

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



Moral Purity— Behaving According to God’s Standards

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The Source of Behavior

Matthew 5:27, 28, 33, 34, 43, 44

Aim: By the end of the lesson I will discuss the condition of the heart that is reflected in living.

Start Here



The lessons for this quarter concern morality. You will learn some practical ideas that you can put into practice in your everyday living. As there are standards for the physical things in our lives, there are also standards for our behavior.

When we buy a pound of apples or a gallon of gasoline, we expect to get a certain amount for the price we pay. A pound or a gallon should be the same for everyone. This illustrates what we mean by morality. Right is right and wrong is wrong. It's never right to do wrong and it's never wrong to do right, but, to do right, we must know what the standards are.

As someone has to know how much a pound is or how much a gallon contains, each of us needs to know for ourselves how we should behave.

The Bible is our only reliable and never failing guide to our personal and corporate behavior. Ultimately, we will not be judged by others. Judgment is not a jury trial. We will be judged by the standards of God's Word. This is why we need to learn what is right as well as what is wrong. We all have choices to make, and, when we have the proper understanding of morality, we can make the right choice.

Take a Closer Look



The words of the text are from the Sermon on the Mount. In this wonderful message, Jesus intro-

duced His church to the world and the world to His church. As Jesus set forth the things that were different about Christianity, He set a standard for His followers.

Morality begins with a right relationship to God through Jesus Christ. Unless you are saved by the grace of God, you will always have a problem with proper behavior. This cannot be stressed too strongly. First and foremost, give your heart to Jesus. Then and only then will you be able to behave in a way that is pleasing to God and profitable for yourself.

Jesus taught those who believed in Him three important things about the source of moral behavior.

Lust and our hearts. We can see moral behavior as only concerning the things that happen on the outside, and from that viewpoint, we can think that we are doing well. Jesus used adultery as an example. While a lot of people do commit adultery, a lot of people do not. At least they do not physically commit such sins. There are some who might even brag about the sins that they have never committed.

God holds His children to a higher standard. While the things that we actually do with our bodies are significant, equally significant are the things that we do in our hearts. We all seem to think that we can safely retreat into the world of our own imagination, and, once we are there, behave any way we want to. We can dream and fantasize and no one will be affected, but we are only deceiving ourselves.

It is in that private world of the heart that sin is born, and it is there that sin can be controlled. This is why Jesus taught that adultery could be committed in the heart, even if it were never committed in the flesh. Eventually the things we lust for in our hearts will be revealed in our lives. The only way to consistently prevent this is to learn how to deal with such issues in our hearts. If we can learn to control our hearts, our bodies will readily follow.

Words and our hearts. Language is vital to morality. The reason is simple. We think in words. If the words that you use to form thoughts are vile and filthy, then the thoughts will also be vile and filthy.

What we say to others is important, but even more important is what we say to ourselves. What do you say when you talk to yourself? Do you swear to yourself? Do you use vile language when you are thinking about others? You may never say the words out loud, but, if they are in your heart, they will eventually find an expression in your life.

You see, there is a vital connection between what and how we think and how we behave. There are many people who do not attempt to control or even influence what goes into their hearts. We read all sorts of literature and watch any kind of show, thinking that it will not affect us in any way. But it will. When evil things enter our hearts, they will color the way we think as well as what we think, and, at one time or another, these things will slip to the surface of our lives.

If you will recognize this simple principle and avoid stuffing your heart with garbage, you will go a long way toward moral behavior. Words can hurt you, and they can certainly harm others.

Love in our hearts. We may not commit adultery physically, and we may not take a vain oath. We may believe that it is good to love those who love us and to hate those who hate us. This principle even applies to the animal world. The least of God's creatures know how to be good to those who are good to them and to avoid the other creatures that will harm them. The Bible holds God's children to a higher standard of morality.

There will come a time when loving your neighbor and hating your enemy will not serve you as a rule to live by. You will need something more and God knows what that is. It is love. The standards of love are higher and better than any others.

Think for a moment. How do you want to be treated? Do you want justice? Do you want everyone to always treat you like you deserve to be treated? What about when you have made an honest mistake? Do you want to be condemned for it? Probably not. I want to be loved and understood, especially when I behave badly.

For this to happen, I have to learn to love in return. Those who hold to the old rule divide the world into friends and enemies. Jesus looked at the world only in terms of sin and righteousness. No person was His enemy. His enemy was Satan. That is why Jesus commanded us to look at people differently.

We are to see others as objects of love and that love must come from our hearts. We will treat everyone differently if we can get this view of humanity. Jesus died for those whom you do not like, just as He died for you and me. We will behave in a different way toward others when we look at them in love than we will when we divide the whole world into friends and enemies.

Do you see how these are basic building blocks of moral behavior?



What we do makes a difference, but why we do it also makes a difference. Both are vitally related to morality. If we can get our hearts right, and consequently our motives right, then our outward behavior will be much easier to control.

This is not to say that we will always behave on the outside. We are all sinners, and, no matter what, we will do things that are wrong. We have a much better chance of controlling our behavior if our hearts are right with God and if we apply the principles of God's Word to that part of us that lives on the inside.

It is not enough to merely be a rule keeper. We can keep all the rules on the outside and still not be truly moral. When we learn the real lessons of morality, we will learn them in our hearts.

The lessons we learn will bring about a change in the three things taught in the Scriptures for today's lesson. They will change lust, our words and the direction of our love. All this is about seeing things as God sees them. When we look at things from God's point of view, as taught in the Bible, we will begin to understand what true moral behavior is all about.

Building Blocks

Do you see why it is not enough to simply tell someone who is misbehaving to stop it? Although the bad behavior can be controlled on the outside, the real root cause of it remains in the heart. To truly change, we must change our hearts.

The hearts of men are wicked (Jer. 17:9). We can look at ourselves and other human beings as basically good people who may on occasion do bad things. Or we can look at ourselves as basically sinful people who may occasionally do good things. These are two vastly different views of humanity and the view you take will affect your behavior greatly. The Bible clearly teaches us that we are sinners, even though we will occasionally do good things. As sinners, we need to be saved and we need to be changed from what we are by the law of sin and death into what we can become through Jesus Christ.

Only when we let Jesus into our lives and live according to the truth that He sends into our hearts can we ever hope to be moral as God recognizes morality.



Each of us spends a great deal of time examining the motives and actions of other people; however, we seldom give such careful scrutiny to our own actions and motives. Things that we will condemn in others we will excuse in ourselves. After all, we are special and we have special needs. At least this is how we think about it, but the truth is different.

We should not set standards for others. We should not even set standards for ourselves. We should simply accept the standards that are set forth in the Bible. These are not suggestions that we can take or leave or alter to suit our preferences. These are the teachings of God and we should view them as such. It is never enough to be moral in the eyes of others. We are only righteous when we are righteous before God, and that can come only when the shed blood of Jesus is applied to our hearts.