



Transcriptions

Moral Messages

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Annotation: *Grace College of the Bible, Omaha, NE, February 27-28, 1981.* Because it matters how we make moral choices of right and wrong, Ted Ward interprets Lawrence Kohlberg's three levels of moral judgment within a Christian framework.



We're going to talk this morning about a rather heavy matter of concern. The theological implications are profound. The problems in the topic are substantial and the intellectual challenge it represents is adequate to properly reward those of you who quite obviously took a cut this morning and those of you who did I will say to you in absentia, you saved yourself an intellectual challenge and a perhaps moral strain and you will probably live longer because of it. However, for those of us who are here, we will nevertheless make the best of it in this hour.

I'm going to talk about moral messages and I'm thinking primarily of the communication problem associated with moral communication, or communication on moral ethical issues. Now as we will discover in the second hour this morning, I am making a distinction between moral development and spiritual development, even though these two cannot be separated any more than any other two parts of human development can be separated. But the research field of human studies does include examination of the way moral consciousness develops. And for those of you who are inclined to believe that when we talk about moral issues, only Christians can understand and only Christians have moral conscience and other kinds of extreme notions of that sort, let me remind you that that particular view is strange to the Word of God. As a matter of fact, as we talk about moral messages this morning we're talking about humanity, in general, and we are not talking

about Christians in particular, except as we will make some applications to Christians in particular. And, as a matter of fact, all humankind has a conscience.

Now if you are deep into proof texting and you feel better when somebody gives it to you on the line, let me just call your attention to the apostle Paul's writings to the Christians at Rome. Romans chapter 1 and 2 [NASB] have within them some very fascinating tidbits. Lurking, as it were, in the middle of the 1st chapter and somewhere toward the middle of the 2nd chapter is an indication in the words of the apostle Paul, writing in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the natural man also shares moral conscience—that part of being human apart from Christ, apart from redemption, apart from salvation, apart from personal acceptance of Jesus Christ. There is, even in the heathen, in the language here in verse 18 of chapter one. I read it with you, Romans 1:18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness." Now so far, so good. You say, well, of course, we all know that. Well, hang in there. ". . . because that which is known about God is evident . . ." What are the next two words? What are the next two words, loud and clear? ". . . *within them.*" Regardless of your translation, I think that the words are "within them." "for God made it evident . . ." Next two words? "*to them.*"

Now we're talking about the heathen. We're talking about the people who have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. We're talking about the people who are not redeemed. Nevertheless, because they are human they have a conscience which God has attuned to his statutes of right and wrong. Verse 20, "For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through that which has been made, so that they are without excuse."

". . . being understood through that which has been made" read: Creation. "That which has been made" is not saying, "that which has been *said*, that which has been *written.*" It says, "that which has been *made.*" Clearly, then, there is a moral accountability that develops, even out of human conscience. Now in chapter two, as if not to leave us with that one little dangling text without clarification, Paul, as he often does, later comes back to the same theme in chapter 2:14: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do instinctively the things of the law, these not having the law, are a law to themselves."

Now that's a very complicated sentence. In fact, we're not even done with the sentence. Paul is capable of writing in very complicated sentences. And it's one reason we know it was Paul writing because he just loves this stuff that asks you to think along with him. Paul is a good example of what I would call a profound teacher. He does not spoon-feed. He asks people to think and develop ideas along with him so that they become *informed.* Remember that one? "For when Gentiles," he says, "who do not have the law, . . ." Now that's clear enough. That's people who do not have the Word of God, "do instinctively . . ." Do instinctively? I didn't know that humans have instinct. Wait a minute. Humans have all sorts of stuff that is programmed into that genetic pattern that is the humanity process itself, including the moral conscience phenomenon. Those who do not have the law, do instinctively the things of the law, these not having the law, are a law to themselves. Now we use that phrase, law to themselves or she's a law to herself, usually in a negative or a pejorative sense as a put-down. In other words, boy, she makes her own rules as she goes along; or, he just doesn't pay attention to anybody else's rules but his own. He's a law to himself. Actually, that is not the context here. The context is a very positive context. When it says they are a law to themselves, it talks about the fact that they have the representation of God's true reality within them, testifying to

(and in verse 15) “in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts.” We’re talking about unregenerate. We’re talking about Gentiles who do not have the law. “They have,” it says here, “the work of the law written in their hearts.” Now that is figurative language for moral conscience, make no mistake about it. “Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternatively accusing or else defending them.”

