

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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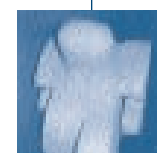


Table of Contents

Introduction to the LISTEN Process 8

Wise Judgment: Good-Conscience-in-Action

Judgment Case 1: A Deadly Practical Joke 12

Judgment Case 2: Stop-Sign Prank 16

Judgment Case 3: A Senior Prank Gone Too Far? 20

Justice: Love's Minimum

Justice Case 1: Blowing the Whistle 26

Justice Case 2: Harassment at School 30

Justice Case 3: Appropriate Punishment, or Torture? 34

Courage: Facing Our Fears for the Sake of the Good

Courage Case 1: Rescuing Friendship 40

Courage Case 2: Staring Down AIDS 46

Courage Case 3: Saving Her Children 50

Wholeness: Toward Strength, Beauty, and Happiness

Wholeness Case 1: Living High 56

Wholeness Case 2: Teen Parents 60

Wholeness Case 3: Dying to Be Whole 64

Wholeness Case 4: Bulking Up 68

Honesty: Creating Trust

Honesty Case 1: Driving Honestly 74

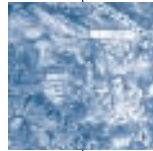
Honesty Case 2: An Epidemic of Cheating 78

Honesty Case 3: Little Big Lies 82



Respect for People: Looking Again

- People Case 1: Abusive Relationships 88
- People Case 2: Who Belongs? 92
- People Case 3: Intimidation 96



Compassion: Solidarity with Those Who Suffer

- Compassion Case 1: Getting to Know Angie 102
- Compassion Case 2: A Change of Heart 106
- Compassion Case 3: A Family in Service 110



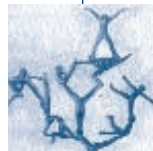
Respect for Creation: The Earth As God's

- Creation Case 1: Caring for the Environment 116
- Creation Case 2: Simple Living 120
- Creation Case 3: Trees Can Help 124



