

FAITH & FREEDOM

LESSON 5: ETHICS APPLIED

Introduction

We live in tumultuous and rapidly changing times. We might with King David ask the question, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3) I submit there are a number of things the righteous can do. We need a Biblical understanding of the events we are witnessing and the evolution of prevalent ideologies. We need to not be distracted from God's mission for us during these last days. We need to stand on the front lines and not sit on the sidelines in silence.

Ethics Applied

In prior lessons we covered the difference between ethics and morals – ethics being the process of analyzing data for the purpose of determining moral values. We also considered different ethical systems including relativism, emotivism, utilitarianism, ethical egoism and absolutism. In this lesson we begin considering specific moral questions. A danger for us is oversimplifying and providing a quick answer instead of a reasoned answer after research and contemplation.

1. **Capital Punishment:** Should governments take the lives of people who are convicted of capital crimes? If so, which crimes should be capital crimes? And what procedural safeguards should be in place to prevent wrongful convictions?

- Relevant passages: Gen. 9:5-6; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14
- Christians that oppose the death penalty rely on Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:38-39, 22:39, 26:52; and John 8:2-11.
- If you contend that capital punishment is moral for murderers, is it moral for any other crimes? (Consider Exod. 21:18-24; Lev. 24:17-22)
- If you believe the imposition of the death penalty should consider the killer's mental capacity or history (e.g., abuse), what Bible verses would you rely on?
- If you believe the legal process must ensure the defendant has effective assistance of counsel, what Bible verses would you rely on?

2. **The Just War:** What is a "just war"? When is it right (if ever) for a Christian to serve as a soldier? What are the arguments in favor of a pacifist position?

- Some relevant passages: Luke 3:14; Acts 10; Num. 32:6-7, 20-23; Verses used for pacifism: Matt. 5:39, 22:39.
- The historic Christian concept of a "just war" is that it is morally right when it meets certain criteria.
- What is a just cause for going to war?
- What is a proper intention for going to war?
- Are there diplomatic or other strategies that must be tried before going to war?
- Who should make the decision to go to war?
- What is a proper goal for going to war?
- What means are permitted in waging a just war?
- Is it ever permitted to target noncombatants?
- How long should a just war be maintained if there is no reasonable hope of success within the criteria of a just war?