

Challenged by Life...Powered by God

(Case Studies in Christian Challenges)

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This monthly series of case studies illustrate the challenges presented to us as Christians. Facing these common challenges is inevitable. How we respond to those challenges is what defines us as human beings and whether others observe and mimic or take notice and mock. It should be our desire as Christians to serve as that coveted example worth mimicking 100% of the time. See if this case study has presented similar decision points and challenges in your life. I would love to hear your reactions, thoughts and alternative approaches in the comments section below.

The Case of Doing What is Easy vs. What is Right

We are surrounded today with all kinds of programs geared to make us more efficient. We learn early on in science class about the concept of “path of least resistance” and then are bombarded with ways to improve ourselves by working smarter and not harder. We look to time management programs to improve our personal efficiency and business techniques such as Six Sigma and Lean to improve our business operations. There is nothing wrong with finding easier and more efficient ways of functioning in our personal and professional lives. However, we must take care that those concepts do not impinge upon our religious and ethical obligations to do what is right, even when it is not easy.

What are the Differences?

For those not exposed to some of the business concepts mentioned above, allow me to provide some very simple illustrations. The Six Sigma process asks you to analyze the most efficient way to complete a task. Suppose I had a 300 page report on my desk at work and wanted to take it home. I could take the pages to my car one at a time and be extremely busy for quite some time. Or I could choose to pick up the entire report and take it to my car in one trip which would be much more efficient. In contrast the Lean Concept teaches you to ask the question, “do I really need to take the report home?” In other words, should I do a particular task, yes or no? Eliminating unnecessary tasks also improves efficiency.

But what if doing what is easy and efficient is not right or moral? We have an obligation as Christians to always strive to do what is right. For example, we are in the grocery store, check out, push our cart full of groceries to the car and then realize that the checkout clerk forgot to charge us for the case of water that you had on the bottom of the cart. The easy thing to do would be to get in your car and leave. The right thing to do of course would be to go back inside and correct the error. A second example, playing off of this same scenario, is to leave our cart

in the parking lot by pushing it aside into the handicapped parking space next to our car, even though there is a “carts return rack” 40 feet away. What is right vs. what is easy in that example is simple to determine, but despite the clear answer, do we always act in the correct fashion? Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us when he clearly could have taken an easier path. There is no greater demonstration of love than what he did for us.

Do What is Right When No One is Looking

Let’s take doing the right thing one step further. We have an obligation to do what is right when no one is looking. What actions do we take when no one is looking and we could clearly take the easy route vs. what is right? It’s late at night and we decide to drive a short distance the wrong way down a one way street to get to our destination faster. There are no police around to observe our behavior and offer punishment, so it must be alright then. Correct? Conforming to rules to avoid punishment is not the reason to obey the law. We should follow the rules in this situation because it is the safe thing to do and we would not want our actions to result in harm to another driver or pedestrian who are surprised by our backward trip down the one way street. The real thought that should guide our actions is the reality that “someone is ALWAYS looking.” Sometimes that includes friends, children and grandchildren who are paying attention when you don’t think that they are. On other occasions there is no one around except for God who is always watching our every move.

If we consistently strive to do the right thing rather than what is easy and have the constant realization that God is watching our actions, we will be the role model to others that we can be proud of.

What are your thoughts?