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Doing the Moral Math
Measuring the Moral Climate of America 2019 - Part 2

By Tal Davis

In May of this year (2019) the Gallup Corporation released the results of a survey it took on the question of what American adults think is or is not morally acceptable. They presented twenty-one issues of current interest and asked the respondents simply if they considered a specific issue as "morally acceptable" or "morally unacceptable." The results are a good indicator of just where our country and society stand on key ethical issues. In this three part series we are examining the results of that poll and analyzing them from a Biblical and evangelical Christian perspective.

In the first installment we looked at the first seven of those specific issues. They included the following: 1) Birth Control; 2) Drinking Alcohol; 3) Divorce.; 4) Sex Between an Unmarried Man and Woman; 5) Gambling; 6) Smoking Marijuana; and 7) Embryonic Stem Cell Research. (To read the poll results and our comments in part one go to: <http://www.marketfaith.org/2019/06/doing-the-moral-math-part-1>)

In this installment we will continue with our evaluations of the results of the next seven moral issues as polled by Gallup.

8. Having a Baby Outside of Marriage

According to Gallup, in 2019, 64% of Americans consider having a child outside of marriage morally acceptable. 34% disagree and regard such out-of-wedlock births unacceptable morally. This liberal attitude is reflected in current American birth statistics. In 2016, 40% of all births in the United States were to unmarried mothers. In 1970

it was less than 11%. The annual rate rose steadily until about 2008 when it leveled off. What may be even more troubling is that the rate of unmarried births for African-Americans is more than 75%.

The impact on society of such numbers is difficult to gauge. However, common sense would tell us that children being raised in families without fathers can only have serious negative effects. The Bible, of course, makes it clear that the ideal is for children to be born into families with a committed husband and wife. The family is the core institution of a society, and the Scriptures are filled with passages concerning family relations. Children are a blessing from God and deserve the care of a stable home. As the late ethicist T. W. Maston wrote: "Every child has a right to have a father and mother who look forward to and plan for the child's coming into the world" (*The Bible and Family Relations*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983, p. 39).

Of course, the Bible shows a keen awareness that the ideal is not always possible. The care for widows and orphans is a common theme in the Old and New Testaments.

Some key biblical passages include the following: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Deuteronomy 24:17-22; Psalms 127:3; 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Matthew 18:5-6; 19:5; Mark 9:42; 10:7; Luke 17:2; 1 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 5:31.

9. Gay and Lesbian Relations

Certainly no issue has garnered more interest and controversy over the last twenty years than this one. Homosexuality was for centuries regarded as a moral

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deviation and mental illness. In fact, until recently, homosexual acts were illegal in nearly all states in the United States. In 1973, the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of psychological disorders. According to Gallup, 63% of Americans now consider gay and lesbian relations as morally acceptable. Only 35% regard them as immoral. As a result of these changes in the moral climate, the United States Supreme Court ruled 5-4, in June, 2015, that same sex marriage is a right guaranteed by the US Constitution, and that states can no longer keep it illegal.

Surprisingly, many churches and denominations have followed the cultural shift and now allow same sex marriages, and even ordain as clergy openly practicing gays and lesbians. Legal or not, the question of how Christians regard homosexuality should be determined by the Bible, not by psychology, public opinion, civil law, the courts, or even ecclesiastical bodies.

So what does the Bible say? Some pro-homosexual revisionist Bible scholars have tried to reinterpret certain passages that address the issue. That being said, the clear consensus of biblical teaching, both Old and New Testaments, is that homosexual relationships (gay, lesbian, or bi-sexual) violate God's will, and are serious distortions of His plan for marriage as the joining together of one man and one woman, as established in Genesis 2:23-24.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

The Bible addresses homosexuality more than two dozen times. In the Old Testament, the first major encounter with this problem was in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19). It is clear that one of the primary reasons for God's destruction of those cities was the sin of homosexuality. Another time in Israelite history when this issue was faced was during the civil war with the tribe of Benjamin which was caused by the homosexuality of the Gibeonites (Judges 19-21).

Homosexuality is also address in the Holiness Code in the book of Leviticus (Lev. 18; 20) where it is called an abomination (*tow'êbah*) as are other deviant sexual practices including incest, adultery, and bestiality.

"You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22).

"If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act (abomination); they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them" (Lev. 20:13).

Obviously the LORD regarded it as so much a sin as to be worthy of death.

In the New Testament homosexuality is spoken about by the Apostle Paul in several key passages. In Romans, chapter one, he regards it as one of the symptoms of humanity's rejection of God the Creator (Rom. 1:18-32). Romans 1:26-27 focuses on this specific problem:

"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

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Another place where this sin is mentioned is in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Here, homosexuals are listed among those whose behaviors are disqualified from the kingdom of God.

