"Is Eating Pork a Sin?"

Is eating pork a sin? It was mentioned to me by a friend that eating pork is forbidden and he said that Bible says that you won't go to heaven if you eat pork. Didn't Jesus say that what makes the person dirty is what comes out from his mouth and not the food that he takes in? Please give me some supporting verses on your response.

It is true that under the terms of the Mosaic Law given to Israel, pork was forbidden. However, God is no longer relating to mankind under the terms of this covenant. Rather, we are under the terms of the New Covenant (see Hebrews 8, for instance). Under the New Covenant, pork is no longer forbidden. Indeed, in Mark 7:14-23, Jesus clearly declares that all foods are clean. The same thing is affirmed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 14.

Bottom line, you can eat as much sausage, bacon, and pork chops as you like!

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn Probe Ministries

"Is Cremation Against the Bible?"

I have become curious as to why certain Christian denominations claim cremation to be against the Bible. Is it?

Thanks for your e-mail. Although many Christian and Jewish groups DO permit the bodies of the deceased to be cremated, this is not the usual manner of disposing of the body. Furthermore, there are some groups who are strongly opposed to cremating a body. For instance, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states, "Cremation is normally forbidden in the Orthodox Church." But WHY are some opposed to cremation? Is this practice unbiblical? These are good questions.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion states that some rabbis are persuaded, on the basis of Deuteronomy 21:23, that interment is a positive biblical command. This would make cremation an unbiblical practice. In addition, some rabbis argued that cremation was disrespectful to the deceased; others that it implied a denial of belief in the doctrine of physical resurrection. There is one clear biblical account of a cremation. In 1 Sam. 31:9-13, the men of Jabesh-gilead are said to have "burned" the bodies of Saul and his sons. Afterward, they buried their bones. Thus, The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion states that "in spite of the general prohibition against cremation", most branches of Judaism permit it (even if somewhat reluctantly).

The situation today is similar for most (but not all) Christian denominations. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church states, "Belief in the resurrection of the body made cremation repugnant to the early Christians." The article goes on to point out that the practice was "revived in the 19th century, largely in free-thinking circles, though among some Christians it has now come into favour." The Roman Catholic Church permits, but does not recommend, cremation. The Orthodox Church typically forbids it. Others sanction it, though somewhat cautiously.

In my opinion, there is no clear biblical command prohibiting cremation of the deceased. Traditionally, however, both Jews and Christians have been a little wary of disposing of a body in this fashion. There seems to be at least a twinge of conscience about whether it's really acceptable, or properly respectful (whether to God or the deceased), to cremate the dead. I can certainly understand this feeling (and even share it to a degree), but I do NOT think the Bible forbids it.

Furthermore, I do not think it creates any problems for the doctrine of a physical resurrection. Many people throughout history have been burned at the stake, eaten by wild animals, etc. Many of those who have received a traditional burial have already completely decomposed. The doctrine of physical resurrection does not require that the same atoms which once composed a body also compose the resurrection body. Indeed, if those scientists are correct who tell us that the entire atomic content of the human body changes every seven years or so this would clearly be absurd anyway. Whatever the precise nature of the resurrection body, the God who can create an entire universe ex nihilo (i.e. out of nothing) will obviously not be hindered in resurrecting the bodies of all men and women (cremated or otherwise) and assigning them to their eternal destination.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn Probe Ministries

"Is Acupuncture OK?"

What do you know about acupuncture? No one in my church knows much about it except that it works.

In a book on Alternative Medicine, written by Christian scholars at The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, the

authors noted that a National Institutes of Health (NIH) review, while finding many of the claims for acupuncture to be lacking in firm medical and scientific evidence, nonetheless reported that "acupuncture reduced nausea and vomiting after chemotherapy or surgery and was effective at relieving dental pain" (Gary P. Stewart and others, Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine: What is Good and What is Not?, [Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998], 44).

But what is responsible for the limited success enjoyed by acupuncture? The above authors write:

"Different explanations for the effectiveness of acupuncture have also been proposed. Acupuncture causes numerous biological changes, with the release of endorphins being the most significant. These compounds are part of the body's natural way to relieve pain. Also, pain in one area of the body can be reduced when another area is irritated, which may partially explain why the needles work" (p. 44).

