them. (See 'Tips On Planning Your Time' - Resource, page 13)

"If you have lost gold or silver, you can find something in place of what you lost. However, if you lose time you cannot replace what is lost." (Sayings from The Desert Fathers)

### When Choosing Between 2 Seemingly Important Choices

- Evaluate their **TRUE value of importance** based on your personal goals and priorities. Sometimes things just seem important.
- Consider which has the **greater benefit** and the **lesser loss**. We cannot make time for everything all the time.
- Consider its **urgency**. Can it be given time later? What has been neglected? Things urgent may not be really important.

### Carrying Through & Saying 'No'

Jesus' example in Mk 1:29-39 is a very helpful lesson. He has just begun His public ministry and many people were coming to Him. He was a very busy man but He not only rested for the night, He went off in the morning to be alone to pray. So when Peter came to tell Him that many people were asking for Him, He could say 'No' to them. He did not succumb to people's demands or the temptation to stay and be popular because He was very clear and sure about what He was suppose to do and it required Him to move on to another place.

- Remember that saying 'No' to one thing can mean saying 'Yes' to another.
- Being clear of your personal mission, priorities & boundaries helps a lot.
- Organising and planning your schedule way ahead of time prevent you from being caught off guard most of the time.
- When saying 'No' results in some unpleasant or unwanted consequences, take the risk & trust God if you are sure it is the right thing to do.



What seems to be most difficult for you in putting your life in order?

*Don't run through your life so fast that you forget  
Not only where you've been,  
But also where you are going.  
Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured.*

### HOW TO KEEP THE FIRE BURNING?



- Share with each other some of your personal practices in keeping your spiritual fire burning.
  
- Now try recalling the times when you found it difficult to keep going. What were some of the reasons you could not manage to keep these practices consistently?
  
- What do you think are the unique resources for you as a student in terms of keeping your spiritual life alive and growing? (eg. flexibility of time, small group meetings, CF, etc...)





### ***The first 6 months; getting used to an exhausting routine***

Almost all young graduates would be able to testify that the 9am - 5pm work hours would be sufficient to drain a person physically. Somehow, regardless of whether you have a traveling sales job, a factory-based job or an office-based job, you'd feel exhausted; like a dead log at the end of a day. This will go on from 3 months to half a year. Yes, the biological clock of a young graduate just isn't tuned for this fixed routine! As the days go by, the pattern becomes just work, traffic jams, meal times, staring at the TV, getting ready for the next day and sleep. That's it. Good friends from university days who stay just 10 - 20km away are as good as staying in another state!

*... like a dead log at the end of each day!!*

*Friends? What friends?!*

### ***How to keep growing?***

What assurance do you have that your spiritual walk will continue to grow and flourish? And ***what lengths*** would you go to in order to keep growing?

A recent graduate recalled that as a student she had many opportunities to read chunks and chunks of the Bible in a week. Now, those days are gone. Even so, having recognized the importance of keeping her spiritual life alive, this is what she does....

*"As I drive to work in the morning, I take that time to say 'Good morning' to God and sing or hum a song of praise to begin the day. If I have extra time in the morning, I would read a chapter of the Bible and use that as a short meditation during my drive. In this way, by the end of the day, I'm reminded to spend more time with God."*

Another graduate says,

*"As my daily journey to work via public transport takes an hour one way, I decided to use the time constructively. In the morning, I will prepare myself by talking to God and seeking Him, 'How do You want me to bless the people around me today?'. Also, as I watch people on the street or in the bus, I am reminded to pray for needs that I see. In the evening when I return, I take the opportunity to unwind from the day's interaction with people and say 'Thank You, Lord'."*

Yes, though it sounds simple, CONSCIOUSLY talking to God is one very effective way to keep our spiritual life growing.

**What about you?**

What would be YOUR TESTIMONY in the months to come? What spiritual practice would you want to persistently keep, even when you don't feel like it or when you are worn out by the working world?

Decide NOW and make a **little** commitment to God to **grow your life** even when you face adverse circumstance.

You may want to start practicing something small **daily**, e.g.

- Be quiet, listen to God for 5 minutes each morning and ask Him to lead you, etc. Do this whether you are in the bus, train, car or while walking.
- Read a short portion of the Bible.
- Take time to say 'Good Morning' to God and wait in anticipation of the day's challenge.
- Choose a song for the day and let it fill your mind.
- Pray a short prayer over and over: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' or 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus'.
- 

Later, you may want to consider doing something **weekly**, e.g.

