

# Playing with Unwise Things



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ON THE HEART

Proverbs 3:3

in order from to abstain from it? To Paul it didn't have to be. One said, "If you know that someone will associate your action with something bad, don't do it." Ponder this situation: One lady liked to make a batch of homemade vanilla extract. She needed alcohol to make it, so she would go to the store and buy some. As she would approach the cash register, she would say, "I'm not buying this to drink it, I'm buying it to make vanilla." [3] Although this lady was not necessarily doing anything sinful here (unless one argues support for sin by her giving money for it) she still made an unwise decision. **SHE HAD VODKA IN HER HAND AND SHE WAS BUYING IT!** What if another Christian saw her from afar? What would they automatically assume from her actions? Did she think about the other sinners who saw her buy it? What if this same lady went door knocking the following Saturday and knocked on a door of the person who thought she drank vodka? She may have ruined her influence with others **JUST BECAUSE** she wanted to make vanilla at home. Nothing is inherently sinful with making vanilla; however, could she have avoided the ruined reputation, skewed influence, and harmed example because of it? All she had to do was buy vanilla already made. While the woman could have argued "I can do what I want," Paul counters that argument with "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (1 Corinthians 10:24).

Flirting with sin is extremely dangerous. Some Christians may give excuses, beat around the bush, and take passages out of context to support their choices. Not as extreme, but definitely not good, is when Christians try to practice things that do not cross the "sinful" line, but attempt to get as close as they can. One said that "Just because something is permitted does not mean it is beneficial. The Corinthians...wanted to know how much they could get away with and still be Christians." [4] While Christians are to be the called out and special people (1 Peter 2:9), they don't act like it when they are dating or flirting with sin. Instead of trying to get close

without "stepping over the line," they should be running from it as far as possible (c.f. Matthew 5:29-30). "A wealthy couple desired to employ a chauffeur. The wife advertised, the applicants were screened, and (4) candidates were brought to her for the final selection. She called the prospective men to her balcony and pointed out a brick wall alongside the driveway. She asked the men, 'How close do you think you could come to that wall w/out scratching my car?' The 1st man felt he could drive w/in a foot of the wall w/out damaging the car. The 2nd felt sure he could come w/in (6) inches. The 3rd believed he could get w/in (3) inches. The 4th candidate said, 'I do not know how close I could come to the wall w/out damaging your car. Instead, I would try to stay as far away from that wall as I could.'" [5] No person in their right mind would attempt to get as close as he could to the loose lion on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8), and similarly should no person get as close to sin as he can.

While something may not necessarily be sinful, we **MUST** keep in mind these three questions: (1) "How does the world look at me," (2) "What does the church think," and (3) "Does this action help me or hurt me?" Why would we want to do anything that ruins our name, hinders our light (Matthew 5:16), or puts barriers up with sinners? Oh yes, Jesus did go against common tradition of eating with sinners and publicans (Matthew 9:11), but His purpose was to convert, restore, and show His love. We must not try to justify our pleasurable desires at the risk of hurting the church (c.f. Titus 2:8) and ourselves. We **CANNOT AND WE MUST NOT!**

## Endnotes

- [1] Strong's Concordance, eSWORD.
- [2] <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/ctf/philippians-4.html>
- [3] Illustration from Chandler Francis.
- [4] David Guzik, Enduring Word Commentary, eSWORD.
- [5] <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/lust-joseph-rodders-sermon-on-sin-general-84639?page=2&wc=800>

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When it comes to sin, we often deal in absolutes: Black, white, wrong, right, sin, godliness. But, there are some things in Scripture that the Bible does not explicitly touch on. How do we determine our decisions on these things? Are there unwise and wise decisions that are not placed in the category of sinful? What should we do when faced with a situation that is not sinful, but is definitely not wise?

Every decision we make should be done with the following questions in mind.

- Does it edify the church?
- Is it beneficial to my influence?
- Could it lead to sin?

With these thoughts in mind, let us examine what the Bible has to say about those unwise things.

