

THY KINGDOM COME #18
Developing A Biblical Worldview

I. Introduction

The topic of our teaching tonight is...

“By What Standard?”
An Introduction to Christian Ethics

Tonight we continue our teaching on “Developing A Biblical Worldview”; we are learning how to see all of life through the lens of scripture. For example, let’s consider the current condition of our American culture...

We are living today in an America that seems similar in some ways to Israel during the days of the Prophet Jeremiah, when he cried out to the Lord...

Jeremiah 12:1

Righteous are You, O Lord, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously?

Can we identify with Jeremiah?

We are led by leaders who lie to us. They give us taxation without representation. They label patriots as traitors while they themselves disregard the Constitution. Yet they seem to prosper! They seem too get away with it. They get re-elected. It reminds me of the condition of the country under another prophet...

Isaiah 59:11-12;14-15

We look for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us... Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. (honesty can’t enter). So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

Isaiah 59:15 NLT

Truth is gone, and anyone who renounces evil is attacked.

Notice what's missing? Justice-Righteousness-Truth-Honesty

These are all ethical issues dealing with moral values.

Even the world is waking up to the problem of American immorality.

Gallup Poll, June 2022

A record-high 50% of Americans rate the overall state of moral values in the U.S. as "poor," and another 37% say it is "only fair." 78% think our moral values are getting worse. Just 1% think the state of moral values is "excellent" and 12% "good."

(These are the highest negative ratings in the past 20 years of polling)

The Gallup Poll is a *secular* poll; but the Christian surveys show the same thing.

Cultural Research Center Survey

Ongoing research from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University paints a bleak picture of our nation's radically shifting moral landscape, with Americans no longer looking to biblical truth for moral guidance and increasingly rejecting traditional values that have defined us as a nation since our founding.

Dr. Tracy Munsil

Executive Director, Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University
Our nation is facing a potential moral freefall unthinkable to earlier generations—with a majority of Americans today no longer embracing values of honesty, respect for the rule of law, the sanctity of life, and traditional sexual morality when facing moral issues.

The scariest section of the survey shows the moral breakdown is not limited to the world...

Arizona Christian University

The research shows this seismic shift of morality is occurring even among people of faith. Although born-again Christians in the survey were three times as likely to rely on the Bible for primary moral guidance, less than half (48%) do so.

I'm old enough to testify this is true. I never thought I would see...

- Politicians who claim to be Christian demanding abortion on demand
- Professing Christians supporting and voting for pro-abortion politicians
- Christian churches with Marxist BLM flags in front of their churches
- Christian churches putting Gay Pride flags in front of their churches
- So called Christian denominations performing same-sex marriage and ordaining homosexuals to the ministry

The Apostle Paul rebuked the elders in the church at Corinth for not excommunicating a member who was involved in known fornication.

1 Corinthians 5:12

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

Paul did not point to the problem of sin in the world but sin in the church. God did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because there were so many sinners but because there were too few righteous.

Theme

The moral meltdown in America tells us too many Christians have no biblical worldview on the subject of ethics and morality.

II. An Introduction to Christian Ethics

A. We Begin With The Definition Terms

1. Many make the mistake of confusing ethics and morality. This is important!

Ethics and Morality

Are similar but not the same. Morality is descriptive; the study of the way things are. Ethics is normative; the study of the way thing ought to be.

Our ethics tell us what we ought to do. Our morality is revealed in what we do.

2. Morality is defined by our behavior. We are moral or immoral based on what we do. But *our morality is determined by our ethics*.

a. We don't have a moral problem, we have an ethical problem!

3. Our ethics tells us how we ought to behave. The simplest definition of ethics is from the 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant...

Immanuel Kant
Ethics is "oughtness".

4. The formal definition of ethics holds the key for the Christian...

Ethics
The moral principles that govern a person's behavior; our ethics determine how we define good and evil, what is morally good and bad and morally right and wrong.

5. The great ethical question of life is, 'how do you define good and evil'? How do you know what is good and what is evil?

6. If you have a biblical worldview, this ethical question about the knowledge of good and evil takes you back to the Garden of Eden, and the one thing God denied mankind.

Genesis 2:16-17
And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

7. Remember that the definition of ethics is 'how we define good and evil'; so based on that, the issue here is an *ethical* issue?

a. God gave man the freedom to enjoy all of His creation; He set no limits upon them except one...He did not give them the freedom to 'determine good and evil' apart from what God Himself would reveal to them.

b. God would not allow them to establish their own ethics!

8. The so called 'forbidden fruit' was over the 'knowledge of good and evil; so the center of Satan's assault was on the issue of ethics.

Genesis 3:4-5

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

9. You know they fell for it. And took the whole human race into separation from God. But don't miss this important point. Remember I said, 'our morality is determined by our ethics'. This is what happened here: Their change in ethics came before they committed immorality.

