As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

—Colossians 3:12–17

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Growing in Christian Morality

Student Casebook

by Kathleen Crawford Hodapp

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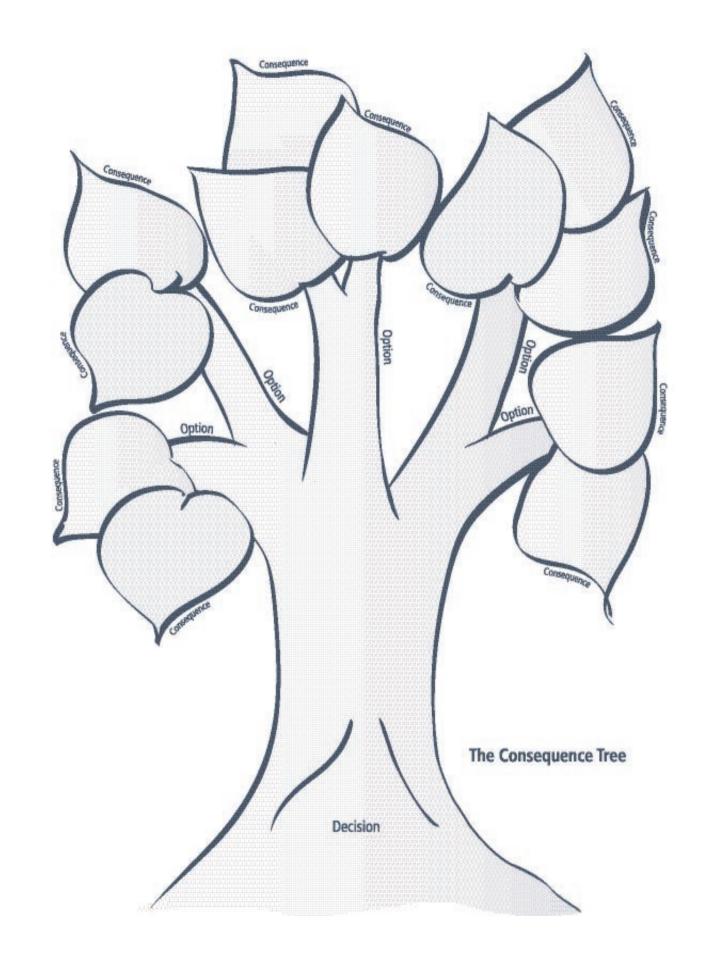


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Introduction to the LISTEN Process

You will surely encounter thousands of decisions on your way to becoming the person you are meant to be! You may make some of these decisions quickly and easily; others may be the outcome of much struggle and discernment. Good decisions require an open attitude as well as an open mind and heart. How will you make these decisions? The purpose of this casebook, filled with true stories from young people's lives, is to give you an opportunity to apply the LISTEN decision-making process to real-life situations. You will find it a practical tool in making moral decisions that are consistent with the Christian vision of morality.

The Value of Listening

In our action-oriented culture, listening is often seen as a passive verb and definitely not as a value. However, in moral decision making, listening is a dynamic, active process. To listen actively is to be open to the world around us. When we listen, our mind must be engaged, working on what we hear and sorting it out. Only then can we evaluate what we hear and know in our heart how we must act.

Active listening also requires the element of humility. To listen humbly is to be open to the opinions, insights, and observations of others. An attitude of humility promotes active listening by preventing us from presuming that we have all the answers and do not need to listen closely to others. The elements of good moral decision making can be thought of as ways of listening to reality.

Not a Perfect Process

Moral decision making is about listening to the full reality of life, and life is rarely neat and orderly. The LISTEN process of moral decision making is similar to a runny, messy blueberry pie. From the top, it looks fairly neat, cut into six separate pieces. But when you try to lift any one of the pieces out, you see that circumstances, motives, advice from others, religious teachings, values, gut-level feelings, and anticipation of consequences, all run together.

It is also possible to sincerely complete the LISTEN process and arrive at a decision that is not good, one that does not promote full humanness. Because we human beings are imperfect and limited, we can never guarantee that our own deliberations will turn up conclusions that are objective and morally right. However, following the LISTEN process sincerely gives us a better chance to discover what is objectively right than if we made our decisions simply from our biases or inclinations. We may be limited in our grasp of reality, but the LISTEN process expands our vision to help us see with clearer eyes.