In other words, the natural man has the capacity of hearing in himself, as moral conscience, a discerning basis for determining right and wrong. In fact, it says here that the way the natural man’s mind works, it flips back and forth as if in a kind of an alternating current pattern; flipping back and forth between using one’s intellect to justify oneself and then using one’s intellect to criticize oneself. This, Paul says, is the characteristic of humanity.

When we talk about moral messages, then, we are talking about something that I can talk just as freely with a secular audience about as I can you. Because, as a matter of fact, the research that I’m going to develop with you in this hour—and it will be a very quick tight run through of a number of very crucial pieces of research—is research that has been done largely in the secular framework. Now there are a number of Christians who are very fascinated by this research, who have done replications of these studies, who have pursued the same line of inquiry with other groups and have discovered that, indeed, regardless of the culture, regardless of the religious background of the people, you get a very comparable set of findings. And so what I’m going to say to you this morning comes largely out of secular research, but the research that has been replicated in this vein with reference to other sets of people, particularly Christian groups, shows basically the same sort of thing. So what we’re talking about this morning is, as we said yesterday, something that comes out of a scientific inquiry into nature. Please understand that the human is *in nature*. You are *in nature*. When one’s studies you from a social scientific point of view, one is studying God’s handiwork.

We can approach the human being—indeed, we can approach all of Creation in scientific mode and be responsible to certain kinds of approaches, and be more sure and more honest in what it is that we discover. Now I pointed out to you yesterday in the introductory lecture that a Christian has an extra obligation to also be approaching the Word of God in theological disciplines and to be disciplined in one’s theology in such a way that one’s theology informs one’s science. But, as a footnote on that one; when science and theology don’t seem to agree on a given issue, it does not always follow that the error is in the science side. There have been oodles of cases down through history, especially associated with some of the excesses of anti-scientism prior to the Renaissance, when the church of Jesus Christ made it for itself a very black mark by taking very shabby theology and laying it on science in a vindictive way. The track record of science and theology in conflict and clash has not been a very good track record.

Now I want, this morning, to focus distinctly on what is involved in the moral decision-making process. If you please, to introduce this perhaps we should say that there are three moral processes that link ethics and character. And on the left, I posit a *knowing* function; on the right I posit a *doing* function. One of the peculiarities of the Christian religion is that the Christian religion is very much concerned with the *doing*, but is concerned with the *doing* of good on the basis of a *knowing* of the Author of good. Now there are things we know; there are things we do. And, as Paul said, one form of sin is when we don’t do what we know we ought to do. And Paul made a self-judgment on one occasion that he said he knows what he ought to do, but those things he finds himself not doing. And he very openly, candidly admits that it’s a real problem sometimes getting

the knowing and the doing together; there's a break. Sin creates a break between the knowing and the doing.

Now there are these three functions that I call the bridging of the gap between knowing and doing. And, by the way, as we look at this matter of moral conscience, you'll see later where it comes in to an application and implication for communication that is very heavy for those of you who are professionally headed toward communication; and for all of you, as Christians, who really want to understand yourself. So hang in there, baby. It's going to be a rough go for the next thirty minutes, but we're going to make it.

The cognition function, the volition function, and the operation function are the three pieces that we can identify as separable identifiable parts. There is such a function as cognitively knowing to do the right. This is called the moral judgment zone. There is a volitional sector: the *willing* to do the right. It's not enough to know to do the right; you have to also *want* to do the right. But even if you want to do the right and know to do the right, there is also the operational sector which is the *strength* to do the right. And that strength factor is strangely missing in a lot of us at various times. And as Paul says, I want to do the right, I know to do the right, but sometimes I don't do it. So Paul points out that, even in his own life, volition and cognition are themselves not enough; there's also an operational strength. If we read the materials on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we're inclined to think that the work of the Holy Spirit, unless thwarted in your life, is providing operational strength. In other words, the Holy Spirit is very much concerned in this sector. And as the Holy Spirit is allowed to be active in your life, you will have strength to do the right.

