

Sorting through the Gray Areas

COMPROMISE. With friendship, it comes in many different shades. Sometimes things are black and white: Compromise is either a clear betrayal of your own values or it's a clear case of putting aside your own needs to meet those of a friend's.

But there are times when compromise is colored gray, when you're not sure which is the best course to take. Here are some guidelines for sorting through such situations.

■ *How important is the relationship?* The more important the relationship, the more you want to invest in it. The more important the relationship, the more significant the long-range consequences of your actions become.

■ *Analyze the underlying expectations.* Most of the time when we feel pressured to com-

promise, it's due to someone else's expectations of us. If the expectations are good ones, we can feel good about meeting them. If the expectations are not really in our best interests, we should beware.

■ *Look to an objective standard.* Don't let feelings carry you away. Set standards for yourself. When you're not sure what is right, find out. The Bible is full of wise counsel on right living.

■ *Think about long-term consequences.* In what direction will compromise lead you? Will it build up the relationship over the long run? Will it drag you down a path you don't really want to go?

■ *Weigh the costs.* What will you give up, and is it worth it? Again, answer this question in terms of the value of the relationship and the long-term consequences of your action.