

# A Short Course in Morality

In a time of new medical discoveries, rapid technological developments, and social change, what is new can either be an opportunity for genuine advancement in human culture, or it can lead to **policies and actions that are contrary to the true dignity and vocation of the human person.**

***How to Answer Tough Moral Questions***

***St. Joan of Arc Bible Study***

***Winter 2019***

# How Do We Know The Moral Law?

## Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

*Spiritual Souls*



*Intellects*

*Wills*

We Have The Ability To Know And Love

Only WE Are Made In The Image Of God



# How Do We Know The Moral Law?

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote: In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. ... Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.

We Are Moral Beings

Moral

We Can Choose Good or Evil

*Judgment Of Intellect Is Called Conscience*

**Romans 2:5-10**

For he will render to every man according to his works; to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. **There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil ... but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good.**

The Gift of Being Made in the Image of God Comes with **Accountability**

Freedom makes man a moral subject. When he acts deliberately, man is, so to speak, the father of his acts. Human acts, that is, acts that are freely chosen in consequence of a judgment of conscience, can be morally evaluated. They are either good or evil. (CCC 1749)

# How Do We Know The Moral Law?



## Matthew 22: 37-40

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

Through  
Human  
Reason

## Romans 1: 18-21

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them, Ever since the creation of the world **his invisible nature**, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been **clearly perceived in the things that have been made**.

Natural Moral Law

How people should act in accordance with their rational nature

# How Do We Know The Moral Law?

The morality of human acts depends on:

1. the **object** chosen – a good toward which the will deliberately directs itself
2. the end in view or the **intention** – resides in the acting subject
3. the **circumstances** of the action – includes consequences & secondary elements of a moral act

The object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the "sources," or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts. (CCC 1750)

A *morally good* act requires the goodness of the object, of the end, and of the circumstances together. An evil end corrupts the action, even if the object is good in itself (such as praying and fasting "in order to be seen by men").

The *object of the choice* can by itself vitiate (impair or destroy) an act in its entirety. There are **some concrete acts** - such as fornication - that it is **always wrong to choose**, because choosing them entails a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil. (CCC 1755)

It is therefore an **error to** judge the morality of human acts by **considering only the intention that inspires them** or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. **One may not do evil so that good may result from it.** (CCC 1756)

# Approved Moral Principles

**Do Good & Avoid Evil**

**We Can Never Do Evil to Bring About Good**

**We Must Follow Our Conscience**

**The Principle of the Double Effect**

**Material Cooperation with Evil**

**The Principle of Totality**

**Minimizing a Greater Evil**

# Approved Moral Principles

## Do Good & Avoid Evil

**“Depart from evil, and do good” (Psalm 37:27)**

***Basic precept of the natural law and the foundation of all morality***



*St. Michael Prayer and Chaplet*

*Guardian Angels*

*Fasting*

*Bless Your Home*

*Crucifix*

*Rosary*

*Blessings*

*Adoration*

*Miraculous Medal*

*Prayer*

*How to  
Combat  
Evil*

# Approved Moral Principles

## We Can Never Do Evil to Bring About Good

**“the end never justifies the means” (CCC 1753)**

*And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just. (Romans 3:8)*

For example...

Ending the life of a terminal patient (an evil) in order to relieve their suffering (a good)...



# Approved Moral Principles

“The Church equips its members to address political and social questions by helping them to develop a well-formed conscience.

...Conscience is not something that allows us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere "feeling" about what we should or should not do.

Rather, conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil.”

## We Must Follow Our Conscience

When examining any issue or situation, we must begin by being open to the truth and what is right.

We must study Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church.

We must examine the facts and background information about various choices.

We must prayerfully reflect to discern the will of God

The prudent advice and good example of others support and enlighten our conscience.

The authoritative teaching of the Church is an essential element.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit help us develop our conscience.

Regular examination of conscience is important as well.