There's an interesting thing: Christ transforms the will. Salvation is the transforming of the will, from the will of Adam, bent *away* from God to the will in Christ, the second Adam, bent *toward* God. God himself provides the *knowing* base. There's a Trinitarian image right here, if you can see it: God, as originator, source, author, provides as a basis for knowing. Jesus Christ, as the one who provides a way of transforming nature from the Adamic nature to the Christological nature, provides a transformation in the volitional realm. And the continued day-by-day walk with God, in the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling, becomes the source, then, for the operational strength.

Now I put this on the screen so that you can understand that as we focus in the moral judgment zone, we're still not talking about the willing and the operational strength. We're going to focus right here because this is where the research has been the most full and most well-developed. And this is where the research has something, I think, terribly important for us to look at as Christian persons and particularly as people who are going to be parents and communicators.

Now I've got to lay some vocabulary on you—and, by the way, if at any point we go so fast today that you really do get snowed and you begin to get reactive about it, kind of keep that in mind that there is a way out. If you're interested, the little book written at a relatively easy vocabulary level entitled, *Values Begin at Home* is over in your bookstore on a special price for the next four or five hours. And it deals with exactly the content we're dealing with this hour, and it deals with it from the perspective of a parent. And many of you are beginning to recognize that one of the things you'd better be preparing for in life is parenthood. And it deals with the perspective of a parent, of a teacher, and of a ministering person in the church.

We want to make a distinction, now, for our vocabulary between content and structure in moral judgment. Now moral judgment is the process of deciding right and wrong. That's easy

enough, moral judgment. But moral judgment has two parts: it has the content part and it has the structure part. And what we're going to be looking at is particularly the research on the structure component of moral judgment. Now a structure of a moral judgment is the answer to the question, why do you believe that? Why is that so? Why do you value that? Why do you say that is right and something else is wrong?

The content is the particular. If I said to you is it wrong to smoke? Some of you would say, it's wrong to smoke. Now would that be a matter of content or structure? Let me say it again. The distinction between content and structure. Let me see if we've got it. It's wrong to smoke and you agree or disagree. The issue of wrongness to smoke is a matter of content or a matter of structure? Content. It's wrong to smoke because you will hurt yourself; you will damage your body if you smoke. Okay. Is that additive, now, more content, or a structural revelation? Structure. You see it deals with the *why*. The content is a concern for the *what* of a moral judgment; the structure is the concern for a *why* of a moral judgment. Why do you hold it to be wrong? Let me give you an example. I bring in here a guy by the name of Johnny and he's about yay high, and I say, "Johnny, is it wrong to tell a lie?" "Oh, yes." "Oh, that's interesting, Johnny. Why is it wrong to tell a lie?" You see what's happening now? I'm going from content to structure. "Oh, well, when you tell a lie, you usually get in trouble." Can you hear that? Does that make sense? Now what is he saying? He's saying a structure, right? He's telling us what his structure is. Not telling a lie is a way to stay out of trouble. By the way, is that very normal for a person about that high to talk that way? Very normal.

I bring Johnny back a few years later. We all gather back here in the same place, same coat of paint, everything; and we have Johnny here and Johnny's about this high. I say, "Johnny, I want to see if your moral judgment has developed over the years." And he very shyly says, "Well, I kind of hope so." And I say, "Johnny, what do you think about this? Is it wrong to tell a lie?" And he says, "Well, of course, it's wrong to tell . . ." I say, "Johnny, that's what you said years ago. Haven't you changed?" You see, his content may not have changed. But then I say, "Johnny, why is it wrong to lie?" "Oh, well," he says, "God's Law says you should not lie. You should not bear false witness. God has said it."

Now is that a different structure than he had when he was here four years ago? Yes. What has happened? Has his moral content changed? No. Has his moral judgment changed in the structural sense? Yes. You got it? Now that distinction is terribly important because a lot of folks really don't change their content much after about age 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Now they may elaborate it, but they generally change much more in the realm of structure, if they're developing. But more about that later.

Another distinction we need to hold as vocabulary before we talk further is the distinction between moral judgment and moral action. A moral action is the doing of a moral act; right or wrong, good or bad. The doing is in the action; the thinking about it and making it a matter of moral deliberation is what we call the moral judgment. The research is not looking at moral action, and that may frustrate you because you say, well, I'm really concerned about the payoff level of this. Yeah, I am, too, and we could we could say a lot about why the research doesn't look at that yet. But suffice to say that the research we're reviewing in this hour is primarily looking at the mental process that goes on as people decide the rights and wrongs of their lives.

