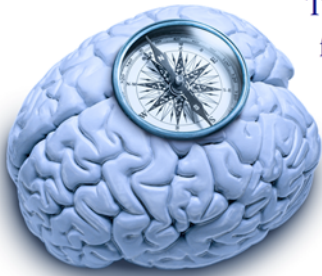


## What Defines Moral Behavior? (Part I) Personal Choices

**Proverbs 2:6-7:** *6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.*



To be moral is to conform to a standard of right behavior. Ideally, to be moral is to stand for principles and actions that are positive and contributory to the world in which we live. This sounds great! It sounds like something we would all (with the exception of those who just don't care) want to live by. However, there is a problem. Who defines what is moral and what is not? Upon whose proclamation do we decide whether someone is acting in a positive and contributory way or in a way that is destructive? Outside of the laws of the land we live in, each of us (for the most part) has the capacity to develop a personal moral code. The big question is, do we each define that moral code based on personal experience and preference, or do we define it by what we would consider to be higher guidelines?

In this episode, we are going to address some philosophical ways in which people look at and define morality. Our approach will be to respectfully address and compare Humanism as a guiding principle for morality with God's word as a guiding principle for morality.

**Atheist:** someone who does not believe in God.

**Agnostic:** someone who says we can't know whether God exists or not.

**Humanist:** how some atheists or agnostics approach life. It describes their values or philosophy. Rather than focusing on God or religion, humanists promote individual and collective well-being through natural and human means. It includes a reliance on science and reason instead of a supernatural source to understand the world.

The tagline of the American Humanist Association (with over 30,000 members) is you can be "good without God" by treating each other with kindness and respect. Humanists ask, "How, in this one life we have, might we make the most of our time here for ourselves and for others?" They believe in easing suffering of humans and animals, fighting for justice, being honest and compassionate and treating people with respect. These are all wonderful ideals!

Humanism ideally approaches life through the lens of a carefully thought out **subjective morality**.



(Source: Objective vs. Subjective Mortality: The Moral Disagreements, [believeinmind.com](http://believeinmind.com)): Subjective morality refers to moral judgments and values that are based on personal feelings, opinions and perspectives...Subjective morality acknowledges that beliefs can vary between individuals based on their own experiences, cultures and circumstances.

**Subjective morality** is the idea that there is no single perception of right and wrong. Different societies throughout history have had differing senses of what's right and wrong.

As Christians, we look for God's word as OUR guiding moral principle. What does God's word teach us in terms of the basis for our own morality? Plenty!



**Here is just one teaching from the book of Proverbs that gives us an overview of how our morality should be defined:**

**Proverbs 2:6-14:** *6 For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, 8 guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. 9 Then you will discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; 11 Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, 12 to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things; 13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; 14 Who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perversity of evil.*

God is THE source of all we need to establish a sound, wise and righteous life. God gives knowledge and wisdom. He protects those who have integrity in relation to His guidance. He assures us His principles will give us the capacity to discern true righteousness and justice. This is the basis for having what is called **objective morality**.



(Source: Objective vs. Subjective Mortality: The Moral Disagreements, believeinmind.com)  
Objective morality means establishing moral rules and judgments that are universally valid and not subject to individual biases or preferences. Objective moral truths exist independently of what any particular person or group believes.

Those humanists who do believe in **objective morality** would say morality comes from inside of us and is determined by the natural selection of evolution.

For the Christian, God's word is already in place, so our **objective morality** is defined for us.



We acknowledge we are giving very simplistic definitions for our purposes here. The subject of ethics and morality is extremely complex and hotly debated.

We do not believe it is possible for **objective morality** to come from within. **Objective morality**, by definition, exists outside of any individual bias—it is universal. Otherwise it is subject to “me.”

The disconnects between humanism and God-directed morality are many. As we trace the elements that give followers of Jesus clear moral direction, let's begin by looking at where **subjective morality** began with the human race.

**Let's look at the birth of subjective morality for humanity:**

**Genesis 3:1-3:** *1 Now the serpent... said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? 2 The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.*



There is no gray area in Eve's answer to Satan. It was either right or wrong! She cited the **objective morality** of God's guidance— *You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.* God's command was clear and unambiguous! It was straightforward.

