

CHAPTER 16

GOD

IS

RIGHTEOUS

How can there be so many different views about what is right and what is wrong? Why are moral issues no longer seen as black or white but rather as varying shades of gray? Why do the standards of morality constantly change within society?

Today the distinction between right and wrong is becoming increasingly blurred. People passionately defend their sinful actions. What is right has become a matter of interpretation by the individual, the community, or the courts. However, this view is absolutely wrong because it assumes that public opinion and government legislation provide the ultimate criterion for determining what is right. But our sovereign God sets the standards for His creation. His standards do not change; they are timeless. And our American society, like many western nations, was built on the biblical principles of right and wrong.

Our culture understands how important it is to be “right” about certain things. Permit me to give you several examples:

An architect building a hundred-story skyscraper takes immense precautions to have the building’s foundation perfectly level. If the footings are off even a fraction of an inch, there are tremendous consequences. The farther up he builds on an unlevelled foundation, the more unstable the skyscraper becomes.

Scientists at Mission Control in Houston also know the importance of being “right” when bringing a spaceship back to Earth. If the angle of re-entry into the Earth’s atmosphere is off just a little, the spaceship will encounter too much friction and burn up before it reaches the ground.

Last, consider the speed skater in a race. Two lanes circle the track. The skaters not only race each other, but each skater is also required to stay in his own lane. If one skater crosses the line into the other lane, he is disqualified and loses the race.

Although most people understand the importance of laying the “right” foundation, having the “right” re-entry angle, or staying in the “right” lane, they have problems understanding the “rightness” of moral laws. When it comes to stealing, for example, most people divide stealing into categories like “borrowing,” petty theft, robbery, and embezzlement. They feel that some categories are okay, such as taking a few supplies from their employer or school, or keeping the excess when a cashier gives them too much change. But to them it would be wrong to break into someone’s home or rob a bank. Moral laws, they believe, are not as rigid as other laws. Therefore, we can bend them a little without incurring any penalty. But that is contrary to how God sees His righteous laws.

GOD IS ALWAYS RIGHT

It is easy to understand God’s righteous role as Creator. Everything He created functions according to the laws applying to its creation. All His natural laws perform the way He intends for the good of His creation. Look at the way a coastal marsh works. Each day, tides bring fresh nutrients for the millions of tiny plants that grow in the soil and water. At high tide, all kinds of shellfish dine on these tiny plants. Fish such as spotted sea trout spawn in the calm water and the tiny hatchlings feed in their own little marshy nursery. Ducks and other birds build nests to raise their young. A stew of vegetation provides a smorgasbord for the ducklings and goslings. Natural laws and processes work together as a system to benefit all of God’s creation.

It is easy to recognize how God created nature in its right order. But it is far less common to understand that God has created the moral realm to function in its right order, too.

In fact, as humans we often purposefully overlook one wrong to right another. In recent years, juries have declared a defendant “not guilty” of a crime despite evidence that clearly convicts him. Through their actions, jury members hope to make a statement about some other moral wrong connected with the crime. Many experts believe the jury in the O. J. Simpson murder trial did this to right the wrong of minorities often not getting equal justice in the court system. But ignoring one wrong

to address another wrong will not make things right. We just end up with two wrongs—and no right.

As humans, we sometimes fail to do what is right in our daily lives. Have you ever said to yourself, “I know the right thing to do, but if I do what is right, I will mess up my situation”? Perhaps you are in a college class when someone advocates an immoral viewpoint. You do not challenge the speaker’s opinion because you do not want to be viewed as a moral extremist. Standing up for what is morally right might cause you to be ridiculed, lose friends, receive a lower grade from the professor, or lose your job. As fallen human beings, we have a hard time even understanding perfect righteousness much less living righteous lives.

Only God is righteous because He is holy. He has never acted unrighteously; never had an evil thought; never rationalized a questionable act to make something else right.

WHAT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

We learned previously that God is holy. But His holiness and His righteousness are not the same. Holiness is “a condition of purity or freedom from sin.”¹ God’s righteousness is “the quality or attribute of God by virtue of which He does that which is right or in accordance with His own nature, will, and law.”²

In other words, holiness describes God’s nature; righteousness describes how God acts according to His holiness. God’s laws are holy because they come from His nature. God’s standards for enforcing His laws are always righteous.

Let me give an example of one law. God says, “Do not commit adultery.” That simple statement arises out of God’s holiness. He can never be disloyal when He has made a commitment; it is against His nature. In the Old Testament, God made covenants or promises to His people. He made a covenant with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. The rainbow in the sky is the evidence of His covenant. Over the many centuries since the flood, God has acted rightly regarding this covenant. That follow-through with His holy covenant shows His righteousness.

In the same way, when we stand before a minister and promise to love our spouse and be faithful to him or her the rest of our lives, we are making a covenant that reflects God’s holiness. We act righteously when we keep that commitment or covenant.

But do not imagine that righteousness is reaching a standard like climbing a ladder to a higher level. That is what most people think when they consider righteous acts. “If I tell the truth more times than I tell lies, I’ll be more righteous.” “If I make up for the money I stole from my employer, then I’ll be okay.” No one can work up to righteousness because it begins as purity. It comes out of holiness; it does not reach up to holiness.

Holiness sets the standard. Righteousness is the result of a relationship that fulfills that standard.

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

How righteous is God? Everything God does is perfectly right in every way. David tells us, “The LORD is righteous in all His ways and loving toward all He has made.”³ For God, righteousness is not an external standard that He must adhere to; righteousness is part of His very nature. It emanates from His inner being. As a result, whatever God wills is perfectly right. It is impossible for God to do anything wrong.

All righteousness within the entire universe has its origin in Him. The psalmist exclaims, “Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God, You who have done great things. Who, O God, is like You?”⁴ Every action God has ever taken or will take is righteous. As a judge, He has never made a wrong determination. He has never had to reverse a decision when He learned more facts. No one can question His judgment in all His actions.

Heaven is filled with God’s righteousness. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.”⁵ Because God is righteous, He wants righteousness to fill His universe.

GOD AS RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

When you walk into a courtroom and face the judge, you may wonder, “Who gave this judge the power to decide between right and wrong? Who gave the judge the moral and legal authority to pronounce what is righteous behavior and what is grievous misbehavior deserving punishment?”

Whether judges are elected directly by the people or appointed by the politicians we elect, they ultimately owe their authority and legal power to us, the people. These judges are subject to human passions, can misuse their authority, and be removed. A

New England judge was recently removed after a grand jury indicted him for forcing young men to have sex with him in his private chambers—in return for dismissing their cases. An Illinois judge was removed for “fixing” speeding tickets in return for illegal bribes.

But when we discuss the righteousness of God, we are not talking about an appointed judge, prone to weaknesses. An infinite and powerful God does not need anyone to elect or appoint Him, to give Him righteousness. He was righteous before the beginning of time and always will be.

God told Jeremiah, “I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.”⁶ He is the standard by which every evaluation of righteousness must be compared. If God were not inherently holy and just, He could not act righteously.

GOD’S LAWS DEFINE RIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR

The *Dred Scott v. Sanford* Supreme Court case in 1856 shows how little righteousness we really have as humans. The case began when Henry Blow filed a suit trying to free a slave, Dred Scott, who worked for him. The problem, however, was that Henry did not own Mr. Scott. A Mrs. Emerson did. Although she lived in New York and Dred Scott lived in Missouri, she would not give him his freedom.

The case wound its way from the lower courts to the Supreme Court. By the time the Supreme Court Justices heard the case, the abolition movement in the U.S. had grown strong. Abolitionists wanted slavery outlawed in new territories and states like Missouri. Southern slave owners were desperate to keep their right to own slaves because of their labor-intensive farms. To complicate the case, Dred Scott had lived for a time in free Wisconsin territory. Because of that fact, Blow argued, Scott should be a free man.

The Supreme Court could not make up its mind. It heard oral arguments twice, then the Justices recessed for two months. They were so divided on the issue that they did not even meet during that time. Finally, each Justice wrote his own opinion. Seven of them ruled that Dred Scott was still a slave, while two ruled that he was free. Since the Supreme Court ruled that slavery could not be prohibited in new territories, only a constitutional amendment could outlaw the expansion of slavery. This decision was

one of the principal causes of the Civil War.⁷ Years later, The Supreme Court reversed its decision on slavery.

Throughout history, human judges have had a hard time determining right from wrong. Just like us, they are caught up in the culture, swayed by their own personalities, and limited to the evidence presented in court, which may not accurately portray the truth.

A more recent miscarriage of justice was the *Roe v. Wade* case in which the Supreme Court ruled that abortion is legal. Lawful killing of preborn babies is certainly not righteous. Yet the Court approved of this travesty. I am praying that, like its reversal on the slavery issue, the Supreme Court will reverse its decision in *Roe v. Wade* that legalized abortion on demand.

God does not struggle with right and wrong. The psalmist declares, “Righteous are You, O LORD, and Your laws are right.”⁸ His laws reflect His own righteous nature and the moral perfection of His character. Cultural bias, a lack of knowledge, or any other factor does not alter His rulings.

God’s spiritual laws are every bit as absolute as His physical laws. If we break God’s natural laws, we pay the consequences. For example, if you jump off of the Empire State Building in New York City, the law of gravity will guarantee your death. Likewise, if you lock yourself in a garage and breathe carbon monoxide instead of the oxygen that your body needs, you will die.

God’s spiritual laws are no less binding. As the perfect Judge and Lawgiver, God is also the law enforcer. His laws lay out the responsibilities for which God holds us accountable. They are a yardstick by which God measures our righteousness. When His laws are broken, He must punish anyone who defies His righteous laws.

You may wonder why God is so exacting about His spiritual laws. He did not make rules just for the “fun of it.” His righteous laws focus on standards for acting rightly toward one another.

Consequently, God’s spiritual laws are the pillars for justice and morality within any nation. To restate this fact, the laws of a nation are just only to the degree that they conform to the laws of God. When national leaders reject and disobey God, they cut their nation loose from the anchor of morality, and set it adrift in an ocean of moral relativity. Without God they lose their moral compass and doom their society to injustice, dishonesty, and depravity. In our next chapter, we will see how important righteous laws are to our nation.

WE CANNOT MEET GOD’S RIGHTEOUS STANDARD

Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, every person has been born with a

sinful nature that insists on exerting self-will, even against the Creator. Isaiah describes our dilemma, “How can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us
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away.”

Imagine a contest between an Olympic gold medal winner and me to see who can jump across the Grand Canyon, which is miles wide and deep. Who do you think would win that match? While I am sure the Olympian would jump far beyond me, he would still fall short of the other side. We would both plummet to our deaths.

That is similar to our attempts to be righteous. Even when we try our very hardest, we still fall far short of God’s perfect standard. Because of our sinful nature, it is impossible for us to live the righteous life God demands. As we read earlier, if we are ever to be acceptable to God, He has to intervene on our behalf.

FAITH IS THE KEY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

We can be righteous only when God’s righteousness is imputed, or freely given to us as we place our faith in God’s only Son, Jesus Christ. Abraham was an Old Testament illustration of this truth, which was not fully revealed until Jesus came some 2,000 years later. Genesis 15:6 explains, “[Abraham] believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (NIV). This “righteousness” is sometimes referred to as “right standing” with God; in other words, God considers us right with Him. Abraham came into right standing with God because Abraham believed Him!

Since God’s standards for morality and virtue are 100 percent perfect and we are imperfect and inadequate, we can only be righteous as a gift from God. Through our faith in His Son, He “credits” His own righteousness to our account.

In the New Testament, Paul referred to this passage about Abraham and then gave us the wonderful news that “the words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe

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in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” This is one of the most wonderful truths in the universe: God declares us righteous by faith, and sees us as having the righteousness of His own Son! This is grace, or unmerited favor—a free gift purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ through His death on the cross.

What is our worshipful response to the knowledge that God gives us righteousness because of His Son? The Bible contains many examples of prayers that we can offer

up to God. One such prayer was written by Paul and is found in 1 Thessalonians: “Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes

again. God, who calls you, is faithful; He will do this.”¹¹

Make this prayer the cry of your heart. God will respond by touching your heart, spirit, soul, and body. We can be assured that He will answer this prayer and make us righteous in His sight.

LIFE APPLICATION

EXALT YOUR GOD—Worship our righteous God with the words of Psalm 119:137–144:

O Lord, You are righteous, and Your decisions are fair. Your decrees are perfect; they are entirely worthy of our trust.

I am overwhelmed with rage, for my enemies have disregarded your words. Your promises have been thoroughly tested; that is why I love them so much.

I am insignificant and despised, but I don't forget Your commandments. Your justice is eternal, and Your law is perfectly true. As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in Your commands.

Your decrees are always fair; help me to understand them, that I may live.

