

Moral Issues Facing The Church

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Who Decides Morality?

Times change. New customs evolve. Standards of morality change. Society accepts behavior today that it would not tolerate yesterday. Yet, society does not determine acceptable behavior, God does! “*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*” (Jeremiah 10:23).

To put it bluntly—if we think that moral issues are decided by the times we live in, then the devil has blinded us to the truth “*...it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Not only does “*the god of this age*” color and skew the way we think, but he masks the truth behind confusing questions, emotional situations, and rationalizations which hide real motives. All of these make the truth harder for us to accept.

Many of our assumptions twist and slant the truth, convincing us that they are the truth. Even though they directly oppose the Bible, we find difficulty convincing ourselves that they are wrong. Notice a few of our more common cultural assumptions.

There is the assumption that “*self is number one,*” that we should always look out for ourselves and think about what is best for us. God’s way is better—put God first, others second, and self last (Matthew 22:37-39; Philippians 2:3-4).

There is the assumption that “*I can’t help myself.*” No one takes personal responsibility for their actions anymore—the fault is with our environment, our parents, or the lack of social programs. Yet, God will judge us for what we do (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Then there is the popular assumption “*no one can claim to know the truth.*” If someone claims to know the truth about moral issues, then he is labeled as an arrogant, religious bigot. Jesus said “*And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*” (John 8:32). Was He a bigot?

Add the assumptions that “*all social and moral values are relative*” and “*the church must keep up with the times*” and we have a real mess! Is the Bible relative to today’s moral questions? Not only is it relative, but it is the ultimate authority!

Abortion

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were no more." (Matthew 2:18)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What is abortion?
- 2) What do you think is the key thing that separates the attitude of the pro-choice advocate from the attitude of the anti-abortionist?
- 3) What are some common reasons given to justify abortion?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- 4) What are some of the strongest arguments?
- 5) What are some inconsistencies between the stand pro-choice advocates take on abortion, and their stand on other popular cultural issues?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) What light does the Bible shed on the question of abortion from the following Scriptures? Are there any indications as to when life begins?
 - Genesis 5:3-4,28-32. When is the only time the father is directly involved in the birth process?
 - Genesis 25:21-26. Does the Bible make a distinction between a fetus and a child?
 - Job 3:11. Could he give up something he did not have?
 - Jeremiah 1:5. Did God call him a fetus or a man?
 - Amos 1:13. How does he describe these pregnant women?
 - Matthew 1:18-25. When did Mary become "with child?"
 - Luke 1:41,44. Where was this living child when Elizabeth heard the news about Mary?
- 2) Does God make a distinction between the unborn child and the newborn child? What clues does the Bible give in answering the question "*When does life begin?*"
- 3) What part of the nature of all human beings does the abortionist overlook when taking his/her stand (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 4:16)?

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- 4) What distinguishes the life of humans from the life of animals (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:1-6)?
 - 5) How important does God consider life (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-10)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) What can we do about the problem of abortion?
 - What can we do to stop it?
 - What can we do to help those who are considering it? What would you say to someone you know who is considering abortion?
- 2) Where can we draw the line with sin, so we avoid the temptation of abortion (Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19-21)?
- 3) What should our attitude be toward such an atrocity (Matthew 2:16-18; Galatians 6:7)?
- 4) Do you have a closing thought?

Abuse

"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal." (2 Timothy 3:2-3)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Domestic violence and abuse are often thought of as private family problems. Does that make them no one else's business (James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1)?
- 2) Who are some of the people who suffer the worst abuse?
- 3) What forms does abuse take today?
- 4) How can abuse happen (Romans 1:28-32; esp. vv. 31-32; 2 Timothy 3:1-5)?
- 5) What are two primary factors that contribute to abusive behavior (Romans 1:21-22,28; 2 Timothy 3:2)?
- 6) What are some of the explanations offered by abusive people for their actions?
- 7) Although there are many sociological and psychological reasons why people become abusive, what is one motivation which psychologists won't often consider (1 John 5:19; 3:8-12)?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) In the first case of domestic violence and abuse recorded, how did God describe this action (Genesis 4:6-8)?
- 2) How does God respond to violence (Genesis 6:5-7,11-13; Psalm 11:4-6)?
- 3) What does the Bible say about resolving some of the factors at work in making people abusive?
 - Guilt? This is one of the major contributors to irrational and abusive behavior. How can we effectively deal with guilt, rather than taking out our frustrations on others (Hebrews 8:12; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 John 1:9)?
 - Selfishness? How is this a characteristic of abusers (2 Timothy 3:2-3)? How will such a person respond to those who do not serve his desires? What does he need to learn (Philippians 2:3-4)?
 - Lack of control? Is a hot temper and fiery response a sign of strength (Proverbs 16:32; James 1:19)? Why does the Bible demand self-control (2 Peter 1:5-11; 1 Corinthians 9:25-27)?
 - Brutality? Is brutality and roughness a sign of strength or weakness? If force and manipulation are principles which weak people use to control others, then what principles can guide our lives in a positive way (Matthew 7:12; Colossians 3:12-13; Philippians 2:3-4)?

