

Christian Ethics

Study Pak

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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STUDY PAKS 1 & 2

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

“Christian ethics is a branch of Christian theology that defines _____ and _____ from a Christian perspective. Systematic theological study of Christian ethics is called _____. Christian virtues are often divided into four cardinal virtues and three theological virtues.”

~~ Wikipedia ~~

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. Ethics deals with what is morally right and wrong _____.
- 1. God has revealed basics of right and wrong through _____.
Romans 1:19-20; 2:12-14.
- 2. Christian Ethics goes beyond that which is revealed by natural law and is based upon _____.

II. THE BASIS FROM CHRISTIAN ETHICS

- A. Christian Ethics is based upon the idea that God is the answer to the question, “_____?”
- B. God’s principles are based upon His _____.
- C. God’s principles are revealed by _____.
- D. God’s principles are not subject to _____.
- E. Christian Ethics deals with what _____ not what is.

III. A CULTURE WITHOUT A SENSE OF ETHICS

When a culture tries to function without a sense of ethics anything is possible.

“It can no longer be maintained by anyone but a “Religious Fanatic” that man is the special darling of the universe, or that animals were created to provide us with food or that we have _____, and divine permission to kill them.” Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Avon Book 1975, p. 143.

“If we compare a severely defective human infant with a non-human animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the non-human to have superior capacities,

both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication and anything else that can plausibly be considered “_____”!
Peter Singer, *Pediatrics*, July 1983. Entitled “*Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life*”.

“Mental defectives do not have a right to life, and therefore might _____ - if we should develop a taste for human flesh - or for the purpose of scientific experimentation.” Peter Singer quoted in “*Death Dies in California*”.

“Humans without some minimum of intelligence or mental capacity _____, no matter how many of their organs are active, no matter how spontaneous their living processes are...idiots are not, never were, and never will be in any degree responsible. Idiots, that is to say, _____ . Stated in a speech by Joseph Fletcher in 1988 at San Francisco Conference of the “*World Federation of Right-to-Die Societies*.”

Harris, Marvin, “Our Pound of Flesh,” *Natural History*, vol. 88 (August/September 1979), pp. 30-36. Harris was in the Department of Anthropology, Columbia University. “According to (Michael) Harner, the Aztecs sought to overcome the depletion of faunal resources by consuming the flesh of enemy soldiers ostensibly sacrificed to appease the gods.” p. 30.

“Surely there can be no special pride in the practice of letting millions of soldiers rot on the battlefield because of _____. One can even argue that, nutritionally, the best source of protein for human beings is human flesh because the balance of amino acids is precisely that which the body requires for its own proper functioning.” p. 36.

IV. WHO MAKES THE RULES?

Both society and individuals must answer the question, “Who makes the rules?”

V. HEDONISM - I GO AS I PLEASE. I DO AS I PLEASE.

- A. People who live by the “I’ll do as I please” philosophy are after only one thing - their own pleasure regardless the cost.
 - 1. Suppose you were to see a person who lives by this approach gradually ruining their life through drinking, drugs or sexual immorality and you take it upon yourself to warn that person.
 - a. He would probably say something like this: “What I do is my business. If I want to ruin my life it is totally up to me!”
- B. People who make personal pleasure that aim in life don’t always seek it the same way.

1. Some foolishly destroy themselves in the pursuit of gratifying their flesh.
 - a. Others live relatively decent lives as accepted members of the community.
 2. They are both alike in one respect and that is they both push aside God and any thought that there is sin and that it will be punished.
- C. This is an old philosophy of life called “_____”. The belief that pleasure and happiness is the goal in life.
1. The apostle Paul summed it up well when he wrote in Ephesians 2:2-3:

“Wherein in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”
 2. This philosophy of conduct was promoted by ancient Greek philosophers who did not believe in a personal God.
 - a. They assumed that death ended it all.
 - b. Therefore it only made sense to live by the saying “_____ for tomorrow we die!”
 3. Many of them believed that when a person faced the pains of death, and life was not longer enjoyable, a person might just as well commit suicide.
- D. No nation in history has remained strong after the majority of its people had adopted this philosophy.
1. Greece and Rome rose to power during a time when their people were family centered, patriotic, and industrious.
 - a. Over the years however, their leaders became “Hedonistic”, and their attitudes gradually affected people.
 - b. It wasn’t long before old-fashioned virtues were _____, and this inner decay is what, many believe, led to the collapse of these once mighty empires.

