

Do Not Stray into the Gray

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There are billions of people in this world and each one is a free moral agent. Each person has their own individual mind-set and thought processes and each one views things in their own different and unique way. Some people are positive, upbeat and happy in their lives, while other people seem to enjoy wallowing in the negative and are always moping around full of doom and gloom. People can be classified into different categories, depending on how they tend to look at situations they are presented with and the decisions that need to be made in their lives. Each person has a free mind to think with, but there are similarities in how people reason. Most people fit into some basic categories that define the way that they think. One of these categories is called the black and white thinker. Black and white thinkers tend to deal in absolutes and logic. Let us take a deeper look at this concept of black and white thinking, and how it relates to eternal life and the spiritual decisions that we are faced with.

What exactly do I mean by black and white thinking? Black and white thinkers view situations as only having two outcomes and those two outcomes oppose each other. People, who think in black and white terms, have a specific thought and decision making process. They are realists; they deal with facts and think in very logical terms. All aspects of a situation are analyzed and then a definite decision made. There are no maybes, or areas that are blurred and hazy. Let us take a look at a biblical example of black and white thinking.

Deuteronomy 30:19

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;

The choices here are clear, there is no ambiguity, no misunderstanding. Life and death, blessing and cursing, there can only be one possible outcome either way. A black and white decision is clearly one way, or the other, there is no middle ground. Notice this diagram of a black and white rectangle, the opposing sides offset each other; there is a distinct and definite line between the two sides.



When people become confused on an issue, when they start to reason with themselves and attempt to justify their decisions, the way becomes cloudy and hazy. There is no longer a clear line with a definite outcome. They begin to reason and wonder if the decision placed before them is really only one way or the other, or if there is some "wobble room". They begin to look for different interpretations and different thoughts and ideas. They look for loopholes and ways to circumvent having to make a definite commitment one direction or the other.

What happens when you remove the dividing line that keeps the black and white sides separate? Since there is no longer any clear delineation between the two sides, they flow together and intertwine, they become mingled together and each becomes part of the other. Now, instead of two clearly defined sides, the entire area becomes gray.



There are also gray thinkers in the world. They tend to be more tolerant of different views. They are wishy-washy and fence straddlers, they are indecisive and they believe that they are knowledgeable enough to make decisions without help from anyone. They always believe that their interpretation of a particular situation is correct and are for the most part unwilling to be convinced, or shown otherwise. Now, why do you suppose that gray thinkers have such a problem with making decisions and in setting a clear course and plan of action? Looking at the two diagrams, there is another significant difference between the two, other than the fact that the colors are different.

When you remove the line dividing these two opposing forces, some of the good (correct decisions) mixes in with the bad (poor decisions), some of the bad mixes in with the good and then all of a sudden there is no right or wrong anymore, no opposing force to offset each of the other sides. There just exists this gray area; an area of limbo and indecisiveness where there is no clearly defined right or wrong. Everyone is free to come to their own conclusions and then to act on them. Most people do not see anything wrong in this way of thinking. Everything is open to each individual's own private interpretation. So, just what is wrong with gray thinking anyway? Gray thinking will cause you to lose out on eternal life and in scripture that is clearly spelled out in black and white! In Matthew there is an example of both types of thinking; the bold comments are mine.

Matthew 19:16-22

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good* Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (A Black and white decision, to enter into life as opposed to death).

18 He said to Him, "Which ones?"

Jesus said, "'*You shall not murder,*' '*You shall not commit adultery,*' '*You shall not steal,*' '*You shall not bear false witness,*' **19** '*Honor your father and your mother,*'* and, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'""

20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (A gray decision, the man began to reason with himself and to think about what he owned and what he would be giving up).

That man threw away an opportunity to become one of Jesus Christ's disciples, because of a poor decision made with gray thinking! Think about what he threw away. He gave up literally the opportunity of a lifetime and all because he could not bear to give up his wealth. Was that a sound decision? His mind was clouded, because he was weighted down with the cares of this world. You have to think way beyond the here and now. The decision is clear! You can try to amass possessions and get all you can out of this life, or you can look at the bigger picture and be working towards God's kingdom and eternal life there. Black and white!

Do you realize, or have you ever thought about the fact that God thinks in black and white terms? What did Christ tell the man in the scripture we just read? "But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." What situation confronted Adam and Eve? They had a choice between the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What kind of decision was it that they faced there with the two trees? There were clearly two choices, two paths to follow...a black and white decision.

When Christ called his disciples, He told them "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Entering the kingdom of God is a black and white proposition. You will either enter the kingdom or you will not, there is no gray area, no second chances. God clearly lays out the requirements we are to meet, if we want to inherit the kingdom and receive eternal life.

God is not pleased when we slip into the gray area of thinking. Moses had already decided that he was not going to go before Pharaoh. He tried to use his poor speech as reason to shirk the job that God had for him to do. I will send Aaron, your brother, with you to do the speaking God told him. What about Jeremiah? He told God I am just a child, I cannot speak. God said you shall go wherever I send you and you will speak whatever I tell you to. And there was also Jonah, he did not want to go to Nineveh, so he decided to run away on a ship. After three days and nights, in the belly of a fish, he decided he was ready to do God's will. All of these decisions involved gray thinking. Now what is the significance of gray thinking for us? It is as simple as black and white, gray thinking will keep you from inheriting eternal life!

Notice Christ's condemnation of these people who **thought** they had everything right. They thought that they were doing God's will and following Christ. Here is the problem; it was their own interpretation of how those things should be done. God gives us clear instruction as to how He wants things done and how we should live our lives and the fruits that we should bear. God sets the terms, not us!

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

These people are in the gray area, they profess Christ and they even have works, but there is no commitment, they still do as they please. Notice what Christ says here "Not everyone shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that ***does the will*** of my Father." Black and white, you are either doing God's will or you are not. People want to have Christianity on their own terms, they want the religion they follow to conform to them. People profess God, but they do not want to do the things that God requires! God's ways are not burdensome...God's way brings peace and happiness. God's ways bring eternal life!

People are not willing to make the sacrifice and commitment that it takes, to truly set themselves to follow God and His way no matter the cost. Following God cannot be a half-hearted attempt. It has to be our focus and first priority in life. We have to make a definite, clear decision and commit to it. There can be no indecision, no faltering and no gray thinking involved. It is our eternal life that is at stake here! That is very, very serious!

Revelation 3:14

¹⁴ "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,
'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Hot, or cold, is equal to black and white. Lukewarm is equal to the gray area and the gray way of thinking. These people have one foot in each area, but will not firmly commit themselves either way, they are in limbo and indecisive. Christ has more respect for those that are cold for Him than He does for the gray thinkers, they will be spewed from his mouth. Many have lost the sense of urgency, they once felt, about the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. Christ is coming again, it could be tonight, or tomorrow, or five minutes from now. We better be committed, we better be doing God's will and we better be prepared.

Matthew 24:36

³⁶ "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

No one knows the day and hour, not even Christ himself, but He is coming again make no mistake about that! He is coming in power and glory and He will reclaim this world and wrest it from the hands of man. People will be carrying on as usual not even the least bit concerned about His return, but return He will.

The Bible is clear; the way into the kingdom is laid out in scripture, it's all there in black and white. There are no gray areas, God tells us exactly what we need to do to gain the kingdom and inherit eternal life. Let us examine one final scripture; there is an unpleasant fate that awaits those that do not enter into the kingdom.

Malachi 4:2

² But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.
³ You shall trample the wicked,
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet
On the day that I do *this*,
Says the LORD of hosts.

I wonder...have you ever taken the time to notice that ashes are gray?