

# *Christian Ethics*

*or*

*"How to live right  
in a wrong world"*

by Rick Shoemaker

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## INTRODUCTION

Luke tells us the believers in Berea "Searched the scriptures daily" to make sure what Paul and Silas had told them was what the Bible taught (Acts 17:11). There are four things about the Bereans that should be true about us.

The Bereans *respected* the Scriptures. They saw the Scriptures as God's Word and something to honor and respect. It was not just another book to them.

The Bereans *received* the Scriptures. They believed what the Scripture said and they accepted it as the guide to their lives.

The Bereans *researched* the Scriptures. They searched the Scripture daily to make sure what Paul and Silas had told them was correct. God uses people to teach and preach, but people can be wrong.

The Bereans *responded* to the Scriptures. They did not just listen and learn, they did what the Scriptures said. We are to be "*Doers of the word, and not hearers only*" (Jam. 1:22 emphasis added).

These four points are what this study is all about.

Moses told the people of Israel "This day the LORD thy God hath *commanded* thee to *do* these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore *keep* and *do* them with *all thine heart*, and with *all thy soul*" (Dt 26:16 emphasis added).

The following is my feeble attempt to examine the Word of God and see what it tells us to do.

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **1. CHRISTIAN ETHICS EXPLAINED**

As with any subject, we need to explain what we are discussing.

##### **A. THE "WHAT" OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

What exactly is "Christian Ethics"?

The 1828 Webster Dictionary defines the word "ethics" as, "A system of moral principles; a system of rules for regulating the actions and manners of men in society.

As we will discover, the world has its own system of ethics and self-made rules that guide the way they live.

The Christian, however, lives by different guidelines and measure by a different ruler. The old-fashioned believer may use the terms "Christian standards" or "Bible convictions" when referring to Christian ethics.

So, "Christian" ethics are the Biblical guidelines that control how we live our lives. They tell us what is right and what is wrong.

Christian ethics answers the questions, how do we live in a way that pleases and honors God and how do we live in harmony with the people in our lives?

With that thought in mind, Christian ethics can be defined as, "What the Bible says about the actions, attitudes, appearance, and amusement of a believer".

*.God is concerned about our actions.* What we do matters to Him. If it matters to Him, it ought to matter to us.

*God is concerned about our attitude.* Our actions refer to what we do, our attitude refers to why we do what we do. God wants us to do right for the right reason.

*God is concerned about our appearance.* God does look at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7) but He also cares about our appearance. Man sees what we wear, God sees why we wear it.

*God is concerned about our amusements.* God is not opposed to us having a good time or enjoying ourselves. But, He opposed us living for pleasure and going to the world trying to find it.

## B. THE "WHO" OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Who exactly is under the authority of the guidelines we are discussing in this study of Christian ethics? The simple answer is, everyone.

All though there are some principles that apply only to Israel, the general guidelines found in the Bible are for everyone, everywhere, of all times. Christian ethics apply to every person on earth, no matter their country, culture, or circumstances.

The person's environment does not excuse them from the demands of Scripture. The modern world believes a person's environment should excuse their behavior. They believe the man who committed a crime should be let go because he had a difficult childhood. The fact is, even though our environment can have a tremendous effect on our mentality, it does not excuse our bad behavior. Wrong is still wrong, no matter how we were raised.

We should realize, since God is the Creator of all things, He has the right to tell mankind how to live. In our day, everyone talks about their rights. There are human rights, women's rights, black rights, animal rights, and gay rights. The fact is, mankind has no rights other than what God, by His grace, gives them. That means if God says something is right, it is right. If He says something is wrong, it is wrong. Our opinion does not matter.

The standards God gives in the Bible are a reflection of who He is. The Bible is not a rule book written by the warden of our prison. It is a love letter from a loving God who wants the best for mankind.

### C. *THE "WHERE" OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS*

If ethics are the moral principles that govern our daily lives, where should these principles come from? Where do we find the guidelines that determine how we are to live?

We can get our principles for living from four places.

- *We can get our life principles from Satan*

The devil is all too ready to fill our hearts and heads with his ungodly philosophy.

Lucifer's first attack against man was to twist God's word. He said to Eve, "hath God said" (Ge 3:1). Then, Lucifer lied. He said "Ye shall not surely die" (Ge 3:3). Next, he tried to convince Eve that God was withholding something good from them. He said "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Ge 3:5).

Paul said that the same thing could happen to us that happened to Eve (2 Co 11:3).

The devil has not changed his method of attack. He is still walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The Bible warns us about the "wiles" of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Jesus said the devil was a "liar and the father of it" (Jn. 8:44). You cannot trust a liar.

Most importantly, for this study at least, Paul tells us "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He pretends to be a representative of God.

- *We can get our life principles from society*

Society actually has some good rules. There are laws forbidding murder or stealing. There are laws to keep us safe as we drive. There are rules at work to help us do our job better. These rules are good and helpful.

However, when it comes to spiritual matters, society falls far short.

The Bible calls human society the "world". The world is that Christless system that focuses on that which is of the earth, instead of heaven. It is of man and not of God.

God tells us to "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*" (1 Jn. 2:15 emphasis added). We are to overcome the world, not be overcome by the world (1 Jn. 5:4-5). We are not to be "conformed" by the world (Rom. 12:2). The believer is to be crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14).

Since the philosophy of the world is based on man's intellect and impulses it offers no real and lasting help for mankind. A system that rejects Christ and the Bible cannot offer any real benefit to mankind.

The Bible has much to say about the world (1 Jn. 4:5; Jn. 15:19; Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:4; 6:14; Eph. 2:2; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:10).

If we compare ourselves with others, we may measure out pretty well. When we measure ourselves by the Word of God we all fall far short (Rom. 3:23).

- *We can get our life principles from self*

We can devise our own set of rules. We may be sincere in our beliefs, but we may be sincerely wrong. We cannot trust ourselves. Jeremiah said "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: *who can know it*" (Je 17:9 emphasis added).

The awful results of man setting his own rules can be seen in the days of the Judges. The Book of Judges covers approximately 330 years of Israel's history.

During those years, God blessed the people of Israel. Sadly, instead of appreciating God's goodness, they devoured His blessings and fell into sin. Their disobedience forced God to judge them. His judgment caused them to repent and get right with God. Then, God would begin to bless them again and the whole thing started again. It was a vicious cycle of disobedience, judgment, repentance, restoration, blessings, and return to disobedience. It is a perfect example of what happens when man runs his life without God.

The Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 17:6).

This verse reveals two problems during the time of the judges.

One, "There was no king in Israel". When there is no common standard the result will be chaos.

Two, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes". Everyone did what "felt right" to them. Nothing good can come out of such a thing.

- *We can get our life principles from Scripture*

Of course, the Scripture is the only dependable source of truth.

The Psalmist said "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105).

The "lamp unto my feet" refers to a lamp used to show the ground at the feet of the traveler which revealed only his next step. The "light unto my path" refers to a light used to light the path out ahead so the traveler could see some distance ahead. The Word of God does both, it shows us how to make our next step, and how to plan for the future.

God said His Word is "*Profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Ti 3:16 emphasis added). That means, the Word tells us how God wants us to live and teach us how to live it.

It is easy to find a verse as a proof text but we need to take the Bible as a whole when determining what it says about a particular subject. For instance, reading about God and learning about His character will help us understand His desire when dealing with situations in our lives that are not clearly addressed in the Bible.

Some may wonder if the Old Testament has any relevance during New Testament times. As New Testament believers, we are not bound by the ceremonial requirements of the Old Testament, but we can find moral and spiritual insight in the Old Testament that will apply to our modern lives.

Paul said "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom.15:4). That means, we can look in the Old Testament and get help to know how to live today.

We should realize, there are no contradictions or errors in the Word of God. If there is an issue between us and the Bible, we are the ones in error.

The goal of this study is not just to teach us what we are to avoid or reject. It is my desire that we learn how to apply the principles of the Scripture so we make wise decisions about life and how to live it.

#### *D. THE "WHY" OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS*



The question arises, why should we care about Christian ethics? Why should we govern our lives according to a book that is centuries old?

We will look at this point in more detail later in this study, but for now, I'd just like to say there is more to Christian ethics than a bunch of rules. God does not want a bunch of robots unconsciously obeying His rules and following His commands. He wants us to obey Him because we love Him. That takes a willing submission within our hearts, not just a cold and fearful adherence to the rules.

For this reason, the first step in obeying God starts with getting saved. Nicodemus was a religious Pharisee who kept the rules of the Old Testament (Jn. 3:1). But, Jesus told him he had to be "born again (Jn. 3:3-7).

Jesus told of another Pharisee who lived right, fasted twice a week, and gave of all he possessed. But, he was lost and his life did not please God (Lk. 18:9-14).

If you have never been saved and had your sin forgiven, please confess your sin to God right now and ask Him to forgive you and save you. The Bible says "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom.10:13).

## **CHAPTER ONE STUDY GUIDE**

1. In your own words, define Christian ethics.
2. God is concerned about our \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A person's environment excuses them from the demands of Scripture (True or False).
4. Name the four places where we can get our principles for living.
5. The Bible calls human society the \_\_\_\_\_ .

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. CHRISTIAN ETHICS EXPLORED**

I love to explore. Whether a path through the woods or the busy downtown in a large city, I love finding something I have never seen before.

The 1828 Webster Dictionary defines "explore" as "To search for making discovery; to view with care; to examine closely by the eye".

If we are to truly comprehend the subject of Christian ethics, we must become explorers of truth. There are some things we will need if we are to become spiritual explorers.

#### A. A SPIRITUAL EXPLORER NEEDS SPIRITUAL DESIRE

A spiritual explorer, like any explorer, needs a sincere desire to discover that which they have never seen before.

The Lord said through Paul "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Ti 2:15). The word "study" means "to make an effort" and carries the thought of being eager. Paul reminds us of the importance of having an eager desire to know God's Word and will.

A spiritual explorer should have the eagerness of a prospector.

The Bible is full of gold nuggets of truth that can enrich our lives. A believer should search out those nuggets with the eagerness of a prospector searching for gold.

In 1848, the news of gold being found caused an estimated 300,000 people to hurry to California. Some came as far as 3,000 miles and endured the horrible conditions of travel for up to six months. They did it because they had a desire to discover gold.

If the chance of discovering gold would cause so many to travel so far, how much more should believers desire the golden nuggets of God's Word?

A spiritual explorer should have the thirst of a newborn.

Peter said, "As newborn babes, *desire* the sincere milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2 emphasis added). The word "desire" means "to long for".

Paul warned of a time when people would have no desire for the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:3). Unfortunately, it appears that we are living in those days.

#### B. A SPIRITUAL EXPLORER NEEDS SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Explorers must have discernment of their surroundings. They must stay alert and pay attention to that which they are exploring.

Likewise, as spiritual explorers, we need a God-given discernment if we are to understand what the Bible says about any particular subject.

John wrote "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try the spirits whether they are of God*: because *many false prophets* are gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1 emphasis added).

First, John warns us to not "believe" everything we hear because there are many false teachers. Jeremiah talked about prophets that "prophesy falsely" (Jer. 5:31). Jesus said "Beware of false prophets" (Mt. 7:15). He also said, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Mt. 24:4). Peter said there "shall be false teachers among you" (2 Pet. 2:1).

Second, John tells us to "try" the spirits. The word "try" means "to test". It has the idea of testing metals to determine their purity and value. We need to test what we are hearing by comparing it to what the Bible says. I mentioned earlier about the Bereans who "searched the scriptures daily" to see if what they had heard was true (Acts 17:11).

### *C. A SPIRITUAL EXPLORER NEEDS SPIRITUAL DETERMINATION*

The path of an explorer is not always easy. In like fashion, an in-depth study of God's Word is not easy. For that reason, a spiritual explorer needs a determination to keep going when it gets difficult.

It isn't easy because of the opposition. We have an enemy who tries his best to hinder us from learning God's Word. He tries to discourage and deceive us.

It isn't easy because we are limited. We have a limited amount of time to devote to study. We have a limited amount of intelligence and memory. Sadly, that worsens the older we get.

Seeing these things are so, we need to ask God to give us some spiritual determination to keep exploring the truth of God.

Thankfully, by His grace, God will give us supernatural insight into the truth we seek. What a blessing it is when God opens our eyes and shows us golden nuggets of truth.

## **CHAPTER TWO STUDY GUIDE**

1. To comprehend the subject of Christian ethics, we must become explorers of \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Name the three things a spiritual explorer needs.
3. The word "study" means \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Jesus said "Beware of \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. God will give us a \_\_\_\_\_ into the truth we seek.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. CHRISTIAN ETHICS ENCOURAGED**

This part of our study has more to do with the *student* who is studying than the *subject* we are studying.