"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (lit.: effeminate by perversion), nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Note that Paul says that some of the believers in Corinth had at one time been like those listed, but were cleansed and delivered by their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul also includes homosexuals in a list of evil actors in his pastoral letter to Timothy.

"But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

Legal or not according to civil law, and regardless of what the polls say, given these passages and others, it is clear that homosexuality is never morally acceptable according to biblical teaching. Those who practice it, in whatever form (gay, lesbian, bisexual, same sex marriage, or what-

ever), are living outside of the will of God, just as are those who practice other biblically forbidden acts. Those modern interpreters and denominations who try to rationalize homosexuality by revisionist exegesis of Scripture are not really helping people who struggle with homosexual temptation. Instead, churches should compassionately encourage them to repent, accept God's forgiveness through Christ, and pray either for deliverance or strength to live honorable celibate lives.

For an excellent Hebrew and Greek exegesis of the Bible's teachings on this subject, with thorough refutations of the revisionists' interpretations, see: *God, Marriage, and Family - Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (2nd edition) by Andreas J. Kostenberger, with David W. Jones (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010, Chapter 10, pgs. 199-222).

10. The Death Penalty

Does the state have the right to execute a criminal who has committed premeditated murder or other heinous crimes? There is much disagreement among Christians about this issue. Currently, thirty-one states and the United States government still have the death-penalty on the books. Nineteen states and the District of Columbia have banned it, replacing it with a sentence of life in prison without hope of parole. According to the Gallup poll, 60% of Americans consider the death penalty as morally acceptable, 35% do not.

Many Christians are among the minority who oppose the death penalty. They argue that it violates God's sole authority over life and death. Other Christians believe the death penalty is justified in extreme situations. They cite God's instructions to Noah in Genesis 9:1-6. He told Noah he could eat animal flesh for food. Then, in verse 6, God makes an even more salient point:

"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."

This verse seems to imply several things. One is that the life of a human being, made in God's image, is of utmost value in His sight. Another is that murder is a usurpation of God's sovereign authority over life and death. And third it implies that any person who arrogantly takes the life of another human without valid moral cause, and with incontrovertible evidence, is himself or herself worthy of execution!

The Apostle Paul also acceded to the civil government's right to punish wrong doers.

For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Romans 13:3-4 - Read the whole context in vss. 1-7.)

Note, the Bible indicates that some other crimes besides murder may also be worthy of capital punishment. The Levitical Law prescribed the death penalty in Israel for adultery, rape, incest, homosexual activity, bestiality, striking or cursing a parent, and other transgressions (See Exodus 21, 22, 35; Leviticus 20 and 24; Deuteronomy 21-24). Few Christians would argue for the death penalty in those cases today. Nonetheless, the fact that they were regarded so seriously by God for the Israelites certainly suggests that they were, and remain, terrible evils.

11. Buying and Wearing Clothing Made of Animal Fur

As late as the 1960s, in the United States, it was considered a symbol of societal status for women to own and wear coats and stoles made of fur from mink, fox, rabbit, or ermine. In the last half-century, the world has witnessed the growth of what is usually called "the animal rights movement." One major aspect of that cultural trend is the increasing disapproval by society of people wearing clothing made from the fur of animals that must require the suffering or death of the animal.

According to the Gallup poll, 45% of Americans now disapprove of the use of animal furs for any kind of clothing. 53% still regard it as morally acceptable. The truth is, a big part of the growth in animal rights advocacy can be attributed to the influence of the Far Eastern Thought worldview even in western society. In that worldview, especially in Hinduism, animals are regarded as reincarnations of human souls, and thus should never be harmed or killed.

This issue is rarely discussed among evangelical Christians. It is possible their opinions will echo those of society in general. But we must ask, does this Bible have anything to say about animal rights?

A number of Scriptures address God's and mankind's relationships with other living creatures. To begin with, the Bible indicates that all life belongs to God and we are to respect them because of it. Consider these passages.

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it. (Psalm 24:1)

Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O Lord, You preserve man and beast. (Psalm 36:6)

"For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. "I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains." (Psalm 50:10-12)

The book of Job contains a passionate poem extolling the wonders of God's many creatures.

"Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer? 2 "Can you count the months they fulfill, Or do you know the time they give birth? 3 "They kneel down, they bring forth

their young, They get rid of their labor pains. 4 "Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; They leave and do not return to them. 5 "Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, 6 To whom I gave the wilderness for a home And the salt land for his dwelling place? 7 "He scorns the tumult of the city, The shoutings of the driver he does not hear. 8 "He explores the mountains for his pasture And searches after every green thing. 9 "Will the wild ox consent to serve you, Or will he spend the night at your manger? 10 "Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes, Or will he harrow the valleys after you? 11 "Will you trust him because his strength is great And leave your labor to him? 12 "Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain And gather it from your threshing floor? 13 "The ostriches' wings flap joyously With the pinion and plumage of love, 14 For she abandons her eggs to the earth And warms them in the dust, 15 And she forgets that a foot may crush them, Or that a wild beast may trample them. 16 "She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers; Though her labor be in vain, she is unconcerned; 17 Because God has made her forget wisdom, And has not given her a share of understanding. 18 "When she lifts herself on high, She laughs at the horse and his rider. 19 "Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? 20 "Do you make him leap like the locust? His majestic snorting is terrible. 21 "He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength; He goes out to meet the weapons. 22 "He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; And he does not turn back from the sword. 23 "The quiver rattles against him, The flashing spear and javelin. 24 "With shaking and rage he races over the ground, And he does not stand still at the voice of the trumpet. 25 "As often as the trumpet sounds he says, 'Aha!' And he scents the battle from afar, And the thunder of the captains and the war cry. 26 "Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, Stretching his wings toward the south? 27 "Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up And makes his nest on high? 28 "On the cliff he dwells and lodges, Upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. 29 "From there he spies out food; His eyes see it from afar. 30 "His young ones also suck up blood; And where the slain are, there is he." (Job 39)

That being said, the Bible says animals can be used for food by humans.

"Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant." Genesis 9:3 (See also Psalm 104)

Other passages seem to say that animals have rights. For instance, God instructed the Jews that, on the Sabbath day, work animals were to rest like humans (Exodus 20:9-11; 23:12). He also said, *"You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing."* (Deut. 25:4).

So, the clear teaching of Scripture is that animals should be treated kindly and humanely. All that being said, there is no explicit prohibition in the Bible against using animal fur or skins for clothing, just as there is none against using them for food. Perhaps one can make the case that killing animals unnecessarily just for their pelts for expensive stoles and coats is morally questionable. In any case, animals that must be slaughtered should be put to death quickly and with as little pain as possible.

12. Doctor Assisted Suicide

In 1999, Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a pathologist in Michigan, was convicted of second-degree murder in the assisted suicide of a terminally ill man. Kevorkian became something of symbol for a growing movement in America to legalize doctor assisted suicide. Currently, eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized the "right to die." According to the Gallup poll in 2019 52% of Americans agree that doctor assisted suicide is morally acceptable. 44% regard it as unacceptable. So what, if anything, does the Bible have to say about it?

First, we need to say that Scripture does not prohibit the sacrificing of one's life for a higher purpose, or to save a life or lives. Jesus Himself stated, *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:13) Paul stated, *"For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you."* (2 Cor. 4:11-12)

That being said, Paul also made it clear our bodies are not our own, we have been bought by the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Additionally, we are created in the image of God, and therefore we should have the

highest regard for our own lives. The Christian church has always historically considered suicide a grave sin. Scripture gives several examples of those tempted to kill themselves.

In the Old Testament, some the prophets, became so depressed about their ministry that they asked God to take their lives. They included Moses (Num. 11:12-15), Elijah (1 Ki. 19:4), and Jonah (Jonah 4:1-11).

In the New Testament, Even Jesus was dared by Satan to try and commit suicide. He refused to tempt God. (Matt. 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11). Paul rescued a Philippian jailor who was about to commit suicide when he found the prison gates open (Acts 16:27-28).

In every instance, God would not allow his servants to commit suicide. According to the website of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, there are basically eight reasons why suicide is a sin.

- Suicide is a sin against God as the creator and sustainer of life. It rejects God's sovereignty and usurps his prerogative in regard to life and death (cf. Job 12:10).
- Suicide is a violation of the sixth commandment (cf. Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17).
- Suicide disregards the image of God and the sanctity of human life (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 9:5-6).
- Suicide is poor stewardship of one's body (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- Suicide demonstrates misdirected love, and is injurious to others (cf. Matt. 22:36-39; Eph. 5:29).
- Suicide overlooks the value of human suffering (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; 8:28; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 12:10).
 1. Believers are called to suffer with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17).
 2. The present life is not one of earthly glory and conquest. Believers are called to have joy and hope in the midst of current trials, looking forward to the age to come.
- Suicide fails to recognize the unnatural nature of death (cf. Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:26; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
- Jesus refused to commit suicide, and Paul prevented it (cf. Matt. 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11; Acts 16:27-28). (<https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/suicide-from-a-christian-perspective>)

Thus, it seems clear that doctor assisted suicide should never be an option for a Christians, and that we should strongly oppose its legalization.

