

DAWN TREADER

EQUIPPING FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

A KEEPING THE FAITH RESOURCE

ISSUE 2.3



The *Dawn Treader* is heading into deep waters this month — as we approach Easter, we will be discussing some of the most foundational issues of our faith in Christ: the nature of right and wrong, human sinfulness and redemption.

Dawn Treader Moments

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: RIGHT AND WRONG, AND REDEMPTION

Dawn Treader Moments are purpose-driven opportunities to engage children in important topics. We offer one key question per week, the answers to which parents can then explore with their children throughout the week.

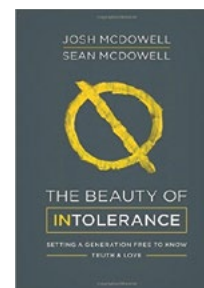
The challenges facing young followers of Christ in today's western society are serious ones, because they strike at the very root of the principles of our faith. The basic bedrock of all religious thought — the existence of an absolute right and wrong — is at stake. From this moral relativism, a complete misunderstanding of what constitutes human sinfulness follows; and if there is no sin that people recognize, why do they need redemption? The task of communicating the human need for Christ's salvation has never been more important nor more challenging than now, and it is our children who will need to be equipped to undertake it.

For week one, ask the first question over an unhurried meal. Let the children think about it and then offer their own answers. The children should talk more than the parents. Throughout the week, offer the

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Resource of the Month

The Beauty of Intolerance: Setting a Generation Free to Know Truth and Love Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell



Intolerance is a beautiful thing ... when you understand it from God's point of view. Today's message of cultural acceptance is dangerously distorted and deceptive. It shows up everywhere — in education, government, society ... even within the church. "If you truly care about people, you must agree their beliefs, values, lifestyles and truth claims are equal and as valid as yours." Josh McDowell and his son, Sean, cut through the confusion by providing clarity on today's cultural view of

Dawn Treader Moments (CONT'D)

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FOCUS OF THE MONTH: RIGHT AND WRONG, AND REDEMPTION

Week One: How do we know there is an absolute standard of right and wrong? (Deuteronomy 6:18, Proverbs 20:11, Romans 1:18-22)

- God is good. What is in accordance with His Will is right, and thus what is not in accordance with His Will is wrong; so people who depart from His way demonstrate what is wrong behavior, just as those who follow Him demonstrate what is right behavior, and we can see the difference.
- Seeing wrong things done bothers us, but we know it is not because we ourselves are always right, so there must be Someone Else Who is always right and is telling us what that standard of right is.
- There is an astonishing amount of consensus among the widely differing cultures in the world, as to what right and wrong are. As C.S. Lewis observed: "Think of a country where men were admired for running away ... where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him."¹ It is deeply ingrained in our God-created nature to know the difference between right and wrong.
- We cannot logically object to anything that happens to us as "unfair" unless there is a way to determine what is fair: if everything is only due to our own personal taste, then there is no reason for people not to do things that hurt us, since it's only "their way".

Week Two: How can we tell the difference between right and wrong? (Proverbs 14:12, 1 John 4:1-4)

- God tells us in the Bible.
- History shows patterns of the evil consequences that come of doing wrong, and the benefits that come from doing right. We should imitate those who have done good things, and avoid the bad example of those who have caused evil in the past.
- God has given us each a conscience to signal to us what is right and wrong, and the more we listen to it and do what is right, the stronger our conscience will become and more able to clearly indicate the right way to behave even in very tricky circumstances.

Week Three: Why does it matter what is right and wrong? (Genesis 6:5-18, Isaiah 5:20, 1 Timothy 6:3-5 and 11-16)

- We can never achieve our fullest potential and happiness without being right before God.
- Love of our neighbor requires us to do the right thing by them; doing wrong things always hurts someone else besides ourselves.
- We can't make proper decisions or set achievable goals without some criteria for measuring our success.
- Unless there is such a thing as right and wrong, forgiveness and healing are impossible.

Week Four: How do right and wrong relate to our redemption in Christ? (Genesis 2:16-17, Romans 5:17-19 and 6:16-23, Ephesians 2:1-10)

- The Fall was caused by disobeying God and eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, releasing evil into the world to compete with God's good creation.
- Since the Fall has separated us from God, we can never achieve perfection on our own: we have to be put right with Him again somehow.
- Jesus died to save us: but in order to accept that free gift, we must recognize that we need salvation!—there is no way to be put right unless we first know we are wrong
- Just as Jesus bore all our wrongdoing on the Cross, He can give us His Own Righteousness if we ask Him! Then, through the Holy Spirit, we can discover how to always follow God's goodness instead of this world's evil.

Dawn Treader Moments (CONT'D)

FOCUS OF THE MONTH: RIGHT AND WRONG, AND REDEMPTION

different reasons highlighted and let the children discuss them. (Parents, read through the relevant Bible passages in advance.) Challenge the children to look up other verses addressing the question. Do the same for the following questions each week for the month.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Touchstone, 1996), p. 19.

Resource of the Month (CONT'D)

The Beauty of Intolerance: Setting a Generation Free to Know Truth and Love
Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell

tolerance, detect its inaccuracies and offer practical insights on: Who created moral truth and its purpose, How to live out a biblical view of tolerance to people with whom you disagree, Why moral truth is universal, How to experience love and acceptance that isn't based on performance.

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner (CONT'D)

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHO'S RIGHT, WHO'S WRONG?

Polly: Morning, Riley. It's been a while since I've seen you.

Riley: Hello, Polly. I'm glad to see you too; I've been meaning to ask you something.

Polly: Sure, what about?

