

Judging Right and Wrong

“I know it when I see it.” Likely, you have used that phrase. I have.

That statement, as defined by one *Wikipedia* contributor, “is a colloquial expression within the United States by which a speaker attempts to categorize an observable fact or event, although the category is subjective or lacks clearly defined parameters.”

The phrase was famously used by United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart to describe his threshold test for pornography in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (378 U.S. 184, 1964).

In that case, the court was asked to rule on an issue of obscenity in the movie industry. “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description ‘hard-core pornography;’ and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it.”

In the United States, the Supreme Court is considered by many to be the ultimate dispenser of truth and justice, right versus wrong. Yet even this highest of courts and giant of justice has sometimes had a hard time articulating right from wrong.

Which raises the question for you and for me: What is our *threshold test* for right and wrong? Do we depend on our own judgment? The judgment of others? Do we just leave it to ourselves to “know it when we see it?”

While Justice Stewart’s judgment is an acknowledgment that not all things are as black and white as we would like them to be, there is a supreme standard to which we can turn for definitive judgment of black-and-white issues of morality and conduct, as well as a wealth of wisdom for judging those inevitable issues that fall into various shades of gray.

It is the Holy Bible, a collection of sacred texts or scriptures that Jews and Christians consider to be a product of divine inspiration and a record of the relationship between God and humans.

In short, from cover to cover, the Bible is God’s love letter to us, a desire for Him to have fellowship with us in this life and throughout eternity. It is chock-full of wisdom for successful living.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV).

The answer to the question posed above, then, is: The Bible should be our resource for judging right and wrong. And it is our guide to the quality of our lives.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter