

## Life's Big Questions Study Five "What makes something right?"

नैतिकता    道德    *Morality*    أخلاقية    *Moralidad*

*Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior*

Thirty-five thousand – that is how many decisions we make every day according to most researchers. What am I going to wear? What will I have for lunch? Who am I going to study with? Life is full of these kinds of decisions.

These are relatively ordinary decisions though. Life is full of other kinds of decisions too. Is it right for me to google the answers to my homework? Should I throw my trash on the ground or put it in a trash can? How should I treat people who I disagree with?

All of these are examples of moral decisions. While we usually encounter these decisions less frequently, they are usually more important decisions. They are usually more difficult as well.

There is no debate. Humans are moral creatures. We all think about right and wrong. The question is,

*Does morality truly exist, or is it something we make up?  
If morality truly exists, where does it come from?  
Is it important to live a moral life?*

Morality affects our lives every day. As we normally do, let's explore questions that matter together as an Alpha family.

## The Reality of Morality

*Does morality truly exist, or is it something we make up?* Most people can agree that certain things are wrong. The Nazis killing six million Jews in the Holocaust was wrong. Pedophilia is wrong. Hurting someone for no reason is wrong.

Nearly everyone agrees these things are wrong, but what makes them wrong? Is it just a feeling, or is it something else? As we begin to ask these questions, it becomes harder to know if morality really exists or if it is something we make up.

The answer to this question matters. If morality is something we make up, it is only an opinion. Why should someone respect another person's moral beliefs if they are only opinions?

For example, some people think pineapple on pizza is delicious. Others think pineapple on pizza is gross. Neither opinion is truly better than the other because they are just opinions. If morality is made up, then one moral opinion is no better than another.

If morality truly does exist, then things like "right" and "wrong" truly exist and should be obeyed. Many people believe that morality truly does exist. C. S. Lewis a philosopher and former atheist once said,

*"My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and [evil]. But how had I got this idea of [good] and [evil]? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it [evil]?"*

If there is no such thing as good or bad, where did the ideas of good and bad come from?

## **The Origin of Morality**

*If morality truly exists, where does it come from? Also, what exactly is morality? We cannot see it. We only have a sense of it. Pain is like morality in these ways in that we cannot see it. We can only perceive it.*

If we hit our toe on a chair, it hurts (sometimes a lot!). The pain we feel is a real thing, even if we cannot see pain. The force of our toe hitting the chair travels to the surrounding nerves, and the nerves send a pain signal to the brain. The feeling we call pain is the result.

The point of this example is that things do not need to be visible to exist. For people who believe that morality truly exists, they usually say that they don't know where morality comes from or that it comes from God.

As we have discussed in previous studies, the Bible teaches that humans are made to reflect God. Because God cares about right and wrong, humans care about right and wrong too.

The Bible also teaches that God is the source of all good things. Anything good is a reflection of who God is. Love, joy, peace, courage, and pleasure all reflect different aspects of God. Because God doesn't change, morality doesn't change.

## **The Importance and Impossibility of a Moral Life**

*Is it important to live a moral life? Almost everyone would say "yes." Nearly everyone recognizes that morality is a valuable thing. The moral laws of good and bad make the world a better place.*

There is less chaos, more order, less violence, more peace, less hate, and more love when people try to live a moral life. All our relationships benefit from people trying to do good. Hardly anyone disagrees with this.

Why don't we all live morally upright lives? Why don't we all do good all the time? The fact is, no one does only good. We all do bad things. It is impossible for anyone to live a morally perfect life.

Jesus teaches this idea. As Jesus was travelling one day, a man came to Him and said,

*"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone?'"*

When Jesus says, "No one is good except God alone," He is referring to how no one is morally perfect. Everyone makes wrong decisions. This is a crucial thing to recognize about humans.

It is important so we remember to not expect ourselves or others to be perfect. This helps us to be patient and forgiving with those around us. It also helps us to understand that Jesus was not an ordinary man. The Bible says that Jesus lived a perfect life and died on the cross for us.

God is the moral judge of the universe. Because all of us have done wrong, we all deserve to be punished for our wrongs. The good news is that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve. Anyone who turns away from and confesses their wrongs to God by trusting in Jesus will receive forgiveness because of what Jesus has done.

### Life's Big Questions Study Five - Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you think right and wrong exist?
2. Are there things that are considered right in the United States that are considered wrong in your country?
3. Have you ever changed your mind about a moral question? An example of this would be someone believing that it is right to lie in certain situations but then deciding that it is never right to lie.
4. What motivates you to do the right thing?
5. How do you answer difficult moral questions like this:  
*Imagine yourself talking to a person in a boat, in a small, calm cove, which sits just beside the crest of a waterfall. Suddenly, you look up and spot a raft coming down the river towards the waterfall drop. The raft is out of control and five people are in the raft. If you do nothing, those five people in the raft will go over the waterfall and die. Or you can push the single person in the raft out of the cove so there is room for the raft with five people to come in. However, that means the single person will go over the waterfall and die. What would you do?*
6. If God exists, do you think He cares about whether your actions are right or wrong? Why?
7. If there is an afterlife, do you think someone's actions in this life affect what happens to them when they die? Why? For example, do you think good people go to a good place, and bad people go to a bad place?