

# Right and Wrong: A review of recent surveys on values and religion

*2010 Edition*

## Introduction

### The values survey

On *May 3-6, 2010*, the Gallup organization conducted random telephone interviews with 1029 adults 18 and older, and surveyed them on their views on the moral acceptability of fifteen activities. In each case they were asked, regardless of whether they thought the activity should be legal or not, did they consider it morally acceptable, or morally wrong.

Issue	Morally Acceptable	Morally Wrong
Divorce	69	23
The death penalty	65	26
Gambling	61	34
Buying and wearing clothing made of fur	60	35
Medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	59	32
Sex between an unmarried man and woman	59	38
Medical testing on animals	59	34
Having a baby outside of marriage	54	40
Gay or lesbian relations	52	43
Doctor assisted suicide	46	46
Abortion	38	50
Cloning animals	31	63
Suicide	15	77
Cloning humans	9	88
Polygamy	7	90
Married men and women having an affair	6	92

#### **Surprise? Shock?**

- **More people are sure that cloning animals is wrong than think abortion is wrong**
- **For the first time on the annual survey, a majority of those surveyed considered homosexual behavior to be morally acceptable. Nearly half of those polled believe homosexuality is morally wrong in spite of mass promotion of this.**

### How moral values are determined

Where do we get our ideas of right and wrong?

- Personal feelings (Prov. 14:12)

- Values passed down from parents – but we feel our parents were wrong about some things
- Societal norms – Which part of society? Which society? Does a practice become right or wrong when a majority begin thinking it is right or wrong?
  - o Was homosexual behavior wrong in 2006 when a majority said it was wrong, and four years later right because 52% of survey respondents said it was acceptable?
  - o Will wearing fur become morally wrong in another six or seven years, when a majority think it is?
  - o Is doctor-assisted suicide somehow neither right nor wrong since a majority neither approves nor disapproves?
- Human philosophy/self-help – Different philosophies contradict each other, how do we determine which is correct?
- God – He knows best, because He made us

## The categories of moral issues

Sexual conduct - yellow

Activity	Morally acceptable	Morally wrong
	%	%
Sex between an unmarried man and woman	59	38
Homosexual behavior	52	43
Polygamy, when one husband has more than one wife at the same time	7	90
Married men and women having an affair	6	92

- Not many undecided
- The Bible directly regulates nearly every aspect of sexual conduct

Value of Human life - green

Activity	Morally acceptable	Morally wrong
	%	%
The death penalty	65	26
Medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	59	32
Abortion	38	50
Suicide	15	77
Cloning humans	9	88

- Several issues where a significant number are undecided.
- Difficult issues that are often personal and painful for those who are affected by them
- The Bible directly addresses several of these, and gives principles that inform us on those that it doesn't mention directly

Animal rights - pink

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Morally acceptable</b>	<b>Morally wrong</b>
	%	%
Buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur	60	35
Medical testing on animals	59	34
Cloning animals	31	63

Are these Bible issues? The Bible does not speak of these issues, but the Bible does teach that God gave animals to us for food and clothing, the relative value of human and animal life, the relationship of man to the animal world, and principles for governing our actions toward animals.

Outcome-oriented behavior – blue

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Morally acceptable</b>	<b>Morally wrong</b>
	%	%
Divorce	69	23
Gambling	61	34
Having a baby outside of marriage	54	40

- how you are viewed tends to depend on how well you do it
- the real right and wrong of the behavior is determined by some other root action or attitude
- More people are sure that it is wrong to have a baby outside of marriage than are sure it is wrong for unmarried people to commit fornication. You can sin, but if the obvious and natural consequence results, then you are judged.

## Training our conscience by God word

### *Mosaic Law*

- ▶ **Completely harvesting your field (Lev. 19:9) Leave the corners of the field for the poor to harvest**
- ▶ **Raising beefalo (Lev. 19:19) No interbreeding with animals of another kind**
- ▶ **Entering the promised land, planting a fig tree, and eating the fruit three years later (Lev. 19:23-25) They were to wait until the fifth year**
- ▶ **Shaving your sideburns (Lev. 19:27) Don't shave the sides of your head**
- ▶ **Eating lobster (Lev. 11:10-11) Food from the water must have fins and scales**
- ▶ **Getting an \$850 phone reading from Sylvia Browne - (Lev. 19:31) do not regard mediums and spiritualists**

How would you know what is right and wrong in these situations if it were not revealed?

