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How Do I Handle It When I Am Wrong?

Romans 14:5: (NASB) *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.*



Everyone has had and will have the experience of being wrong, of making mistakes and of not understanding something well enough to properly represent it. Everyone. The question is not about what to do IF these things happen, the question is how do we handle it WHEN these things happen? Making mistakes and being wrong are never comfortable experiences, but they are priceless in their value if we allow them to be. So, how do we allow them to be priceless? When we are wrong, do we face it or ignore it? When we make a mistake, do we 'fess up or bury it? Further, how can we identify the thought and behavior processes that bring us to wrong conclusions and actions so we can avoid repeating the same old mistakes over and over again?


 **How does it feel, *On Being Wrong*, Kathryn Schulz, TED Talk**

The good news about making mistakes and being wrong is that there is usually a process to get there. If we pay attention to the process we can begin to identify those things which would make us right and those things which would make us wrong. The following are *Seven Gates of Right and Wrong*. Each of these gates has two entrances - one entrance leads to incomplete, immature and worldly judgments. The other entrance leads to more mature, spiritual and sanctified judgment.

Gate #1: Comfort (personal) vs. Conscience (godly)

The battle of being right or wrong often begins with a battle for personal comfort. So often we look for what is comfortable - physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. This is a physical, natural desire. Are we looking for a comfortable answer that we can relax with, or are we in tune with an inner compass that may drive us towards righteous but often *uncomfortable* actions?

The context of our theme Scripture teaches us about two categories of Christians - **weak in faith and otherwise:** Romans 14:1-4: Two kinds of people are described. One of them is weak in faith, but each are judging the other. *To his own master he stands or falls* - There is a principle that will echo throughout our conversation of how to look across the aisle at someone. We are not political on this podcast, but this relates to politics. People in politics get so energized about their side and look across the void between with daggers in their eyes. It is a great visual for us to draw a spiritual lesson. *For God has accepted him* - Are we saying it is okay to be wrong and be told that you are wrong? Why would we stand for something wrong? How do these work together?

 **Wile E. Coyote, *On Being Wrong*, Kathryn Schulz, Ted Talk**

What is your conscience tuned to? It is easy to find the lowest common ground to tune in to: 1 Timothy 4:1-2: *Seared in their own conscience* - your sensibility has been deadened.

It is much harder to find the higher and less common standards of Christ to tune in to: 1 Peter 2:18-19: The idea is to have a higher level of principle.

Right and Wrong Red Flag: Living according to comfort can produce a faulty conscience.

One example is taking a specific side on an issue because you have the "heavy hitters" on that side. You do not really know why you are on that side, but knowing certain people take that position is just more comfortable.

A pure conscience is key, but it is certainly not the only key in figuring out right and wrong in our lives. There are so many of us who have a good conscience - who really want what is right - who make the wrong decisions anyway. Why? Desire for God's way is only a foundation. Learning God's way is where our building truly begins.

Gate #2. Cloudy Vision vs. Clarity of Vision

Are we unsure of the objective at hand (cloudy), or do we have a clear picture of what we are involved in (clarity)? Our world is filled with gray areas.

 **Surgery gone bad, *On Being Wrong*, Kathryn Schulz, Ted Talk**

Continuing in Romans 14, Paul lays out that those who are weak (and therefore wrong on some issues) are still acceptable to God. **Why would God accept them if we KNOW they are**



wrong? Romans 14:5-6: Why did this happen? (Source: Bible Commentary by Henry Alford) There is some doubt who the weak in faith were, of whom the Apostle here treats; whether they were ascetics (practicing strict, self-denial), or Judaizers (those who adopt Jewish customs and practices such as Christians who practice the Law of Moses). Some habits mentioned, as for example the abstinence from all meats, and from wine, seem to indicate the former: whereas the observation of days, and the use of such expressions as "unclean," ...plainly point to the latter. The difficulty may be solved by a proper combination of the two views.

Remember, Christianity grew out of Judaism. As Jesus sets up this new arrangement, a lot of the rituals of the Jewish Law no longer mattered. This was easy for Christians who were not Jews - they had nothing to unlearn. But this was a huge problem for Jews coming to Christianity because these were the traditions and laws they were taught for generations. The Apostle Paul tells us both sides were wrong.

