

Who's Morals Matter?

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What are morals and who determines what they should be? Once they are agreed upon, should they be applied universally? If so, who should have the authority to do this? If a moral code of conduct is not enforced, will it make any difference to a society?

These are important questions that should be addressed, especially when there are many different opinions about moral conduct. From an historical perspective, values are shifting rapidly due to a combination of socioeconomic factors that previous generations did not experience. Today, there are efforts to reach a consensus on issues such as climate change, globalization, automation, and artificial intelligence because these pose a potential threat in the near future. However, the biggest threat to the world's future is "moral bankruptcy" leading to chaos, tyranny, and anarchy. Man's history has experienced episodes of a total breakdown in human morals and the consequences were literally catastrophic (Gen. 6:5-7; 19:1-25). Before proceeding further, a definition of "morals" is in order:

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

An authoritative code of morals has force and effect when it expresses the settled customs of a stable society (*Walter Lippmann*)

The science of morals endeavors to divide men into the good and the bad (*J.W. Krutch*)

Synonyms: *All right, decent, ethical, good, honest, honorable, just, nice, right, right-minded, righteous, straight, true, upright, virtuous.*

Adjectives: *Moral, ethical, virtuous, righteous, noble, which mean conforming to a standard of what is right and good. It implies conformity to established sanctioned codes, or accepted notions of right and wrong.*

Sadly today, many people decide what their standards of behavior should be; regardless of how that might negatively impact other people, or whether their actions contravene standards of conduct that would have been considered unacceptable a decade or so ago. Yes, there may have been problems in previous decades, but that does not justify throwing out the many positive values that worked, in many cases, for centuries.

Today, it is becoming unacceptable to publicly criticize issues such as abortion or same-sex marriage. Also, those who are supportive of capital punishment, for premeditated murder, can be publicly maligned. Consequently, basic rights such as freedom of speech/expression are under attack. This is more than evident if one's political opinion is not aligned with the so-called "majority consensus", with its "supposed" wisdom, or higher moral values. In many educational systems, child discipline is being eroded in favor of the beliefs espoused by the religion of modern psychology. These are only some examples of a world that has lost its way, and is in desperate need of foundational principles that will insure its continued existence and prosperity. So where do we turn for these principles?

It would be helpful if there was a universal understanding of what is true, versus what is false. If we could arrive at an accurate definition of what is true, this would be a starting point upon which other societal values and institutions could be built. A thoughtful Roman leader in ancient Judea knew that the search for truth was illusive, probably due to the same problem of

misinformation that existed during his generation.

Pilate therefore said to him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that **I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.**" ³⁸Pilate said to him, "**What is the truth?**" ... (Jn. 18:37-38a; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; emphasis added).

Therefore, one aspect of understanding what is true requires trusting someone's word, opinion, or interpretation on any given subject. Even though Christ could explain the truth, Pilate dismissed it because he knew that trusting the word of others was unreliable, and Pilate did not know Christ well enough to trust his word. Unfortunately today, the majority of mankind absorbs lies in many forms including half-truths and misinformation from politicians, religious figures, news media, and educators; in concert with inherited traditions that go unchallenged from generation to generation. Consequently, we cannot arrive at the correct solutions to serious problems, which include how to interact with parents, spouses, family members, employers, and communities at large in a manner that is constructive, helpful, and respectful. Sadly, even though we have more information than ever before, it can lead to confusion and various forms of internal and external conflict, rather than solving problems. Why? Because it contains half-truths, personal bias, plain ignorance of the facts, and ignores or misunderstands the source of all truth.

But you Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; (at that time) many shall run to and fro, and **knowledge shall increase** (Dan. 12:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

But know this, that in the last days perilous time will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but **denying its power** (God's authority to determine right from wrong). And from such turn away! (2Tim. 3:1-5; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2Tim. 3:7; emphasis added).

So access to huge volumes of knowledge is not the solution to our problems because it does not lead to a correct understanding of what is true, versus what is false. If so, every answer to our problems would easily be available through the internet and/or social media. Again, mankind needs to understand that there is only one source for the truth, and unfortunately we have been trained to marginalize it, if we recognize it all. This occurs because the basic truth on all important matters in life comes from only one source, and that source is spiritual, but we are physical, or carnally-minded.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because **the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God,** nor indeed can be (Rom. 8:5-7; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

But **the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor does he know**

them, because they are spiritually discerned (1Cor. 2:14; emphasis added).

From the early stages of man's history, our forefathers had freedom to choose whether to believe the source of all truth, or ignore it in favor of a better narrative from another so-called authority on this subject. This other authority was already in a state of rebellion against God's word because, in his opinion, he had a more reasonable way of doing things. According to scripture, he was a master of propaganda and therefore able to persuade anyone who listened to him (Gen. 3:1a). The problem is, anyone who believed he was speaking the truth could not see the consequences of his proposals until they acted on them. By acting on them, they simultaneously placed their trust in a rebellious spirit-being and rejected the word of God as the only source of truth. At this point, the consequences for rejecting the source of truth started to take effect. The first consequence was emotional trauma when Adam and Eve experienced the fear of consequences, combined with guilt for not believing God's word.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened (aware of consequences), and they knew they were naked (had sinned; cf. Rev. 3:17-18); and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Gen. 3:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Rather than admit their guilt for transgressing God's word, and then asking for forgiveness (Gen. 2:16-17), they attempted to cover up their sin. They were not literally "naked." Instead, this is another example of the Bible's symbolic language. In reality, their transgression of God's command was "exposed", and, in this state of exposure or "nakedness", they were deceived enough to believe they could hide their deed from God.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **Adam and his wife hid themselves** from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8; emphasis added).