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- Ignorance? Some people don't know how to deal with problems, marriage, parenting, or other difficult pressures and situations. Rather than abusive behavior, how would God have us resolve such problems (Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:4; Colossians 3:18-21)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) How can older women get involved (Titus 2:3-4)?
- 2) Since many abusers consistently abuse those people who they really do love, what can we teach them about love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Philippians 2:3-4)?
- 3) Where can we point people with abusive tendencies for help (Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13)?
- 4) What are the consequences if abuse does not stop (Psalm 58:1-11; Galatians 6:8)?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Dancing

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness... but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Romans 13:13-14)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Describe some of the different types of dancing.
- 2) Name some influences that keep people from studying this subject objectively.
- 3) Many reasons are given to justify and rationalize modern dancing. Consider each reason—along with the Bible passages—then write down your conclusions:
 - *"It is good exercise."* (1 Timothy 4:8)
 - *"It is fun."* (Hebrews 11:25)
 - *"It is socially accepted."* (Matthew 7:13-14)
 - *"It helps me develop poise."* (Romans 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:12)
 - *"I can dance without having evil thoughts."* But can you control the thoughts of others (Matthew 5:27-28; 18:7)?
- 4) Can you think of other reasons that people use to justify dancing?
- 5) Would you say that dancing allows people certain privileges with the body of another person, which would not be accepted or tolerated in the absence of the accompanying music?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Some people say that modern dancing is all right because the Bible condones dancing in many passages. The Bible mentions three types of dancing:
 - Dances of public rejoicing (Exodus 15:20-21; Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6; 2 Samuel 6:12-16; Psalm 30:11; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Luke 15:25).
 - Dances of public worship (Psalm 149:2-3; 150:4).
 - Dances of lust, amusement, and pleasure (Exodus 32:19-28; 1 Samuel 30:16; Mark 6:14-28).

What is the difference between each of these expressions of dancing? Under which would you classify modern dancing?

- 2) Define the word *"lasciviousness."*
- 3) Define the word *"licentiousness."*

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- 4) Define the word “*lewdness*.”
 - 5) Define the word “*revelry*.”
 - 6) Define the word “*wantonness*.”
 - Each of these words is used in various Bible translations.
 - What does the Bible say about these and similar activities (Mark 7:18-23; Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:17-20; 1 Peter 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:18; Jude 4)?
 - 7) Would modern dancing fit the description of any of the above activities? How?
 - 8) What is it that makes modern dancing immoral?
 - 9) Do changes in the forms or styles of dances—from generation to generation—change its basic evil?
 - 10) If one dancing partner has evil desires while dancing with the other, who has sinned (Matthew 5:27-30; 18:6-9; Romans 14:13)?
 - 11) Can you be a good example to others when dancing (Matthew 5:13-16; James 1:27; Romans 12:2)?
 - 12) If all dancing is not lascivious or lewd, are the weak always able to distinguish the difference? Could they be made to stumble? What should Christians do (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Many enjoyable activities promote dancing (proms, nightclubs, music videos). That makes this a tough question. But if it is sinful, what kinds of places should Christians avoid (1 Peter 4:3-4)?
- 2) Many people say they just enjoy spending time with their friends and having a good time. But if it is wrong, how can we enjoy watching our friends sin?
- 3) What should we do about dancing?
- 4) What can we do to provide entertainment where there is no dancing?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Drinking

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Define the word “*wine*” as it is used in the Bible, with a Bible dictionary.
- 2) What is the difference, if any, between “*alcoholism*” and “*drunkenness*?”
- 3) How big is the problem of drinking in our society.
- 4) Do a little research to see if today’s alcoholic beverages have the same concentration of alcohol as those in Bible times. Record your findings.
- 5) What positive benefits does drinking bring us?
- 6) What negative consequences does drinking bring us?
- 7) Am I ever the only person who is affected by my drinking?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) How are men deceived by the influence of strong drink (Proverbs 20:1)?
- 2) According to the following passages, what are some of the reasons that people drink?
 - Ecclesiastes 10:19. How long does this last?
 - Proverbs 31:7. Is drinking the solution? Why or why not?
 - Proverbs 31:6. How can God relieve the same problem (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7)?
 - 1 Peter 4:1-4. What kind of pressure are they under?
- 3) How does wine “*sting like a viper*” (Proverbs 23:32)?
- 4) According to the following passages, what are some of the negative effects of drinking?
 - Proverbs 23:19-21. Name at least two.
 - Proverbs 23:29-35. Name at least six.
 - Proverbs 31:4-5.
- 5) Do you think God is trying to keep something good away from us when He warns us to stay away from strong drink?

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- 6) What does the Bible say about drunkenness (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 13:12-14)?
 - 7) What does the Bible say about social drinking (1 Peter 4:1-4)?
 - 8) How does the Bible portray men who were influenced by wine?
 - Noah (Genesis 9:20-27)—
 - Lot (Genesis 19:30-38)—
 - Elah (1 Kings 16:8-10)—
 - Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-6)—
 - 9) If drinking is so often portrayed in a negative way, why do people insist that some passages give us liberty to drink (Matthew 11:18-19; John 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 5:23; Titus 2:3)? Are these passages necessarily talking about the intoxicating kind of wine?

