

Engaging the skeptics
on ethics

**DOES THE BIBLE GIVE
ABSOLUTE RULES, OR
ONLY CONDITIONAL ONES?**





Ethics

The study of what we ought to do or not do (including how we come to beliefs about ethics)



Goal-based ethics

We should do what produces the goal(s) we seek (usually defined as "happiness").

GENESIS 3:4-6

The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."



GENESIS 3:4-6

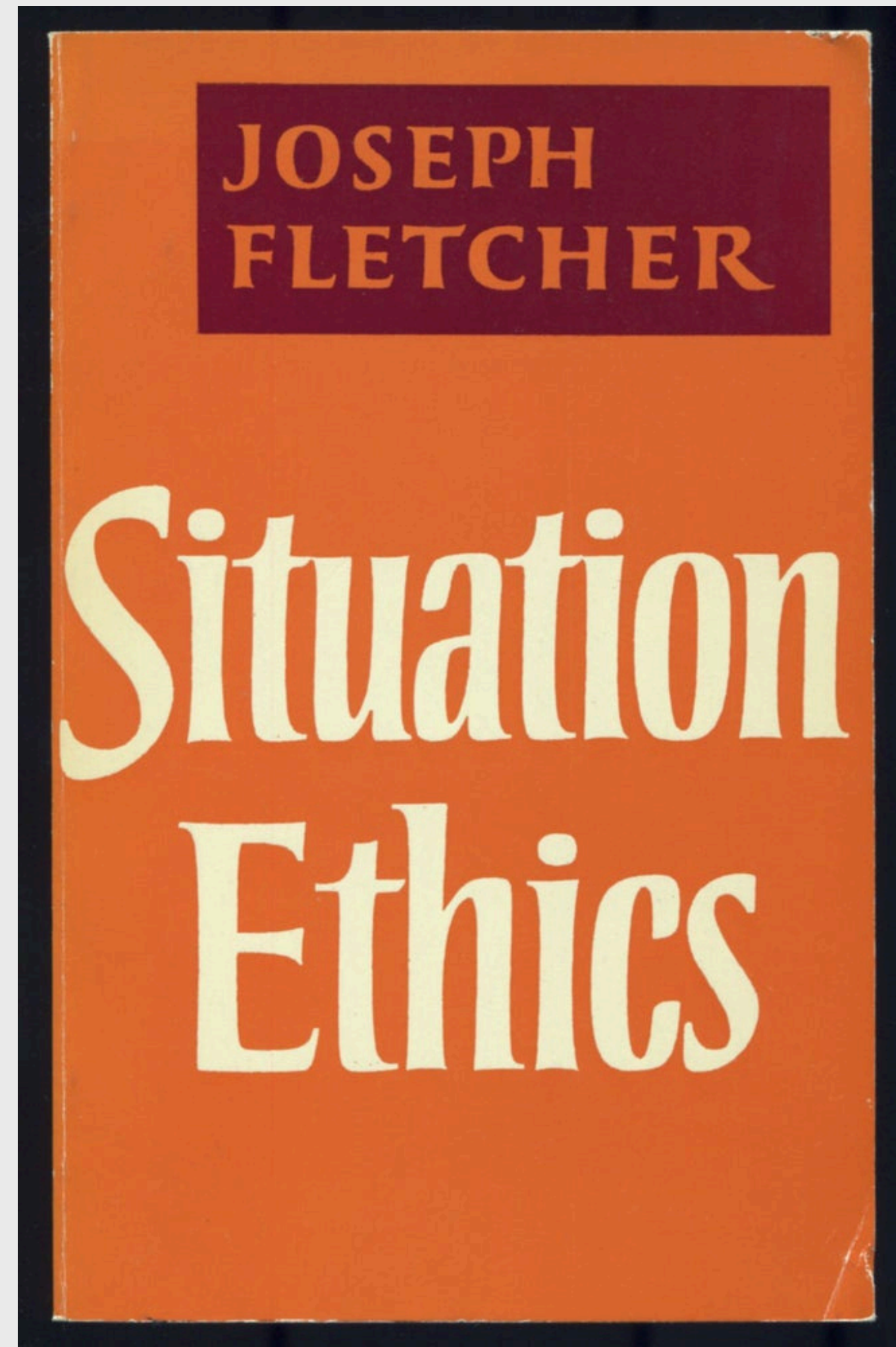
When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.





Defining situation ethics

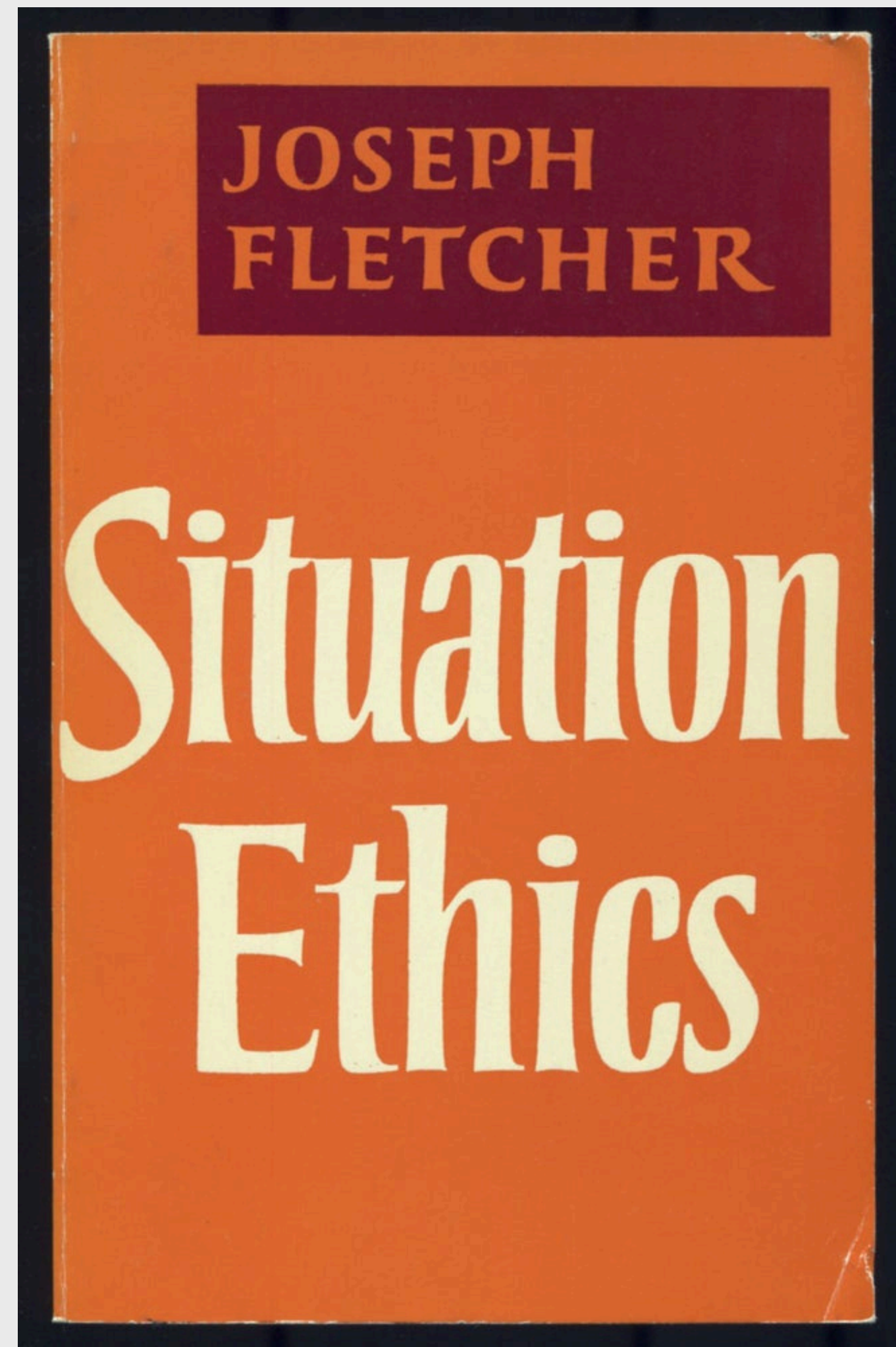
The “**situation**” in situation ethics is defined as “the relative weight of the ends and means and motives and consequences all taken together, as weighed by love” (p. 23).





Defining situation ethics

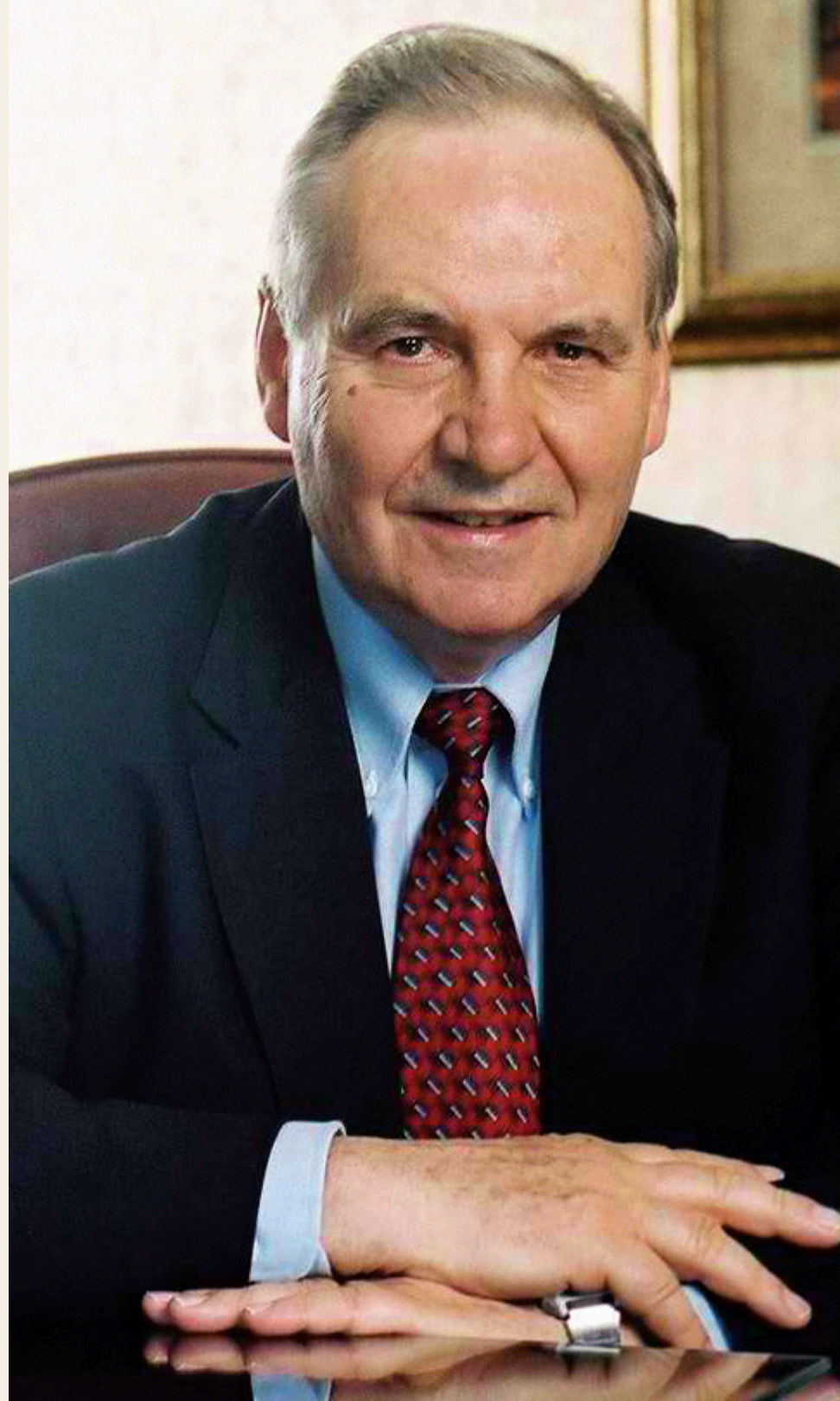
All moral rules are conditional upon the situation. For example: "Thou shalt not steal ... *unless* love demands that you steal in a particular situation."