**Satan then introduces a subjective basis on which to consider what is "right" behavior:**

**Genesis 3:4-7:** *4 The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*



Eve pauses and considers. She had the **objective morality** of God's statement clear. But now Satan has suggested God withheld some information. In her thinking, Eve will be going to override God's objective statement with her subjective human judgment.

*6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food,*

*Satan's suggestion opened her eyes to see things differently.*

*and that it was a delight to the eyes,*

*She noticed it was beautiful before, but now Satan opened the door for her to consider its beauty and nourishment in a different way.*

*and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,*

*Who wouldn't want to be made wiser by eating of this fruit? Besides, Satan, the guardian of the Garden, said she could do it!*

*she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

*She reconsiders the objective clarity of God-driven morality with this new information from Satan as the serpent. If we won't die AND Adam and I will have special knowledge, how can this be bad?*

*7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*

*The eyes of both of them were opened and now they were exposed on every level. They were exposed intellectually because they have now taken a subjective approach to an objective problem. They saw it differently than their Creator presented it.*



They realized their nakedness because now they saw things in a way God had not yet intended for them to see. They had taken the beauty and clarity of God’s command and His gifts of creation and dominion and made a mess of it. They chose an action outside the guidelines they were given.



### Moral Clarity in an Unclear World:

We as humans are blessed with intelligence and choice and we use those things to design our approach to life and circumstances. In our deciding right and wrong, we easily and often go by what feels right.

**Is what feels right to me right before God?**

We are just getting started and already we have multiple reasons to truly stop and think about the direction we might be going.

**Are we saying God looks down upon us as sinful human beings with eyes of contempt because we are so stuck in our subjectively moral thinking?**

No, absolutely not. God is far more just and wise than to look down upon His human creation in such a way. On the contrary, what He often did with Israel, His chosen people, was to give them space to make their choices and then live with the consequences, be they good or bad.

We're going to compare God's **objective morality** versus humanity's **subjective morality**.

Before we get too far into this, let's look at the complaint from humanists:



Humanity doesn't require a god's assistance to be moral. Humanity has the ability to be altruistic, responsible and act with self-control. While humanity can be cruel and violent, it is outweighed by our capacity to be humane, cooperative and peaceful.

These are certainly very noble ideals, but we just reviewed how Eve reasoned on the information she had been given by a “trusted” source and made the wrong choice!

**God's objective morality is simply defined in this prophecy about Jesus' future role with humanity:**

**Isaiah 42:1-4:** *1 Behold, My servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for his law.*

The purpose of God's **objective morality** is to give humanity a just environment. Justice is mentioned in this prophecy over and over again—*justice to the nations*. And isn't morality based in the highest form of justice? Morality demands justice for all.

This prophecy shows us God has justice in control and will bring this justice not only to His people, but to all of humanity. There are many prophecies that tell us this.

Let's look at one practical example of how God chooses to have His **objective morality** work in conjunction with the **subjective morality** of sinful humanity. We will look at what God says as the absolute truth and see how He works with people making their own decisions.

**This was back in Samuel's day when Israel wanted a king after having judges for 450 years:**

**1 Samuel 8:4-6:** *4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; 5 and they said to him, Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations. 6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the LORD.*

Samuel had become old and unable to do the work of judging all of Israel by himself, so he appointed his two sons to help him. But they took bribes and were corrupt, so the people did not respect them. These were legitimate concerns but could have been solved by simply asking for honest judges.

They could have gone to Samuel, explained why they were troubled about these issues, and asked him to consult God and join with them in finding a solution. Instead, the legitimacy of these concerns led them to suggest the illegitimate solution of wanting a king.

**God's surprising response:**

**1 Samuel 8:7-9:** *7 The LORD said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also. 9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.*





It comes out in **1 Samuel 8:20** the three real reasons they wanted a king: *That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

God went on to explain all the bad things that would happen with a king, and of course, God was right. Of the 20 kings of the two-tribe kingdom of Judah, about five were good and five were utterly evil. The other ten were a mixture of good and evil. Of the kings of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, all were bad in varying degrees.

Though having kings would prove to be generally disastrous, God still always blessed Israel when they came back to Him and to His ways.