2. As I look around our nation I see this very attitude becoming prevalent today.

VI. UTILITARIANISM

- A. “I set the rules, but I’ll always consider the greatest good for the greatest number.” The belief that all action should be to bring about the _____.
 1. The people who take this view are making public welfare their criterion for moral decisions.
 - a. They are for the most part, against the selfishness of the Hedonist, choosing rather the most good for the most people.
 2. They may be against promiscuity, for example, because they know it’s harmful to not only those involved, but the entire community as well.
 - a. They may promote the family because they view it as a basic unity of society.
 - b. They would be against drugs in the schools because they know that it would be harmful to our society.
- B. In fact, some of the people who make moral decisions on the basis of the greatest good for the greatest number take commendable stands on many issues.
 1. But this system of belief falls short in actual practice because it doesn’t offer authoritative guidelines for behavior.
 2. Leaving the definition of the “greatest good” opens wide the door to all kinds of strange and harmful practices.

Illustration: There have been some in the medical field who have suggested that all “fetuses” should be checked and every “defective” child should be aborted.

 - a. Others have suggested that when a person reaches the age of 60 or experiences _____, that the person should be brought to a beautiful sanitarium and be given a shot that will “painlessly” take their life.
 - b. This would reduce the threat of overpopulation and dramatically cut medical costs thus easing a “burden” on society.

- c. Yet others would argue that fetal infant body parts should be used for medical research.

C. This principle of “greatest good” _____.

VII. SITUATIONISM

A. “I always consider the situation and do the ‘loving’ thing.”

1. This is also call “_____” and is sometimes taught in our public schools.
2. Situation ethics takes into account the particular context of a “situation” rather than judging a situation according to absolute moral standards like those contained in the Bible.
3. The “Christian form” of situation ethics was espoused by Rudolph Bultman, A. T. Robinson, Karl Barth, Deitrich Bonhoeffer, and Paul Tillich.
 - a. Tillich teaches that “love is the ultimate law”.
 - b. Joseph Fletcher stated, “All laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love.”

B. The followers of this philosophy usually say that:

1. They are looking for _____ solutions to moral problems - not idealistic unworkable solutions.
2. They insist that people must be valued above principles or laws.
 - a. Therefore they say that a person who is facing a moral dilemma must find a “workable” solution that is loving and kind - even if it means that a person must beak a law.

C. In Christian situation ethics there are four working principles:

1. Pragmatism: An action someone makes should be judged according to the love influenced in it.
 - a. The question one needs to ask oneself is “What is the most loving thing to do?”

- b. War may not to a situationist be considered the most loving thing and thus it is deemed morally wrong.
2. Relativism: Approach every situation with a “relative” mindset and thus avoid legalistic approaches. Avoid words such as never, complete, and perfect!
 3. Positivism: The most important choice of all teaching is found in 1 John 4:7-12.

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is of God; and every one that love is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

4. Personalism: The legalist thinks people should work to obey laws, but the situationalist believes laws are for the benefit of people.
 - a. This stresses the importance of people before laws.
 - b. It also stresses the “ends justifies the means”.

D. In the non-Christian world of situation ethics, under this kind of thinking:

1. It is OK to have sex outside marriage “if you really love that person and are probably going to marry them anyway”.
 - a. Or it is OK to “live together”, this way you will find out if you two are really meant for each other thus you will avert a divorce (which is good).
 - b. It should be acceptable for two people of the same sex to be married as long as they are faithful to one another and that they love one another.

“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”
Leviticus 20:13

“And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.” Leviticus 20:15-16

2. This is the pervasive underlying belief that drives the sex education programs in our public schools.
 - a. Forget about “abstinence”.
- E. The problem with this thinking does not consider that fact that there is _____ who does not merely sweep sin under the rug, or does He ever look the other way and ignore it.
 1. It allows a person to justify their own sinful behavior.
 2. What we see today as a result of these types of philosophy are people like a Jack Kevorkian or our political leaders who have allowed the use of “fetal” tissue for experimentation and the sale of baby body parts. Consider 2 Samuel 6.

VIII. GOD

It is when we consider the fourth approach in considering who sets the rules. “
_____.”

- A. This belief has _____.”

“For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Malachi 3:6a

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Hebrews 13:8

1. We are to submit ourselves to His teachings for they represent His will for mankind and mankind’s best hope.
 - a. The “ends” do not justify the means!

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made the at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”
Matthew 19:4-6

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”
Exodus 20:12

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 14:12

IX. BAKER’S DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS, edited by Carl Henry

Baker Publishers has produced a 725 page hardback dictionary discussing hundreds of topics from the perspective of Christian ethics. It is edited by Carl Henry and has over 150 contributing authors.