Thus, there are some reasonable physical explanations for the limited success of acupuncture. But are there potential moral and spiritual dangers which one must be wary of in acupuncture? Yes. To quote again from the previous source, "Caution should be exercised in choosing a practitioner. Those who adhere to its roots in traditional Chinese medicine and religion may call on spiritual powers to assist in treatments, thus exposing people to occult influences" (p. 44).

This is a very good point and we would do well to be careful of such possibilities. But of course not everyone who practices acupuncture is involved with the occult. In fact, I'm aware of a local Chinese doctor who incorporates acupuncture (when appropriate) into his medical practice. But this man is a devout Christian and does not buy into the philosophical/religious ideas sometimes associated with traditional Chinese medicine.

So it appears that there is at least some evidence that acupuncture can be medically effective in treating pain and nausea. However, one should be careful in selecting a practitioner for the reasons stated previously.

Hope this helps. God bless you!

Michael Gleghorn Probe Ministries

Addendum 3/17/2019: A friend of Probe, Dr. Caroline Crocker, provided us with this insightful article on the worldview aspect of acupuncture, adding, "Acupuncture is based on nonChristian prescientific ideas. Sorry." It states that there is no scientific support for any mechanism that would explain a way for acupuncture to work, and that clinical trials show that it doesn't work apart from a placebo effect.

https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/reference/acupuncture/

"Weaknesses in Wild at Heart"

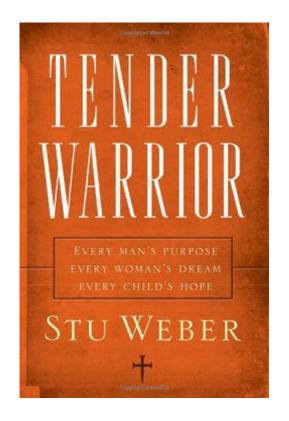
Read your article <u>"Is the Tender Warrior Wild at Heart?"</u> on the Probe website. I have studied Eldredge's book in a one-onone mentoring situation, and in a small men's group. The book came highly recommended.

I found it interesting, but left us hanging and created unresolved gaps in thinking and process. My one big question centered around "the wound" — what about the man who has already addressed and recovered from his wound? The exploration of it only creates more anguish, not healing; more pain, not godliness.

As a pastor, teacher, and consultant, I have encountered

several churches who have or are using "Wild at Heart" but finding the need to augment the material. Too bad, since there is some good material in here as well. But for many (and myself), too much to sort through and interpret, so not worth the trouble... There are other resources.

Interesting analysis you did, though. Thanks for your thinking on it.



Thanks for your reaction and comments on Wild at Heart. I agree with much of your concerns and criticisms of the book. Hopefully you caught some of that in my article. (There is a little more in an extended footnote at the end of the article.) I too found have it valuable but incomplete. I believe the book is largely written for those men who have spent most of their lives on the sidelines. Tender Warrior continues to be my book of choice for mentoring all men on God's intention for a man. Those who have experienced a vital

walk with the Lord and a fulfilling ministry will only find Wild at Heart helpful in understanding why so many men never get to that point.

Thanks again for your input.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin Probe Ministries

"Is a Raffle the Same as Gambling?"

Is a raffle the same as gambling? For example, the church has an article and they ask the brethren to buy a ticket for two dollars, then they will pick one ticket and that person whose number they pull will get that article. What does the Bible say on the subject? Please help me. I think it is gambling but there are others who do not think so.

I know of many churches that sponsor various forms of gambling (Bingo games, raffles, etc.). So your question is not unique.

At the outset, let me acknowledge that there are some differences between gambling in secular arenas and inside the church. The goal of a church-sponsored event is fund-raising, often for a good cause. The goal is not so much to win a large prize but to contribute to a good cause with the possibility of winning something.

But that distinction is often lost on those affected by gambling. Because I have written on the subject of gambling, I have been in contact with many people whose lives have been shattered by an addiction to gambling. For them, the distinction between gambling outside of church and inside church is irrelevant. Their lives have been adversely affected by gambling.