Practical Solutions

- 1) If unbelievers are alarmed at the harm which alcohol brings, should Christians somehow try to justify it?
- 2) Should one indulge himself in an occasional beer or glass of wine? What are the advantages? The disadvantages? Which one outweighs the other?
- 3) Under what influence should a Christian find himself (Ephesians 5:18)? How can he do that?
- 4) What should a Christian do if he finds himself in a situation where he is offered a drink, or is pressured to drink socially?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Gambling

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What is gambling?
- 2) Why do you think people like to gamble?
- 3) What forms—even seemingly innocent ones—does gambling take?
- 4) If you say gambling is wrong, some people counter with the following statements. Is each of these a legitimate point, or does each merely confuse the issue?
 - *“Life is a gamble.”* But *“time and chance happens to everyone”* (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12). Is that a gamble or just a part of life?
 - *“Farming is a gamble.”* But God promised *“seedtime and harvest would not cease”* (Genesis 8:22). Is farming really a gamble or is someone else in control of what happens (Psalm 24:1; 104:14)?
 - *“Buying insurance is a gamble.”* But *“if anyone does not provide for his own he has denied the faith”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Is insurance an attempt to make provisions for someone, or wagering money against good health?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Some people say that gambling is wrong, and others say that since it is not mentioned in the Bible, it could not be wrong. Consider each of the principles below, and determine whether or not gambling violates any of them:
 - a) Does gambling violate the principle of stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:10)? Who owns all of our possessions (1 Chronicles 29:13-14)? Are we accountable to Him for how we use them?
 - b) Does gambling violate the *“golden rule”* (Matthew 7:12; 22:39)? Are we doing a man good if we take his goods on a wager (Romans 13:8-10)? Is gambling a way of seeking another person’s well-being (2 Corinthians 12:14-15; Philippians 2:3-4)?
 - c) Is gambling equal to stealing (Mark 7:20-23)? Does the fact that two people have consented to a bet make it any less stealing (Psalm 50:16-21)?
 - d) Is gambling an outgrowth of covetousness (Ephesians 5:3-7; Colossians 3:5-6)?
 - e) Does gambling exhibit the *“love of money”* (1 Timothy 6:9-11)?
 - f) Does gambling exploit others or extort money for one’s own advantage (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)?

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- g) Does gambling contradict the work ethic (Genesis 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:10)? Which is more consistent with the Christian walk of life—gambling on a chance at great wealth or working hard for the sake of earning your money (Ephesians 4:17-22,28 [esp. v.19]; Proverbs 13:11)?
- h) Does gambling lend itself to addiction (2 Peter 2:19; 1 Corinthians 9:27)?
- i) Does gambling hurt our influence as a Christian (Matthew 5:13-16; 2 Corinthians 8:21)?
- j) Does gambling associate us with good or bad company (1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:11)?
- k) Does gambling lay up treasures on earth or in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21)? Does it bring just or unjust gain (Proverbs 28:6-8)?
- 2) The Bible indicates three legitimate and honorable means of transferring money or commodities which are listed below. Can you think of any others? Explain each of these methods in greater detail.
- Law of labor (Ephesians 4:28)—
 - Law of exchange (Proverbs 31:16)—
 - Law of love (Proverbs 17:8; Luke 14:12-14)—

Does gambling fall under any of these categories? If not, how would you categorize it (Titus 2:11-12)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Gambling is either right or wrong in principle. How far does the principle need to be applied in relation to various forms which gambling takes (cf. Preliminary Thoughts, question #3)?
- 2) How can we arm ourselves to overcome the temptation to gamble?
 - 1 John 2:15-17—
 - Romans 13:8-10—
 - Romans 8:13-14—
 - Proverbs 3:5-6—
 - Colossians 3:17—
 - 2 Corinthians 10:5—
 - Matthew 7:17-20—
- 3) Do you have a closing thought?

Homosexuality

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites..." (1 Corinthians 6:9)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What is homosexuality?
- 2) Is homosexuality a new practice? Why do we hear so much about it now?
- 3) What are some reasons people give to justify homosexual practices?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- 4) Why are some people tempted with homosexual feelings and others are not?
- 5) Are feelings and temptations wrong, or do they become wrong when we do something about them (James 1:12-15)?
- 6) Is there a limit to the power of any temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)?
- 7) The subject of homosexuality is confusing because everyone calls it something different.
 - Is homosexuality a physical or genetic disease?
 - Is homosexuality *"the sickest sin there is?"*
 - Is homosexuality *"natural"* for some people, being an inborn trait (Romans 1:26-27)?
 - Is homosexuality a legitimate *"alternative lifestyle"* (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4)?
- 8) Most people seem to have no idea how homosexuality can be a temptation to anyone. Therefore, we are not very helpful to a person who is struggling with the temptation (cf. Galatians 6:1-2; Jude 22-23). Maybe that can change if we understand a few general things about homosexuality.
 - God makes every person unique (Psalm 139:13-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). He may be different, but God does not make him *"gay"* (James 1:13).
 - Homosexuality generally has little to do with sex. The sexual involvement with another person of the same sex, is a compromise for the need to be loved and accepted.
 - Some inborn factors may contribute to the development of homosexual attractions, but these are not sufficient to make a person homosexual (James 1:14-15; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

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- Factors which lead to each person's struggle with homosexual attraction are different, but certain stages are common to many—low self-esteem, gender emptiness, gender attraction, sexual attraction, homosexual reinforcement, homosexual identity.

