

# **Right from Wrong – Part 1**

*Josh McDowell*

## I. Introduction.

- A. One of the hardest things is learning how to pass on values to one's children.
- B. It is difficult to help them understand right from wrong.

## II. The challenge.

A. Illustration - 3 out of 249 church students said that in a difficult circumstance they would lie although almost all of them said that lying was wrong.

- 1. There is almost no continuity between belief and behavior in the youth culture today.
- 2. Most of these said that it was wrong because their parents said so.
- 3. If something is wrong because one's parents teach us it is wrong, then nothing is wrong.
  - a. The Holocaust is justified.
  - b. Every atrocity is wrong if only one's parents teach them.
- 4. Something is not merely wrong because the Bible says its wrong either.
  - a. We must teach Christians why the Bible says it is wrong.
  - b. Our culture has been raised upon legalism.

B. A culture raised on legalism will not survive.

- 1. "Thou shalt nots" will not propel people to do good - there must be another basis besides commandments. There must be a moral authority.
- 2. How you turned out is irrelevant if you were raised under legalism.
  - a. If you raise your children the way your parents raised you, you could lose them.
  - b. Our culture has changed - whatever was taught by the pastor was reinforced by the culture in the earlier generations.
  - c. Today we must take our children a step further - why is something right and why is something wrong?

C. Action based upon precept, principle, and finally the Person of God.

1. Behind every precept is a principle.

a. A principle is a broad standard or norm.

b. A precept deals with a very specific moral issue; it is the application of a very broad principle to a specific situation - it is like a funnel that narrows the principle down.

2. Behind every principle is the character and Person and nature of God.

a. Since the principle of the Persona and character of God is truth, we should not lie.

b. On the same note killing is wrong because God is life.

c. Injustice is wrong because God is just.

d. Hatred is wrong because God is love.

e. Impurity is wrong because God is pure.

3. The very basis for what is right and what is wrong is not our pastor, teacher, parent, or even the Bible - it is the character, nature, and Person of God..

D. The point of precepts.

1. God's commandments protect us and provide for us.

2. Illustration: as long as we are under an umbrella we are protected from the rain and provided with dryness. When we move out from under the umbrella by an act of our will, we get wet.

3. Example of teenagers who violated neighbors' precepts that were put there to protect them.

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## STUDY GUIDE

### *Part 1: What do you see?*

1. What is the major disconnect in children today between morality and reasons for morality? What do they fail to understand?

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2. How should children see the basis of their actions?

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3. What is God's purpose in giving us precepts in the Bible if His character is already displayed?

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### *Part 2: What do you think?*

1. What stood out the most to you about this message? Explain.

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2. Why do you think that our culture is losing touch with the reasons for right and wrong?

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3. What is the importance of understanding the basis for right and wrong? How will this help people to maintain consistency with their belief and practice?

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***Part 3: What will you do?***

1. How will you teach principles and precepts to youth in a way that will stick? How will you teach them the basis of their actions?

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2. Do you find your own behavior being determined because “the Bible tells you so?” How will you take this a step further?

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3. What areas of your own life are outside the character of God? What steps can you take to display Him rightly with these areas of your life?

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