

# The Grad Experience

## Week 3



### ***Sin: Standing Up for What is Right & Still Being a Good Friend***

*Key Lesson: Many long for joy but we settle for pleasure to fulfill a particular moment in time and choose far less than what is best.*

Welcome to Week 3 of the Grad Experience. **Each week as we look at specific topics that are extremely present in your world today, our goal is for you to spend some time discussing in a safe place so you ask questions and develop a stronger viewpoint on each of them.** Even if they are not present in your high school right now, they will eventually be present on a college campus, workforce, or military ... or just in the general culture of the world you live in.

**Our goal** isn't for you to leave here each week with a definitive answer to some of life's tough questions when it comes to living life after high school, but to get you at least **thinking about the topic and determining how that connects with whatever faith you claim to have.**

Last week we talked about the church and how it is important for us to find the right faith community.

This week we are going to talk about the concept of morality – what is considered right and wrong and how do we know? But also, how do we stand up for what is right and still be a good friend.

#### **So here's the big question:**

- **What makes something a sin? Or who defines what is right and wrong?**

Think about it this way:

**The answers to questions about sin and morality rest on value and purpose.** [WRITE ON BOARD]

- On how things were made, and why.

#### **DEFINITION OF SIN:**

**Let's look at this from the Christian worldview: this world and everything in it – including every person who has ever lived – has been created by God. Mankind was created in his Own image and called good. God literally looked to Himself as the blueprint for mankind.**

- One of the truths of the Christian faith is that God is **not** a random, impersonal force who created stuff on a whim or some super powerful being who made us and the left us to fend for ourselves. **His desire is to interact with those He made.**
  - **The fact that He made us gives us inherent value.**
  - **The fact that He loves us gives us purpose and worth.**
  - Our job ... **to steward His creation in a way that reflects His character.**
    - His character (according to the Bible) is a morally perfect loving being whose very nature is love.
- So when it comes to **"what is sin?" – any destruction, demeaning, devaluing, or exploiting of what God has made, is sin.**

From a Christian perspective – **God defines what is right and wrong.**

- The Maker makes the rules.
- Something is either in line or not in line with God's moral nature.
- Since we are made in His image, we have a moral nature too.

### CONSEQUENCES OF SIN:

On the other side of this are the consequences of moral failure.

That's part of God's design too (*Rom. 6:23 – "the wages of sin is death."*)

- Moral failings lead to separation or estrangement from God, from ourselves, from others, and from creation itself – which leads us in need of God's rescue, forgiveness, and grace.

**So if we're all created individuals, then why shouldn't each of us just follow his or her own heart; or just do whatever feels right?**

**"A world in which there are limited resources, conflicting interests, unequal power to defend ourselves or attain our desires and no ultimate moral authority--everyone doing what he or she feels is right is a sure recipe for chaos." Agree or Disagree – Why?**

Think about it this way:

Living in a world where right and wrong are determined by the feelings of individuals would be like trying to navigate through a forest using a compass in which the coordinates North, South, East and West switched places every time you took a step.

- It would be impossible to get your bearings or arrive at your destination.

Think about the culture in America today. Are we there? What makes you feel this way.

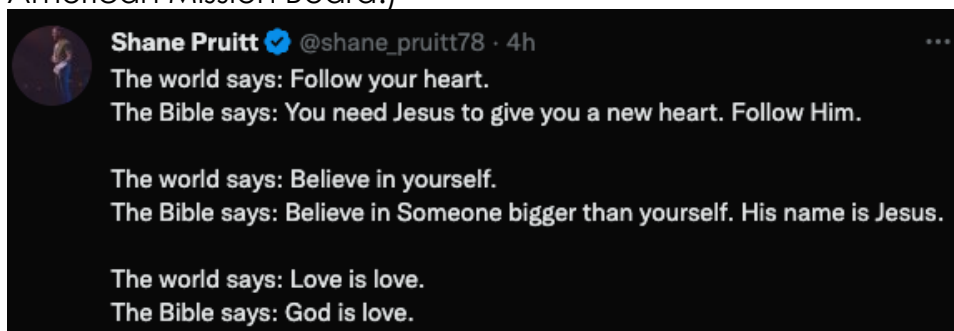
**"If good is a fixed point, it is at least possible that we should get nearer and nearer to it; but if the terminus [final point/end] is as mobile as the train, how can the train progress to it?" – C. S. Lewis, "The Poison of Subjectivism" WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS QUOTE?**

**Feelings are always subject to change** from moment to moment and situation to situation.

- A feelings-based moral compass would be useless in navigating our way through the various and often complex moral decisions we face throughout life.

