

**Trending vs. Truth**  
**Reimagining Morality**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
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For those of you who are our guests, let me just give you some context, because you wouldn't know this otherwise – I normally teach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible. We just finished a seven-year study of the book of Romans, and Lord willing, we'll start in the fall with 1 John. But this summer we're taking a little break to look at some of the compelling cultural trends that are out there in our world. Unless you're Rip Van Winkle or Captain America and have been asleep for decades, you know that the moral views of Americans have changed dramatically. And the basic reason is that our culture has increasingly embraced moral relativism. An article in *The Christian Post* described the growth in moral relativism – it was reporting the results of a major study conducted by Impact 360 Institute and Barna Research, to learn how moral views have changed among the currently living generations. The latest of those generations of course is Generation Z, as it's called – that's composed of some 69 to 70 million children and teens, born between the years 1999 and now, basically. The article states this about Generation Z – 31 percent strongly agree with this statement: "What is morally right and wrong changes over time based on society," 31 percent strongly agree. Another 43 percent of Gen Z agrees somewhat that that's true – just 10 percent of those in that category strongly disagree that what is morally right changes over time. That means, folks, that 90 percent of Gen Z have embraced some degree of moral relativism and only 10 percent are truly opposed to it. Now sadly, the professing Christian church is close behind. In a survey by Barna, 4,000 professing Christians were asked if there are moral absolutes – 32 percent of the Christian adults agreed with that statement, there are moral absolutes – 32 percent. 9 percent of professing Christian teens agreed, that's one in ten, that there are moral absolutes.

What I want you to see, folks, is that as a society we are awash in moral relativism. Let me just give you a couple of examples of how this growing trend is affecting our culture's views on very specific moral issues. For example, when asked if lying is morally wrong – it's a pretty basic question, right; is lying morally wrong? 61 percent of those born before 1946 said yes, 61 percent. 54 percent of boomers, 50 percent of Gen X, 42 percent of millennials – you see a trend

here – and 34 percent of Gen Z. So almost half of Gen Z says it's morally wrong compared to the older generation. On the LGBTQ issue, Gallup reports that 1.3 percent – now follow these statistics, 1.3 percent of that oldest generation identify as LGBTQ. 2 percent of boomers, 3.8 percent of Gen X, 9.1 percent of millennials, and are you ready for this – 16.5 percent, one in six of Gen Z identify as LGBTQ. Gallup also reports – and this is pretty amazing to me, because at my age this seems a pretty brief time ago, but Gallup reports that in 1996, 70 percent of Americans opposed same sex marriage, that's 25 years ago – 70 percent. Today, 30 percent oppose it; there's been a complete shift of a vast majority on that issue. But now we've gone beyond simply allowing same sex marriages – the Pew Research Center reports that about 48 percent, almost 50 percent of Gen Z believes homosexual marriage should not only be allowed, but that it is good for our society. On the gender issue – this is another example of how moral relativism is changing our culture's moral views – 60 percent of Gen Z believes official government documents and other official documents should include gender options beyond male and female.

We are truly being drowned in moral relativism. Because our culture, as we've learned the last two weeks, has abandoned God, and because it has silenced the scripture, it has truly lost its moral compass. You see, once you walk away from all divinely revealed standards of morality, you're only left with two options. If you say, I don't want the Bible, I don't want God's law, I don't want what He says about these things, you have two options. The first option is to completely deny that there are any standards of right and wrong. You may not know this, but there's a growing number of people in our country that believe exactly that – it's what the proponents of what is called evolutionary psychology teach. This is a growing field in academic circles, evolutionary psychology. They reject morality as a viable category – for example, biologist William Provine, who taught for many years at Cornell. He traveled from university to university across America, teaching our kids – he said that we have not yet fully worked out all the moral implications of Darwinism; "There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life, and no free will." Those, he said, are the implications of Darwinism we haven't yet embraced – there is no foundation for ethics.

Darwin himself, by the way, he gets a free pass, but he understood that there are profound ethical ramifications to his theory. Did you know that the full title of his most famous book, written in 1859, was this: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. In his book *The Descent of Man*, he argued that infanticide – this is a quote – "Infanticide, especially of females, has been thought to be good for the tribe." In the same book, he also wrote this: "The civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world." Darwin was into eugenics – Darwin was not someone that should ever be followed or praised.

