

“When you face a fork on the road, don’t pull out a knife!”

Decision-making and the Will of God

www.prshockley.org

~ Paul R. Shockley

First Lesson: The Basis for Moral Decision-Making: God’s Revelation

Psalm 19

I. INTRODUCTION:

Maybe you heard about the guy who fell in love with an opera singer. He hardly knew her, since his only view of the singer was through binoculars from the third balcony. But he was convinced he could live “happily ever after” married to a voice like that. He scarcely noticed she was considerably older than he. Nor did he care that she walked with a limp. Her mezzo-soprano voice would take them through whatever might come. After a whirlwind romance and a hurry-up ceremony, they were off for their honeymoon together.

She began to prepare for their first night together. As he watched, his chin dropped to his chest. She plucked out her glass eye and plopped into a container on the nightstand. She pulled off her wig, ripped off her false eyelashes, yanked out her dentures, unstrapped her artificial leg, and smiled at him as she slipped off her glasses that hid her hearing aid. Stunned and horrified, he gasped, “for goodness sake, woman, sing, sing, sing!”¹

Ladies and Gentlemen: The title of my 4 message series is when you face a fork in the road, don’t pull out a knife!” The series will focus on the choices in life we make, the habits we create, and the consequences we live with.

A. In sum, this series will address the following issues:

1. How do we make moral decisions that honor God?
2. Are you able to not only consistently live out, but communicate your model of ethics to others in your disciple-making ministry?
3. What are we to do when we faced with a moral dilemma or hard-case situation?
4. What is God’s will for my life? How do I discover God’s will? Am I doing God’s will?
5. Why can’t I make better decisions? Why do I keep making poor decisions?
6. How have I become someone I never wanted to be/
7. If the estimate is truth at as many as 88% of teenagers who profess faith walk away from their faith by the end of their freshman year, what I can do as a parent to raise sons and daughter who walk with God? What can I do to help my children and grandchildren take serious ownership of their faith?

¹ Charles Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart* (Nashville: Word, 1998); 145. It was originally cited from *Swindoll’s Strike the Original Match*, 145.

These questions deal with making godly-decisions and living out God's will in your daily life.

B. In my first lesson I want to tackle the first three questions:

1. How do we make moral decisions that honor God?
2. Are you able to not only consistently live out, but communicate your model of ethics to others in your disciple-making ministry?
3. What are we to do when we faced with a moral dilemma or hard-case situation?

So, how do you go about making godly decisions and what responses do you give when you are faced with a moral dilemma or a troubling ethical issue?

What I'm talking about is ethics. *Ethics is about what is right and wrong how we can tell the difference.* Consider, what honors God the most when it comes to contraception, reproductive technologies, divorce and remarriage, abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, capital punishment, civil disobedience and revolution, war and peace, environmental issues, and the genetic revolution that is presently taking place in our culture? How are we as evangelicals to respond to those types of ethical issues?

Evangelicals are unique in the world of ethics because we believe that the God of the Bible is the sum-total of His infinite perfections. Therefore, whatever precept God discloses we consider them to be absolute and morally obligated to obey. Why? Open your Bibles to Psalm 19.

Psalm 19 offers the basis for our evangelical models of ethics. In God's revelation is where our knowledge of right from wrong, good from evil, what we are to be and not be, and what we are to do and not do is justified or anchored. It is in His revelation that our moral values, duties, and accountability are generated.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "I take this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world."²

Transition

II. EXPOSITION OF PSALM 19

- A. Thesis statement: If I could summarize Psalm 19 in one statement I would say: David, who is moved by the observation that the heavens under the dominating influence of the sun, declares the royal majesty and power of God, the transforming nature and power of God's instruction, and prays for complete cleansing so that his life will be acceptable before Him as a follower of God. The pattern of this psalm is that it begins with majesty of heaven (vv. 1-6), proceeds to describe the nature and power of God's Word (vv. 7-11), then closes with David contemplating the life of the person of God (vv. 12-14).

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

²C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, p. 63.