Now here are the findings that I want to share with you. First of all, at the scientific level it has been very clearly established that moral development itself, in fact, the development of

conscience can be studied scientifically. It is not some metaphysical loose-goose kind of thing that floats in the air. It is a very real set of mental processes that can be studied. Now that's an important one for people like me. It may be far less important for you, so let me go on.

At the psychological level, findings are several. First, that there are three levels of structure in the developmental processes of human beings. Once they enter moral conscience—and, by the way, there is such a thing as being pre-moral, not there yet, not making moral judgments, and sometimes in biblical theology we call that the age of accountability. There is such a thing as being pre-moral. But when you enter morality and the decision-making of a moral judge, there are three levels that you go through. And in virtually every culture examined, with very subtle nuances, the pattern is basically the same. And it is good evidence that the pattern is in the psychogenetic structure of being human. It is not culturally induced. Virtually everybody in every culture starts making moral judgments, like my little Johnny here a little bit ago. What do you really classify that moral judgment as? First level: “Is it wrong to tell a lie?” “Yes, it's wrong to tell a lie.” “How do you know it's wrong to tell a lie?” “When I tell a lie, *I* get in trouble.” The first level in every society is a preoccupation with what'll happen to me if I do or I don't. Now that's what we mean by level. Come back to that in more detail.

There is a predictable sequence in this level. Level I always occurs before two; two occurs before three. There is a non-reversibility in the pattern. And once a person comes to make moral judgments in Level II, they never change in their judgment capability back to Level I. Now in their behavior, they might. And for some of you who are deeply into the backsliding bit that might come as a great comfort—that it is possible to backslide; that keeps your theology intact.

It's possible to go back in moral action. Anytime you can fail to live up to your best moral judgment. But what we're talking about is the capability of making moral judgments at higher levels, and you never lose that once you have it. There are hurdles or blocks between the major levels. Between one and two and between two and three there are hurdles and there are blockades. And there are bases for people getting stuck, and it's that one that gives us a special reason for examining this whole proposition because, as Christians concerned with the development of people, we're very concerned about why people would ever get stuck in their moral development. And sometimes we can find that it's partly because of things that we do to them.

The communication finding that is of particular value, and the one that I'm going to be focusing on here, is that the hearer tends to translate a moral message from whatever level it is being communicated to his or her level at present; and if that movement of thought is very far, the person tends to make a distortion of it. Or, if you put it another way, speaking too abstractly, too much at a high level about moral issues to a person who's operating at a very low level of moral judgment, that person tends to hear your message by re-wording it; re-sorting it so that it comes at their level.

Let me give you an illustration of that: One of the really exalted principles of biblical Christianity is the Golden Rule. Now the Bible doesn't call it the Golden Rule and you can't look in a concordance under 'G' and find it. But the Golden Rule says, “Do unto others as you would have them to do to you.” In other words, behave outwardly in such a way that you would accept the same if it were offered to you. A small child quite often can learn that far beyond his capacity to intellectualize it and to make moral sense of it. And quite often small children will take that particular verse and warp it to where they are. Small children are at a normal state in a relatively self-centered Level I kind of moral judging, and they tend to see things in terms of how it affects them.

So they read that verse in their heads not, “Do unto others as you would have them to do to you,” but, “Do unto others so that they will do to you.” Do good things to others so that they will do good things to you. Now that’s not what the Golden text says, but that’s the way it comes across in a Level I frame of reference. So the thing we have to be very cautious about is pitching our moral messages at a level that the person cannot comprehend and will then be forced to make some kind of alteration in the message in order to be able to understand it.

Now the same thing works in reverse and it’s perhaps here that we have even some of the more serious problems in in communications in the adult publics where quite often you’re dealing with non-Christians who are not at Level I. In fact, sometimes they’re not even at Level II; they’re at rather high level of moral judging. But you come on with a hellfire-and-brimstone approach about how God’s going to get you if you don’t look out and you may deeply offend that person because that person’s not tuned any longer to that kind of self-seeking sort of motive. So pitching your moral message appropriately to your target audience becomes a very crucial issue. Or you can do it as our Lord did and that is in every time he spoke in the public he had moral messages at several levels of comprehensibility. Read the Beatitudes, for example, if you want to see what our Lord was saying to very simple Level I sorts of people who were hurting. There’s something in it for you, he would say. And then you read on in the Sermon on the Mount and you find some very high-principled sorts of things. All within that one series of teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord spoke to different sectors of his audience with different levels of moral message.

