

THE MORALITY QUESTION



Autumn was in the air, and it was the first day of school at a community college. A professor came to class and without hesitation, mentioned to the full classroom that he was a Christian and that he looked at things from a Christian perspective. Immediately one of the students raised his hand.

"Yes, do you have a question?" the professor asked.

"Professor, I just want to let you know that I am an atheist! I just thought it would be good for everyone in the classroom to know where I am coming from," he chuckled under his breath.

The professor smiled and said, "Can I ask you a simple question? How do you decide what's right and what's wrong—what is the foundation for your concept of morality?"

The student puffed his chest up and answered, "Oh, that's easy. I'm the god of my own world! I decide what's right and wrong!"

The professor smiled and said, "Ok, good. I am glad you explained that to the class and me. I just want to let you know when school gets out today, I am going to smash all the windows out of your car with a baseball bat."

The student became agitated and yelled. "You can't do that!!!"

"Yes, I can, because you see, I am the god of my own world, and I can decide what's right and what's wrong, and I don't like your attitude so that is what I am going to do!"

The story illustrates a very important point—how do we define morality? How can we know what is right or wrong? The point is, if we do not have some kind of standard for what is right or wrong, if we don't have some kind of foundation for what basic morality is, truly it is a jungle out there. It is survival of the fittest. We are left to make our own rules, and it is a proven fact that when man is left to himself to decide what is basically right or wrong, the results are always disastrous. Anything goes and everything is justifiable, depending on circumstances.

In 2 Peter 3:3 we are told, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days *scoffers*, walking after their own lusts..." As the verse states in English Standard Version: "that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, *following their own sinful desires*." In other words, they are walking in their own

understanding or measurement of what is right or wrong, and they mock those who might disagree with them. This verse goes on to say, "For this they *willingly are ignorant of...*" talking about the flood story in context, but in a general sense, willfully deciding what they think is right or wrong. They are willingly uninformed on purpose!

The real problem is, if people acknowledge the fact that God exists, then they would have to admit that there is a Creator and that we are the created. That means they have an obligation—a moral responsibility to Him. And that means they would have to subject themselves to His standard of morality. And that great standard of morality rests in the 10 Commandments. I often think what a wonderful place the world would be if everybody would simply acknowledge the Law that God has given us—the foundation of morality found in His 10 Commandments.

But the Law was Done Away With!

I have a hard time believing people really think that God's law was done away with at Christ's death on the cross. The law tells us what is right or wrong—what is moral and immoral. The law points out sin. People read 1 John 3:4 and think the solution is to just get rid of the law! "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

1 John 3:4. In dealing with the sin problem, one can't just do away with the law. It is like "defunding the police". We all witness the kind of lawlessness that has brought! When there is "no law" we have anarchy! The problem is not the law, it is the behavior.

God's government has a foundation based in morality—and the spirit of the law simply tells us when we are out of harmony with God's will. We know that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20. The law can't save us—only Christ can save us. The great standard of morality simply points out sin and then points us to a Savior!

Truly, when we give our hearts to Christ, the Holy Spirit brings us into harmony with God's law. This is God's way of dealing with sin—confession, repentance, and redemption. "Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20.

The Morality Police

I am sure some of you heard about the recent political uprisings in Iran after the Morality Police, which is the religious police squad of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran, killed Mahsa Amini for not wearing a head covering. The uprising in Iran reminded me of an experience I had years ago.

Back in 1982, I had a job managing an autobody shop for a Volkswagen, Oldsmobile, and Chevrolet dealership in Moscow, Idaho. Not far away was Washington State University (aka WSU). We saw a lot of damaged cars from the university students from what the locals called "Wazzu." That nickname came from the perception that WSU is a place where booze trumps books! So, we saw a lot of car damage from frat house and other party places.

But besides the students that partied, there were the foreign students from all over the world. I always took an interest in talking with people from other countries (this was right before we started *Laymen Ministries*). In the fall of 1982, an older Middle Eastern student came in to get an estimate. It turned out that this student was from Iran. For some reason, he liked talking with me as we sat in my office. I asked him how he ended up at WSU?

