

SABBATH SCHOOL

Jr. High School Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level J • Unit 1 • Week 3

MONITORING YOUR MORALS

OBJECTIVE:

Create a sense of awareness in the students of the moral decline in society and how the world has separated itself from God. Illustrate how following God's laws creates peace and happiness that draws us closer to Him and out of this world.

SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 12:36-37; Mark 7:8; Hebrews 11:6; Isaiah 55:8-9; Matthew 22:38-40; Romans 13:9; Proverbs 14:11-13; Ephesians 6:10-18

LESSON:

You are being targeted. Each day we are constantly bombarded with all types of influences that vie for our attention. From the music on the radio to the shows and commercials on TV to the magazines we read and the clothing on our classmates. All of these influences seek to appeal to our senses and our response to them says a lot about how we view the world around us. More importantly, it says a lot about whether or not we accept that world or we accept God.

When we allow ourselves to be exposed to these influences, they target our thoughts, minds and actions into accepting their message. This is what we must be aware of and defend ourselves from.

When you get up each day and get dressed, think about what influenced you to buy the clothes that you will wear? When you come home from school and do your homework, do you rush to complete it so you can watch the most popular sitcom? Do you save your allowance in hopes of buying the latest CD? All of these things involve you taking actions based upon decisions that are more than likely based on outside influences.

But are these outside influences based on good, sound moral judgment? Who is to judge what is moral and what is not? The answer, as you have already guessed, is God. The example by which we should

model ourselves after, is Jesus Christ. Our moral compass should be set on Christ's example. True Christian morals (values) are to reflect the person of Jesus Christ.

Morality deals with many different aspects in our lives. It deals with discernment. Everything we come in contact with presents us with choices. What we choose is based on what we know or what we accept. Some of those choices are easy: "Should I rob that bank? NO!" Some are not as easy: "Is that show really OK for me to watch? All my friends like it and my parents seem to like my friends, so it must be OK."

So let's get back to the question: Who decides what is right and wrong? Can the world today—with all of its laws, all of its knowledge, its research and technology, all of its books on the good and the bad—define what is morally OK and what isn't? It depends on who you ask, doesn't it (Mark 7:8)? And therein lies the problem. Because the world has rejected God, it has also rejected His laws and His commandments. It is those very laws and commandments that are the basis for moral character. They define how to love God and your neighbor. We find this instruction in God's Word, in the pages of the Bible (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:9). Without God's Word, morality is left up to the person who is making the decision of whether something is right or wrong. This can oftentimes be at the expense of hurting others for one's own selfish gain.

Here is an example. You are going to your next class and you find a \$5 bill on the floor. And there is no one around. Do you keep it? After all, "finders keepers." And besides, what is the chance of you finding the rightful owner? If you asked around, you would probably find 200 "rightful" owners. Besides, if you delay any longer, you'll be late for class and then you will be in trouble. So keeping the \$5 is OK in this case, right?

WRONG! That money isn't yours. The reality is that you probably won't find the real owner, but that doesn't matter. It is not up to us to reason for ourselves, make excuses and twist logic so that things seem acceptable. Proverbs 14:12 tells us "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

Discussion: Ask the class what would be the right thing to do? (Possibilities: Take it to the school office and turn it in to lost and found; take it to class and give it to the teacher so you're not late for class, etc.) After that, leave the rest up to God. For that is what His law would have us to do. By doing so, we are showing love to our neighbor. This means that we respect others, and their property in this instance, and we honor and obey God by not stealing.

Many times we see people who seem to profit from doing things that aren't ethical. Does that mean that God is OK with what they are doing? Does that mean that it is OK for us to do likewise? Of course not. We all have to eventually own up to our shortcomings and God is quick to reward those who do good and obey His commandments. If we go back to the lost \$5 and look at it from our classmate's and teacher's perspectives, and more importantly from God's perspective, we can see how God's reward is much more valuable. God's benefits are much more of a reward than the \$5 would ever be!

Discussion: What rewards could possibly come from returning the money? (Possibilities: If you turn the

money in to a teacher or the office, you will gain the trust and confidence of your teachers and they are more apt to treat you with more respect. Your friends will see that they can trust you as a friend. And imagine how grateful the person would be that lost the money to begin with!) These rewards go beyond money and more importantly they establish a reward in God's Kingdom that cannot be compared to all the riches of this world.

Discuss the armor of God. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and discuss how the spiritual armor can help us to be on guard against immorality.

- *Gird your waist with truth.* – Honesty is one of God's commandments.
- *Put on the breastplate of righteousness.* – God wants us to be righteous before Him. We can do this by obeying His laws and repenting of our sins so that we can be clean before Him.
- *Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* – Our feet can be likened to a firm foundation which is founded on God's gospel message.
- *Take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.* – It is by faith that we should conduct ourselves. We must never take things into our own hands but rather live by the reassurance that God will see things through. By this, we can ensure that we never need to do anything immoral or unethical to get ahead. Also, living by faith helps us to guard against the temptations that Satan throws in front of us, whether it be TV, magazines or music that are not appropriate for us to look at or listen to.
- *Take the helmet of salvation.* – This is our crown and we need to protect it so that no man can take it from us. Therefore we must remain close to God and keep His commandments.
- *And take the sword of the Spirit.* – A sword is sharp and it pierces and divides. This helps us to discern right from wrong. God's Spirit pierces through situations to help us see more clearly what He would have us to do.
- *And finally, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* – Through prayer you can go before God and seek His help and tell Him how you feel. He is there and He will listen and show you what you should do and encourage you to endure through anything that troubles you.

God wants us to obey Him and His laws (Deuteronomy 30:15-19) because they bring us peace and happiness and that is what He wants for us. If we choose to follow God, keep His laws and put on the armor that He freely gives us, then we in turn are saying to God that we choose life and an inheritance in His Kingdom, living eternally in a world where no one will be targeted by the wickedness that this world lives by today.

Q&A (Open Discussion)