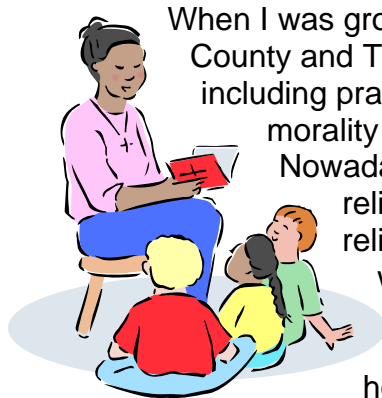


# Morality and Ethics

Michael Sovern resigned as president of Columbia University in 1993. A reporter asked Sovern if there were any task he had left incomplete.

“Yes,” replied Sovern. “It sounds complacent, but there is really only one.” He referred to the lack of instruction in ethics. Professional schools, he pointed out, like law, medical and business administration, have some pretty good programs in values and professional ethics. The average undergraduate, however, gets no training in these areas.

Why? Most likely because most educators – from grammar school through college – are afraid to touch the subjects. Topics such as these are usually addressed by parents or members of religious organizations. The result is that in this country, young people who need moral and ethical training more than ever are getting less than ever.



When I was growing up and attending the public schools of Putnam County and Tennessee Tech, a state-owned university, devotionals – including prayer and Bible reading (which form the foundation of morality and ethics) – were the norm rather than the exception. Nowadays, with court rulings on the premise of freedom of religion (which, I believe, wrongly conclude freedom *from* religion) children are deprived even more of the principles which help shape determination of what is right and wrong.

With the debate on religion in the classroom aside, however, there ought to be teaching on character issues. Morals and ethics, in and of themselves, are not a religion. They are logical, sensible principles of good conduct that we need for a peaceful, productive society.

When Thomas Jefferson created the state-run University of Virginia, he insisted that it have no religious affiliation. Yet even with this restriction, he still included “moral philosophy” in the required course of study.

Shouldn't we teach good morals and ethics not as religion, but simply as the most practical, direct route to success and happiness? And hadn't we better do it soon?

As we train the associates in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home to equip them for success in pursuit of our mission, let us keep in mind the real possibility that they could be lacking in a solid foundation of morals and ethics and weave them into our instruction.

– Beecher Hunter