*Ministries should be exercised in a spirit of fraternal service and dedication to the Church, in the name of the Lord. At the same time the conscience of each person should avoid confining itself to individualistic considerations in its moral judgments of the person's own acts. As far as possible conscience should take account of the good of all, as expressed in the moral law, natural and revealed, and consequently in the law of the Church and in the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium on moral questions. Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church. (CCC 2039)*

# Approved Moral Principles

## The Principle of Double Effect

An act that is good (or at least not evil), but that has an evil side effect, may be done only under the following conditions:

1. The act itself must be good or at least morally neutral
2. The evil effect must not be directly willed, but only foreseen and tolerated
3. The good effect must not be the result of the evil effect (the good is the direct result, the evil is the indirect result)
4. The good desired must equal or outweigh the evil effect (CCC 1737)

The decision to carry out an action which, as a consequence, has unintended bad results may be made only when the good effect cannot reasonably be brought about any other way and when certain conditions have been met.

# Approved Moral Principles

## The Principle of Double Effect

### Example 1 – Satisfies Principle of Double Effect

Woman who has advanced uterine cancer. The removal of the cancerous uterus will result in the death of the baby but it would be permissible under the principle of double effect.

1. The act itself is good; it is the removal of a diseased organ.
2. All that one intends is the removal of the diseased organ. One does not want the death of the baby, either as a means or an end. Nonetheless, one sees that the unborn child will die as a result of the removal of the diseased organ.
3. The good action, the healing of the woman, arises from the removal of the diseased uterus, not from the regrettable death of the baby which is foreseen and unintended.
4. The unintended and indirect death of the child is not disproportionate to the good which is done, which is saving the mother's life.

**What about giving morphine to a patient in pain which might expedite death?**

# Approved Moral Principles

## The Principle of Double Effect

Example 2 – Does **NOT** Satisfy Principle of Double Effect

A pregnant woman has a serious heart attack. Her doctors tell her that the stress of her pregnancy will lead to her death, so she has an abortion.

1. The act itself is morally unacceptable
2. The death of the baby was clearly intended
3. The good effect (saving the mother's life) was the direct result of the evil effect (intentionally killing her baby)

### The Trolley Problem

**Scenario 1** – Trolley with 5 people on it is out of control. You can pull a switch that will run the train into a sand bank which will save their lives. However, a person is standing on the alternate track and will be killed if you pull the switch.

**Scenario 2** – A person is standing next to the track who you can push in the way and save the five people on the trolley but would kill the one person.

Is either alternative acceptable? Why?

# Approved Moral Principles

## Material Cooperation with Evil

Formal Cooperation is assisting in a wrong-doing while approving it.

Immediate Material Cooperation - when the person cooperating does not approve of the evil action and does not want it to occur but participates in the execution of the evil action itself (*a pharmacist for a state prison who personally disagrees with the death penalty yet mixes the lethal dose of drugs for an inmate's execution*)

Remote Material Cooperation - when the person cooperating does not approve of the evil action and does not want it to occur but participates indirectly or in an unessential aspect of the evil action (*An IT worker fixes an internet connection so a student can complete his schoolwork but the student subsequently uses the internet to look at pornography*)

Material cooperation falls under double effect and is allowed only under the same four conditions:

1. Action must be good or neutral in itself
2. One cannot share in the evil intention
3. Action cannot directly cause evil effect
4. Sufficient reasons must exist to allow the evil effect

# Approved Moral Principles

## Cooperation with Evil

### Formal or Material?

**Doctor at Abortion Clinic**

**Nurse that Cleans Instruments at Abortion Clinic**

**Janitor that Cleans Floors at Abortion Clinic**

**Person that Drives Woman to Abortion Clinic**

**Legislator that Supports Right to Choose**

**Person that Rents Building to Abortion Clinic**

**Person that Provides Telephone Service to Abortion Clinic**

**Citizen who Pays Taxes to Government That Subsidizes Abortion Clinic**

Formal Cooperation

Immediate Material Cooperation

Remote Material Cooperation

# Approved Moral Principles

## The Principle of Totality

We are not the owners of our body – we are only administrators, therefore we are limited in how we use our body – **What does this mean to you?**

*For the sake of overall health, we can mutilate, modify, or remove and organ or body part.* (Charter for Health Care Workers, Section 66). Organs are subordinate to the body as a whole.