- Have a weekly target for Bible reading.
- Set aside 1-2 hours for personal reflection. Take time to remember God's grace and faithfulness.
- Get hold of a Bible study guide and study a chapter a week.
- 

And **monthly**,

- Set aside half a day and head to a nearby park with your journal and pen. Take stock of your life and conclude the month you have just reflected on.
- Meet up with friends whom you want to be accountable to about your spiritual growth and share with one another how life has been.
- 

Do not look down on these small steps. On a short term, you may not see much fruit. But the result of not doing anything to help your spiritual growth is a severe cave-in of your spiritual life.

**Share** with each other how you want to seize the moment each day to grow your spiritual life as you step out to the working world.





## MONEY MATTERS

One aspect of living the called life is how we handle our finances.

0%  
Interest

### For Graduates only

Hassle-free online Credit Card application  
Only employment letter needed  
Annual fee waived for life  
High credit limit  
Low interest  
Immediate approval  
PLUS.....

A HP IPAQ 2215 Pocket PC might be yours!

@ [www.interestfreeinstallmentpurchases.com.my](http://www.interestfreeinstallmentpurchases.com.my)

There are numerous such advertisements around. As a graduate to-be, you can't help but dwell on this great surge of purchasing power. Perhaps you are already dreaming of how you want to reward yourself once you get your first pay cheque!



*"I am the only one left!" Andy lamented.*

*"Yeah! For goodness sake, go get a mobile phone. You're really making life difficult for others," said many of his friends.*

Andy is a leader in his college Christian Fellowship. Since he didn't see the need to own a handphone, he decided to delay owning one. However, it meant being left out of the SMS-ing loop.

A handphone isn't a necessity to a lot of students. Yet, going without a hand phone is such a rare occurrence today. Most people have chosen to follow the trend rather than not.

There are many such temptations, and more, in the working world. From car to clothes and apparels, from places to hang out to holiday destinations, from hair-do to facial and relaxation packages, graduates seem to have a "class taste" of their own. One begins to learn to dine, dress and deal like a working adult.

Some may not have as high a remuneration as others and are therefore unable to enjoy the 'comfortable lifestyle' assumed to be the norm. So, in order to enjoy such a lifestyle, most will not consider working in smaller towns or accepting jobs that do not pay as well, such as NGOs and Christian ministry. Sometimes, we take up part-time jobs to increase our 'disposable income'.

Here we want to take a look at what the Bible says about us as stewards of money and lifestyle.



1. What is my view about money and lifestyle?  
(e.g. I work hard to earn it, I should be able to spend it any way I wish. Your lifestyle depends on who you associate with. Work for it, it will be yours, etc.)

■ Money

■ Lifestyle

Check your views against what the Bible teaches in Deuteronomy 8:17-18. What does it say about **who God is** in this instance?



Deuteronomy 8:17-18 "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today."



2. As I look at all my possessions (clothes / phone / shoes / computer accessories, etc.) am I living **within my means**? In what ways have I succumbed to the pressure of the 'ever new and upgrading lifestyle'?

■ Am I **free to choose** any job that God leads me to?



1 Timothy 6:6-9 "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."

■ If I earn RM 5000 a month, how much would I use on myself? How much is **enough** for me?

■ As a Christian, how should I manage the financial resources God has put at my disposal?







3. "We give Thee but Thine own.  
Whatever the gift may be,  
All that we have is Thine alone.  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee."

So goes the hymn. **Giving** is a *spiritual discipline* that confronts every Christian.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Paul Borthwick, in his book 'How to be a World Class Christian', says that he has frequently been asked,

"Should I tithe before or after taxes?"

"Do I need to give money away from the profits on my investments or can I limit it to just my salary?"

"Can I include donations to NGOs which are not uniquely Christian to bring me up to 10%?"

While these questions have some legitimacy, those who asked have **missed the biblical point of generosity**. He goes on to say, God calls us to be generous, and through generosity, **we grow**. If we spend our energy trying to figure out how to give the bare minimum and still be obedient Christians, we miss the freedom that **accompanies generosity**.

Ponder on this. How would you tithe when earning RM800 and earning RM8000 a month?



4. What have I learnt about God and money today?



All of us need to grow in handling money matters. For a start, you may want to watch your spending or practice regular giving.

End this study by writing down your decision as a personal commitment to the Lord.



