

## **How Mature Are We?**

I've heard it said that the Church of Christ is known by all of the things its members can't do. Now I'm not sure how the Church really compares to other religions in this realm, but here are a few of the things I have heard over the years, - you can't drink – you can't dance – you can't go to the pool – you can't swear – you can't go to an "R" movie – you can't go to the Prom – you can't be a cheerleader – you can't have long hair (boys) – you can't have short hair (girls) – you can't go to the beach – you can't wear shorts – you can't smoke – you can't buy a lottery ticket – you can't go to a bar – you can't get a tattoo – and you can't miss church for any reason. Now I'm not going to spend my time here debating the right or wrong of these issues, but I know we have all struggled at some point in our lives with some of these things.

Many people don't want to be a Christian, or go to church, because they feel as a lifestyle the Church has too many restrictions. And especially as young people, we struggled with these restrictions more than we did as we got older. But the fact remains, as a Christian there are things we can't do – shouldn't do – or have to be careful where we do them. Most people, especially Christians, would like for things to be black and white. Something is either right and right all of the time, or it is wrong and wrong all of the time. If this were the case we wouldn't spend nearly as much time in our lives debating whether we should or shouldn't do something – whether something is right or wrong – what kind of an example we are setting – or wonder what Jesus would do?

Now I don't know about you, but there have been times in my life that I have debated with myself on an issue as to whether something was ok to do, or not ok to do, or just when and where this activity crosses that line of becoming something sinful. I'd like to think that we don't try to live too close to the edge (edge of sin), but I think sometimes we do. - Can I go into a bar if I don't drink? Can I hang out at the pool if I leave my clothes on? Can I go to

the party as long as I don't dance? Can I have just one beer? Can I go to an "R" movie at the theatre? Can I make-out with my girlfriend/boyfriend in private? Now these can be difficult questions for some people, but not for others. As a parent we are quick to say, "No, you can't do that", or "No, you can't go there", or "No, you can't wear that."

But as a young person, or a young Christian, do we always understand these things? After all, the Bible doesn't say specifically that you can't dance. It doesn't say exactly what kind of clothes you can't wear. And, it doesn't say what kind of movies you can't watch. So what makes the difference here? Well simply put – its maturity – Christian maturity. In Heb 5: 13-14 it says, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. (14) But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Notice the end of verse 14, "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." The word sense here means a mental faculty or an organ of sense. As a Christian we must exercise or use our organ of sense. We must use our mental faculties to determine right and wrong – good and evil.

The Bible simply does not tell us what we need to do in every situation that we can run into in our life. However, what God does expect us to do is use the instruction he has given us – apply some godly logic and reason to it – and then be able to make a determination about whether something is right or wrong. This then is why young people, young Christians, struggle sometimes with doing the right thing. They don't have the knowledge or experience to look at a situation and come up with the best answer, or the Christian answer. When we apply our human logic and experience, rather than godly logic and experience, the answers we come up with can be very different. And then add to that mix some fleshly (human) desires and you can really come up with the wrong answer. Gal 5:16-17 says, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (17) For the

flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” The flesh lusts against the Spirit. The word lust here simply means a strong desire. Human desires are very strong, which is why as a Christian we must learn to control our desires and emotions.

Paul tells us here that if we don’t control them we will do the things that you wish, and those things are not typically godly things. This is why in this section of verses here in Galatians it goes on to list many things that are evil and sinful (vs. 19-21, lusts of the flesh). If we don’t keep our desires in check, we will do the things we wish to do and we will get involved in things that can jeopardize our salvation. And, this popular idea of “following your heart” as a guide for how we live our lives is not always a good one, unless you are doing what Paul instructs us to do in Col 3:15, which is to, “let the peace of God rule in our hearts”.

As a Christian, if we are living too close to the edge, the edge of sin, I hope it’s because we don’t know any better (we lack Christian maturity) and not because we just enjoy sin. All Christians have been given the task of learning and developing (2 Tim 2:15) so that we can rightly divide truth, and make good and godly decisions in our lives. If you are struggling with making good decisions – good Christian decisions - maybe we can help. Whether young or old we all struggle at times. Let your Christian friends help, after all, that’s what we are here for.