Now, thankfully, most people are not yet ready to fully embrace such radical positions as, there is absolutely never in any situation right or wrong, but here's the dilemma. People want certain behaviors to be right, they want others to be wrong, because frankly that's the only way society functions, and that's the only way they can promote their own viewpoints, right? If there is no right and wrong, then who cares what you think? And who cares what everybody thinks, let's do what we want individually. And so there has to be something, so they're left with only one course of action and that is to embrace the adaptable standards of moral relativism. And folks, that is exactly where we are. We are reimagining morality, and we're doing it, it seems like day by day, but certainly year by year.

Now, I want us to look at this moral relativism and consider several important facts about it as we look at it this morning. Now, let me say that the first part of this is going to be a little more like a classroom, because I want to give you just a bit of history and then we're going to come to the scripture, so stay with me – we're going to get there, but I need to give you a little background. Let's start by looking for a functional definition – what does moral relativism teach? Here's a brief but simple definition: Moral relativism teaches there are no universally true moral principles. There are no universally true moral principles – instead, what is right, they would say, is relative, it varies. It varies based on individuals; it varies based on circumstances – there are no moral absolutes. There are no fixed moral laws that bind all people in all places at all times. Right behavior is completely conditioned on individual human choice in that moment, or in some cases the collective human choice – what we all decide together. But it varies by circumstance. The Second Humanist Manifesto states this very clearly: "We affirm that moral

values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous" – it means, you rule yourself on this – "and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction.... To deny this distorts the whole basis of life." Consistent relativists believe that no action or behavior is intrinsically objective evil.

The problem, though, with moral relativism, is – there are a couple of problems that I'll point out right off the bat, and that is, one is, it is inherently self-contradictory, because the statement "There are no moral absolutes" is what? A moral absolute. So, it's self-contradictory, it's self-defeating. Also, it's hopelessly inconsistent, because those who are moral relativists almost always have moral absolutes on certain issues, such as the abuse of women, the abuse of children, incest, rape, slavery – why? Well, we're going to argue, it's because of the residual image of God printed on the human heart. And so, you can't live consistently with this theory – it doesn't work in the real world.

Now let's consider a second fact about moral relativism – that's just a brief functional definition, but let's look briefly at its philosophical formation. Where did it start, or maybe better, how did it develop? The first champion of moral relativism was a Greek philosopher named Protagoras, who lived in the 400s B.C. He was agnostic, he wasn't sure there was a God – including the Greek gods, of course, at that time – and his agnosticism led him to deny any moral absolutes. By the way, as we've seen, that's how it always goes – you deny God or deity, and you're driven to moral relativism, you deny moral absolutes. Protagoras wrote this, and you'll recognize this statement, it's his most famous – "Of all things, the measure is man – of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not." In other words, man is the measure of everything – man determines the reality of things, and he even determines the rightness and wrongness of everything. This is where it began.

Fast forward to the Enlightenment. During the Enlightenment, moral relativism was championed by philosophers like Spinoza, David Hume – but the primary modern support for this idea came from no one less than Charles Darwin. As I mentioned, in 1859, Darwin wrote his book *On the Origin of Species*, and as his evolutionary ideas developed into a unified theory, there were a lot of Christian voices warning – warning that there would be huge ethical repercussions of this

theory; if man is only another animal, then why should there be any ethical imperatives? Why should there be any moral absolutes? Of course, Darwinists at the time assured Christians that man didn't need God to be good. In fact, atheists still do that – there was a book written a few years ago that made that point, you know, we don't need God to be good. But over the last 150 years, the ramifications of Darwinian evolution have radically redefined human morality. So understand, that's how it has come – it started with Protagoras and has come through generations carried on by those antagonistic to God who don't believe that God is, who reject Him, and therefore there can be no moral absolutes.