13. Medical Testing on Animals

According to the Gallup survey of Americans, 51% consider medical testing on animals as morally acceptable. 44% believe it is unacceptable. In the section above, regarding the wearing of animal skins, we examined the Bible's teachings on the care and uses of animals. We showed that animals do have divinely endowed rights, but not to the same degree as humans.

We indicated that God allows humans to eat the flesh of animals as food. However, He expects humans to treat His creatures kindly and humanely, even when causing their deaths. The question of medical testing on animals involves similar principles. There is no prohibition for testing new medicines and treatments on animals, so long as doing so does not cause unnecessary suffering by the test subjects. Obviously, animal testing has provided enormous advances in medical treatments for humans – many life-saving. It is clear that such testing is morally valid if done with humane restraint.

14. Abortion

Probably no issue since slavery and the Civil War has divided Americans more than that of abortion. In 1973, two Supreme Cases, Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton, essentially opened the legal door for abortion on demand. Since then, more than 60 million abortions have been performed in the USA. That is an average of more than a million a year. Though the annual rate has dropped somewhat in the last few years, it still remains at over 800 thousand. Actually, these estimates are probably low because they do not take into consideration the numbers of abortions due to "day after" birth control methods that destroy already fertilized embryos.

The Guttmacher Institute, an organization that keeps track of these statistics, found the following percentage of stated reasons for woman getting abortions:

- <0.5% - Victim of rape

- 3% - fetal health problems
- 4% - physical health problems
- 4% - would interfere with education or career
- 7% - not mature enough to raise a child
- 8% - don't want to be a single mother
- 19% - done having children
- 23% - can't afford a baby
- 25% - not ready for a child
- 6% - other.

In Florida, in 2018, more than 70,000 abortions were performed. Reasons given for the procedures included the following:

- .01% - The pregnancy resulted from an incestuous relationship
- .14% - the woman was raped
- .27% - the woman's life was endangered by the pregnancy
- 1.0% - there was a serious fetal abnormality
- 1.48% - the woman's physical health was threatened by the pregnancy
- 1.67% - the woman's psychological health was threatened by the pregnancy
- 20.0% - the woman aborted for social or economic reasons
- 75.4% - no reason given (totally elective). See: <https://abort73.com> - See also: <https://nrlc.org/uploads/factsheets/FS01AbortionintheUS.pdf>

Another statistic that should be of special concern to African Americans is that among white women, 10% of pregnancies currently end in abortion, while, among Black women, 28% of pregnancies end in abortion (CDC). These facts mean that in a country where African Americans are only about 12.3% of the population, three times as many African American babies are aborted each year than are White babies. It is baffling as to why most African American social and political leaders are strongly in favor of keeping abortion legal.

Despite these troubling numbers, 42% of all American adults still regard abortion as morally acceptable. 50% now consider it unacceptable. Clearly the issue still divides the country, with many passionate advocates on both sides.

As Bible believing Christians, when addressing this issue, we must not be swayed by either the secular law or public opinion. We must look to the Bible for our perspective. So, we ask, what does the Scriptures say about abortion? We really need to reframe the question a bit. The real issues are these. What does the Bible say about the value of a human life? And, when does a human life come into existence?

We will start with the former question. When we seek to determine the value of a human life, the Bible states emphatically that we are all created by God in His image. Thus all human life has innate and infinite worth in His eyes.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6)

As for the second question: When is human life established? Is it at conception, sometime after that but before birth, or at birth? Science has established that, at conception, when a sperm fertilizes an egg in the womb, the embryo then possesses an entire set of 46 chromosomes and its own unique and distinct DNA signature. The only logical conclusion is that a new human life has been created. Whether that new life is worthy of all the rights of a fully developed human being is debated. It would seem, however, that new human

life in the womb should be treated with the same value and right to life as those outside. Thus, abortion, except for the most extreme reasons (danger to life of the mother), is morally wrong. The current legal situation in America, from a biblical position, is morally untenable and needs to be changed.

Several key Scriptures lead us to that conclusion.

"If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, (Exodus 21:22-24)

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. (Psalm 139:13-16)

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5)

Thus says the Lord who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, "Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen." (Isaiah 44:2)

But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, (The Apostle Paul in Galatians 1:15-16)

Also consider the reaction of Elizabeth and the unborn John to the announcement by Mary that she was pregnant.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1:41-44)

In the next and final installment, number three, we will examine the final seven moral issues as polled by Gallup among Americans.

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