REFLECT HIS IMAGE—We are called to be righteous, but we cannot do this in our own strength. Ask your heavenly Father to reveal areas of unrighteousness in your heart and life. Then repent and confess them to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to live righteously in those areas you are most tempted to disobey God.

SHARE HIS MAJESTY—One of the ways we can testify of God's righteousness is by displaying our faith in Him. When you are with your friends, relatives, or neighbors who do not know Christ as Savior, relate your experiences with faith-building answers to prayer and share the gospel message of love and forgiveness. As people see your faith in a God who is trustworthy, many will want to live a righteous life as a child of God.

CHAPTER 17

GOD HELPS

US LIVE

RIGHTEOUSLY

We live in a world where many believe that the end justifies the means. They say it is acceptable to compromise God's standards to get ahead. But the fact is we always lose when we violate God's standards of righteousness. On the other hand, it is not always easy to do what is right.

I think of a situation in which we found ourselves as a ministry when we moved our headquarters from San Bernardino, California, to Orlando, Florida. We had been unable to lease or sell some of our property in San Bernardino. The buildings remained empty, yet every month we still had to make our mortgage payments.

I was counseled by some successful Christian businessmen to default the payments and allow the bank to repossess the property. After all, many businesses had done this during the economic downturn. Financially, we would be far better off, but that would be wrong since we had signed a contract with the bank. We purposed to trust God to help us pay the bills and sell the property in a way that would bring honor and glory to Him. Some would say, "Boy that's stupid." But we had given our word. Five years passed before we finally sold the property.

Although making those payments was a financial hardship, God has greatly

blessed the ministry of Campus Crusade. Contributions have dramatically increased year after year. I believe God has blessed us because we run Campus Crusade for Christ in His way. We depend on Him to help us pay our bills.

As Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., once said, “It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.” In other words, if we had defaulted on our agreement, we could have saved a lot of money every year. Think of all that the ministry could have done with that money—but we would have violated our word and our contract. That would not have honored God. Living righteously means making sacrifices and saying no to desires. We cannot live this way in our own strength.

Let us look at a few action points that will help us do what is right no matter what.

DEPEND ON GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS RATHER THAN OUR EFFORTS

We are so fortunate that “the LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.”¹ Otherwise we would be doomed by our lack of righteousness. Our righteousness does not depend on what we do, but on whom we place our faith. Paul explains:

We are made right in God’s sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done. For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet now God in His gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God’s anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed His blood, sacrificing His life for

us.”²

There was not anything we could do to earn this gift of grace. We accepted it by faith. Now God no longer sees our sinfulness, but only the righteousness of Christ which covers us.

When we put our faith in Christ, we received a new nature—one of holiness and righteousness. Christ wants us to display His righteousness in our new life. We are commanded: “Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature

because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness—righteous, holy, and true.”³

Yet we are all tempted to achieve righteousness under our own power. That never works. We cannot live righteously without the enabling of the Holy Spirit, and His power is released through our faith. For example, if a person has a problem with swearing, he could try his hardest to quit using foul language. For the most part, he would be able to control his tongue, but when someone cuts him off on the freeway or breaks in front of him in a line, his mouth curses before he even realizes what he is saying. All his efforts to control this reaction come to nothing.

The secret to changing bad habits like cursing is to turn the problem over to God. By faith, admit that you are helpless to change your bad habit. By faith ask His Spirit to give you righteous language to replace the filthy language. As you walk in the Spirit moment by moment, your heart is prepared to act righteously the next time someone angers you. When this happens, take a deep breath and start praising God for something good in the situation. Trust God to take over and work out the problem. This will make the difference in your reaction and the results of the problem.

SEEK GOD FIRST AND TURN AWAY FROM WORLDLY ATTACHMENTS

The only way we can live a life of faith is by submitting our will to the Holy Spirit moment by moment and depending on Him to empower us. When doing this, Jesus

instructs us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.”⁴ As a result, we will enjoy the rewards of righteous living and agree with David, “Surely, O LORD, You

bless the righteous; You surround them with Your favor as with a shield.”⁵

A friend of mine lived in a palatial home in El Paso, Texas. He was a very successful manufacturer who had accumulated considerable wealth. Following his retirement he ministered weekly to the poor people across the border in Juarez, Mexico.