Thirdly, I want us to look at the cultural expressions of this – how is this trending? How does our culture's growing rejection of biblical morality and their acceptance of moral relativism express itself? How is it demonstrated in the lives of the people around us? There are a lot of things I could say here – in fact, I had to scratch several in the interest of time – but let me just give you the primary ones. The first cultural expression of this is, there's a group who intentionally redefine what the Bible calls morally evil as morally good. They simply are brazen and overt about this. I'll give you two examples. Peter Singer is a professor, currently still is, at Princeton University, one of the universities that are raising up the elite who are going to be the leaders of our nation in the future. He teaches in the Center for Human Values, and teaches practical ethics. *The New Yorker* calls him "the most influential philosopher alive." *The New England Journal of Medicine* says he has had "more success in effecting changes in acceptable behavior than any philosopher since Bertrand Russell." So what does Singer teach? There are things he teaches, I wouldn't tell you from this pulpit. But let me give you an example – this is what he's teaching the next generation of leaders, teaching kids at Princeton University. Singer teaches, "any kind of fully consensual sexual behavior involving two people or two hundred is ethically fine." By the way, he goes on to include things like necrophilia and bestiality. He writes that the Judeo-Christian tradition taught us that humans alone are made in the image of God, but he says that's just not true, evolution has refuted the biblical count of creation – "we are animals, and sex across the species barrier" – that's a really nice way to put that – "ceases to be an offense to our status and dignity as human beings." This is not some nut case, you know, locked away from human beings – this is a noted professor at Princeton University teaching ethics!

Another example would be Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood. She was one of the chief architects of the Sexual Revolution. Nancy Pearcey describes Sanger's goal in that this way – listen to this, this was Sanger's goal. It was "to construct a scientific approach to sexuality based squarely on Darwinism. Sanger portrayed the drama of history as a struggle to free our bodies and minds from the constraints of morality." We need to read that line again – "she portrayed the drama of history as a struggle to free our bodies and minds from the constraints of morality, what she called the cruel morality of self-denial and sin. She touted sexual liberation as the only method" – did you hear that – "the only method to find inner peace and security and beauty." Finally, Sanger offered this sweeping messianic promise. This is Sanger's words: "Through sex, mankind will attain the great spiritual illumination, which will transform the world and light up the only path to an earthly paradise." Now, what I want you to see is that this is happening increasingly in our culture – there are those who openly and brazenly redefine morality.

There's a second expression that's very popular in our culture, and that is reclassifying moral choices as inherited biological orientation and then claiming the protection of civil rights. For example, the radical cultural shift on homosexuality over the last thirty years – a lot of people say, how did that happen? Let me tell you how it happened – it wasn't an accident; it was the result of a brilliant, carefully crafted marketing strategy. And that strategy was laid out in a 1989 book entitled *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*. By the way, I'm not the only one who says this is the key, so does the homosexual community. Here's what the authors of *After the Ball* wrote – see if you recognize this. This is the strategy; this is the marketing strategy to make homosexual behavior acceptable. "Gays should be considered to have been born gay. To suggest in public that homosexuality might be chosen is to open the can of worms labeled 'Moral Choices and Sin' and give the religious intransigents a stick to beat us with. Straights must be taught that it is as natural for some persons to be homosexual, as it is for others to be heterosexual." Before that, the homosexual community spoke of the homosexual lifestyle and of sexual preferences – many of you are old enough to remember that; that's all we heard about that. But over the last thirty years they have skillfully and amazingly worked out this marketing plan, and they have shifted the conversation

from lifestyle and preferences and moral choices to biological determinism – they created a third category. There are now males, females, and homosexuals, and of course now it has broadened – it's LGBTQ, etc. – and then they say, because this is who we are, just as truly as if it were our ethnicity, it needs to fall into the protection of civil rights. It was a brilliant strategy, reclassifying moral choices as inherited biological orientation.

There's a third cultural expression; that is, determining morality by cultural consensus. Determining morality by cultural consensus – this is a particular kind of moral relativism; it's called cultural relativism. It's the belief that a consensus of the majority determines the rightness or wrongness of a moral choice. It's morality as a group construct, it's ethics by democracy. And you hear this every day – in the media, you'll hear things like this: 70 percent of Americans support gay marriage. Why? Why is that so important? Because they truly believe that as a culture, we define the rightness or wrongness of various behaviors – that's cultural relativism.