Had Adam believed that the Lord God told him the "truth" about sin and death, he would have obeyed God's command and avoided the consequences of his actions, which resulted in death many years later (Gen. 5:5). Because the Lord God loved Adam, he did not want Adam to suffer the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23a). Therefore, the command given to Adam was an act of love (1Jn. 2:3-5; 5:3).

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but **of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die**" (Gen. 2:16-17; emphasis added).

Adam not only rejected what the Lord God had commanded him, he believed that the word of the "serpent" was truthful, when in reality it was a lie (Rev. 12:9). Jesus Christ addressed this issue when dealing with "so-called authorities" on religious matters.

You (Pharisees) are of **your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it** (Jn. 8:44; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Once Adam and Eve rejected God's word, they were cut off from the source of all truth. This source is described in symbolic language as "the tree of life" (Gen. 3:22-24). Trees are frequently used in scripture to identify spirit-beings (see the

following studies under the heading "*Symbolism*": The Tree of Life and River of Living Water; What Tree Did Eve Eat From?). Once separated from the source of truth, Adam and Eve began making decisions on what they perceived to be "true". However, this would result in making mistakes that cause pain and suffering, both physically and emotionally. This is also described using symbolic language, which the majority of mankind can only understand in a literal sense.

"Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3: 17b-19; see the following studies under the heading "*Symbolism*": Did God Create Adam From TtheDust; Thorns and Thistles).

Without direct access to the tree of life, mankind "reasons" about what is right and wrong. However, one way or another it leads to problems for the individual, and those around him/her:

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end (result) is the way of death (Prov. 14:12; cf. 16:25; Ed. note in parenthesis).

It seemed reasonable for Adam and Eve to break God's command by having fellowship with an individual whose belief system might prove to be better than the Lord God's. However by doing this, they placed their trust in the word of a liar and deceiver. Unfortunately, mankind has been blindly following the value system of Satan ever since (Eph. 2:1-5; Rev. 12:9). As mentioned previously, the carnal mind does not believe that God's "commands" are trustworthy. Therefore,

human reasoning concludes that a murderer should not be put to death upon the testimony of two or more witnesses (Dt. 17:6; 19:15). Instead, a murderer should go to prison and be supported by taxpayers for twenty or more years. This makes mankind appear to be wiser, more reasonable; even more loving than Almighty God (Prov. 3:7). In essence, mankind is taking what God says is the right thing to do and claiming, by their disobedience to His word, that He is wrong. This is "proof positive" that mankind does not trust God's word, which is Satan's objective (Gen. 3:1-4).

Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed... (Gen. 9:6a).

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; **who put darkness for light**, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isa. 5:20; emphasis added)

It is not a coincidence that the word "light" is used in Isaiah 5:20 because it represents the word of God, which includes His law and commandments,

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps. 119:105).

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light... (Prov. 6:23a; cf. Mt. 5:16-18).

Just as Adam and Eve did not trust the word of God, so mankind rejects God's word today as the source of truth and wisdom. Instead of having deep respect for Almighty God, and seeking His wisdom on what is true or false, society looks to its entertainers, talk show hosts, news commentators, etc. for the latest ideas on what is right and wrong in our more enlightened world (Ps. 118:8; 146:3; Prov. 29:25),

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who **do** His commandments... (Ps. 111:10a; emphasis added).

... Your law is truth (Ps. 119:142b).

... all Your commandments are truth (Ps. 119:151b; cf. 119:172).

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever (Ps. 119:160; cf. Mt. 4:4).

So He (Christ) said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? No one is good but One, that is, God (Almighty). But **if you want to enter into life** (everlasting), **keep the commandments.**" (Mt. 19:17; cf. Ps. 119:166; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

God's truth is always available for those who seek to find it.

For this commandment which I command you today, it is not hidden from you, nor is it far off. ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" ¹³Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" ¹⁴But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you.... (Dt. 30:11-16a; cf. 1Jn. 5:3).

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and he who

seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened (Mt. 7:7-8; cf. 7:9-11).

Those individuals, who make a conscious decision to obey God's word, will experience more peace and happiness in their lives.

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing (ultimately) causes them to stumble (Ps. 119:116; Ed. note in parenthesis).

I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure (Ps. 119:162; cf. Mt. 13:45-46).

So there is only one source of truth, and anyone who seeks truth can have access to it by searching God's word and asking for His assistance to understand it correctly. Seeking truth from any source other than the word of God will be unreliable because Satan deceives the entirety of this world to one degree or another (2Cor. 11:14-15; Eph. 2:1-5; Rev. 12:9). Therefore, whatever any news commentator, educator, entertainer, politician, religious authority, etc. claims is "moral", must be "fact checked" using God's word before it can be regarded as truthful.

Going back to the original questions in this study, it is only Almighty God who determines what is "moral" or "immoral" and he defines these principles throughout His word, the Bible. God's morals are to be observed by everyone, without exception.

You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the Lord your God (Lev. 24:22; cf. Nu. 15:16, 29; Gal. 3:28).

Because of mankind's carnal mind, only God can administer and oversee the application of His law. Once applied universally, the effect will be extremely positive (Read: Isa. 2:1-4; 11:7;

65:25). Based on many prophecies in the Old and New Testament, this intervention and application of God's law will not occur until mankind has reached a point of moral degradation, resulting in chaos and destruction throughout this present evil world (Mt. 24:22; Mk. 13:20).

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