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“New Morality” and the Ten Commandments
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One of the movements in our society in the last 50 years has been the effort of humanists to relativize Judeo-Christian values. Here we define values as something that makes a favorable difference in our lives. Some theologians have proclaimed a “new morality.” One response to this proposition is that the problem with the new morality is that it is the same as the old immorality. In spite of the furor that was created when this was proposed, its popularity has died down and one does not hear anything about moral behavior these days. A recent news article noted that in a survey of church members in Great Britain the people wanted to hear more about morality. All of us need to hear about it, for it is a fact that members of the church are no different from their secular counterparts in their behavior, but don’t know why. A friend of mine once said that he took over a church and he found that the members of his church were like the goats in Robinson Crusoe’s pasture. If you remember, Crusoe caught a bunch of wild goats and put them in a pen. He expected to tame them, but when he finished what he considered a good effort he found that the goats on the inside were as wild as the goats on the outside. Daniel Defoe did not relate the story the way I wrote, but it does provide an example of the state of the church today.

If relativism of our mores is rampant and hedonism abounding in the church, it is even worse on college and university campuses where our future leaders are being trained. Recently I was reading a story about the frequency of rape on the Duke University campus. They estimate that one in seven girls will be raped during their college careers. They went on to tell how underage drinking fuels the epidemic, and how “hooking up” or having casual sex also contributes. What they did not mention was that coed dorms, so called “visitation,” and loosening of discipline among students who are too immature to handle modern campus life has also contributed. Having raised five children and sent them to college at a time when moral standards on campuses were eroding, I am aware of how this deterioration contributed to the gross immorality and incidence of rape that now exists on campuses. An experience with the college scene occurred one summer when my oldest daughter went to a state university to take organic chemistry in summer school. When we took her to her room that was in a suite, one of her future suite mates was in her room in bed with her boyfriend. It appeared that they were having sex. I did not want to leave her there. In spite of my misgivings, my daughter felt safe so we left her. I trusted her because she was a Christian, and I never had worried about her morals. It is interesting that my second son once said that one thing he appreciated about me

was that I always trusted him and his brothers and sisters. Maybe that is why I could leave her.

As I read the article I thought -- there are easy ways to reduce the moral problems that schools face and I know what they are.

- They should quit selling alcoholic beverages on the campus.
- They should expel any students contributing to drinking by minors. Since most girls are minors when they come to college they are easy marks for male upperclassmen who operate on the Ogden Nash dictum that, "Candy is dandy, but likker is quicker." These upperclassmen and the underage drinkers should be expelled.
- There should be no coed dorms and
- No "visitation" in dormitories.
- Above all, ethical behavior and morality as well as the consequences of immorality should be taught to all undergraduates as soon as they hit the campus. It has been shown that kids who are taught abstinence from alcohol and sex early in life tend to be abstinent and usually do not get raped. It may be too late when they get to college, but at least they will have been told what is right and what is wrong.

If campus administrators were to follow these suggestions it would not stamp out immorality among college students, but it would inhibit it mightily. When I was in prep school the guys drank, got stinking drunk, sneaked into the girls' dormitories by climbing up ropes, went to houses of prostitution, and homosexuals on campus did their thing, but they understood that if they got caught they would be thrown out of school, so their acting out was infrequent. Temptation was minimized because boys and girls were separated and they could not be out after 10 PM on week nights and 11 PM on weekends. It was the same in my undergraduate years at Duke except the hours were later. One other inhibiting factor existed, though, that in our day most of us still subscribed to -- God's moral precepts and we tried to live by them. Most youth do not subscribe to them today for they have not been taught. Even if they do know them, they have been told that they are anachronistic.

I am not a pessimist, but I have to recognize that we can never hope to stamp out sin. Yet one thing is true and that truth is that sin can be inhibited. I recently was challenged on my view that our biological drives contribute to our sinfulness. I do not know where my critics come from theologically, but I know that lust, gluttony and greed all arise out of our human nature. In the fifth chapter of Galatians Paul attributes any number of sins to our human nature. In my mind there is no question that our biological drives are part of our human nature. The King James Version of the Bible called human nature our "flesh" so there is little doubt that the translators of that version of the Bible saw these biological drives as one source of our sins. Of course pride, which in the biblical sense refers to inordinate self-esteem, can encourage the gratification of these drives that arise out of our human nature. The satisfaction of our biological drives is a selfish activity. We want to fulfill them because they bring us pleasure. It is no wonder

that Sigmund Freud believed that the motivation for life was the “pleasure principle.”