**Eventually, God would take the subjective desires of His people and fulfill them with His objective justice and righteousness. He would bring them their true king: Ezekiel 37:24:** *My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.*

We know this verse is prophetic because David had been dead around 500 years by the time Ezekiel was a prophet. David as king here pictures Jesus, the everlasting king. Remember, the Messiah would come through the line of David.

This prophecy points to the king—but this king was appointed by God in His time and under His conditions. They wanted a king, but look at what their kings brought them. God’s king and shepherd will bring righteousness forever. What a great comparison between human **subjective morality** and God's **objective morality**.

What about us? How do we practice using God’s moral standards to guide our own behavior?

**The book of Psalms begins with clear directions regarding standing firm in God’s objective morality. There is profound wisdom that reflects back to Eve:**

**Psalms 1:1:** *How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers.*

*Walk/stand/sit*—there’s a progression here.

Let’s look closer at the individual path of what a blessed man does NOT do.

- ▣ First, *he does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.* No matter if we are religious or not, the available input is generally more wicked counsel than good.



**FIRST STEP—RESIST COMMON DIRECTION:**

**Don’t walk along the path of those who seek their own answers:**

**Proverbs 13:20:** *He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

Walking with the wise helps us to be wise, but the opposite is also true. If we are a *companion of fools*, we do ourselves harm. This is logical, but our **subjective morality** often overrides.

▣ What else does a blessed man NOT do? ...*Nor stand in the path of sinners...*

Here the walking stops; we are not progressing. We get comfortable in this space.



**SECOND STEP—REPEL COMMON INTEREST:**

**Pausing to consider any other path opens up our subjective minds:**

Proverbs 2:11-12: *11 Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, 12 to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things.*

Discretion and understanding from above is higher than that which we find within ourselves. This higher understanding helps us to resist following inappropriate paths of behavior.

▣ Finally, a blessed man does NOT *sit in the seat of scoffers!*

We started by walking along, then relaxed and stood still because we were comfortable. Now we sit down. When we sit, our defenses are weak—our ability to run away is gone. We are comfortably sitting in this fellowship.



**THIRD STEP—AVOID UNGODLY FELLOWSHIP:**

Be careful where we spend our time and who we spend it with. Be careful what we allow into our minds.

**Prolonged engagement with those who diminish godly principles brings us to unhealthy doubt and even to becoming unrighteously critical:**

Psalm 26:4-5: *4 I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. 5 I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.*

In other words: *I won't stay in a place where I stop looking at my life from a godly perspective.*



A humanist critique is that religious people appear to be deciding morality on their own when trying to understand God's will. When we pick certain Bible passages to follow and ignore others, the argument goes, we are in effect interpreting our own standard of morality biased by our own cultural prejudices (rephrased from pragmatism.org). As proof, there are approximately 41,000 different Christian denominations!

The humanists are correct! There IS a lot of **subjective morality** within Christianity. Why? Because inevitably we want to take our Christianity and match it to what WE are looking for, rather than accepting the simple clarity of Christianity.

When we twist what God says in the Bible to fit what we want it to say, we have made it part of “me” (subjective) instead of me being part of “it” (objective).

**By taking these three steps (don’t walk/stand/sit) to avoid often attractive engagements, we can set our minds to what the next few verses offer:**

**Psalm 1:2-3:** *2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

When we meditate on God’s word, it brings us freedom, nourishment, health, strength, and peace. In today’s world, we wonder how anyone can cope without God in their lives!

Of course a humanist would say they have freedom, they are nourished, they have health, they have strength. They can prosper without religion and without God. To them, religion is irrational, superstitious and oppressive, as well as ancient and outdated. Besides, there are a lot of “religious” people who do terrible things.

We agree, but even with a humanist mindset, there can be irrationality. Humanists are also capable of creating a reality based on their own perceptions, something they accuse the religious of doing. This can lead to judgment and oppression on their part, condemning those who follow God.

### Moral Clarity in an Unclear World:



**When dealing with His people, God often demonstrated His respect for their legitimate complaints and did at times allow their own subjective solutions. However, His objective principles were always present and gave them the ability to reveal the potential folly of their choices.**

**Are we willing to learn this kind of awareness as we face the moral challenges of our lives?**

Are we willing to learn from something bigger than ourselves and take that to create our moral direction?