## CALLED TO BE LIGHT

### MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS – A PERSONAL REFLECTION



You will be going out to the working world soon. There will be many fears and questions on your mind. One that never fails to arise, especially if you are a committed and concerned Christian is, "Will I be able to keep my faith and commitment intact?" Naturally one area you will think about is how to make ethical decisions in the marketplace.

The desire to equip oneself to make godly decisions is commendable. However, making decisions on ethical issues is complex and not straightforward. What is most crucial is to be determined to uphold godly values.

Many obstacles stand in the way. Never underestimate the power of peer pressure. Everyone wants to work in a friendly environment. The cost for upholding godliness is sometimes very high. Losing one's job and source of income is especially difficult in today's world where the cost of living is high. It is even more difficult if your family is financially dependent on you or you are burdened with repayment of loans for a car and a home, which have become necessities. Above all we have to overcome our natural instincts - the desire to succeed or to get to the top and our fear of failure. These can be very strong influences in our decision making process. One's confidence can be greatly hurt when left behind in the race for a promotion and a successful career. We live in such an achievement-driven society that it is difficult not to be affected.

*Sometimes, the cost for upholding godliness is very high. One's confidence can be greatly hurt when left behind in the race for a promotion and a successful career.*

Therefore it is only appropriate that before you jump into the complexities of making ethical decisions, to reflect on where your priorities lie and to consider what kind of life you want to live. Much depends on how secure you are in God.



The reflection questions below may help you.

1. Make a list of your priorities according to their importance. What is most important to you in life? What are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of the things that are most important to you?





2. Where does **success and wealth** rank in your list of priorities? How do you measure success and wealth? How much or what are you willing to sacrifice in order to reach your measure of success and wealth?

3. Where does godliness appear in your list? What are you willing to give up to develop godliness in your life?

4. How sure are you of what God requires of you and what He wants for you? Think of some difficult situations or ethical questions that you may have encountered before and see if you are able to determine what God and the Bible has to say about them.



## MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS – THE INGREDIENTS

It is rather amusing that we only begin thinking about making ethical decisions when we begin to start “work”. Were we not faced with ethical questions while we were in campus? What about situations where friends asked us to sign the attendance list when they ‘ponteng’ class, or when we copy assignments or laboratory reports from seniors?

*The point is we do not only encounter ethical choices in the marketplace. We encounter them in different areas throughout life. If we have not learnt to deal with those situations, we are likely to be lost when we encounter ethical dilemmas at work.*

There are various reasons why it is more urgent at this point to start thinking about making ethical decisions. Perhaps in the marketplace we can no longer avoid facing such situations. We may face demands or pressure to act unethically. Perhaps too there is more that is at stake now. Your responsibility would be greater. The costs or consequences are greater too. Your decisions could cause death or lead to serious harm. You could lose your credibility and your source of income.

*Learning how to face and deal with ethical dilemmas is important. One cannot avoid it and should never pass the ‘buck’ to others - the company, your bosses or colleagues, or worst still, make other people (your subordinates) do the dirty job.*

## A LIFELONG PROCESS

Learning to live ethically can be a lifelong process. There is no standard method to making ethical choices because ethical dilemmas are often complex. The choices we make are often spontaneous and flow out of who we are. Our character distinguishes the person we are. Our character depicts our moral and ethical strength. Thankfully our character is not something we are born with. It can be developed and shaped.

Therefore the building of our character is crucial in equipping us to face ethical dilemmas. The Christian’s goal in character building is to obtain Christ-likeness or godliness. This process is continuous and involves knowing Christ better and deeper, both personally and rationally. It includes increase in knowledge and understanding of what God wants us to know and believe. However it is not enough just to know. We also need to exercise our will. It takes discipline and practice to uphold what is right and to choose Christ in every situation of our lives.

## ETHICS & BEING ETHICAL - A DEFINITION

Ethics is ‘doing what is right’. It refers to behaviour and action. For the Christian, ethics is ***right living that is in line with God’s purposes.***

Ethical living for the Christian flows from his relationship with God. According to Wayne Grudem (in Systematic Theology), it answers the question of what God requires us to do and what attitude He requires us to have with regard to any given situation we face today.



## WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE ETHICAL



h o p e

of reward &

f e a r

of punishment?

Hope of reward and fear of punishment play a very important role in motivating us to do right and deterring us from doing wrong. Though the Bible talks about punishment and reward, to do things out of a fear of punishment or hope of reward is not regarded as very noble. The Bible gives a completely different motivation for living right and godly lives. It appeals to our sense of who we are, emphasizing on character. Righteous living comes out of good character and the fruit of righteous living is character. The ultimate reward is, of course, God Himself.