For example, removing my prostate to eliminate the cancer to preserve the rest of my body is acceptable and falls under this principle.

- Continue function of organ or presence is a danger to whole body
- The harm cannot be avoid without some form of mutilation
- The evil effect is offset by the positive effect

Therapeutic sterilizations to remove diseased sexual organs is acceptable and falls under this principle.

**Contraceptive sterilization is immoral because it is intended to destroy fertility.**

What about taking a healthy kidney and donating it to someone in need or organ donation? *Law of Fraternal Charity*

Must be:

1. Informed Consent
2. Risk to donor must be proportionate to good of recipient
3. Cannot destroy healthy functioning of body

What about giving away an eye or a leg? *Integrity*

# Approved Moral Principles

## The Principle of Totality

*The human person is NOT subordinate to society.*

In a natural body the principle of unity unites the parts in such a manner that each lacks its own individual subsistence: on the contrary, in the Mystical Body the mutual union, though intrinsic, links the members by a bond which leaves to each the complete enjoyment of his own personality. Moreover, **if we examine the relations existing between the several members and the whole body, in every physical, living body, all the different members are ultimately destined to the good of the whole alone**; while if we look to its ultimate usefulness, every moral association of men is in the end directed to the advancement of all in general and of each single member in particular; for they are persons.

Research or experimentation on the human being cannot legitimate acts that are in themselves **contrary to the dignity of persons and to the moral law**. The subjects' potential consent does not justify such acts. Experimentation on human beings is **not morally legitimate if it exposes the subject's life** or physical and psychological integrity to disproportionate or avoidable risks. Experimentation on human beings does not conform to the dignity of the person if it takes place without the informed consent of the subject or those who legitimately speak for him (CCC 2295).

# Approved Moral Principles

## Choosing the Lesser of Two Evils

*When faced with two or more UNAVOIDABLE evils, we must choose the lesser one.*

In making this decision, we CANNOT intend either outcome.

Example of a pilot flying a plane that is about to crash:

Option 1 – Hit a Home

Option 2 – Hit a School

Wrongly applied is a woman having an abortion to save her life

Her death vs. the baby's death

However, her decision is intentional and avoidable

She commits an evil to attain a good

# Approved Moral Principles

## Minimizing a Greater Evil

Limiting the harm caused by an unavoidable evil

Example – Current abortion law

A politician votes for incremental legislation that limits abortion although it does not ban it.

Wrongly applied would be the use of a condom to avoid contracting AIDS.

This act is avoidable.

Proper approach is abstinence

From the very beginnings of the Church, the apostolic preaching reminded Christians of their duty to obey legitimately constituted public authorities but at the same time it firmly warned that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In the Old Testament, precisely in regard to threats against life, we find a significant example of resistance to the unjust command of those in authority. After Pharaoh ordered the killing of all newborn males, the Hebrew midwives refused. "They did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live" (Ex 1:17). But the ultimate reason for their action should be noted: "the midwives feared God". It is precisely from obedience to God-to whom alone is due that fear which is acknowledgment of his absolute sovereignty-that the strength and the courage to resist unjust human laws are born. It is the strength and the courage of those prepared even to be imprisoned or put to the sword, in the certainty that this is what makes for "the endurance and faith of the saints" (Rev 13:10) (The Gospel of Life, 73)

# False Moral Principles

**Intrinsically Evil Acts** – Always evil regardless of circumstances, ie, rape, murder, adultery

**Objective Morality** – Examines the rightness or wrongness of human acts. Are certain things seriously wrong?

**Subjective Morality** – Examines the personal guilt or merit and individual has for his moral acts. Focus is on whether or not person had sufficient knowledge and intent to commit a mortal sin.

