

GIMNAZIJA „STEVAN JAKOVLJEVIĆ“ VLASOTINCE

The Ten Commandments

Author: Sandra Stojanović

Mentor: Biljana Pipović, English teacher

April 15, 2011

ABSTRACT

Moral values and graciousness, in the past, were prominent in most teenagers. Majority of the youths then learnt respect, courtesy, consideration, decency, propriety, honesty and righteousness from a young age, and had enough self-discipline to hold to these values. However, these moral values and self-discipline are slowly diminishing. Over the years, almost all of the younger generation are gradually disregarding these ethics. The listed values have slowly faded away, as they mean little to these adolescents, as moral values and self-discipline are on the verge of disappearing.

We are facing the lack of morality nowadays. Everywhere we look, we can see crimes, rapes, drugs, violence, stealing, murdering, sheating- a plenty of immorality. It seems people lost their moral compass and there are more and more who are wandering in the moral darkness. Especially problematic group are young people. This is the point I will highlight in this essay, and I will try to explain why youngs often choose the wrong way and is there any possibility to prevent this.

Key words: ten commandments; morality; religion; teenagers;

REZIME

Moralne vrednosti i ljubaznost su bile prisutne kod većeg dela tinejdžera u prošlosti. Većina mladih je tada učila o učtivosti, saosećajnosti, pristojnosti, ispravnosti, iskrenosti i pravednosti od samog detinjstva i imali su dovoljno samodiscipline da se pridržavaju ovih vrednosti. Međutim, ove etičke vrednosti i samodisciplina postepeno iščezavaju. Navedene vrednosti su polako izbledele, pa one ne znače mnogo današnjim adolescentima, etika i samodisciplina su na ivici nestajanja.

U današnje vreme smo suočeni sa ozbiljnim nedostatkom morala. Gde god da se okrenemo vidimo zločine, silovanja, drogu, nasilje, krađe, ubistva, prevare—mnogo nemorala. Izgleda da su ljudi izgubili svoj moralni kompas i sve je više onih koji lutaju u moralnoj tami. Naročito problematična grupa su mladi ljudi. To bih posebno naglasila u ovom eseju i pokušaću da objasnim zašto mladi često biraju pogrešan put i postoji li ikakva mogućnost da se to spreči.

Ključne reči: deset zapovesti; moral; religija; tinejdžeri;

'We're on a road to nowhere'

lyrics from a popular song of the late twentieth century by *Talking Heads*

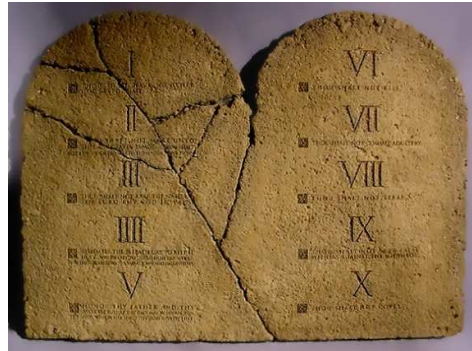
Morality is a personal or social set of standards for good or bad behavior and character, or the quality of being right, honest or acceptable. It is characteristically the way you make decisions based on what you think is right or wrong. However, this warning seems to be considered a fraud because the number of people who subscribe to these laws seem to diminish every day. This, therefore, gives reason to my opinion that Christian morality is having a tough time surviving due to its leniency.

Religion has many functions within a society, both social and psychological. It appears to do this by encouraging what a given society deems acceptable behavior and discouraging socially inappropriate behavior. Every religion, regardless of the form it takes, is an ethical system that prescribes proper way of behaving. This social order of rewards and punishment is reinforced when backed by supernatural authority. Thus one's neighbor may be exorcized from his or her community when a behavior is seen as socially unacceptable or inappropriate. Examples of this in the Christian community would be the breaking of the Ten Commandments such as stealing, committing adultery, or murdering.

Try to read these ten laws carefully and ask yourself, what are they actually? Are they moral laws or religion ones? Or both? If you think they are only religion laws, then imagine how the world would look like if only believers in God had obeyed these laws.

