

# 1. Understanding Principles, Patterns and Practices

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Sometimes we hear the term “Principled Leadership”, which means that a person who practices “principled leadership” bases their leadership patterns & practices entirely on certain principles, rather than flipping around & acting randomly according to circumstances or their personal preferences.

A man of principles is quite predictable in his patterns and practices – you can trust him, and safely expect him to do what’s right in every situation. After all, he is a man of principles!

Not so with a man of preferences. A man of preferences is unpredictable in his actions – he will flip around and act randomly according to what’s best for him in the moment.

For example, many politicians are not persons of principles. They say one thing, but end up doing another. Rather than being guided by solid principles in what they say and how they vote, they follow the vein of popularity and give in to lobbying pressures from various interest groups.

## Definitions of Terms:

1. Principle – from Latin “*principium*”, meaning “beginning”
  - a standard or rule of personal conduct
  - a fundamental or general truth or law
  - an underlying or guiding theory or belief
2. Pattern – a standard repetitive way of speaking or acting
  - ie. a pattern of speech or a pattern of a certain behaviour
3. Practice – to carry out a certain action, doing things, etc.

Ideally, all of our patterns (# 2.) and practices (# 3.) should be based on fundamental principles (# 1.)

## Some Examples of godly fundamental Principles:

- Honesty
- Kindness
- Diligence
- Hard-working
- Punctuality
- Pro-life
- Keeping our word
- Other-mindedness (we-ism)
- God-fearing

### Quote by Edwin Louis Cole

*“You become successful and prosper when you base your life on principles and find the patterns that work for you. The more you build your life on principle, the higher your highs, the straighter your path, and the greater your life.”*

- Ed Cole was the founder of the Christian Men’s Network, a Christian ministry dedicated to discipling men
- He is considered by many to be the father of today’s Christian men's movement, including Promise Keepers
- Ed Cole used to teach men to be men of principles instead of men of preferences

## Some Scripture References about Principles:

**Galatians 3:11 (DARBY)** ... *by (the) law no one is justified with God is evident, because **the just shall live on the principle of faith;***

- As believers, we are called to walk by faith and not by sight (1 Cor. 5:7)
- Therefore, we seek to apply faith in all areas of our life (ie. Marriage, parenting, health, finances, job, business, etc.)
- Faith is our guiding principle
- The written Word of God is our guiding document

**Romans 13:5 (AMP)** *Therefore one must be subject (to authorities), not only to avoid God’s wrath and escape punishment, **but also as a matter of principle** and for the sake of conscience.*

- We are called to submit to authorities is a matter of principle, not just to avoid the consequences of rebelling against authorities

- (This is becoming increasingly difficult and complex, as various authorities are becoming more crooked in their intentions, and more evil in their policies & law-making)

**Proverbs 18:1 (LB)** *The selfish man **quarrels against every sound principle of conduct** by demanding his own way.*

- A selfish man rejects every sound principle
- He does not wish to be hampered in his style by guiding principles
- Instead, he wants to act according to his own preferences

**Proverbs 6:32 (AMP)** *But whoever commits adultery with a woman **lacks heart and understanding (moral principle and prudence)**; he who does it is destroying his own life.*

- Persons who lack moral principles will always stray into futile pattern & sinful practices
- Moral principles limit our options in life (truth, sexuality, heterosexuality, monogamy etc.)
- Acting on multiple options in sexuality will destroy our lives
- (Narrow is the gate that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14), and wide is the way that leads to destruction)

**Matthew 1:19 (LB)** *Then Joseph, her fiancée, **being a man of stern principle**, decided to break the engagement but to do it quietly, as he didn't want to publicly disgrace her.*

- Joseph, Mary's fiancée, was a man of stern (strong) principles
- When he found out about Mary's extramarital pregnancy, he decided that he could not proceed with his plans of marrying Mary
- But instead of publicly disgracing her, he decided to break up his engagement with her quietly
- This shows that he was not only a man of strong moral principle, but also a man who operated by strong principles of kindness and other-mindedness

### **Example of Jesus Christ:**

- Our Lord Jesus lived out the highest moral and ethical principles above any other man

- Jesus' commitment to principles were tested at His temptation by the devil in the wilderness

**Matthew 4:3–10 (NKJV)** *Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” 4 But He answered and said, “**It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’**” 5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” 7 Jesus said to him, “**It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’**” 8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! **For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’**”*

Satan tried to tempt Jesus into a pattern of fleshly preferences and selfish practices, but Jesus was a man of the highest principles!

One of Jesus' primary principle: Total obedience to God the Father  
 Jesus' commitment: I will only do what the Word of God says!

**Psalm 111:10 (NET)** *To obey the Lord is the fundamental principle for wise living; all who carry out his precepts acquire good moral insight. He will receive praise forever.*

The moral of the story:

- Wise people always obey God and live by His Word
- Foolish people follow their personal preferences and suffer the consequences