Last week: our Biblical Theory of Ethics

Three Biblical aspects of morality:

1. Creation order (nature) → Doing good

2. Personal Relationships (love)→ love for God / love for neighbor

3. Community → Interrelationism (mutual relationship between individuals and society)

Applying this theory to specific moral issues:

Issues the Bible speaks to openly, plainly, and directly

Marriage & Sexuality

Marriage is the fundamental unit of community

People have two aspects to their being as it relates to ethics:

- Inner being where commitments are made

- Outer being that engages in actions/behaviors

Examine this with biblical theology:

Creation purposes of marriage (*telic*):

1. create one entity out of two (mutual love relationship)

2. beget children (beginnings of community)

> Note: infertility is a result of the Fall. This *does not* mean that an infertile heterosexual married couple is the same as a homosexual couple.

> Note 2: bestiality is eliminated simply because of the nature of the created kinds (generic order) → man, among all the other creatures, was still alone until woman was created

rest of OT: Not everything reported in the Bible is promoted or endorsed in the same way (e.g. polygamy→ look at all the issues it caused for Jacob and his sons!)

Fundamental commitment to one person explains why sexual intercourse and other sexual behavior outside of marriage is considered morally abhorrent.

"Butter knife" example (M. Hill)

Note: the Bible knows nothing of the idea that human sexuality itself is dirty or demeaning. That came from Greek philosophy. It is the misuse of human sexuality that is both demeaning and sinful.

In the NT, Jesus affirms the marriage institution as ideally one man-one woman for life (certain exceptions to be dealt with in divorce section)

Jesus & Paul: relationship w/God the highest purpose → singles for the kingdom (but not norm)

Kingdom to come: no marriage among people; the church will be the bride of Christ. Human marriage on earth is a picture of that heavenly, eternal marriage.

We live in a fallen world. Should a "retrieval ethic" should be examined in certain situations? i.e. attempting to salvage the most good out of the fallen situations we encounter (M. Hill)

Divorce/Remarriage

Individualism in our society: the individual is what matters most. Self-fulfillment is the highest goal.

Sidenote: some relationship books present understanding others and/or care of others as the best way of securing your own interests (*His Needs, Her Needs*; *Men Are From Mars, Women are From Venus*; Love Languages series, etc.). That doesn't mean the concepts can't be helpful, but they can also be (and often are) presented by well-meaning counselors and pastors from a purely selfish standpoint. Remember: our motivations and character are part of ethics, not merely our behaviors.

Mosaic Law: Divorce was regulated – Deut. 24:1-4

Jesus: Divorce, still regulated (not outright forbidden), but much more highly than in OT

-   only exception – adultery

-   mutual, committed love relationships should be pursued ← obeying God should be pursued

-   Interesting note (M.Hill): Jesus does not command divorce even in the case of adultery. Bible never presents moral choices in a framework of justifying ourselves, but rather of obligations to one another. Reasonable conclusion: even if a spouse has committed adultery (fundamental betrayal of marriage commitment), default position of both Christian parties should be restoration/repairing of marriage relationship. If it becomes obvious that the adulterous spouse isn't willing to abide by their commitment, then they have abandoned the commitment. [relate testimony of a divorced couple's remarriage to each other]

Paul: believers are only to marry another believer

- If an unbeliever wants to stay with a believing spouse, stay with them (this blesses the unbelieving spouse and any children)

- If the unbeliever wants to depart, let them go in peace

Remarriage: for those who say marriage bond is only broken by death, this is never Paul's argument (despite Rom 7:2-4; context there is death breaks the bond to the law; not that *only* death breaks the bond in the marriage). Marriage covenant requires two willing partners→mutual love relationship

M. Hill: those who take this approach (only death breaks marriage bond) are taking a "Kingdom only" approach to ethics; assumes something re: the eternal nature of marriage not a present reality

M. Hill: "the logic of the Kingdom of God, which is the logic of the Kingdom of mutual love relationships, suggests that a believer who leaves his or her spouse and refuses to repent would no longer qualify as a member of the Kingdom." Matt 18:15-20. Jay Adams concurs with this sentiment.

Also Jay Adams: the Bible never suggests semi-permanent "separation" as an alternative to divorce. Relationship problems must be worked out within a relationship. If you separate the troubled couple for more than just a very brief cooling off period to prevent "crimes of passion," you are encouraging the very outcome (divorce) that you're trying to prevent.

<u>Homosexuality:</u>

Individualism has led to the premise that one's sexuality is to be individually discovered

M. Hill: "People are free to choose from a range of possible actions before them. In this sense they are autonomous. But they cannot create their own system of moral values. Moral values have been established by God and built into the very order of creation. People are autonomous in that they can disobey God and ignore His values, but they are not free to create their own set of moral values."

Homosexuality flies in the face of both the generic order (kind) and the telic order (purpose behind the creation). Neither of the two purposes of marriage can be achieved in a homosexual relationship.

Homosexuality is never spoken of in any positive fashion in the Bible, only negatively

Homosexuality is not genetic. Obviously self-contradictory set of arguments from LBGTQ+:

- homosexuality is a "fixed orientation" and cannot be changed, though it is not genetic

- "gender" (sex) is supposedly fluid, though male/female is genetically built into every cell of human DNA (except the gametes)

Is there place for a retrieval ethic here?

1. "Monogamous homosexual relationships" don't meet purposes of marriage (so, "not good").

2. "Monogamous homosexual relationships are virtually non-existent

3. Homosexuality is physically and psychologically destructive

4. Thus, promoting these would be harmful, not beneficial

Re: "conversion therapy" (and related to "chaste" homosexual partnerships: Rosaria Butterfield - not called to be attracted to all members of the opposite sex, just attracted & committed to one. Related point: behavior alters brain. Choices affect our capacity for moral choice → impacts on Biblical Counseling related to psychotropic medications

Abortion (Bible speaks indirectly):

Real questions: 1) Is murder wrong? Bible is clear on this (Gen 9:6)

- Some modern pro-choice arguments even readily acknowledge that it's murder but justify the choice based on extreme individualistic (self-actualization) arguments

When does the fetus become a person? → value of kind (human vs. all other animals/life)

- This is actually the wrong question (Magnuson). Humans are a subset of personal beings. God Himself is a personal being. Angels and Humans are both personal beings. The real question: when does the fetus become a human? Answer: clearly at conception (Ps. 139:13)

"Difficult cases do not provide the basis for good policy!" M. Hill

Capital Punishment
Gen 9:6 and Mosaic law. Retrieval ethic possible?
Best argument against: c.p. cannot be administered justly

Suggested Reading:

Michael Hill. *The How and the Why of Love*
Ken Magnuson. *Invitation to Christian Ethics*
Jay Adams. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*
Robert A.J. Gagnon. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*