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Is homosexuality a new practice (Genesis 19:1-29; Judges 19:1-28; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7)? Is there anything new (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10)?
- 2) What did God say about homosexuality under the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13)?
- 3) Many people say that homosexuality is an inborn trait. Is a person born greedy, jealous, malicious, gossip, slanderer, thief, child abuser, serial killer (Mark 7:20-23)? Why would people say that homosexuality is inborn?
- 4) Is homosexuality a "*natural*" practice (Romans 1:26-27)?
- 5) Is homosexuality against God's law or sanctioned by it (1 Timothy 1:8-10)?
- 6) Homosexuals advocate "*coming out of the closet*" and being open with their lifestyle. What does the Bible say about such open sinning (Isaiah 3:9)?
- 7) Men try to lessen the severity of sin by softening its description. The Bible does not describe homosexuals/lesbians as "*gay*" or living an "*alternative lifestyle*." How does the Bible describe such people?
 - 1 Kings 14:24—
 - 1 Corinthians 6:9—
 - Colossians 3:5—
 - Jude 7—
- 8) What two things does 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 teach us about homosexuality?
- 9) Those who oppose homosexuality are often called "*homophobes*" or "*gay bashers*." Some people really are—but how would you describe a caring, concerned Christian who wants to help a person overcome his struggle with homosexuality (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; James 5:19-20)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Can a person who is engaged in homosexual practices remain in that condition? What must he/she do (Ephesians 5:1-14)?
- 2) Does God care about our struggle? What are some practical ways that God gives us to overcome this temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)?

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- How did Jesus overcome temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)?
 - Who can we turn to for help (Philippians 4:13; 1 John 4:4)?
 - How must we respond to the devil's temptation (James 4:7)?
 - What activity helps us as much as anything (Philippians 4:6-7)?
 - What do we need to try to master (Philippians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 10:5)?
- 3) After you rid yourself of this practice, what must you do to keep worse sins from returning (Luke 11:24-26)?
 - 4) How is the church to react to a practicing homosexual who repents (2 Corinthians 2:3-11)?
 - 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Immodesty

"In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation... which is proper for women professing godliness with good works." (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Is immodesty a relative or absolute term? Does that make it harder or easier to judge what is appropriate?
- 2) Is society's view of modesty a good rule for Christians to follow (Romans 12:2; Matthew 7:13-14)? When society's view of modesty changes, do Christians' view of modesty change too?
- 3) Is it possible for the Christian's manner of dress to set him/her apart from the world?
- 4) How does any kind of clothing reflect a person's attitude?
- 5) People justify wearing revealing clothing for various reasons. Are each of these justifiable? Comment on each reason.
 - *"It is too hot to wear much clothing."*
 - *"No one notices me."*
 - *"It is not a sin to swim."*
 - *"If someone is going to lust, they will lust no matter what I wear."*
- 6) Do people realize that the immodest clothing they wear is revealing to others? Consider some of their preparations in the spring which affects their appearance in the summer.
- 7) Let's take an honest little test. What is the difference in these two attitudes? Which of these attitudes is yours?
 - *"Where do you draw the line?"*
 - *"How does my clothing reflect my character?"*

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and becoming enlightened:
 - What did Adam and Eve realize about themselves? What did they do (Genesis 2:25; 3:7)?
 - What did Adam say about Eve and himself, even though they were wearing the fig leaf coverings (Genesis 3:8,10-11)? Is it possible to have a covering but still be naked in one sense?

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- Is there any hint that God may be displeased with the clothing that humans wear—that He has different ideas about how we should dress than we do (Genesis 3:21)?
- 2) Is it possible to be naked in one sense, and still have on clothing (Job 22:6; Matthew 25:34-39; James 2:15-16)?
 - 3) What does nakedness often symbolize when it is mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 9:20-25; Isaiah 47:2-3; Revelation 3:18)?
 - 4) One's dress can actually reflect certain things about a person—specifically his character and attitude toward certain things. In each of the following passages, describe what kind of clothing is involved, and what message it is conveying.
 - Genesis 41:14—
 - Proverbs 7:10—
 - Matthew 22:11-12—
 - 1 Timothy 2:9-10—
 - James 2:1-4—
 - 5) Define the following words from 1 Timothy 2:9-10.
 - “Modesty”—
 - “Shamefacedness” (“propriety”—NKJV)—
 - “Sobriety” (“moderation”—NKJV)—
 - 6) Define “*lasciviousness*.” What is the consequence of it (Galatians 5:19-21)?
 - 7) What happens when we lose the ability to blush or be ashamed of our actions (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12)?
 - 8) Does a Christian bear any responsibility for the thoughts and actions of others (Matthew 5:28; 18:6-7)?
 - 9) Was Bathsheba completely innocent in David's seduction of her (2 Samuel 11:1-5)? Why or why not?
 - 10) How much difference is there between a man or woman dressing modestly?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Someone has said, “*A swimsuit is like a barbed wire fence. It doesn't hide anything, it just covers the territory.*” Do you agree or disagree? What can we do about it?
- 2) Some people say, “*No one would ever lust after these legs,*” but is lust the only consideration or criteria for judging what we should wear?

