**Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development** (Fill in the blank.) Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lawrence Kohlberg developed an interesting theory about how people deal with moral questions. Kohlberg believes that there are six major stages of moral reasoning, related to human growth, development and intelligence. People are called to the stage higher than their own by listening to reasons of others who have already advanced to a higher stage. Ultimately, we are called to move from self, to others, to a universal principle.

**I)** **Preconventional Level** ( the )

A child follows cultural rules (right or wrong, good or bad).

**Stage 1: Punishment and Obedience**

- decisions are motivated by of the power of authority (e.g. ).

- the avoidance of if not caught and reward for behavior are the key motivators.

- good or behavior is determined by the consequences of the act.

**EXAMPLE**- I will tell the truth so that I do not get spanked.

**Stage 2: Personal Usefulness**

- decisions are based on what one of it.

- what is right is what is to me (satisfies your own needs, selfish).

- give that I may (you bargain to get a fair return).

- “I’ll your back if you scratch mine.".

- a attitude is based on this stage (“ for an eye...). (e.g. )

**EXAMPLE**- I will tell the truth because if I do, I will get the car to go to the dance.

Also, " " and one’s job.

**II) Conventional Level** (to do what is normal or expected)

One conforms to expectations (loyal to , , group, religion, town, etc.).

**Stage 3: Conforming to the Will of the Group**

- decisions are based on what would think of you.

- act to please others, to get their l (e.g., parents, peers, boss)

- act to gain so as to avoid or be labeled an outcast.

- to those around (to be a "yes" person, "good boy, nice girl").

- want to keep a good .

**EXAMPLE**- I will tell the truth because my parents and teachers will think that I am a good person.

**Stage 4**: **Law and Order**

- decisions are base on the .

- right behavior consists in the laws of society (the law is seen as absolute).

- doing one’s , what is expected by .

- show respect for and maintain order.

**EXAMPLE**- I will tell the truth because I should- it's the right thing to do. Note: very little effort is required for stages 3 and 4 as you go with the flow.

**III) Post-Conventional Level** (above the "norm")

A person at this level defines moral principles, and ideals that are valid apart from what others think.

**Stage 5: Social Contract**

- decisions are based on actions that are right which serve the general of society.

- concern is to maintaining self- and respect of the .

- laws are followed but may be if they do not serve society.

- the is more important than the law.

**EXAMPLE**- I will tell the truth but sometimes I cannot in order to safeguard someone else's privacy or confidence or the person is asking me something that they have no right to know. Also, community service, fight oppression or injustices.

**Stage 6: Personal Conscience**

- it is not law but personal informed , based on principles or truths that tell you how to act.

- the principles of , equality of human , respect for the of human beings as individual persons are to be the foundation of .

- when a law violates a , the person acts in accordance with the principle, no matter what to self (e.g. martyr).

- the of other persons are of supreme , regardless of who they are.

**EXAMPLE**- I will always stand up for the truth, even if it costs me my life or property or friends or reputation.

**Overall Characteristics of Kohlberg’s Stages**

1. Each person moves from stage to stage as they mature. People can make good or bad decisions at each stage. The purpose of morality is to make a good decision.

2. No one skips stages, but moves from one to another. A person may slip back a stage or two in certain areas of decision making or under stress. We also have an attraction to the next stage.

3. One can become frozen at a given stage (note: usually stage 3 or 4).

4. As you progress through each stage, you have a greater chance of solving more complex moral dilemmas as you take in more perspectives.

5. Learning to make good moral decisions and growing in Christ will help a person reach Stage 6 which is a level of deep personal growth and freedom.