So, those aren't all the cultural expressions, but those are three of the chief cultural expressions of moral relativism. Now having laid that foundation, let's move on and consider what the scriptures teach about this. Let's look, first of all, at the spiritual foundations – what is the source? Where does this come from, where does this human antipathy toward biblical morality come from? The nation of Israel found itself in a very similar moral quagmire to the one we find ourselves in, in the time of Isaiah. Turn back to the Book of Isaiah and to chapter 5. In Isaiah 5, beginning in verse 8 and running down through verse 23, the Prophet Isaiah, at the command of God, issues six woes, six pronouncements of judgment against unrepentant Israel. Six of them – but I want you to look at the fourth one. The fourth woe comes in Isaiah 5:20, and it is a woe pronounced on the complete reversal of biblical morality. "Woe" – God's judgment be – "on those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Obviously, there are a couple of illustrations – the dark and light illustration is a powerful one, the bitter and sweet is a powerful one, but the pronouncement, the clear moral pronouncement comes in the first line. Literally, the Hebrew text says this: Woe to those who say concerning evil, it is good, or literally, who say to evil, good and who say to good, evil. It is a complete reversal of biblical morality – it's what we're talking about in moral relativism, is the redefining of what the Bible says is evil as good

and the redefining of what the Bible says is good as evil. Folks, that's happening today. Do you realize that because I would say something against same sex marriage that I would be labeled as immoral, as a bigot? That is the complete reversal that was happening in the time of Isaiah.

Now surrounding Isaiah 5:20, Isaiah presents us with several reasons for their moral confusion – and interestingly, they're the same reasons that lie behind our own culture's confusion, and our own culture's relentless efforts to redefine morality, like it was there in Israel in 5:20. So, let me just point you to a couple verses around, and show you some of the reasons for this moral reversal. The first one – and I'm not going to follow the text order here, and I think you'll understand why, I'm following kind of a logical order – but the first one is pride. Pride. Right after Isaiah says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil," he gives another woe, a fifth woe in verse 21, and this is what lies behind the willingness to do that. Notice verse 21: "Woe to those" – judgment on those – "who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight." This is what lies behind the moral revolution – it is human pride. It is the willingness to sit in judgment on what God has said, and to say literally, I know better. That's what's unfolded; that's what's happened. I mean, it's like Romans 1:22, speaking of pagans: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became" – what? "Fools." How does that happen? It happens out of human pride. They are – notice what it says again in verse 21, "wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight." Boy, if that isn't a description of those who set themselves against biblical morality, I don't know what is.

There's a second reason given here in this text, and that is their overt rebellion against God – their simple rebellion against God and His coming judgment. Look at verses 18 and 19 that lead up to that moral reversal in verse 20. Verse 18: "Woe to those who drag iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as if it were cart ropes" – in other words, they are all in, they're dragging it as their treasure, as their harvest. But notice what they say to God in verse 19, "who say, 'let Him'" – that is, God, notice the capital H – "let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it, and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!" What's going on here? This is taunting God. This is – this is sarcastic unbelief. They simply did not believe that God would judge their sin and so, literally, in verses 18 and 19, they are daring God to intervene. So again, you see pride clearly, but you also see this sort of overt



sinful rebellion – let God do whatever He wants; if He's out there, let Him strike me dead now – that's the attitude these people have.

There's a third spiritual foundation here in this text, and that is a rejection of God's Word. Look down in verse 24. "Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom will blow away as dust." In other words, God's going to intervene, He's going to come in judgment against these people, why? For, because, here's the reason: they have rejected the law of the Lord of Hosts and despise the Word of the Holy One of Israel. Now, notice there's a different nuance in those two lines. The first nuance is, they have rejected God's law, but in rejecting God's law they have rejected God, they've rejected His Word – it's the Word that comes out of His mouth, but there is this rejection of God's Word. This always stands behind moral relativism. Before you begin to play with morality, you are elevated in your pride, you think you know better, you think you are the ultimate judge of all things, so you set yourself in rebellion against God – you say, I don't care what God thinks, I'm going to do what I want. You essentially sarcastically taunt Him, and you reject His Word and say, I don't really care what the Bible says.

And there's a fourth spiritual foundation, and it's the divine wrath of abandonment. You see, people act, and then God acts in response. And He simply, as Romans 1 puts it, He abandons them to their sin. In this case, He abandons them to their sin, and He brings temporal judgment for all, He brings eternal judgment. As verse 24 begins, "Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into flame," they're going to be destroyed. Verse 25: "On this account, the anger of the Lord has burned against His people, He stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. Mountains quaked, their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this, His anger is not spent, but His hand is stretched out still." Why do people adopt their own moral standards? Those are the reasons: human pride, rejection of God and rebellion against Him, rejection of His Word, and then in response to their rejection, God turns them over – Romans 1 – to their sin. And they're enslaved by it. Those represent the source, the spiritual foundations of our moral relativism as a culture.