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- 3) If it is the public display of immodesty that is wrong, how can one rightfully enjoy swimming, tanning, and outdoor water activities? Give some practical solutions.
 - 4) In a question like this, sometimes the response comes “*Well, I probably shouldn’t dress that way, but I probably still will.*” Which part of our nature does that attitude accommodate (Romans 13:14)?
 - 5) Do you have a closing thought?

New Age Movement

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What exactly is the "New Age" movement?
- 2) Why is this philosophy so popular these days?
- 3) Who do the ideals of the "New Age" movement appeal to?
- 4) The following are some of the more common and important "New Age" beliefs. Explain each one the best you can:
 - Pantheism—
 - Reincarnation—
 - Karma—
 - Altered states—
 - Higher self—
 - Create your own reality—
- 5) The following are some of the common "New Age" practices. Explain each one the best you can:
 - Meditation—
 - Channeling—
 - Paranormal experiences—
 - Holistic medicine—
 - Astral projection—
- 6) The "New Age" promises unparalleled enlightenment and human potential—an evolution of the soul to a higher level of consciousness. What ancient practices does it adopt to take that step forward?
- 7) According to *New Agers*, we are entering the "Age of Aquarius." Powerful new energies are radiating on our planet—cosmic energy from outer space, originating in various star groups. Each age brings new cosmic energies that produce a change of consciousness on the planet. How is astrology an important part of the "New Age" concept?

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- 8) Why do Christians tend to dismiss all expressions of occultism and supernaturalism as fringe lunacy, fakery, quackery, trickery, and in general, “not real.” Does that mean we are right (Deuteronomy 29:29)?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) What does the Bible teach—in contrast to pantheism (i.e. “*God is the world and the world is God*”) (Psalm 90:2; 102:25-27; 113:4-6)?
- 2) What does the Bible teach—in contrast to reincarnation (Hebrews 9:27; Ecclesiastes 12:7; 1 Corinthians 15:35-57)?
- 3) What does the Bible teach—in contrast to meditation for contacting our “*higher self*,” thereby finding the answers to all of our questions (Jeremiah 10:23)?
- 4) *New Agers* say the world is evolving with increasing complexity, and that evolution is “*an ascent towards consciousness*.” The globe itself will develop a consciousness—they call this “*Gaia*,” after the earth goddess of Greek and Roman mythology. Therefore they are very active in global pursuits to save the planet.
 - What kind of insight does the Bible give about those who worship any part of the creation (Romans 1:21-25)?
- 5) What is there, in those who claim to be enlightened, that will lead to their ultimate undoing (Romans 1:18-23)?
- 6) Do we need an explanation for psychic phenomena, and all the different experiences of *New Agers*, to know that their philosophies are wrong (1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6)?
- 7) Perhaps there is enough explanation in the Bible to help us understand who is behind much of this activity (Ephesians 2:2; 6:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3).
 - Why did God warn His people to avoid the occult (Deuteronomy 18:9-14)?
 - Is it possible to have “*fellowship with demons*” (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)?
 - Does Satan have any kind of amazing powers that he can work in the world today (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)?
 - How is Satan able to deceptively cloak his evil intentions (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)?
 - Is there a realm with beings created by God, which are fundamentally not of this world, yet are very real (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 18:10; Luke 15:10; Hebrews 1:13-14)?
 - Is supernatural activity the same as miraculous activity? What is the difference, if any.
 - What are we to consult for our knowledge about the world (Isaiah 8:19-20)?

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- What will happen to us if we delve too much into this spiritual realm (2 Timothy 2:26; Galatians 5:19-21)?
- 8) Is channeling a new practice (1 Samuel 28:1-25; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14)? Why are people so interested in channeling?
 - 9) How can we judge whether an appearance—or a channeled message—is genuine? Should we listen to any of them (Jeremiah 23:16-18; Galatians 1:6-8; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-6)?
 - 10) What will God do if we forsake Him and engage in such conduct (Isaiah 2:6; 8:19-20; Galatians 5:19-21)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Should a person even experiment with “*New Age*” practices and philosophies (Romans 16:19)? What should he do instead (Ephesians 5:6-13)?
- 2) Why is it so important to fight these influences (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)?
- 3) Where can a person find answers instead of looking to crystals, spirit guides, channeling, astrology, etc. (Proverbs 3:5-8)? Who is our source of enlightenment (Ephesians 5:14)?
- 4) Where can a person find meaning and fulfillment—rather than in a “*New Age*” (Colossians 2:8-10)?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Obscenity

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:36-37)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Define “*obscene*.”
- 2) Obscenity occurs in many different areas. Explain how each of these things can be obscene:
 - Language—
 - Pornography—
 - Music—
 - Television—
 - Movies—
 - Dirty Jokes—
 - Gestures—
- 3) Define “*profanity*.”
- 4) What is the most common object of profanity (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 18:21; 21:6; Ezekiel 36:21-23)?
- 5) Why are we loosening our restrictions and accepting such obscene things (Proverbs 14:9)?
- 6) What do our First Amendment Rights—which everyone hides behind—have to do with what is right or wrong? Does the First Amendment to the Constitution make obscenity right?
- 7) How do good, moral people react to such obscenity (2 Peter 2:7-8)?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) What does the Bible say about obscene language?
 - What does our speech show (Matthew 12:34-35)?
 - Why must we keep our speech from being obscene (Matthew 12:36-37)?
 - What kind of language must we put away (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Peter 2:1)?
 - What kind of man uses such coarse language (Psalm 10:4,7)?
 - Why is cursing and swearing inconsistent with the Christian life (James 3:8-12; Colossians 4:6)? Why do you think people swear?