*Acts might not be subjectively sinful but remain objectively immoral – example???*

**Freedom of Conscience**

**The Fundamental Option Theory**

**Situation Ethics**

**Values Clarification**

**The Ends Justifies the Means**

**Cultural Clichés**

# False Moral Principles

## **Freedom of Conscience**

Often used to justify acts such as contraception, direct sterilization or abortion.

- ✓ *We can follow our conscience, but we have a responsibility to form it according to Church teachings*
- ✓ *Saint Pope John Paul II – True freedom isn't the ability to do whatever you want, but the ability to do what you ought.*
- ✓ *True freedom of conscience is following the teaching of the Church*

## **Fundamental Option Theory**

- ✓ *States one can only break relationship with God by explicit rejection of Him*
- ✓ *The act of sin is not mortal if we are not explicitly rejecting God*
- ✓ *Saint John Paul II (The Splendor of Truth, 1993) states willfully and knowingly engaging in serious sin means deliberately disobeying (indirectly rejecting) God. Therefore, we have lost sanctifying grace.*

## **Situation Ethics (Condemned by Vatican in 1956)**

- ✓ *States there is no system of morality or moral law*
- ✓ *States each situation should be evaluated for its moral character versus against objective, universal principles*
- ✓ *Basically allows people to “do their own thing”*

# False Moral Principles

## The End Justifies the Means

- ✓ *Promotes doing an evil act to attain a desired good*
- ✓ *The evil is acknowledged but believed to be justified because of the perceived good*
- ✓ *Makes no sense to violate moral law in order to keep it*
  - ✓ *Hitler killed millions in the name of political stability & economic prosperity*
- ✓ *Extreme situations are exemplified in an effort to justify this logic – this is a slippery slope!*
- ✓ *Consequentialism/Proportionalism - Of all the things a person might do at any given moment, the morally right action is the one with the best overall consequences.*
  - ✓ *Lying to someone is okay if it leads to a good outcome*
  - ✓ *Denying God to avoid being persecuted/killed*

# False Moral Principles

## Consequentialism

1. An action is judged as good or evil from the consequences that follow.
2. An otherwise bad act can be the right choice if “it’s not hurting anyone” or “I can get away with it.”
3. Fails to look at the objective goodness of the act itself.
4. Example - cheating on your spouse can be good if it somehow makes the adulterer feel like a better person and has certain fulfillment.

## Proportionalism

An act is good if the good effects of that action exceed the evil effects, and evil if the evil effects exceed the good effects (there is an intentionality associated with this)

"Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (cf. *Rom 3:8*) — in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general" (Veritatis Splendor 80)

# False Moral Principles

## The End Justifies the Means

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## Values Clarification

A sophisticated version of situation ethics used widely in school systems to detach children from Christian moral standards

- ✓ *Students asked to consider various scenarios that require a moral choice*
- ✓ *Different moral systems are offered as equally acceptable to Christian moral values*
- ✓ *Student decides what he thinks is right based on his own opinion – he is the final authority*
- ✓ *Be moral is staying consistent with self-imposed values versus those set by the Church*

