Ethical Decisions: The Slippery Slope/The Blurred Lines

Ann Gibson, PhD, CPA
Andrews University

PRESENTATION FOR THE NAD ORIENTATION FOR NEW TREASURERS
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Ethical Rationalizations

Calling an unethical act by a softer name

Everybody else does it

That’s the way it has always been done

It’s a gray area

I was just following orders
I Corinthians 15:32

“If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”

Paul, quoting Epicurus (342-270 BC)
I Corinthians 15:20, 58

But Christ has risen from the dead!

We should live today in light of the fact that one should stand firm, and always give their work to the Lord, for labor in the Lord is not in vain.
Moral Development Levels

The Morally Clueless:

- Appear to be unaware of any ethical rules
- Appear to have little or no sensitivity as to the impropriety of their conduct
Example of the morally clueless:

Chuck Colson
Moral Development Levels

The Amoral Technician:

- Functions within the system to the letter of the law
- “Works the system”
- Appears to be unaffected by the impact of their decisions on others
Example of the amoral technician:

Andrew Fastow
Moral Development Levels

The Morally Desensitized and/or Morally Detached:

- Feels beaten down by the organization’s actions
- Gives up raising concerns
- May or may not join in unethical activity
Moral Development Levels

Example of the morally desensitized or morally detached:

Reuben
The Moral Chameleon:

- Adapts to the ethics of those he/she works with
- Ethics change when the organization, the group, or their role changes
- When asked, states: “I was just following orders”
Example of the moral chameleon:

Douglas Faneuil
The Moral Procrastinator:

- Aware of ethics, but will worry about ethics “later”
- “Later” is generally after personal wealth is generated
Example of the Moral Procrastinator:

The rich farmer (Luke 12)
Moral Development Levels

The Morally Superior:

- Ethics rules are for the plodders, not for the stars
Moral Development Levels

Example of the morally superior:

Sanjay Kumar
Moral Development Levels

The Moral Schizophrenic:

- Lives by one set of ethics at work and another set of ethics in their personal life

- “I only do this in certain situations”

- “I would never allow my kids to do this”
Moral Development Levels

Example of a moral schizophrenic:

Bernie Ebbers
Moral Development Levels

The Inherently Moral:

- Has a strong moral code
- No hypocrisy
- Commitment to values and a life that reflects those values
Moral Development Levels

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? 
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who **walks uprightly,**
And **works righteousness,**
And **speaks the truth in his heart;**

He who **does not backbite with his tongue,**
**Nor does evil to his neighbor,**
**Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;**
In whose eyes a vile person is despised, 
But he honors those who fear the LORD; 
He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 
He who does not put out his money at usury, 
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved.

Psalm 15 (NKJV)
Moral Development Levels

Summary:
- Morally Clueless
- Amoral Technician
- Morally Desensitized and/or Morally Detached
- Moral Chameleon
- Moral Procrastinator
- Morally Superior
- Moral Schizophrenic
- Inherently Moral
Common Ethical Challenges

- Taking things that don’t belong to you
- Giving or allowing false impressions
- Saying things you know are not true
Common Ethical Challenges

- Buying influence or engaging in conflicts of interest
- Hiding or divulging information
- Permitting interpersonal and/or organizational abuse
“We try to live in such a way that no one will ever be offended or kept back from finding the Lord by the way we act, so that no one can find fault with us and blame it on the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 6:3


