



KATIE MORELAND

# GOOD OR GODLY?

A STUDY OF BIBLICAL MORALITY

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## A Study of Biblical Morality

By Katie Moreland

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# Introduction

**A**t this point in your spiritual journey, I am sure you have noticed that there are many good people in the world. Good people who do good things for others and have great intentions. So, how does one move from being merely a good person to being a godly person? What sets those who are God-fearing Christians apart from those who are merely good people? And why does such a distinction matter, anyway?

Many of these topics concern morality, defined as “principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.” The issue is that there are two places people derive their standard of morality from . . . the world and the Bible. Worldly morality is when we look at the world and people around us and use that as a gauge for what our actions, behaviors, and speech should be like. It is based on a comparison of humans around us and the world, and therefore, it is subject to change for many reasons . . . which group we are looking at, what period we are in, what culture or country, etc. Biblical morality is when we study the scriptures as our gauge for what our actions, behaviors, and speech should be like. It is based on a standard that does not change because the word of God does not change.

Whether we have grown up attending the church of Christ or recently began attending, as we grow (both in age and spiritual maturity) and study the Bible, there will be many times we notice discrepancies between Biblical morality and worldly morality. As these questions and distinctions arise, we must use the Bible as the standard by which we measure ourselves. To be found faithful on judgment day, we must live a life by God’s word and plan . . . and the Bible is where we discover that information. 2 Timothy 3:17 tells us, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

So, let us dive into the Word to study a few issues that look different when comparing the worldly standard of morality to the Bible standard in hopes that we may be complete, thoroughly equipped, and pleasing to God.

## Does It Matter What People Think of Me?

**A**s I started formulating ideas for this book, I had difficulty deciding where this topic fit into the study. I've determined it needs to be here, at the beginning, so we can all get on the same page about it immediately.

On this topic, worldly morality is easy to “peg” in our current cultural climate. It screams: “No! It doesn't matter what people think of you. Be your best self. Follow your passions. Don't worry about what others think!”

I am not here to tell you that everyone has to like you and think you are perfect. Unfortunately, there will be people you cannot please or keep happy. However, biblical morality shows us that there are, in fact, two groups whose opinions of us *do* matter: God and anyone on Earth we hope to one day influence for God.

When you become a Christian, you decide to live for something much bigger than yourself—Christ. You are committed to living for God and demonstrating His characteristics to the best of your ability. You also committed to keep growing (2 Peter 1:5–8).

When you became a Christian, you decided that what God thought of you mattered to you. When referencing his baptism and walk with Christ in Galatians 2:20, Paul tells us, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Your life is not your own. It is God's—and it should reflect that. So, it is worth your time (and your soul!) to continue studying the scriptures to ensure you live according to God's will and plans.

It is generally easy for those of us who have chosen to become Christians to agree that what God thinks of us matters—after all, when judgment day is described in Matthew 25:31–46, we know which group we hope to be sorted into. Somehow, it's the people here on Earth whose opinions we have a more challenging time agreeing to care about. But they matter very much, too.

If we live for God as Christians should, one of our significant goals, desires, and duties is to take others to Heaven. Many Bible verses give the command to share the gospel. Mark 16:16 tells us, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Matthew 28:19 reads similarly, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

Furthermore, Matthew 5:15–16 reminds us not to hide our light by saying, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” ...but what if our works aren’t good?

Have you ever met a hypocrite? A person who tells you to do one thing while they are doing—quite obviously perhaps—the other? That doesn’t make them very easy to listen to or obey. Similarly, have you ever seen someone who is terrible, mean, thieving, or maybe even violent? Does that make you want to be like them? I am assuming not—especially if that meanness is directed at someone who means a great deal to you.

For us to have the opportunity to teach people about God—to show people how the scriptures get us to Heaven—people must be willing to listen to us. If we are not living in a way that people recognize as godly, they are not likely to ask us about God or want to sit and listen to us talk about God. If they see us doing things or participating in things contrary to the scriptures, they will not be as willing to have us show them scripture.

There is a hard fact Christians need to accept: people are watching you. They see the way you live. They hear the way you talk. They see things you do and notice the places you spend your time. We get to choose if this is a good thing for people to see or a bad thing. People form opinions about you whether or not you pay attention to them. Little children are looking up to you. Friends and strangers alike are noticing you. Weaker, younger Christians may be watching and learning from your spiritual journey. Are you showing them that you have changed? Are you showing them that you are living for God?

It boils down to this: every action you take, the way people see you behave and talk and be, has the potential to either bring someone *to* Christ or turn them *away* from Christ. That is a huge responsibility that we cannot afford to take lightly. In Matthew 18:6, we are given a firm warning: “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the



depth of the sea.” If we are leading people astray by our actions—or turning them off from Christ—we need to care very much about that.

A famous hymn, “The World’s Bible,” states, “We are the only Bible the careless world will read. We are the sinner’s gospel; we are the scoffer’s creed. We are the Lord’s last message, given in deed and word; what if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?”

Does it matter what people think of me? Whether they like my haircut or feel I’m skinny enough doesn’t matter. However, it matters *very much* if they can see I am a Christian trying my best to live godly. It matters very much if they look at me and think, “I can follow that person’s example, and they will help me grow closer to Christ.”

## **Concluding Thoughts**

This world is full of dangerous cliffs and pitfalls. Our first and foremost aim is to live in a way that pleases God. Our second must be to walk in a clean and pure way, saying, “You can come walk the cliffs with me, and I won’t put you in danger of the loose edges on the footpath.”