Here, we will answer the question "why". Why we should care about Christian ethics. Why we are spending so much time and effort on this subject? Most importantly, why does God encourage us to live by the standards that Christian ethics teach?

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will make us like Jesus*

God wants to conform us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:9). The word "conformed" means "to resemble". Being conformed into His image means we become like Him.

Being like Jesus does not mean we should wear sandals and robes as He did. It does mean we should live, think, talk, and react like He did. The early disciples were called "Christians" because they reminded people of Christ by how they were living (Acts 11:26).

Jesus could rightly say, "I do always those things that please him" (Jn 8:29). Peter said, Jesus left us an example, that we "should follow his steps" (1 Pe 2:21). Jesus' first words to Peter and Andrew were "follow me" (Mt. 4:18). Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Co 11:1).

We will never have the deity of Christ, but He does want us to have His lifestyle. Jesus obeyed His Father (Jn. 8:29), lived pure (1 Jn. 3:3), resisted temptation (Mt. 4:1-11), prayed regularly (Lk. 6:12), served others (Jn. 13:12-17), spoke the truth (1 Pet. 2:22), did not retaliate (1 Pet. 2:23), and went after the lost (Lk. 19:10).

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will bring glory to God*

God said "I have created him for my glory" (Is 43:7). That means, God made us for His glory and we should live our lives in a way that will bring glory to Him.

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see *your good works*, and *glorify your Father* which is in heaven" (Mt 5:16 emphasis added).

We "glorify" God by having a godly thought life (Ps. 1:2), talking right (Pro. 25:2), abstaining from sin (1 Co 6:20), loving others (Rom. 15:7), dressing right (1 Co 11:7), and by doing our best (Col. 3:23). We are to glorify God in everything we do. Paul wrote "*Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Co 10:31 emphasis added).

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will please God*

God the Father said He was "well pleased" in His Son (Mt. 12:13). When we live like Jesus, it pleases God. Just knowing we are pleasing our good Father, should be enough to make us live right.

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will produce joy*

There is joy in serving Jesus. David said, "But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice" (Ps 68:3).

The Psalms are full of comments about how living right brings joy (Ps. 19:8; 97:11; 100:2; 119:11).

Jesus said He spoke that their "joy might be I" (Jn.15:11 emphasis added). He said also "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have *peace*" (Jn 16:33 emphasis added).

The believer who lives for self will not experience the joy of the Lord. Isaiah said "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked" (Is 48:22).

The person who can be happy while living a worldly life is not a true believer (Heb. 12:8).

Some may see Christian ethics as shackles that confine. However, they are that which keeps us safe from the harshness of the world around us. A bird in a cage may think the bars on its cage have him in bondage. Actually, those bars are protecting him from flying into the danger of the world where he will be devoured. Those bars are bars of love, not of confinement. So it is with the restrictions God gives us in His Word.

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will quieten our critics*

A sad, grumpy, quick-tempered, carnal, believer is not a good advertisement for the Lord. The life of a believer should be above reproach. No one should be able to rightly accuse us of wrong.

Paul talked to Titus about a lifestyle that could not be condemned (Titus 2:7). Jesus led a blameless life. Pilate said "I find no fault in this man" (Lk. 23:4) and said Jesus was "innocent" (Mt. 27:24). Pilate's wife called Jesus a "just man" (Lk. 23:4). Peter said, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). The writer of Hebrews said Jesus was tempted like all men but was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus Himself said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin" (Jn. 8:46).

- *The Bible encourages Christian ethics because it will enhance our witness*

The lost world gets their view of our God by watching the way we live. Nathan told David his sin with Bathsheba had "given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" (2 Sam. 12:14). Israel's sin caused other nations to blaspheme God. Paul wrote "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Ro 2:24).

Our lifestyle should match our doctrine. We should live what we say we believe. A lost person should be able to look at our lives and know we belong to God. Lot was mocked because he had failed to live a godly lifestyle in Sodom (Ge 19:14).

The world already cares little, or nothing, about Jesus. Many of them are looking for an excuse to reject Him. Sadly, many believers give them an excuse by their unchristian-like lifestyle.

Jesus said "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt 5:16). Our "light" in this dark world is our "good works".

What is your present behavior telling the world about your God?

### **CHAPTER THREE STUDY GUIDE**

1. Chapter three had more to do with the \_\_\_\_\_ than the subject we are studying.
2. In your own words, explain why should we care about Christian ethics.
3. Name two ways we can glorify God \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. The life of a believer should be above \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Our lifestyle should match our \_\_\_\_\_ .

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

#### **4. CHRISTIAN ETHICS ENDANGERED**

In 1973 the United States Congress adopted the "Endangered Species Act of 1973". This legislation was an effort to protect various species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States.

This document states certain species of plants or animals are on the verge of extinction because of lack of "concern and conservation". In essence, that means people have gotten to the place where they do not care enough to do what needs to be done to protect that which is dying.

If that is true of wildlife and plants, it certainly is true of Christian ethics. We have reached the point where Biblical standards should be considered an endangered species. Sadly, most believers do not care enough to do what needs to be done to protect that which is ready to die.

I see three reasons why Christian ethics have become endangered.

#### A. *CHRISTIAN ETHICS HAVE BECOME ENDANGERED BECAUSE OF THE NEGLECT OF SCRIPTURE*

Sadly, the Bible has become an ornament for the coffee table instead of a road map for life. When we neglect our friends, our friendships will suffer. When we neglect a healthy diet, our health will suffer. And, when we neglect the Bible, our spiritual health will suffer.

- *Neglect of Scripture causes confusion*

Lack of God's Word opens us to the devil's lies. Eve must have not listened closely for she twisted God's word it into something God never said (Ge 3:2-3). Her confusion about God's word led to her believe Lucifer's lies and to fall into sin (Ge 3:6).

Many modern universities and colleges are skeptical and antagonistic to the Scriptures. Their, so-called, higher learning attacks anyone who is so "ignorant" as to believe the Bible. These "intellectuals" would rather believe mankind is the product of chance than the act of an Almighty God (cf. Gen. 1;1:). They are not content to just believe this error themselves, they feel compelled to teach it to others.

- *Neglect of Scripture causes compromise*

When the Scripture ceases being a priority in our lives, we will be prone to compromise its message. This has led some believe the Bible is out of date and needs to be updated to our modern way of thinking.

The changing of time has a way of bringing about compromise. What was once considered sinful and was shunned, gradually becomes questionable. That which has become questionable will eventually become tolerated. And, that which has become tolerated will eventually become accepted.

The problem is, while man has shifted, God has not moved. His Word is forever "settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89) and "Shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). Jesus said "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt 24:35). Peter said God's Word "endureth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:25).

God's Word will never become outdated and is up to date as tomorrow's Newspaper.

- *Neglect of Scripture causes change*

When we neglect the Scripture we forget how precise it is. Every single word is inspired and inerrant (Ps. 12:6; 19:7; Pro.30:3; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). In fact, Jesus "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law" (Mt. 5:18). A "jot" refers to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet (yohd). A "tittle" is a tiny extension on a Hebrew letter. A jot and tittle were little more than a stroke of the pen in the Hebrew language. They can be compared to the dot on our English letter "i". If Jesus says even the dot on an "i" will not pass away, what about the rest of Scripture?

God warns about adding to, or taking away from, His Word (Re 22:19). John was referring primarily to the words in the book of Revelation, but it certainly applies to the entire Bible.

Despite this warning, some think nothing about changing the words of Scripture. Approximately 500 English versions of the Bible have been written and close to 100 are in print presently.

The most important problem is the fact that these versions contain hundreds of changes or omissions to the King James Version.

Man can write as many versions as he wants to, but God will never change His Word.

Those who are so quick to change the Scripture should keep in mind the fact that they will stand before God and be held accountable for how they handled the Word of God. Since it is "forever" settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89) we will give account according to the Scripture that God says is His, not what man rewrites.

## ***B. CHRISTIAN ETHICS HAVE BECOME ENDANGERED BECAUSE OF BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF SIN***



All mankind has a sinful nature. If left alone, that sin nature will naturally drag us down.

Gen.6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Job's friend Eliphaz was wrong about Job but he was right when he said man is abominable and filthy and drinks iniquity like water (Job 15:16).

David was right when he said he was shapen in iniquity from his birth (Ps. 51:5). Isaiah was right when he said "But we are all as an unclean thing" (Is 64:6). Jeremiah was right when he said "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Je 17:9).

Jesus certainly was right when he said, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mt 15:19).

Paul said without God we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). He also said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom.7:18) and "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

All the preceding verses remind us of how our sinful nature is never satisfied. Like the drug addict that needs more drugs to get the same high, our sin nature always craves more sin.

It is for this reason, that we need to adhere to the Christian ethics found in the Scripture. The second we let down our guard our sin nature will drag us on a downward path.

### ***C. CHRISTIAN ETHICS HAVE BECOME ENDANGERED BECAUSE OF BECAUSE OF THE NEED OF SINNERS***

Many well-meaning believers, seeing the sinner's need of salvation, will water down the Word in their attempt to bring them to Christ. The message gets changed from "Repent or perish" to "God loves you as you are".

- *This leads to comfortable sinners*

This way of thinking has produced seeker-friendly churches where the sinner is made comfortable. The goal of the seeker-friendly church is to fill the seats. Unfortunately, filling seats has left hearts empty.

This mentality has caused churches to bring worldly attractions into the church. When the world comes in, the Spirit goes out. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is the only hope for the sinner. The sinner needs conviction, not comfort. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will "reprove the world of sin" (Jn. 16:8). Paul told Timothy to "reprove" and "rebuke" (2 Ti 4:2). The "truth" may hurt, but it is the truth, and only the truth, that can make you free (Jn. 8:32).

While the sinners are being coddled, the believers in the church are hearing a message that offers no real help for their daily issues.

- *This leads to carnal saints*

These sinners stay in the church and influence the believers. The end result is, the sinner is changing the church instead of the church changing the sinner.

What makes it worse is, these types of churches are flourishing, which gives the illusion of being blessed by God. That makes preachers and churches who are standing for godly living question themselves because they see, what seems to be, the blessings of God on the churches that are compromising.

## **CHAPTER FOUR STUDY GUIDE**

1. Name the three reasons why Christian ethics have become endangered.
2. Name three things neglect of Scripture will cause.
3. If left alone, our sin nature will naturally \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. God warns us about \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ from His Word (Re 22:19).
5. In your own words, explain why the Bible does not need to be updated.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. CHRISTIAN ETHICS EXPERIENCED**

Having established a measure of understanding of the what, who, and why of Christian ethics, and seen Christian ethics explained, explored, encouraged, and endangered, I'd like to take a look at Christian ethics experienced. I mean by that, putting Christian ethics in shoe leather and living it out in our daily lives.

We will take a close look at some specific situations of life and attempt to determine what the Scripture teaches us about those situations. In this chapter, we attempt to learn how to *experience* Christian ethics I our daily walk through this world.

For this reason, I have entitled this chapter, Christian Ethics Experienced.

## INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS DEALING WITH CHRISTIAN ETHICS

We will look at Christian ethics experienced in separate categories that will include several subjects of study.

### A. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FAITHFULNESS

This section contains several subjects that deal with us being faithful to God, the church, and to others. The Scriptures speak often of the importance of faithfulness in the life of every believer.

God is most definitely concerned about the way we live. Throughout the Bible, He reminds us of the blessing of obeying and the price of disobeying. He puts before us a blessing and a curse. Our obedience, or disobedience, will determine whether we receive the blessing or the curse (Dt. 11:26-28; 28:1-2; 28:15-68). God tells us to choose right instead of wrong (Josh. 24:15; 1 Kg. 18:21).

- *Our faithfulness is connected with an earthly reward*

Our obedience or disobedience will determine how we are rewarded in this life (Num. 32:23; Ps. 7:16; Gal. 6:7). The Bible likens our service for the Lord to "sowing". The amount of our reward will be determined by the amount that we sow. Paul said, "He which *soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully*" (2 Cor. 9:6 emphasis added).

- *Our faithfulness is connected with an eternal reward*

Our obedience or disobedience will determine how we will be rewarded in heaven (Ecc. 12:14; Mt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Co 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). Those who are faithful will receive eternal rewards (Ps. 62:12; Mt. 5:12; 6:4; 16:27; 1 Co 3:13-14). Those who are not faithful will lose the rewards they could have received (1 Co 3:15; Col. 3:25).

## B. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FAITH

This section deals with faith in the life of a believer. Our faith plays a vital role in how we live in this world. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). The writer of Hebrews wrote "Let us *draw near* with a true heart in full *assurance of faith*" (Heb 10:22 emphasis added).

As with all spiritual truths, the devil has attacked faith with a vengeance and is doing all he can to confuse and deceive.

One of the devil's greatest weapons against faith is legalism.