- 1. Do not have other gods before God.***
- 2. Do not make idols.***
- 3. Do not take the name of God in vain.***
- 4. Keep the Sabbath day Holy.***
- 5. Honor your parents.***
- 6. Do not kill.***
- 7. Do not commit adultery.***
- 8. Do not steal.***
- 9. Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.***
- 10. Do not covet your neighbour's possessions.***

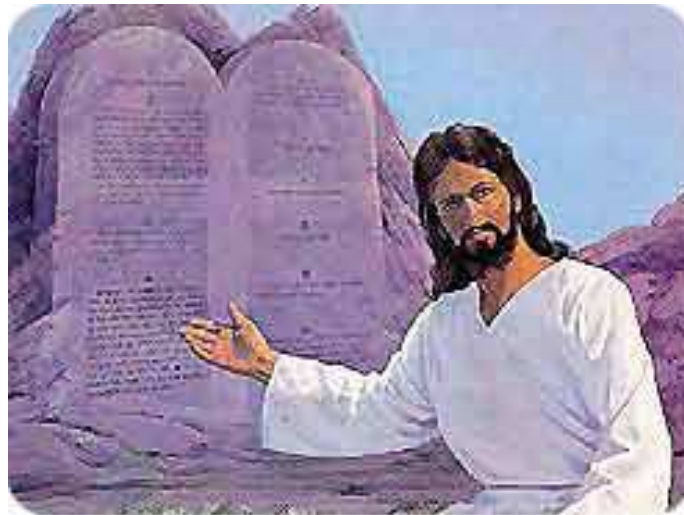
These are the Ten Commandments, the ten laws in the Bible that God gave to the nation of Israel shortly after the exodus from Egypt. Tertullian, an early Christian writer, asserted that the Ten Commandments were engraven on the hearts of men even before being written on the tables of stone. But over time it changed. People forgot the basic moral values and God once again reminded people that they must follow some rules in order not to get lost in a world of sin and become what they shouldn't be. Because of this, God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments engraved on two stone table on Sinai Mount. The commandments that God gave Moses were not to be only followed by the people of Israel, but they are commandments for all people. They not only applied to those that lived before Jesus but also apply to us who came after Jesus' life on earth. But, many people today feel that God's Ten Commandments are no longer valid because they do not apply to our current society. They look to the Ten Commandments as being outdated and full of inflammatory language which does not sit well with our politically-correct viewpoint. Does this mean we can all have lovers, kill or steal because some rules are not valid anymore? These fundamental rules have been around since the Old Testament and are still expected to be obeyed. The rules hold family morals within them, and even though the rules are from years ago they are still important.



The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. The last six commandments deal with our relationships with one another. Then, we can say that The Ten Commandments are both, moral and religion laws. To my mind, everybody is supposed to follow these commandments because they are the basic moral values. The younger generation has not been exposed to the commandments like older generations once were. The students around the Ten Commandments will consequently have a positive influence on them later in life. The Ten Commandments are like guidelines in your life that people are expected to obey, they can help you make decisions between right and wrong. The Ten Commandments are the back bone to our students, if we throw them out, the students will struggle in life, because they will not understand what is right and wrong. In life there are many decisions you will face daily, so to some the commandments are very helpful.

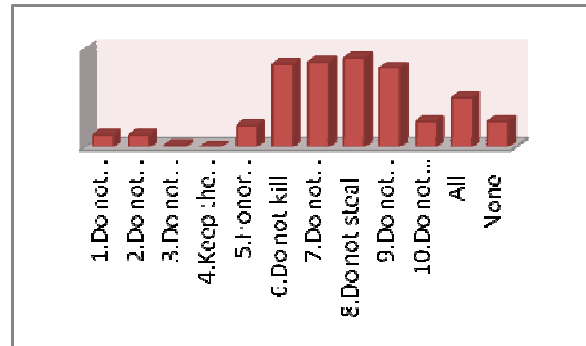
Teaching moral (or character) values to children in school, from an early age, will enable them to achieve greater success in all areas of life. By discussing and educating

students on moral decisions along with social conflicts, society would morally improve. Based on readings and observations, an outbreak of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime along with juvenile gang violence proves that society is morally corrupted. Teenagers and other minor individuals commit crime and participate in gang violence which causes society to become a dangerous and insecure place to live in. Also, experiences in high school prove several students and classmates abuse drugs and smoke cigarettes on the school campus. Fellow classmates and students roam around the school smoking cigarettes and abusing drugs in the locker rooms and bathrooms. By analyzing readings on teenage pregnancy, observations on juvenile crime and gang violence, along with experiences in high school, one can comprehend that schools should help students understand moral choices and social issues.