That brings us to the positive side of it. Let's consider the biblical correction – what is the truth? What is the truth? This is where we really want to go – as I told you when I began this series, I don't want to spend all summer talking about what we're against. Let's talk about what we're for, and here's what we're for – this is what we can champion. What does the Bible say about morality, and we can reduce that to one simple sentence – God our Creator has revealed to us an objective, universal, eternal moral law. Let me say that again – God our Creator has revealed to us an objective, universal, eternal moral law. He affirms certain moral behaviors by saying "thou shall," and He denies the validity of other behaviors by saying "thou shall not." This is our God. Now, let's consider this universal, eternal, moral law. Let's take it apart a bit – first of all, and this is crucial, you have to understand that the ground of all morality is the character of God. This is why it's eternal, this is why it's unchanging – because the ground of all morality is the character of God. The Bible teaches that God's moral law finds its foundation deep in God's Person, specifically in an attribute that the Bible calls His holiness.

Now, what is God's holiness? Holiness is used of God in scripture in two related but distinct ways. First of all, when we say, God is holy, or when scripture says, God is holy, it means this – it means that God is transcendent, God is elevated beyond everything else in His majesty. That's why you have texts that say, Lord, You are holy. There is no one – what? Like You, there's no one like You. God is so awesome, He's so exalted, that He's separate or distinct from everything else in His universe – He is in His own category, there's nobody else in His box. This stresses His separateness from us as creatures, but there's a second thing we mean when we say God is holy. Not only do we mean that God is transcendent or elevated in His majesty, but God is transcendent in His moral purity. Holiness describes not only His separateness from us as creatures, but also His separateness from us as sinners. Scripture uses the same word group, "holiness," for both of these concepts. God is morally pure, He is holy. Robert Reymond, in his *Systematic Theology*, puts it this way: "Just as He, as the Creator, is transcendentally separate from men as creatures, so also He is ethically separate from them as sinners. He is morally pure, infinitely, eternally and unchangeably, with regard to His character, His thoughts and His actions – there is not the slightest taint of evil desire, impure motive or unholy inclination about Him." God is utterly, completely separate from evil and sin – it's hard for us to even comprehend that.

Many years ago, when I lived in Mobile, I was doing some visitation for the church, and I visited a home there, where a family, for reasons I still don't fully understand, lived in absolute squalor and filth. I sat on the couch after a little space was cleared for me to sit, and I looked at the kitchen, and it was behind the woman I was talking to, and there was literally at least a year's worth of dirty dishes stacked feet high on every inch of the kitchen counters. The woman sat with her back to the kitchen, and as I looked past her, I was shocked to see, literally during the day, we're sitting there having a conversation, and roaches were crawling all over those stacks of dirty dishes. She didn't seem to notice at all – to her, everything seemed perfectly fine, but I couldn't imagine how she could live like that. In the same way, it's hard for us to grasp the concept of God's holiness because we have learned to live with our filth, we have learned to live with unholiness and to look at it as natural and normal and expected. As A.W. Tozer says, "we must allow the scripture to cut a new channel through the desert of our minds." Berkhof defines this aspect of God's holiness like this: it is "that perfection of God" – listen to this definition, I love this – "that perfection of God in virtue of which He eternally wills and maintains His own moral excellence, abhors sin and demands purity in His moral creatures."

Holy is the way God is. Get this in your minds – God doesn't abide by the standard, He is the standard and God's moral norms for us are expressions of who He is. He is simply being consistent with His own character. Psalm 5:4-5 says this: "You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes" – listen to this, because no evil dwells with You, You take no pleasure in wickedness – "You hate all who do iniquity." And we've talked about this before – yes, God loves sinners, and yes, God hates those who do iniquity. Love and hate are not mutually exclusive. I've told you the story about George Washington, who had to end up killing for treason his good friend Benedict Arnold. At that moment, when he discovered his treason to the revolutionary cause, he was both – he loved this man, he was a dear friend, and he hated him for what he had done. Love and hate are not mutually exclusive – God does love the sinner, yes, scripture's clear on that, but He also hates the sinner for his iniquity. Look at Psalm 11 – let me show you one very clear text on this front, Psalm 11:4-7. "The Lord is in His holy temple; Yahweh's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence" – notice this – "His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares;

fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup." Now watch why, verse 7: "Because Yahweh is righteous, therefore, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face." Do you see the logic that's flowing here? "The Lord is righteous; therefore, He loves righteousness" – therefore, He hates those who do unrighteousness, and those who participate in righteousness, those "will behold His face." Habakkuk 1:13: "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You do not look on wickedness with favor." 1 John 1:5: "This is the message we have heard from Him" – from the Messiah – "and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness" – what? "At all." None. God's moral holiness is both negative and positive. Not only is He separate from all evil, but He is the personification of moral excellence and ethical perfection. So, understand, then, that God's moral norms for us are not some arbitrary set of rules He's established – they reflect His own holy character. That's why they're unchanging – because God is unchanging.