Many Christians have been writing books in the last few years about gambling, calling for the church to provide help and counseling for gamblers and their families. But I would argue that a church loses it moral authority to help those struggling with gambling. How can you reach out to gamblers and their families devastated by casino gambling, racetrack gambling, or lottery gambling when your church sponsors Bingo games and raffles?

Moreover, a Bible-centered church should be a refuge from the world. People addicted to gambling need a safe place to escape the temptations of the world. When we bring gambling into the church, it is no longer a place where an addict can escape from the world.

Norman Geisler in his book *Gambling: A Bad Bet* addresses the argument that gambling must be OK since "they do it in the church." He points out that churches do all sorts of things that can't be morally justified. Cults have promoted sexual orgies, "divine deception," and all sorts of corruption. That doesn't make it right. He and I would argue that even though gambling may help a church raise money for a good cause, we shouldn't use questionable means for a good end. The means and the ends must be moral. As one clergyman put it, "We don't need to use the devil's water to operate the Lord's mill."

Gambling is wrong wherever it takes place. I would encourage you to download my <u>article on gambling</u>. It provides a biblical perspective on this issue. I believe these biblical principles apply to gambling outside the church and inside the church. Thank you for writing.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

"Single Men Struggle, Too"

Dear Probe,

Even though I am a man, I found the article on the role of women (5 Lies the Church Tells Women) quite interesting. I especially enjoyed the section on the struggle/opposition faced by single women engaged career/ministry activity. Though

perhaps not as intense, I have also found a similiar attitude toward single men with the verses saying a pastor should be the husband of one wife being taken out of context and meaning unmarried men aren't fit for leadership either. It might be fruitful for Probe to conduct a similar study for singles.

Thank you for taking the time to share your response to my article! What an insight. It does seem, doesn't it, that sometimes people in the church are better at excluding than making people feel like they belong. . . sigh I'm so sorry. The people with the anti-single-man attitude would probably have a problem with the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul as well!

Cheerily,

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

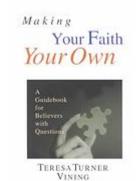
"I'm Having a Terrible Battle in My Mind"

I'm having a terrible battle in my mind. I know in my heart these terrible thoughts are lies, but getting it to my mind is hard to do. I have had thoughts of doubt, disbelief, and the devil has even questioned God's holiness to my mind. About two years ago I got serious about my walk with Christ and answered the call to preach. I need your prayers very much.

The Bible teaches the principle of "displacement." That is, rather than trying to make thoughts shoo away, we are told to replace them with what is good, true, and perfect (Phil. 4:8). As the truth comes in, the lies are displaced—much like when

we fill a bathtub too full of water, and when we get in, our bodies displace the water, which flows out over the top of the tub.

What are you doing to displace the lies with the truth? I suggest that you read and meditate on Psalm 119, memorizing portions of it and reciting them OUT LOUD whenever possible. I also suggest you play good praise and worship music whenever you can, not as background music but as something to focus on. One other thing: it would probably be good for you to invest some time in reading



books that will build your faith and send the lies packing, such as Lee Strobel's books *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Christ*, and Teresa Vining's *Making Your Faith Your Own: A Guidebook for Believers With Ouestions*.

Also, spiritual battles are fought on the battlefield of the mind, so be sure to put on all your spiritual armor (Ephesians 6). It's all anchored to truth, so fill your mind with truth. That includes being careful what ELSE you're filling your mind with, such as TV, videos, movies and magazines that are filled with garbage. Most of those sources of information or entertainment come from the world, which is Satan's realm. Cut out the garbage, which is flavored with lies about God and about reality.

Let me pray for you, as you requested.

Father God, I thank you that _____ is recognizing there is a terrible battle going on for his mind, and I ask that You show him what to do about it. Father, give him a distaste for anything other than the truth, and give him a deep desire to immerse himself in Your word and in works—books and music—that bring glory to You. Show him the source of the lies and give him a hatred of them, Father. Give him joy in resting in You and in developing discernment about his thought life. Teach him to love You with his mind as well as his heart and

strength.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"How Do You Determine Your Spiritual Gift?"

How do people determine their spiritual gift? Is it through prayer? Or does the Lord reveal it to them in some way?