Inhibition of our biological drives and especially our sinfulness can only come if we have mores. Mores are the fixed morally-binding customs of a particular group. The Bible has prescribed a set of binding customs for a Christian culture. When I was young, some 70 years ago, we knew what these were. I have not forgotten them. The Ten Commandments were the primary rules we were to live by and if we transgressed them we knew we would suffer. We knew that the wages of sin is death and that there would be no deflation of them. It is interesting that I still believe that today.

It should not be the job of the schools and colleges to teach young men and women rules of behavior that will make a favorable difference in their lives. It really is the parents' job to teach moral behavior. They also should model it. My children learned biblical values. Although we did not have the Ten Commandments posted in our house we discussed biblical values on frequent occasions. Some of the discussion took place even before I became a Christian. For the most part they have lived by them. Our society would be far better off if they were posted in all of our homes. One of my patients raised in a nominally Catholic home said that her only exposure to religion was the Ten Commandments posted above her bed. Without any other teaching they made a difference in her life.

Today we evangelicals are all in a tizzy about taking the Ten Commandments out of government buildings, and abolishing prayer in our schools. The schools are also teaching our children the humanistic idea that they can decide right and wrong for themselves. With that kind of instruction they go to the Internet, heavy metal rock and rap music, as well as video games to get their values. Why? It is because WE are not teaching our children the rules of right living. Even the church who is supposed to be a repository of true values does not teach them. I was on the curriculum resources committee of the United Methodist Church for eight years, and I do not remember reading a proposal that included anything about morality. I was on the youth subcommittee, and I am sure I would have remembered proposals relating to moral behavior for I was actively involved in youth work and wanted to see children learn how to live rightly. In my community activity I especially found that the Boy and Girl Scouts were designed to pass on biblical values to our children. The Boy Scout oath and laws were all biblical in their origin. My wife assured me that it was true for the girls too. Deep down inside of me I wanted my sons and their peers to know these laws, and be determined to live by them. That is why I was a scoutmaster for 15 years of my life. I still treasure the memory that each week we recited the oath, the Pledge of Allegiance, and had every boy memorize the scout laws. Older scouts had to teach the laws to the new boys coming into the troop so they had them firmly engraved in their minds. As a scoutmaster I was doing what the Bible said to do (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). I can also say proudly that almost all of my scouts became born again Christians.

Does it make a difference for children to learn biblical mores early in life? The answer is an emphatic yes! Most of my scouts have grown up to have successful marriages, raised children of worth, been successful in their vocations and been good citizens.

Some years ago we did a study of normal persons. The most interesting finding was that they all came from homes that were based on Christian principles. I am sure they were taught Christian values too. In the same way Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, in their epochal work on juvenile delinquency, found that children who came from ghetto homes that had a philosophy to live by (e.g Christianity) were not delinquent and were out of the ghetto 20 years later. A missionary to Nicaragua once told me that when a family head becomes a Christian, the family almost immediately raises their socioeconomic level and changes their moral behavior when they learn what the Bible teaches about morals. We found that the same thing is true in Africa. Living by God's laws makes a difference.

God created mankind in his image. He knew that there were many ways we could behave wrongly when he gave us free will. Therefore, he had to formulate the rules we needed to live by. When God chose Israel he revealed those rules through Moses in the Ten Commandments and other laws and ordinances. The amazing thing was that he covered almost every aspect of their lives including their health. He was especially interested in their relationships. God created us to be in relationship with each other and with him. It is not surprising then that many of the laws he gave applied to those relationships.

Mankind has never been able to live by God's laws. They disobey them over and over. Finally, Jesus had to come to give us the power to live by them when we accept him as Lord and Master. This is what makes Christianity different from all other religions. We have the power to obey God's laws when the Holy Spirit comes and lives in us! What then are the basic laws we are to live by?

The first of the ten basic commandments is to **love God**. He makes it plain that we are to worship no other gods. He created us as his treasure and he finds pleasure in us. He finds pleasure in us only when we relate to him and him alone. It is interesting that in most relationships that are intimate neither party wants the other to have other relationships that are intimate. God said he is a jealous god, and since we are created in his image we, too, get jealous when someone we love has another that they love in the same way they love us. God made sure that we would relate to him by building into our brains the circuits that light up when we relate to him. In doing this he gave us a radical neediness for himself. At the same time he gave us a radical neediness for a mate, children and friends. We fulfill these needs even in the womb where we start bonding to our parents. Throughout life we seek God to establish a relationship with him, we acquire a mate, we create children, and establish friendships.

Knowing that we need rest he commanded us to rest every seven days. On that day we are to spend our time relating to him. Sadly, most of the world does not do that now. The world believes that Sundays are for recreation, shopping, yard work or anything else they cannot do during the work week. Most

do not go to church. In some parts of the US only 2% of the people go to church to worship and honor God. But what do we do to honor him ? To honor someone is to exalt, to glorify or to magnify them. That is the real reason for taking a day of rest, for it gives us a chance to worship without the distractions of the workday world.