However, one woman greatly ministered to him. She lived in a little hut with a dirt floor. Her earthly possessions were a small stove, a pot, a pan, a plate, a knife, fork and spoon, and one change of clothes. Every time she saw him she would tell him, “God is so good to me, He is so wonderful and faithful to me.” This successful businessman loved God, but this godly woman was far happier than he was. Through her, he discovered that joy and fulfillment are not found in material possessions, but in a

relationship with God and in obedience to His commands.

Seeking God first will lead to a new perspective on life. Old, worldly attachments will seem insignificant and God's blessings will be apparent in righteous living. I challenge you to rearrange your priorities, schedule, and finances to put God first and follow His "right" plan for your life.

ADJUST YOUR LIFE TO GOD'S STANDARDS

Some years ago, a Christian man from a Middle Eastern nation attended a Campus Crusade conference in another country. While there, he felt God calling him to join our staff. That decision meant much more sacrifice to him than it does to someone who joins our staff in the United States. Because of Muslim persecution in his country, his decision to follow the Lord in ministry could result in harm to him and even death—and the same consequences for his family. But he felt sure that God wanted him to tell his countrymen about the love of God as revealed through Jesus Christ our Lord.

After the conference ended, he went home and told his wife what God was leading him to do. Her reaction was amazing. She said, "If God wants you to join Campus Crusade for Christ, then I agree with your decision. I am willing to follow your decision."

She realized the ramifications that this change meant for her and her family. In fact, today she and her husband are exiles from their homeland because of their witness for Christ. But she adjusted her plans to fit into God's plans for their lives—and she and her husband saw tremendous fruit in their country before their exile. God continues to use them mightily in their new assignment.

We have discussed confessing sin when our lives take a turn from God's perfect standard, but God wants us to do more than that. Henry Blackaby and Claude King explain in their book *Experiencing God*, "God wants you to have no hindrances to a love relationship with Him in your life. Once God has spoken to you through His Word,

how you respond is crucial. You must adjust your life to the truth."⁶

This means adjusting your life in areas in which you have been disobeying Him. If you are not sharing your faith, you begin witnessing to others. If you read questionable—even pornographic—books or magazines, or watch such videos, get rid of the objectionable materials at once. Start spending more time reading God's Word or other materials that edify your spirit, instead. If you are not spending enough time with your family, readjust your schedule.

Adjusting your standards also may mean making changes in your life that fit God's leading. If God directs you to change careers, you take the necessary steps to do what He asks. If you feel the Holy Spirit guiding you to help with the preschoolers in Sunday school, you willingly give up that Sunday morning class that you enjoy. If a need arises for someone to work with boys at church one night a week, you must stop working late that night. If He leads you to share His good news in other countries and cultures, you must step out in faith and respond. Knowing God's truth and holiness always leads to righteous action. But the rewards, friends, for you and those you serve are exciting and fulfilling.

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

WHERE YOU LIVE

As disciples of Jesus Christ we are to live righteous lives. But how does righteousness impact the course of a nation? The Bible declares, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but

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sin is a disgrace to any people."

In the Book of Deuteronomy, God promised to bless the nation of Israel for obedience, but He also warned of judgment upon His people if His laws were disregarded. Second Chronicles 7:14 gives this wonderful promise: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land."

America has a unique heritage—one rooted in a dependence on God and His biblical principles. The scriptural principles for a godly nation were well understood by the Pilgrims. Their purpose, as stated in the Mayflower Compact, was to plant

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colonies "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith." Ninety-nine percent of the colonial population professed to be Christians and most of our founding fathers were true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Early in the 19th century, the French philosopher and historian Alexis de Tocqueville did a study of democracy in our country and came to this conclusion:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there. I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her fertile fields and boundless forests, and it was not there. I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. I sought for the greatness and genius of America

in her public school system and her institutions of learning, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will

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cease to be great.

For many decades after our country's founding, American leaders advocated God's righteousness in government.

- George Washington said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."¹⁰

- John Adams, the second president and co-drafter of the Declaration of Independence said, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people, it is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."¹¹

- Noah Webster believed, "The Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed."¹²

- Nearly all of the first 119 colleges and universities of our nation, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, William and Mary, and Columbia, were founded primarily to train young scholars in the knowledge of God and the Bible.