The first appeal is that . . .

We have been redeemed at a high cost by Christ's work on the cross. Through that we are endowed with a new spirit and made a new being (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). As God's children with this special empowerment, we are to imitate God and reflect His character in all our actions (Ephesians 5:1).

we are

God's  
children

Paul reiterates this by calling us again and again to 'live a life worthy of the calling you have received' (Ephesians 4:1). Christians therefore should do what is right and avoid what is wrong out of the goodness that is found in being made new and alive in Christ. Integrity requires that our word and action match what we believe. We live up to what we know and affirm to be true. If indeed we are God's children made new then our lives must reflect the person he has redeemed us to be. So then let us become in our character and conduct what God's action in Christ has made us to be.

Secondly,

we are

d' Salt & Light to d' World

Matthew 5:13-14

We are called not merely to be a decent witness, abstaining from the greater immorality of the world but to be a visible and relevant impact to our society. Read the Bible and you will find an emphasis on being counter culture, going against the flow of the stream (Ephesians 4:17). This kind of impact can only be possible if we are engaged with society, living out the gospel (its values) in the context of whatever we face.

As God's children and ambassadors, we need to engage all areas of life because God our Father is the Sovereign LORD, King and Lord of everything (Psalm 24:1). His influence should permeate all of life whether it is work, play, social, intellectual, spiritual or moral. Therefore no area of living is unaffected by His influence.





## SOME APPROACHES TO MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

### Everything IS RELATIVE ...

The prevailing attitude of most people today is that everything is **relative**. Moral beliefs and values are the first to suffer its influence. There is neither a standard nor basis of morality for the world to follow. In approaching ethical dilemmas in life there are several indicators that determine the choice between what is right and wrong. Among them are:

- good feelings
- that which is pleasurable
- the loving thing to do
- social consensus
- the end result or consequences

These are helpful indicators but inadequate and absolutely unreliable as they differ from person to person and from culture to culture.

### Right IS RIGHT, Wrong IS WRONG ...

Another approach states that certain things are clearly right or wrong. There are things we ought to do because they are right in themselves. There are also things we ought not to do because they are wrong in themselves. Such an approach needs a common source of authority by which what is right and wrong can be clearly derived. This source must be consistent and provide a basis that is true for all and can be applied to all situations.

### God IS Our AUTHORITY ...

For the Christian, God is that authority. None is more consistent than God. God is consistent in His character (Hebrews 13:4). He never changes. He is the standard of goodness and goodness sums up His person. The Bible is our source of moral knowledge as it reveals God to us.

## HOW CAN THE BIBLE HELP

### OT Law reflects God's Character & Concern

In the OT, the Law is the epitome of ethical living for the people of God. The Law is God's requirement for His covenant people. The Law is where God spells out specifically how His people are to live and act because they are His people. God's people are to reflect God's character and concerns in their everyday living. The Law was not meant to be mere rules to be followed mindlessly without understanding and without the right motives (Isaiah 58).

While the Law covers many areas of everyday living, we must be careful not to take everything directly as the context and time in which it is given is very different from ours. However, it can be a good guide for us to discern what ethical living is as God's people because from it we can see what God values and what kind of attitude pleases Him, and therefore draw basic principles that will help us make our decisions today. The essence of the Law is summarized in the Ten Commandments.





### Jesus' Concern - Character & Motive

While the OT Law deals with specific actions, Jesus deals directly with **character and motives** that inspire action. Yet what Jesus taught required a higher ethical standard than could ever be enforced by the law in the OT. This is because the standard which Jesus sets is on par with God's character.

Jesus never gave comprehensive rules for moral living. Instead He set out or illustrated the general character of God's will. In the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes what we find is a description of life in the Kingdom, of how the people of the Kingdom is supposed to live or behave. Again **Christians will have to decide how to live specifically in their own context & time** based on biblical truth. Essentially what matters is our motive and a character that reflects God.

### Paul - Action based on Truth

Paul makes the pattern clearer for us through his writing style. In most of his letters, Paul appeals to the believers with the imperative (i.e. ethical commands) proceeding out of his arguments based on theological truth. This allows us to see clearly how a required action or behaviour (rule/commandment) has its basis in the character or will of God. A good summary of Christian ethics in the NT recognised by many Christians is found at the end of Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 12:1-15:16) after his most distinguished exposition of the gospel message.