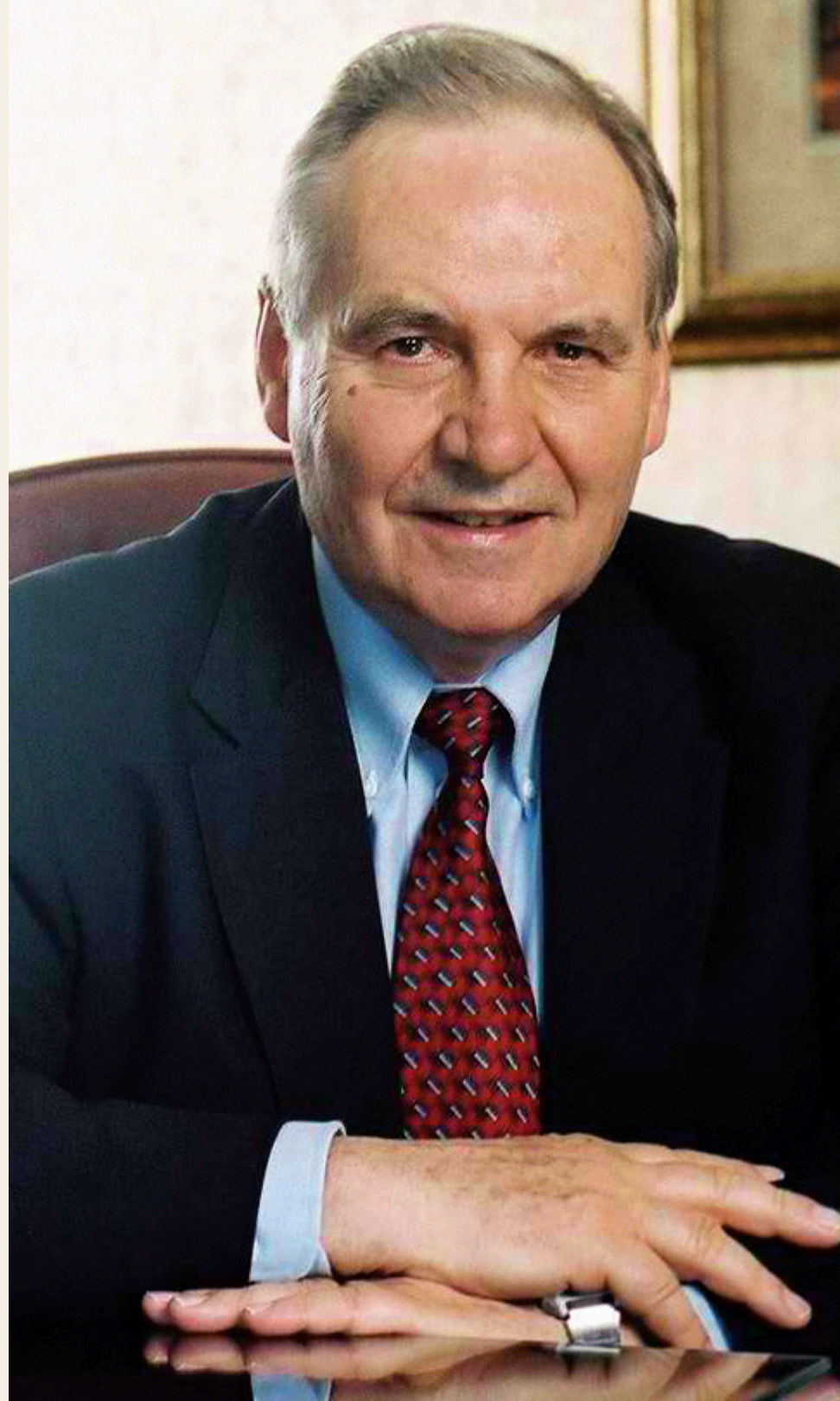
George Barna

"This is reflective of a nation where morality is generally defined according to one's feelings. In a postmodern society, where people do not acknowledge any moral absolutes, if a person feels justified in engaging in a specific behavior, then they do not make a connection with the immoral nature of that action. . . . Until people recognize that there are moral absolutes and attempt to live in harmony with them, we are likely to see a continued decay of our moral foundations."