So, the ground of all morality is the character of God – the Bible teaches secondly that, as our Creator, God has the rightful authority to prescribe our moral actions. As our Creator, God has the moral authority, the rightful authority, to prescribe our moral actions. Psalm 24:1 says "The earth is Yahweh's" – belongs to Him, "and all it contains," and then it adds this: "The world and those who dwell in it." In other words, every human being on this planet belongs to God, their Creator. 1 Chronicles 29:11 says, "Yours, O Lord is ... indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth" belongs to You. "Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all" – you see the logic there? Because everything on Earth belongs to God, He has the dominion, the right to rule and command. And what does He command of human beings? Leviticus 19:2, and this is one example of many – I cut a lot of examples from my notes in the interest of time: "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy." God demands that humanity reflect His own moral character.

Thirdly, God has revealed the standard for human behavior in His objective, universal, eternal moral law. You see the logic unfolding here? God has revealed this standard that reflects His character, that He has a right to lay out on us. And He's done it in binding laws – those laws, by the way, and I'm not going to take time with this because we've already covered this. But those laws have been made known to us in three ways – first of all, in the conscience. Romans 2 –

God has written in the conscience of every human being. Romans 2:14-15, the substance of His law, the basic understanding of right and wrong. Secondly, He's revealed His law, His moral law, in the scripture. Look at Romans 2:14-15. He talks about the law written in the conscience – the Gentiles who don't have the written law have the substance of the law written in their conscience. But look at verses 12 and 13: "For all who have sinned without the law" – those are Gentiles who don't have the Bible, "will also perish without the law," though they'll die because of their refusal to follow the laws that's written in the conscience. But "all who have sinned under the law" – that is, all who have God's written law, will be judged by that law. It's in the scripture. Verse 17: "If you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God," you know His will. You say you "approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the law," and yet He goes on to say, you don't keep it. That's no good – it's not good to have it and not do it. It's only the one who keeps it who's justified.

So, God has revealed His moral law in the scripture. It's outlined – if you want to know a summary, it's outlined in the Ten Commandments. Think of the Ten Commandments as like hooks on which you can hang the rest of God's moral law. And, of course, Jesus summarized God's moral law in two commands – remember? Two positive commands. Here it is, all summarized: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," and you should "love your neighbor as yourself." That's God's moral law, and it's universally binding. And of course, we've also seen God's moral law in Christ. The complete revelation of God's moral character came to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. John 1:18. "He explained God" – literally, the Greek text says He exegeted God. Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus is "the exact representation of God's nature" – He shows us what God's morality looks like.

So, God's moral law is there, it's in the heart, it's in the conscience, it's in God's written Word. It is universal for every culture and every person; it is eternal because God is eternal. It will never be right to have any other gods instead of or in addition to the one true God, it will never be right to make a graven image, to murder, to commit the sexual sins God forbids, to lie, etc., etc. Those are eternal reflections of His being. In fact, in Revelation 22:14-15, John says that God's moral law will still be in force in eternity. So, what the Bible teaches in response to the new morality is this: the ground of all morality is the character of God. God has the rightful authority to

prescribe our moral actions, and He has revealed that standard in an objective, universal, eternal moral law.

A fourth biblical correction is this: God demands perfect obedience to His law, and His justice requires He judge every person and punish every violation. I wish I had time to take you there, but Romans 2 – He says, listen, it doesn't do you any good to have the Bible if you don't obey it, it doesn't do you any good to have God's moral law if you don't follow it, and He goes on to say in Romans 2:6, God will render to every man "according to his deeds." Everybody gets what they deserve, thankfully.