### LEGALISM

#### *The definition of legalism*

Legalism is the belief that a person obtains salvation, and spiritual growth, by adhering to a set of man-made rules. That means legalism denies justification by faith alone (Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9).

Legalism says believers have to adhere to the Old Testament rules, restrictions, and requirements. Paul said to the Galatians, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal.4:10). Legalism emphasizes an outward performance of man instead of an inward work of God.

Legalism places more emphasis on obeying the law than God does and becomes more strict than Scripture. Jesus said, "Howbeit in *vain* do they *worship* me, *teaching* for *doctrines* the *commandments of men*" (Mk 7:7 emphasis added).

God gave the law to show man He needed Jesus. Paul wrote, "Wherefore the law was our *schoolmaster* to *bring* us unto *Christ*, that we might be *justified by faith*" (Gal.3:24 emphasis added).

A "schoolmaster" was a person who was given charge of a child to make sure they received proper education. The Old Testament law is our schoolmaster in that it shows us our helpless state as a sinner and points us to Christ who died for our sin.

Paul continued by saying "But after that faith is come, we are *no longer under a schoolmaster*" (Gal. 3:25 emphasis added). Once the sinner sees their sin and comes to Jesus for forgiveness, the need for the law ends. The law has done what it was meant to do. New Testament grace releases God's people from the bondage of the Old Testament system.

That does not suggest that the Old Testament has no value to the New Testament believer. As we see, the principles found in the Old Testament can assist us in our walk of faith with the Lord. We should follow the morals found in the Old Testament, but we are no longer bound to its priests, sacrifices, feasts, holy days, or rituals. New Testament grace has taken the place of the Old Testament law.

Unfortunately, the Jews did not let go of the Old Testament system so easily. The Law had been all they had known all their lives. It had been all their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents had known.

Just as the Jews, there are many today who refuse to let go of the Old Testament system. And these are the ones this study is about.

### *The difficulty of legalism*

Legalism can be difficult to detect because a dedicated believer will have a sincere desire to serve God. Determining whether a person is motivated by this God-given desire or by their own personal legalism can be difficult. For this reason, it takes godly wisdom and maturity to be able to detect legalism. Fortunately, God has promised to give us the wisdom we need (Jas 1:5).

Dealing with legalism can be difficult because we are admonished by God to be loving and kind (Rom. 12:10; Col. 3:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:7), but also to reject all forms of heresy (Gal. 5:12; 2 Th. 3:6; 3:14; 1 Tim. 4:7; Tit 3:10; 2 Jn. 10; Jude 3). John wrote "Beloved, *believe not* every spirit, but *try the spirits* whether they *are of God*" (1 Jn 4:1 emphasis added).

We need to be kind to one another while, at the same time, steadfast in our doctrine. A combination of knowledge of Scripture and mercy to others is required if we are to avoid both legalism and heresy.

### *The disobedience of legalism*

At first glance, we might see legalism as a good thing. After all, it seems like the legalist is more dedicated to God than the average believer.

However, when examined correctly, we'll discover legalism is disobedience to God and His Word. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Why do ye also *transgress* the *commandment of God* by your *tradition*" (Mt 15:3 emphasis added). The word "transgress" means "to violate a command". They were breaking God's law by their own self-made rules.

### *How is legalism disobedience?*

- *Legalism is disobedience because it puts an extreme emphasis on works*

Salvation is by grace through faith without works (Rom. 3:20; 3:28; 4:6; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9). Any teaching that puts an excessive emphasis on works is heresy.

Even though a believer's salvation will be made evident by their godly works, their salvation is not dependent upon their works.

Genuine salvation will produce works. James said, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18). James was not saying he was saved because he worked, he was saying he worked because he was saved. We work, not to be saved, but because we are saved.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it is contrary to God's Word*

As previously mentioned, legalism is actually more strict than the Bible and puts more demands on man than God does. Doing more than what the Bible demands is as much a sin as doing less than it demands. Any work we do that is not initiated and energized by the Holy Spirit is a work of our flesh. Works of the flesh, even those we consider good works, are displeasing to God and are, therefore, sinful.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it relies on man and not on God*

Jesus called the works of the scribes and Pharisees "your tradition" (Mt. 15:3). Legalism puts the responsibility on man instead of God. The Pharisees were living by their rules and it left God out of the picture entirely.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it does away with faith*

It is by faith that a sinner gets into the family of God (Jn. 3:15; 3:36; 5:24; 6:29; 6:40; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 4:5; 10:9; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 2:8-9).

It is also by faith that a believer walks with God after he is in God's family. The Bible says four times, "The just shall *live by faith*" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38). The Lord must have meant what He said since He said it four times.

It is by faith that a believer serves God. Any attempted service for God without faith is useless and empty. Lack of faith has many believers crippled. The disciples could not cast the demon out because of their unbelief (Mt. 17:19-21). We miss out on God's blessings because we refuse to trust Him (Heb. 3:19). We limit God by refusing to believe Him (Mt. 13:58).

- *Legalism is disobedience because it is adding to God's Word*

Jesus said "For *laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men*" (Mk 7:8 emphasis added). They set the Scripture aside and emphasized their man-made rules instead.

The tradition Jesus spoke of here had to do with the washing of hands. Of course, this involved more than making sure their hands were clean before eating. This dealt with a man-made ritual they had devised themselves which they followed precisely. First, they poured water over their hands with their fingers pointing upward. The water had to run to the wrist and drop off. Then, they poured water on their hands with their fingers pointing down. They rebuked Jesus because He did not observe this man-made tradition.

The Jews came up with a long list of their own rules to add to the Old Testament law. They finally wrote these self-made rules down and called it the Talmud. The Talmud is a gigantic book of 2,711 pages, so they had a bunch of their own rules.

The following are some statements taken from the Talmud. Please keep in mind the word "alms" refers to good works and not just giving money.

"It is good to do alms rather than to treasure up gold for alms deliver from death and they purge away every sin".

"Alms will atone for sin"

"Alms giving is more excellent than all offerings and is equal to the whole law and will deliver from the condemnation of hell and make one perfectly righteous".

"The words of the scribes are more lovely than the words of the law".

"My son, attend to the words of the scribe more than the words of the law".

Certainly, these are false statements and are found nowhere in Scripture.

Since these laws were man-made God never put His stamp of approval on them nor required they be followed. God does not require anything that is not required in Scripture. Nor does God prohibit anything that is not prohibited in Scripture.

I wonder, how much our church procedure comes from our tradition and not from the Scripture.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it produces pride*

The Pharisee prayed "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are" (Lk. 18:9). God hates pride (Lev. 26:9; Job 5:13; Ps. 10:4; Pro. 8:13; 13:10; 29:23; 1 Tim. 3:6; 1 Jn. 2:16). Anything that causes pride cannot be pleasing to God.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it judges others in an unjust manner*

Paul wrote, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant" (Rom. 14:4). Our limited knowledge keeps us from judging correctly (Rom. 2:1; Jn. 7:24).

- *Legalism is disobedience because it seldom compliments others*

Since a true legalist sees all accomplishments as a duty they fail to appreciate the good works done by fellow believers. The Bible admonishes us to encourage other believers (Rom. 15:2; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:2; 6:10; 1 Th. 5:11; Heb. 10:24).

- *Legalism is disobedience because it promotes prejudice*

The person who is proud of their own accomplishments will be prone to judge others harshly. James rebukes believers who treat those in the church according to their financial standing (Jam. 2:29).

A legalist is critical of those who do not believe, talk, or dress, exactly as they do. The problem is, that God made us all unique individuals (Ps. 119:73; 139:14; Isa. 64:8; Jer. 1:5; Mt. 10:30; 1 Co 12:11; Eph. 2:10). All the different members fit together to make the body (1 Co 12:12; 12:18). Paul said the members that seem most feeble are needed just as much (1 Co 1:22-27).



- *Legalism is disobedience because it seldom leads to contrition*

The 1828 Webster Dictionary defines "contrite" as "Deeply affected with grief and sorrow for having offended God" or "To be broken or bruised".

Jesus tells of a Pharisee stood proudly without any remorse over his condition (Lk. 18:11). That type of attitude is common with those who are legalistic. The publican, however, a perfect example of a contrite heart, would not even lift his head toward heaven (Lk 18:13-14).

A contrite heart demonstrates humility. There is no pride in a contrite heart. The person with a contrite heart is not trying to defend themselves or offer excuses for their behavior. They are open and honest with themselves and God. In short, the contrite heart agrees with God about their spiritual condition.

The last verse of the account of the Pharisee and the publican shows us God's attitude toward contrition. Jesus said "This man went down to his house justified" (Lk. 18:14).

God looks with favor on those with a contrite heart (Isa. 66:2). The Psalmist said "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps 51:17). Isaiah shows us God's response to a contrite heart when he wrote "To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Is 57:15).

God is pleased with a contrite heart, not because He gets pleasure from our pain, but because He sees our submissive attitude and brokenness over our sin.

- *Legalism is disobedience because it produces a negative and critical attitude*

The Pharisee stood proudly and proclaimed that he was not like others (Lk. 18:11). Legalism sees the negative but seldom the positive. Paul wrote, "But why dost thou *judge thy brother?* or why dost thou *set at nought* thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom.14:10 emphasis added).

True believers can be legalistic. We can be critical to a fault and expect too much of others. Paul wrote "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Rom. 14:1).

- *Legalism emphasizes the lesser matters of life*

Legalism exalts the non-essential matters. The scribes and Pharisees were more interested in the outside than the inside of the cup (Mt 23:25). Jesus told them to clean the inside of the vessel first and then the outside would be clean also (Mt 23:26).

Jesus said of the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel (Mt 23:24). Some of the Pharisees would strain their drinks through a fine cloth to make sure they did not accidentally swallow a gnat, which was the smallest of all unclean animals (Lev. 11:23). The camel was the largest of all unclean animals (Lev. 11:4).

A legalist will condemn those who wear questionable clothing while they themselves have a heart filled with hate and anger. While questionable clothing is forbidden by the Word of God (1 Pet. 3:3-5), a heart of hate and anger is far worse. Paul said, "For I *delight* in the law of God after the *inward* man" (Rom. 7:22 emphasis added).

### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FAITHFULNESS AND FAITH**

1. In your own words, define legalism.
2. The Old Testament law is our \_\_\_\_\_ in that it shows us our helpless state as a sinner and points us to Christ who died for our sin.
3. Give three reasons why legalism is disobedience.

#### **C. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FINANCES**

##### *Money can be spiritual*

How we handle our finances will tell us a great deal about our spiritual condition. If we aren't right with our finances, we aren't right with God.

Jesus said "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24).

The Bible has much to say about money. One out of every six verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke has something to do with money. Of the 38 parables in the Bible, 12 are about money.

- It is God's will that we love Him more than money or possessions

1 Jn 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...

- It is God's will that we use our finances as He directs

The fact is, we own nothing and God owns everything. We are stewards of God's property. A steward was a person who took care of the property of the owner in his absence (Lk. 12:42). Every decision the steward made was dependent upon what the owner wanted. He would do what the owner would do if he were present. When the owner returned, he rewarded the steward according to how he handle his possessions. Our Lord will do the same.

### *Money can be sinful*

Money itself is neither moral nor immoral. What makes it right or wrong is how we handle it. The same dollar that can buy a beer can buy a Bible. The same money spent at a liquor store can be given at a church.

- *Money becomes sinful when we live with no regard for the consequences*

The rich man said "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Lk 12:19).

- *Money becomes sinful when we live in a way that gets us into financial bondage*

Financial problems put many people in bondage and are one of the main reasons for depression, divorce, and suicide. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Pr 22:7).

Our great-grandparents believed they should not buy anything they could not afford. That concept seems like something out of the Stone Age in our day. The credit card has placed many Americans into bondage. At present, the interest rate of some credit cards is almost 30%. Also, a credit card company will allow a person to spend 250% of what they can afford to pay back.

God would not allow the people of Israel to get into debt to such a degree that they could not recover. He established the Year of Jubilee in which, among other things, all debt was forgiven and property was returned to its original owner (Lev. 25:23-38).

We, like our great-grandparents, should never buy anything we cannot afford. If there is something we want, we should wait until we have the money or simply not buy it.

- *Money becomes sinful when we are never satisfied and always want more*

The marketing system of America is based on the idea of convincing the public they need something better than what they have. The idea of a bigger house, a better car, nicer clothes, and the latest phone, is making businesses rich and people poor. And the devil laughs them all the way to the poor house.

The Bible speaks loudly against covetousness.

Paul wrote, /But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1Ti 6:6-9).

Paul wrote, "But they that *will be rich* fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Ti 6:9 emphasis added).

The words "will be" refer to the person who is determined to get rich. This type of person will find themselves in bondage to their greed.

Paul also wrote "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Ti 6:10).

