



# CHIVALRY IT IS!

By  
Dame Stacy Jubitz

Chivalry in today's world is practically a non-existent term. When you think of this word, it conjures images of the past—European elegance, uniformed soldiers, and, the obvious, gallant knights on horseback. Where has it gone? Fear not! Chivalry is not dead, but would we recognize it? Morals, values, and ethics each have slight differences but combined they define chivalry.

**In order to understand what chivalry entails, we need to break it down.**

Let's begin with morals. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, morals are defined as "standards of behavior; principles of right and wrong." Principles are described as essential truths or proposals that function as the grounds for a structure of belief or behavior; standards are defined as "principles of conduct informed by notions of honor and decency" (Oxford).

---

So who decides what morality is? Many will say that society dictates morality and that morals change with the social times. There are different ideas for what makes up a society—a community, a religion, a group with similar beliefs, etc. Others will say that any rational individual will accept morality based on their need to circumvent harm being done to another. They believe that rational people know the types of actions dictated by morality—what is verboten, mandatory, discouraged, encouraged, and permissible (Gert).

In the broad sense it seems that morality is considered to be actions taken to avoid or prevent harm. Morals and ethics are often used interchangeably. Let's explore their differences. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ethics as "moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity." Ethics grounds us in purpose and is held on a more personal level than morals. The similarities in meaning between the two words often lead to confusion. Ethics helps us understand how our principles and values relate to one another, and gives us direction for how we live our lives (Pojman and Fieser).

In his article, "Ethics vs. Morals," Mark Nichol states, "Morals are the tools by which one lives and ethics constitute the manual that codifies them." Ethics help us to see that certain laws and behaviors can be immoral while realizing that they are still legally upheld (Pojman and Fieser) If this is true, then it can be said that ethics sets the standards and morals dictate the actions. Let's see how values differ from morals and ethics.

Values are "principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life" (Oxford). The operative word here is judgment. All three of these words have to deal with "standards" of behavior, however, values require that we look within ourselves and make a judgment of what is important to us. What are we willing to accept as right and wrong and which lines are we not willing to cross?

Now that we are aware of the meanings of these three words, let's explore some of the characteristics or virtues that would be associated with them. Some of the adjectives that I would assign to being moral would be loyal, charitable, truthful, trustworthy, and reliable. Some of the characteristics that could be used to describe an ethical person would be having integrity, being honorable, above board, honest, courageous, just, and courteous. However, as in the words themselves, the characteristics could also be interchangeable.

As stated in the first paragraph, morals, values, and ethics have slight differences but combined they define chivalry. We have explored the meanings and characteristics of these three words; let us now see how they relate to chivalry. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, chivalry is defined as "the combination of qualities expected of an ideal knight, namely courage, honor, courtesy, justice, and a readiness to help the weak." We can now see how the qualities previously discussed are the same as those that define chivalry. The word chivalry originates from Middle English in three different forms: Old French, *chevalerie*; medieval Latin, *caballerius*; and late Latin, *caballarius* meaning 'horseman.'

A true horseman was considered to be the embodiment of chivalry. A chivalrous person does not beat his/her spouse, abuse a child, commit theft, tell a lie, be disloyal to a friend, or bend the rules. If more people in this world were chivalrous, there would be less hate, fewer wars, more peace and greater trust. Chivalry is an amalgamation of the most highly valued qualities. These are the assets that we search for in employees, bosses, friends, and spouses. Chivalry is not dead and may we all espouse to be chivalrous and to extol these fine virtues.

