



Moral Values That Truly Enrich

Christina could not believe her eyes! She had just found a black plastic bag containing a very large sum of money—the equivalent of her wages for more than 20 years! And she knew who lost it. What should she do? What would you do? Your answer will reflect your view of honesty and your commitment to this moral value.

What are values? They are moral or ethical principles that we view as good and important. They might include forgiveness, honesty, liberty, love, respect for life, and self-control. Our values, therefore, influence our behavior, priorities, and relationships, as well as the moral guidance we give to our children. Despite their importance, however, moral values are in decline.

AN EROSION OF VALUES

In 2008, researchers in the United States interviewed hundreds of young adults about their views on moral values. “What’s disheartening is how bad they are at thinking and talking about moral issues,” said David Brooks in *The New York Times*. Most felt that rape and murder were wrong, but “aside from those extreme cases, moral thinking didn’t enter the picture, even when [they were] considering things like drunken driving, cheating in school or cheating on a partner.” As one young person put it, “I don’t really deal with right and wrong that often.”

An Urgent Need for “a Global Ethic”

Humanity’s survival “may depend on the acceptance of a global ethic,” says the journal *Counseling and Values*. “Perhaps the most agreed-upon universal moral value is the Golden Rule.” What is that rule? Taught by Jesus Christ, it says: “Do for others what you want them to do for you.”—Matthew 7:12, *Good News Translation*.

Many viewed the matter this way: ‘If it feels right, do it. Go with your heart.’ Is that thinking wise?

The human heart, while capable of great love and compassion, can also be ‘treacherous and desperate.’ (Jeremiah 17:9) This sad reality is reflected in the world’s changing moral landscape—a trend the Bible foretold. “In the last days,” it said long ago, “people will be selfish, greedy, boastful, and conceited,” as well as “unkind [and] violent.” Also, “they will hate the good” and “love pleasure rather than God.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5, *Good News Translation*.

Those realities should move us to question our own heart, not blindly trust it! Indeed, the Bible frankly states: “He that is trusting in his own heart is stupid.” (Proverbs 28:26) Like a compass, our heart needs to be calibrated with sound values if it is to serve us well. Where can we find such values? Many look to the Bible itself, appreciating both its wisdom and its candor.

VALUES WE CAN TRUST!

Bible values give evidence that they were tailor-made for humankind. Consider just a few examples—the qualities of love, kindness, generosity, and honesty.

■ **Love for others.** “If you have learned to love, then happiness will surely knock on your door,” says the book *Engineering Happiness—A New Approach for Building a Joyful Life*. Clearly, as humans, we need love. Without it, we cannot be truly happy.

What the Bible says: “Clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.” (Colossians 3:14) The same Bible writer also said: “If I . . . do not have love, I am nothing.”—1 Corinthians 13:2.

That love is neither sexual nor purely sentimental; it is governed by principle. It is the kind of love that moves us to help a stranger in difficulty, with no thought of a reward. At 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we read: “Love is long-suffering and kind. [It] is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, . . . endures all things.”

When families lack such love, everybody suffers, especially children. A woman named Monica wrote that as a child, she endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. “I was unloved and without any hope,” she said. Then, when she was 15 years of age, she moved in with her grandparents who are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“In the two years I lived with them,” said Monica, “they taught this shy girl to be outgoing and loving and to care for others. They helped me to become a

respectable young woman.” Now, happily married, Monica along with her husband and three children shows love to others by sharing the Bible’s message with them.

A particularly subtle enemy of love is materialism—the belief that material well-being and pleasure are the highest values. Yet, secular studies repeatedly show that beyond a surprisingly modest threshold, more wealth does not bring more happiness. In fact, people who adopt materialistic values may actually be investing in unhappiness, a view that finds Biblical support. Ecclesiastes 5:10 tells us: “A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income. This too is vanity.” The Bible also states: “Let your manner of life be free of the love of money.” —Hebrews 13:5.

■ **Kindness and generosity.** “Wouldn’t it be great if you could walk into a store and buy lifelong happiness?” said an article in the United States by The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. “The idea’s not as fanciful as it sounds—as long as whatever you buy is meant for someone else.” The point? Giving makes us happier than receiving.

What the Bible says: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35.

Often, the best form of giving—and the most rewarding—is giving of ourselves, in the form of our time and energy. For example, a woman named Karen saw three women—a mother and her two daughters—sitting in a car with its hood up. The mother and one of the girls had to catch a plane; but their car would not start, and the taxi was late. Karen offered to take them, even though the airport was 45 minutes away. They accepted the offer. On her way back, Karen saw the other

daughter still waiting in her car in the parking lot.

“My husband is on his way,” the woman said.

“Well, I’m glad you are OK,” replied Karen. “I’m going to do some gardening at my Kingdom Hall, or church.”

“Are you one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?” the woman asked.

“Yes,” said Karen, and a brief conversation ensued.

A few weeks later, Karen received a letter in the mail. In part, it read: “My mother and I haven’t forgotten your wonderful deed. We made our flights, thanks to you! My sister said that you are one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, which explains everything. My mom is a Witness, and I’m an inactive one. But I’m going to work on that soon!” Karen was elated that she had been able to help two fellow believers. “I cried,” she said.

Author Charles D. Warner wrote: “It is one of the beautiful compensations of . . .

Values That Elevate Us

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
—Mark 12:31.

“Return evil for evil to no one.”
—Romans 12:17.

“Continue . . . forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another.”
—Colossians 3:13.

“The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things.”
—1 Timothy 6:10.





life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” That is so because God did not create humans to be selfish but, rather, to reflect his own precious qualities.—Genesis 1:27.

■ **Honesty.** This ethical value is fundamental to any civilized society. Dishonesty fosters fear, mistrust, and social decay.

What the Bible says: “Who will be a guest in [God’s] tent?” The answer? “He who is walking faultlessly and . . . speaking the truth *in his heart*.” (Psalm 15:1, 2) Yes, genuine honesty, like the other qualities we have considered, is a personality trait. It is not governed by circumstances or expediency.

Recall Christina who found the bag of money? Well, her heart’s desire was, not to gain wealth, but to please God. So when the anxious owner returned, she told him that his money had been found. He was amazed at her honesty. So was her employer, for he later promoted Christina to general storekeeper, a position of

considerable trust. How true are the words at 1 Peter 3:10: “He that would love life and see good days, let him restrain his . . . lips from speaking deception.”

“WALK IN THE WAY OF GOOD PEOPLE”

The moral values found in the Bible reflect our Creator’s deep love for us, for those values enable us to “walk in the way of good people.” (Proverbs 2:20; Isaiah 48:17, 18) When we follow that guidance, we, in turn, show our love for God and reap many rewards. In fact, the Bible makes this promise: “Keep [God’s] way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it.”—Psalm 37:34.

Yes, what a wonderful future awaits those who adhere to Bible standards—life in a peaceful earth free of wickedness! Surely the values taught in the Bible merit our consideration. ■