Some, mistakenly say "money" is the root of all evil, but it is the "love" of money that is the root of all evil. This verse is not saying that every evil deed ever committed can be traced back to the love of money. The context of this verse refers to those who are determined to get rich (v.9). For that person, all their evil actions can be traced back to their love for money.

If we wonder if covetousness is harmful, we should ask Judas (Mt. 26:15-16) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3-11).

### *Money can be spent*

God provides our finances. We decide how we spend that which He provides.

- *We spend our money to pay our bills*

God determined that man would provide for his needs by working.

Even before the fall of man, Adam and Eve were to "keep" the garden. After the fall, God told Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen.3:19).

Paul wrote, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph 4:28).

God expects us to pay our bills on time. Paul wrote "Owe no man any thing" (Ro 13:8). This does not forbid borrowing money. It means we should pay our bills on time. If the bill comes due on the 15th of the month, we should pay it before the 15th. God said, "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again" (Ps 37:21).

Our bills include paying taxes. Jesus said "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk 12:17).

- *We spend money to provide for our family*

God says the person who fails to take care of their family is worse than an unbeliever.

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

God says, those who are able to work, and do not, should go without.

2 Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

- *We spend money for our enjoyment*

God is not against us using some of our money for recreation or enjoyment. Certainly, this should not be the major focus of our lives and we should never put our enjoyment before our obligations.

### *Money can be saved*

God expects us to use our money in such a manner to we have some left over after all our bills are paid. We do that by carefully handling the money we have.

- *We manage what we have by making a budget*

Keeping a written record of every expense and every expenditure is vitally important.

- *We manage what we have by avoiding all unnecessary spending*

We need to learn to live within our means and do without that which is not absolutely necessary. It is amazing what we can do without if we ask the Lord to help us. We're living in a day when people think they cannot live without two new cars and a \$1000 cell phone. We should do all we can to keep costs down. A little effort goes a long way and certainly pays off in the long run.

- *We manage what we have by planning ahead for future needs*

One of the most spiritual things we can do is to plan ahead and save for future needs.

Pr 27:26 The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.

Proverbs says the foolish man spends all his money and fails to save for the future (Pro. 21:20b).

God tells us to go to the ant and learn how it plans for the future.

Pr 6:6–8 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

- *We manage what we have by making wise investments*

Jesus said, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers" (Mt 25:27).

A financial adviser may be needed, but good investments can help our financial situation tremendously.

### *Money can be shared*

God never wants us to hoard what He gives us. He gave (Jn. 3:16), we ought to do the same.

- *Sharing our money begins with the tithe*

This makes me think of three questions.

One, is tithing Biblical? Does God want His people to tithe?

God told the people of Israel to give the first part of their increase to Him (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:26; 2 Chr. 31:5; Pr 3:9). We will not take time to discuss it, but the Old Testament actually demanded multiple tithes.

Two, should New Testament believers tithe?

Some believe tithing was something God required under the Old Testament Law. Actually, tithing started before the Law was ever given. Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Ge 14:18-20).

In the New Testament, when speaking of tithing, Jesus said "These *ought ye to have done*" (Mt 23:23 emphasis added). So, Jesus told the New Testament believers they should be tithing. When dealing with giving, Paul wrote "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor 16:2).

Three, how much should we tithe?

The first tenth belonged to God. Moses said it is the "LORD'S" (Lev. 27:30). Since the first tenth is the Lord's, giving 10% was not giving anything. They were simply paying back what they owed to God.

If 10% was the requirement under the Law, should we give less under grace?

The amount of our giving is not the only issue. Our attitude about giving is vitally important. God wants us to give cheerfully (2 Co 9:7b)

Trying to avoid the tithe is not only unspiritual, it is also unwise. Those who refuse to tithe are robbing God and are under a curse (Mal 3:9).

God will get what belongs to Him. One way or the other, we will pay our tithe. We will pay it at church, or the hospital, or the auto parts store.

- *Sharing our money may involve lending money to others*

The Bible is not silent about us lending money. It tells us lending money is not wise (Pro. 6:1-5; 22:26).

Lending money is the quickest way to end a friendship. There is something about borrowing from a friend that causes the borrower to be lax in repaying.

The Bible tells us those who decided to loan money were not to require any interest on the loan (Ex 22:25-27).

The Bible tells us we should not co-sign on a loan or lend anyone money unless we are willing to forgive them if they do not pay (Ex 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 15:7-9; Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:34).

As we conclude our study of finances, we should ask ourselves three questions.

First, do I control my money or does my money control me?

Second, does my financial condition help or hinder my walk with God?

Third, does my financial condition help or hinder my testimony in my community?

### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FINANCES**

1. We should view God as our \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Name one way money becomes sinful \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Name one way we can spend our money \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Name one way we can save our money \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Name one way we can share our money \_\_\_\_\_ .

#### **D. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FAMILY**

*The biblical family deals with people*

- A Biblical marriage is a flawed person marrying another flawed person

Since there are no perfect people there will be no perfect families. We are all broken and need God's grace to help us be what God wants us to be.

- A Biblical marriage is two people leaving their parents to start a family of their own

They do not abandon their parents but they have a family of their own and their new family should come first. God said "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Ge 2:24). The word "leave" means "to loose from". The word "cleave" means "to join or stick to".

- A Biblical marriage is two people of like beliefs and behavior

The Bible forbids a couple from getting married if they are "unequally yoked" (2 Cor. 6:14). The term "unequally yoked" refers to yoking an ox and a donkey in the same yoke. The ox is the type that presses ahead while the donkey lags behind. Their different natures make it very difficult for them to work together.



This means a believer should not marry an unbeliever. Their two completely different natures will make it impossible to have a good and godly family.

It also means a believer should not marry someone quite different than themselves. Two people with dramatically different personalities, desires, and goals, will have problems.

### *The biblical family deals with purity*

God makes a godly family by making godly individuals.

Paul dealt with the Biblical family in Ephesians 5:21-6:4. Before he said a word about being a good family member, he talked about being a godly individual (Eph. 5:1-21). A family cannot be a godly family until the members of the family are godly individuals.

The relationship we have with our family will be determined by the relationship we have with our Lord. For a family to be what God desires, each member needs to be saved (Eph. 5:8), spiritual (Eph. 5:11), surrendered (Eph. 5:21), and Spirit-filled (Eph. 5:18).

Each family member should focus on improving themselves before they try to improve the other members of the family.

The Biblical family is supposed to be an example to the world. If we fail God in our home our service for Him will be hindered outside of the home.

### *The biblical family deals with purpose*

When thinking about a family, every individual must decide if God wants them to get married or to stay single? We need to determine God's purpose for our life.

Some during Paul's day were teaching it was more spiritual to stay single (1 Tim. 4:3a). Paul dealt with this issue by saying each person had their own proper "gift" from God (1 Co 7:7). That means, both singleness and marriage is a gift from God. It means also that every individual needs to determine which is right for them.

Paul talked also about the "present distress" (1 Co 7:25-28). The persecution of believers and the possibility of being imprisoned or killed made staying single a wise choice. Under normal circumstances, this would not apply.

Our society, mistakenly, pushes people towards marriage. Unfortunately, that same mentality has made its way into the church. It seems there are some who believe their role in life is to play Cupid. I wonder if it ever crosses their minds that they may be pushing someone into something that is absolutely against God's plan and purpose.

Marriage is not required. In fact, God wants some to remain single.

- *Some should get married*

A single person should marry only if it is God's will. God's purpose should come before anything else.

A single person should marry if their physical desire is causing them to fail. Paul said, "To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Co 7:2). It is better to marry than to spend your life constantly falling into temptation.

- *Some should remain single*

A person should not feel like a failure if they are not married. Paul said, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, *It is good for them* if they *abide even as I*" (1 Co 7:8 emphasis added). Paul was saying, for some, it is right to remain single.

A single person should not get married if they have peace about remaining single. God gives peace to those who are in His will.

This person will not be happy if they get married. More importantly, they will be out of God's will if they marry.

### *The biblical family deals with pleasure*

God ordained marriage for pleasure.

After He made Adam, God said "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18a). This is the first time God said something was not good. The Bible says six times "It was good" about God's creation (Ge 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). But, then He said, "It is not good" that a man be alone. For this reason, God made a wife for Adam (Gen. 2:18b).

God brought man and woman together was to make "good" what had been "not good". Clearly, God intended marriage to be something that brought pleasure to both the man and the woman.

One part of this pleasure is the marriage bed. The writer of Hebrews wrote "Marriage is honourable in all, and *the bed undefiled*: but *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*" (Heb 13:4 emphasis added).

Within the bonds of marriage, the physical relationship is right and enjoyable. Outside the bonds of marriage, any physical relationship is wrong and will bring God's judgment.

### *The biblical family deals with partnership*

The Biblical family is the most perfect partnership on earth.

God made Eve by removing a rib from Adam (Gen. 2:22).

Matthew Henry wrote, "The woman was made out of Adam's side. She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."

The Biblical family is supposed to be a partnership where every member knows their role and does it. The idea that a marriage has to be 50/50 is ridiculous. Each member needs to give 100% if a family is to be all it should be.

Each member has their part. If they fail to carry their part of the load, the family will suffer and will not be that which God designed it to be.

### *The biblical family deals with posterity*

The Biblical family is a means whereby children can be brought into the world. Jesus loved children. He said, "little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" (Lk 18:16).

Children are declared to be a blessing from God. The Bible says "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Ps. 127:3-5; Jn. 16:21).

However, with the blessing of children, comes the responsibility to raise them in a godly manner (Dt. 6:6-7; 11:18; Col. 3:21).

Part of the responsibility of raising children is to correct them properly (Pro. 19:18; 22:6; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; 29:17).

God is the perfect example of a good father (Dt. 8:5; Pro. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-8).

### *The biblical family deals with permanence*

God's design for marriage was, and is, one man with one woman, for life (Gen.2:24; Mt. 19:8-9).

God said he hates divorce (Mal 2:16). Jesus said "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mk 10:9).

Even though God hated divorce, He permitted His people to end a marriage to protect the innocent party (Dt. 24:1-2). Jesus spoke of this in the New Testament (Mt. 5:32; 19:9).

The Bible gives two reasons for divorce.

The first reason is, proven, not merely suspected, sexual immorality (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). That means, one spouse has been unfaithful to their mate.

Jesus said, "That whosoever shall put away his wife, *saving for the cause of fornication*, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Mt 5:32 emphasis added). The word "fornication" is a general word that refers to any type of sexual unfaithfulness. It would include adultery, incest, prostitution, or homosexuality.

So, Jesus said anyone ending a marriage for any reason other than fornication will be committing adultery.

The second reason is, abandonment by an unbeliever (1 Co 7:15). In this case, the unbeliever is the one who initiates the separation and divorce, not the believer (1 Co 7:10-11).

Divorce should never be taken lightly and should not be the first option when troubles come to the family.

God may permit divorce but that does not mean it is required. With confession, repentance, and reconciliation, the family can be restored. God forgives, and so should we. God can put the pieces back together.

### *The biblical family deals with perversion*

As with everything else in this world, man has perverted that which God has designed for the family.

Let's take a look at some of man's perversions relating to the family.

- The perversion of abortion

The Bible does not speak of abortion directly but it does give us guidelines that show us it is a horrible sin (Ex 21:22-25; Ps. 139:13-16). God made man in His image (Ge 1:26-27). The Psalmist said "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14). Jeremiah said God knew him while he yet in the womb (Jer. 1:5).

Abortion is nothing short of the murder of the innocent. Since Roe V Wade there have been almost 65 million abortions performed in America.

The overwhelming reason for abortion is the simple fact that the mother does not want the baby. Many of those who have had abortions regret their decision and suffer severe depression as a result.

- The perversion of adultery and fornication

Perhaps the best-known case of adultery in the Bible is King David (2 Sam. 11:1-5). His sin displeased God (2 Sam. 11:27). His adultery brought disgrace to the name of his God (2 Sam. 12:7-9), death to Uriah (2 Sam. 11:14-17) and to his child (2 Sam. 12:13-14) and disease to his body (Ps. 38:5-8). The sword of God's judgment never departed from David's life (2 Sam. 9:10).

The perversion of adultery is accepted as normal in our world but God still declares it to be sin (Ex 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Dt. 5:18; Mt. 5:27-28; 15:19; 19:9; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4).

Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife for a reason. He realized the danger of close contact with anything that the flesh desires. That is why we are admonished to avoid anything that stirs our flesh (Rom. 12:9; 1 Co 15:33; Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:22).

- *The perversion of multiple wives*

Even though several men in the Bible had multiple wives, Esau (Ge 26:42; 28:6-9), Jacob (Ge 29:15-28), Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:1-8), David (1 Sam. 25:39-44; 2 Sam. 3:2-5; 5:13-16), and Solomon (1 Kg. 11:1-3), it never pleased God. As I have mentioned, it is God's will that one man marry one woman for life (Gen. 2:24).