Riley: I'd just like your advice on sharing the Gospel with some friends of mine. The trouble is, they're such nice people that I'm afraid of offending them by trying to convince them that they ought to become followers of Jesus. I mean, since they seem to be getting along fine in life as they are, how am I supposed to tell them that they need something else?

Polly: That can be very hard in our society today. We worry so much about offending people, because nothing is considered wrong anymore, except telling people that they are!

Riley: Sometimes I wonder — really, Polly, is it so much that they're *wrong* as, oh, I don't know ... something a little less severe, perhaps?

Polly: That's just the trouble nowadays. Anything but calling things right and wrong. Nobody believes in that anymore,



and that's the root of the whole trouble. If there is no right and wrong, what's the point of believing in anything? In fact, you really *can't* believe in anything.

Riley: Well, Polly, don't you think you're putting the situation a bit strongly? I mean, people do still want to do the right thing nowadays.

Polly: Sure. But when you can change what right and wrong mean according to whatever suits you at the time, you don't get very far with it. G.K. Chesterton talked about that more than a hundred years ago in his book *Orthodoxy*: "We are not altering the real to suit the ideal. We are altering the ideal: it is easier ... let us suppose a man wanted a particular kind of world; say, a blue world ... he might toil for a long time at the transformation ... But if he altered his favorite colour every day, he would not get on at all ... How can I answer if there is no eternal test ... What on earth is the current morality, except in its literal sense

Apologist Polly Conversation Corner (CONT'D)

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHO'S RIGHT, WHO'S WRONG?

— the morality that is always running away?”² Chesterton saw it coming, but it is actually here in practice now. People don't want to acknowledge that there is a real, definite right and wrong.

Riley: Well, what is an argument that might convince someone about there being a right and wrong?

Polly: This is one of the subjects that C.S. Lewis talked about in *Mere Christianity*. At the beginning of the book, he argued that quarreling shows that people are born with a sense of right and wrong. Lewis noted that when quarreling, people say things like:

'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?' — 'That's my seat, I was there first' — 'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm' — 'Why should you shove in first?' — 'Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine' — 'Come on, you promised.'³

Lewis observed that when people quarrel this way, they are appealing to some kind of standard they expect the other person to know about. A little later in the book, Lewis argued that "The Moral Law ... is not a mere fancy, for we cannot get rid of the idea, and most of the things we say and think about men would be reduced to nonsense if we did."⁴

Riley: Then how can we get people to acknowledge a need for redemption? That's what this all comes down to in the end.

Polly: Basically, we have to put the situation to them of how they would feel if someone really did do them wrong. One pastor that I heard of used to discuss moral issues and bring his conversation partners around to insisting that there was no clear, definite rule of right and wrong, and then turn their argument on its head by saying, "Okay, then give me your wallet." Once people realize that they do acknowledge an absolute standard of right and wrong for themselves, it's an easy step to get them to acknowledge an absolute standard for the world, which can only come from God. And if there is right and wrong, then each one of us has clearly done wrong, and so needs redemption. And that is where Jesus comes in.

Riley: Pretty straightforward. It might be a little more work to put it into practice, but I'll give it a try.

Ask your children: What do you think about Polly's answers to Riley's questions? Do you have any other questions of your own that this dialogue has brought up for you? Challenge them to think up more responses they could give, if someone asked them a question like Riley's.



² G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: An Image Book, published by Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc., 2001), pp. 109, 112.

³ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁴ Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

Prayer of the Month

DEAR JESUS, HELP ME SO TO FOLLOW YOU

This month, we are first going to be reading a poem that makes a very valid point for followers of Christ today, and then a prayer version based upon it. Discuss the poem as a family, applying it to yourselves, and then say the prayer together in your usual devotions.

Were the whole world good
as you — not an atom better —
Were it just as pure and true,
Just as pure and true as you;
Just as strong in faith and works;
Just as free from crafty quirks;
All extortion, all deceit;
Schemes its neighbors to defeat;
Schemes its neighbors to defraud;
Schemes some culprit to applaud—
Would this world be better?

If the whole world followed
you — followed to the letter —
Would it be a nobler world,
All deceit and falsehood hurled
From it altogether;
Malice, selfishness and lust,
Banished from beneath the crust,
Covering human hearts from view —
Tell me, if it followed you,
Would the world be better?

Anonymous

Dear Jesus,

Help me so to follow You — follow to the letter,
To be always pure and true,
In every way to be like You;
To obey Your each command,
Let You guide me with your hand;
Filled with faith and hope and love;
With your Spirit from above;
In every way, in all I do,
Trying to win new hearts to You;
For if the whole world followed You —
Your world would be better.

Amen

Activity of the Month

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?



What would you do if you were put into a situation where you had to make a choice of what was the right thing to do? For this month's activity, write up several scenarios, at a level your children can understand and identify with, in which they will have to choose whether to take the right or wrong route for dealing with the situation. Try to include situations in which the most common response of your children's peer group, or the one recommended by society, would actually be the wrong one, thus requiring moral courage and critical thinking to deal with properly. Role play the scenarios out with your children, and ask them why they chose the solution they did, and what makes one decision right and the other wrong. With older children, continue to discuss what the future consequences might be for making the wrong choice. How have wrong choices impacted the world we live in today?



What is Keeping the Faith? The Keeping the Faith program is a unique study-plus-fellowship experience featuring the Aslan Academy Small Group model centered around the Keeping the Faith guidebook. It is designed to equip parents, grandparents and other caring adults for intentional discipleship of their children and teens. Dawn Treader is a monthly newsletter filled with activities and ideas geared to help you to disciple the children in your lives from preschool through the teen years. To learn more about the program, go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KTFResources