Number 5: God requires – and accepts, I should add – the perfect sacrifice to forgive violations of His moral law. This is our only hope, folks – He requires perfect obedience; be holy like I am holy. That's the only way you can earn your way into God's presence, and it's not going to happen – but thankfully, He requires and accepts the perfect sacrifice to forgive violations of His moral law. Hebrews 9:22 – "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." For God to forgive, there has to be justice – satisfied death has to happen, so how does that work? 1 Peter 2:24: "Jesus Himself bore our sins in His own body on the cross." If you're here this morning without Christ, let me just say to you, this is your only hope. God is perfectly holy, and He demands that of you, and the only way you don't get the judgment you deserve is if you are willing to accept the offer of forgiveness found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and turn to Him in faith and repentance.

Number 6 in our little list here – God demands that those He has forgiven, now His children, seek to obey His moral law. It doesn't go away when you become a Christian, it's not like, okay, now it's okay, all bets are off – no, you still have to love God with all your heart and love others. This is what we pursue – Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world," in order that we would be holy like He is. 1 Peter 1:16, Peter says to the believers, "it is written, 'you shall be holy for I am holy.'" Folks, that's the biblical correction to the serious aberration going on in our culture. This is what the Bible says – this is how we should live.

There's one final fact about moral relativism that I want to point out to you very briefly, and that is, the practical ramifications. Why does it matter, why have I spent the time to do this? First of all, and this is really important – having rejected God's moral law, unbelievers can only offer flawed and fractured moral viewpoints. To borrow Jesus' description of the Pharisees, don't look to the spiritually dead and the spiritually blind to serve as your moral guide. So many Christians, if they want to know what to think about the times – what do they do, they go online! That's brilliant – they're dead, they're blind! Jesus says in Matthew 15:13, "they are blind guides of the blind, and if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." Parents, I'm sorry, but I just have to say this – folks, don't be stupid. Don't go to people who are completely without a moral compass to get your moral compass.

Secondly, as believers, we must reject all traces of our culture's moral relativism. We just need to reject it. Now, I don't really have time to develop this – in fact, I'm out of time already. But let me just give you, I'll just list them – some ways Christians have been subtly affected by the new morality. I have verses and everything else here, but I'm out of time, so let me just give you the list and you can think about it. I'll give you the passage and you can think about it. Don't do this – number 1, don't become so accustomed to the new morality that you're no longer tormented by it. 2 Peter 2:6-8 talks about Lot being "oppressed by the sensual conduct" in Sodom, "for by what he saw and heard, that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented, day after day, by their lawless deeds." Let me ask you, is that how you're responding to the cultural sin around us? I'm not talking about failing to show compassion, of course. We're going to get there – in fact, next week, I'll deal with that a little more. We need to show compassion for those who are sinners, but don't become so accustomed that you're no longer tormented by it.

Secondly, don't focus so much on Jesus' love and compassion toward the sinner – which is true – that you ignore Jesus' calls to repentance and His warnings about coming wrath. Luke 13:3 – Jesus was a preacher of repentance; He said, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Number 3: Don't misunderstand Jesus' attacks on the unbelieving Pharisees and their legalism as a rebuke on believers who speak out against biblical sins in the culture. Oh yes, there are

believers who do so badly, who do so ungraciously – but the Pharisees were false teachers, and according to Matthew 23:15, they were sons of hell, so don't liken them to believers who put their trust in Christ.

Number 4: don't confuse the moral culpability of sin before God with the equivalent evil of every sin. You see, all sins are equally damning apart from saving grace, but not all sins are equally evil in the sight of God. R.C. Sproul writes, "there is a difference between lesser sins and what are called gross and heinous sins." Is that biblical? Oh yeah – Matthew 5:19 speaks of the least commandments. Matthew 23:23 speaks of the "weightier provisions of the law." And John 19:11 – Jesus speaks of "greater sin." That's a biblical concept, don't forget it.

Number 5: Don't confuse love for and graciousness towards sinful people, which we must demonstrate, with acceptance of their sinful choices. Psalm 15:4 – I've been studying this psalm just on my own, and it says this: "in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord." Folks, don't buy into the new morality – don't reimagine morality. Follow the character and the revelation of our God. Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for our study together this morning – so much to cover, and Lord, I pray that you would cause us to think deeply about these things. But Father, for those of us in Christ, help us most of all to always come back to the very basic question. Forgetting what the culture says, Lord, may we always ask ourselves, but what does the Bible say? What has our perfectly holy God prescribed? Lord, help us to live like those who've been redeemed. Don't let us be swept along by the culture and its ever-changing morality.

We pray in Jesus' name – Amen.