

# Hartford Bible Students

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## Christian Morality in Today's World

We live in an era when "...every man is doing what is right in his own eyes..." (Proverbs 12:15) This basically defines moral relativism — moral standards which are not absolute, but are subject to change, depending on the popular culture of the time. This shifting world view of morality presents a great challenge for Christians to sort out what is truly virtuous. The Apostle Peter counseled: "Seeing that all these things [this present evil world] shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 2 Peter 3:11

As we see that this present evil world is being dissolved, it is timely for Christians to evaluate whether they have allowed the standards of the world to guide their path or whether they have been led by the only true moral compass — that which is laid out in the Word of God.

### God's Love Revealed in His Moral Code

Some claim that because God is love, He must love everyone, whatever their life choice, as long as it is socially acceptable and not hurting anyone. Yes, God IS love, but because He loves, He also sets down righteous laws to live by so that His creation might live in health and harmony with one another. Therefore, even though we come as we are to God, He does not want us to stay as we are. James counsels: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands... purify your hearts..." (James 4:8) And the Apostle Paul confirms this saying, "... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Romans 12:1, 2

God's Word sets before us moral absolutes. We are admonished to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." In fact, the Christian should not only obey the moral standards of God's Word, but in addition, he should be careful that he does not even give the appearance of evil. (1 Peter 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)

### "If Ye Do These Things, Ye Shall Never Fall"

**2 Peter 1:10**

The world may choose any life choice desired, but if one has given his life to God in full consecration, then that

Christian has stated a desire to live a godly life. For example, there is no passage in the Bible which states definitively that a Christian should not smoke. But, if a Christian has given over his will to any harmful habit or addiction, then, through prayer and persistency, every effort should be made to overcome. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12) Thus, where there is no direct command, the child of God will make earnest strides to live in conformity to the principles of righteousness set forth in the Bible and thereby glorify God. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body..." See 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 and Romans 6:4-18.

With this goal in mind, the Apostle Peter set forth guidelines from which to make spiritually healthy life choices and mature decisions as Christians: "...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance [self-control]; and to temperance patience [perseverance]; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity [love]. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." — 2 Peter 1:5-8

### "...giving all diligence..."

Peter's first admonition is to be diligent about this endeavor to develop in moral character as a New Creature in Christ. The Apostle Paul stated it even more forcefully, "I discipline my body and make it my slave..." (1 Corinthians 9:27 NAS) He also stated that "the flesh sets its desire against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." (See Galatians 5:16-21.)

Character development does not come easily, and it is a process of diligent study along with prayer — applying the knowledge we learn from the Scriptures along with the experiences the Lord permits in our lives to refine our character and become more Christlike. The Bible sets before the Christian boundaries to hold in check the natural fallen tendencies of the flesh. God set boundaries upon the first man and woman to keep them pure and to sustain their lives in a perfect environment; He warned

them not to eat of one particular tree or they would die. This test of obedience seems simple to us now because we have thousands of years of experience with the knowledge of good and evil. But to Adam and Eve, the test was a matter of inexperience with the bitter consequences of sin. They believed God, but they had not learned to trust Him and His codes of conduct to keep them safe. Self-control means making “straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.” (Hebrews 12:13)

As we mature in our Christian walk, we should be keenly aware of our weaknesses, and we should ask for God’s help in avoiding those influences which we know to be evil. “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise...” (Ephesians 5:15 NAS) It is our responsibility, as Christians, to “watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 6:13; 26:41

In the current climate of political wrangling, the media takes delight in promoting mud slinging among political candidates. Unfortunately, these professed Christian men and women find it necessary to evil speak for the sake of winning votes. But the Scriptures admonish Christians to “speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” (Titus 3:2) In the eyes of God, slander is a serious offense. (Matthew 5:22) Again, our examples should be that of Jesus and the Apostles, not the examples set forth to us in the media.

### Go and Sin No More

When a consecrated child of God has learned what it means to live a truly virtuous life, rather than dwelling on how far away from righteousness he has strayed, it is comforting to recall what Jesus said to the man who had

been cleansed from sin — go and “sin no more...” (John 5:14) It is important to recognize sin for what it is, thank the Lord for opening our eyes to it, repent, and then turn away from sin. Using the lessons learned from our experiences in the failure of our flesh, we see opportunities to grow in knowledge and grace. How merciful is our God who accepts the perfect heart intentions of the truly consecrated instead of the absolute perfection of our flesh. It is impossible for the fallen flesh to walk perfectly, and so we must keep in mind the Scripture: “a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again.” (Proverbs 24:16)

Those who have accepted Christ as their redeemer and who have given their wills to God are invited to go “boldly before the throne of grace,” asking for strength to go forward and sin no more. God’s children have been given the responsibility and great privilege of being ambassadors of His Kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:20) We are to be “blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world...” (Philippians 2:15)

Now is not the time for this world in general to learn righteousness. At this time God is refining only those who willingly put their lives into His hands. In due time — when the Church is glorified, having been proven faithful under the trying circumstances of this present evil world — the remainder of mankind will have their opportunity to learn righteousness under the direction of Christ and his faithful Church. (Galatians 1:4) Then inhabitants of the world will walk up the highway of holiness to perfection — learning and living righteousness.

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