### How Truth relates to Rule & Application

Understanding the correlation of truth to rule and application is very important. There are 4 levels as described in the table below. Very often we find that the situations we face are not identical or similar with that which is found in the Bible. This makes it difficult for us to know what is right and wrong in our world today. Using this understanding we can work backwards from cases/rules in the Bible to the basic principles, which will then be used to decide on what is right and wrong according to God for our context and time.

Foundational Basis →	God's Character, Values and Truth either explicitly taught or derived from His dealings with people, Jesus' descriptive ethics and example.
Basic Principles →	Fundamental law or value, which is or derived from the foundational basis and becomes the basic reason for the rules or guidelines which determines appropriate behaviour. <i>E.g. Everyone is equal regardless of race or gender because God created everyone and extended His love to everyone equally.</i> Therefore Christians must not be prejudiced against anyone and treat all people with respect, regardless of race or gender.
Rules →	Commandments or imperatives, sometimes given in a specific situation to specific persons. <i>E.g. If the command (as we assume it is) to "be fruitful and multiply" is for us, then no Christian should be using any form of contraceptives but we evidently never obey it, and what about those who are not married?</i>
Cases →	Found in the Bible as narratives, stories, parables and descriptions. Specific situations in different times where rules may apply differently if at all. <i>E.g. How would the commandment "not to steal" (Exodus 20:15) apply today with photocopying, piracy of CDs and software or plagiarism?</i>





## IT'S BLACK, IT'S WHITE, IT'S GREY

In ethical dilemmas, it is often unclear what the real issue is. There may be many issues involved. In addition, many situations in life are not clearly or simply right or wrong. There are "grey" areas, especially where the Bible does not state a specific case about the issue. This is especially true for situations that have emerged from modern living and advancement of technology; issues such as abortion, the use of birth control, going to pubs and disco.

The most important rule is that the rule of God must always be above the rule of man. The rule of God here does not refer to a set of rules but the basic principles derived from the Bible which reflects God's character as discussed above.

However, the Bible also accepts and mentions situations where every possible action is less than ideal. In such dilemmas, it advocates the choice of the greater good or of the lesser evil. Two examples of such cases are divorce (Malachi 2:16, Matthew 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:12-15) and the taking of a life (Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:13). Such actions are nonetheless evil, and should be carried out with humility and require repentance.

When in doubt, let Christian love guide our decision-making. It can give insight to what is the appropriate attitude and action. Ultimately, we are to reflect God's character and love sums up God's character. Love also provides us the motivation and power to meet all moral demands.

## IN THE FACE OF AN ETHICAL DILEMMA

- To solve an ethical dilemma, we must first **identify the issue**. Sometimes there may be more than one. Identify all of them.
- Determine whether there is a **clear commandment or a comparable example** from the Bible that applies to the issue.
- If not, identify which, if any, **basic Biblical principle** that is at stake. Determine how it applies to your situation.
- Once clear on the above, **consider the best course of action** or the right thing to do for that particular situation. Part of your consideration would be what the costs and consequences are.
- Sometimes it means avoiding a situation where you will be cornered to do something unethical or inappropriate. For example, if you are entertaining clients, be the first to suggest the venue (so you get to choose an appropriate place) and ask to leave before the need to proceed to something else such as the pub or massage parlour arises.
- Sometimes it requires confronting someone in charge or in authority to dialogue or resolve the problem in a way that is amicable and beneficial to all parties. Confrontation need not be direct or aggressive.
- If you end up doing something you should not or did not want to do, remember that all is not lost. Seek God's forgiveness and forgive yourself. Try again next time.



## IN CONCLUSION

- **Know God** – a deep and secure relationship with God is essential to ethical living as a Christian. We need to trust that the end will turn out well and for the best ultimately because God loves us.
- **Know the Bible** – be familiar with godly values revealed through the Word.
- We must never be resigned i.e. believe that there is no hope / no choice and therefore give in to the situation. **We choose** how we will deal with or respond to any situation in life. Be prepared to bear the consequences or cost of our choices.
- Redemption provides the **power** for us **to choose** that which is **good**.
- **The Holy Spirit is our guide** who will lead us to right decisions and to discover wise behaviour in specific circumstances.
- **Find like-minded people** for fellowship, for accountability to check for complacency and for support.