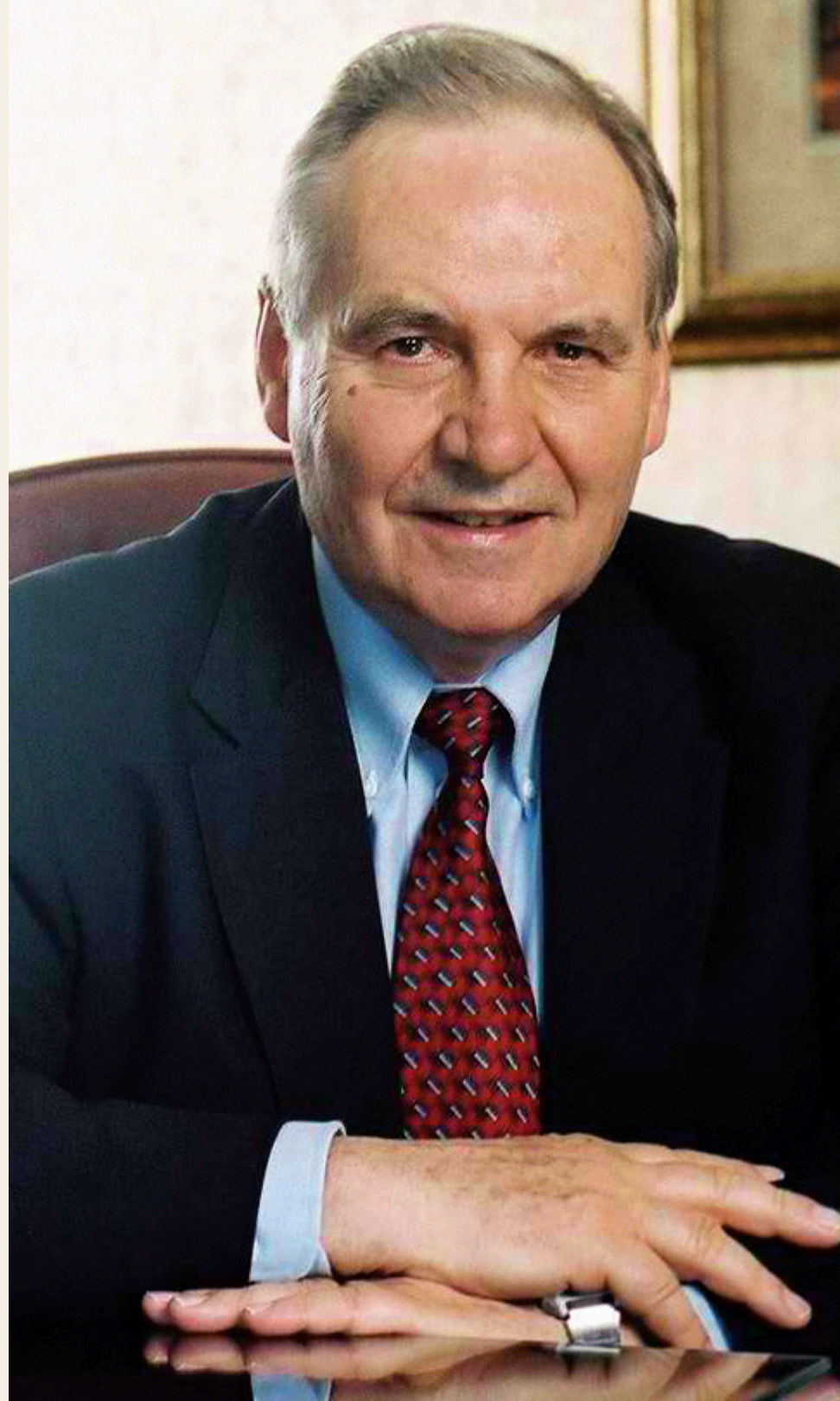
NORM GEISLER'S "GRADED ABSOLUTISM"

God does not hold us accountable
for failing to keep one law, so long
as we keep the higher law.



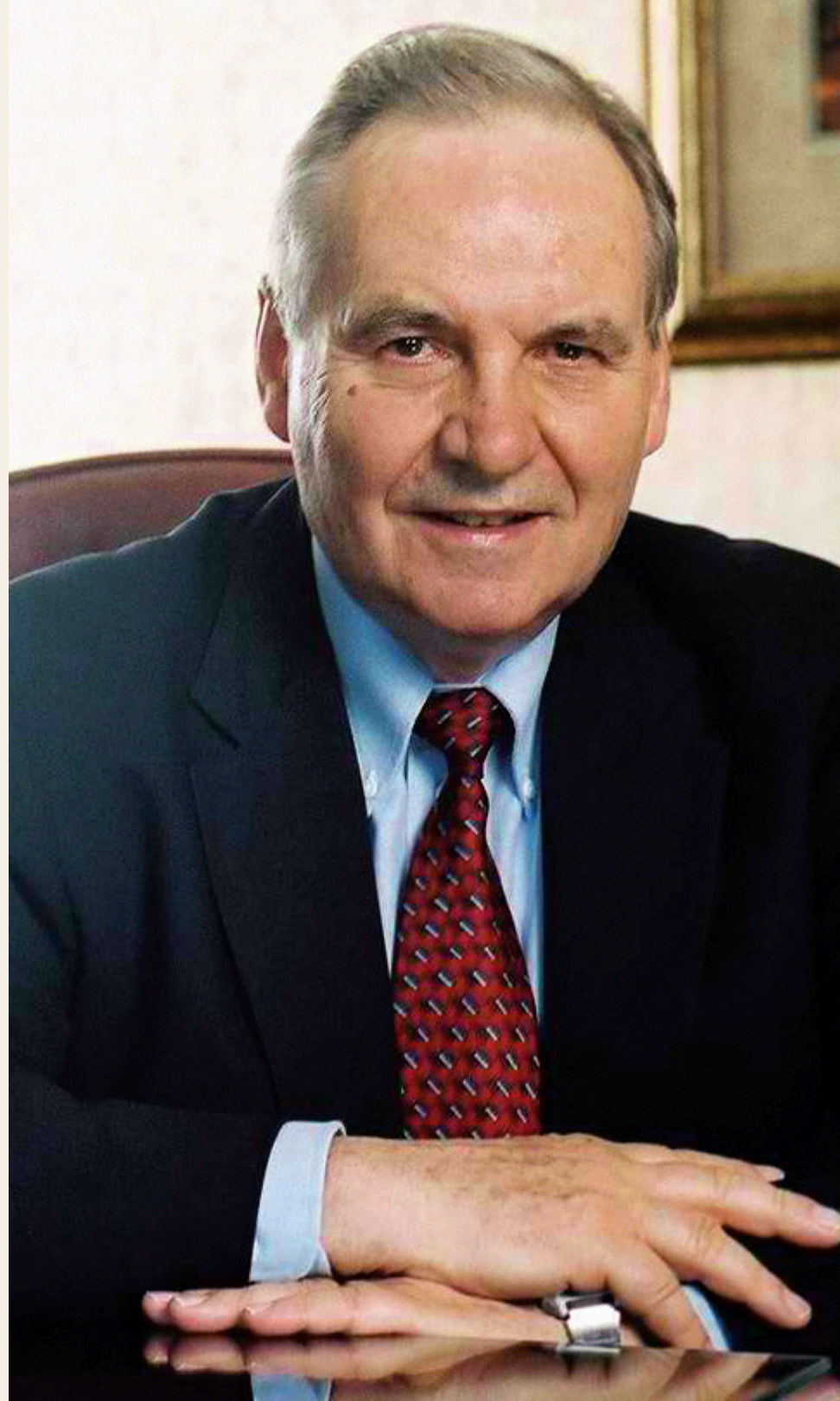
GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