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- Can you make a fairly accurate estimate of a person's character by the way he speaks (Matthew 12:34)?
- 2) What does the Bible say about obscene pornography?
 - What does it say about any kind of illicit sexual behavior (Romans 1:29; Ephesians 5:3-4)?
 - Even though pornography is not an active sexual relation with another person, does God consider it to be any different (Matthew 5:28-29)?
 - Does pornography associate you with the better, or the worse side of human activities (Ephesians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 15:33)?
 - 3) What does the Bible say about obscene entertainment (music, television, movies, etc.)?
 - What kind of attitudes can singing portray (James 5:13)? What kind of attitudes does it portray when the songs are obscene?
 - What influence does television or entertainment have on the world if it depicts obscenity? Is that proper (Matthew 5:14; Philippians 2:15)?
 - 4) What does the Bible say about dirty jokes?
 - Are there topics and language which a Christian should avoid (Ephesians 5:3-4; 4:29; Colossians 3:8)? What are some of them, and how should we avoid them?
 - 5) What does the Bible say about obscene gestures?
 - A gesture is just an action. How could it ever be considered obscene (Galatians 5:19-21)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) What should moral people do about such obscenity (Psalm 39:1)?
- 2) How can you stop your mouth—if it has been used to cursing, swearing, and speaking evil things (Ephesians 4:17-29; Colossians 3:1-11)?
- 3) Where does your speech come from (Matthew 12:34)? Where must we start to make the change (Proverbs 4:23)? How can we control what our hearts think (Philippians 4:8-9)?
- 4) What should our goal be in all the above areas (Acts 24:16; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Philippians 1:10)?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Racism

"The Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.'" (Acts 10:34-35)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) Define "*racism*."
- 2) Define "*prejudice*."
- 3) List some common statements which we make, or hear being made, which are racist.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- 4) Why are some people racist?
- 5) Explain how each of the following things can contribute to racism.
 - Prejudice—
 - Discrimination—
 - Segregation—
 - Stereotyping—
- 6) How are the differences between races exaggerated when pink and brown people are called "black and white?" How do these terms polarize our thinking?
- 7) Is it possible for a person to be "*racist*" even if he is not white?
- 8) Would you agree or disagree that churches, as a whole, remain segregated along racial lines? Why or why not?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Was racial prejudice a problem in Bible times (John 1:46; 4:9; 8:48; Acts 22:21-23)?
- 2) What does the Bible say about those who judge according to outward appearances (John 7:24; 1 Samuel 16:7)?
- 3) Is there one race that is superior to any other (Genesis 1:26-27; Acts 17:26,28)?
- 4) God commanded Israel to remain a separate and pure race (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). Was it **because** they were a superior race? Did they think that was the reason?

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- 5) Racism is a sin of pride—one considers himself to be better than others. What does the Bible warn us about (Galatians 6:3)? How should we consider all other people (Philippians 2:3-4)?
 - 6) What is God’s attitude about different races of people (Galatians 3:28; Acts 10:24-35; 17:26,28)?
 - 7) What does the Bible say about hatred for anyone (1 John 2:9-11; 4:20-21)? Could a Christian be a member of the Ku Klux Klan? Of the Black Panthers? Of a racial gang?
 - 8) How does love react to any man—regardless of race, social standing, or anything else (James 2:1-10)?
 - 9) What had God told the Jews about the Gentiles and salvation (Isaiah 2:2-4; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 28:19-20)?
 - What had Peter preached in the first gospel sermon (Acts 2:21,39)?
 - Why did it take a miracle for them to understand God’s will (Acts 10:9-22,44-48; 11:1-3,15-18)?
 - What is the church supposed to be (John 10:16; Ephesians 2:14-18)?
 - 10) Did Peter sin in refusing to have fellowship with the Gentiles, or in refusing to socialize with them as equals (Galatians 2:11-16)?
 - Is there any difference between that attitude, and today’s attitude that *“blacks should stay with blacks and whites should stay with whites”* (cf. Galatians 2:12; Acts 11:3)?
 - What should we do about racial distinctions and segregation (Colossians 3:10-11; Galatians 3:26-28)?
 - Is that attitude of *“equal but separate”* acceptable to God (Ephesians 2:16)?
 - 11) Some people have tried to use the Bible to justify racism—like in the following examples:
 - The curse of Cain (Genesis 4:1-15). What was the mark (4:15)? What was Cain’s curse—being sent out or being marked?
 - The sin of Ham and the curse of Canaan (Genesis 9:20-25). Does the curse placed on Canaan infer that there would be perpetual servitude of the black race? Were Canaan’s descendants settlers of Africa, and therefore black (Genesis 10:6,15-20; cf. Joshua 9; Judges 1)?
 - 12) Are interracial marriages condemned in the Bible?
 - Was God’s prohibition against intermarrying with the Gentiles based on racial, or religious and moral grounds (Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Joshua 23:3-13; Ezra 9:12; 10:10-11; Nehemiah 13:23-31)?

