

...But What if I Don't Call it "Sin"?

The issue is whether or not *God* calls it sin. If he does, then pretending that it *isn't* sin won't cause it to *stop* being sin.

Is it sin?

You need to make sure that God *does* call it sin. There are many people who want to push their own opinions on people they have no authority over. You have no obligation to do (or to believe) what they say.

On the other hand, you also need to remember that God *does* speak about everything in life, whether *directly* (such as doing activities that are directly mentioned in the 10 Commandments) or *indirectly* (such as what you plan to eat for supper - example: 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Can it become sin?

Many things that belong to the "indirect" category are simply matters of freedom - it doesn't matter whether you do them or not. However, they may also be linked to other actions which belong to the "direct" category. In this case, the impact that your "free" choice has on your obedience to God's *direct* commands will determine the rightness or wrongness of that "free" activity. Furthermore, something may be perfectly acceptable for you to do (as far as its impact on *your own* conduct is concerned), but if, in doing so, you cause *someone else* to fall into sin, then it becomes sin for you to do it.

A special note regarding this issue:

Some "Pharisee-like" people will distort this principle and try to use it to *restrict* the freedom that God has given us. They may pick some issues that God calls "matters of freedom," and claim something like this: "Someone, somewhere might see you doing it, and fall into sin... so you should *never* do it." Often the theoretical examples they give will involve someone you don't know, who supposedly sees what you are doing, reaches false conclusions about it, and uses your actions as a justification for sin. Such a view is just as sinful and distorted as the other view that says you can do whatever you want, with no regard for its effect on others.

Anything that is not done out of love for God and neighbor (or that is incompatible with love for God and neighbor) is sin. Anything that is done with the wrong motives is sin. This includes activities that, under *other* conditions, might have been perfectly legitimate and pleasing to God, *or even commanded by him*.

How should we respond?

We can "redefine" sin and call it something else, if we want. We can "justify" our actions and excuse our conduct, if we wish. But in the end, we will stand in God's presence and give an account for our values and conduct. At that time, all our pretension will be stripped away, and we will be exposed for what we are.

Wise, and blessed, is the person who accepts God's ways before that time!