- Abraham Lincoln said, "But for the Bible we would not know right from wrong."¹³

- The first U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Jay said, "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."¹⁴

- In 1892, the U.S. Supreme Court made the following ruling, "No purpose of action against religion can be imputed to any legislation, state or national, because this is

a religious people...This is a Christian nation.”¹⁵ That court ruling cited 87 different historical precedents.

Then at the turn of the 20th century, a bloodless revolution began to change our nation. Unrighteous philosophies such as relativism and evolution spread throughout mainstream America. Without a single previous precedent, the Supreme Court in 1947 declared the separation of Church and State. This action was widely interpreted as separation of godly principles from public life. In 1962 and 1963, the Supreme Court declared school prayer to be unconstitutional and the Bible was outlawed from our schools. Within a decade, the Supreme Court made it lawful to kill our unborn children yet unlawful to display the Ten Commandments in public schools. As a result, God’s righteous foundation in America is systematically being destroyed. As the foundation crumbles, so does the nation. It is obvious from every social indicator that the secular and humanistic system has failed.

As believers, we dare not continue to be silent. For many years, I have had a deep burden for our country’s moral condition. I firmly believe that if Christians will stand firm on the righteous standards of God’s law, we can turn our country back to its godly heritage. We must hold fast to the righteous standards set forth by the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe in our own lives and be advocates for His standards in our culture.

I have seen exciting gains in advocating God’s righteousness through the fasting and prayer movement sweeping our country. In Houston, Texas, people joined together from November 22, 1996, to January 1, 1997, every day and evening for intercession, evangelistic messages, corporate repentance, racial reconciliation, and praise and worship. They renamed the large outdoor amphitheater in which they met “Prayer Mountain.” Throughout the forty days, worship was held in Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, English, and other languages. Messianic Jewish pastors publicly embraced Arab ministers; Chinese and Japanese leaders prayed for one another; walls between people fell as they worshipped the Lord in unity. People streamed to the altar every night, eager to get right with God.

The fasting and prayer effort resulted in righteous action. Five thousand needy families received groceries, clothes, blankets, food, and toys. Lives were changed in miraculous ways. “I was involved in gangs,” a 19-year-old man explained, “and two months ago was released from prison. A friend of mine invited me to come to Prayer Mountain tonight. Jesus saved me.”

On January 1, Houston symbolically passed the baton to Dallas. On January 3, Dallas believers began forty days of fasting and prayer for their city. In February,

believers in both Kansas City, Missouri, and Pasadena, California, started their forty days of citywide fasting and prayer. Katy, Texas, located just outside Houston, also got involved in the fasting and prayer movement. The “domino effect” of one city’s

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example produced amazing results!

Regardless of the beliefs and behavior of a nation, ultimately God will hold every person accountable. Whose standards of “right” will you follow? God’s or man’s? What we do in our personal lives and how we serve as an advocate of God’s righteousness to our neighborhoods, cities, states, and country will help change the world for Christ.

Every day I review and meditate on the Ten Commandments. I urge you to keep the Ten Commandments clearly in mind by writing them on a card and displaying them in your car, on your refrigerator, or at your desk.

In the following Life Application, you will find ways you can be an advocate for righteousness. I urge you to begin right now through prayer and witnessing to help others know and apply the righteous standards of our loving God.

LIFE APPLICATION

WRITE IT ON YOUR HEART—Commit the following statement and verses to memory. Then when you are tempted to compromise God’s righteous standards this week, claim them as promises from our God of righteousness.

- Because God is righteous, I can live by His standards.
- Psalm 145:17 (NIV)—“The LORD is righteous in all His ways and loving toward all He has made.”
- 1 Peter 3:12 (NIV)—“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer.”
- 1 John 3:7 (NIV)—“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous.”

COUNT ON GOD—Because God is righteous, He will never do wrong. How simple and wise to place your trust in Someone who cannot wrong you. So far, we have studied a number of God’s attributes. Which one is the most difficult for you to understand or accept? This week, ask God to give you assurance that He uses all His attributes righteously for our good.

OBEY GOD—Our world today often calls right wrong and wrong right. We honor the immoral and ridicule the upright. Even the most “moral” programs on mass media today advocate immoral solutions to problems: living together before marriage to see if you are compatible partners; using violence to resolve disputes; using foul language to look “cool.” As you watch television, listen to the radio, or read secular books and magazines, compare the ideas you encounter with standards in God’s Word. Ask God to help you separate the unrighteous morals of our culture and exchange them for God’s righteous rule