The LISTEN Process

Appropriately, the first letter of each of the elements spells out LISTEN. Below are key questions to ask yourself for each step. Refer to these when working on the cases in this book and in real-life situations.

Look for the Facts

- 1. What facts do I need to know to make a good decision?
- 2. What exactly is going on in this situation?
- 3. Why is it happening?
- 4. Who is involved?
- 5. Why are they involved?
- 6. What are their motives?
- 7. When is this situation happening?
- 8. Is there a time frame involved with this situation?
- 9. Where is this situation happening?

Imagine Possibilities

- 1. What are all the possible choices I could make in this situation?
- 2. What are the consequences, short- and long-term, for each possible decision?
- 3. What is the most loving response I could have in this situation?
- 4. How can I be creative in my approach to this decision?

Seek Insight Beyond Your Own

- 1. What would my family advise me to do?
- 2. What would my friends and community say I should do?
- 3. Is there a legal issue involved?
- 4. What would Jesus do?
- 5. What does the Bible say about this situation?
- 6. How could the values in the Ten Commandments or Beatitudes lead me to a good decision in this situation?
- 7. What is the church teaching on this matter?

Turn Inward

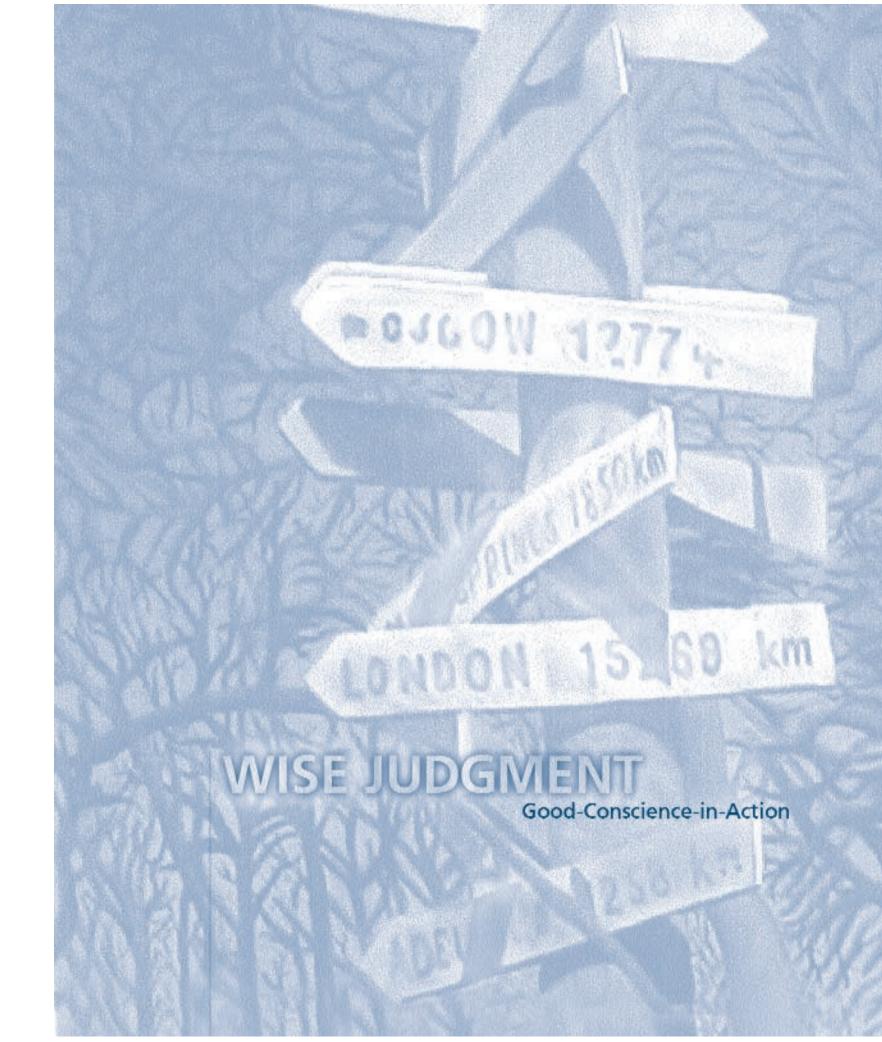
- 1. What is my inner reality saying to me?
- 2. What is my conscience telling me?
- 3. What are my personal feelings about this situation?
- 4. What are my motives for acting one way or another?
- 5. What do I need from the decision I make?
- 6. What do I most want from the decision I will make?
- 7. What does my gut-level sense of things say about this?
- 8. Do I have an intuitive understanding of this situation?