¹ The heavens declare the glory of
 God;
 And the firmament shows His handiwork.
² Day unto day utters speech,
 And night unto night reveals knowledge.
³ *There is* no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.
⁴ Their line has gone out through all the earth,
 And their words to the end of the world.
 In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
⁵ Which *is* like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
⁶ Its rising *is* from one end of heaven,
 And its circuit to the other end;
 And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
⁷ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
 The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
 The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;
 The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
¹⁰ More to be desired *are they* than gold,
 Yea, than much fine gold;
 Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there is* great reward.
¹² Who can understand *his* errors?
 Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
¹³ Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
 Let them not have dominion over me.
 Then I shall be blameless,
 And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
 Be acceptable in Your sight,
 O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.³

B. 1st Movement: Divine Revelation is disclosed in Creation! Thus, no one is without excuse.

1. vv. 1-3 declares that the heavens declare the majesty and power of God without actual speech.
 - a. 19:1: *The heavens declare the God's glory; the sky displays his handiwork.* The word, "glory" refers to his royal majesty and power and handiwork refers to the ongoing testimony of the heavens.
 - b. 19:2 *Day after day it speaks out; night after night it reveals his greatness.* He says that they are telling of God's glory. In fact, the phrase, is basically stating that the "sky gushes forth a word." The word "greatness" refers to knowledge. It seems that knowledge refers to God's

³The New King James Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ps 19:1-14.

royalty and majesty evidenced in the splendor and movements of the stars.

- c. 19:3: *There is no actual speech or word nor is its voice literally heard.* The heavens, day and night proclaim God's majesty and glory without actual speech.
- d. 19:4 *Yet its voice echoes throughout the earth; its words carry to the distant horizon.*" Verse 4 describes natural revelation reaching out to every place on earth. No one is without excuse.
- e. 9:5-6: *"Like a bridegroom it emerges from its chamber; like a strong man it enjoys running its course."* Psalm 19:6: "It emerges from the distant horizon, and goes from one end of the sky to the other; nothing can escape its heat."
- f. "The word "*bridegroom*" is a metaphor that likens the sun to a bridegroom who emerges from the bedroom thoroughly satisfied and full of joy." *Net Bible*, 874.
- g. This word "*emerges*" expresses "repeated or regular nature of the action."
- h. "Dominant **in the heavens** is **the sun**. **Like a bridegroom** who excitedly leaves his house on his wedding day, the sun **rises**; and **like a champion** runner racing on **his course**, the sun **makes its circuit**. These verses do more than speak of nature as a witness to God's glory; they also undermine pagan beliefs, for the same imagery was used of the sun god in ancient Near Eastern literature."⁴
- i. When it states that "*nothing can escape its heat*" it means no one can hide from it. Even if one is blind and cannot see it, one still feels the heat. Although it has no voice, it declares the majesty and power of God.

C. Applying this first movement to Christian ethics, we immediately recognize that first component to our model of ethics is natural law. Natural law compliments special revelation. Let me try to unpack this by turning to J. Budziszewski, one of my all-time favorite scholars and whose expertise includes natural law.⁵

1. We realize there are certain foundational principles revealed from natural revelation- that are not only right for all but at some level are known to all. We call these principles natural law. In this case, the starry heavens declare the majesty of God. Thus, God exists.
2. Natural law is law because it has properties of law. Its precepts are not arbitrary whims, but rules that the mind grasps as right; they serve not special interests, but the common good of all; their legislator is not a private person, but the public

⁴John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:807.

⁵ Adapted from J. Budziszewski, "Natural Law" in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, edited by W.C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath (Downer's Grove, IL.: 2006), pp. 473-76.

authority of the universe; and they are not secret rules, for God has so designed them that every rational being knows them.