- *The perversion of homosexuality*

One of the primary reasons God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was because of their sin of homosexuality (Ge 19:4-7).

God's Word says homosexuality is a sin (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Co 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10).

God makes it clear, that homosexual desire is not natural. Paul deals with this subject by saying people are "leaving the natural use" (Rom. 1:27). That means, homosexuality is abnormal behavior. It also means, contrary to the opinion of some, that the practicing homosexual was not "born that way".

- *The perversion of incest*

Amnon forced his half-sister (2 Sam. 13:1-15). The Bible speaks clearly against this type of sin (Lev. 18:7-18; 20:11-21; Dt. 27:23).

- *The perversion of trans-gender*

Shockingly, our world is having difficulty trying to determine if a person is male or female. The claim of the LGBTQIA+ groups is, that gender is not about the person's anatomy, it is about who they know themselves to be. In 2023, there are 107 specifically named gender identities in our world.

The believing family should unashamedly treat their little boy like a boy and their little girl like a girl. We should dress a boy like a boy and a girl like a girl.

Sadly, we are living in the days when even gender selection is accepted as a positive process of childbirth.

The good news is, the grace of God is sufficient to forgive and deliver any person who is willing to believe and repent of their sin. Paul said, "And such were some of you" (1 Co 6:11). God had saved them out of their perverted lifestyle.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE FAMILY

If the Bible's instructions can tell us how to get to heaven, they can tell us how to have a happy family.

### TO ALL FAMILY MEMBERS:

All relationships have conflict because we are all imperfect. The same is true among family members. For this reason, each member needs to be committed to their own family.

The first step to a godly family is for all members to devote themselves to each other. Paul wrote "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph 5:21). That means the husband is to submit to Christ, and the wife is to submit to her husband, as Christ submitted to His Father (1 Co 11:3).

Each member needs the attitude of a servant. Jesus, even though He was God, humbled Himself and washed His disciple's feet. And He said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15).

When all family members find their Biblical place, the family will be blessed by the Lord. They will be as happy as possible in this world.

### TO WIVES:

The Bible tells the wife to be submissive to her own husband.

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

1 Pe 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands ...

Col 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Submission is not a negative word. Being submissive does not make the wife inferior or less intellectual than the husband. Jesus submitted to His Father but it did not make Him less than the Father (Lk. 22:42; Jn. 5:30: 6:38).

The wife should submit to her husband because she loves God and wants to please Him.

The wife is to submit to her "own" husband, not to every man. That means, her submission does not extend into society.

Submitting to her husband does not mean she is supposed to endure abuse. There may be times when a wife will have to remove herself and her children from danger. Doing so is a form of self-defense.

Submitting to God's plan may make it possible for a believing wife to win her unbelieving husband (1 Pet. 3:1).

### TO HUSBANDS:

God has established several types of authority in the world. The government establishes laws that citizens are to follow. Pastors are to lead the church. Parents are to lead their children. And, husbands are to lead their wives.

The husband is to be a godly leader who lives in a way that deserves to be followed. He is responsible before God and will be held accountable for how he treats his wife and children.

Being the head of the home does not give the husband the right to be domineering or abusive. To do so is a sin and will bring the wrath of God on his life.

Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, *even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph 5:25 emphasis added).

The husband is to love his wife like Jesus loved the church. Jesus loved the church and "gave himself for it". That is a sacrificial love.

A selfish husband is not a godly husband. If he loves his wife, he will not neglect, use, or abuse, her.

A husband should exercise his authority in a wise, gracious, loving, and godly manner.

Every husband should remember, that when a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, she will be much more likely to submit.

#### TO CHILDREN:

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

The children should obey their parents as they would the Lord.

The modern concept of parents being friends to their children instead of parents is unbiblical and dangerous.

A child should recognize the authority of their parents and act accordingly. They should respect their parents even though their parents are imperfect and fail themselves.

#### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FAMILY**

1. Biblical marriage is two people leaving their parents to start a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Explain in your own words what "unequally yoked" is.
3. A single person should feel like a failure. TRUE / FALSE
4. Give the two reasons for divorce.
5. Name two of the perversions of the Biblical family.

#### E. **AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FASHION**



As we will see, when I speak of "fashion" I am talking about our appearance as a whole. Fashion includes our clothing, hair, accessories, and our overall appearance.

## SIX FACTS RELATED TO FASHION

- *One, our bodies are the temple of God*

God lives in the body of every believer (1 Co 3:16; 6:19). We are to glorify Him in our bodies (1 Co 6:20). We are not to defile God's temple (1 Co 3:17).

- *Two, the way we dress is an expression of who and what we are*

Dressing to impress others can be a form of pride.

The person who dresses like the world has a worldly heart and desires worldly things.

Trying to dress like the world will draw us away from the will of God. Jesus said we are not to be of the world (Jn. 15:19). Our beauty should come from the heart (1 Pet. 3:3-5).

- *Three, the world judges us by our appearance*

Dressing like the world identifies us with the world. Judah thought Tamar was a harlot because she was dressed like a harlot (Ge 38:15). When we dress like the world, they will think we are of the world. And, they will be right. Remember, man sees what we wear, God sees why we wear it.

- *Four, the devil and the world will try to control our fashion*

Fashion has become a form of worship in the world. The global apparel market grossed \$1.3 trillion in 2020.

God tells us to dress in "modest" apparel (1 Tim. 2:9). The believer should dress in a manner that covers their body appropriately and does not draw unseemly attention to themselves. Sadly, the fashion industry produces suggestive clothing for the very young.

- *Five, beauty can be deceiving*

Many beautiful faces hide ugly hearts. We should remember, that true beauty comes from a godly spirit, not from our outward adornment.

- *Six, beauty is temporary and fades with age*

Beauty is temporary and will disappear as we age. Putting such an emphasis on something that last for such a short time is not wise.

We are forced to live in this world, but we are not forced to look like the world. We should do as Jesus, and let our light shine in this dark world (Mt. 5:16). The only thing that overcomes darkness, is light.

God does not expect us to dress in burlap sacks, but He does expect us to dress in a way that would honor Him. It isn't wrong to be fashionable as long as we keep it in the right perspective and we do not violate Biblical standards.

### *Fashion includes the way we dress*

God has the right to demand the type of clothing mankind is to wear. A believer's appearance is a vital part of their Christian walk.

- *Man's appearance involves God's design*

After the fall of man, God rejected man's fig leaves. As far as God was concerned, Adam and Eve were still naked (Ge 3:11).

- *Man's appearance involves God's demands*

God made "coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen 3:21). The word "clothed" means "a covering over the body". I believe these skins covered most of their bodies and were much more than little aprons.

- *Man's appearance involves God's desire*

The fact that God designed the clothing for man tells us He cares about our appearance.

Some boldly say that God looks on the heart and does not care how we look on the outside. They base their argument on a misinterpretation of a comment God said to Samuel (1 Sam. 16:7). God was telling Samuel to not look at the stature of the man to determine who would be the next king. This certainly is no indication that God doesn't care about our appearance.

Our bodies reveal the wonder of God's creative power. The fact that we are all different reveals the fact that God cares about how we look.

Since our appearance matters to God, it ought to matter to us.

### *Fashion includes the way we wear our hair*

#### *Fashion deals with the length of hair*

As with all of God's instructions, the length of hair has a spiritual significance in our lives. Nothing is unimportant to God.

The Bible speaks about long hair on men and short hair on women (1 Co 11:14-15).

- *Hair and culture*

The length of hair is often driven by the cultural beliefs of a place or time. Culture will be different from place to place and may change with time. Believers should not allow themselves to be controlled by culture or fads. More often than not, believers will have to go contrary to culture.

- *Hair and creation*

God created men and women to be completely different. One way this difference reveals itself is in the fact that a woman's hair usually grows faster than a man's.

The length of hair is meant to help keep the genders separate. God intends a man to look like a man and a woman to look like a woman and nothing should blur the line between the two.

The Bible says "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Dt 22:5). As mentioned earlier, parents should dress their boys like boys and their girls like girls.

Paul said "Nature itself" teaches us a man should have short hair and a woman should have long hair (1 Co 11:14-16).

The word "nature" refers to that which God has designed.

Paul also used the same word when talking about how women being with women is against "nature" (Rom 1:26). He meant, a woman with a woman goes against God's plan of creation. In like fashion, long hair on men and short hair on women goes against that which God designed.

Paul also used the word "nature" when writing about the conscience of man (Rom. 2:14). God has put in mankind the discernment to know what is right and wrong. He has given mankind the common sense to know a man should have short hair and a woman should have long.

- *Hair and Christ*

One of the best ways to determine the right or wrong of any subject is to find out what Jesus did. We know He would never do anything that would be contrary to His Father's will. He said, "I do always those things that please him" (Jn. 8:29).

There is no indication in Scripture that Jesus had long hair. Since no one knows what He looked like, the modern images of Jesus are nothing more than the imagination of man.

We do know, that since He was a Jew, He had dark hair and brown eyes, not the long light hair and blue eyes like some images depict. We know also, that He would not have worn His hair in an effeminate manner. Jesus was a man and He looked like a man.

Some say Jesus let His hair grow long because He had taken the Nazarite vow. However, there is no evidence that He ever took a Nazarite vow. He was a Nazarene, not a Nazarite.

All we can discern from Scripture tells us Jesus wore His hair in a short and masculine manner.

- *Hair and carnality*

The long hair on men of our day began in the '60s as a sign of rebellion against authority.

The same is true today. Anytime we go against God's plan, we are being carnal.

Long hair on men was not the norm during the Old Testament days.

The Old Testament priest was to neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long (Ezk. 44:20). Since the priest was an example to the believers, it is reasonable to say God wants men to keep their hair short.

Long hair on men was not the norm during New Testament days.

Paul said it is a "shame" for a man to have long hair (1 Co 11:14). The word "shame" means "disgrace or dishonor". It is a disgrace because long hair is associated with being feminine.

Paul also said long hair is a "glory" unto the woman (1 Co 11:15). The word "glory" means "honor". Long hair on a woman was a statement to the world that she was in submission to the plan of God about womanhood. During the days of Christ, the only women who cut their hair short were the prostitutes or those rebelling against God's plan.

The fact is, whether, during Old or New Testament days, it was considered disgraceful for a man to have long hair. The only exception was the man who had taken the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-6; Judges 13:6; 1 Sam. 1:11; Acts 18:18). The long hair connected to the Nazarite vow was a sign to all of the person's commitment to their vow. They were to cut their hair as soon as their vow ended (Num. 6:18). The long hair of the Nazarite vow would have meant nothing if long hair was the norm of their day.

Some have used the fact that Paul said it is a "shame" but does not say directly it is a sin. It being a shame should be enough reason to reject it.

As believers, we should be willing to abstain from anything with the slightest hint of being inappropriate.

Paul ends his comments about hair by saying "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Co 11:16).

Notice, that Paul said those who resist God's plan are being "contentious". That word means "fond of strife". It reveals the contrary attitude of those who refuse to submit to Biblical instruction about hair.

The words "we have no such custom neither the churches of God" mean neither the apostles nor the churches, approved of those who rebelled and wore their hair in a way that was against God's design. In essence, he was saying whoever rebels will be on their own.

### *Fashion deals with dying of hair*

The right or wrong of dying hair is determined by the reason a person does it. God is concerned, not only with what we do but with why we do it.

- *Dying hair may be a sign of pride*

Some use dye to cover their gray hair. One person may simply want to look their best while for another it may be a sign of all-consuming pride and vanity. In 2022, hair coloring sales amounted to over 1.67 billion dollars in the United States.

The Bible says there is honor (Lev. 19:32) and beauty (Pro. 20:29) in gray hair. Since gray hair usually comes with age it can be a sign of maturity and wisdom (Pro. 16:31). Of course gray hair itself is not a guarantee of maturity. What matters is what we do with the years we have.

- *Dying hair may be a sign of rebellion*

Some of the hair colors of today would certainly be associated with the world. We are to abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Th. 5:22).

- *Dying hair may be a sign of discontentment*

Dying hair may be a sign of self-hatred and rejection of God's design and an attempt to change who we are.

#### *Fashion deals with the braiding of hair*

In the first century, there was a custom of using the woman's hair as decoration. Peter wrote, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel" (1 Pe 3:3).

The women would twist their hair and weave in gold, jewels, and costly ornaments. These hairstyles got more and more extravagant and became a thing of pride. Peter's admonition was more about humility and modesty than hairstyle. We know that because in the next verse, he says beauty should come from the "hidden" things and not the external (1 Pet. 3:4). Paul speaks of the same subject (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

These verses cannot be completely forbidding the plaiting of hair or the wearing of gold because Peter's last words in verse 3 are "putting on of apparel". Certainly, he was not forbidding the wearing of clothes.

