

Moral Dilemmas

1)

A runaway train is racing toward five men who are tied to the track. Unless the train is stopped, it will inevitably kill all five men. You are standing on a footbridge looking down on the unfolding disaster. However, a fat man, a stranger, is standing next to you: if you push him off the bridge, he will topple onto the line and, although he will die, his chunky body will stop the train, saving five lives. Would you kill the fat man?

You are the network administrator for a rather large company. You have a young family and need your job to support them. As part of your responsibility as a network administrator is to monitor the emails for the organization. Usually this just means occasionally allow through emails for staff members that have been accidentally blocked by the spam filters.

2)

One day you get a helpdesk request from a staff member asking for an email to get released. Normally it's standard procedure except this time the request has come from the wife of a very good friend of yours. You recognize the name on the helpdesk request so quickly attend to the problem. As part of the procedure you need to manually open up the email to ensure that it isn't spam, so you do and you discover that it certainly isn't spam. You find that it's actually an email to your friend's wife from her lover. You scan the rest of the contents of the email and there is no doubt that she has been having an affair for some time now.

You release the email, but you can't decide what to do. Your initial reaction is to call your friend up and tell him about the email, however you quickly realize that company policy is very strict about revealing the contents of confidential emails of staff members regardless of the contents and unless someone's life is in immediate danger, under no circumstances are you permitted to reveal the information.

In any case you know that revealing this information presents great risk, because even if you don't do it directly, there is a good chance that the dots will be joined somewhere along the line and you will be found out. However you feel that by not telling your friend that you are aiding his wife get away with adultery and this troubles you greatly.

What do you do?

3)

One morning you are driving to work, and as per usual you are running a bit late, so you are driving a touch faster than the speed limit. You reach down to your stereo to change the CD, when all of a sudden your car hits something solid. You spin to a stop, but not before several more cars have run into you and each other in an attempt to avoid the accident.

As you look up and out of your car, you can see that you hit a person, and that the person is not looking very good. In fact, you are sure that they are dead. You shakily get out of your car, and look around at the damage that has been caused. Several cars have been badly smashed up, but more importantly you have killed someone with your careless driving.

As you are standing there in shock, a woman comes up to you, tears running down her face, and obviously very shook up. As a natural reaction, you ask her what is wrong. She gives you a funny look, and then she explains that she just ran over someone. You ask her where this person is, and she points towards the person that you ran over!

You don't understand why, but for some reason this woman thinks that she caused this accident and killed the person, when in fact you are well aware that you were the cause. Whoever accepts the blame is likely to be placed in jail for a very long time. If you let the woman take the blame, there is a very good chance you will get away with it all. However, there is also the chance that you could be placed in jail for even longer for trying to cover it up.

4)

You are going on a cruise. 2 days into the cruise your ship experiences technical difficulties and the captain says it needs to make an unscheduled stop. A couple of hours later the captain makes another announcement that the ship's hull has been breached and that you will all need to start heading to life rafts and abandon ship. The ship's life rafts are lowered as people begin to pile in and you get on board one of the life rafts.

As it is lowered however, it hits the side of the ship, putting a hole in the side of the raft, and when it hits the water it begins to sink. There are 10 people in the boat and to prevent it sinking, you quickly work out that by having 9 people working for 10 minutes while 1 person rests you can bail the water out with their hands, quick enough to keep the water at bay and preventing it from sinking, but you have to continually keep it up to ensure that the boat doesn't sink. By being able to rest one person you are greatly able to increase the length of time you can keep the boat afloat, however if the rescue team doesn't turn up you calculate that within 5 hours the boat will sink and you will all die.

While taking your break, you glance over to another boat and notice that a friend of yours who you met on the boat is there and has noticed your predicament. He is signaling for you to come over and join them on their boat so you don't have to continue bailing water out. There is only just enough room for one more person. You also notice that their boat is moving away rapidly with the current, but your boat can't keep up because the hole is affecting its buoyancy.

You estimate that if you jump ship, you will force all 9 remaining crew members to bail water continuously, which will reduce the total time they can stay afloat to just 2 hours, but will ensure that you will be able to live long enough to be rescued.

If you stay aboard, you will not have another chance to jump ship, and there's no guarantee that the rescue will arrive in 5 hours, meaning you will drown, however by staying you give everyone a better chance of survival.

As you watch the boat with your friend drift away, you realize you have about 30 seconds to make a decision:

- a) Do you stay on your current boat and help keep it afloat as long as possible and hope that the rescue will arrive in 5 hours
- b) Do you go to your friend's boat, ensuring your rescue, but reducing the chances of the others on the boat being rescued?