There are several ways. Praying for guidance about your spiritual gift(s) is the first step, certainly. Also important is educating yourself to find out what the gifts are and what they look like in operation. And ask the people around you what they think your gifts are, if the people around you know anything about spiritual gifts! (They are found in 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:7; and 1 Peter 4:10.)

I have discovered that when you're operating in an area of supernatural gifting, it's like getting on the moving sidewalks at airports—you can get where you're going twice as fast as the people walking next to you who aren't on the people mover, and there's energy and power and a spring in your step. It's FUN! When you're using your spiritual gifts, you are aware of operating in God's power and strength instead of your own. . . and the Spirit-led response is humility instead of pride.

After studying spiritual gifts, my husband Ray and I compiled a spiritual gifts inventory that some have found helpful. I hope you do too. (These are limited to the ministry gifts and do not include the foundational gifts of apostleship or prophet, nor the sign gifts of tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings or miracles.)

Spiritual Gifts Evaluation

Teaching — The supernatural ability to explain clearly and apply effectively the truth of the Word of God.

- Do you love the Body of Christ and desire that others know more about Scripture and how to apply it?
- Do you love studying the Word of God?
- Do you have a passion for sharing the insights and principles you have learned from the Word?
- Do you find it a challenge to make complicated truths simple and understandable?

Pastor/Teacher — One who is supernaturally equipped to shepherd and feed the flock of God with the result of their growth and maturity.

- Do you deeply love the people of God?
- Do you feel a yearning to model the principles of Scripture and mentor others so that they can follow Christ also?
- Do you feel God's calling to shepherd His people, tenderly nurturing and nourishing them?

Evangelism — The supernatural capacity to present the gospel message with exceptional clarity and an overwhelming burden for those who don't know Christ.

- Do you find yourself in situations where the topics of Christ and salvation come up?
- Do you gravitate toward relationships with non-Christians?
- When others hear you explain the gospel, do they respond

by trusting Christ?

• Do you have a passion for the lost?

Word of Knowledge — The supernatural ability to receive information and truth directly from God without natural means. To know without knowing how you know.

- Do you find yourself "knowing" something you did not learn, and unable to explain how you know it?
- If you feel that God has given you a message to give to another Christian, is it confirmed by that person's response as truly coming from God?

Word of Wisdom — The supernatural ability to have insight concerning God's perspective and relay this insight succinctly to others. "Deep insight with handles."

- Do you experience flashes of insight on spiritual things, unusual in their clarity?
- Are you able to express this wisdom in ways that minister to people?
- Do you recognize wisdom in others when you hear it?
- Do people consider you unusually wise, and trust your judgment?
- Do you find yourself being quoted, and you recognize the quote as "a God thing"?

Faith — The supernatural ability to believe God for the impossible.

- When diverging roads appear before you, are you able to see God's path based on His word, in a way that others miss?
- Do you depend on God's resources and guidance to an unusual degree?
- Are you able to firmly claim God's presence in the midst of chaos?
- When God answers your prayers, is your response one of calm satisfaction rather than wonderment?

Exhortation (Encouragement) — The supernatural ability to come alongside and help others by comforting, encouraging, challenging, and rebuking.

- Are you especially sensitive to people?
- When you encourage someone, do they respond with grateful appreciation?
- Is the timing of your encouragings usually "perfect"?
- When you challenge or rebuke another believer, is it well received?

Showing Mercy — The supernatural ability to minister compassionately and cheerfully to those who are difficult to minister to.

- Do you have the ability to sense when a person is in need, even before they tell you?
- Are you drawn to people with emotional or physical pain, and to those society considers "unlovely"?
- Do you have an intuitive sense of when to be quiet and when to speak, or what to say and what not to say?
- Do people seek you out when they're hurting? Do they enjoy having you around?

Giving — The supernatural ability to give of one's material goods to the work of the Lord consistently, generously, sacrificially, with wisdom and cheerfulness.

- Are you enthusiastic when presented with an opportunity to give money to meet a need?
- Are you constantly looking for ways to give?
- Do you enjoy giving privately or anonymously?
- Do you REALLY think of money as God's, not yours?

Leadership/Administration — The supernatural ability to organize and lead projects while handling people tactfully and providing the vision to keep them at the task.

• Do you enjoy taking a disorganized situation and

straightening it out?