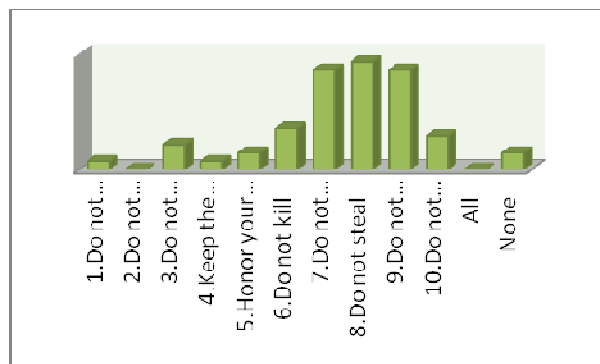


The best known Commandments

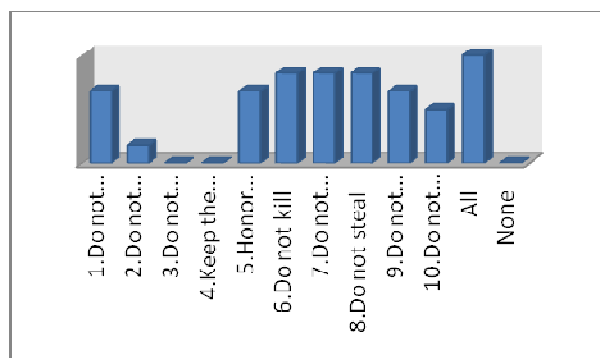
(Graphic 1)¹



(Graphic 2)²



(Graphic 3)³



¹ This statistic is based on the survey which involved 86 people between 17 and 19 years of age

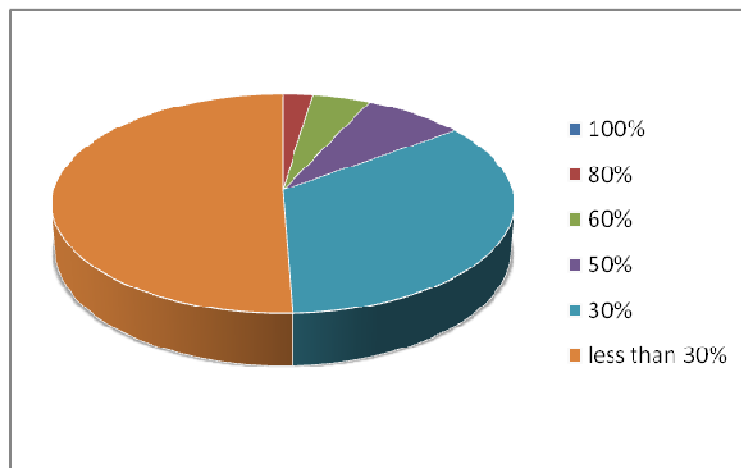
² This statistic is based on the survey which involved 14 uneducated or low educated people between 18 and 48 years of age

³ This statistic is based on the survey which involved 11 educated people between 25 and 62 years of age

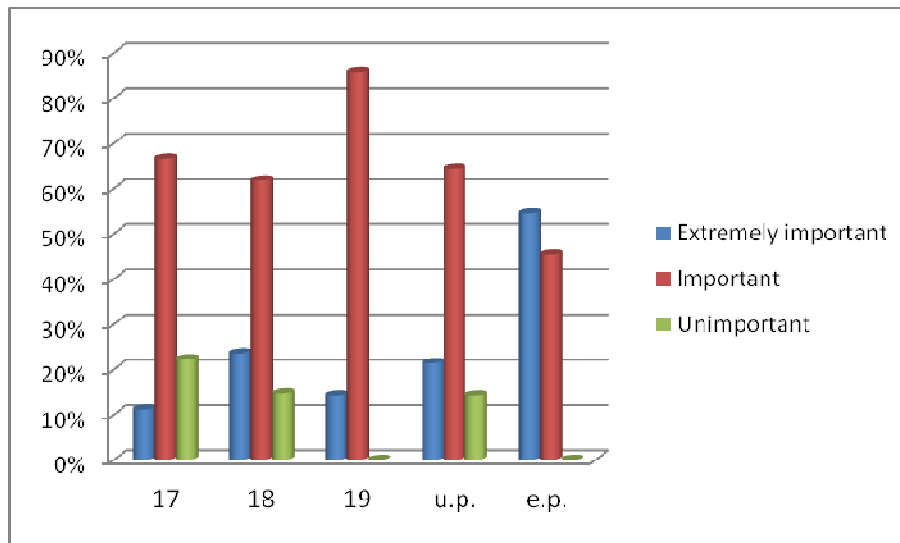
What we can see from these statistics is that the best known commandments are 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th. That does not mean that other ones are not important. In my opinion, to honor our parents is equally important because we cannot respect other people when we do not respect the members of our own family, our father and mother who brought us into this world and gave us the most precious thing we have, our life. Also, nothing less important is not to commit adultery. To people we love we must give some sacrifices and try not to make them suffer because of us. In every relationship we have to stay loyal because we chose to do so. In my opinion, 10th commandment is one of the most important. It says: *Do not covet your neighbour's possessions*. It means not to desire anything which is not ours. If people respected this, they would not steal, commit murder or commit adultery. We would live in a better world!

