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The decline in moral standards which has long concerned social analysts has at last captured the attention of average Americans. And Jean Bethke Elshtain, for one, is glad. The fact that ordinary citizens are now starting to think seriously about the nation's moral climate, says this ethics professor at the university of Chicago, is reason to hope that new ideas will come forward to improve it. But the challenge is not to be underestimated. Materialism and individualism in American society are the biggest obstacles. "The thought that 'I'm in it for me' has become deeply rooted in the national consciousness." Ms. Elshtain says. Some of this can be attributed to the disintegration of traditional communities, in which neighbors looked out for one another, she says. With today's greater mobility and with so many couples working, those bonds have been weakened, replaced by a greater emphasis on self. In a 1996 poll of Americans, loss of morality topped the list of the biggest problems facing the U.S. And Elshtain says the public is correct to sense that: Data show that Americans are struggling with problems unheard of in the 1950s, such as classroom violence and a high rate of births to unmarried mothers. The desire for a higher moral standard is not a lament for some nonexistent "golden age."

Elshtain says, nor is it a wishful longing for a time that denied opportunities to women and minorities. Most people, in fact

, favor the lessening of prejudice. Moral decline will not be reversed until people find ways to counter the materialism in society , she says. “ Slowly , you recognize that the things that matter are those that can ’ t be bought. ”

1. Professor Elshtain is pleased to see that Americans

A. are a wakening to the lowering of their moral standards
B. have realized the importance of material things
C. are longing for the return of the good old days
D. have adapted to a new set of moral standards

2. The moral decline of American society is caused mainly by

A. its growing wealth
B. the self-centeredness of individuals
C. the prejudice against women and minorities
D. underestimating the impact of social changes

3. Which of the following characterizes the traditional communities ?

A. Concern for one ’ s neighbors.
C. Great mobility.
B. Emphasis on individual effort.
D. was by no means a rare occurrence.

4. In the 1950s , classroom violence

A. attracted a lot of public attention
C. began to appear in analysts ’ data
B. was something unheard of
D. was by no means a rare occurrence

5. According to Elshtain , the current moral decline may be reversed _____.

A. when women and men enjoy equal rights
B. if less emphasis is laid on material things
C. when people rid themselves of prejudice
D. if people can return to the “ golden age ”

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