- Are you able to motivate others to complete the project? Do people respond when you step in to give leadership?
- Do you enjoy planning and completing projects?
- Do you enjoy sorting out details, or do they frustrate you?

Service — The supernatural ability to serve faithfully and joyfully behind the scenes, in practical ways, in long-term commitments to service.

- Do you willingly volunteer to help with details?
- Do you prefer to work behind the scenes?
- Do you gain a sense of satisfaction when others succeed as
- a result of your behind-the-scenes work?
- Is faithfulness over the long term important to you?

Helps — The supernatural ability to minister joyfully to God's people in short-term service with flexibility and sensitivity to what needs to be done.

- Are you sensitive to specific and immediate needs?
- Are you flexible?
- Would you rather meet a one-time need than commit yourself to long-term service?

Discernment of Spirits — A supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and spirit of error, between holiness and evil. Can instantly sniff out when someone's a phony or lying.

- Do you have an internal alarm that goes off when you encounter something phony or evil?
- Even when you're the only one who senses something wrong, is your "intuition" eventually validated?
- Do you (and others) consider yourself a good judge of character?

Hope this helps!

"How Do We Repent If Those We Hurt Are Dead or Far Away"

If we are asked to make up to those we may have offended, ask for their forgiveness—before prayers are answered or before coming to God, how do we possibly repent if those we hurt are no longer alive, or if many years have passed and they are now married, have good jobs? If we hurt people in the past by our very attitude daily—and everyone, really, we came in contact with for any length of time through negativity and criticism—how can such a lifelong sin be forgiven? How to ask repentence of so many? A very kind woman is praying for me today, and I don't want to get too close, or mislead her, but her prayers are so BIG I almost think I can begin again after many, many years away from life. Don't mean to sound self-pitying. I really do just want to make sure I don't weaken another good person again.

What wonderful questions!! I can sense that God is answering your friend's prayers by opening your mind to a new way of thinking.

Repenting means to change the way we think and to turn 180 degrees around, a U-turn, in our behavior. Repenting of our bad thinking and behaving patterns is the first step. Then comes the step of asking for forgiveness, which is necessary for there to be any reconciliation. They are two separate steps.

If the person we hurt is no longer alive, then we can't ask

for forgiveness. We can receive God's forgiveness, but that's where that process ends. The next step may be to grieve the loss of that relationship and the loss of the ability to be reconciled. You just have to leave that in God's hands.

If the person we hurt is still around, then we need to pray and ask God if HE is the one telling us to contact the other person and confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. (In some situations, that would cause even more pain and it's best left in His hands.) As you continue to pray about each person you have hurt, God will give you direction about what you should do concerning each one. The best way to handle it is often through a letter because it gives the other person the opportunity to think about what you've said before replying. And it even gives them the opportunity to decline to reply at all. So you honor that person in several ways.

Your "lifelong sin" can and WAS forgiven in one moment (the moment you trusted Christ—I am assuming you have made that decision) because Jesus paid for it. His love is stronger than your sin, and His blood is more powerful than your sin. He wiped out the penalty for it. You may not have the forgiveness of those whom you offended, but you DO have God's total and unconditional forgiveness. God doesn't command you to secure the forgiveness of everyone (you don't have that kind of power), He tells you to do what is within your power to do. That is, acknowledge and confess your sin, and ask for forgiveness. That's why Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." If someone doesn't grant the forgiveness you humbly ask for, you can't be reconciled with them, but at that point it's not your fault.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"How Do We Discern God's Will?"

Ray and Sue,

I was hoping I could take a few minutes to ask a question and draw upon your experience and wisdom. It concerns knowing the will of God and faith and confidence. We have a decision to make in our family, and there are good reasons to believe we should go through with it, for the benefit of many of us. There are many factors involved: financial, relational, comfort, influence of the children, etc. And, though I may be convinced it is the right thing, there is still an uneasiness. Now, I know many of the principles of finding God's will:

- What is righteous
- Peace after prayer / Clear feeling of direction
- Open and closed doors
- Blessing to others
- Wisdom of scripture
- Wise counsel (uh, that would be you guys!)