We are to ***honor our mother and father***. God knows that the family is to be the place where we are to be nurtured, so he wants to make sure that our relationship with our parents is to be one of respect, appreciation and love. It is interesting that he added the promise that we might live long in the land to this one if we obey. Honoring our parents means to give them the respect due them for bringing us into the world and rearing us. At times I hear of stories of parents that do not deserve honor and respect. Only yesterday a young man told me of his mother, a woman who deserved only condemnation. I can only urge someone with a mother like he has to honor his mother for giving him life. That may be all, but it is something. Sadly, the Bible does not tell us how to honor parents who reject and abuse their children physically, verbally, and sexually.

We are to ***do no murder***. God considers life sacred. He gave us life and it is his right to take it away. Murder disrupts God's plan for a life and he, therefore, expects us to respect life. Murder creates pain in the lives of those who love the murdered person. It is greater than natural death. Satan is intent on murdering mankind because he wants to destroy those who God loves and created. In doing this he creates as much pain in society as possible.

We are ***not to commit adultery***. God wants us to be faithful to our mates in our marriages. He knows that jealousy creates all kinds of problems. Above all he knows that trust is destroyed in a marriage and love cannot thrive in the relationship if adultery occurs. Jealousy is the first cousin of anger and they both occlude love. Adultery kills love. My mentor once told me that when love dies only the corpse of a marriage is left in the house. It is no wonder that 75% of marriages where one or the other spouse commits adultery end in divorce. Even if there is no divorce, the marriage is never the same again.

The next commandment is that we ***should not steal***. We as human beings are possessive. We like to own things and when we do, we do not want to lose them. I will never forget a technician I had who smoked marijuana. He was not a heavy user and did not use it on the job, so I could only chastise him for using it. He did run around with a group of heavy users. His buddies were not as circumspect as he was so they often had to steal to buy more "grass." One day he came to work as angry as I had ever seen him. When I asked him what was wrong he told me that someone who knew the layout of his apartment had stolen his Hi Fi, his television set and all the loose money he had in his house. He was so angry he wanted to kill them. All I could do was laugh at him, and remind him that bad company ruins good character. I had felt all along that this event was something that he could expect. Addicts are known to steal from their parents or from their girlfriend or from their mates or anyone else to buy more drugs.

God realizes that truth in relationships is necessary. He especially said that we **should not bear false witness against our neighbor**. God is truth! His Word is truth! Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life! God desires truth from us. We are to spread the truth of his Word in the world. In Proverbs the wages of truth are extolled. It is no wonder then that God gave us a commandment to tell the truth since lying destroys relationships.

The last commandment is **not to covet**. Again God is emphasizing the need to avoid thinking about possessing something that is not ours. He knows what James told us later -- that our evil desires will lead us or carry us away and sin will be conceived. God was very specific and named the things we were not to covet. The range was rather broad. It included any thing that belongs to our neighbor whether living or material. Greed is the origin of covetousness. In our world today greed abounds. All one has to do is read about CEOs of companies and professional athletes demanding and getting sums that are astronomical. Their demands are covetousness at its worst.

The Levitical laws cover almost every other aspect of human relationships. They especially address the problem of sex. God knows that controlling man's sexual urges is especially necessary if human relationships are to be harmonious. Incest was forbidden in any form. Punishment was in many cases death by stoning. In Deuteronomy he made the point that both the man and woman caught in adultery should be put to death. I often wonder if Deuteronomy 22:22,23 which prescribed stoning for **both** the man and the woman was what Jesus was writing on the ground when the Pharisees confronted him with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). To be sure the Old Testament spoke about homosexuality. Man was not to lie with man (Leviticus 20:13). Paul reiterated this prohibition in the first chapter of Romans. Bestiality was also forbidden and punishable by death.

God also gave us public health laws, especially about the cleansing of newborn babies. Skin diseases, including leprosy, were singled out for quarantine. This was important since they were so contagious. He even gave instructions for the disposal of human waste.

I must emphasize the point that breaking the commandments gives rise to negative emotions. What happens when a man commits adultery and is discovered? First of all his wife feels betrayed. She is overwhelmed with jealousy. She becomes preoccupied with what her husband has done and in many instances wants to know what exactly took place in his relationship with the other woman. If he has consorted with a prostitute, she wonders why he would go to someone who was not pure and could possibly infect him with a venereal disease such as the human papilloma virus or herpes and possibly bring it home to her. She might be afraid he could bring AIDS home. If his consort is someone other than a prostitute, she gets angry and wants to go and confront the woman and maybe even "beat the stuffing" out of her.