The beauty of the believer should come from a godly heart, not from extravagant hairstyles and expensive jewelry.

#### *Fashion includes the accessories we wear*

By accessories, I mean jewelry, tattoos, piercings, and such.

## IS IT WRONG TO WEAR JEWELRY

Once again, we need to go to the Bible and let it speak. As with all aspects of our lives, we should not allow man-made traditions to control our thinking or actions.

The Bible often mentions "jewels" (Ge 24:53; Ex 3:22; 11:2; 12:35; 35:22; Num. 31:50; 2 Chr. 20:25; Song 1:10; 7:1; Hos. 2:13; Mal. 3:17) and "earrings" (Ge 35:4; Ex 32:2; 35:22; Judges 8:24-26; Isa. 3:20; Ezk 16:12; Hos. 2:13).

Since most of these references about jewels and earrings are spoken of in a neutral (not positive or negative) sense it would seem that God is not totally against these types of jewels.

Certainly, the Lord is not pleased with an excessive amount of jewelry.

The determining factor is the reason a person wears these types of jewelry.

## IS IT WRONG TO HAVE BODY PIERCINGS

Body modification, such as piercing, cutting, branding, and tattooing, has become more and more popular in recent years. That which used to be limited to piercing for earrings has exploded into every body part imaginable. Elaine Davidson, called "Iron Maiden", holds the world record of 15,000 piercings. She has a goal of 20,000.

The Bible mentions different types of body piercing or cutting.

One, the Old Testament Bond Servant would have his ear pierced through with an aul to show his lifelong surrender to his master (Ex 21:1-6; Dt. 15:12-17). This was a unique process and totally different than any of the piercings of our modern time.

Two, ear and nose rings for jewelry.

Earrings and nose rings were accessories worn by Hebrew women (Ezk. 16:12). The Song of Solomon speaks of her "rows of jewels" and "chains of gold" and "studs of silver" (So 1:10–11).

Three, the cutting of the flesh in pagan idol worship (Le 19:28; 21:5b).

These "cuttings" refer to the practice of the Egyptians who cut gashes in their body in times of grief (1 Kgs. 8:28). They believed it to be a sign of respect to the dead and an offering to their gods.

Sadly, the Jews adopted this practice (Jer. 16:6; 47:5b). Those who worshipped Baal cut their bodies in their pagan worship when they were battling against Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:28). While these scriptures are not referring to the practice of piercing as a fashion statement, the principle still applies. We should avoid all appearance of evil (1 Th. 5:22).

## IS IT WRONG TO HAVE TATTOOS

God spoke to the people of Israel about "marks" on their flesh. He said, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD" (Le 19:28).

These "marks" and "cuttings", as I have already mentioned, were connected to Egyptian worship of gods.

Some try to compare tattoos to make-up. However, there is a vast difference between the two. If for no other reason, the tattoo is, for the most part, permanent.

Some say since this prohibition was given to Israel, it does not apply to the New Testament believer. However, as we have discussed, the principles of the Old Testament do apply to the modern believer.

If for no other reason, the association of tattoos with worldly activity makes them undesirable and unwise.

## CONCLUSION

When considering the preceding issues (jewelry, piercings, and tattoos), the believer should ask themselves the following questions.

One, does it cause unseemly attention?

Anything, no matter what it is, that draws unseemly attention to a believer's body is sinful and should be avoided at all costs. For example, the book of Proverbs talks about a woman who wears the "attire of a harlot" (Pr 7:10).

Two, what effect will it have on others?

Does what we wear offend others? Paul tells us to abstain from that which offends others (1 Co. 8:9). Also, what we wear will influence others to follow our example and do the same thing.

Three, does it glorify God?



We should ask ourselves if we can wear accessories in a way that would glorify God. Paul wrote, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Co 10:31).

Four, is it questionable?

Paul talked about the person that "doubteth" (Ro 14:23). The word "doubteth" means "to hesitate". It has the idea of a person not being sure if something is right or wrong. God says if we are wondering about it, we should not do it.

Five, why do we want to wear these accessories?

- *It is sinful if the believer is trying to fit into the world*

Looking, acting, or talking, like the world is wrong and displeasing to God. We live in this world but we are not to be of this world. Any fashion that causes us to set aside our Christian testimony should be avoided.

- *It is sinful if they are worn as an act of rebellion*

Much of the jewelry and piercing of today is a definite sign of rebellion. Rebellion is any time we are willing to do anything when we know it is against God's will. God says rebellion is like the "sin of witchcraft" (2 Ch 33:6).

- *It is sinful if they are worn in pride*

Some wear expensive accessories to display their riches. Some do it because they think of themselves as attractive. Either one is a form of pride and displeasing to God.

Peter tells us to be "clothed with humility" (1 Pe 5:5). He went on to say "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble".

- *It is sinful if they become more important to us than the spiritual part of our lives*

We should never let our outward adornment be more important than our inward man.

## IN CONCLUSION

All this being said, the conclusion to the matter is that we are willing to do what pleases God.

The key is to be modest in what we wear. Paul said "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Ti 2:9).

The beauty of the believer should come from a godly heart, not from extravagant and expensive jewelry. Peter tells us we should focus on the inner beauty of the heart instead of the outward beauty of the body (1 Pe 3:3-4).

We may have to live in this world but we do not have to live like the world. God will show us His will and give us the grace to do that which He desires. Paul said God's grace will teach us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and help us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FASHION**

1. Fashion includes our clothing, hair, accessories, and our \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Man's appearance involves God's \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Give three of the six facts related to fashion.
4. In your own words, explain what does the Bible says about long hair on a man.
5. Give the three reasons I give for why people may dye their hair.
6. List the three different types of body piercing or cutting mentioned in the Bible.
7. Give one reason why a tattoo may be a sin.

### **F. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FOOD**

*What does the Bible say about food?*

#### **THE REASON CONNECTED TO FOOD**

The "reason" food should matter to us is because it matters to God. For the most part, we see food simply as something we enjoy and something that keeps us alive. However, food matters a great deal to God.

Interestingly, God made a tree and its fruit (tree of the knowledge of good and evil) the object of temptation for Adam and Eve (Ge 2:16-17, 3:6). He also made a tree and its fruit (tree of life) the illustration of everlasting life (Ge 2:9). Much of the complaints of Israel while in the wilderness was about drinking (Ex 15:24) and eating (Ex 16:2-3, 12-35).

The fact is, everything in our lives, including what we eat, should bring glory to God (1 Co 10:31).

### *Should we eat meat*

There is very little disagreement about the eating of fruits and vegetables. God gave Adam and Eve fruits and vegetables in the Garden of Eden for their food (Ge 2:16) and never restricted man from eating either.

The confusion and disagreement about food usually deals with the eating of meat and the slaying of animals.

### *Animals are inferior to man*

We're living in a day when many put animals on the same level as man. Amazingly, quite often, those who believe so strongly in animal rights also demand the right to abort little babies. The fact is, the Bible says nothing specifically about animal rights.

The concept of animals being inferior to man runs throughout Scripture.

We know animals are inferior to man because animals were not made in the image of God, as man was (Ge 1:27).

We know animals are inferior to man because no indication in Scripture would suggest animals have an afterlife. At their death, they simply cease to exist. The only animals seen in heaven are the horses on which Jesus and His people are riding at His second coming (Re 19:11-14).

We know animals are inferior to man because God gave man dominion over all His creation, including the animals. God told Adam he was to have "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Ge 1:28). The word "dominion" means "to rule over". God reiterated this after the flood when speaking to Noah. He said, "Into your hand are they delivered" (Ge 9:2). That means, animals are subject to man and for his benefit.

We know animals are inferior to man because when man sinned, God made Adam and Eve coats of skins (Ge 3:21). Of course, this means God put an animal to death.

After Adam sinned, God required animal sacrifices to cover the sin of man. He accepted Abel's animal sacrifice and rejected Cain's (Ge 4:3-7). Untold millions of animals were put to death as sacrifices throughout the Old Testament. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus recorded that in 4 BC over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed for Passover.

We know animals are inferior to man because He does not rebuke those who kill animals in self-defense. David said the Lord delivered him from a lion and a bear (1 Sam. 17:36-37).

We know animals are inferior to man because God designed the system whereby animals survive by consuming other animals (Ps. 136:25; 145:15b; 147:9; Job 38:41). On the other hand, God declared that the man who kills another man be put to death (Ge 9:6; Ex 21:12).

We know animals are inferior to man because God gave animals for travel and labor (Ge 37:25; 44:13; Ex 4:20; Dt. 25:4; Num. 22:31; 7:3; 1 Kg. 20:21; 2 Kgs. 9:19; Zech. 9:9). Jesus Himself rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mt. 21:7).

We know animals are inferior to man because God gave animals as a source of clothing for man. John the baptist wore camel's hair and leather (Mt. 3:4). Animal furs were used for clothing.

We know animals are inferior to man because God gave animals as a source of food for man (Ge 9:2-3).

And so, this brings us back to the question, is it wrong to kill and eat animals?

For the most part, the Bible views hunting and fishing as a means of survival and not as a means of recreation or sport as they are in our day.

The Bible talks about fishing in a positive way.

Jesus used fishing as an illustration of living for God (Mt. 7:10). Jesus called fishermen and said He would make them fishers of men (Mt. 4:19; 13:47-50). Jesus sent Peter fishing to get tax money (Mt. 17:27). Jesus asked for and ate fish (Lk. 24:41-42).

The Bible talks about hunting in a positive way.

God approves hunting as a means of food (Ge 10:9; 21:20; 25:27; Lev. 17:13; 1 Sam. 26:20b; 27:30; Pro. 1:17; 6:5; 12:27; Jer. 16:16; Isa. 51:20; Amos 3:5).

Though the Bible does not speak of it, animal research is tremendously healthful to mankind and is not condemned.

## THE RESTRICTIONS CONNECTED TO FOOD

Did God put any restrictions on what man was to eat?

## FOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God did set some dietary restrictions in the Old Testament. It is important to realize, that these restrictions were given to Israel and Israel alone.

The people of Israel were forbidden to eat meat with the blood.

They were to drain the blood from the meat before they cooked and ate it (Ge 9:4; Lev. 17:13; Dt. 12:16). We are not told why this is so, but it may have been to remind man of the importance of blood. The "life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev. 17:11).

The people of Israel were forbidden to eat certain animals.

The animals that could be eaten

Approved animals were those that chew the cud and have split hooves (Lev. 11:3; Dt. 14:6). These would include cattle, sheep, goats, and deer. Fish with fins and scales may be eaten (Lev. 11:9-12).

The animals that could not be eaten

Forbidden animals were camels, rabbits, and pigs (Lev. 11:4-8), fish without fins and scales (Lev. 11:9-12). "creeping things" such as moles, mice, and lizards (Lev. 11:29-31), and animals with paws (Lev. 11:27).

Birds that were scavengers were forbidden (Lev. 11:13-19). Birds such as chickens, turkeys, and pheasants could be eaten. Some insects were forbidden and some were allowed (Lev. 11:20-23).

God did not reveal His reason for forbidding the consumption of some animals. We do know God gave these restrictions to make Israel different from other nations and people. Perhaps it is because some were scavengers and ate decaying flesh. It may be because some targeted the weakest prey. Some believe it is because God forbade that which was harmful for human consumption.

## FOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As mentioned, the restrictions about food given in the Old Testament were for Israel only. The New Testament releases believers from these Old Testament restrictions.

As New Testament believers, we are not subject to the Old Testament Law because Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament when He died and rose again (Rom. 10:4; 14:14; Gal. 3:25; Eph. 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:3).

Jesus said that which goes into the stomach does not condemn a person (Mk. 7:18-19). He could not have said this if meat was forbidden.

Peter was using Old Testament restrictions when he refused to eat what he thought was unclean. God said it was clean and told him to eat (Acts 10:9-16).

Paul said God has given "us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Ti 6:17 emphasis added). God really meant it, He wants us to enjoy His creation.

Paul said the kingdom of God is about "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" and not about what we eat or drink (Rom. 14:17).

Paul said, " Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink..." (Col 2:16).

Paul said food does not make us closer, or drive us further from God (1 Co 8:8).

### *Meats offered to idols*

The early church believers were faced with the problem of meats that had been sacrificed to idols

During the early church days, idolatry was common in the Roman society. Those who practiced idolatry would offer sacrifices to their gods, and then take the extra meat to the village market to be sold.

The problem was, that some in the church believed it was wrong to eat this meat since it was from an animal that had been offered to an idol. Others believed, that since an idol was not real, it was not wrong to eat the meat.

Paul dealt with this problem in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Co 8:1-13).

First, Paul said, that eating the meat offered to an idol is not sinful because the "idol is nothing" (1 Co 8:4-6). An idol was, in itself, nothing but a piece of wood or stone.