One thing is clear. It is very easy to inject our own subjectively moral decisions as we face the daily challenges of following God’s objective principles.



**We have just been given a sense of how God deals with the subjective morality of His people. How does He respond to everyone else?**

For many, this is a big question. In our present social environment, we can see when those on one side of an issue with moral implications are faced with an opposing view, the most common default reaction is contempt. Our wholesale discounting of those who see things differently is telling. In so doing, are we acting in accordance with or in contradiction of God's ways?

One of the reasons we are hearing the term "humanism" more and more is because of the traditional stigmatism towards atheists. They are a mistrusted minority in the United States.

According to a 2023 Pew Research Center survey, an overwhelming majority of atheists (94 percent) say that the statement "religion causes division and intolerance" describes their views a great deal or a fair amount. And 91 percent say the same about the statement "religion encourages superstition and illogical thinking." Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) say religion does more harm than good in American society.



This may be true in some cases. However, the American constitution and government (and therefore its society and values) were founded on biblical principles.

**Before we navigate God's responses to those who do not seek Him, let's observe one more detail of His care for those who do seek Him in our theme text:**

**Proverbs 2:6-7:** *6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity <8537>.*

**Integrity:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8537 *tom*; completeness; figuratively, prosperity; usually (morally) innocence

The shield described here is a "buckler," a portable shield held by a handle or worn on the forearm. This is comforting!



Think about being able to walk into the battle of everyday life wearing God’s principles as our shield! Not only is it comforting, but it should give us a great sense of support when standing against ungodly principles.

Humanism, in its most honorable form, proclaims that WE are the source of human enlightenment. It seeks not a higher power, but instead seeks science, nature and reason for its basis.

On the other hand, the Bible recognizes and reasons that all are given the testimony of nature and science.



Thought question: Without a “higher power” guiding and governing the universe, what are the chances that such expansive order, beauty, creativity, power and intelligence could come from sheer chaos and random disorder?

“—

*Here is the answer of Stephen J. Gould, humanist and evolutionary biologist:  
“We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs...because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a ‘higher answer’—but none exists.”*

“—

*James Hemming, President of Humanists UK (1977-1980) “Our entire bodies and brains are made of a few dollars’ worth of common element...Assemble them all in the right proportion...and the result is our feeling, thinking, striving, imagining, creative selves. Such ordinary elements; such extraordinary results!”*

It is by Intelligent Design! It would ruin their perspective to acknowledge this.

Yes, the basic elements humanity is made up of are cheap because they are plentiful on earth. Yet, they are so magnificently put together! For us it is undeniable that there is intelligence behind creation. Humanity did not come from fish with weird fins—it is far above the rest of creation.

**Let’s see what the Scriptures say about this very argument:**

**Romans 1:20:** *For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

The vast complexity of creation gives us cause to acknowledge a MUCH higher power than ourselves.

Of course, WE look at science and nature and see the fingerprints of God. Medical knowledge has increased very quickly in the last century, yet we still have no idea how our own immune system works or even something as basic as how our brains are able to dream at night. Think about the complexity of DNA. Would it be possible to randomly throw a bunch of elements up in the air and have them come down with even one strand of DNA?

There is reason here. **Romans 1:20** starts with the premise that the world should be able to realize the existence of God through observing nature. His signature is all over creation, all over the order of things; the functioning of the universe and our own solar system, the law of gravity, the property of ice that enables it to float in water instead of sinking, the incredible diversity of nature. These things are all the signature of God!



**And yet:**

**Romans 1:21:** *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*They became futile in their speculations—this fish had weird fins and out popped a human being half a million years later. This is foolish.*

The act of ignoring God, of intentionally discounting His existence and power, of denying the evidence of Intelligent Design, creates a void in man’s **subjective morality**. By ignoring God, we are operating with less than our full intelligence. By definition, WE are now the highest moral decision makers. By taking God out of the picture, WE have become “God.”

**Romans 1:22:** *Professing to be wise, they became fools.*

This sounds familiar. We often hear the phrase, “It’s my truth.” “My truth” is what the individual WANTS to believe. What we think we see clearly becomes “the” truth to us.