If the Bible isn't true and there isn't a God who made us in His image and told us to love our neighbors as ourselves, we have no basis for saying racism is wrong. We have no basis for saying babies shouldn't be left outside to die. Because if there's no God, these things are just our preferences and opinions. **AGREE OR DISAGREE? Why?**

Look at this tweet from evangelist Shane Pruitt (He leads student evangelism for the North American Mission Board.)



## AGREE OR DISAGREE? WHY? WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON WHAT HE SAYS?

Follow your heart ... listen to what the Bible says about the heart: **(have students read verses)**

**7**“But **blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,**  
whose confidence is in him.

**8**They will be like a tree planted by the water  
that sends out its roots by the stream.

It does not fear when heat comes;  
its leaves are always green.

It has no worries in a year of drought  
and never fails to bear fruit.”

**9**The **heart is deceitful above all things**  
and beyond cure.

Who can understand it? – Jeremiah 17:7-9

**20** He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. **21 For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come**—sexual immorality, theft, murder, **22** adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. **23** All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” – Mark 7:20-23

Our culture says “follow your feelings or follow your heart” and it receives a lot of applause, but it is a very unreliable guide for living.

- **Life always operates better when our choices are informed by a morality “outside ourselves,”** and not when morality is defined by personal preferences.

There’s a well-known pastor and writer Alistair Begg who speaks a lot about how our society wants to rewrite the Bible:

I want to show you two clips from twitter from Alistair preaching and get your thoughts on each: **[SHOW VIDEO 1]**

[https://twitter.com/jake\\_cribbs/status/1600207036809027584?s=20&t=d5QJZwUWdb4hFu0-sETcQ](https://twitter.com/jake_cribbs/status/1600207036809027584?s=20&t=d5QJZwUWdb4hFu0-sETcQ)

**What do you think about what he said about the authority of the Bible and how that affects our truth we live by?**

**“We’re not at liberty to rewrite the Bible ... If we lose conviction about the authority of the Bible, if we then become uncertain about it, then we lose our voice.” – Alistair Begg**

**“Did God really say that ... the same bullet is in his [Satan’s] gun today.” – Alistair Begg**

A never-changing, morally perfect, loving, all knowing, and all-powerful God is in a far better position than we are to prescribe what is right for us and for the world He created.

**But what if my sin doesn’t hurt anyone else?**

Can we be sure that it won’t?

The idea that morality is only a personal, private issue might be true if we each lived on our own uninhabited island and never interacted with a single soul in all of our life.

- But that’s not how we were created. We’re relational beings.

- As a result, **any time we choose to defy God's boundaries our choice may be made in private, but its repercussions will never be completely private.**

Show quote:

**None of us sins in a vacuum.**

**What are your thoughts about this idea?**

- **"Personal sin yields collateral suffering, without fail." – Jen Wilkin**
- On the flipside – personal holiness is equally collateral when it overflows and becomes a blessing to others.

When love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control (*Gal. 5:22-23*) direct our lives, collateral blessing--not collateral suffering--is the result.

**Do you believe that there is any connection between God's love and his moral law?**

**God's commands are always given for our good** – not to diminish or limit us.

WHY? **Because He made us and knows what is best for us**, God gave us moral parameters.

- Example: (restricted freedom) parents don't let toddlers play in the street – for their well-being

God does not force us into moral perfection by depriving us of freedom. Rather, God instructs us on how to properly use our freedom in accordance with the moral standard He has set.

Look at the "results" of applying God's moral law to your life:

**Have student read Psalm 19:7-11**

*<sup>7</sup>The law of the Lord is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.*

*<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.*

*The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.*

*<sup>9</sup>The fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever.*

*The decrees of the Lord are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.*

*<sup>10</sup>They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;*

*they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.*

*<sup>11</sup>By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward. –*

*Psalm 19:7-11*

Behind every law of God we find His love.