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- Did God disapprove of Moses' marriage (Numbers 12:1-16)?
 - Who were the Gentile women in Jesus' ancestry (Matthew 1:1-17)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) Listen to yourself talk. Are you prejudiced or racist?
- 2) Is racism—or bigotry—an innocent attitude if we only hold it in our hearts and don't express it (Mark 7:20-23)?
- 3) Is racism an area especially noted for accuracy, fairness, and rationality?
- 4) What commands can we follow to help us overcome racist attitudes?
 - Matthew 7:12—
 - Matthew 22:39—
 - Acts 10:34-35—
 - Titus 3:2-3—
 - 1 Samuel 16:7—
 - 2 Corinthians 5:16-17—
 - Matthew 28:19-20—
 - 1 Corinthians 15:33—
 - Philippians 2:3-4—

Respectable Worldliness

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What is “*worldliness*?”
- 2) How would you describe “*respectable worldliness*” (cf. Isaiah 5:20)?
- 3) Who finds this kind of worldliness respectable—God or man?
- 4) Many people realize the sinfulness of things that are vulgar, immoral, and sensual. Why would some kinds of worldliness be harder to condemn?
- 5) Describe how this principle of “*respectable worldliness*” is a danger in the following areas:
 - Working mothers—
 - Use of free time—
 - Choice of marriage partners—
 - Business practices—
 - Church attendance—
 - Choice of career—
- 6) Give an illustration of an individual who is “*respectable*” but still “*worldly*.”
- 7) Give another illustration of an individual who achieves a lesser goal at the expense of a more important one.

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) What does the Bible say about “*respectable worldliness*?” Is it respectable with God (1 John 2:16; James 4:4)?
- 2) What does the Bible say about those who concentrate their lives and works on earthly things (Philippians 3:19; James 3:15)?
- 3) What is more important than anything else in this world (Matthew 16:26)?
- 4) Why is there nothing in this world which is worth obtaining at the expense of spiritual things (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:10)?
- 5) Explain how some Christians can be caught up in a respectable, albeit worldly lifestyle.
- 6) What does the Bible say about some of these attitudes which prompt worldliness?
 - The attitude that we can give ourselves completely to both God and worldly pursuits (Matthew 6:24)?

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- The attitude that “things” come first and God comes later (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15; Proverbs 27:1)?
 - The attitude of being satisfied with mere church membership (Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:3-8)?
 - The attitude of near-sightedness (Hebrews 11:14-16; 2 Peter 1:5-9)?
- 7) Explain how each of the following Bible characters were caught up in “*respectable worldliness*”:
- Lot (Genesis 13:1-18; 2 Peter 2:7-8)—
 - Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:1-11)—
 - Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27)—
 - Martha (Luke 10:39-42)—
 - Rich fool (Luke 12:15-21)—
 - Demas (2 Timothy 4:10)—
- 8) Explain how each of these Bible characters was tempted by worldly things—which seemed respectable enough—but refused them:
- Moses (Hebrews 11:24-27)—
 - Daniel (Daniel 1:8-21)—

Practical Solutions

- 1) What areas of your life fit into this pattern of worldliness which seems respectable enough—and sometimes even honorable?
- 2) In what ways can “*respectable worldliness*” be more dangerous than the obviously immoral and ungodly type of worldliness?
- 3) How can each of the following actions help us overcome “*respectable worldliness*?”
 - See things through the eyes of God (1 John 1:5-6; 1 Samuel 16:7; Isaiah 55:8-9)?
 - Seek transformation rather than conformation (Romans 12:1-2)?
 - Seek association with other Christians (2 Timothy 2:22)?
 - Give up whatever stands in our way (Philippians 3:7-14)?
 - Setting our sights higher (Colossians 3:1-4)?
- 4) Do you have a closing thought?

Suicide

*"For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself."
(Romans 14:7)*

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) How extensive is the problem of suicide?
- 2) Why do we often avoid the topic of suicide?
- 3) Perhaps you have never contemplated suicide yourself—why would you need to study the subject?
- 4) Is suicide more common in a specific age group or social group, than it is in others?
- 5) What are some stressful situations that can trigger suicidal feelings?
- 6) Consider each of the following. How do each of these statements explain the suicidal actions of some people?
 - Some people attempt in order to fail.
 - Some people attempt in order to escape the problems of life.
 - Some people don't feel like they belong.
 - Some people have no vision of a brighter future.
- 7) How can attempted suicide actually be a cry for help?
- 8) Suicide doesn't end pain. How does it increase pain? Is the person who attempts suicide—or who succeeds—the only person who is affected by his actions (Romans 14:7)?
- 9) What emotional feelings are associated with suicide?
- 10) People used to uphold the *"sanctity of life."* Unfortunately, this view has eroded into a *"quality of life"* standard. How does that attitude alter people's view of suicide?
- 11) Is suicide a way to *"die with dignity?"*
- 12) What would you call *"physician assisted suicide?"* Why?

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Name some Bible characters who committed suicide.
- 2) Name some Bible characters who thought about suicide—or at least a death that would take them from this world.