The adulterous husband on the other hand should be filled with guilt and most often is. He is ashamed of his behavior and often tries to make amends with his wife. She, on the other hand, has trouble forgiving him since her anger

is renewed every time she thinks of him with the other woman. He tries to excuse himself with all kinds of rationalizations, but they are not acceptable to his wife. It is almost as if he has committed the unpardonable sin. Sometimes the man is repentant and filled with remorse so that he will do anything to get forgiveness. Occasionally he receives it, but even if she does forgive him the marriage is irreparably damaged. It is extremely difficult for her to ever trust him again, and the marriage can never have the oneness that it had at the beginning. Now as I make this latter statement I know I will get letters telling me that marriages can be repaired, but in my 55 years of experience I have never seen one that was the same again.

Indulgence in pornography has the same effect that adultery does. It is in fact a form of adultery. One woman I knew said about her husband's pornography obsession that the very idea that what he was looking at on the Internet was more attractive than she was, filled her with anger. Wives of men who are bisexual also have the same feelings about their husband's homosexual liaisons since they too are adultery.

Other sins also give rise to similar negative emotions. A student who was working with me on a research fellowship trying to determine the physiology of hallucinations got my associate to order some cocaine to use in some experiments. He ordered much more than he needed and took it to use for his "pleasure." I did not know he was a user of street drugs, so I was appalled by what he had done. I felt this way because I thought he was trustworthy. After discovering his transgression, I became increasingly angry and fired him. I could never trust him again, so I ended my relationship with him. That was something I did only once in my career as a teacher. It was difficult for me to forgive him even though I tried.

A major consequence of sin is that it involves not only the sinner but others. I have seen many pastors who have fallen because of adulterous relationships. Most of them get fired summarily. Their wives are hurt, the congregation is hurt and disillusioned, and they find it difficult to get another pastorate. They never realize that their congregations or church governing body expect them to be above sin. They are to abide by the principle of *noblesse oblige*. Even though we know that pastors commit adultery as often as do the members of their congregation (approximately 20% for each), we still expect more of them. One can only comment that they are human like everyone else and their faith does not protect them. The reason? I believe it is that we live in a morally infectious environment and that they, too, can be infected by the culture. On top of that, they do not preach about morality, and above all, do not learn themselves or teach their congregations how to meet and master temptation. We all are going to be tempted and sometimes the temptation comes when our needs are not being met for a variety of reasons. Many of the pastors who have fallen have a poor or even non-existent sexual relationship with their wives. When their biological drives are stimulated, their spiritual armament is not adequate and they fall. That has been the most frequent cause of the fall of most of the pastors I have seen. In other cases they have been promiscuous before they were married and entered the ministry and remained so afterwards.

Sinners are aware of the consequences of their sin. I once interviewed a series of alcoholics. These were structured interviews, and I am sure the Holy Spirit led me to ask each of them a series of questions about the effects of the alcoholic's drinking on those he loved and their lives. I asked them what effect it had on their relationship with their wives, how their children felt about their drinking and how their drunkenness affected their relationship with their children. We went on to its effect on their extended family, their economic state, their jobs, their health, and their brushes with the law. By the time I had finished this interview eight of ten men were in tears. They realized that their alcoholism had negatively affected every aspect of their lives. They were filled with remorse.

I am sure you think I have become obsessed with the problem of sin. I do not think I am. What I am reacting to are the problems that I have to face in my practice that arise out of sin. Everyday I have to deal with the residual effects of growing up in homes where adultery, alcoholism, violence, verbal abuse and other sins have abounded. If you are told as a child that you are dumb, stupid, a whore, a slut, or ugly a thousand times, and you are never loved unconditionally you will have problems when you grow up. If you are told over and over that you can never do anything right, that you are worthless, you never try to achieve. If you are made to do something, and even though you try, you never do it good enough, you will hate to do that activity when you grow up. I do not know how many women have told me that they could never clean the house to suit their mother, so they now live in chaos. "Why try?" they say. They can still hear a voice in their head saying it's not done good enough.

Sin has consequences for many people besides the sinner. I am sure this is why God knew he had to give us rules to live by. Still he gave us the choice to live by them or not to live by them, but God knows that if we do not obey them we will first of all punish ourselves. We will deprive ourselves of happiness, for we cannot be happy if we experience the negative emotions of anger, shame and fear. They are what sin elicits in us and other people. This is one reason why we should obey God's laws and ordinances. The other is that sin grieves the Holy Spirit.

We should be obedient!