Now, educationally, this whole line of research has put a new emphasis on structure and has somewhat reduced the emphasis in moral teaching from the area of content and has caused us to focus on structure because that’s where most of the development occurs. So much moral teaching in schools has tended to be, especially in Christian schools, has tended to be in terms of extensions of basically Pharisaic handlings of God’s law; making more and more laws out of it. And that’s very questionable when all you do is proliferate law. Our Lord had a lot of trouble with people who were into that stuff.

The second thing that’s happened is that it is putting an emphasis on the importance of perspective and role-taking and experiences as part of learning process. Not just didactic hearings and encounters with information. And then it’s also increased the urgency of the participation in the quest for justice. Now there’s a there’s a whole sermon to be preached on that one and I won’t get into it this morning. Suffice to say at this point that one of the most significant things, from an educator’s point of view, about this research is that the key researcher in this field, Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard, has found that there is a strong correlation between the quality of justice in the growing-up person’s environment—at home, at school, at church—the quality of justice and the degree of respect among people and the degree to which people are given a just hearing for who they are, what they are, what they’re into, and are really treated as human beings. The higher is that quality of justice, the more apt the person is to progress and continue to develop in moral judgment structure.

Now, at this point, you’re probably saying, well, what are those three levels? You talked about the Level I a bit and then you talked about higher levels, but what are they? Okay. Hang on to your hat. The development of the structure of moral judgment in the human being tends to progress from the entrance into moral judgment through three levels. The first level is characterized by a focus on *self*. The moral determinant for a person in Level I is *self*. If it feels good to me, I’ll do it. If

it gets me in trouble, I won't do it. In other words, that business of answering right and wrong in terms of how it's going to work out for my benefit or my handicap is characteristic of Level I.

Level II is characterized by a preoccupation with what *others* are saying. It's a transference, if you please. Level I looking *inside* for moral truth, Level II looking *outside* for moral truth. And that wrenching between Level I and Level II is what we refer to as one of those tremendous hurdle barriers that especially some people really get hung up on. Some people cannot disengage themselves and begin to recognize the authority of an *other*. They go through life as their own moral judge. But Level II is characterized by once recognizing that one's own intellect, one's own understanding, one's own experience, one's own feeling is not an adequate base for moral judgment—there is moral truth outside oneself. Then we enter into Level II. Most college students are into Level II. Most college students are into Level II in the sense that they have come past that self-orientation and they're beginning to reference themselves to others. Now not always do we behave that way. We're not always consistent with our moral judgments. But usually when we sit down in the sober truth of it, we say, I know that it's not just a matter of how it relates to me, but what others are expecting, the standards that are expected, what God has said.

And, by the way, God is an *other* in this sense. God's law is an *other*. God's example in Jesus Christ is an *other*. Being like Jesus is an example of this kind of *otherness* of moral judgment. You say, Oh, oh. Now you're in trouble, Ted, because if you say, that's Level II, but there's a higher level, then it implies that that higher level somehow is less concerned with what God has said in being like Jesus and all the rest of that good stuff. No, hold on. There's one reason that I wouldn't want to do this lecture first because you haven't had a chance to hear me enough to know where I'm coming from. Maybe by now you do. I'm not coming to undercut that, but I'm coming to do exactly what Jesus Christ said that he came to do when he said he came to . . . what is the word, with reference to the law? Fulfill. "I have come not to destroy the law but to fulfill the law." And, by the way, a law preoccupation is an *other* preoccupation. A law is a statement from an *other*. And when Jesus came to release people from that bondage to the law, it was at exactly this level of concern because there is such a thing as bringing people into principle. It is a normal human process of development, and even the unsaved come into a level of principle judgment if they continue to develop morally.

