



SCRIPTURE: 1 John 3:4-9: **morality in a broken world.** Text updates: 4 weeks of prayer. TRC to 252-632-6650

**For thousands of years, navigators have found their way using the Sun and the stars.**

In the northern hemisphere, ships captains would use Polaris – the North Star – to work out which direction was north in order to help them navigate across the seas. If they could see the North Star, they knew which way they were heading.

But what if it was cloudy or stormy? What if Polaris was not visible?

**By the 16th century, compasses and charts were standard kit for ships sailing at sea.**

But even then, navigators and sailors knew there was something a little strange going on with their compasses. They could see Polaris, but they could see that their compasses didn't always align with it. Compasses didn't always point north.

**Tuns out there are two different kinds of NORTH.**

*True north* is the direction that points directly towards the geographic North Pole. This is a fixed point on the Earth's globe.

*Magnetic north* is the direction that a compass needle points to as it aligns with the Earth's magnetic field.

What is interesting is that the magnetic North Pole shifts and changes over time in response to changes in the Earth's magnetic core. It is not a fixed point.

This morning I want to talk about morality.

## **mor·al·ity:**

conformity to the rules of right conduct;  
moral or virtuous conduct;  
moral quality or character.

- ▶ So who gets to decide what is RIGHT conduct?
- ▶ By what standard is morality decided?

When it comes to morality...  
where is **TRUE NORTH?**

**Romans 2:15**

<sup>15</sup>They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

The Bible says that God wrote His law on our hearts. This is conscience. In other words, even without God's revelation in the commandments, we intuitively know God's law based on the fact that we were created in His image.

What happens if we don't turn to the Bible as our source for morality?

We all tend to trust our conscience, whether implicitly or explicitly. The human conscience can be likened to an alarm system; it warns us when we transgress our moral standard. **The catch is our conscience is only as good as the moral standard that informs it.** If it's not the

Bible, then we inevitably inform our conscience by various other means.

Our own opinions; Government; Social consensus.

If we trust our own opinions, then morality is as vast as there are people in the world. We all get to decide what's right and wrong. Which might be generally ok, until you run across someone like a Kim Jong-un, who doesn't seem to have the same moral compass most everyone else does.

So maybe we trust government to make the right laws that direct our collective morality. But the question still has to be asked, "What is informing the government's laws? By what standard does the government make those laws?" Cause that can get off the rails pretty quickly also. Just ask Nazi Germany.

Maybe we let the natural order decide morality. But then we are no more than animals. And our standard for morality is "survival of the fittest."

Seems like today the most common place we go to determine morality is social conscience. We kinda go with the flow of society.

If our morality is shaped and changed by the culture around us, it should be easy to see that if social consensus is our moral compass, then we have built our morality on a foundation of shifting sand. Social consensus is just that—a consensus. It's a picture of the general social tendencies of the day.

Do I need to point out the difference in what is socially acceptable today that was not ok 30 years ago?

Art, like morality consists in drawing the line somewhere.

- GK Chesterton

This morning I would like for us to consider...

# Morality in a broken world.

## 1 John 3:4-9

<sup>4</sup>Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

<sup>7</sup>Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The

reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

## MORALITY **SAYS...** there is a definitive standard.

### **1 John 3:4**

<sup>4</sup>Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

Without a standard for morality, we are left to figure it out on our own. But I believe there is a definitive standard.

John says, "everyone who sins breaks the law."



There is a line and when you cross it, you have missed the mark and that is sin. That is moral failure.

God has given us these guidelines since the beginning of time.

God gave a commandment to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Do not eat from this one tree. It was clear and precise.

God gave Ten Commandments to the Israelites after the exodus in Sinai. The people of Israel needed these guidelines to make society work. All of these commands pointed to a loving moral God who knew what was best for the people.

Jesus boiled those Ten Commandments down to two essential commandments—love God and love your neighbor.

All of these represent God's revelation of His law, which is simply a reflection of His moral character to His people.

There needs to be some standard by which all mankind can equally be measured. Not an arbitrary guideline or system, but a moral standard.

**Judges 17:6**

<sup>6</sup>In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

The NASB says, "everyone did what was right in their own eyes."

The second thing I see in this passage is this...

**MORALITY SAYS...**  
**God is that standard.**

**1 John 3:5-6**

<sup>5</sup>But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.  
<sup>6</sup>No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

When Jesus came to earth he revealed God's true nature. Jesus was sinless. God is completely holy.

God is our standard for morality because he is the only one who can be. He is completely pure and holy.

John says, "in him is no sin."

We can trust God's standard for a couple reasons...

1. God exists outside the system.
2. God is completely without sin.

The reason we cannot trust anything of this world is because everyone has an agenda. Everyone has an angle.

God is not bound by the same time space and dimension. He exists outside the system.

Jesus is a perfect reflection of God's perfect nature. Therefore God's laws are rooted in His perfect nature.

This is why it makes sense not only that there is a God, but that God is the one who determines what is right and wrong. He is the one who gets to determine right conduct.

He is the standard for morality.

Without Him life would be chaos. There really would be no standard of right and wrong.

Tim Keller said

"If there is no God, then evil and suffering and violence are perfectly natural, the weak are killed off; the stronger survive. That's the way the world is. There is no right and wrong—there is just what is. To believe that some things that happen are evil requires some supernatural standard of good—something from outside of nature—by which to judge which natural things are truly natural and which things are unnatural."

**Romans 9:19-20**

<sup>19</sup>One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" <sup>20</sup>But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' "

God is the standard because he is God, he is creator and he is good.

# MORALITY **SAYS...** the right thing is always the right thing.

## **1 John 3:7-9**

<sup>7</sup>Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. <sup>8</sup>The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. <sup>9</sup>No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

Because God is God and God is good, there is right and wrong. It is our responsibility to follow God's standard of good.

I have always said, "the right thing is always the right thing."

There are some things that are black and white.  
There is a solid standard by which to build our  
lives.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus  
said these words...

**Matthew 7:24-27**

<sup>24</sup>"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup>But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup>The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Each one of us will have to decide what we will  
build our life upon.

Are you headed to TRUE NORTH or some shifting destination?

God is our moral standard. Anything else is a moving target.

INVITATION:

When you get to your destination, will it be where you set out to go? If you're not sure, I'd love to have that conversation with you today.

One of the reasons I believe there is a God is because there has to be a moral standard. I believe that God is that standard.

The cool thing is God is ready even when we fail...



# SGL Questions

1. When you give directions to people, what is your go to method, actual street names and addresses, or by buildings and geographical locations?!
2. What is morality? Where should our moral compass point?
3. What happens when there isn't an actual moral point to set your life course by?
4. Read 1 john 3:4-9 - what are the identifiers of followers of Jesus?
5. What is the golden rule? How is this similar/ different to the greatest commandment?
6. Since Jesus lived a sinless life, and he is our true north, what do we do to strive to live a sinless life?
7. Read mat. 7: 24-27 - what does this passage say about hearing and doing Gods word?
8. How can we be a change in our culture in helping to correct the direction of its moral compass?