

## **Practical Helps on the Doubtful Things**

**by Al Troester**

Some call "doubtful things" the "gray areas" in defining those things that are questionable. In reality, from the Bible viewpoint there are no gray areas. We just mark those things as such that are not specifically mentioned in the Word of God. Actually, things are either right or wrong. They cannot be half right and half wrong, half good and half bad. To engage in things that are doubtful usually leaves one with a guilty conscience, remorse, or regret. A good rule to follow that has been around for a long time is, "If you doubt don't." To practice those things that are doubtful is like skating on thin ice that will surely let you down for a good soaking.

Doubts are not new. They go back to Satan's trickery in getting Eve to partake of the forbidden tree. As he did then, he still does. The Bible calls his operations "the wiles of the Devil" and exhorts us against them (Eph. 6:11). We are also told to "be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (I Pet. 5:8). We are told to resist him steadfast in the faith. He is said to be the one that "deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). He can make those things that are doubtful seem right, and those things that are right seem wrong. He makes all kinds of suggestions to the mind in an attempt to deceive the believer. He makes the bad seem good, and the good bad. He said to Eve, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). At the very outset of her fall, he trapped her with a doubt. She followed through with his suggestions until she disobeyed what God said. Not only did she fall, but so did the whole human race in Adam. She could not resist the things that he made doubtful. Can you?

Do not test the doubtful things by doing them in hopes of a clear conscience afterwards. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" is a good exhortation before engaging in the doubtful things as well as afterwards. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt by a definite resistance and you will find joy and peace in resistance.

### **What help does the believer have against the doubtful things?**

There are a number of things to consider to keep one from going astray. God has given many provisions to keep us on the right path.

1. Believers are endowed with wisdom (I Cor. 1:30). Study also wisdom in Proverbs chapters 1-9.
2. We have the Bible to give us the right and wrong by way of guiding principles. While some of the specific modern things are not given, the

principles are surely there so that one need not be hounded with doubts.

3. We have the Holy Spirit to guide us. He indwells the heart of every believer and will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).
4. We have recourse to prayer (John 14:13,14; I John 5:14; Matt.7:7,8). Stay in close contact with God and walk in the light as He is in the light (I John 1:6, 7). Believers need not walk in darkness seeing that we have the light of life within us in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:12). He will throw light on the doubtful things.
5. Believers have the help of evangelists, teachers, pastors to guide us in those doubtful things (Eph. 4:11,12). God gave us these spiritual men as gifts to the church. We should take advantage of their instructions.
6. We have spiritual insight that the unsaved do not have so that there is no excuse. We do know good and evil.
7. We have a conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9: 14). and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit so that we are convicted when we do wrong. Believers should be able to make the necessary distinctions.
8. We have the good example of fellow believers and seasoned saints of God (I Cor. 10:6) and that of Christ Himself (I Pet. 2:21)
9. We have also the tried experiences of others who may be older or gone on before us.
10. The advice of spiritual Christians and the established testimony and standards of the church are also a provision of God.
11. For the younger set, God gave parents to guide in things that are doubtful (Prov. 1:8,9). Christian parents should know what things to avoid and what things are right to do.
12. God has allowed us to be responsible for our actions, but we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account (II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12,13).

### **Suggestions for Deciding on the Doubtful Things Whether or Not You Should Engage in Them.**

There are many things one may want to do that are not definitely in the Bible. Whether to do them or not is where the doubts come in and give us difficulty in making a decision. Bible principles, however, are quite clear although specifics are not mentioned. Each one must decide for himself or herself on the questionable. It is important that one be honest and seek only to do those things that would please God (I Thess. 4:1,2). Consider some of the following Bible principles that may be a guide in the doubtful things.

1. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. The Bible clearly says, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God " (I Cor. 10:31). This one principle alone would settle a lot of questions if one wants to live for the glory of God. Self-seeking must go.
2. Does this doubtful thing you want to engage in make provision for the flesh? The Bible says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14). This takes

real heart searching and honesty.

3. Another question one may ask is whether or not this thing is profitable to my spiritual life? The Bible principle states, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (I Cor. 6:12). The word "expedient" means profitable.
4. The same verse says, "All things are lawful...but I will not be brought under the power of any." Some things are certainly binding and habit forming and better left alone. Lifelong habits are hard to break. To be caught up in a binding habit is to lose one's liberty and no longer enjoy freedom in Christ. He came to set the sinner free.
5. "All things are lawful for me...but all things edify not" (I Cor. 10:23). Not everything builds one up spiritually. Therefore, we refrain from doing many things. The question may well be considered, "Does this thing edify."
6. Would my engaging in this doubtful thing make me a stumbling block to a weaker Christian? Would my presence in a doubtful situation do the same thing? Rom. 14:13,21 gives the guiding principle.
7. Would this doubtful thing be classified with the works of darkness? (Eph. 5:11). Rather than enter into the works of darkness, we should reprove them.
8. Would your engaging in that which is doubtful make you a good example? (I Tim. 4:12). Paul told Timothy to be an example of the believer.
9. Do you think Christ would do it? He said, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). This is surely a good rule to follow for those that would please God.
10. The Bible says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22,23). In other words, the Christian must put all things to the test.
11. Notice what God told the Jews about doing their pleasure on the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13,14). Many Christians no longer regard the Lord's Day as a day set apart for the Lord.
12. Can these doubtful things be said to edify one another as we are told to do? "...edify one another" (I Thess. 5:11).
13. How much time would I spend on them in comparison to the time I spend in church?
14. What about the cost? Do I spend more money on these things than I am willing to tithe to the Lord?
15. Would you recommend the doubtful things to your children?

### **Some Clear Cut Bible Exhortations.**

1. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).
2. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor. 6:17).
3. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).
4. A good verse for the TV—see Phil. 4:8.

5. "Walk not as other Gentiles walk" (Eph. 4:17).
6. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).
7. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:2,3).

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