

Question: Why do we need the Bible and Jesus to tell us what is right or wrong?

Questions about moral absolutes are complex and difficult to address in a short article. For example, the same Jesus who often appealed to certain absolute truths indicated that there are some situations in which a higher law should prevail. When the disciples of Jesus were accused of violating the Sabbath law by picking grain to eat on a Sabbath day, Jesus defended them. He referred to the time that David and his men were fleeing from King Saul and desperately needed food; so they ate bread from the tabernacle that was supposed to be eaten only by the priests. Jesus then added, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent" (Matthew 12:7).

However, serious problems are created when we cut ourselves away from all moral absolutes in preference for each individual's unguided feelings of love. We need the guidance of something like the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus to serve as a grounding point. Almost everyday our news media reports the tragic result when biblical concepts of right and wrong with regard to things like sexual relationships, lying, stealing and killing are rejected.

If followed consistently, a rejection of all moral absolutes will lead to a world where there can be little personal accountability. When each act is judged in light of its specific situation only, we have no way to hold a person accountable for his misconduct. A thief or murderer could always argue that there were circumstances that made his actions right in the given situation. Each person becomes a law unto himself and accountable to no one outside himself.

However, the Bible does teach that love is the basis for morality when properly guided by an objective standard of right and wrong. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor.

Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8-10). Only when love is guided in moral choices by a common standard of right and wrong can humanity have any possibility of living in peace and harmony.

Who better to tell us what is right and wrong and what is the loving action to take toward all our fellow human beings than God our creator? In the interests of love for one another, may each of us deny ourselves and submit our will to his wise guidance!

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2014/05/23