

The Moral imperative

The moral imperative is the Christian's call to act faithfully with what God has entrusted—resources, relationships, influence—so that our choices reflect His character rather than our convenience.

From a secular perspective, a citizen's moral imperative is to use their influence, responsibilities, and freedoms in ways that strengthen the welfare of the whole society.

In African culture, people with a high social position or people who have wealth can pretty much break certain laws if they choose to, without fear of consequence. We lived about 20 miles from the largest town in our region of the country and the commercial center where we did a lot of our shopping. On one of our trips into town, there was a well-appointed Toyota Landcruiser parked right in the middle of the road in front of a popular grocery store. It was a shop that sold many items that were expensive by local standards and was primarily patronized by expatriates and nationals of means. All the parking spaces along the road in front of the shop were full, and since the owner of the vehicle clearly had money, why not? The traffic continued to flow up onto the raised median and back down in front of the vehicle, and I thought to myself, "*There's a person who clearly sees himself as important and who can do what he wants.*" This behavior may not seem to have any immediate or clear consequences on the health of the society, but it surely does.

- ❖ Cultures that resist development indicate a great divide between their official laws and everyday practices.
- ❖ Cultures that promote development have a common morality (general behavior) that's more closely aligned with its nation's laws.

When my wife first started the school on the hospital compound, she and I, along with the hospital administration, formed a school committee. Other members were some parents and additional appropriate members from the hospital staff. At that time there were many who understood what it meant to be a Christian in everyday life. They knew the value both of order in society and of following the rules that had been created for a good reason. The main motivation for starting the school was because the other schools in the area, those operated by the government and by religious denominations, were all lacking regarding any kind of quality education. There was great support for enforcing order in the new school for this reason. There were several reasons for those existing schools' lack of success in providing a quality education for the children. One was the lack of commitment to time schedules during the school day, which was

evidenced by the fact that almost every school had children running around outside at any given point during the day. Another was that many school policies set by the government were ignored, such as the age requirements for entering school. Many parents were sending their three-year-old children to Class One, even though the law for that class was six years of age. This age requirement is pretty much standard throughout the world and was established based on children's mental development and their readiness to begin formal education. Unfortunately, school served as childcare for most employed parents, which was the primary argument used for disregarding the age requirement.

The hospital's primary school operated under all the same government regulations as the other schools did, with the exception that the regulations would be enforced because they would be beneficial to the children's education. The actual reason for starting a primary school at the hospital was because my wife had been tutoring several children in reading at our home after school. Many of those children began to rapidly improve, and the parents of those children then began to talk about it with some of the other parents they worked with at the hospital. Those parents also wanted their children to have a good education, which was a challenge for them, because the hospital was a tough place to live. It was in a rural setting with no private schools like those available in the major towns. The large towns had many private schools available, so the parents who could afford it would send their children to them. This meant that educating their kids could be a real hardship when someone was posted to work at this hospital.

Most of the parents had no problem accepting the official age-limit rule for starting Class One once the reason for the rule was explained to them. However, several of the doctors who worked at the hospital complained loudly to the administration: They felt the rule should be bent for them because they were doctors. That's how it's normally done. Despite their complaints, the administration stood its ground and told them that if they didn't like the rules, they could take their children elsewhere. This same battle was fought for ten years as new people were transferred to work at the hospital, but the administration and school committee continued to stand firm. Several of the original staff who were present at the time the school was started eventually either retired or were transferred to different locations. Then, sadly, the original vision was lost and enforcement of the school policies grew lax as new people came in. It began by allowing one policy to be compromised which, in turn, inspired other demands to be made that led to the breaking of many other policies. The quality of the education basically collapsed in a matter of weeks, literally due to the loss of order in the school.

The school is still there, but the earlier excellence of the education is long gone. I want to note that from the first year the school was open until year 10, it received an award from the National Ministry of Primary Education for having the highest academic achievements of any school in the

entire division. The school never received another award after the 10th year, when the school fell into disorder and the policies fell by the wayside. Part of me is glad about that, because it was hard evidence that maintaining rules, laws, and policies designed for the good of society are necessary. However, part of me is sad that, even though the doctors were happy to be respected in their demands as big people, it was costing a lot in terms of their children's futures and the futures of the school's other children. This was also frustrating for the other parents who saw the value in those policies but had no say because of their lower social positions. The sad reality is that bad behavior can be perpetrated by a few, but the consequences will often affect many.

This is yet another cultural value that's contrary to biblical values and is one of the main reasons Africa doesn't develop. You can begin to see how the transformation of a cultural value can have a great and positive impact on a society. Imagine if Christian people in positions of influence allowed the Word of God through the Holy Spirit to transform their hearts and minds! What an influence they could be for the Gospel and as contributors to a strong church! These people who worked tirelessly to get the rules bent for them in our hospital would all tell you they're Christians. I've heard several of them lead devotions, and many can quote Scripture fluently, yet where is the transformation?

1 Peter 2:13-17: Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Romans 13:1-5: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there's no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you'll receive his approval, for he's God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he doesn't bear the sword in vain. For he's the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

Philippians 2: 6-8: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Module | opposing Cultural Values—

The Moral Imperative [Pages 37 – 40]

Theme: *How alignment between law and behavior reflects spiritual transformation and societal health.*

Grounding Scripture

1 Peter 2:13–17 – “*Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution...*” Romans 13:1–5 – “*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities...*” Philippians 2:6–8 – Christ’s humility and obedience, even unto death.

Puzzle Piece

Insight: In cultures where laws are routinely bent by the powerful, societal trust erodes and development stalls. When Christians demand exceptions rather than model submission, they undermine both witness and justice.

Challenge: A moral culture requires more than good laws—it demands consistent, humble obedience. Transformation is visible when believers uphold order, even when inconvenient.

Bridge Thought | connection

- Christ’s example of submission—even with divine authority—calls believers to live under human institutions with integrity.
- When Christians in leadership model obedience, they elevate the moral tone of society and strengthen the church’s credibility.

Toolbox | Practical Tools

Policy Integrity: Uphold rules that serve the common good, even when pressured to bend them.

Influence Audit: Identify areas where Christian leaders can model transformation through obedience.

Cultural Reset: Reframe “importance” not as privilege, but as responsibility to serve.

Reflection Prompts

1. When have you seen rules bent for the powerful? What was the impact?
2. How does your culture define “importance”? How does scripture challenge that view?
3. What policies in your context need defending for the sake of justice?

Action Steps

- Teach submission to authority as a spiritual discipline.
- Celebrate leaders who model integrity over privilege.
- Protect policies that promote equity, even when unpopular.