

# Pondering life's perplexities

**I**s it right to be wrong? Is it wrong to be right? Can you be right even though you are wrong? Strangely, in our society we encounter much conflict about the interpretation of what is right and what is wrong. Our eclectic society is so diverse and mysterious that it sends many mixed messages about conduct, content, truth, reality, and even nonsense. Whom do you trust? Whom do you believe? Who is right? Who is wrong? What is right and what is wrong?

At a time in history when having the answers is necessary to solving the cacophony of disputes in the world, we sit endlessly, day after day, scratching our heads, trying to make a judgment call about what we know and what we should know - yet being unclear about its nature.

All I can do, in a humble manner, is pose some thoughts of right and wrong for you to ponder and declare a challenge of deep pensive proportions.

Is it right to be politically correct even though your convictions cry out with a voice that echoes the dogma of the other side? Is it wrong to cautiously go through stop signs and red lights when you have a passenger in the car you are rushing to the hospital for medical attention? Is it right to stay silent if you witnessed a crime for fear of reprisals? Is it wrong to sincerely trust someone even though the odds, as you see them, say otherwise?

Is it right if you find a \$10 bill on the sidewalk, to keep it? Is it wrong to help your child with his science project so he can get a very good grade? Is it right to kill someone in self defense? Is it wrong to call for the death penalty when a person has insulted humanity by taking a life? Is it right for President Clinton to reject clemency to Jonathan Pollard when, after all, he really only spied for Israel - a friendly country? Is it wrong to grant tuition tax credits to have children educated at private, parochial and public schools? Is it right to think, "see no evil, hear no evil?" Is it wrong to get involved in everything around you? Is it right to think that democracy is the best type of government and, since we have it in the United States, we are better for it? Is it wrong to denounce totalitarian governments without reservation?

Was it right for the Holy Wars to profess the glory of Christianity through bloodshed? Is it wrong for government to plan the future of society because it "knows better?" And what do you say to your child when he asks a simple question and you know full well there is not a clear right or wrong answer? "Well, Matthew, you shouldn't do that, but people do!" WOW, what a state of cerebral confusion the child is placed in! To remedy this, should there be a right or wrong answer to issue to a three-year-old, a modified

answer with mild ambiguities for the 12-year-old, and a definite answer of complete mental chaos regarding decision making for the 18-year-old?

Was it right for Councilwoman Vivian Cook, a Queens Democrat, to say in her Albany office recently, "If you're not my skin color or from my neighborhood, get out of my office?" Witnesses say she said it; she denies it. Who is telling the truth? Is it wrong to have Curtis Sliwa on WNYC Radio? Is

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it right to feel you can do no wrong when consequences for your actions don't exist, as in the case of Ed Stancik's evaluation of the culture of the bureaucracy at the Board of Education? Is it wrong to exaggerate the truth of deductions on your income taxes - say, just a little bit?

I just wish life could be simpler. Or is it really simple, yet we perpetuate ambiguity on purpose? Where are the clear markers of behavior which many of us want to still hold sacred? Could they be gone forever, or do you suppose that

right and wrong could, one day, be fully appreciated or even satisfied through human dialogue? And just when we master that unimaginable feat, will the computer take over and complicate the relationship between right and wrong because transactions will be made in a human vacuum?

Yet, with the wonder of contemplation and, for some of us, wanting to be transfixed on trying so desperately to do what is right and to avoid what is wrong, it all comes down to the reality that, at least we are doing something. We are thinking. We are interacting. We are searching. We may disagree, but we are doing. To think - it may not be the right or wrong of it, it may be the debate itself.

Therefore, 'Tis better to have done than not to have done at all. And, in the words of the philosopher Plotinus, referring to good and evil, if in fact, right is good and wrong is evil, then, "... Evil is not in any and every lack; it is in absolute lack. What falls in some degree short of the good is not evil; considered in its own kind it might even be perfect, but where there is utter dearth, there we have Essential Evil, void of all share in good..."

Now, What's wrong with that?

