

RATIONALIZE

A criminal may rationalize committing a crime; but he has still committed a crime. A witness to a crime may rationalize that she should not tell the truth under oath – because it may lead to someone else’s prosecution and incrimination; but she is still committing perjury or giving false testimony. A country may rationalize the invasion of another country; but both the innocent and the participating will die and much destruction could occur.

In the movie, “The Big Chill”, Jeff Goldblum takes a position that people make more rationalizations than any other thing: that is, that people are constantly making rationalizations or justifying what they do as the moment-by-moment thought processes occur. I think he is right – we do rationalize a great deal whether we realize it or not...maybe it’s to clear our conscience, to make us feel good about ourselves or our decisions, but we make rationalizations all the time.

Rationalizations are not necessarily bad – sometimes such thinking is just a logical way of approaching a problem or decision; but if the rationalization involves justification of a wrongful act, it could be bad. As in the examples described in the first paragraph, rationalization can sometimes occur as a wrongful action seemingly intended to benefit someone...but at the expense of someone or something else.

The basis or justification for a decision and action may not be sound; in other words, it may not have been given sufficient thought, time, etc. Even with sufficient thought, however, the basis may be altogether corrupt, sinister, and even wicked – intended to cause evil or hurt to others for one’s entertainment, satisfaction, or desire for revenge of some kind. To rationalize decisions with a corrupt basis is to determine that pain and suffering caused to others is, in a demented way, necessary and justified to bring a sense of satisfaction or appeasement to another – one will bask in the pain and hardship of another. Proverbs tell us that *a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths*. Those who devise wicked schemes, who rationalize such behavior and decisions, are known for their folly.

Even if the basis seems sound, by much thought and time, it may still be lacking in the sense that sin or wrong may be included in the *total package*. Again, Proverbs tell us that *there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death*. Following along this same chapter, *a simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thoughts to his steps*; and yet further still, the chapter address the worst of rationalizations with a question:

Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.

In a **WORD**