



# The Moral Compass

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## Introduction

We live in a complex, confusing and often frightening world, changing so rapidly that even a map quickly becomes out of date. But the direction in which the needle of a magnetic compass points changes very little and without a compass to provide direction navigators are unable to find their way.

The Bible is also unchanging and is widely accepted as a source of moral guidance. We can use it as a compass to navigate through life's minefield of moral issues.



If its teachings are followed, the Bible will point us along the right path to life rather than along a path to destruction on life's many moral mines.

*Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it.*

Matthew 7:13-14

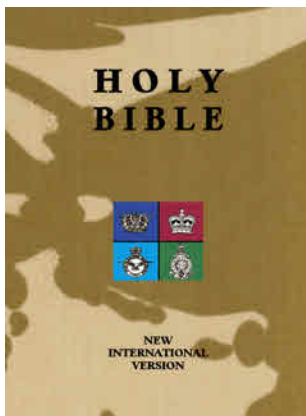
There is a passage in the Bible describing people living at a future time:

*You can be certain that in the last days there will be some very hard times. People will love only themselves and money. They will be proud, stuck-up, rude, and disobedient to their parents. They will also be ungrateful, godless, heartless, and hateful. Their words will be cruel, and they will have no self-control or pity. These people will hate everything that is good. They will be sneaky, reckless and puffed up with pride. Instead of loving God, they will love pleasure.*

2 Timothy 3:1-4

People have always displayed some of these traits and none of us is entirely without fault.

The Bible has much to tell us about military conduct and gives guidance on how we should live. This booklet looks at what the Bible has to say about a number of moral issues such as: concern for others, duty, money, leisure, alcohol, behaviour, relationships and death.



*Everything in the Scriptures is God's Word. All of it is useful for teaching and helping people and for correcting them and showing them how to live.*

2 Timothy 3:16

## Concern for friends and enemies

The teachings of Micah and John the Baptist are examples of God's instructions in life and are particularly relevant to military conduct.

*The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands:*

*“See that justice is done,  
let mercy be your first concern,  
and humbly obey your God.”*

Micah 6:8

John the Baptist taught:

*“If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else.”*

*Some soldiers asked him, “And what about us? What do we have to do?”*

Luke 3:11, 14

John did not tell the soldiers, who may have been from the Roman occupying army, to desert, throw away their weapons and go home. Instead he urged them to live by moral and ethical values, telling them to show concern and compassion for others.

Jesus said:

*Love your enemies and be good to them.  
Have pity on others, just as your Father has  
pity on you.*

*Don't judge others, and God won't judge you.  
Don't be hard on others, and God won't be  
hard on you. Forgive others and God will  
forgive you.*

Luke 6:35-37



*Don't be happy to see your enemies trip and  
fall down.*

Proverbs 24:17

*If your enemies are hungry,  
give them something to eat.  
And if they are thirsty,  
give them something to drink.  
And the Lord will reward you.*

Proverbs 25:21-22

Concern for others is the basis of Christian ethics. Concern is looking at everyone through God's eyes of love and goodwill.

Are we concerned about people in trouble?

The Golden Rule is: *Treat others as you want them to treat you.*

Matthew 7:12

Jesus told a parable of an un-named rich man and a poor beggar called Lazarus who lay on the rich man's door step. The rich man ends up in hell, not because he was cruel, but because his wealth and selfishness made him indifferent to Lazarus and his plight. On the other hand Luke's Gospel also tells the story of the Good Samaritan, who was concerned with another man's suffering and did something about it. (Summarised from Luke 16 & Luke 10)

The Good Samaritan's action was positive. The rich man's attitude to Lazarus was negative. He didn't want anything to do with Lazarus, and he didn't want Lazarus to have anything to do with him.



*Caring for the poor is lending to the Lord, and you will be well repaid.*

Proverbs 19:17

But, when Jesus was asked:

*“Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?”*

*Jesus answered:*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one.*

*And it is, “Love others as much as you love yourself.”*

Matthew 22:36-39

## Duty

*Do your work willingly, as though you were serving the Lord himself.*

Colossians 3:23



The duties service personnel are expected to undertake are many and various and can be interesting, boring or sometimes frightening.

