



Standing in the Gap

Last month I wrote about the difficulty of making ethical and moral decisions and how we need to manage the gap between the *idealized* and the *realized*. After reviewing that article I felt the concept needed more explanation.

We are often faced with critical issues in our day-to-day decisions. We soon realize that there is no formula. There are steps you can take to improve your decisions, but you will not be perfect. As Christians we desire to do what is right, in God's perfect will, in all things. We are challenged and exhorted by the passage in Matthew 5:48, which states, "You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." Therefore, we must strive for perfection, even while living in an imperfect world. Some call this "the glory of the imperfect." We strive for perfection, knowing it is not humanly possible, while resting on Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me."

There is no glory in striving for 80 percent obedience to God's Word and achieving our goal. In this scenario, striving to make decisions consistent with God's Word, and knowing we cannot achieve that perfection, is the bad news. The good news is that applying God's Word and superimposing it over all of our decisions will help us bridge the gap between the *idealized* and the *realized*.

If you were to draw a graph with the idealized being a straight line across the top where perfection would be, the line across the bottom would represent time. As we make decisions on ethical dilemmas, we could plot our performance. We would never reach the top line, but over time the gap between the two should be increasingly less as we grow closer to the Lord.

We cannot expect to make the right decision if we do not know what God teaches us in Scripture. Therefore, the first requirement for making decisions that are consistent with God's perfect will for our lives is to be thoroughly trained in His Word. That is how we manage the gap. Employees cannot honor rules in an employee handbook if they have not read it. No Human Resource Department would expect employees to live by the rules if they never gave them the manual and trained them on its content. From the standpoint of a corporate environment, the director of Human Resources is the one who stands in the gap. He is the one who strives for the idealized. We must have the same attitude in applying Christian morals and ethics in the workplace. We must be the one standing in the gap for our circle of influence as Ezekiel stood in the gap for his people.

Now, some clarification; we are not talking about deciding whether or not to call in sick when we intend to play golf, pad our expense report or

take pens and paper for personal use. These are not ethical or moral issues for the Christian. You simply do not do what you know is wrong. Choosing between right and wrong is not a moral dilemma or an ethical dilemma.

An ethical dilemma for a Christian would be to choose between two rights, not a right and wrong. For example, if there is a situation where it was clearly right to pursue a certain direction in the best interest of the company, but would have negative consequences on some employees, we have a dilemma. It is right to do what is in the best interest of the company and it is right to be fair and equitable with employees.

Obviously studying ethics and being ethical are two different things. We can, however, improve our performance in those decisions that cause two rights to seemingly be in conflict. We learn in two ways; through observation and habituation. So we practice applying Scriptures in areas where two rights come into play, and we watch other Christians who are also facing similar dilemmas. A word of caution: We have all heard "practice makes perfect." That is not true. Practice makes *permanent*. Only perfect practice makes perfect. A second word of caution: others are watching us as well. So, let us heed God's Word when He instructs us to "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12b)."

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