

Christian Ethics – An Overview

Understanding Ethics: A Christian Perspective

I. The Impact of Creation

- It all starts with the reality of God as Creator and Sustainer.
- There is an emphasis on the unique dignity of every human being.
- There is an emphasis on the ethical responsibility of every human being (cf. character development, care, stewardship)
- The key values expressed in The Ten Commandments are sound ethical instructions for everyone.

«Creation ethics» is intended for everyone, but must not be imposed.

II. The Impact of the Fall (sin)

- The Bible presents us with a realistic view of
 - The universe
 - Human beings
 - Evil
- We must distinguish between two different levels:
 - The reality of sin means that we are (1) *incapable* of self-salvation, (2) *vulnerable* to self-deception, and (3) *dependent* on healthy influence.
 - The reality of sin does NOT mean that we are incapable of (1) good motives, (2) good attitudes, and (3) good, caring and just actions.

Reflections / discussions

| The key values in The Ten Commandments | Relevant for which global, social and personal issues? |
|---|--|
| * the sanctity of <u>our allegiance to God</u> | |
| * the sanctity of <u>love, marriage and family life</u> | |
| * the sanctity of <u>life</u> | |
| * the sanctity of <u>private property</u> | |
| * the sanctity of <u>truth</u> | |
| | |

III. The Impact of the Death of Christ

1. A new life

- A new start (2 Cor. 5:17ff)
- New terms and conditions for living

2. A new ethical motivation

- A new ethic of love and gratitude
- The ethic of moral consistency («died to sin»)
- The ethics of redemption

3. A new system of values

- Our use of time (service)
- A new value on people

Reflections / discussions

- The Cross and a new life:
 - «You shall love you neighbour as yourself». Why is that a «new» commandments? P. 263
- The Cross and a new system of values:
 - «Conscience is like a watch» p. 275

IV. The Impact of the Resurrection of Christ

The Resurrection gave the disciples a completely new worldview: Death is not the end.

The effects of this new worldview:

- 1) Changed their attitudes towards property and possession
- 2) Freed them from the tyranny of the fear of death
- 3) Motivated them for engaging spiritual forces

Reflections / discussions

- «And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins.» (1 Cor. 15:17) p. 282.
 - How important is the Resurrection of Jesus?
 - What are the implications for Christian ethics?

See also appendix B (pp. 331-363)

V. The Impact of the Coming of the Holy Spirit

1) A new relationship

A deep personal experience of a new relationship to God:

- They have become children of God.
- They have received the Holy Spirit

2) A new outlook on reality

- A transformation in attitudes to personal property
- A new evaluation of the human body («a temple»)
- A new entity: the Body of Christ
- A new internationalism

VI. The Impact of the Second Coming of Christ

1) Thinking, living and working in hope

- A part of conversion and a part of life (1 Thess. 1:9-10)
- An incentive to work (due to future reward)

2) A purifying hope and a promise of justice and peace

- A shaping process («now»)
- A promise of participation («then»)

Transition to issues ...

- We are now moving from an overview of Christian ethics to:
 - Contextual issues
 - Is Christian involvement necessary?
 - Is Christian thinking distinctive?
 - Is Christian witness influential?
 - Key issues
 - Global issues
 - Social issues
 - Personal issues