Gary DeMar

The fall of the human race was over ethics.

10. God's issue with the human race is not primarily a MORAL issue; it is an ETHICAL issue. It's beyond behavior. It's not just DOING good or evil (morality); it's about DEFINING good and evil (ethics).

B. What Is The Christian Ethic?

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German Pastor-Theologian had some profound things to say about all this in his book, "Ethics".

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The knowledge of good and evil is the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge. In launching this attack on the underlying assumptions of all other ethics, Christian ethics stands so completely alone that it becomes questionable whether there is any purpose of speaking of Christian ethics at all.

a. Follow carefully what he is saying: **The aim of all ethical study is the knowledge of good and evil; and our first job is to invalidate this knowledge; we must renounce it; we must do away with it.** We must all begin by saying, "I, of

myself, have no knowledge of good and evil. Apart from God, I do not even know what it is!" This is a declaration of humility, a confession of our inability.

b. Then he goes on to say that the Christian ethic repudiates all other ethical systems, since in one way or another, they claim to have a 'knowledge of good and evil' apart from God.

c. Even the subject of Christian ethics makes no sense apart from the revelation of God.

d. Bonhoeffer goes on to make the point that, for the Christian, there is no meaning, or knowledge, or true understanding of anything apart from God!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Christian ethics claims to discuss the origin of the whole problem of ethics, and thus professes to be a critique of all ethics simply as ethics. Man at his origin knows only one thing: God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

It is only in the unity of the knowledge of God that he knows of other men, other things, and of himself. He knows all things only in God, and God in all things. The knowledge of good and evil shows that he is no longer at one with his origin.

e. The biblical worldview is at war with all other worldviews and ethical systems because it unifies all things 'in the unity of the knowledge of God'.

f. The last line is powerful: Anyone who claims to know good and evil apart from God has proven that they are separated from God!

2. Why? Because the knowledge of good and evil does not come from man; it can only come from God. Unless there is a God, good and evil do not even exist.

Dr. William L. Craig, Talbot Theological Seminary

I think that we cannot truly be good without God, because without God, good and evil (as such) do not exist. Without God, we cannot be good, but neither can we be evil without God. In the absence of God, everything is relative. Moral values just become personal expressions of taste.

a. If there is no God, there is no standard; as the Book of Judges says, 'every one does what is right in their own eyes'; or...

Fyodor Dostoevsky

If there is no God, everything is permitted.

3. If there is no God, there are no fixed laws; no absolute truth; nothing but new value systems made up in the minds of men who forget...

Randall Niles

Moral values are discovered, not invented by, humans.

4. The American Christian community needs to repent of its complicity with world systems that seek to save us with new value systems that replace God's.

C.S. Lewis

The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary color, or indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in.

5. Human ethics and morality are subject to change; God's ethical principles do not.

a. Example: Up until just a very few years ago, every state in the Union had laws prohibiting the practice of sodomy (homosexuality)

b. These laws were based on the Judeo-Christian ethic

c. Today, almost all of these same states have legalized sodomy; some even celebrate it.

d. The question is, "What **changed?**" It wasn't the immorality; it was the ethics of those who passed the laws. But making immorality legal doesn't change its nature.

Dr. John Stevenson

We get the wrong idea that if something is legal, it is ethical.

e. History has proven we can legalize the unethical.

Unethical Supreme Court Legal Decisions

1857-The 'Dread Scott Decision' ruled that African-Americans are not protected by the Constitution (overturned)

1973-'Roe Vs. Wade' legalized abortion (Overturned)

2015-'Obergefell Vs. Hodges recognized same-sex marriages (?)

6. All of this proves the point you cannot separate religion from politics because you cannot separate legislation from morality. Somebody is going to decide what good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral, and pass laws accordingly.

- a. Some say 'you can't legislate morality'. But all legislation is moral.
- b. All laws are based on ethics...somebody's ethics.

7. When you have a nation in a moral meltdown you need to know what to do.

1 Chronicles 12:32

The sons of Issachar understood the times, to know what Israel ought to do...

III. Close

A. Review

- Our nation is in a moral meltdown

The moral meltdown in America tells us too many Christians have no biblical worldview on the subject of ethics and morality.

- God's people need to repent of our own 'knowledge of good and evil' and follow the model of Jesus
- Even Jesus, though He was God in the flesh, refused to offer His own opinions on ethics!

John 7:16

"Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is *not Mine*, but His who sent Me."

John 8:28-29

"Jesus therefore said...I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things *as the Father taught Me*. "

John 14:10

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? *The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative..*, but the Father abiding in Me does His works."

It's time for the church to speak to the culture on every moral and ethical issue; not out of our own knowledge of good and evil; but by the revelation given us in the word of God!

Closing Prayer

Title