The Hebrew midwives (and other biblical characters) disobeyed civil government (Exodus 1:15-22; Daniel 6; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29).



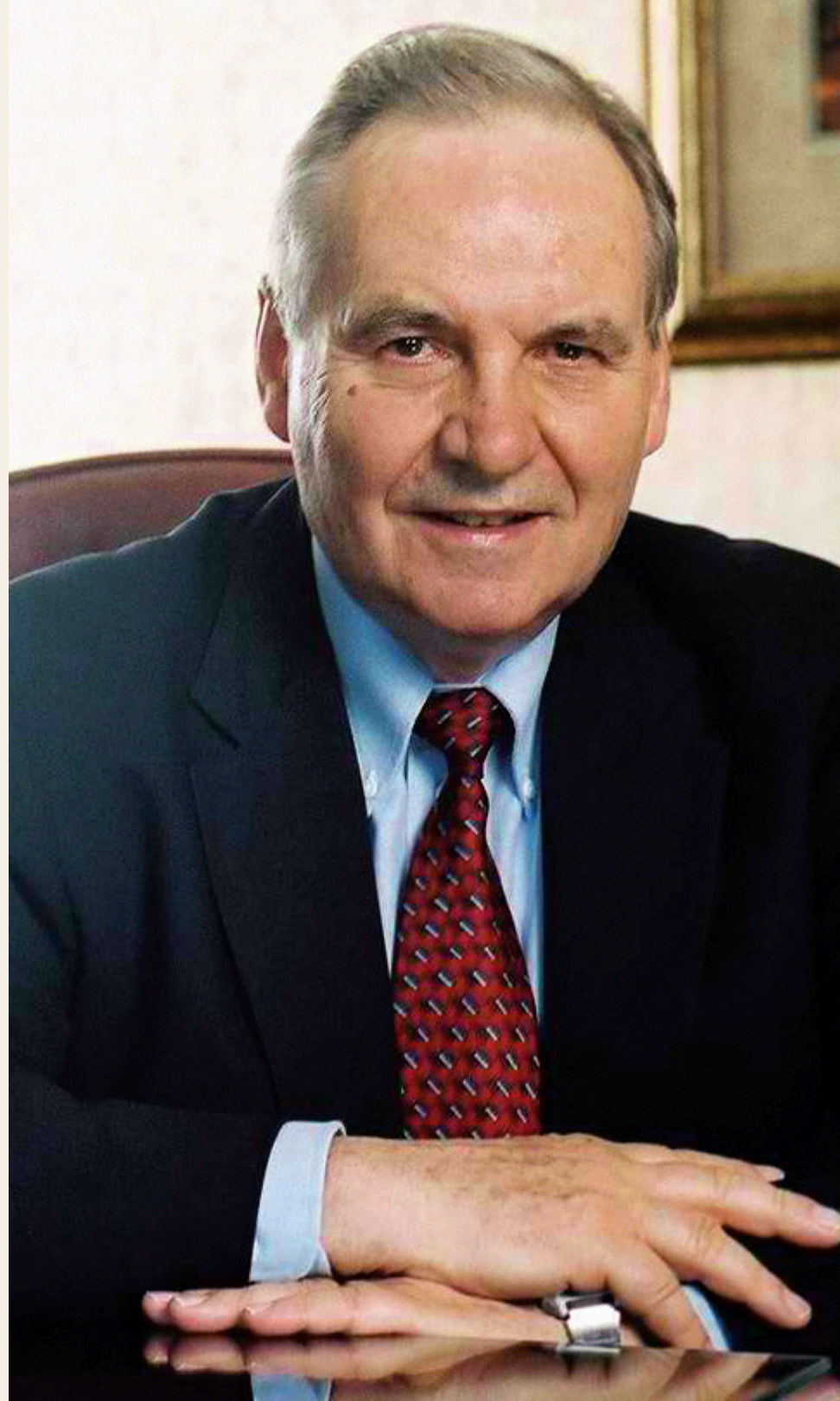
GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

Jesus disobeyed His parents (Luke 2:41-49).