Conscience is clear and directed to honoring God on both sides, but knowledge is NOT clear! Those who were wrong were doing the best of their ability to honor God.

Whether cloudy or clear, here is the bottom line: Romans 14:7-8: Both groups had the same, clear objective - to honor God. Some did it by adopting practices that were not appropriate for Christianity, but Paul was saying, "We have to honor them because they want to honor God." We can be right in our wrongness and wrong in our rightness!

This does not mean that anyone with a conviction can do what they want within Christianity. Remember, this was a specific issue at a very crucial point in time regarding with the Jewish Law and how it would relate going forward.

Right and Wrong Red Flag: Living according to our obsessions and traditions does not necessarily translate into a clear and godly vision just because we want it to or because it seems like it should.

Introduction to Ed, *On Being Wrong*, Kathryn Schulz, USI 2012, Paris, France

So, what if we are wrong?

Jesus' point here is that we are naturally cloudy in our vision and need to change:

Matthew 7:1-5: The lesson is for us to take a look at ourselves before we make a judgment on our brother. The very idea of us making a judgment brings a faulty reasoning along with it. Instead of looking at that speck in your brother's eye, telling him he messed up, his vision is not clear, you should take the 2x4 plank out of your own eye. You are blind because you are overlooking your own faults. This is a severe warning from Jesus about us approaching others to let them know they are "wrong." Your condescension can create a more damaging wrong.

Going from "cloudy" to "clarity" requires a searing internal honesty - feelings must be shelved!

How can we change? Realize that God expects us to live UP to His standards according to our best ability and not live DOWN to what we think we know.

Conscience and clarity are two approaches to right and wrong that very much come from our heart. While this is needed to get our attention, following the path that is willing to correct our wrongs must add a firm decision (based in real conviction) which is based on firm truth (based on sound principle).

If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes. — John Wooden (former UCLA basketball coach)

Gate #3. Convenience vs. Conviction

Do we look for an easy way out, or are we driven by a deeply-convicted belief?

Boring story, *Being Wrong*, Kathryn Schulz, USI 2012, Paris, France

Back to Romans 14. Paul essentially tells both of them that they need to grow up. With the issue now laid out, he begins to build a solid Christian solution to the volatile issue of who is right and who is wrong.

He appeals to their highest convictions: Romans 14:9-12: To this end Christ died and lived again - "All of you are answerable to this highest level of conviction." Why do you judge your brother - Paul talks to those who are right. Why do you regard your brother with contempt - Paul talks to those who are wrong. We will all stand before the judgment seat of God - not of



each other. We want to look at each other with a godly perspective. In the Day of Judgment it would be better to say, "I was as honest as I could be; I did my best. I admitted my mistakes and tried to forgive others of theirs." We all will have to "come clean" at some point. It comes down to an attitude of humility and grace with integrity. It is not just about being right; it is about being right in such a way that you lift others up and appreciate others even if they are wrong.

There is very little appreciation in our politics today! What a shame! There is no appreciation for the conviction someone on the other side may have. That influences society to act the same way.

The folly of convenience begins this text, but it ends with the solid action of conviction: Ephesians 4:14-15: We can be right in principle but wrong in attitude. If you are right, how do you present it? Is being right a sledgehammer with which to crush your enemy or is it a hand up to help the person with whom you disagree?

Right and Wrong Red Flag: Convenience never brings us to a level of being "right" in thought and action for such a level is always inconvenient.

Conviction brings us to a whole new level of existence - one in which "right" breeds contentment: Philippians 4:11-13: The Apostle Paul had to suffer in his attempt to do right. *I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am* - because the road he was on was one of righteousness and grace. He would rather be on that road in disarray than another road being happy and proud.

How can we change? Realize that all of the most powerful Christian growth comes through conviction!

4. Passion vs. Principle

We are suggesting that "principle" is the right gate and "passion" is the wrong gate.



Surgery moral, On Being Wrong, Kathryn Schulz, Ted Talk

The battle of passions vs. principle is between the deep emotion we feel on an issue and the principle behind the issue. Most times it is easier to follow emotion.

