

# "How to Respond to..."

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# CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

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## **Introductory thought:**

The life of a Christian often involves making challenging decisions. Younger people often consider decisions like: How should I dress? What music should I listen to? Whom should I have for friends? As we get older, other decisions arise: What should I do for a living? Whom should I marry? Where should I live? Making these decisions is not easy. In general, choices we make will have either a positive or negative effect on our spiritual welfare. Therefore, we need help in making the right decision that benefits our soul. Christian "liberty" is our freedom to make choices. While Christian "judgment" focuses on making those decisions based on what is appropriate for the soul and agrees with God's will.

## **How is Christian judgment a matter of having "good balance?"**

It helps to think of life as a road with two ditches on either side. We want to stay on the road and not fall into the ditch. Our decisions should be well-balanced, not going to either extreme. Our choices should be made with self-control, not giving in to the impulses of our flesh. Part of good Christian judgment is knowing our own weaknesses and being extra careful to make sure those weaknesses are not being ignored.

**1 Peter 1:13** *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

- The word "sober" in this passage means self-control. You could also think of it as being sharp or alert in your mind. Since there are so many things in this world that appeal to our flesh, just because we like something or someone doesn't mean it's good for us.

**1 Peter 5:8-9a** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...*

- The devil is going to try to tempt us by going after our weaknesses. We need to watch out for that. We need to control the urges and impulses that we have.

**1 Corinthians 10:23** *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful; all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify.*

- The advice to do "all things in moderation" is worth our attention. We are free to do and enjoy many things, as long as the activity we get involved in is not contrary to God's Word. But even the enjoyment of innocent activity could become harmful if it consumes our time, talents, and treasures beyond the state of moderation (See Romans 14).

### **In what ways does Christian judgment affect my soul?**

Many, if not most, of the decisions we make in our lives have spiritual consequences, whether good or bad. These spiritual consequences should receive careful consideration when we are faced with decisions and choices in our life. We can divide spiritual needs into two categories:

#### **A. Looking out for our OWN soul and our own spiritual needs.**

**Matthew 16:26** *"For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"*

**Matthew 6:33** *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

- In these passages Jesus shows two complete opposite motivations for what we seek after most in this life. Our last day on earth will come at any time. The most important thing is that we are ready to go, that we have true faith in Jesus Christ when He comes.
- If we make a decision that has the effect of making our faith weak, we aren't exercising good Christian judgment. Whenever we make a decision, we should always consider what effect our choice will have on the welfare of our soul.

## **B. Looking out for OTHERS souls and their spiritual needs.**

**Romans 12:3** *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

- To "think soberly" in this passage means to have sober judgment and saving thoughts. We have spiritual needs that deserve our attention, but so do other people. It would be selfish for us to only pay attention to our own souls. God wants us to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of others too. They need to know about Jesus and learn what it means to follow Him as a disciple of all He teaches.

**Philippians 2:3-4** *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

- God tells us plainly to pay attention to other people's interests and needs. When we make decisions we will consider how our decision will affect other people. Will it tempt them to ignore any of Christ's Word? If our actions bother someone's sensitivities, we shouldn't insist on our Christian liberty or "rights." Rather, be gracious. Go talk to them. And if need be, yield to the other person, so that his/her spiritual condition is not weakened by your actions.

**I Corinthians 10:31-33** *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

- Christian freedom means we are free to do anything as long as it does not violate a commandment of God. However, it may not be good for other people's souls to take advantage of this freedom all of the time.

**Example** - as Christians who are of legal age, we are free to drink alcohol or even to go to a legitimate, respectable bar. But if some fellow Christian, who has a problem with alcohol, sees us go into

the bar, they may get the impression that they too can drink as they see fit. As an indirect result of our actions, they become drunk. We gave "offense" to them, even though we conducted ourselves properly. Our actions gave an occasion or excuse for that person to go sin. Therefore, in consideration of his soul, we won't insist on our freedom to drink alcohol or go to a tavern, if we know that it could cause spiritual problems for somebody else.

### **How to respond to poor "Christian Judgment"?**

Think Scripturally. Pray for good judgment and wisdom. This means that we use God's Word as a guide in our life. We want His Word to train our conscience so whenever we are faced with a decision, we ask ourselves, "What does God say about this part of my life?" and then we seek His answer.

**Luke 6:45** *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."*

- The Lord strengthens proper thoughts and proper attitudes. God's Word is the "good treasure" that we want stored in our hearts. Having the Word in our hearts and minds has a good and positive effect on our attitude and our decisions.

**Psalms 119:105, 109** *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. My life is continually in my hand, yet I do not forget Your law.*

- In matters of adiaphora (where God neither commands nor forbids) God teaches us to make proper use of good Christian judgment. We consider what is best for the spiritual welfare of ourselves and those around us; and we take the matter to God in prayer.

Using good Christian judgment is an art that continuously needs to be developed. As we grow in our faith and in our knowledge of God's Word, He helps us become more skilled in our use of our Christian liberty and judgment. Let's add this wisdom to our list of very important gifts which we want to pray God would give us!

**John 14:13** *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*