Now the research shows us that a relatively small fraction of the American society actually moves into Level III—principled judgment. And I can tell you, from my own work, that there's a high percentage of the Christian community that does not move into Level III. There's nothing automatic about a Christian getting into Level III in moral judgment. Absolutely not. Because, in fact, people who are highly religious—if they are preoccupied with religion like the Pharisees were as a system of codes and laws and rules and things in which you do this in order to look good in front of people and stand good in front of God, and that's your view of religion and that's your view of Christianity—you are going to get locked tight in Level II because that's where it's at. Pharisees are the classic example, biblically, of people that are really into Level II with both feet. So I warn you, that to be preoccupied about these things at Level II is as dangerous for us, as Christians, as it was in the time of Christ for the Pharisees.

There is a principle level. Our Lord said on one occasion when asked what is the great commandment—and, of course, he was being trapped, as it were. He said, oh, the first? The Great? Number one. And he said, the number one is . . . and then he read the first commandment. And then he added something to it very precious. He said, but the second is like it. And I'm sure those Pharisees scratched their heads and reminded themselves what is the second commandment? And

then when they heard Jesus say this second, it wasn't the second commandment in the ordinary writing of the Decalogue. He said, the second is like to it. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Do you remember that?

Then on another occasion, he said to his disciples, "I give you a new commandment, that you love your neighbors as yourself." These two great principles of Christianity is the man/God love relationship and the man/man relationship. And it's very interesting; it forms a cross, and I think it's the crucial cross, if you pardon the pun. The crucial cross of Christendom is the man/God vertical relationship interlocked with and fulfilled by a human/human relationship. And if we have only the one or only the other, we do not have the completeness of the symbolic cross and we do not have the fulfillment of the two principles that Jesus said are basic. Because Jesus, after saying those were the first and the second, and they're alike; then he said something else extremely important. He says, in these two—he didn't even say in these two *laws*—in these two principles, because they're more than laws. In these two the whole of the Law and the Prophets holds together, consists, is glued together. The whole of what God has said is embraced by those two principles and there is, for a Christian today, a principlized level.

Now here's what the research shows us. That in that third level the principles become incorporated in oneself. Therefore one can, once again, look in and see what's going on in here to make moral judgment. So Level I is in here on the basis of my feelings, my tastes, my hopes, my aspirations, my, my, my, my this. Level II is out there on the basis of something external to myself. And Level III is moral judgment. Again, I recognize to be in here on the basis of what is going on in here because of an involvement with principle. Now if I were a secularist, I would just say, the great principles of humanity. But I'm not a secularist. I'm a Christian and I say it's in here on the basis of what God is doing. You say, well, wait a minute. Is that really going to hold water? Well, consider this. In the Scriptures, God is recorded as saying, "I would rather have written my law on the" . . . What's the next word? "Fleshy table of the heart." "I would have rather written . . ." Where is this? It's a symbol, but where is it? Is it external to the person? No, it's very internal to the person. He would rather have written his law within the person. And what is he contrasting that with? He's contrasting it with having written it external to the person on the tablets of stone. Do you see it? And if you're still living in a tablets of stone level as a Christian, take courage, friend. There's more coming and it's great.

Let me give you another illustration. When Jesus met the woman at the well in Samaria on that occasion, do you remember? And they had this little dialogue that you will have quite often in trying to strike up some kind of a bridge-building exercise with a person—and Jesus was really trying for a bridge. And finally he says: Can I have a drink? And she says: Well, how is that you asked me to drink? You're of a different religion, different ethnic group. And Jesus said: Lady, if you knew who it was that was asking you? Remember that little phrase? Lady, if you knew who it was that was asking you; if you accepted who I am, you would be asking *me* for water. That's really elegant because it says: lady, you are still in a moral Level I in which you are your own judge. You're getting your own water. You're going inside to get it and you're getting it in terms of who you are, what you are, and that's it. The first thing that would come is that if you saw my worth as authority; if you saw my authority who it is that asks of you to give me a drink, you would've asked me. She would have first have had to accept his legitimacy as moral source, symbolically. Then he says, I would have given you water; I would have been your *other* to provide source. But that which I would have given you would have been unusual water in that the water that I would give you would come . . . What's the next? into yourself and there become a well springing up for your everlasting life. Do you see?

That's what God wants to do with us. He wants, first of all, to accept us as we really are and that is human beings that start off in life making moral judgments in terms of whether it feels good to us or not.