My question is whether my uneasiness is a lack of faith. In studying science (and especially probability and statistics), we define confidence as a measure of certainty, and it is always somewhere on the continuum between 0 and 1, exclusive of the endpoints. So, I feel that I cannot say anything with 100% confidence, though I may approach that on the most serious issues in life. And when I want to determine the will of God in the gray areas, my confidence is much less than on things of which I'm doctrinally certain.

If it is a lack of faith, does this have spiritual

implications I'm unaware of? I mean you can say I'm sure God exists, and I'm certain Jesus was raised from the dead. To some extent, though, my confidence is based upon my perception of these realities. Any my perception can always have a (remote) possibility of being false, right? The easiest person in the world to fool is myself (Richard Feinman). Even if I know God wants me to walk that tightrope, I may still have an uneasiness as I do it, right? Is this a lack of faith? What am I missing here? What are your experiences regarding this?

Thanks for your time. I'll be very appreciative of any insight you can throw my way.

Dear	 ,

Good to hear from you. Glad to know God is leading you into places of uncertainty!

Let me explain. It sounds like you have availed yourself of godly wisdom and sound counsel. Your hesitancy is not so much a lack of faith as it is a normal human reaction to change. It's called fear! Stepping out of our comfort zone! When a soldier is asked after performing a heroic deed in battle if he was scared, he invariably says YES! Courage is not the lack of fear but the ability to do what is right in the midst of fear. Jesus Himself experienced the agony of Gethsemane. It wasn't a lack of faith He wrestled with, but the very real fear of separation from the Father. Once He was convinced that the path ahead was the will of the Father, He went ahead despite the fear.

Each time I was elected chairman of the elders at our church (two consecutive years), I experienced times of wrestling with God whether He really wanted me to do that. I was scared of not being able to measure up. I felt unqualified. But once I was convinced that this was His path, I was still scared and insecure but determined to follow His path for me regardless of the consequences.

I have found that this is precisely where God wants us so we can depend on Him and not ourselves. If we are fully confident in our own abilities and decision-making, then our confidence is in our own flesh and not in Christ. Sometimes we need to be put in a rather squeamish or uncertain position, so we can recognize that it got done by His grace, and God gets the glory and not us.

If God is leading you in an uncertain or slightly scary position or decision, that means He is giving you an opportunity to grow. Will you trust Him or yourself? He won't shout or make it so plain as to be a no-brainer. He wants to see if you are listening to that still small voice despite the contrary noise of your flesh. I have never regretted stepping out when it didn't always make complete sense. The fear or uneasiness often doesn't dissipate until well after the decision is made and the results begin to show.

You are right to say that we are never entirely certain of anything. But that is not a lack of faith, just being human.

As a whole, I am firmly convinced that the church suffers today because too many are unwilling to face their fear or indecision and truly rely upon God and not themselves. I think you already know what is the course He wants you to follow. My advice is to make the decision knowing that at every step you are relying on Him and not yourself.

Respectfully,

Dear ____,

Ray Bohlin

So good to hear from you, and thank you for honoring us with this question!! I loved what Ray wrote and mega-dittoes to him on everything he said. I just have one thing to add. . .

I think that when we have a decision to make, it's either

between two good things OR between the right thing and the wrong thing (or possibly wise and unwise). If it's a choice between good things, we can choose either one and the Lord will be glorified and He will accomplish His purposes either way. In that case, it's been my experience that we don't necessarily get a super clear "YES, DO THIS AND DON'T DO THAT" kind of response from the Holy Spirit. Which can be a little unsettling because we want clear direction and instead what we get is the Lord saying, like a waiter opening the menu before you, "Choose whatever you want and you'll enjoy whatever you choose."

Then there's the other kind of choice, which is between right and wrong or wise and unwise. I like to think of those as "red light/green light" kinds of choices. Either the Lord gives us a red light ("Stop! Don't do it!" or a check in our spirit) or a green light, which is either a sense of being given permission or a lack of any constraint otherwise (and sometimes it's a clear "Go for it!").

So my question is, is your uneasiness due to a "red light," in which case making that choice would be disobedience, or simply the reality that you're not completely sure?

Sounds to me like it's the second, which takes you back to what Ray said about the humanness of experiencing fear as we step outside of our comfort zone.

Hope this helps!

Warmly, Sue