## GLOSSARY

### CHARACTER

- the collective qualities especially mental and moral that distinguishes a person

### VALUE

- one's principle or standard in life, one's judgement of what is important in life

### PRINCIPLE

- fundamental truth or law as the basis of reasoning or action, a personal code of conduct

### ISSUE

- a point in question, an important subject of debate

### PRIORITY

- by order of importance or urgency

### MORALITY

- right moral conduct, moral principles, points of ethics

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Dilemmas of Life, David Cook, IVP
2. Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions, Arthur F. Holmes
3. The Moral Quest: Foundation of Christian Ethics, Stanley J. Grenz, IVP
4. Ethics of Jesus, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel, IVP
5. Ethics, Dictionary of Paul and the Epistles, IVP
6. Ethics, New Dictionary of Theology, IVP
7. Biblical Ethics, New Bible Dictionary, IVP



## MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS – CASE STUDY ON WORK ETHICS

Train your mind to think, with these case studies. In each case, **identify the issue and the principle(s)** at stake. Describe the **risks involved** and suggest **possible solution or action plan**.

1. You are a sales executive in a big pharmaceutical company. It has been made clear to you that meeting sales targets and loyalty to the company are your primary concerns, even if it means falsifying the truth. A new client has come to you requesting for a product to be sent in 2 days but you can only deliver in 4. The success of the sale hinges on whether you could deliver on time. What do you say to the client?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

2. At your workplace, everyone is supposed to sign in at 8.00 a.m. Your colleagues have an accepted practice where the first person to sign in the book is to sign in at 8.00 a.m. and others who sign in later, sign in at about 1 minute intervals after 8.00 a.m. irrespective of the actual time they arrive. If you do not follow this practice it will arouse the resentment of your colleagues. What should you do?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

3. Some important business associates of yours have invited you to an evening together. That night after dinner, they proceeded to a karaoke set-up with hostesses. There is also a massage parlour. They quickly did their normal things like hot bath, etc. They insisted you join them in all their activities and it will go a long way in sealing your business relationship. What should you do?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**





4. You work in the accounts department as a Junior Accountant. You have become interested in shares and see it as the fastest way to a bungalow and other luxuries. However you cannot find enough time to really dwell in it. So you decided to take time during your office hours to view through share prices, read market reports and contact your remisier/stock broker for transactions. To compensate, you extend your working hours. Do you think you are doing the right thing?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

5. You are the Project Manager of Project A, which requires the conversion of an agricultural land to a commercial one. You had submitted all the required applications and documents to the relevant departments for more than 6 months. It has come to you that the application seems to be stuck at a particular officer who thinks that the development would have an adverse effect on the surrounding villages. Should you go and take the officer-in-charge out for a meal?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

6. You work with a PR company and have been assigned to the company's biggest client. Your client wants to launch a new product in a big event in a shopping mall. With the massive amount of work, your boss has insisted you put in more hours i.e. work late into the night. The launch is scheduled on a Sunday morning. How should you respond?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**



7. You work with a developer's company. A project that has been completed for more than 6 months is still waiting for the issuance of the Certificate of Fitness. Everything has been done as required. The company has also complied with all the requests made so far. However the government officials involved refuse to release the required document citing the need for some "incentives". Your boss asks you to settle the matter as soon as possible. What are you going to do?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

8. You are a lecturer in a local university. Your Dean has come to you with a request regarding 6 final year students who have failed your paper by 3-10 marks. You have been requested to adjust their marks to the minimum required for them to pass. If these students fail, they will not be able to graduate. How should you respond?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**

9. You are a graduate working as a Trainee Manager. You report to a Senior Manager who is not a graduate. You have always taken initiative and done your work well. Then one day while giving some suggestions, your boss made this statement in front of your other colleagues, "Your ideas are not new. Don't try to be smart." You are hurt and wonder why he made such a statement. Later you realised that someone has been influencing your boss about you threatening his position. What should you do?

**Issue:**

**Principle(s):**

**Risks:**

**Possible solution / Action plan:**





10. At your work place you get along very well with one particular colleague who is of the opposite gender. Both of you work a lot together and you work well together. At stressful times you found comfort and understanding in each other. You appreciate each other very much. You often go for business functions together and frequently have meals together. There is definitely mutual affection. Your colleague is married. You are both Christians but rationalize that there is 'nothing' except for work and relaxation between yourselves. Yet there's a feeling of guilt and perhaps more. What should you do?

***Issue:***

***Principle(s):***

***Risks:***

***Possible solution / Action plan:***