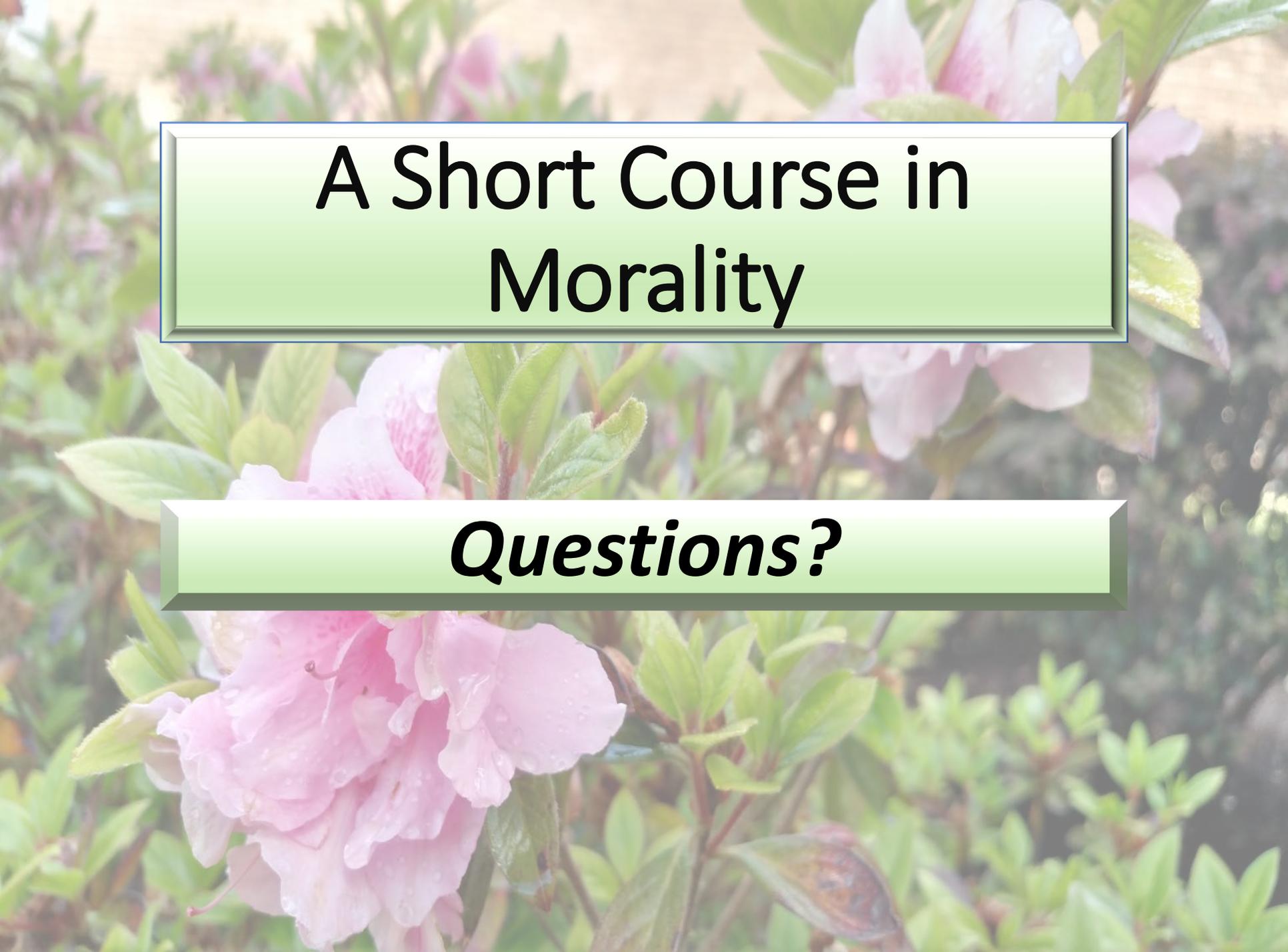
# False Moral Principles

## Cultural Clichés

- ✓ *Look out for number one*
- ✓ *You only live once*
- ✓ *Follow your heart*
- ✓ *But I love him!*
- ✓ *If it feels good, do it*
- ✓ *We cannot impose our morality*
- ✓ *We must be tolerant*
- ✓ *God would not want me to be unhappy*



**Common  
Factor**  
*Man is Final  
Judge & Not  
God*

A close-up photograph of pink azalea flowers with green leaves and water droplets on the petals. The background is softly blurred.

# A Short Course in Morality

***Questions?***