According to these statistics, we can notice that the elder and more educated the people are, the more they know about these moral values. That can help us to understand why the young ones are the most vulnerable group in our society. This confirms the above-mentioned statement that our schools should have the moral education like subject.

But, it is not important which or how many commandments we know, it is essential to follow them. The best indicator are the opinion and experience of the people who took part in this survey.



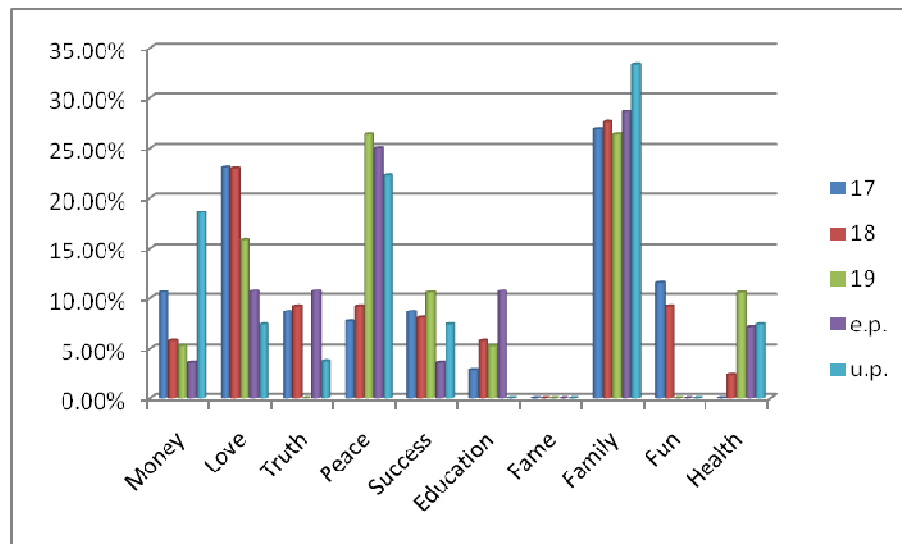
⁴According to the survey conducted and the data represented by this pie chart, the current situation is not good at all. Namely, almost more than two thirds of respondents said that percentage of people that follow the Ten Commandments is 30% percent or less. This is a warning sign and in my opinion we should do something about this.



The encouraging fact is that the number of people who think it is important to live by following these commandments is increasing with age and education level. Again, it seems that our schools play the main role in our society for developing the need to follow moral values.

Moreover, the following graphic chart represents another aspect of the survey conducted – what is the ultimate goal in life for people. It shows a lot about the values respected and pursued. For instance, liar will never say that his ultimate goal in life is the truth. And if he or she does, that will not be true. What else we can notice here is that with age and the level of education, money stops to be the ultimate goal in life, contrary to education for instance.

⁴ 114 respondents



To sum up, education has an enormous importance for our society and the development of its moral values, as well. That is why we have to improve our educational system and introduce Moral Education as the new subject that will be studied along with Citizenship or Religious Education. Or at least as the integrated part of the Religious Education.

The relationship between all these commandments is LOVE. That is still the ultimate moral value. „*Love your neighbours with all your heart and all your soul*“ said Jesus.

And people say that he was the greatest moral teacher. I believe he is and we need to follow his rules in order to have a better life and to make the Earth a better place to live in.



Bibliography:

[1] Ancient Israel's Faith and History by George E. Mendenhall (2001)

[2] Etched in stone by David H. Aaron (2006)

[3] The freedom of Morality by Christos Yannaras

[4] www.wikipedia.org

[5] www.the-ten-commandments.org