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- 3) What does the Bible say about:
 - Who gives us life (Acts 17:25; 1 Timothy 6:13)?
 - Who we belong to (Psalm 100:3; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)?
 - The unauthorized shedding of blood (Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9)?
 - 4) Some people who commit suicide feel that life has lost its meaning and is no longer worth living. How should we feel about ourselves and our own life (Romans 12:3; Matthew 22:39; Ephesians 5:28)?
 - 5) Explain how each of the following factors are involved in the thinking processes of those who consider dying or who contemplate suicide. Then show how each of the characters associated with that thinking process exhibited it.
 - Depression—Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18)
 - Seeking an escape from problems—Job (Job 3:11-26; 6:8-11; 7:11,15-16; 14:13) and Paul (Philippians 1:21-26)
 - Feelings of failure—Philippian jailor (Acts 16:25-29)
 - Pride—Saul (1 Samuel 31:3-5) and Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23)
 - Guilt or remorse—Judas (Matthew 27:3-5)

Practical Solutions

- 1) In what ways can we help someone who contemplates suicide?
- 2) How did Paul deal with his desire for death (Philippians 1:21-24; 2:3-4)?
- 3) Where can we point people for help (cf. Acts 16:27,30-34)?
 - What kind of people did Jesus come to help (Luke 4:17-21; Matthew 12:18-21; 11:28-30)?
 - Whose strength can we lean on (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 4:15-16)?
- 4) Do you have a closing thought?

Violence

"The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates." (Psalm 11:5)

Preliminary Thoughts

- 1) What are some of the forms that violence takes?
- 2) What makes us such violent people?
- 3) How do each of the following things lead to increased violence today?
 - Racial tension—
 - Frustration—
 - Anger—
 - Hatred—
 - Lack of respect—
 - Feelings of defeat—
 - Feelings of entitlement—
- 4) How can a country—once built on biblical morals—become such a violent nation?
- 5) What does the term *"group mentality"* mean? How does it contribute to violence, gangs, gang rapes, riots, vandalism, etc.?
- 6) Violence is not exclusively physical. What kind of mental and emotional forms can it take?
- 7) Explain the motivation behind vandalism.
- 8) Explain how people can torture others—enjoying those violent acts along with the suffering of others.
- 9) Explain how rape can be as much an act of violence as it is an act of lust.
- 10) How is it possible that violence can be "fun" to some people.

What Does The Bible Say?

- 1) Is cruelty and brutality a sin (2 Timothy 3:3)?
- 2) Sometimes we wonder how anyone's mind can be corrupt enough to do the violent acts we hear about. What is the Bible's explanation for their motivation (Romans 1:28-32)?

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- What was the motivation behind Cain's violence (Genesis 4:1-8)?
 - What was the motivation behind Simeon and Levi's cruelty and violence (Genesis 49:5-7; cf. 34:1-31)?
- 3) How does God feel about the violent man (Psalm 11:5-6; Micah 2:2)?
 - 4) Does God take note of violence (Ecclesiastes 5:8)? How does God respond to violence (Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13; Psalm 11:4-6)?
 - 5) Is violence consistent with the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39)? Is intimidation consistent with violence too (Luke 3:14)?
 - 6) How was rape punished under the Old Testament law (Deuteronomy 22:25-26)? Who did God hold responsible for that terrible situation (22:26)?
 - 7) Explain how divorce can be considered a violent act, even though no physical abuse is involved (Malachi 2:16; cf. 1 Peter 3:7)?
 - 8) Although a violent person may terrorize others, will he get away with it? What principle will catch up with him (Galatians 6:7; Psalm 7:16; 140:11; Habakkuk 1:2-3)?

Practical Solutions

- 1) What is God looking for to help overcome such oppressive violence (cf. Ezekiel 22:29-30)?
- 2) Have we come to the point yet that "enough is enough"? What should we do (Ezekiel 45:9)?
- 3) What is a better way than violence (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1-7)?
- 4) What is a good way to stay out of trouble, and out of the middle of violence (Proverbs 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:33)?
- 5) Do you have a closing thought?

Biblical Correctness

There is a popular term being tossed around a lot these days—*“political correctness.”* A person who is “politically correct” is blown along by the winds of popular opinion. He is influenced by the thinking of those who are outspoken about moral and social issues, who sway our thinking in a way that is consistent with the way they think we ought to think! Even without a certified list of politically correct or incorrect stands on issues, the influence and pressure is there nonetheless.

Our challenge is to take the proper stand on each of these issues, regardless of the way the political winds blow. Oftentimes, being politically correct will require that we be biblically incorrect. Which is more important? *“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.”* (Isaiah 5:20).

When it comes to the politics of right and wrong, we need to be on the side of that which is right. Which is more important—to be politically correct or biblically correct? It does not matter what our society believes and accepts in this or any other generation. What matters is that we rise above these issues and be what our heavenly Father wants us to be, *“that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”* (1 Peter 4:2-4).

People may think it bigoted or narrow-minded to say what the Bible says about these moral issues. They can choose to go along with the crowd if they want, but we have to teach what God said, “politically correct” or not! *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”* (John 8:32). My friend, it is time to take a stand for what is right! Where do you stand? Jesus said, *“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad.”* (Matthew 12:30).