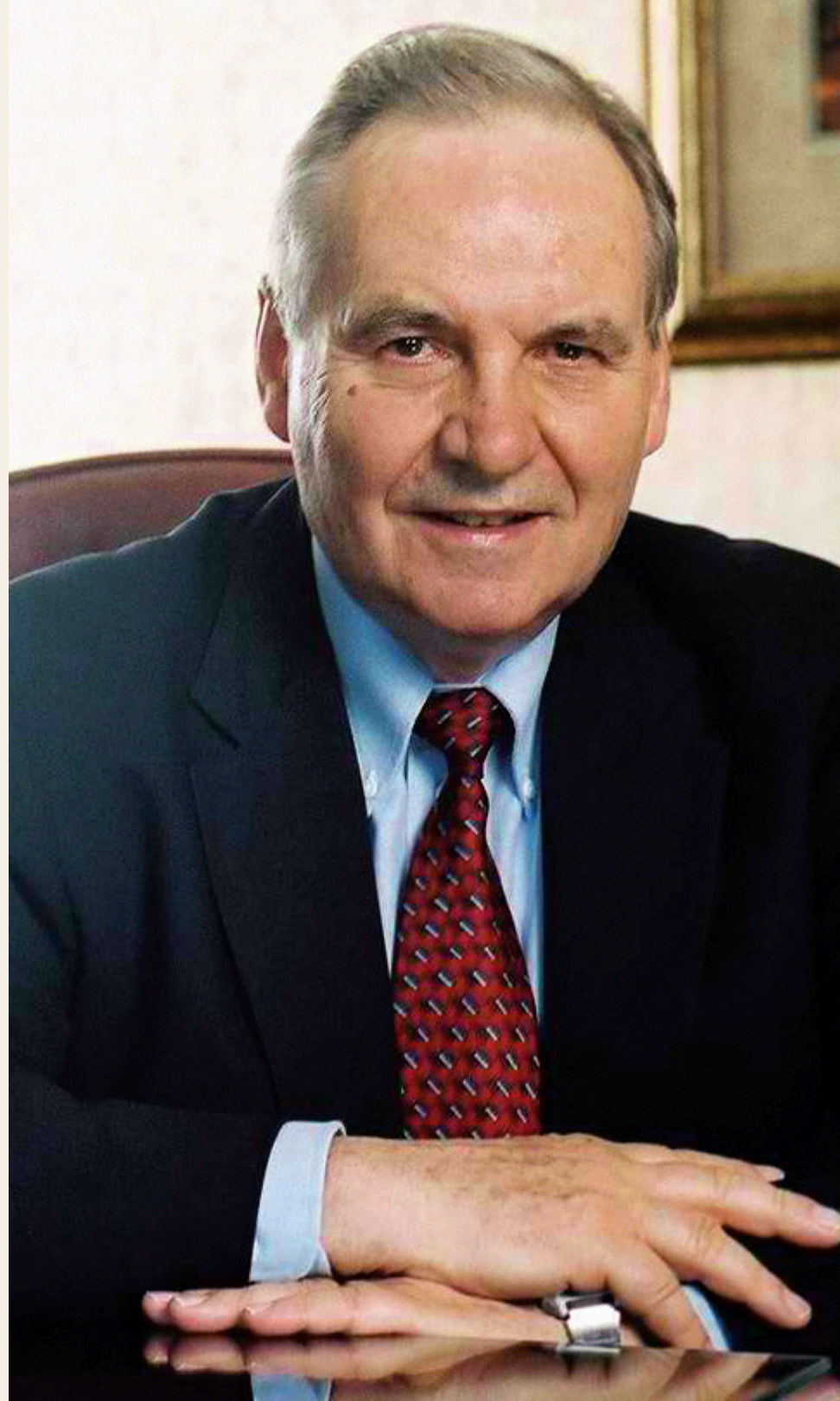
GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

Jesus disobeyed the law of Moses by working on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28).



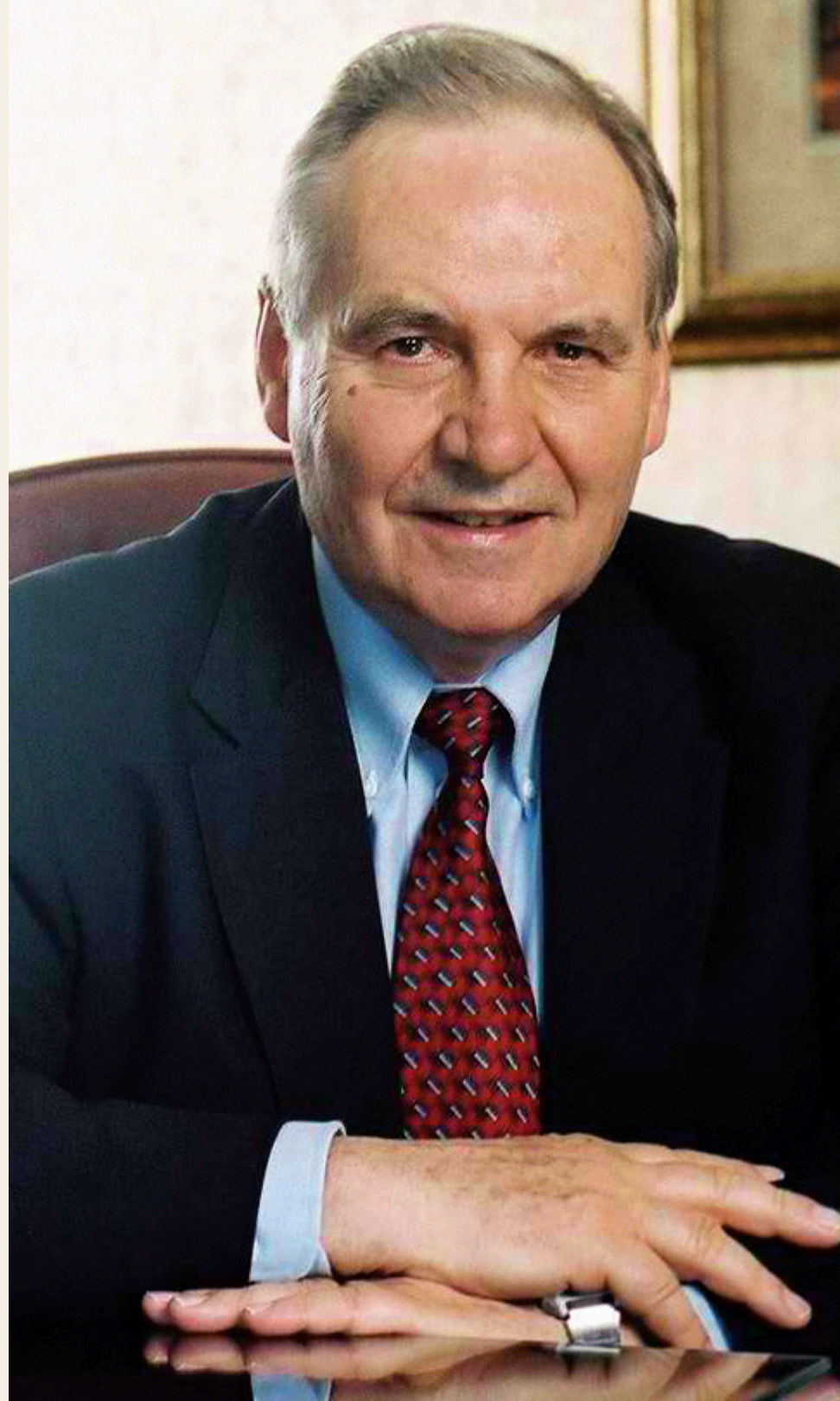
GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