3. In turn, natural law is natural because it is built into the design of created human nature and woven into the design of created human mind. Another reason is that we rightly take it to be about what really is. A rule like, God exists reflects not mere illusion or projection, but genuine knowledge. It expresses the actual moral character of a certain kind of act.
 4. In this passage we see the witness of designedness of the heavens. Paul, Builds on this idea in Romans 1, indicating that this fact is plain even to the wicked “for since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).” Therefore, the witness of design reveals that God exists.
 5. Not only do we have the witness of design but we have other witness as well that tell us that God exists, there is right from wrong, and truth is knowable.
 - a. Witness of deep conscience (Romans 2:14-15)
 - b. Witness of our human design (Romans 1:26-27)
 - c. Witness of God-ward longings (Ecclesiastes 3:11)
 - d. Witness of consequences (Gal. 6:7). “*God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*”
- C. In summary of verses 1-6: Since God exists, no one is without excuse. We all know on some level that God not only exists, but what is right from wrong, and that truth is knowable.
- D. In 1st Century Jewish thought, in the *Tosefta*, a Jewish companion, it is recorded that they believed that the 10 Commandments are inscribed into the heart of every person. Early church fathers believed like Origen, believed the same. He also included the Golden Rule as another law written upon the heart of every person (see J. Budziszewski’s books *What We Can’t Not Know* and *Written on the Heart: Case for Natural Law*. Many commentators suggest that Paul’s statement in Romans 2:14-15 reflects this idea. He may very well have in mind that the 10 Commandments are inscribed upon every heart.
- E. Because of the revelatory foundation of our model of ethics, our model is distinctly set apart from the ethics that try to establish morality and generate moral values, duties, and accountability apart from God.
1. Consider the following three.
 - a. David Hume. David Hume’s model of ethics believes that moral values, duties, and accountability are based on human sympathy. Sympathy, for Hume, is the capacity to be moved or affected by the happiness and suffering of others; to be pleased when others prosper and distressed when others suffer. The inclination for this capacity is experienced to be a principle of human nature. So, a Humean type ethicist, who rejects the existence of God, will attempt to generate moral values, duties, and

accountability from our human nature-which for him is not wholly evil and not wholly good.

- b. F. Nietzsche. Our model also sets us apart from Nietzsche's model of ethics. He states that true morality is that which conforms to nature and condemns that which has oppressed the unfettered spirit of humanity. He condemns whatever is contrary to the conformity of nature. He says we must say yes to life as it is. He contends that the moral person is the one who "*lives dangerously*" by increasing his or her mastery. Morality, for Hume, is located in nature and its process. It is earthy and empirical as opposed to spiritual.
 - c. Our model of ethics also sets us apart from pure utilitarianism whereby the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by the goodness of the results that flow from it. Ends, not the means, is what counts.
 - 1. Horrific outrageous and horrific actions can be justified by pure or direct utilitarianism.
- F. God not only reveals Himself and His moral law through natural revelation, but He also reveals Himself through His Word which is called special revelation. Once again, natural revelation and special revelation are complimentary. They are complimentary because they flow from the one and only Triune God of the Bible who is the Creator of the Universe. Consider this second movement in Psalm 19:7-11:
- 1. In Verses 7-9 David gives six descriptions of God's instruction. When he refers to the Law he means the Torah which means "*instruction*" or "*direction*." Since he is referring to the nature and power of God's instruction, David's descriptions, evaluations, and observations of God's Word is applicable to us today even though we are no longer bound to the law.
 - 2. David offers six words to *describe* God's instructions: law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments.
 - 3. He then offers six *evaluations* of God's instructions: It is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true.
 - 4. He also offers six *results* of God's instructions: It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and righteous altogether.
- Consider the words of Tom Constable in his commentary on this psalm: "The revealed Word of God has the same dominant influence over humankind as the sun does over nature. Whereas the sun restores natural life, the Law restores the life of the human soul. The sun dispels physical darkness, but the Word of God removes the darkness of ignorance from our understanding. It is flawless and reliable."⁶
- 5. Psalm 19:7: **The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.**

