

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: Morality in Cultures

Morality is a system of ideas about what is right and wrong, good and bad behavior. Discuss the following quotes.

Art, like morality, consists in drawing the line somewhere. ~Gilbert K. Chesterton

As a group, make a list, from your culture, of good behavior and bad behavior. Notice what is similar and what is not similar. Give examples.

Where do we get our ideas of right and wrong?

Can morals change? How?

How do you feel about yourself when you go against your morals?

What do you do to make yourself feel better?

Wisdom, compassion, and courage are the three universally recognized moral qualities of men. ~Confucius

Do you agree with this quote? Are there any other qualities that you feel are recognized world wide as moral?

Where does a person get the courage to do what is right, even though it is hard?

What role does our conscience take in helping us stay with our morals?

A man does what he must- in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures- and that is the basis of all human morality. ~Winston Churchill

What are some examples of people doing right in spite of personal consequences?

What are some examples of people doing right in spite of obstacles, dangers and pressures?

How do you feel about such people?

The following story is an example of a boy, who despite odds and bad examples, took responsibility for himself and made decisions that were morally right.

2013 (CBS News) OKLAHOMA CITY -- Seventy-eight-year-old Tona Herndon of Bethany, Okla., was vulnerable in every way. Her husband of 60 years had died just two weeks earlier. Her eyes were so clouded with grief, she never saw it coming.

"You know, I really didn't even know anything was going wrong until I was halfway in the car," she says. She was mugged as she visited her husband's grave. The mugger got away with her purse and \$700, but not for long. Police caught him, and the news put his mug shot on TV.

Fifteen-year-old Christian Lunsford says the first time he saw the picture, he recognized it "in detail." He had no doubt that it was his dad. Christian says his parents divorced when he was two, and his dad has been mostly absent ever since. Last time he heard from him was a few weeks ago. His dad gave him \$250 for a band trip Christian really wants to go on. But that's been the extent of his parenting recently. In fact, over the years, Christian says his dad has been in and out of jail more than half a dozen times.

"There's times that you just feel really low, like, 'Is that going to be me?'" he says. "'Am I going to end up like that?'"

The apple wants nothing to do with the tree. Which is why, after Christian heard about his dad's latest crime, he reached out to the victim and asked to meet her in a church parking lot. Christian says he just had to tell her he was sorry about what happened.

"It needed to be done," he says. "She needed an apology from somebody. If I didn't apologize, who would?"

"I thought that was so, so precious," Tona says. "Any 15-year-old boy who has that much conscience is extraordinary." And Christian was just getting started.

"He gave me \$250 for my band trip, but I'm not sure if it was yours or however he got it, but I'd feel bad if I didn't give it to you," he told Tona. Never mind that it wasn't his crime. He paid the debt.

"I accepted the money back," Tona says. "And it was mine to do with what I wanted."

Which brings us the best part of this story.

"I want you to take your band trip," Tona told Christian. She gave it all back to him for his band trip.

"It was a joy to do that," Tona says.

In the end, no money changed hands in that church parking lot, but they each got something tremendously valuable from the other.

"I feel more like my life still has a purpose," Tona says.

"You're not who your parents are," Christian says. "Even if they do raise you, you can become whatever you want to be." No victims here.