



Patterns in Moral Development: *Foreword*¹

Ted Ward

The Word of God is concerned with the moral development of humanity. Making men and women righteous in the sight of God is at the heart of God's great redemptive acts. The Bible teaches that it is only through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ that sinful humanity can be made right before God. Thus, the issue of being "saved" or "lost" depends on faith in Jesus Christ. But God's whole redemptive plan for the creation involves far more. What is the process through which one's conscience develops? What happens as a child learns the difference between right and wrong? Why is it that among all of us—Christians and non-Christians alike—that there are acts of kindness and acts of selfish evil? Other than religious decisions and commitments, what are the values that underlie moral behavior? Where do they come from? How do they develop?

Just a few years ago, the Lilly Endowment gave Michigan State University a substantial grant to gather a research team and seek a better understanding of these questions. Our task was to examine the twentieth-century research, especially in social science, that deals with moral and ethical judgment and the processes by which people's values develop. We were to carry out research on the *research*, to discover the practical implications. We focused on four matters: what every person ought to know about what goes on inside oneself as moral values are put into action, what part the parent can play in the development of a child's moral judgment, what part teachers and schools can play, and what part religious education can play.

Catherine Stonehouse was a deeply respected member of that research team. One of many outcomes of her service with us was the original manuscript for this book. She poured herself into it, so great was her concern for effective home and church influence on the lives of boys and girls. She went into many church education conferences and seminars to test the early version of the material. Nothing less than the best would satisfy Cathy.

In the chapters that follow, we have the highlights of those efforts. Making research interesting isn't always successful. But there are pleasant surprises ahead in this book. You will find practical yet thoroughly responsible answers to the question, "What can I do that will help children and young people in their moral judgment?" As an additional bonus, you will surely get some new insights into yourself—what goes on in your judgmental processes as you make moral choices, and how you came to be the person that you are.

Dr. Stonehouse is dealing with difficult material. She handles it in interesting yet thorough ways. Her years of experience engaged in strengthening the effectiveness of Sunday school volunteers and Christian education staff show through on every page.

Try to learn from this book. Reading it is not enough. As you come to the end of each short section there are questions to be answered. On the basis of what you have read, try to answer them for yourself. In doing so you will be able to remember and put into practice far more of the valuable information in this book.

¹ Ted Ward. Foreword. In Catherine Stonehouse. *Patterns in Moral Development*. (Waco, Texas: Word 1980), pp. 9-10. Copyright reverted to the author and book reprinted by Wipf & Stock in 2000. Used with permission.