However, we maintain that any profession of wisdom and enlightenment within a godless environment is ultimately flawed. Why? Because it forces its **subjective morality** to never have a true and everlasting answer or basis.

The morality might work temporarily for this generation or this group of people, but it will have to change for the next. Without absolute truth, without an immovable “north” for our moral compasses, we have anarchy. Everyone acts for whatever is good for their own advancement.

**Romans 1:23:** *And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*



This **subjective morality** replaces worshipping the mighty God with self-worship and nature worship in a form of idolatry. When we take out the Designer and just worship the design, we lose touch with the intelligence behind what we are worshipping. We lose our way, getting stuck in a lower level of thinking.


These texts were written 2,000 years ago, and we are still seeing this exchanging of our own selves for God. It shows up now in humanism. But we also find it in the resurgence of paganism and witchcraft. This is **subjective morality**. These texts evidence eternal wisdom of God in predicting the self-centeredness of humanity.


**Romans 1:24-25:** *24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

Wanting to help humanity and the planet are beautiful ideals. But all idolatry—worshipping the created instead of the Creator— eventually brings darkness and not light.

While well-intentioned, without God, humanism operates in ignorance of God’s ultimate purpose for man. The agreed-upon morality might be good for today and tomorrow, but ultimately it will change. If we don’t get the change right every single time, the result is anarchy—each person for themselves rather than the common good.

The end result of how God responds to humanity is, when people don’t look to Him, He leaves them to their own devices. Israel demanding a king was a good example. God patiently explained the ramifications of having a king, but they insisted on having one anyway. He let them have their way to show them natural consequences. This reminds us of teenagers who think they have all the answers but make often make the wrong choices through a lack life experience and maturity!

 Speaking of “leaving them to their own devices,” what do we say to those who say, *Okay, God DOES exist, but this human experiment went so awry that He abandoned the project and moved onto a far distant universe to try again. We’re on our own to fend for ourselves—this is obvious if we look around at how awful things are!*

 The answer is to look into God’s word. Although it may look like God has forsaken the world, the permission of evil is by design. When we look at the prophecies and the structure of the Bible as a whole, we see this tapestry of beauty showing us a beginning, middle and happily-ever-after ending to the putting away of sin and death. The eternal life promised by God will follow.

**What God ultimately wants from His human creation:**

**Micah 6:6-8:** *6 With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? 7 Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

Should we do all of these dramatic, overt things? No!

*8 He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*



Here's the key: God requires us *to do justice*—according to His standard; *to love kindness*—according to His standard; and *to walk humbly*—not only with each other (though that is important) but primarily with Him. This puts all of us on an equal par, learning everything every humanist wants humanity to learn—just from a higher perspective. This is God's objective for the human race.

**Moral Clarity in an Unclear World:**



God's wisdom dictates that He give space to humanity in this age of sin and death. He knows that any and every human attempt at a godless utopia will end in the sadness of dysfunction and destruction.

**Why does He do this?**

He knows that in the resurrection every ransomed human being will plainly see just how far their collective subjective morality fell short of the true and pure morality He has in store for them.

It's not the end of the story! God is in control, even though He allows some to think He isn't. He is giving us the opportunity to make our choices and experience the consequences for our ultimate good.

The fact that God leaves humanity alone in their own moral reasoning and planning really makes us look hard at the results. Hmm—they're not good!

**As we attempt to follow Jesus, how do we more fully embrace God's objective morality in OUR everyday lives?**

Of the many answers provided to us in Scripture to this question, we will dwell on only a few. The key here is understanding that life has too many intricacies to make this a black and white/right or wrong discussion. Morality must be able to fit into the practicality of every day, and the only way to do that is to use our best God-based moral judgment in each circumstance we face.



In spite of the apparent contradiction, though, **objective morality** and **subjective morality** aren't really mutually exclusive. There is some overlap. To say that morality is subjective—that it varies from person to person—doesn't preclude it from existing objectively for each person as well. We ARE all flawed by sin, and our own biases interfere.

How do we make sense of all of this so we CAN do better?