God commanded the killing of innocent people (Genesis 22; Judges 16:28-30).



GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

A man comes late to dinner to save a life.



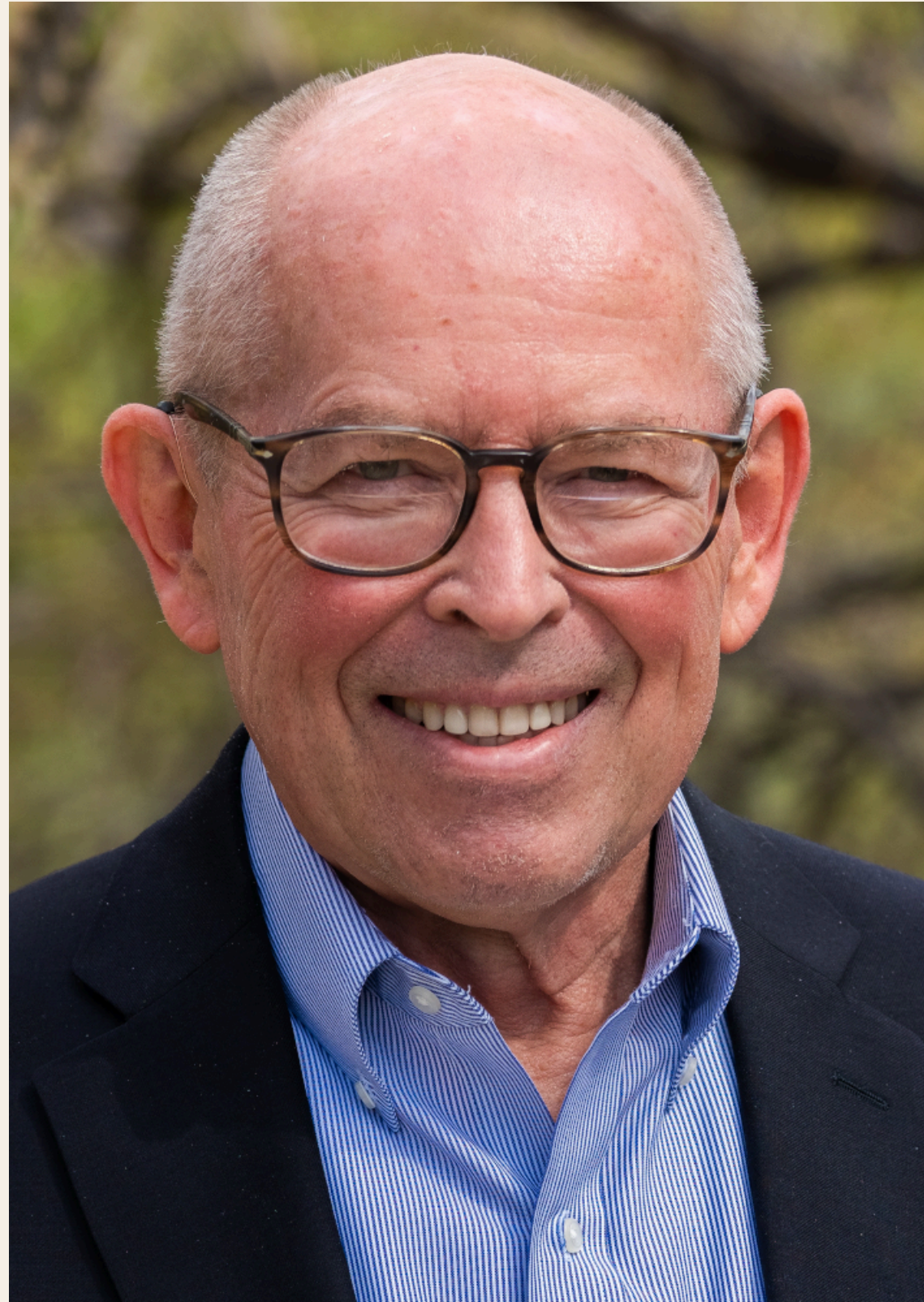
GEISLER'S EXAMPLES

A man tells a lie to save a life.

