

MORTAL SIN 101

For a sin to be considered *mortal*, ALL 3 of the following conditions must exist:

1. The act must involve *grave matter*
2. The act must be committed with *full knowledge*
3. The act must be committed with *deliberate consent*

In other words, the action must be ¹**REALLY BAD**, you need to ²**KNOW** how really bad it is, and you need to ³**PURPOSELY CHOOSE** to do it.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each example below. Then, using the 3 conditions listed above, decide whether a mortal sin has been committed or not.

EXAMPLE SITUATIONS

Example #1

Mr. Rutabaga killed a man yesterday. He knew that it was wrong but he did it anyway.

ANSWER: Murder is a “grave” (serious) matter, Mr. Rutabaga knew it was wrong, and he deliberately chose to do this. Since conditions 1, 2, and 3 are met, this would be a mortal sin.

Example #2

Mr. Rutabaga received a strange note in the mail one day. It read, “*Tomorrow morning at work you must throw burning acid on your boss’ face. Note: If you show or tell anyone about this note, I will kidnap your children when you least expect it.*” Mr. Rutabaga knew throwing acid on his boss would be wrong, but the pressure to keep his children safe led him to acid bomb his boss while at work the next day.

ANSWER: Conditions 1 and 2 are met, but Mr. Rutabaga did not *completely* choose it by his own free will. He was pressured into committing this sin and therefore it would probably not be a mortal sin for him (although it is still obviously very bad).

Example #3

Mr. Rutabaga found an unopened bag of delicious Skittles on the ground yesterday. Mr. Rutabaga knew that these Skittles probably belonged to someone else, but since he didn’t see anyone around he decided to keep the bag and eat all the Skittles himself.

ANSWER: Mr. Rutabaga knew that it would be wrong to eat the bag of Skittles, but he freely chose to do it anyway. While conditions 2 and 3 are met, eating a lost bag of Skittles would not be considered “grave” (serious) matter. Therefore, this would probably not be a big enough sin to be considered *mortal*.

Example #4

Mr. Rutabaga stayed up really late one Saturday night eating popcorn and watching movies with some friends. When Sunday morning rolled around Mr. Rutabaga felt pretty tired and lazy and decided to skip Mass for the day. “After all”, he thought, “It’s not that big of a deal.”

ANSWER: TRICK QUESTION. We need to find out more about Mr. Rutabaga. Does he really know that missing Mass without a good reason is a sin? Has he ever been taught this? Did he think about this when he decided to skip Mass that day? Etc.

Mr. Rutabaga’s, “It’s not that big of a deal” line should give us a hint that he does not know the 3rd commandment (“Keep holy the Sabbath”) and does not understand how important and amazing the Mass (specifically, the Eucharist) really is.

For example #4, it would probably be safe to say that condition #2 is missing from Mr. Rutabaga’s decision to skip Mass (he probably has no idea that skipping Mass out of laziness could be a mortal sin).