He told me he was the son of the former General of the military under the Shah of Iran, and that the CIA tipped his father off about the US causing a war between Iraq and Iran, as Iran which had been an ally to the US was becoming too independent. Allowing Ayatollah Khomeini to return to Iran and stirring up a revolution (1979), would accomplish two things: 1) Islam would set the country back many years, and 2)



would deplete all the US made military hardware—thus weakening Iran. His father got him out of the country so he would not get trapped in the middle of all this turmoil.

As we talked about Iran returning to fundamental Islam, I told this student, "I believe someday America will have a religious awakening and religious laws will become part of the law of the land." The student looked at me and said, "You are very intelligent person!" I asked why he would say that? His answer? "You see, when government rule is based on civil laws, it rules the outward behavior of a man. But then you interject religion into it, then the government can rule the whole man—even his conscience and soul." I reminded the student that that was why our forefathers had written separation of church and state into the American Constitution!

This is an important point. When the government passes laws, they do so as civil laws only—that deals with the outward conduct of people within the land. Many "civil" laws are often moral in nature, but the laws are NOT made based on morality alone. Morality is something that runs deep into the soul and conscience. It takes in the intent and purposes of the heart. This is why Jesus stated:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Matthew 5:27.

When we try to legislate morality, we are headed down a slippery slope. Can you imagine the police kicking in your door and arresting you, and when you ask, "What is my crime?" the police tell you that

they know you are “thinking” about stealing your neighbor’s new boat, so you are under arrest! God’s law says, “Thou shalt not covet.” You can covet your neighbor’s new boat all day long and you can’t be arrested for that. Coveting has to do with the intent and purpose of the heart. On the other hand, civil laws can only cause an arrest once the crime has been committed. If your neighbor’s new boat is in your garage covered with a tarp—well, off to jail you go. Moral law, God’s Word, states it this way in the Bible:

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:12.

And today, people are setting up their own morality and then are passing laws to force *their morality* on other people. It is one thing to be gay or to be transgender, or other types of lifestyle choices. But these things are matters of conscience – not to be legislated on other people against their moral convictions. People should not be mandated by laws against their religious convictions. As an example, pushing abortion on people who are pro-life. Or making doctors practice this against their convictions. Or making laws allowing minors to have transgender hormone treatment without the permission or even knowledge of the legal guardians/parents. It is one thing to have your own twisted moral values, but it is something else to pass laws to force it on others against their convictions. Yes, the morality police are alive and well right here in America, and it is happening around us.

Can We Legislate Morality?

I could share a lot about how trying to legislate morality was part of what happened with the Catholic Church during the Inquisition. Enacting religious (moral) law led to the worst forms of persecution—trials, imprisonment and executions. Our forefathers believed in separation of church and state for good reasons. But here lies the problem, which takes us

back to the first part of this article—how do we deem what is moral? Throughout the ages, many places in the world looked to the 10 Commandments. Then the Roman Catholic Church came along and propagated the belief that it was given the right to define morality—and it even had the power to change God’s Commandments, as what happened with the Sabbath commandment.

Ex Cathedra is a Latin phrase meaning “from the chair” and applies to decisions made by popes from their thrones; according to Roman Catholic doctrine, a pope is infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* on issues of faith or morals. This was the battle that waged between the Protestant Reformers and the Papacy—who held the right to supreme moral authority? The church/pope or the Bible—God’s Word and His Commandments?

The Reformers stated, “*sola Scriptura*” or “the Bible alone” which is a short phrase that represents the simple truth that there is only one special revelation from God that man possesses today—the Bible. Scripture states this concept repeatedly and emphatically. And the 10 Commandments are the ONLY part of God’s Word written in stone (showing its enduring nature) and written by God’s own finger (showing its absolute importance.)

Today basic morality is under attack. Are we ourselves gods, deciding what is right or wrong based on our own will? Or do we find the basis of morality in God’s Word and His Commandments? This is such a vitally important question in the day and time we live in. Is it “survival of the fittest”? Or is it a Christ-centered life wherein:

“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts*: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*” Hebrews 8:10-12. 📖