

## Tests of Our Actions

In the Old Testament, the "you shall" and "you shall not" are both positive and negative. In the New Testament, the Word of the Son of God (Hebrews 1;1-2), are mostly positive. We understand that the opposite, which may not be in words, is also intended. If a positive "do this" statement is made, all else is excluded. But how about matters of judgment, something which may not be sinful but may cause others to doubt or stumble, as Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 8:9-13. For actions and planning purposes, a series of tests may help decide whether something is right or wrong may be helpful.

**The Spiritual Test** - Is this action or attitude forbidden in the Word of God? There are many direct statements in scripture that define prohibited actions. Many have doubts about the meaning of the activities listed in passages like Galatians 5:19-21. To answer the question may take study. Is the action contained in the definition of one or more of the words? An example might be the use of drugs, which is a part of "sorcery" mentioned in Galatians 5:20. Paul wrote to Christians about the things they did, before being called away from idolatry, that they had to stop doing. Today, we face fads, fashion changes, choices of media, and friends to follow. Which of these can we participate in or support? Does it fit into Romans 12:9-21 or Ephesians 4:1-6:9 as things we are to do?

**The Prayer Test** - Is this something that I can ask for the approval and the blessings of God? Would God be pleased to hear this request? Does it fit into His view of love, grace, and mercy? Or is it a self-fulfilling desire? Would it take me and others away from His presence or lead us all closer to Him?

**The Personal Test** - Will doing this make of me a better Christian? Will this help me grow or increase my ability to help others? Or will this cause loss of health, wealth, and influence in the community? Everything we do has one or more results. Will the results be good or bad?

**The Social Test** - Will doing this influence others to be Christians? Is this something that demonstrates Christ living in and working through me? Would I invite Jesus to go along, or would I leave him outside while I went on with the activity? Jesus went into the presence of sinners to save souls. Why would I go in?

**The Practical Test** - What will be the results if I do this? A good end never justifies the means. Both the ways and the conclusion must be upright and acceptable. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2).

**The Stewardship Test** - Will I be fulfilling God's purpose for my life, or will I be wasting that which God has entrusted into my care? Of the many different talents and abilities people are endowed with, not everyone has the same ones. We also have been given resources and various portions of wealth to use. Do we waste what we have, or do we use it to make the lives of others better?

**The Universal Test** - What would happen if everyone did this? Advertisers use the "Bandwagon" appeal to get people to go along with everything from buying soap to electing a politician. They claim everyone is doing it or wants it. The counter-question is, "Would you jump off the bridge because everyone else does?" Jesus said, *"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14).

**The Publicity Test** – What would happen if this showed up on the evening news? Would my reputation be enhanced or ruined? *"A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold"* (Proverbs 22:1).

**The Evangelistic Test** – This goes along with the social test. What will people think after watching or listening to me? Will they want to know my Savior, or will I cause them to shut Jesus out of their *lives*? Paul's advice, *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person"* (Colossians 4:5-6). And never forget the objective, *"Proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ"* (Colossians 1:28).

Paul gives advice that serves well in most situations. *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Colossians 3:17). Doing things in the name of the Lord means that we do and say things that Jesus would do or say, and doing what Jesus has authorized us to do.