

Biting on the Wrong End

A young mother and her five year old son were busy one morning making their beds. After the mother had finished straightening up her room, she went to see how her son was doing in his room. She arrived in time to find him struggling violently to get a clean pillowcase over a large feather pillow.

“Here, son, this is the way to do that,” she said as she took one end of the pillow firmly in her teeth and slipped the cover on.

“Oh, mother,” he cried, “I know! I was biting on the wrong end!”

In the illustration above, it makes little difference of course, which end of the pillow one holds in his teeth while slipping on the pillowcase. However, in the daily life of the child of God many actions are justified and rationalized as being all right by “biting on the wrong end.”

The child of God as he lives from day to day faces numerous choices and must make many decisions. Sometimes these decisions are acceptable and right while at other times they are questionable and even objectionable decisions. Often questionable and objectionable decisions are made because we begin by “biting on the wrong end.”

Some examples will suffice to illustrate the point being made.

The local high school is putting on its annual play and as a high school junior or senior, you would like to attend. However, when you ask for permission from your parents, you run into a grave problem. Your parents say, “No, you may not go.” If your response is, “What’s wrong with it?” you are biting on the wrong end. If you ask, “What’s wrong with movies?” “What’s wrong with dating young people that go to other churches?” “What’s wrong with going to the Senior dance?” “What’s wrong with drugs, drinking, or smoking?” “What’s wrong with wearing short dresses or long hair?” you are biting on the wrong end. It is, of course, important that you do know what is wrong with movies, dances, drugs, etc.; but this is not your primary reason for asking the question. It is an escape technique—a means of putting your parents on the defensive. You force mother or dad to make a statement regarding the wrongness of a certain activity and then proceed to argue against it with might and main. You’ve learned that occasionally your technique is successful and permission is reluctantly given because your parents find it hard to pinpoint the wrongness of that particular activity. Your conscience is now clear because your parents have made the decision for you. But I say, you are “biting on the wrong end.”

Instead of asking, "What's wrong with it?" it is better to ask the question, "What's right with it?" or "What's good about it?" Remember, moreover, that goodness is an attribute of God. If we try to judge the goodness of these activities by our own standard of goodness we will continue to do that which is questionable and objectionable. God demands that we walk uprightly before him in righteousness, holiness, and perfection. In obedience to that calling, the child of God tries to determine what is good and acceptable before God and not those things which are good in the sight of the world.

It is important that we be positive rather than negative. "What's good about not going to movies and plays?" "What's good about drugs or drinking?" "What's good about short dresses and make-up?" "What's good about television?" "What's good about the pill?" "What's good about motorcycling on Sunday afternoon?" "What's good about lotteries and door prize drawings?"

Considered in this light, many of these questionable activities would become objectionable and the sincere child of God would be determined to deny himself these questionable "pleasures." "Biting on the right end" will help us in walking a life of sanctification before the Lord our God.