Expect God's Help

- 1. How is God present in this situation?
- 2. How is God with me as I discern what I should do?
- 3. What can I pray for as I make this decision?

Name Your Decision

- 1. What am I going to decide?
- 2. Why should I decide this?
- 3. What values am I living out in making this decision?
- 4. What is my plan for carrying out this decision?





A Deadly Practical Joke

One Saturday night, fourteen-year-old Matilda Kaye Crabtree had planned to spend the night at a friend's house while her parents were away. But later she changed her mind and the two girls went back to Matilda's house.

Hours later, around 1:00 a.m., Matilda heard her parents' car pull into the driveway. She and her friend decided to play a practical joke on them by making noises as they hid in a closet. They wanted to make it seem like someone was breaking in.

When Mr. Crabtree heard the noises, he found his gun and went through the house to investigate. Matilda heard her dad approaching and then jumped out of the closet yelling, "Boo!" Taken by surprise, Mr. Crabtree fired his pistol, shooting his daughter in the neck. Matilda's friend was not hurt.

LISTENing ■ Judgment Case 1

Judgment Case 1

Use the LISTENing steps and space below to reflect on the case you just read and to decide what you would do if you were in Matilda's situation.

L ook for the Facts	

Matilda was rushed to the hospital, where she died twelve hours after the shooting. The last words she spoke to her father were, "I love you, Daddy."

No charges were filed against the father. A deputy said that Mr. Crabtree totally focused on Matilda while she was in the hospital and was devastated by what happened.

L S T E N

Imagine Possib	lities				
Seek Insight Be	yond Your O	₩n			
S eek Insight Be					
S eek Insight Be					

LISTENing ■ Judgment Case 1

T urn Inward	
Expect God's Help	

Name Your Decision



Judgment Case 2

Stop-Sign Prank

After bowling in a Wednesday night league, Kevin left the bowling alley to meet up with two friends and go cruising. They were driving on a dark stretch of highway outside Tampa, Florida. They passed a sign warning that a stop sign was ahead, but the sign wasn't visible. The boys drove into the intersection without stopping and were hit by an eight-ton semi-truck. The car left no skid marks, and the prosecutor said that the boys did not see the truck coming. All three boys were killed by the tremendous impact.

The police investigation found that the stop sign had been pulled from the ground and was left lying on the side of the road where no driver could see it. Kevin's mother could not believe that anyone could do something like this to deliberately put people in danger.

LISTENing ■ Judgment Case 2

Use the LISTENing steps and space below to reflect on the case you just read and to decide whether you would participate in taking down stop signs with your friends.

Look for the Facts		

Three people were suspected of removing the stop sign and consequently causing the accident. Three roommates, Thomas Miller, Christopher Cole, and Nissa Bailey, were heard bragging to friends and reporters about vandalizing road signs and drinking heavily. One reporter asked Christopher why he would do something like that. "Just for a rush," he said. "I don't really think it was a rush like a happy rush. It was more like a 'I hope we don't get caught' type of rush. It was, in certain ways, fun."

Christopher and Nissa also confessed to police that they dumped some of the stolen signs into a creek. The three admitted that they took down nineteen signs, but not the one that caused Kevin's fatal accident. Nissa said, "I'm sorry to the parents that their kids got killed, but I know in my heart I didn't do it."

L 1 S T E N

Imagine Possibilities
Seek Insight Beyond Your Own
S eek margine beyond roun own

When asked by a reporter if they had thought about what might happen when taking the stop signs, Christopher Cole simply said, "We didn't think it through at the time." Nissa said, "We didn't expect all of this out of just taking a few signs off of back roads."

"People may look at them and say, 'Oh, it's just a prank,' but the bottom line is, these people have to be held accountable for a prank that resulted in the death of three people," said the reporter. Charged with grand theft and manslaughter, Thomas Miller, Christopher Cole, and Nissa Bailey were all found guilty. The jury decided upon this verdict in less than four hours.

LISTENing ■ Judgment Case 2

T urn Inward		
Expect God's Help		



Name Your Decision