

Developing a Biblical Worldview: Ethics

Intro: Ethics and Morality Defined

- Ethics - The study of moral conduct, values, duties, and goodness.
- Morality - A personal standard of determining right and wrong.

Foundational Ethics Theories:

- Teleological Theory - Teleological theories judge actions as right or wrong by their end results or purposes, that is, the desired and intended consequences that their actions will lead to. Such theories ask questions like, "What is the good life?", "What is the purpose or end of a good life?", and/or "How might the good life be secured for as many people as possible?". It includes such philosophies as:
 - Hedonism - Human beings should maximize their own personal pleasure.
 - Eudaimonism - The purpose of human existence is to live a life of flourishing.
 - Utilitarianism - What is ethical is to pursue the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
 - Ethical Egoism - The good life is being free to look after one's own interests.
 - Ethical libertarianism - People live best when they have liberty but agree to not harm others.
 - Moral Skepticism - Objective moral knowledge is either inaccessible or impossible.
 - Pragmatism - Since truth is whatever works, morality is whatever is useful for society.
 - Existentialism - Since we create our own meaning, we ought to do whatever helps us become our most authentic selves.
- Deontological Theory - Any ethical system that judges the morality of actions based upon some principle of duty. Rests on the belief that right and wrong actually exist independent of our situations or circumstances. The ethical question then becomes who to actually understand right and wrong and do what's right. These theories are very compelling to those who believe in absolute moral standards. It includes such philosophies as:
 - Transcendentalism - Our duty as humans is to figure out what is good without qualification and then pursue it.
 - Rationalism - God has made us as thinking beings, so we must use our reasoning ability to live virtuously.

Ethics: The Biblical View

- God is Good:
 - Genesis 1-2: God sees things as good and not good. Things please Him and He approves. Things fail to please Him and He disapproves.
 - Mark 10:17-18: No one is good except God alone.
- God is Ethical:
 - Exodus 34:5-7
 - Romans 3:21-26
 - Revelation 20:7-21:8
- God reveals Ethics
 - Genesis 3 - Adam and Eve are broken in sin but now also know right and wrong. This knowledge will pass to all their descendants.
 - Exodus 20:1-17 - The Ten Commandments reveal specific right and wrongs
 - Matt. 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount adds authoritative interpretation to the 10 commandments
 - Romans 1:18-2:5 - God has revealed Himself in clarity; Men are without excuse
- The Heart of Christian Ethics is Love of God and Others
 - Matt. 22:34-40
 - 1 John 3:1; 3:11; 3:23; 4:7-5:4
 - John 14:15; 15:12-13
 - Deut. 6:4-9
- We must define love for God as God defines it. Love is unconditional and unmerited. From God it is based on the goodness of the Lover Who gives value to the beloved. We love only after we experience His love in salvation. Love is, therefore, the giving of oneself for the good and pleasure of another. Primarily action oriented not emotion oriented.
- At the heart of God's ethics is our good.
- We must Know Jesus Truly; Love Jesus Fully; and Follow Jesus Faithfully. Following the rules to try and know Him is a dead-end street.

Ethics: The Human View

- **Secular Humanism**
 - **Moral Relativism** - the belief that morality is relative to, or defined by, the individual or culture.
 - **Situation Ethics** - the belief that the morality of an action is determined by the unique situation of that action.
 - **Scientism** - the philosophical belief that reliable knowledge is obtained solely through the scientific method.
- **Marxism**
 - **Proletariat Morality** - the belief that whatever advances the proletariat and communism is morally good, and whatever hinders the proletariat and communism is morally evil.
- **Post-Modernism**
 - **Cultural Relativism** - the belief that truth and morals are relative to one's local, small community.
- **New Age**
 - **Karma** - the belief that good is returned to those who do good, and evil is returned to those who do evil (either in this life or the next).

Ethical Dilemmas

- **Antinomianism** - there are no laws, absolute or relative. Good and bad; Right and wrong do not exist. Ex. Lying is neither right nor wrong.
- **Situationism** - There is only one universal law and that is love. Ex. Lying is sometimes right if done in love.
- **Generalism** - There are no universal, absolute laws. Ex. Lying is generally wrong.
- **Unqualified Absolutism** - There are no actual conflicting laws, the conflict is only apparent. Ex. Lying is always wrong as is aiding murder but there is a way out.
- **Conflicting Absolutism** - There are many conflicting laws, violate the lesser of the two laws. Ex. Lying is wrong but forgivable. Murder is worse.
- **Graded Absolutism** - There are higher laws and lower laws. Ex. Lying may be right in order to save an innocent life.