Second, Paul said eating, or not eating, does not draw us closer to God (1 Co 8:8).

Third, Paul went one step further by taking into consideration a weaker brother in Christ. Some of the church, perhaps those who had worshipped idols before their conversion, felt guilty about eating this meat (1 Co 8:7, 10).

For this reason, Paul encouraged believers to abstain from eating. He said to eat knowing it would offend a weaker brother would be a sin (1 Co 8:12). He concluded his comments by saying if eating this type of meat offended a brother, he would never eat meat again (1 Co 8:13).

Paul dealt later in his letter with what to do if eating meat involves an unbeliever (1 Co 10:25-32).

Paul said to the believers, if you buy meat at the market, don't ask if it had been offered to an idol (1 Co 10:25). He goes on to say, if you, as a believer, are invited to a feast by an unbeliever you should eat without asking if the meat had been offered to an idol (1 Co 10:27). If another believer present at the feast tells you the meat has been offered to an idol, you should do not eat it (1 Co 10:28). Paul is saying, the stronger believer should yield his right to eat to make sure he does not hinder the spiritual walk of the weaker believer (1 Co 10:29).

Paul's sacrificial attitude displays a principle that we all should adopt and certainly one that applies to our study of Christian ethics.

We should have learned:

One, how we live around others does matter. Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper" (Gen. 4:9). The answer is "Yes".

Two, having the "right" to do something does not always mean we should do it.

Three, the feelings and beliefs of others should matter to us.

Four, there are times when we should give up our liberty for the well-being of a weaker believer or an unbeliever.

Five, the welfare of a fellow believer should be more important than our individual freedom.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY CONNECTED TO FOOD

After all our discussion about food, we need to recognize one very important fact. That is, mankind is responsible for how he treats God's creation. That includes food.

The fact that man has permission from God to kill and eat animals does not mean God cares nothing about animals. That means, mankind does not have the right to mistreat or abuse animals. The Bible says, "A righteous man *regardeth the life of his beast*" (Pr 12:10 emphasis added).

Animals are a part of God's creation. He included animals when He said "It was very good" (Ge 1:31). He included them in His covenant with Noah (Ge 9:8-12). He said, "For every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps 50:10). He knows when every sparrow dies (Mt. 10:29).

As I have mentioned, God has given man dominion over the animal world. When God made man He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and *let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*" (Ge 1:26 emphasis added).

After He created all things He said to Adam, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have *dominion* over the *fish* of the sea, and over the *fowl* of the air, and over *every living thing that moveth* upon the earth" (Ge 1:28 emphasis added).

The Psalmist said, "Thou madest him to have *dominion* over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet: All *sheep and oxen*, Yea, and the *beasts* of the field; The *fowl* of the air, and the *fish* of the sea, And *whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas" (Ps 8:6–8 emphasis added).

The verses above tell us man is to have "dominion" over the earth and everything in it. A part of man's responsibility is to care for His creation.

As I have mentioned earlier, the word "dominion" means "to rule over". Ruling over God's creation does not mean we have the right to abuse it. In fact, the exact opposite is true. It means we are responsible to do whatever we can to care for it.

How do we take dominion over God's creation? We do what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. God told Adam and Eve to "keep" the garden (Ge 2:15).

The word "keep" tells us what our responsibility is as citizens of God's planet and members of God's family. God has given us a "garden" to keep. Our garden is all of His creation.

### *How do we "keep" our garden?*

- *Keeping our garden involves preparation*

God was more concerned about Adam and Eve than He was about the garden. As with every part of His creation, God is most concerned about the spiritual well-being of man. We prepare ourselves to do God's work by accepting God's offer of salvation and then living in a way that would please Him.

- *Keeping our garden involves pleasure*

God wanted Adam and Eve to enjoy the garden. He meant it to be more than a job for them. In like fashion, God wants us to enjoy His creation. Paul said God has given "us richly *all things to enjoy*" (1 Ti 6:17 emphasis added).

- *Keeping our garden involves perception*



The word "keep" means, "to take heed". Adam and Eve were to look throughout the garden, see what needed to be done, and do it.

That means we should take the time to learn about God's creation, including the animal kingdom, and do what we can to assist its survival. The care of anything begins with knowing about it. The new boss must learn about the company if he is to be a good boss. Ignorance always leads to failure.

- *Keeping our garden involves produce*

The word "keep" means, "to care for". It has the idea of caring for the garden so that it might produce its full potential. As believers, we should do our what we can to help God's creation reach its full potential.

- *Keeping our garden involves protection*

The word "keep" means, "to hedge about". Hedges were used to surround gardens and protect them (Job 1:10; Lam. 2:6; Isa. 5:5; Mt. 21:33; Mk. 12:1). I am not suggesting Adam put a literal hedge around the Garden of Eden but it did need to be protected. It needed to be protected because, as becomes clear (Ge 3:1-5), Lucifer would do all he could to hinder its production. If God told Adam to protect the Garden of Eden, how much more do we need to protect the rest of God's creation?

Part of us being caretakers of God's creation means doing what we can to care for animals. Certainly, man should do his part to keep any species from going extinct. To fail to do so would be cruel. On the other hand, allowing a particular species to over-populate can be just as cruel. Over-population leads to starvation, disease, and wandering into unsafe environments.

- *Keeping our garden involves patience*

The word "keep" means, "to preserve". That meant God wanted Adam and Eve to continue in their work of taking care of the garden. It was supposed to be more than a temporary task.

- *Keeping our garden involves persuasion*

The word "keep" means, "to save". God wanted Adam and Eve to care for the garden in such a manner to where they could save it for their offspring. Of course, they failed miserably and were removed from the garden.

We are to care for God's creation but we should persuade those coming behind us to do the same. To fail here is to fail God.

God expelling Adam and Eve from the garden revealed the fact that He held them accountable for their assigned task. With every responsibility, comes accountability. God will hold us accountable for how we treat His creation.

### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FOOD**

1. Name three reasons that animals are inferior to man.
2. The Old Testament restrictions about eating were for Israel only.  
(True / False)
3. Jesus said that which goes into the stomach does not \_\_\_\_\_ a person.
4. In your own words, describe the meat that had been offered to an idol.
5. In your own words, describe why mankind does not have the right to mistreat or abuse animals.

### **G. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FORGIVENESS**

What does the Bible say about forgiveness and revenge? What are we to do when someone wrongs us?

We need to begin this discussion by realizing, that God wants us to have peace in our personal relationships. We are to "Seek peace, and pursue it (Ps. 34:14). Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9). Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Ro 12:18). He said also, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Ro 14:19).

Unfortunately, as we all know, there will never be complete peace while we are on earth. Even believers have issues between themselves.

Let's look at some simple facts about this difficult subject.

- *Forgiveness is an offended party releasing the offending party*

Forgiveness releases the sinning party from the guilt of their sin. In the eyes of God, their sin is gone, forever gone, completely gone.

- *The greatest example of forgiveness is God's forgiveness of sinful man*

God wants to forgive us. God will not compromise with our sin but He is ready and willing to forgive. The prodigal's father is a great example. He was waiting and watching for the return of his son.

Jesus said, "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Lk. 15:20).

You would expect a father to react in such a manner if his son was returning home after bravely fighting in a war, or accomplishing some great task. But, this son had rejected his beliefs, disgraced his name, and wasted his inheritance.

Truly, God's forgiveness is amazing. He is willing to forgive the worse of the worse. Jesus was willing to forgive those who hung Him on the cross (Lk. 23:34). By the way, you and I hung Him on the cross.

- *Only God can truly forgive*

If a person wrongs us, we can release them from their guilt between us and them, but that does not rid them of their guilt before God.

The victim of a crime may forgive the criminal, but that does not absolve him of his guilt. He still has to face the judge and pay the price for his crime.

- *Forgiveness is not ignoring sin*

Forgiveness is not God looking the other way and pretending we did nothing wrong. Sin demands payment (Rom. 6:23).

The Old Testament sacrificial system was a way of covering man's sin until Jesus came to offer Himself as the supreme sacrifice and pay the penalty of sin.

Only by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross can forgiveness be possible. The book of Hebrews says, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22). Paul said, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7).

- *Real forgiveness comes only through confession and repentance of our sin*

Sin does not dissipate or slowly disappear over time. There is no statute of limitation on our sin. It must be confessed. John said, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 Jn 1:9 emphasis added). Clearly, this tells us there is no forgiveness if there is no confession.

The word "confess" means "to agree with". It means we are agreeing with God about our sins.

Repentance is a change of mind about our sin. It means, we see our actions as sinful and accept the blame for what we have done.

Confession is difficult but it yields great benefits. The freedom from guilt is tremendous. Being aware that there is nothing between me and my Savior is delightful.

- *We are to forgive others as God forgave us*

That means, we should be ready to forgive as soon as someone asks (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). We should be willing to forgive completely.

The fact is, we are never more like God, than when we are forgiving someone who has wronged us. Jesus gave a parable to illustrate this (Mt. 18:23-35). If God forgave our greater sin, we ought to be willing to forgive the lesser sin on others.

- *Forgiveness should have no limit*

Peter asked if he should forgive "seven times". No doubt, Jesus let the wind out of his balloon when He said he should forgive "seventy times seven" (Mt. 18:22). There should be no limit to our forgiveness.

- *Forgiving does not mean forgetting*

Unless we have amnesia, we are incapable of forgetting the wrong done against us. Contrary to popular opinion, God does not "forget" our sins when we confess. This idea comes from a misinterpretation of Hebrews 10:17 where God said, "And their sins and iniquities *will I remember no more*" (Heb 10:17 emphasis added). Notice, that God said He "will" not remember, not that He "cannot" remember. That means God will never bring it up again. He will never hold us guilty for sin He has forgiven.

God told David the sword would never depart (2 Sam. 12:10). If God forgot about David's sin, how did He keep this promise? Certainly, the omniscient God of heaven does not get amnesia.

Genesis tells us "God *remembered* Noah" (Ge 8:1 emphasis added). That does not suggest that God had forgotten Noah. It means the time came when God acted on Noah's behalf. Therefore, when God says He will "remember" our sins no more, He is saying He will never act towards us about the sins He has forgiven. As far as God is concerned, those sins are gone.

- *Forgiveness is not a feeling*

Whether we are talking about forgiveness between us and God, or us and others, forgiveness is an act of faith. It may include feelings, but it may not. Quite often, we will forgive but still battle with harsh feelings. We must remember, that the devil will try to keep us in bondage. We must, by faith, claim the victory.

- *Forgiveness does not remove all consequences of our sin*

God will forgive us, but He may not remove all the consequences of our sins. If we take fire to our bosom, the burn does not go away (Pro. 6:27). After David repented, God told David the sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam. 12:10).

- *Forgiving involves, at least, two people*

Forgiving includes the offended and the offender. It is more than us forgiving ourselves. It is the result of us confessing to the one we sinned against.

- *We all need forgiveness*

Isaiah said, "But we are all as an unclean thing" (Is 64:6). Someone has said if those in the insane asylum could know they are forgiven, 80% of them could walk out today.

Lack of forgiveness has stifled the church's shout and robbed her of her power.

- *Being "willing" to forgive is not forgiveness*

We can have an attitude of forgiveness without actually forgiving. Until confession and forgiveness takes place, there is no true forgiveness.

- *Our forgiveness of others is connected to God's forgiveness of us*

Jesus tells us to not even try to worship until we have forgiven (Mk. 11:25-26). Our walk with God touches every part of our lives. If we are wrong in one area, it affects another area.

So, how do we respond to being wronged?

*We can try to ignore it.*

Paul talked about "*Forbearing* one another (Col. 3:13 emphasis added). We should not make something small into something big. If we can ignore the wrong and hold no animosity against the guilty party, we should simply let it go.

*We can get bitter.*

The prodigal's brother got bitter and was miserable as a result (Lk. 15:28).

It is so easy to get bitter when someone wrongs us. By doing so, we are only hurting ourselves. More than likely, the person who hurt us does not care.

*We can seek revenge.*

It is so easy to feel like we have the right to strike back. However, instead of striking back, we are told to love our enemies and pray for those who spitefully use us (Mt. 5:44).

We need to learn how to let God fight our battles. He does a lot better job than we do.

David said to King Saul, "The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee" (1 Sa 24:12).

*We can forgive*

Refusing to forgive holds us prisoners.

Certainly, this is what God desires. Paul wrote, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph 4:32). He also wrote "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col 3:13). Jesus forgives quickly and completely those who do not deserve forgiveness.

### *WHEN IT COMES TO FORGIVENESS...*

- *We need to recognize*

We need to recognize the fact that there is only one way to forgiveness. God can forgive because of the work Jesus did on the cross. Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28). Paul said, "In whom we have redemption *through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*" (Eph 1:7 emphasis added).