⁶ www.soniclight.com

- a. “*Converting*” means to “*rescue*” or “*preserve one’s life*.” God’s instruction preserves the life of the one who studies it because it makes God’s will known. God’s instruction, which is rendered “*as the best*,” “*without any fault*” “*blameless*”, gives renewed vitality and strength to one’s whole being.
6. Psalm 19:7b: **The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.**
- a. The phrase, “*testimony of the Lord*” is often rendered with this idea: “what the Lord tells you to do” or “all that the Lord says.”
 - b. “*Sure*” means “reliable,” “faithful.”
 - c. “*Simple*” refers to an inexperienced, uninstructed, naïve person. Thus, God’s instruction transforms the naïve into person in becoming wise in judgment and righteousness.
7. Psalm 19:8a. **The statutes or precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.**
- a. “*Right*” denotes “*uprightness*” The idea may mean imparting knowledge of what is just and right;
 - b. How does it “*rejoice the heart*”: There is a sense here in which God’s knowledge brings a sense of joyful satisfaction to the one who knows and keeps them. Just as disobedience brings chaos, so does ignorance of wisdom.
8. Psalm 19:8b. **The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.**
- a. “*Pure*” commandment is one that is right, just, and fair. Because they mirror God’s character, his commands provide moral and ethical purity.
 - b. “*Enlightening the eyes*” means bringing understanding and wisdom.
9. Psalm 19:9: **The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.**
- a. “*Fear of the Lord*” refers to the law which teaches one how to demonstrate proper reverence for the Lord.
 - b. “*Endures forever*” means that it is permanent.
 - c. “*True and righteous altogether*” means that God’s precepts are always right.
- K. 19:10-11 David regards the words of God as more valuable than gold, the most expensive substance in his day, and more pleasing and satisfying than honey, the sweetest substance. God's words warned him of error and danger, and they brought him rewards of many kinds as he followed them.⁷

⁷ Tom Constable Expository Notes on Psalm 19.

- L. **Third Movement: Prayer for Personal Cleansing: 19:12-14.** David, who began this psalm with creation revealing the majesty and power of God, proceeded to the most beautiful description of God's instruction, moves to consider his need for personal cleansing.

Consider the following comments from Tom Constable:

1. 19:12-13: "David's rhetorical question expresses the impossibility of knowing if or when we violate God's will without the light that His Word provides. It can bring to light faults hidden otherwise and can warn us of what displeases God so we can avoid these offenses. David asked God to use His Word to bring these sins to his attention so they would not dominate him. This would result in his being blameless in God's sight and free from the huge mass of sin that would be his without the revelation of Scripture.
 2. 19:14 In closing this psalm, David prayed that his words and thoughts would please God. In view of the context this takes place as we allow the Word of God of affect our lives. David viewed his words and thoughts as sacrifices to God (cf. Heb. 13:15). This is the implication of "acceptable" or "pleasing." As he closed this psalm he evidently regarded God not as his Judge but as the foundation of his life and the One who had purchased him for a special purpose."⁸
- M. In summary of this psalm, God has revealed Himself in nature and in Scripture. This revelation should earnestly move us to bow in humble adoration and willing obedience before our Creator, God, and King. He has spoken; He is not silent.

III. HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MORAL DECISION-MAKING AND THE WILL OF GOD.

- A. From Psalm 19 we are able to deduce the following qualities of God's instruction that reveals the distinctiveness of our evangelical models of ethics.
- B. But before I share these four qualities let me say that each of these qualities reveals why our evangelical models of ethics are distinct from what the secular world and false religions have to offer.
- C. Moreover, there are at least three major models of evangelical ethics. Notwithstanding the diversity among the evangelical models (which we momentarily investigate), they all have anchored their knowledge of right from wrong, good from evil, obligations to execute, and what type of a person a believer should be from God's revelation.
 1. **As followers of Christ we believe that God's instructions reveal God's will.** God will never will anything contrary to his unchanging moral character. Thus, what He says for us to do, we are obligated to do it.
 2. **As followers of Christ we believe is that ethics is grounded in absolutes.** Since God's character does not change, his moral obligations flowing from his nature

⁸ Ibid.

absolute. The word, “absolute” means they are always binding everywhere on everyone.

