

Living the Right Way

Ephesians 4:1; 4:17-5:21; Exodus 20:1-2

- ❑ Throughout the world, there are people who value “doing what is right.” People generally believe there is a “right way” to live and behave.¹

1. What do you think motivates people to “do what is right”? How do people know what is right and wrong?



God's Will

- ❑ The Bible teaches that God is the One who determines what is right and wrong, and this truth should directly affect our motivation to “do what is right”!

📖 Paul wrote to Christians, “Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise. [Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days.]² Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” (*Eph. 5:15-17, NIV, [NLT]*)

Our Need to Understand

- ❑ In Ephesians 1, the term “God’s will” refers to God’s gracious purpose and plan in Jesus Christ (*1:5, 9, 11*).³ It was God’s will to provide Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. It is God’s will that believers are adopted into God’s family through Jesus Christ (*1:5*).
 - ❑ In Ephesians 4:1-6:9, Paul talks about how Christians should live their lives. In this context, “the Lord’s”⁴ will” refers primarily to God’s “desired will” for Christians – that is, what God wants his children to do, especially with regard to moral behavior.
 - ❑ Christians should seek to understand God’s moral will. But it is also important to understand “God’s will” in Ephesians 1 – that is, God’s purpose and plan in Jesus Christ (the gospel).⁵
2. How is understanding God’s moral will (*or* biblical ethics) related to understanding God’s gracious purpose and plan in Jesus Christ? Why do we need to understand the “gospel” (the good news of Jesus Christ) in order to understand how we should live?⁶

📖 “I therefore⁷...urge you to walk (*live your life*) in a manner worthy of the calling⁸ to which you have been called.” (*Ephesians 4:1, ESV*)



¹ Even moral relativists believe there are “right ways” to behave, though they claim “what is right” is relative. And while they deny moral absolutes, they preach “tolerance” as if it were an absolute. Their position lacks foundation.

² Bracketed words are from the NLT. The ESV says, “making the best use of time, because the days are evil.”

³ Using the terminology of our recent study of God’s will, Ephesians 1 talks about God’s “determinative will,” while Ephesians 4-6 talks more about God’s “desired will” – in particular, what God wants his children to do.

⁴ “Lord” – typically refers to Christ in Ephesians. In any case, whether “the Lord’s will” is the will of God the Son or God the Father, the difference is insignificant here.

⁵ Of course, a basic understanding of the gospel is needed to *become* a follower of Christ.

⁶ See the following verses & footnotes. Understanding God’s purpose in Christ is needed to put our lives (including our moral behavior) in proper perspective. Since God is the designer, creator, sustainer, and ruler of the universe, we need to heed what He wants us to know! This understanding is also needed to motivate, guide, equip & empower us.

⁷ “therefore” points back to Ephesians 1-3, which reveals God’s gracious, saving purpose and plan in Christ (*1:5, 9, 11*). In response to what God *has done, is doing, and will do* in Jesus Christ, Christians should respond by living their lives in the right way.

- 📖 “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God⁹ in true righteousness and holiness.” (*Ephesians 4:22-24, NIV*)¹⁰
- 📖 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.” (*Ephesians 5:8-10, NIV*)
3. What should motivate the Christian to “do what is right”? What do we need to do to “understand what the Lord’s will is” (or learn His will) in the various areas of our lives?

Keeping Things in Order

- ❑ Though we seek to live in a way that is “pleasing to the Lord” (*Ephesians 5:10*), we cannot earn God’s acceptance by our good behavior.¹¹ We cannot earn salvation by our own efforts.
- 📖 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (*Ephesians 2:8-10*)¹²

The Ten Commandments



- ❑ The “Ten Commandments” (recorded in Exodus 20:1-17) reflect the moral will of God.¹³ Thus we will use the Ten Commandments as a general outline for this study series.
- ❑ Read Exodus 20:1-2. God reminds His people of who He is and what He has done for them. We need to ask: How should I respond to who God is and what He has done for us?

Reflection/Application

- Review this lesson and ask yourself these questions: What is the basis and motivation for my ethics (moral principles and practices)? How do my ethics compare to God’s moral will?
- Read Ephesians 4:17-5:21 as a sample of God’s moral will. Ask God to show you where you need to change, and commit to change by His grace. If you are not a Christian, the first step is trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior. Then God can renew and change you by His Spirit.

⁸ “calling” – God has “called” believers into a new life according to His grace. The benefits of the new life include God’s forgiveness (1:7), salvation (1:13: 2:5, 8), every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3), the indwelling Holy Spirit (1:13-14), adoption into God’s family (1:5), and the riches of His glorious inheritance (1:18). Believers are called to be holy (1:4), to do good works (2:10), and to praise God for His glorious grace (1:6, 12, 14), among other things.

⁹ “created to be like God” – refers to being like God (or like Christ) in a moral sense so that we can glorify God. “In Christ” believers are renewed and ultimately conformed to the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16; Rom. 8:29-30).

¹⁰ In a similar passage in Colossians 3, Paul grounds his moral instructions on the facts of the gospel, particularly Christ’s resurrection. Likewise, Paul’s moral instructions in Romans 6 and 8 are grounded in the facts of Christ’s death and resurrection, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the reality and significance of our union with Christ through faith. Understanding God’s plan of redemption is needed to understand and apply the Bible’s moral instructions.

¹¹ No matter how “good” we are, we still fall short of the holy, righteous God. However, the good news is that God accepts us on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, if we are united with him through faith.

¹² Our good works are not the ground of our salvation, but rather the fruit (result) of our salvation as new creations.

¹³ The Ten Commandments and the Law were given to Moses and Israel at a specific time in the history of God’s people, and are part of the *Old Covenant*. Theologians disagree on how the Ten Commandments relate to Christians, who are under the *New Covenant*. See the book *Five Views on Law and Gospel*. In any case, the moral will of God is reflected in the Ten Commandments, and God’s moral will transcends the written Law. In the New Testament, God’s law is written on human hearts, which is connected to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34).