We often mistake our passion for principle even if we are right: Romans 14:13-15: (NASB)

Principle: ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. ¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself;

Do not look to judge others or put things in your brother's way to make his way more difficult. Nothing was wrong with eating meat previously offered to idols - it is just food.

Passion: *but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

This passion is on the wrong side of the issue. This individual says, "I cannot eat that because I have an obsession with making sure I do everything according to the Law." That passion brings the person down the wrong road, but the Apostle Paul says, "Let it be, because in his mind he should not eat the meat. Do not tell him to do what he is convicted not to."

Passion: ¹⁵For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love.

If you who know better are harassing him because you are trying to get him to be right, you are wrong - even more wrong than he is.

Principle: *Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

In other words, do not destroy with your understanding of the matter someone who does not get it the way you do.

We often mistake our passion for principle even if we are right. Because passion is such a strong force for movement, we need to learn to apply it to being right - to being spiritually driven and mature in Christ. What this suggests is that as we go through spiritual growing pains we monitor and manage our passion.



Making mistakes is part of life. The only things I would feel ashamed of would be if I had said things I hadn't believed in order to get on. Some politicians do do that. — Tony Benn

))) First assumption - ignorance, *On Being Wrong, Kathryn Schulz, Ted Talk*

Here is what we, as Christians, must grow into: Galatians 5:16-17: Your passion has to stay in check. Unbridled passion causes damage.

Right and Wrong Red Flag: Just because you might be right, it does not mean that your passion will appropriately communicate that right perspective!

Our passion needs to be filtered through these next words of Jesus: John 15:12-15: Jesus was able to handle those who were in direct opposition to him. His ministry was for three-and-a-half years, and he had detractors always around. They were the ones that held positions of greatest authority in their society. They would constantly come at him with what they saw as contradictions going against the Law. He answered them by asking questions on how to apply the Law and inevitably they would get stuck. He did not beat them down with their wrongness; he showed them by asking questions to help them consider looking at things in a different way.

The only time Jesus did something different was towards the end of his ministry after all those years of trying to get them to understand, he finally called them hypocrites. It was a controlled, clear explanation of where they had gone wrong.

How can we change? Realize that all of the most powerful Christian growth comes through conviction!

Gate #5. Coddling vs. Caring

Are we willing to allow the consequences of actions (ours or our brothers) to come to fruition, or do we coddle and overprotect? We live in a society that does not prepare our young people (in the United States) for the realities of life. It is good to care but not to coddle.

))) Moral of the story, *Being Wrong, Kathryn Schulz, USI 2012, Paris, France*

Romans 14:16-19: Paul did not challenge *what* they believed; he challenged how they *handled* what they believe. This was not a sin that would take them off the Christian path. The kingdom of God is being acceptable by doing what you truly believe is right. Sometimes we are off when we try to do the right thing, and we should learn from that. God judges our heart intent, even if we mess up. **Caring:** Galatians 6:1: Help them; do not seek to destroy them.

Right and Wrong Red Flag: Human instinct and emotion can easily misguide our caring actions!

Sometimes allowing someone to go through the pain of something is the best way to care for them.

In our next texts, the Apostle Paul was trying to teach the Corinth church that they were making a mistake. A brother was doing something immoral and Paul wanted them to understand what was actually happening. **They were coddling the offender:** 1 Corinthians 5:4-5: Sometimes wrong actions are wrong enough that they require severe consequences. They were not to withhold those consequences in order to help the person in the long run.

How can we change? Truly caring for our brother means we are focused on their growth in Christ. It means we have a smaller concern for their comfort and a larger and primary concern for their future.

Determining the real source of our personal stand on things can be trickier than it might sound. Thus far we have talked a lot about emotions, comfort, passion and principle. Now let's focus on what to look for when we are ready to take action and what might make us right or wrong in that action. **Please see the FULL EDITION CQ REWIND for the remaining gates, flags and discussion!**

Philippians 4:8: Have your attitude in a godly fashion so you can treat right and wrong with respect to others.

*So, how do I handle it when I am wrong?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*