3. **As followers of Christ we believe that ethics is based on God’s revelation.**
General revelation contains God’s commands for all people and special revelation declares his will for believers. Failure to recognize God as the source of moral values, duty, and accountability does not exonerate anyone, even an atheist, from his moral duty.
 4. **As followers of Christ we believe that ethics is based upon prescriptive commands:** Since moral rightness is prescribed by a moral God it is prescriptive. It doesn’t describe what is, but tells us what we ought to do.
 - a. God’s commands determine the result.
 - b. God’s commands is the basis for actions;
 - c. God’s commands are good regardless of results.
- B. While we evangelicals agree that the foundation of our ethics is based or anchored upon God’s revelation, both natural moral law and special revelation, and is treated as absolutes that are binding upon believers, evangelicals differ when it comes to the following two issues:
1. How to deal with moral conflicts in a fallen world;
 2. Whether one incurs guilt or is innocent if one has to violate a command in order to maintain another.
- C. These differences are seen in the following four models:
1. Non-Conflict Absolutism
 2. Conflict Absolutism
 3. Graded Absolutism
 4. Aretaic Graded Absolutism.
- D. See chart on various models (a more readable version of this chart is available on website under the tab, “worldview thinking” right column):

<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Conflict Absolutism:</p> <p>Anabaptist Tradition (notable proponents include John Murray & Walter Kaiser)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God's unchanging standard is the basis of moral absolutes 2. God has expressed his unchanging moral character in his law. 3. God cannot contradict Himself. 4 Thus, no two absolute moral laws can really conflict. 5. All moral conflicts are only apparent, not real. <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>All moral conflicts are only apparent; they are not real. In other words, sins is always avoidable. There are no exceptions or exemptions.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Conflict Absolutism:</p> <p>Lutheran Tradition (notable proponents include Helmut Thielicke & Robert Lightner)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God's law is absolute and unbreakable. 2. There are unavoidable conflicts between God's commands in a fallen world. 3. When moral conflicts happen, we should do the lesser evil. The wicked world is far from being ideal. 4. Forgiveness is available if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Since not all sins are created equal(John 19:11; Matt. 12:32), the believer is obligated to do the lesser evil. God's forgiveness is always available.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Graded Absolutism:</p> <p>Reformed Tradition (notable proponents include Charles Hodge & Norman Geisler).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are higher and lower moral laws: (a) love for God over love of man (Matt. 22:36-38; Luke 14:26), (b) obey God over govt (Acts 4-5; Dan. 3); (c) Mercy over veracity (Heb. 11: cf. Josh 6:17; Eph. 4:25). There are many moral principles rooted in the absolute moral character of God. 2. There are unavoidable moral conflicts between God's commands in a fallen world. 3. No guilt is imputed for the unavoidable: (a) logic dictates God will not hold a person responsible for doing what is actually impossible; (b) praiseworthy & exemplary conduct of keeping higher obligation absolves one of any responsibility to lower duty. <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The believer is obligated to always follow the higher command. no guilt incurred when obedient to higher law.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Aretaic Graded Absolutism:</p> <p>Complimentary Integration of Graded View with Christian Virtue Ethics (Paul R. Shockey)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. A balanced emphasis on both obligation to be obedient to God's absolutes & character development of virtues derived from biblical principles (Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 5:9-10). 5. A virtue is a habit of Christ-like excellence, a biblical tendency, a wise disposition that assists the believer in conforming to Christ-likeness in desires, affections, intentions, & actions, all in dependency upon the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26). 6. Character is the sum-total of one's habits (Wisdom Lit). <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Since God is concerned with both inner character & outward action, the believer is obligated to inculcate God's commands that will lead to a Christ-conforming way of living.</i></p>
<p>Moral conflicts from the Bible often cited include the following: (1) Kill son vs. obedience to God in account of Abraham & Isaac (Gen. 22 cf. Exod. 20:13); (2) Samson's suicide despite moral prohibition against killing a human being, including oneself (Judg. 16:30); (3) Jephthah's sacrifice of daughter (Judg. 11) is used as vow to God vs. killing an innocent life; (4) Lying & civil disobedience vs. mercy with Hebrew Midwives in Exodus 1; (5) Lying vs. mercy with Rahab (Joshua 2); (6) Civil disobedience vs. obedience to God in Jewish captives disregard to obey Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship golden image of himself (Dan. 3); (7) Daniel's disregard of Darius's command to pray only to the king (Dan. 6).</p>		<p>In case it is difficult to determine what the higher/lower biblical commands are in a certain situation: (1) The overall maxim maintained (Matt. 22:36-38) and most critical question asked is "What will demonstrate your love to God the most?"; (2) Intimately & rightly know the Bible; (3) Seek all the facts regarding your decision (no detail is trivial); (4) Be prayerful; (5) Stay yielded to God; (6) Seek godly counsel from your local church.</p>	