(SOME OF) THE BIBLE'S ABSOLUTE PROHIBITIONS OF LYING

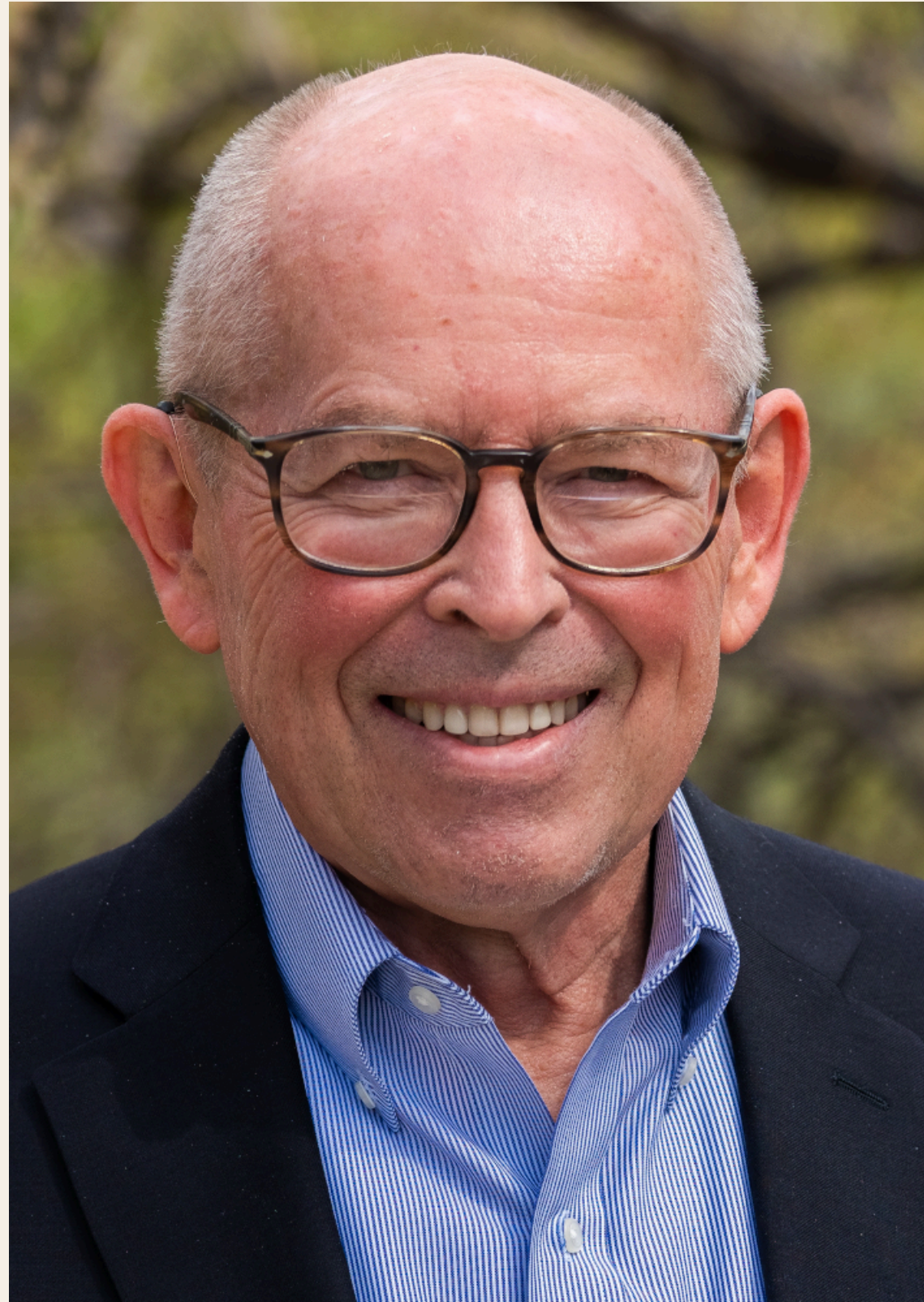
Exodus 20:16; Numbers 23:19; Proverbs 12:22;
Proverbs 6:16-19; Zephaniah 3:13; Matthew 7:12;
John 8:44; 14:6; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians
3:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:10





WAYNE GRUDEM'S EVALUATION

Graded absolutism encourages relativism by positing that love is a “basic conviction” that can override the rules of the Bible when we believe that it should.



WAYNE GRUDEM'S EVALUATION

Those who wish to rationalize a sin will always be able to think of a "higher moral law" to follow in a situation of temptation.

GRUDEM'S "NONCONFLICTING BIBLICAL COMMANDS" VIEW

- We are accountable to all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).
- The life of Christ proves that we never will be forced to sin—even to commit lesser sins (Hebrews 4:15; John 8:29, 46; 10:35; 15:10; 1 Peter 2:22).
- God condemns all sin and never wants us to disobey even a single command of His (Deuteronomy 5:10, 29; Psalms 19:1-7; 119:35; Luke 1:6; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 John 5:2-3).

ROMANS 3:8

And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.



WHY PAUL PROMISED THAT WE NEVER WOULD FACE AN IMPOSSIBLE MORAL CONFLICT (1 CORINTHIANS 10:13).

- There are weightier and lesser commands, but the lesser commands are still binding (Matthew 5:18-19; 23:23).
- It would be unjust of God to give us contradictory commands.
- If God's commands conflict, then this would suggest that there is moral conflict in God's mind (1 Corinthians 14:33).

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