***Heb 5:12-14 - those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil***

### **Why Christians must Defend the Truth**

- The world needs dedicated Christians to be vocal about issues of right and wrong
  - o Christians have the truth
  - o Christians are not just promoting a tradition, but what is best for all men and women
  - o Christians will promote the truth in the best way possible (Matt. 7:12)
  - o If Christians are not the light and salt of the world, the world will grow darker and more morally corrupt and distasteful (Matt. 5:13-14)

### **Which Direction is your part of the world heading?**

Issue	May-01	May-10	Change
	%	%	Pct. Pts.
Homosexual relations	40	52	12
Divorce	59	69	10
Having a baby outside of marriage	45	54	9
Human embryonic stem-cell research	52	59	7
Sex between an unmarried man and	53	59	6

woman			
Abortion	42	38	-4
Medical testing on animals	65	59	-6

In the past decade, seven of the issues surveyed have shown a significant change in opinion.

Five activities have grown more morally acceptable over time. Two have grown less morally acceptable.

Most of the issues with significant changes are moving away from Biblical morality

- Homosexuality – over 50% acceptance for the first time this year and the biggest change of any issue
- Divorce – Continues to gain acceptance
- Fornication between unmarried man and women and the out-of-wedlock births that result are both significantly more acceptable
- And medical research that requires the destruction of human embryos is much more acceptable than ten years ago

One of the issues is moving toward Biblical morality:

- Abortion – Our culture appears to be realizing that the killing of unborn human babies is wrong and that our acceptance of it in the last several generations was a mistake.
- In my opinion this is due to a large amount of speaking out on this issue done by those who hold Biblical points of view
- As well as the availability of 3-D ultrasound technology that makes the true nature of what is being done in an abortion unmistakably clear.

Compare with Romans 1:21-32

v. 21 – No desire to honor God, no gratitude => futile speculations, dark heart

v. 22 – Claimed wisdom while becoming foolish

v. 23 – God becomes less than God and like the man or beasts, then man, who was made in the image of God becomes less than man and of no more value than the animals.

v. 24 – God is unwelcome in the society and sets them free of His godly influence => ruled by their lusts => impurity and dishonored bodies

v. 25 – Misguided worship => of nature, self, success, power

v. 26-27 – Adoption of homosexual practices =>inevitable physical and emotional consequences

v. 28 – Don't even like to think about God and will not tolerate it in others => God gives them up => minds filled with depravity, actions filled with impropriety

v. 29-31 – List of their misdeeds which become common when God has given them up. This is not just a list of what we read about in the newspapers every day, this is a list of what has become for our society the standards of entertainment.

v. 32 – They know God does not approve, they know they deserve the ultimate punishment, but they do them anyway, and try to get as many others to approve and do the same.

Knowledge of God rejected or corrupted => God gives them up (v. 24, 26, 28) =>  
Mental, moral, physical and societal degradation => REPEAT

The point at the cycle where it can be stopped or reversed is where the knowledge of God is rejected or corrupted. (v. 18-20)

- The truth about God is evident
  - o In them
  - o Even more so in the Christian
- If we live out the truth about God and His will for us
  - o They are without excuse
  - o And we are likely to be suppressed, the more society declines
  - o Jesus told us, in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world

## **In discussing moral issues with others, perhaps the following statistics would be helpful to think about:**

- 71% say that moral values in America are getting worse
- 76% of Americans identify themselves as Christian
- 57% of Americans say that religion can answer all or most of today's problems
- 38% have attended religious services in the past week. About 6 in 10 attend at least once a month.
- 61% belong to a church or synagogue
- Most people believe traditional values should be promoted.
- On most divisive issues, most people are personally conservative. Though about half in this year's survey considered homosexuality morally acceptable, only a very, very few would consider it themselves or encourage it in others. Similarly for having a baby outside of marriage, doctor-assisted suicide, and abortion

## **Helpful Scriptures:**

- Prov. 24:10
  - o We might think that it is a difficult circumstance to live in a time when many of the moral values that were taken for granted a few years ago are now in question, or have been rejected by our society.
  - o We are not living in the most adverse conditions morally speaking, not even of our time, much less of all time. Nevertheless, upholding the truth and refuting error takes effort.
  - o Society today does not need weak Christians, it needs strong Christians, very badly
- Prov. 25:26 - If we are weak Christians we can actually hinder the cause of Christ
- Prov. 24:24-25 - Which category will we be in. Will we approve or tolerate wickedness in our home? Our family? Our workplace? Our circle of influence? Or will we rebuke it?

- Prov. 24:11-12 - God will judge us by our deeds, including whether we pay attention to all those suffering the consequences of a society with corroded moral values.

### **Invitation:**

The solution to moral darkness is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is in the image of God – 2 Cor. 4:4