But he wants us, next, to develop an *obedience* relationship—that's what that word is that's hard to read—*obedience* relationship so that we can come into an *otherness* relationship with Christ. But, praise God, he doesn't stop there. He wants to go on and develop within us, through the basis of trust, a relationship that will be a source from within. So the answer is should I do that or should I not do that, making a moral choice today. It's perfectly alright to say what would Jesus do? What does the Word of God say? Praise God! That's fine. But my point to you today, and I urge it upon you, is that that is not the ultimate. That is an intermediate step as God brings your whole will into a transformation with his and, ultimately, we become able to think as Christ thought. Now if that were not so, then Paul wasted an awful lot of time encouraging us to think that way. We can share in the mind of Christ: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and so forth. Paul was big on this because I really believe that Paul, in his unregenerate state, was a good example of a secularist tightly hung up on Level II. And as he became a Christian, he saw that the liberation that God gives is that liberation from the externality of even God's law because Saul was into God's law. But it was an external thing for him and God wanted to deal with him as a personal God in personal relationship and through the nurturing of his own spirit to make him one with Christ. And I don't that's too much to ask for us today.

Now with the practical side of this, especially for parents and teachers, I'd like to point out a couple of things here. First of all, it tells us that there are certain modes of moral influence that are going to be more and less effective. So I have a chart here that's called the relative effectiveness of the major modes of moral influence across three developmental levels [not available]. And we have the little red line, the blue line, and the purple line. The red line is called Rewards and Punishments. Would you say that rewards and punishments can be a moral influence? Yes or No? Yes. Are rewards and punishments wrong? No. Are rewards and punishments more effective with some people than with others? Is there a developmental pattern that intersects with the effectiveness of rewards and punishments? And that one I'm giving you on this chart. The answer is yes. Who is it that is most inclined to behave differently because someone is basically promising them some kind of a reward? That's really what's underneath the whole thing. You're going to get something out of it and, therefore, they're going to behave differently. Who is most inclined to do that? A younger person or an older person? A child or an adult? In fact, adults quite often, who are continuing to develop in their moral judgments, ultimately become a little bit jaded; a little bit offended by too much baiting by rewards. Or haven't you ever gone to Sunday school? There's an awful lot of the mentality of Sunday school and of church education that takes its notion of moral encouragement from a childhood image. And so we find adult classes competing for watermelon festivals and for pizza nights in which the losers will treat the winners; and for emblems and for badges and for other kinds of—as adults quite often see it—junk, appealing to them as you would to children on a rewards and punishments basis.

Now please understand, in a society such as ours that is so shot-through with hedonism—the notion that right and wrong is simply a matter of personal choice—a society such as ours is prone to a lot of adult Level I behavior. Or have you never read seriously after the writings of one scholar by the name of Hugh Hefner, who is probably the best apologist for a very highly sophisticated Level I hedonism as a basis for adult life. Hugh Hefner of *Playboy* magazine is probably the clearest writer on the subject of why it doesn't even enter anybody's head to think above Level I

as an adult because Level I is quite good enough. Very sad, but very real. And it's characteristic of many adults in our society that they're really trapped in Level I because they have never come to the place of accepting the authority of *other*.

Now in the Level II, where the authority is invested in *other*, what becomes more effective? Rewards and punishments, or models and rules? Models and rules. You take a look at what happens in your own life. At what period did heroes become important for you? Did you begin to pay attention to biographies and autobiographies and get hero figures and want to hear about missionaries and all these things other people were doing? You looked for models. You looked for examples. And you also became aware that rules are pretty good because they make life pretty much worth living and they keep other people off your back. And as Level II, models and rules become very influential. In Level III, the influence of both rewards and punishments has waned, and models and rules has waned, and about all that's left is, in fact, the strongest moral influence of all. But it takes a long time across life for it to develop its power—and that is dialogue and experience. Experience that is shared communicatively is one of the most powerful moral influences for Level III folks. Now, as I say, this is brief, fast, and almost glib. And if you want more depth and more care in this, I would suggest that you read such a introductory book as *Values Begin at Home* or any one of the other materials in moral judgment that are being published today.

