

*Understanding Ethics:
A Christian Perspective*

*Summary, conclusions
and reflections*

1 a. *Understanding Ethics*

- This is «**a foundation course**» (UCU), intended to:
 - *Provide* a Christian perspective on understanding ethics
 - As a foundation
 - As bridge-building
 - *Integrate*
 - faith and learning
 - faith and living
- «**Mission in 3D**» – «... bearing witness to Jesus Christ and all that he taught – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas»

(The Cape Town Commitment, 2011)

1 b. «Learning outcomes ...

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- appreciate the necessity of ethical thinking and moral practice in contemporary life
- gain an understanding of a classical Christian ethical perspective
- gain skills of applying this knowledge to key current global, social and personal issues
- gain knowledge of selected theoretical foundations for ethical thinking that are influential and relevant today
- attain particular ability to apply ethical thinking to contemporary African challenges”

1 c. An overview of themes

- **Ethical foundations**

- What is ethics?
- The moral and ethical teaching of the Old Testament
- The moral and ethical teaching of Jesus Christ
- Christian ethics

- **Key issues (selected)**

- Global issues: caring for creation / human rights
- Social issues: celebrating ethnic diversity
- Personal issues: sexual issues / issues of life and death

2 a. *Three practical questions*

- 1) What is your feedback on *The Bible and Ethics*?
- 2) Which three issues do you want to choose for your reading?
- 3) Which one of the three chosen issues would you like to select for your essay?

2 b. Instructions for writing the essay:

- Write a 4000 word essay on a selected issue
- Follow **the five step model** in your essay:
 1. Identifying the issue (750 words)
 2. Understanding the issue (750 words)
 3. Analysing the issue (500 words)
 4. Contributing to the issue – a Christian perspective (1000 words)
 5. Responding to the issue – case study / studies (1000 words)
- Remember to use and engage with the required and recommended literature!

2 c. A five step approach

- 1) What is the issue and why is it relevant?
- 2) How can we understand the issue better?
- 3) What are the key principles and values at stake?
- 4) What is the distinctive contribution from a Christian ethical perspective?
- 5) How should the ethical response be – e.g. from (a) Christian journalists in mainstream news media? (b) Christian communication workers in church media? (c) Christian local churches?

3. *Contextual issues*

Required reading: Stott / McCloughry, 23-94; Lennox / Gooding

- a) *Our Changing World: Is Christian Involvement Necessary?*
- b) *Our Complex World: Is Christian Thinking Distinctive?*
- c) *Our Plural World: Is Christian Witness Influential?*

3 a. *Is Christian Involvement Necessary?*

- **Historical** perspectives (UK and the world):
 - The heritage of evangelical social concern
 - «The great reversal»
 - The recovery of evangelical social concern (cf. Lausanne 1974)
- The Church and «**politics**»
 - Broad or narrow definition of «politics»?
 - The difference between social service and social action
 - The danger of the «politicization» of Christianity
- **Authoritarianism, anarchism or democracy?**
- The **difference** in Christian involvement between the church and individual Christians

3 b. *Is Christian Thinking Distinctive?*

- *«What is needed is to develop a Christian mind and that means analysing the issues, reading the Scriptures, listening to others and taking action.»*
(John Stott)
- **The five foundations**: A fuller doctrine of a) God, b) human beings, c) Jesus Christ, d) salvation, e) the church.
- **The fourfold framework** for a Christian mind: a) Creation, b) Fall, c) Redemption, d) Hope / Consummation.
- **Three applications**: a) the reality of God, b) the human enigma, c) the possibility of social change.
- **The four gifts**: a) our minds, b) the Bible, c) the Holy Spirit, d) the Christian community.

3 c. *Is Christian Witness Influential?*

- Coming to terms with pluralism in the West – and increasingly globally:
 - The decline of the institutional church (secularization)
 - The rise of religious alternatives
 - The fragmentation of the nature of belief
- Three responses to pluralism:
 - Neither imposition nor laissez-faire but persuasion – because of who God is and who we as humans are (cf. conscience)
- Fragmentation and alienation as believers
- The nature of Christian influence:
 - Christians should be both distinctive and influential

3 c. cont'd

- Our response:
 - Prayer and evangelism: the power of prayer and the gospel
 - Witness and protest: to bear witness to the truth
 - Demonstration and organization: truth demonstrated

«We should delight that nobody is too insignificant to be used by God to change the world.» (John Stott)

4. Concluding reflections

- Each and every Christian is called «to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all that he taught – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas» (*The Cape Town Commitment*)
 - «Mission in 3D»
 - The integrity of the message and the messenger
- As disciples of Jesus Christ, every Christian is called to be «salt and light» (Matthew 5:13-16). This is definitely true in the whole area of media:
 - <http://engagingmedia.info/media-engagement-a-global-missiological-task/>