We are going to go into **FOUR SPECIFIC POINTS** in this episode, but in Part II, we will ask what we can do as Christians with our subjective approach to God's objective standards.



**1. REGULARLY CLARIFY THE ORIGIN OF OUR CHRISTIAN MORALITY:**

Clarify where it comes from. Without clarity we are subject to compromise.

**Our mission is adherence to God's objective morality driven by the precepts He proclaimed—not the precepts we like the best:**

**Psalms 119:165-169:** *165 Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble. 166 I hope for Your salvation, O LORD, and do Your commandments. 167 My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. 168 I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies. For all my ways are before You. 169 Let my cry come before You, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Your word.*

Go's law, salvation, commandments, testimonies, precepts, word—these are a good baseline for establishing morality as a Christian. This differs greatly from the perspective of a humanistic atheist who says that “objective moral truths can be discovered by using reason and science, and the process does not require a belief in God.” (quoted from [atheistalliance.org](http://atheistalliance.org))

This is why Bible study is so important. We ask God to help us understand His precepts and to incorporate them into our life experiences. We constantly need to work on maintaining high moral standards. If we don't frequently consult our source, we risk our decisions becoming degraded a little at a time.

Whether photocopying or handwriting, you don't copy from a copy. You always want to copy from the original, because over time, the copies get degraded a little at a time.

We need to clarify our **objective morality** periodically so that our **subjective morality** does not degrade bit by bit. Our Christian morality is to be built upon the purity of God's **objective morality**.



**2. REGULARLY CHECK THE AUTHENTICITY OF OUR CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE:**

**Is my inner voice from God or me:**

**1 Timothy 4:1-3:** *1 But the spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who...know the truth.*

**Like it or not, our inner voice is flawed:**

**Romans 3:23:** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

We naturally have consciences that can be easily seared...as with a branding iron. We have to be careful we do not base the big picture of our life on that seared, flawed conscience.



**3. TRULY BELIEVE IN WHAT WE SAY WE BELIEVE:**

There is a huge difference between merely professing something and truly believing something. “Profess” in the New Testament means to express approval, that is, to covenant or acknowledge.

**Profess:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3670 *homologeō*; to assent (meaning, to express approval), i.e. covenant, acknowledge

There’s an American idiom that says, “Talk the talk, walk the walk.” It emphasizes the importance of matching one’s actions with their words. It’s not enough to say something; you need to demonstrate those intentions through action.

There are two sides to professing.

**The weak side, the common side of “talking the talk” and stopping there:**

**Titus 1:15-16:** *15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. 16 They profess <3670> to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.*

This is about those who make a profession, who “talk the talk,” but that talk is not much more than empty chatter. We acknowledge this is a problem within Christianity. With 41,000 denominations, there is likely a lot of “talking the talk” going on.



**The strong side, where one will “walk the walk” of their profession:**

**1 Timothy 6:11-12:** (WEY) (Paul is speaking to Timothy) *11 But you, O man of God, must flee from these things; and strive for uprightness, godliness, good faith, love, fortitude, and a forgiving temper. 12 Exert all your strength in the honourable struggle for the faith; lay hold of the life of the ages, to which you were called, when you made <3670> your noble profession of faith before many witnesses.*

This is a beautiful example. As a young man, Timothy professed he was living his life for Christ. The Apostle Paul later in Timothy’s life says, *Live that profession you made because you said the words, and then you walked the walk.* This is what a true Christian is supposed to look like.



**“TALK THE TALK, WALK THE WALK”**

Many times we say the words but do not do the deeds according to those words. We need to walk the walk of the professions we make.

Walk the walk of God's **objective morality**, not our best interpretation. Walking the walk of God's **objective morality** requires effort to learn and embrace its principles.

In 1 Timothy, Paul admonished Timothy to live what he professed. In 2 Timothy, Paul was about to die. He knew his life would be cut short, and he turns much responsibility over to Timothy.

**Here is what Paul advised Timothy:**

**2 Timothy 2:14-15:** *14 Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*

This reminds us of natural Israel. God told them to remember each year at Passover how He saved them. He wanted them to stay close to His Laws. Human nature forgets so easily. We also need to be diligent in staying close to God's word. This is our focus here at Christian Questions.