**How can boundaries contribute to our freedom? How can taking some things away actually make me more free?**

- We resist limits or boundaries because we see them as restrictive, but in truth, it is *sin* that restricts and limits us.

When our lives are lived in accordance with God's moral law, we are in a better position to enjoy the world as he intended.

- We are **free to** pursue a relationship with God and positive, fulfilling relationships with others.

- We are **free to** focus on endeavors that encourage, bless and edify the larger community.
- We are also **free from** the kinds of things that ensnare and destroy us.
- And we are **free for** God's glory, and for the good works he has designed for us to do.

There's freedom in Christ and the grace and forgiveness He offers – that's the good news. **The bad news is that (just as Jesus died for our sins) – we are called to die to ourselves daily and die to our own desires.**

**Read:**

***<sup>5</sup> Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. – Colossians 3:5-6***

*Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny themselves and take up their cross daily** and follow me. – Luke 9:23*

That means that we may have feelings, and even desires that others may influence us in or even our own heart seems to feel ... but we are called to deny and die to those daily.

Now comes that hard part after we understand freedom in God's moral law:

**How do we discuss sin in a culture that no longer believes in it? How do I not offend my friends who believe there are no bad ideas?**

FIRST: You need to understand NOW that it is hard to genuinely discuss sin in a culture that considers tolerance the highest virtue and intolerance perhaps the *only* remaining evil.

Let me show you another short video of Alistair Begg discussing something similar to this question. [\[SHOW VIDEO 2\]](#)

[https://twitter.com/CoachRader/status/1543802625153540096?s=20&t=N8pVQ6OIN5L\\_oabDwvS5uw](https://twitter.com/CoachRader/status/1543802625153540096?s=20&t=N8pVQ6OIN5L_oabDwvS5uw)

**Isn't this the culture you live in – either you hate me, or you affirm me?**

What makes it even tougher is that when we connect our individual moral choices with our identity – disagreements about our behavior can be interpreted as personal rejection.

**"We cannot hate because of God's Word and we cannot affirm because of God's Word." — Alistair Begg. AGREE OR DISAGREE?**

**"We have to be prepared to say that we are unprepared to rewrite the Bible in order to accommodate a society that needs the Bible and that needs the Jesus who is the focus of the Bible." – Alistair Begg**

If we're not careful, this is how we arrive at "cancel culture." – **disagreement about morals becomes alienating.**

- **To agree with God about sin – and to voice it – is often viewed as unloving.**

Tell me what you think about this statement: **(show on screen)**

**"As Christians we hold dearly that truth matters. Yet one of the reasons truth is being so readily abandoned in our day is because of the belief that something else matters more:**

**love. It seems strange, but because we do not understand the interplay of truth and love, we are abandoning truth in the name of love.** – James Emery White

Jesus did neither. Even those he called out for their immoral choices felt his deep compassion and love. He pursued sinners! Ate with them, walked with them, talked with them. But **he never lied to them about the reality of sin to prove his love, or to win theirs.** He demonstrated that **love can't be separated from truth.**

What do you think about this ... [this is possibly a lot of people in the church today]  
**"It's possible to be charmed by the Bible being taught without being changed by the Bible being taught."** – Alistair Begg

**You can't have love without the truth, or the truth without love.**

- **No expression of love (if it's truly love) can ignore the truth.**
- **If you feel that love is calling you to turn a blind eye to truth, then you're misunderstanding what it really means to love someone.**

Jesus was fully obedient to God, and full of love for others. The apostle John described him as "full of grace and truth," not as the sin police.

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, **full of grace and truth.*** – John 1:14

Here's an important thing to remember: **Some of your friends don't believe that there are no bad ideas. They just choose to believe their ideas aren't bad and that yours are intolerant, and therefore, unloving.**

Truth is of ultimate importance – but it's delivering that truth in love that allows bridges to be built and not broken.

**"Our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth, and our truth grows hard if it is not softened by love."** – John Stott (theologian)

**Remember: Many long for joy but settle for pleasure to fulfill a particular moment in time and choose far less than what is best.**

QR Code for the church Darkroom website to go deeper

**Close with prayer**