

College Christian Study -Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005 -- **Mere Christianity – by C.S. Lewis**  
Book III: Christian Behavior (\*chapters 1-4\*)

Book III contains twelve chapters which consider questions related to Christian morals.  
-Chapters 1 and 2 discuss the three parts of morality – with others, internal matters, and man with God; as well these chapters discuss the “cardinal virtues” – prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude.  
-Chapters 3 and 4 treat social morality and psychoanalysis.

### **Chapter 1: The Three Parts of Morality**

The chapter starts with the story of a little boy who was asked what God was like. Through the boy we get the picture of morality as God running around snooping and trying to stop people from enjoying themselves. But, in the Christian sense, morality is to keep us from breaking down, straining, or having friction in running our “machine.” Its purpose is to help us, not hinder us. So as Christians, we are free at last to strive to live as God intended us to live with one another.

### **Chapter 2: The “Cardinal Virtues”**

Prudence is practical common sense, thinking about actions and the likely results. Temperance, or moderation, is “going the right length and no further.” Justice is the old name for what we call “fairness”: honesty, give-and-take, truthfulness, and promise keeping. Fortitude includes two kinds of courage (one that helps face danger AND the other that is strong under pain). These virtues are referred to as “cardinal” because the Latin word means “the hinge of a door” or because they are “pivotal.”

The NT gives several lists of virtuous qualities: I Cor. chapter 13 (esp. 13:13); Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:12-16; I Thess. 1:3; Gal. 5:5-6; Col. 1:4-5; II Peter 1:4-5; Pet. 1:3-5; Eph. 2:8-10).

Lewis pointed out that Jesus never meant for us to remain children “in intelligence.” We are to have a “child’s heart, but a grown-up’s head.” And that practicing any of the virtues for any length of time usually brings fortitude to the foreground. The point is not that God will not admit us if we do not have “certain qualities of character,” but unless we have “the beginnings of those qualities inside,” then heaven—that deep, strong, unshakable happiness God wants for us—is not possible.

### **Chapter 3: Social Morality**

The Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” really sums us what everyone knows is right. See Matthew 18:2-4 – “Faith Like a Child.” The reason the New Testament declares that everyone must work is so we may have something to give to the poor... “Charity,” giving to the poor, is an essential part of Christian morality. (Eph. 4:28; Luke 3:11; and I Thess. 4:11-12). The only “safe rule” is that giving involves some sacrifice. (parable of the sheep and the goats: Matt. 25:31-46).

Christians in all walks of life must integrate their beliefs with their actions, their faith with their work. Also, there can be no question that Christians are supposed to be a force in society’s wealth distribution. Giving, to be real, must involve sacrifice.

#### **Chapter 4: Morality and Psychoanalysis**

Both Christian morality and psychoanalysis claim to be techniques to put the “human machine right.” Psychoanalysis, as such, is not contradictory to Christianity, but Freud’s philosophy is. Ultimately the two are doing different things. Both are concerned with choice of which there are two components: (1) the act of choosing, and (2) various feelings and impulses which our “psychological outfit” gives us the “raw material” of our choice. The raw material is either “normal” – feelings common to all people or “unnatural” – a result of things “gone wrong” in the subconscious.

Psychoanalysis may cure subconscious, irrational fears which “no amount of moral effort” can help. Morality, however, is only concerned with free choice. “Bad psychological material” is a disease not a sin. A disease needs to be cured. Sin needs to be repented. This is most important. Humans judge one another by their external actions. God judges us by our moral choices. Humans see the results of choices. God judges not on the raw material but on what we do with it.

Finally, Lewis asked us to remember that the right direction leads not only to peace but also to knowledge. As we get better, we understand more and more clearly the evil still in us. Conversely, as a man gets worse, he understands his “badness less and less.” When we are “moderately bad,” we know we have problems, but a “thoroughly bad” individual thinks he is fine. Actually, common sense tells us: We understand sleep when awake, not when asleep. We know the nature of drunkenness when sober, not when drunk. Good people know both good and evil; bad ones know about neither.

Christians must be aware that a “general philosophy view of the world” is always behind (beneath, foundational to) psychological theories. Every psychological theory has presuppositions about the nature of man and other beliefs. Christians must be careful that they both understand the biblical view of man and the presuppositions and assumptions regarding the nature of man behind a particular psychological theory or counseling technique.