#### **4. ACKNOWLEDGE THE ROLE OUR HUMANITY PLAYS IN OUR THINKING AND ACTIONS AND COMPENSATE:**

Submitting our human **subjective morality** to God's **objective morality** creates an "objectively subjective" approach. In other words: we have our subjective approach to things. God's approach is always objective, but we can't entirely get rid of our own subjective approach. So, we need to raise our thoughts as high as we possibly can in this sinful state to meet God's objective approach. How do we do that?

**Romans 7:18-20:** *18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*

This evil is not the "heinous sin against humanity" kind of sin; rather, it is the human selfishness, idolatry, ego, idleness and covetousness kind of sin.

The Apostle Paul HAD committed heinous sins against humanity, but he turned his back on them and ran hard and fast to put them behind him. However, he was still an imperfect human being, and he did what he didn't want to do.

He could see the gap between his own human **subjective morality** compared to God's **objective morality** and principles. We all have this gap, and it is frustrating! Paul's lament applies to all of us. We just have to keep trying to honor God with honest hearts. Even though we fail over and over again, we don't give up.

**Paul continues:**

**Romans 7:22-25:** *22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.*

Paul understands he is a living contradiction, but his effort is still focused upward. He is showing us how to look at our lives using God's **objective morality** to identify our path. We then use our own **subjective morality** to work on living acceptably before Him. More on this in Part II! It is not a matter of "all or nothing." We can't let discouragement get to us because we are not exactly right. We are in sin, but God understands and provides compassion, grace and forgiveness. It is a matter of moving closer, step-by-step to our goal of Christlikeness.

**Moral Clarity in an Unclear World:**



It's a challenge, but God knows our frame and that we are mired in sin, even though we are disciples of Christ. He uses our fallibility along with the dramatically deficient wisdom of the world's best thinking, to plant the permanent seeds of remembrance into humanity's history.

**Why does He do this?**

He does this to solidify His eternal plan of redemption through Jesus and bring all of creation back to honoring their wise and loving Creator!

God has not abandoned us. He allows our humanistic approach so that all can later be brought to a higher level. The Bible's prophecies assure us over and over. *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

God's **objective morality** says, *I see you. I've got you. I will bless you. I'll let you learn from what you are doing, but watch where I am bringing you. It is higher!*

There is so much to learn about focusing on God's **objective morality** rather than our own **subjective morality**.

**So, what defines moral behavior?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



@christianquestionsministries



cqbiblepodcast

Text CQREWIND to 22828

to receive our Weekly Newsletter, Show Notes and Study Questions

## Bonus Material and Study Questions

**Ep.1244: What Can We Learn from One of the Wisest Men on Earth?**  
*Breaking down the incredible wisdom and life advice of King Solomon*  
<https://christianquestions.com/character/1244-proverbs/>

**Ep.1062: Does Science Prove Intelligent Design?**  
*Documenting the extraordinary creative intelligence behind nature*  
<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/intelligent-design/>



Parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- **What is integrity?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-is-integrity/>
- **How do we know the Bible is true?**  
*Discussion about nature as evidence of our Creator*  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/how-do-we-know-the-bible-is-true/>
- **What is sin and what can we do about it?**  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/what-is-sin-what-can-we-do/>

## Word Study on “integrity” in the Old Testament:

*Many of our topics are compiled with a Word Study using several concordances and other Bible helps. We see how a particular word is used in both the Old and New Testaments. Understanding how the words are used not only tell us what they mean, but it gives us the nuances of the original Hebrew or Greek when comparing how the writers of the Bible use*



*them in different contexts. We can also learn more by seeing the origins of a particular word, providing a depth of understanding just reading scriptures in English cannot provide.*

**Integrity:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8537 *tom*; completeness; figuratively, prosperity; usually (morally) innocence

The King James Version Translates this word as “integrity” 11 times, “upright” 2 times, “uprightly” 2 times, “uprightness” 2 times, “venture” 2 times, “full” 1 time, “perfect” 1 time, “perfection” 1 time, “simplicity” 1 time

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Definition: 1) integrity, completeness 1a) completeness, fulness 1b) innocence, simplicity 1c) integrity

**All uses: (King James Version)**

**Genesis 20:5:** *Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity <8537> of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.*

