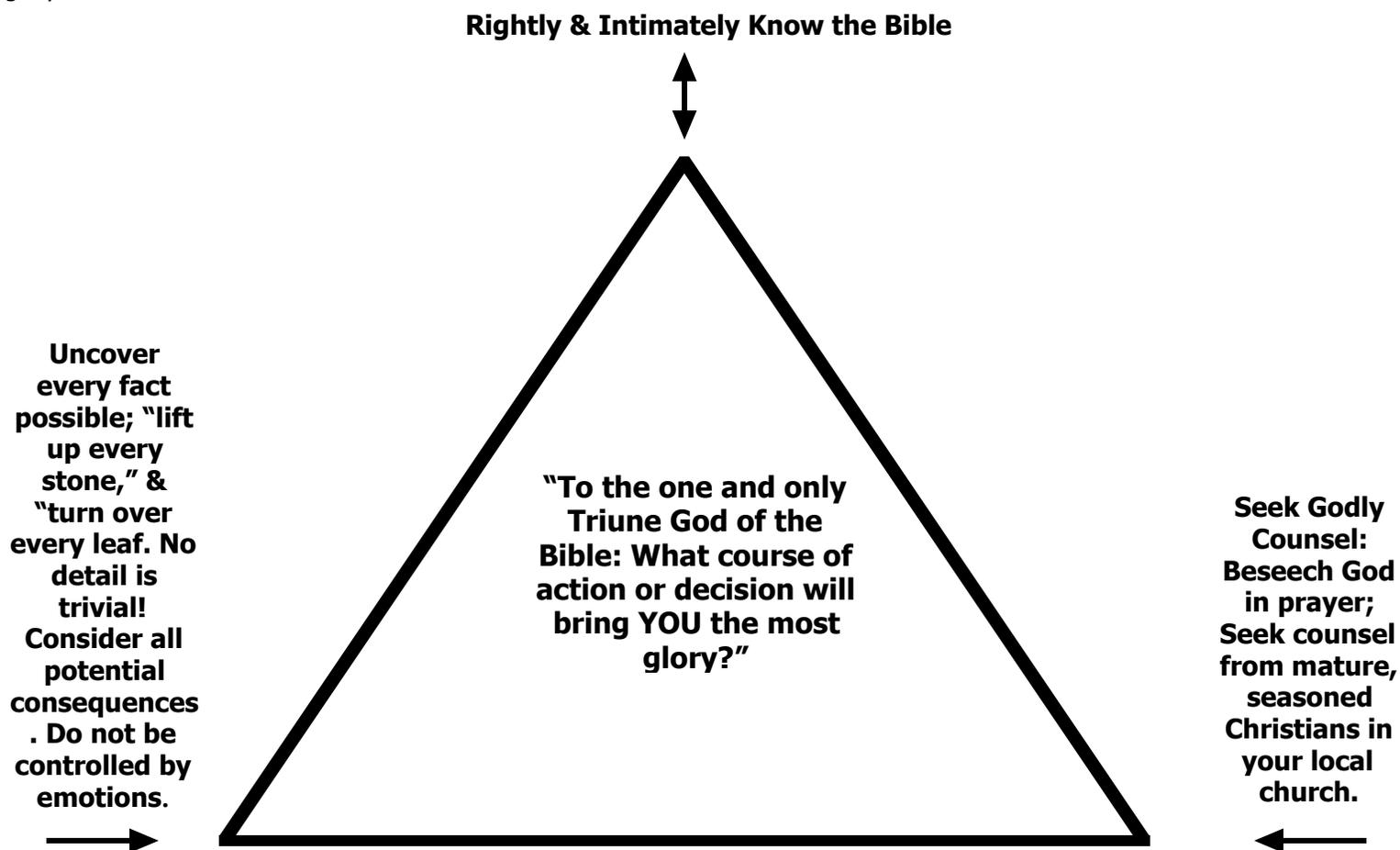


HOW TO HANDLE HARD CASE ETHICAL PROBLEMS AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

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Presupposing the Bible as God's absolute and trustworthy authority, & following my ethical model of aretaic graded absolutism (virtue-deontological approach), what are we to do when the ethical cases we face are not obvious or "black and white." How are we to decide what to do when the particular case or situation is very complicated, gray, & differences among Christian family members & friends find expression? Consider the following tool that might help dispel some of the "fog" on what to do (no guarantee). Take (1) the appropriate principles and precepts of Scripture, (2) godly counsel received from mature, seasoned believers in your local church & wisdom from God in prayer (beseech God), & uncover every fact, complication, & potential consequences to bear & determine what decision or course of action will bring the one & only Triune God the most glory. In other words, take all three factors, namely, (1) Bible as rightly understood; (2) Godly counsel (wisdom from God in prayer; godly people from local church); (3) all the facts & consequences in this particular case & allow them to converge on this one maxim or rule that you will unequivocally uphold as a believer in Jesus Christ: What will bring the God of the Bible the most glory!



1. When searching the Scriptures to know what to do, know the commands, precepts, precepts, & examples rightly. Do not "read into" the Bible. Rather, take the Scriptures & understand them as the Author/author intended them to be. In other words, "what is the plain sense" or obvious meaning following a plain, normal, grammatical, historical, & literary method of interpretation. Do not "universalize" historical examples as if this is what you are suppose to do. Some historical examples were not meant to be translated into universal commands. Just because a biblical figure took some course of action, does not necessarily mean that you should do it. However, closely study the behavior & examples of Jesus Christ. Follow after Christ; He never made a mistake! Do not commit to anything more or less than what the whole Bible says. Intimately & rightly know the whole Bible.

2. Beseech God! Develop an intense prayer life so when those hard cases come about, prayer will not be foreign to your personal experience.

3. Seek to know godly, seasoned, mature people in your local church. Know them *now* so when those hard moments come, you will know who to turn to for immediate assistance; you will already have a relationship with them.

4. Uncover every fact. Consider every consequence. No detail is trivial. Be observant. Ask good questions! Do not merely assume that someone else has your best interests at heart. Those people advising you may be using an ethical model that is not only foreign, but also antithetical to God and His commands. You do not want to face regret because you followed poor advice or did not take the time to study the facts. Do not allow your emotions to control your decision-making. Be controlled by the Holy Spirit, loving God from out of your mind (think well!). Do not be controlled by your emotions or by your situation.

5. Intimately God's commands now & translate them into habits of intellectual & moral excellence. Allow God's Word to be written upon your heart, your actions, & your habituations so that when those gray moments come, you will already have a certain disposition that reflects Jesus Christ. You trust God. You Know He is Sovereign & He is good! Even if your "why's" are never answered, you know Him, & consequently, you can trust Him!