Paul R. Shockey, April 2008

- E. While each of these models are within the range of biblical-evangelical orthodoxy, my personal criticism of non-conflict, conflict, and graded is that virtue ethics is grossly neglected.
1. The focus on all first three models is entirely upon obedience to the biblical commands and no attention is given to the development of personal integrity, virtue, and the cultivation of intellectual and moral excellence.
 2. Therefore, I've merged both graded absolutism with virtue ethics into a complimentary thesis whereby the biblical commands translate into virtues that the believer is to cultivate.
 - a. For example, I have the command in 1 Peter 1:15-16 to be holy. Not only am I to be obedient to that command, but God desires that inculcate, instill, live out that command in the way in which I live. In other words, His commands are to become my way of living.
 3. Thus, these commands will become a part of who I am as I habitually practice them, cultivating the desire to allow them to transform my life into the person Christ wants me to become. Said differently, it not only important that I obey these commands. I need to allow them shape me into the person Christ wants me to be because Christ is only concerned with my outward obedience but my inner conformity (my heart condition).

IV. CONCLUSION:

- A. Let's return to the initial three questions and then I will offer one final thought from Oswald Chambers.
1. **How do we make moral decisions that honor God?** In essence, if our moral decisions align with God's revelation, we are honoring Him. These decisions will cohere or harmonize with both natural revelation and special revelation. The Bible is to be our ultimate authority, offering specifics that natural revelation cannot provide, but both natural revelation and special revelation correspond as evidenced in Psalm 19.
 2. Are you able to not only consistently live out, but communicate your model of ethics to others in your disciple-making ministry? Remember the following:
 - a. Our ethics is anchored in God and His revelation which is disclosed to us in two complimentary parts: natural moral law and the teachings of Scripture.
 1. Because God exists and He has spoken, we have a basis for objective values, duties, and accountability.
 - b. While there are differing evangelical models of ethics, all embrace revelatory absolutism as their foundation.
 - c. Within those differing evangelical models of ethics, you have at least the four particular options I've mentioned above: Non-conflict absolutism, conflict-absolutism, graded absolutism, and aretaic graded absolutism (which I developed in an attempt to integrate virtue ethics with graded absolutism).
 3. What are we to do when we faced with a moral dilemma or hard-case situation? Unpack the particular model you embrace as an evangelical who believes in absolutes.
 - a. Non-Conflict states that all moral conflicts are apparent, not real. Sin is always avoidable.
 - b. Conflict Absolutism states that moral conflicts are real and when you face an unavoidable moral conflict between two biblical commands, choose the lesser evil. When you break a biblical command you must confess your sins and restore your intimacy with God.
 - c. Graded Absolutism states that moral conflicts are real and when you face an unavoidable moral conflict, choose the higher moral law. No guilt is imputed for the unavoidable.
 - d. Aretaic Graded Absolutism agrees with graded but contends that virtue ethics needs to be incorporated into this model because God is concerned with not only outward obedience but inward character as well.

B. Last thought: Don't merely choose what is good, choose what is best.

Listen to the following excerpt from Oswald Chambers (25th May of *My Utmost for His Highest*):

As soon as you begin to live the life of faith in God, fascinating and physically gratifying possibilities will open up before you. These things are yours by right, but if you are living the life of faith you will exercise your right to waive your rights, and let God make your choice for you. God sometimes allows you to get into a place of testing where your own welfare would be the appropriate thing to consider, if you were not living the life of faith. But if you are, you will joyfully waive your right and allow God to make your choice for you. This is the discipline God uses to transform the natural into the spiritual through obedience to His voice.

Whenever our *right* becomes the guiding factor of our lives, it dulls our spiritual insight. The greatest enemy of the life of faith in God is not sin, but good choices which are not quite good enough. The good is always the enemy of the best...

Many of us do not continue to grow spiritually because we prefer to choose on the basis of our rights, instead of relying on God to make the choice for us. We have to learn to walk according to the standard which has its eyes focused on God...