Towing an aircraft on a wet and pitching deck, digging a trench or serving meals are all duties that affect the welfare of others.

Carrying out a duty properly and reliably is much more important than the prestige of the work involved.

Jesus said:

*Anyone who can be trusted in little matters  
can also be trusted in important matters.*

*But anyone who  
is dishonest in  
little matters will  
be dishonest in  
important  
matters.*

Luke 16:10

He told a story  
of a servant who  
was promoted for  
faithfully  
carrying out his  
duty when  
entrusted with  
looking after a sum of money.



*I left you in charge of only a little, but now I  
will put you in charge of much more.*

Matthew 25:21

## Money and possessions

Money and possessions are important but they can bring problems. The Bible says:

*Don't fall in love with money. Be satisfied with what you have.*

Hebrews 13:5

*If you love money and wealth, you will never be satisfied with what you have. The more you have, the more everyone expects from you. Your money won't do you any good – others will just spend it for you.*

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11

Dissatisfaction with our income can make us greedy. It is easy to borrow and get into debt especially with high interest credit cards.

*The poor are ruled by the rich, and those who borrow are slaves of moneylenders.*

Proverbs 22:7

Jesus did not condemn money and possessions but he said that the pursuit of riches can blind people to higher things and can take the place of worshipping God.

*You cannot be the slave of two masters. You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than to the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

Luke 16:13

We should ask ourselves the questions:

Do I possess my possessions or do they possess me? If you cannot give up something you possess, you do not possess it: it possesses you. If a person's goals are to maintain or increase their wealth and comfort levels and you take away those luxuries and comforts, then you take away their life.

Jesus said, *"It's terribly hard for rich people to get into the kingdom of heaven!"* Matt 19:23

He told a story warning that wealth does not bring security and we cannot take it with us when we die.

*A rich man's farm produced a big crop, and he said to himself, "What can I do? I don't have a place large enough to store everything."*

*Later, he said, “Now I know what I’ll do. I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I can store all my grain and other goods. Then I’ll say to myself, ‘You have stored up enough good things to last for years to come. Live it up! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.’”*



*But God said to him, “You fool!  
Tonight you will die. Then who will get what  
you have stored up?”*

*“This is what happens to people who store up  
everything for themselves, but are poor in the  
sight of God.”*

Luke 12:16-21

There are many temptations open to people with money to spend. It is not always the struggle with hard times that has brought the downfall of nations and empires but the inability to cope with prosperity. Selfish hoarding can be a trap.

The Bible says that the prosperity of a nation and its inhabitants is determined by their obedience to God. If people obey him he will bless their country. The rains will fall, the harvest will be plentiful and the nation will live in peace.

But disobedience to God brings famine, hardship, defeat and eventual destruction.

(Summarised from Leviticus 26 & Deuteronomy 28)

Jesus said:

*If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me. If you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me and for the good news, you will save it.*



*What will you gain, if you own the whole world but destroy yourself? What could you give to get back your soul?* Mark 8:34-37

## Leisure

King Solomon was the wisest man of his day and he wrote these words:

*I said to myself,  
“Have fun and enjoy yourself!”  
But this didn’t  
Make Sense.*

Ecclesiastes 2:1



Having fun is good but sometimes we can go beyond fun to what is potentially harmful.

The paradox is that the more we look for pleasure the less we find of it.

No pleasure can be right if its effects are harmful. Drugs and over indulgence in eating and drinking can injure the body, permanently affecting the health. Drugs and alcohol dull the senses and lower our self-control against what is morally wrong.

Some people say:

*“We can do anything we want to.” But I tell you that not everything is good for us. So I refuse to let anything have power over me. We are not supposed to do indecent things with our bodies.*

1 Corinthians 6:12, 13

Sex was given for satisfaction and procreation within marriage, but casual sex can result in disease and mental problems that ruin lives including those of children not yet born. Exposure to sexually deviant and extremely violent movies can lead the weak-willed into perverse and dangerous practices.

*Keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise.*

Philippians 4:8

**Alcohol** - Many military disciplinary cases result from drinking too much, leading to loss of pay, rank, career and even family break up. The Bible has much to say about the joys and the dangers of alcohol. It does not demand we stop drinking it, but condemns the excesses of drinking alcohol in a series of proverbs.

*It isn't clever to get drunk!*

*Drinking makes a fool of you  
and leads to fights.*

Proverbs 20:1

*Heavy drinkers and others  
who live only for pleasure  
will lose all they have.*

Proverbs 21:17

*Don't be a heavy drinker  
or stuff yourself with food.  
It will make you feel drowsy,  
and you will end up poor  
with only rags to wear.*

Proverbs 23:20-21

*Leaders should not get drunk  
or even want to drink.  
Drinking makes you forget  
your responsibilities,  
and you ill-treat the poor.*

Proverbs 31:4-5

Don't destroy yourself by getting drunk, but let God's Spirit fill your life (Ephesians 5:18).



*The Lord gives strength  
to those who are weary.  
Even young people get tired,  
then stumble and fall.  
But those who trust the Lord  
will find new strength.  
They will be strong like eagles  
soaring up on wings;  
they will walk and run  
without getting tired.*

Isaiah 40:29-31

## Behaviour

Bad behaviour is a consequence of giving in to selfish desires. Jesus taught that unclean thoughts make us unfit to worship God:

*What comes from your heart is what makes you unclean. Out of your heart come evil thoughts, vulgar deeds, stealing, murder, unfaithfulness in marriage, greed, meanness, deceit, indecency, envy, insults, pride and foolishness.*

Mark 7:20-22

*Stop being bitter and angry with others. Don't yell at one another or curse each other or ever be rude. Instead, be kind and merciful, and forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ.*

Ephesians 4:31-32

If we let God guide us by his Spirit, we won't obey our selfish desires, and good behaviour will result.

*Let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.*

Romans 12:2

*God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled. God's Spirit has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit. But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.* Galatians 5:22-23, 25-26

Deceit is a minefield to be avoided at all costs.

*We trap  
Ourselves  
by telling  
lies, but we  
stay out of  
trouble by  
living right.*

Proverbs 12:13

*Stop lying  
and start  
telling each  
other the  
truth.*

*Say the right thing at the right time and help  
others by what you say.*

Ephesians 4:25, 29



Our speech is controlled by our personality. If we can control the tongue, we are mature and able to control our whole body. The tongue is like a small rudder that can steer a large ship. The tongue boasts about big things, gets out of control and spreads gossip like deadly poison.

(Summarised from James 3:2,4,5,8)

*Help me to guard my words whenever I say something.*

Psalm 141:3

Use of the Lord's name, Jesus Christ, as a curse or swear word is common, but God has clearly warned us against doing this in the Ten Commandments:

*Do not misuse my name. I am the Lord your God.*

Exodus 20:7

Jesus condemned those who lead children and weak-willed people astray.

*It will be terrible for people who cause even one of my little followers to sin. Those people would be better off thrown into the deepest part of the sea with a heavy stone tied around their necks!*

Matthew 18:6

## **Marriage and family relationships**

A loving marriage brings happiness, security and a stable home for bringing up children. Sadly for more and more people marriage has become a minefield resulting in break up and lasting hurt for the whole family.

Today's popular view of male and female partnerships has moved a long way from the Bible, which teaches that marriage is an exclusive relationship for life, and that a good marriage requires commitment, consideration, love and forgiveness.

*If you are a husband, you should be thoughtful of your wife. Treat her with honour, because she isn't as strong as you are.* 1 Peter 3:7

*A wife must put her husband first. A husband must love his wife and not abuse her.*  
Colossians 3:18-19

Husbands and wives should listen to each other. This stops resentment from building up.