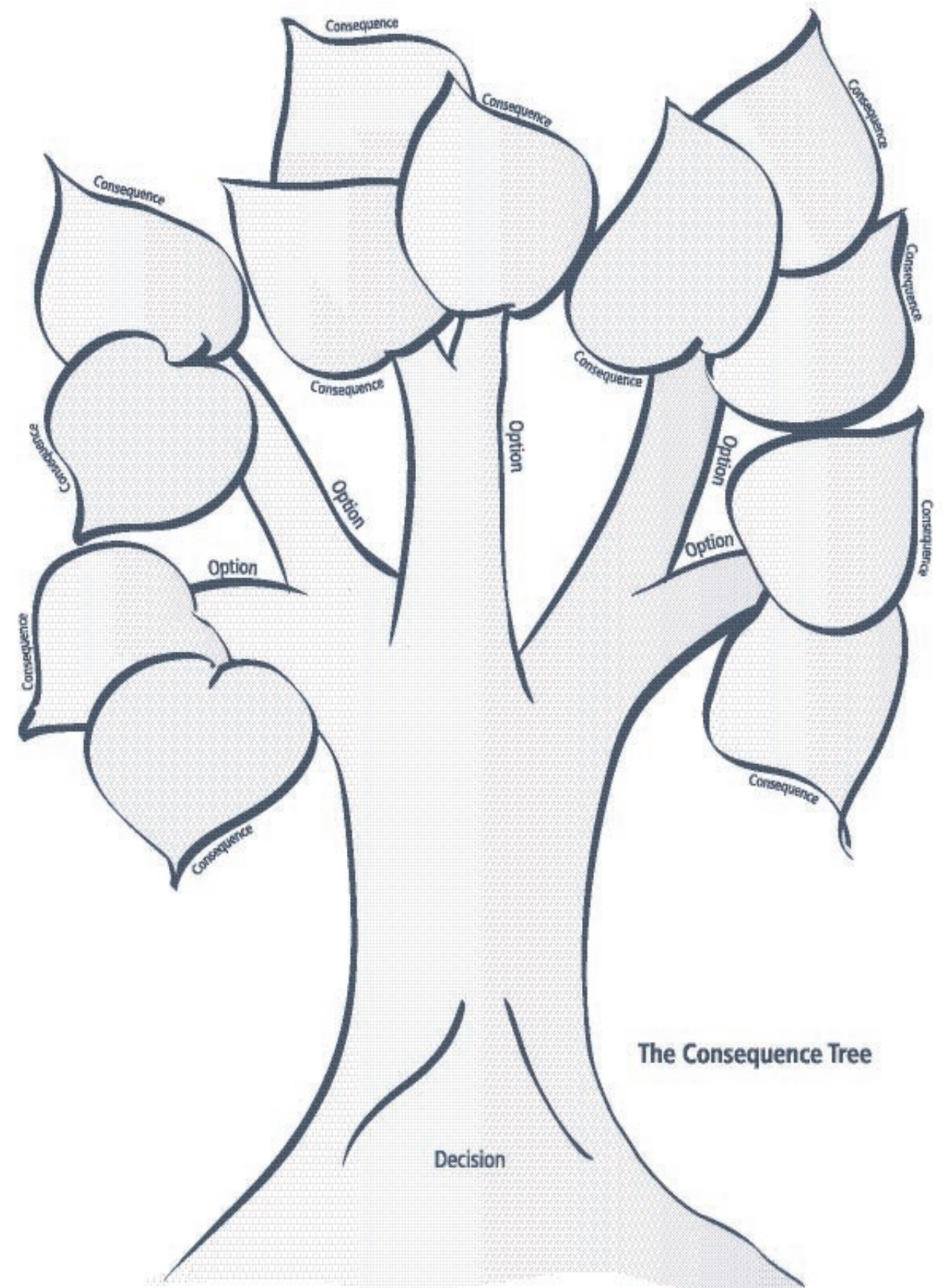
Reverence for Life: Cherishing the Gift

- Reverence Case 1: Sisters for Life 130
- Reverence Case 2: Mother and Daughter 136
- Reverence Case 3: A Time to Die 140
- Reverence Case 4: Driving to Death 146



Peacemaking: Handling Conflict with Creativity

- Peacemaking Case 1: Wrongly Accused 152
- Peacemaking Case 2: Waging Peace 158
- Peacemaking Case 3: Following Her Conscience 162



The Consequence Tree

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

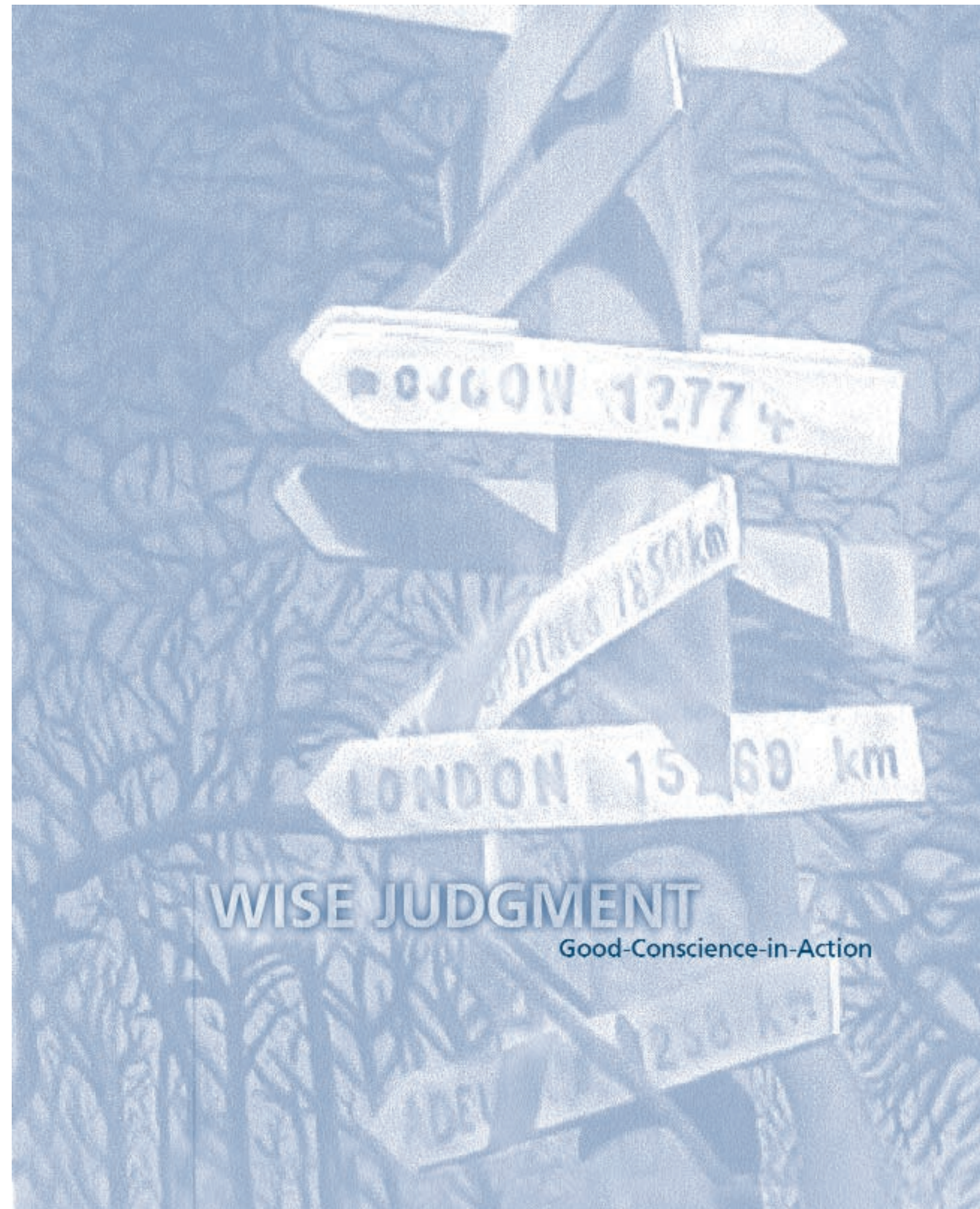
1. What is my inner reality saying to me?
2. What is my conscience telling me?
3. What are my personal feelings about this situation?
4. What are my motives for acting one way or another?
5. What do I need from the decision I make?
6. What do I most want from the decision I will make?
7. What does my 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?



WISE JUDGMENT

Good-Conscience-in-Action