**Genesis 20:6:** *And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity <8537> of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.*

**2 Samuel 15:11:** *And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity <8537>, and they knew not any thing.*

**1 Kings 9:4:** *And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity <8537> of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep My statutes and my judgments.*

**1 Kings 22:34:** *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture <8537>, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.*

**2 Chronicles 18:33:** *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture <8537>, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.*

**Job 4:6:** *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness <8537> of thy ways?*

**Job 21:23:** *One dieth in his full <8537> strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.*

**Psalms 7:8:** *The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity <8537> that is in me.*

**Psalms 25:21:** *Let integrity <8537> and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.*

**Psalms 26:1:** *Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity <8537>: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.*

**Psalms 26:11:** *But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity <8537>: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.*

**Psalms 41:12:** *And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity <8537>, and settest me before thy face for ever.*

**Psalm 78:72:** *So he fed them according to the **integrity <8537>** of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.*

**Psalm 101:2:** *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a **perfect <8537>** heart.*

**Proverbs 2:7:** *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk **uprightly <8537>**.*

**Proverbs 10:9:** *He that walketh **uprightly <8537>** walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.*

**Proverbs 10:29:** *The way of the LORD is strength to the **upright <8537>**: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*

**Proverbs 13:6:** *Righteousness keepeth him that is **upright <8537>** in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.*

**Proverbs 19:1:** *Better is the poor that walketh in his **integrity <8537>**, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.*

**Proverbs 20:7:** *The just man walketh in his **integrity <8537>**: his children are blessed after him.*

**Proverbs 28:6:** *Better is the poor that walketh in his **uprightness <8537>**, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.*

**Isaiah 47:9:** *But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their **perfection <8537>** for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1350: What Defines Moral Behavior? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/society/1350-morality/>

See:  CQRewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. Define **atheist**, **agnostic** and **humanist**.
2. What is **subjective morality**? How is it connected to humanism? What is **objective morality**? From where do some humanists say it originates? Where do Christians say it originates? (Proverbs 2:6-14)
3. How did **subjective morality** start in humanity? Does humanity require God's assistance to be moral? Did Eve's reasoning lead her to a good moral choice? (Genesis 3:4-7)
4. What is the purpose of God's **objective morality**? How did God deal with Israel when they chose a course that differed from what He wanted them to do? What was His ultimate solution? Compare Israel's subjective decisions with God's objective provisions for them. (Isaiah 42:1-4, 1 Samuel 8:4-9,20, Ezekiel 37:24)
5. How does Psalm 1:1 lay out a path a blessed man does NOT want to take? Explain each step and its countermeasure:
  - a. *Who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked* – How do we resist this? (Proverbs 13:20)
  - b. *Nor stand in the path of sinners* – How do we repel this? (Proverbs 2:11-12)
  - c. *Nor sit in the seat of scoffers* – How do we avoid this? (Psalms 26:4-5)
  - d. What do we gain by NOT taking this path? (Psalms 1:2-3, Proverbs 2:6-7)
6. What is the basis for humanism's beliefs? What does creation tell us about God? What is the reaction of non-believers when they look at nature and God's creative works? What are the results of taking God out of our moral decisions? What is God's reaction to man using subjective morality in his decisions? What does God ultimately want from us? (Romans 1:20-23, Micah 6:6-8)
7. What are the four steps we can do to bring our **subjective morality** closer to God's **objective morality**? State the step and then explain how to achieve this step:
  - a. Step 1 = \_\_\_\_\_; How do we achieve this? (Psalms 119:165-169)
  - b. Step 2 = \_\_\_\_\_; What should be our "mirror" questions? (1 Timothy 4:1-3, Romans 3:23)
  - c. Step 3 = \_\_\_\_\_; Describe the difference between just "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" (Titus 1:15-16, 1 Timothy 6:11-12, 2 Timothy 2:14-15)
  - d. Step 4 = \_\_\_\_\_; How do we improve our "objectively subjective" approach to morality? (Romans 7:18-25)
8. What areas in your life are more **subjective** than **objective** when measured against God's morality? How can you use the four steps above to become **less** subjective and **more** objective?