### The Analysis

Philippians 4:8 reads, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Emp. Mine, NO). The Greek word for “good report” is *euphēmos* and it means “well spoken of, that is, reputable: - of good report.”[1] Thayer said it is “sounding well, uttering words of good omen, speaking auspiciously.” A.T. Robertson noted that it is “fair speaking.” The word then characterizes someone who is blameless—a person who could not be charged with any wrongdoing. This is a man of good repute (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1; Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:7). This would lead us to the conclusion then that a reputable man should have a good influence among sinners. He should not be practicing things that are looked upon as unwise and he definitely ought to maintain purity in both heart and action. Of course, we know that not everything culture or common understanding says is justified (LGBTQ+ movement, abortion, etc.); however, when sinners would acknowledge an action to be unholy, we should rethink our practice of the certain action. Note what a few writers had to say about the word in Philippians 4:8

- **Matthew Henry:** “We are exhorted to get and keep a good name, a name for good things with God and good men: Whatsoever things are true and honest (Php\_4:8), a regard to truth in our words and engagements, and to decency and becomingness in our behaviour, suitable to our circumstances and condition of life. Whatsoever things are just and pure, - agreeable to the rules of justice and righteousness in all our dealings with men, and without the impurity or mixture of sin. Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, that is, amiable; that will render us beloved, and make us well spoken of, as well as well thought of, by others. If there is any virtue, if there is any praise - any thing really virtuous of any kind and worthy of commendation. Observe, 1. The apostle would have the Christians learn any thing which was good of their heathen neighbours: “If there be any virtue, think of these things - imitate them in what is truly excellent among them, and let not them outdo you in any instance of goodness.” We should not be ashamed to learn any good thing of bad men, or those who have not our advantages” (Emp. Mine, NO).
- **Adam Clarke:** “Whatsoever things the public agree to acknowledge as useful and profitable to men; such as charitable institutions of every kind, in which genuine Christians should ever take the lead.”
- **Plummer:** “what is kind and likely to win people, and avoiding what is likely to give offense” (Plummer 97).[2]

While not a “transgression of the law,” (1 John 3:4), could we hinder our example, influence, and reputation among sinners because of the unwise choices we make? Could our attempt to possibly convert another be hindered because we chose to make a decision that even sinners deem is unwise? What does the Bible say about such things?

### The Scriptures

While many actions are explicitly sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21), the Bible does not address every wrong action, nor does it address

every unwise decision. From Scripture; however, we can observe some important principles:

- **Romans 14:21.** Paul noted that even eating of meats could cause another to sin. While not sinful in itself, it could be sinful in certain circumstances. The Christian should stay away from ANYTHING (sinful and non-sinful) that would cause another to sin.
- **Romans 14:23.** While an action may not be sinful, if it is against one’s conscience, one should not do it, else if he does, it is sin.
- **1 Corinthians 10:23.** There were things that Paul was not going to practice because they did not edify or help the brethren. They were not sinful, but still did not help the church.
- **1 Corinthians 11:3-16.** Women in Corinth with shorn head were often prostitutes. Paul shows that it would be wise for the women to wear head coverings so they did not look like the harlots. It was not a sin for them to have uncovered heads; however, culture showed that it didn’t look good for them.
- **Ephesians 5:17.** Paul says that men are not to be unwise. Every decision made by a person should be founded in “what saith the Scripture.”

From these Scriptures we learn that the things we may do may not be necessarily sinful, but they could still be wrong because of the division, appearance, or hurtfulness that they cause.

### The Application.

In light of the above Scriptures and with the following examples in mind, we should ask “is this action wise,” “does it edify,” and “would sinners think better or worse about the church for me to do these things?”

- Mixed swimming.
- Going to the prom.
- An unmarried couple in a house ALONE together.
- Going to the casino to eat, but not gamble.
- Going to a rated R movie.

The list could be infinite; however, the question still remains, does a practice have to be explicitly sinful