I want, from a communication point of view, to share with you three levels of moral concern. Or, what sort of grounds do I use to discriminate between right and wrong? The heading here, again, talks about these three levels of moral judgment; but it talks about them in a slightly different way. The way a person answers choices of moral sort, matters of right and wrong, in Level I is to ask, what's in it for me? What will happen if I do or if I don't? And I have drawn this as a kind of a large cloud because we never lose that capacity. We never lose the ability to answer and ask those simple questions. And if given enough threat to ourselves, we will revert to that and we will ask at that level because we never leave that capability. We can always ask that very selfish kind of thing: what's in it for me? It's a level of moral judgment that never is really past. You go so that it is not your limit, and that's what we mean by the incursion of Level II and of Level III. These come into our life as new resources, new possibilities.

In Level II, the way we ask and answer the question of moral right and wrong is to be sure to please God! And I put an exclamation point after that: be sure to please God! And that kind of an emphasis is very appropriate and is very much drawn upon by a person who is in that Level II state of moral judgment. God has said it and that's good enough. The Bible says such and such, and that's good enough. Be like Jesus. Jesus is our great model. Please your mother and your father, like it says in the Bible, honor your father and your mother. The rule says—and these are the preoccupations of Level II. These are not wrong. Jesus said, I did not come to destroy the Law, to undercut the Law, to lower the credibility of the Law; I simply came to fulfill the law, to show that there is something beyond. And what is *beyond* is that base of principle that underlies the particulars of law and it's toward that that we grow into spiritual maturity.

And in that third level, which I will call, for the Christian, at least, the spiritually mature level, the issue of judgments of right and wrong has now become more a matter of respect for what God is doing in one's life. Simply a matter of respecting, as a matter of principle, what it is that God is engaged. I am engaged in a lifelong experience with God. I am God's child. I am one with Jesus Christ my Lord. I am in his service. And to me, this is a basis, a principle basis, for answering all sorts of questions of right and wrong; and I don't have to go and look them up in a rulebook.

Another thought along this line is this one: I am learning to see things as Christ sees them. And, again, that is not presumptive. That's what we are to be doing as Christians—to put ourselves in the mind of Christ. To adopt the mind of Christ. To allow the Holy Spirit to work a frame of reference like Christ's in our lives.

And third: the reality of God is seen in the great principles of life. And so I come into a deeper and deeper appreciation of these principles: the principle of love, the principle of faith, the principle of honor, and the principle of justice. And justice is in the sense, as in the Old Testament, equated with righteousness. The righteousness which can do no wrong. The righteousness which is an expression of the essence nature of God himself. Thus, I decide. You see, the Christianity that we are moving toward is a Christianity that liberates us. It liberates us from that constant looking up in reference to an external source; a preoccupation with what other people are going to think; a kind of living of two lives: one that takes life in which we know what we'd really rather do, and the other a kind of operational front so that other people will see us the way we want to be seen. And we work into a true level of integrity as principled persons, not simply rule obeyers.

I warn you, as communicators, that to treat the people of God as people who are deliberately intending to be stuck at Level I or Level II is to demean the people of God. We need to be moving more and more toward a principle level. But it still is very popular to feed people at Level I and Level II. And I tell you, that one of the reasons why the secular world is not influenced anymore for Jesus Christ is because we oftentimes pitch our moral messages too low, and we harp on things about . . . God will get you for that. God is lurking in his heaven, leaning over the balustrade, waiting on you and, buddy, that's tough. When we put that kind of an emphasis on the negatives and on the hurts or on, even the positive side of that, the kind of silly rewards that we conjure up about heaven, we demean Christianity and we demean the love of God. We should be alert when we're working with children for the reality of the child's experience and we should pitch our messages appropriately. But when we're working with people who are adults, we should be working with people who we assume are continuing to mature and to develop in the image of Christ.

Let's pray:

Father, give us a sensitivity in matters of moral messages. Give us an alertness. Help us to be more able to see what it is that you're doing in our own lives so that we clearly understand ourselves and then are in a better position to relate to others. Help us, Father, to respect the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. To be alert to your footprints about our innermost being. And, Father, may we be sensitive to your Word; to know what it is that you have said. And to understand that all the particulars that you have said are important, but they are most important because they reveal the great principle of our love toward you and our love toward each other.

May these be the principles of Christian experience for every one of us. In the name of our Lord, Amen.