

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My 12-year-old is asking some very difficult questions about morality. I find myself somewhat at a loss as to how to answer some of his moral dilemmas. Help!

ANSWER: Praise God he is asking good questions!

We live in a morally confused world. **Many of our children have come to believe morality is a matter of opinion, popular vote, or situation.** I believe children long for and appreciate clear moral direction from their parents. However, YOU must have a deeply held set of godly convictions before you can effectively teach them to your children. If your 12-year-old sees you “at a loss”, what kind of dangerous message does it send? If you don’t know answers to the moral questions he is asking, you better find solid biblical answers **together**. Don’t shrink from this opportunity!

There are many philosophies regarding ethics. Machiavelli proposed the idea that “might is right.” Sociologists often believe that culture determines what is right. For Aristotle, moderation is right. Hedonists espouse the philosophy that right is what brings pleasure. Many Americans believe that what the majority wills is right.

For Christians who truly believe the Bible is God’s Word, **right is what God commands.** Right is a matter of revelation (God’s Word). Christian ethics are prescriptive (What ought to be, not what is.) Christian ethics are deontological (duty-centered), not teleological (end-result-centered). For Christians, the commandment determines the result; results don’t determine the commandment. The commandment is the basis for our actions; results are not the basis for our actions. The commandment is good regardless of the results (We live in a fallen world.); the commandment is not good because of the results. These truths are often confused even by our judicial system. They are most certainly confused by the vast number of our citizens.

How does a Christian determine what is right? (1) He first looks to God’s written law in the Bible. The lens of Scripture should clearly help determine what is right in the vast majority of moral choices. Jesus made the choice even clearer by helping us understand not only the letter, but also the spirit of the law (Christians are bound by both).

If the moral choice doesn’t seem to be answered in Scripture, and **few moral questions are not**, then the Christian looks to the “law of the land.” (2) As long as the law of the land does not contradict God’s law, it is to be obeyed. (See Acts 4:18-20.)

If the law of the land doesn’t address the issue, then the Christian operates by (3) consulting his conscience (See 1 Timothy 1:19). Questions such as: Will this action draw me to Christ? Will this action draw others to Christ? Will I be acting in the character of Christ? can be used to help determine what is to be done in a particular situation.

If a Christian is familiar with God’s Word and has a dynamic relationship with Christ, he will rarely have to utilize steps 2 or 3. Your 12-

year-old needs help to develop critical thinking skills. He needs to be able to apply God's word to everyday life...not just know theology. The only way I know to help this happen is through lots of ongoing conversations with mature believers who can provide opportunities to discuss and analyze the issues of the day in the context of God's Word. **This should happen first and foremost at home with father and mother.** Secondly, it should come from Pastors, teachers, and youth group leaders. Don't let Hollywood and much of our culture push moral relativism on your child. Children really want clear-cut moral boundaries and definitions. As you help your child find godly answers, you too will grow!

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