We need to recognize the fact that true forgiveness comes only when we admit our sin. Trying to excuse ourselves, and pass it off as a mistake, or a misunderstanding, is not good enough.

We should be broken about our sin. James said "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (Jas 4:9).

- *We need to realize*

We need to realize, we are going to get hurt. Sooner or later, someone will treat us wrong. We need to be ready for it so it won't devastate us when it happens.

- *We need to remember*

We need to remember the times we failed. We need to remember the times we hurt someone. We need to remember all the times God has freely forgiven us.

Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (Jn. 8:7).

- *We need to release*

We need to release the guilty party. Paul said, "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Ro 12:17). Forgiving is not ignoring the wrong. It is releasing the guilty person from their wrong because they have confessed.

- *We need to rely*

Forgiving is not easy. It is impossible without God's help.

We need to rely on our Lord to enable us to forgive completely. We need His help to do so.

We need His help to not seek for revenge. Paul said, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Ro 12:19).

Will you give it to God and let Him take care of it? Then, and only then, will you truly be set free.

- *We need to respond*

With this study, and everything else, God says to us, we need to respond to His voice. With that in mind, we need to ask ourselves some questions.

Have I confessed my sin and received God's forgiveness?

Is there anyone I have sinned against that I have not confessed to?

Am I holding a grudge against anyone? Am I bitter about some past wrong?

Have I refused to forgive someone who asked me to forgive them?

### **STUDY GUIDE FOR FORGIVING**

1. In your own words, define forgiveness.
2. The word "confess" means \_\_\_\_\_. (page 44)
3. Refusing to forgive holds us \_\_\_\_\_. (page 46)
4. In your own words, list some of the consequences of sin.
5. In your own words, explain why we should not seek revenge. (page 47)

#### **F. AREAS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT DEAL WITH FIGHTING**

What does the Bible teach about war? Is there any such thing as a just war? What should the believer's attitude be? Are we supposed to be pacifists and let an enemy overthrow our nation?



## WAR AND PEACE

A casual glance at the Bible will tell us, God wants peace. The problem, of course, is that man is selfish and sinful. The attitude of self-exaltation that Lucifer has (Isa. 14:13), is found in the heart of man. Pharaoh (Ex 9:17), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30), and King Herod (Acts 12:21-23), all tried to exalt themselves above God and suffered the consequences.

God desires that there be peace between the countries of the world. Paul said we are to pray for the leaders of our country that "We may lead a quiet and peaceable life" (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Unfortunately, there may be times when the sin and selfishness of man lead to war. One man or woman can lead entire nations into conflict. What should be the attitude of a believer in such cases?

We know the Bible says "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13). However, the word "kill" is a Hebrew word meaning "murder". It is referring to an individual committing premeditated murder of another person. It is not a declaration against fighting in a war among nations.

## WAR AND PROTECTION

The fact is, God does expect a nation to protect itself from the evil attack of rogue nations. He does not expect a nation to allow itself to be overthrown without doing its best to defend itself. The Bible teaches self-defense, whether it be an individual or an entire nation. The Bible never condemns a soldier who follows the orders he received while on the battlefield.

God has promised to stand with the nation that is unjustifiably attacked. God has certainly protected Israel in this manner. Part of the song of Moses says "The LORD is a man of war" (Ex 15:3). It says also, "Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Ex 15:6b).

God told Israel He would be an enemy to their enemies (Ex 23:22). Later when going into battle, God said to Israel "Be not afraid of them, for the LORD thy God is with thee" (Dt. 20:1). God said He would "Set thee on high above all nations of the earth" (Dt 28:1). Isaiah said, "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand" (Is 40:10).

God told King Saul to "go and smite Amalek" and not spare anyone, including women, children, and livestock (1 Sa 15:3). It is important to recognize, this attack was God's response to how Amalek had treated Israel. In the previous verse, God said, "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt".

God, in mercy, to this point in time, has kept America safe from nationwide homeland conflict. That may not always be the case. If this nation expects God's protection, she had better see her need to get right with God and repent.

## WAR AND PURPOSE

The first thing a believer should consider in times of war is, what is the reason for the conflict. What purpose is involved? As with every point in this study, we must find the answer to this question in the Word of God.

We must first recognize the fact that God did not approve of all the wars recorded in the Old Testament. The wars God approved were defensive, not offensive. As already mentioned, the Bible approves of self-defense, for the individual, or the nation.

The only exception to this rule is when God led Israel into the battles inside the Promised Land. These were offensive conflicts, not defensive.

It is vitally important to realize, the battles that dealt with obtaining the Promised Land were for a specific time and purpose and involved a specific area of land.

Why did God lead His people into the land of Canaan when He knew it would result in war and death?

- *One, God owns all things*

Since God owns it all, He can do with it as He pleases. The Psalmist said, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps 24:1). Since God owns it all, He can do with it as He desires. God is the Lord over life and death.

- *Two, to keep His promise to Abraham*

God promised Abraham a land (Ge 12:1-3; 15:18-21). As we will see, one of the reasons Abraham did not receive the land immediately was because the time of judgment of the Canaanites had not yet come. That leads us to the next point.

- *Three, to judge the Canaanites*

God was using the people of Israel to judge those living in the land (called Canaanites). The Canaanites were ungodly and wicked people who were guilty of child sacrifice, homosexuality, and incest (Lev. 18:1-30). God had been patient with the Canaanites for years but they had refused to repent. Their sin had become so great that they deserved judgment. God never judges early (Ge 15:16). Before He took them into Canaan, God told Israel He would give them the land, not because of their righteousness, but because of the sin of the Canaanites (Dt. 9:4-6).

God warned the Canaanites before the battles began (Josh. 2:10-11; 9:9). They knew judgment was coming and still refused to repent. God had rather a sinning people repent for He has no pleasure in judging (Ezk. 18:31-32).

- *Four, to get rid of the sin in the land*

If God let the Canaanites live, the people of Israel would have been overcome by the temptation. God told Israel to utterly destroy the Canaanites to keep them from falling into the same sin (Dt. 20:18). They would certainly adopt the sin of the Canaanites if they left any survivors.

To put to death the women and the children seems harsh, but we must recognize these facts. The women were participants in the sins, and therefore, deserved judgment as well as the men. Also, if the children had been allowed to live, they would have been extremely resentful towards the people of Israel. They would have grown into greater enemies of Israel and haters of the God of Israel.

- *Five, to teach His people the importance of obedience*

When Israel believed and obeyed, God blessed them.

Unfortunately, the people of Israel failed to totally obey God. They let some of the Canaanites live (Josh. 16:10; 17:12-13; Judges 1:29). As God had warned, this caused the people of Israel to fall into idolatry time after time (Judges 2:1-3; 1 Kgs. 11:5; 2 Kgs. 16:3-4).

- *Six, to provide a place of blessing for His people*

The land of Canaan was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8). God loves to give good things to His people. When they obey Him, they receive His best.

- *Seven, to fulfill prophecy*

God was preparing the way that He might fulfill the prophecy of the birth of His Son (Ge 3:15; Micah 5:2; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Ps. 72:10). God was getting His people in the land where His Son would be born.

## WAR AND PUNISHMENT

There are times when God uses nations, even wicked nations, to bring judgment on other nations. He used the ungodly nation of Assyria to come against the people of Israel when they sinned (Isa. 10:5-7).

God is a God of justice. Whether a nation or an individual, He cannot, and will not allow sin to go unpunished. To do so, would be sinful. The judge who lets the criminal go free is not a good judge.

God warns the nations who forget Him (1 Sam. 12:9; Ps. 9:17; 50:22).

Sadly, our nation has long forgotten God. We certainly are seeing days like the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37). God won't let such a nation continue without judging her. I believe America has been under the judging hand of God for a good while. The worst form of judgment is when God backs off a nation and lets it do what it wants to do. That certainly seems to be what God has done with America.

## WAR AND PREVENTION

There are times when war is prevented by a nation showing its strength. Weakness is a calling card to evil men and nations. The fact is, there are evil people in this world who want to hurt those who seem weak.

There are times when war is necessary to prevent greater destruction. The two atomic bombs released over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed over 200,000 almost immediately and many more died from complications. However, as horrible as it was, brought World War II to an end, and saved many lives as a result.

## WAR AND PROVISION

There were occasions when nations did attack Israel. During those desperate times, God told them to trust Him for He would provide the help they needed.

God told Joshua "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:9). Time after time, God assured Israel and told them to trust Him. He always kept His promise and gave victory (Dt. 20:1-4; 1 Sam. 30:8; Ps. 144:1-2).

The Psalmist talked about those who trust in horses instead of the Lord (Ps. 20:7). He said they are "brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright" (Ps. 20:8). We really can trust our God. A mighty man is not delivered by much strength (Ps. 33:16). We cannot trust in our bow (Ps. 44:6).

God delivered Israel from Pharaoh and his army without them firing a shot (Ex. 4:13). Gideon with 300 against 135,000. He is the same God today.

The bottom line is, there may be times when a person has to go to war on behalf of their country. There may come that time of war (Ecc 3:8). War is ugly, it is brutal, it is ruthless. War is never good but there are times when it is necessary.

Thank the Lord, a day is coming when there be no more war (Isa. 25:8).

## **CONCLUSION**

By this time in this study, we should realize the believer is to live a life that is contrary to the world and pleasing to God.

After all our discussion about Christian ethics, we were confronted with one question. That question is, what will we do about it?

Here are three options.

### *We can become selfish*

We can, as many have, live our lives as we please and not worry about the consequences. We can devour the good things God gives us and live for ourselves.

We do not have to search long nor hard to find many have decided to take this path.

Adam

Adam not only took the selfish route but then blamed Eve for his failure (Ge 3:12).

Nimrod

Nimrod rebelled against God's instruction to cover the earth (Ge 1:28) and organized the building of the Tower of Babel (Ge 10:1-9).

Lot

Selfishly, Lot chose the well-watered plain of Jordan (Ge 13:10). Next, he pitched his tent towards Sodom (Ge 13:12). Finally, he moved into Sodom (Ge 19:1).

Samson

Samson gave into his desires for a woman (Judges 16:4). She would become his downfall and he would become an embarrassment to God (Judges 16:15-21).

David

David failed miserably because he allowed his flesh to get the best of him (2 Sam. 11:1-5). It cost him more than he ever realized (Ps. 51:1-12).

Demas

Demas could have been another Paul if he had not allowed his love for the world to control him (2 Ti 4:10).

Peter

Peter went so far as to deny that he knew Jesus (Mt. 26:74). He fell because he did not think he would (Mt. 26:35; .

### *We can become separatists*

Another option for the believer is to so separate themselves from the world that they have no contact with the world.

There have been groups, like the Mennonites, Amish, and even Christian communes, who have attempted to isolate themselves. The problem with this is the fact that we have little effect on the world. If we are going to reach the world we must have some contact with the world.

Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (Jn 17:15).

Believers are to be separate from the world but that does not mean we are to isolate ourselves totally from the world. We should insulate ourselves but not isolate ourselves.

How can we reach the world if we avoid the world entirely?

Jesus told us to go into the world and preach the gospel

### *We can become Scriptural*

We can turn to the Scripture, find out what God says, and do it.

We may have to live in this world but we do not have to live like the world. God will show us His will and give us the grace to do that which He desires. Paul said God's grace will teach us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and help us to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

Jesus said of His disciples "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn 17:16). He is telling us that since we are not of this world we should not live as though we are (Jn 15:19).

Some examples of living in a Scriptural manner are the following.

Joseph

Joseph served God faithfully whether he was in the pit (Ge 37:20), the palace (Ge 39:1-6), or the prison (Ge 39:20-23). He lived his life for God and, at the same time, was promoted to one of the top positions in Egypt (Ge 41:41-43).

Daniel

Daniel played a tremendous role in Babylon (Dan. 6:1-4) and stayed spiritual at the same time (Dan. 6:10-11).

Jesus

Jesus was called a "friend of publicans and sinners (Mt. 11:19; Lk. 7:36; Jn. 2:2) yet He did always those things that pleased His Father (Jn. 8:29). He knew He had to associate with people if He was going to be able to reach them with the gospel.

He instructed His disciples be in the world but not of the world (Jn. 2:2) and He told them to go into the world and preach the gospel (Mt. 28:19).

Even though the men we have looked at played an important part in the function of their world, they did not take on the ungodly behavior of their world. They remained committed to the will of God and stayed spiritually clean.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The goal of this study on Christian Ethics has been....

To show us who God is.

To show us what God wants and demands.

To provide us some assistance to help us live godly in an ungodly world.

To help us look closely at ourselves and see who and what we really are.

To bring about change in ourselves and the world around us.

To help us please the God who sent His Son for sinful and sorry people like us.

To help us experience the blessings that God promises to those who will love and obey Him. God is not an orge that only barks out demands. He is a loving Father who wants the best for His children.