*Be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry.* James 1:19

*Have respect for marriage. Always be faithful to your partner.*

Hebrews 13:4



*God wants you to be holy, so don't be immoral in matters of sex. Respect and honour your wife. Don't be a slave of your desires.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

*Love is more important than anything else. It is what ties everything*

*completely together.*

Colossians 3:14

**Married couples have a responsibility to bring up their children as God intended.**

*Teach your children right from wrong, and when they are grown they will still do right.*

Proverbs 22:6

*Parents, don't be hard on your children. Raise them properly. Teach them and instruct them about the Lord.*

Ephesians 6:4

The difficulties encountered in navigating our way through the minefields of life stem from our ignorance of Jesus' teaching. The way we live is largely determined by our upbringing, education and role models. If we allow our minds to be influenced by immoral and unethical media programmes and emulate the life styles of those who live contrary to Jesus' teaching, we will always have difficulties.

Some liberal laws in our modern society have made acceptable what the Bible teaches as wrong. We alone are responsible for setting the standards we wish to live by, so we must also accept the consequences if we choose to reject God's warnings from the Bible.

Jesus said:

*I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it fully.* John 10:9-10

In other words Jesus came as the perfect role model, to instruct us in the right way to live. He is the way out of the minefield and from our difficulties in this life and beyond.

## Death

Death is the inevitable end for every human being. But the Bible shows that death does not destroy us, and our souls and spirits live on. Death can happen at any time particularly if we have a dangerous job.



These graves contain the bodies of aircrew shot down in World War 2. They did not want to die so young and, like most of us, probably longed to survive beyond death.

Sin has already separated us from God.

*Your sins are a roadblock between you and your God. That's why he does not answer your prayers or let you see his face.*                      Isaiah 59:2

The Bible says that people were created to live in relationship with God. But we turned away from him and broke this relationship. The Bible calls this rebellion “sin”. If we stay sinners, God will judge us accordingly.

*We die only once, and then we are judged.*

Hebrews 9:27

There is only one way to mend the broken relationship with God and that is through his son, Jesus Christ. The un-named rich man, who ignored the beggar at his gate (page 7), died with his sin unforgiven and so suffered terrible consequences after death.

*You can be slaves of sin and die, or you can be obedient slaves of God and be acceptable to him. The reward for sin is death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ.*

Romans 6:16, 23

*God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.*

John 3:16

Putting our faith in Jesus Christ and accepting his gift of eternal life is the most important thing we can ever do.

*If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won't be punished. The Holy Spirit will give you life that comes from Christ Jesus and will set you free from sin and death.*

Romans 8:1-2

We can all be “set free” from sin and death!

*If you honestly say, “Jesus is Lord”, and if you believe with all your heart that God raised him from death. God will accept you and save you.*

Romans 10:9-10

If you don't want to get trapped in the minefields of life, take hold of God's “Moral Compass”, the Bible, learn how to use it and find the narrow gate that leads to eternal life - Jesus Christ.



*With all your heart you must trust the Lord  
and not your own judgment.  
Always let him lead you, and he will clear the  
road for you to follow.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

## **God is powerful and kind**

*God saves me and honours me.*

*He is that mighty rock where I find safety.*

*Trust God, my friends,*

*and always tell him each one of your concerns.*

*God is our place of safety.*

*We humans are only a breath;*

*none of us are truly great.*

*All of us together weigh less than a puff of air.*

*Don't trust in violence or depend on dishonesty  
or rely on great wealth.*

*I heard God say two things:*

*"I am powerful, and I am very kind."*

*The Lord rewards each of us according to what we do.*

Psalm 62:7-12

In WW2 a Sergeant Pilot serving in North Africa had given his religion as agnostic on joining the RAF, but he changed it to "believer" after someone gave him a Naval & Military Bible Society Scripture booklet to read, as he sat in his cockpit waiting to take off on an evening raid. As it grew dark he stood up to get better light to read by when an enemy aircraft dived out of the setting sun and put 22 bullets into where he had been sitting. Shaken but unhurt he put his faith in Christ.

Extract of a letter from Mr A.Freeman, A.S.R, dated 11-11-1942

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