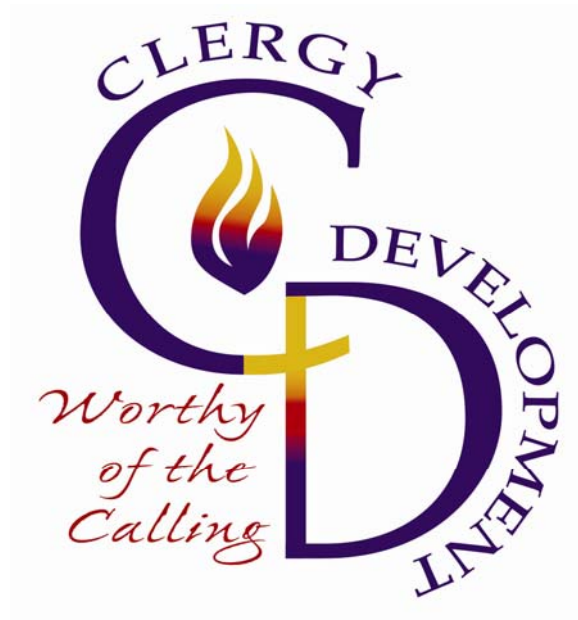


---

Faculty Guide

# Living Ethical Lives



Clergy Development  
Church of the Nazarene  
Kansas City, Missouri  
816-333-7000 ext. 2468; 800-306-7651 (USA)  
2005

---

Copyright ©2005 Nazarene Publishing House, Kansas City, MO USA. Created by Church of the Nazarene Clergy Development, Kansas City, MO USA. All rights reserved.

All scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

NASB: From the New American Standard Bible (NASB), copyright the Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 973, 1977, 1995. Used by permission.

NIV: From the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (NIV). Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

**Notice to educational providers:**

This is a contract. By using these materials you accept all the terms and conditions of this Agreement. This Agreement covers all Faculty Guides, Student Guides, and instructional resources included in this Module.

Upon your acceptance of this Agreement, Clergy Development grants to you a nonexclusive license to use these curricular materials provided that you agree to the following:

1. Use of the Modules.
  - You may distribute this Module in electronic form to students or other educational providers.
  - You may make and distribute electronic or paper copies to students for the purpose of instruction, as long as each copy contains this Agreement and the same copyright and other proprietary notices pertaining to the Module. If you download the Module from the Internet or similar online source, you must include the Clergy Development copyright notice for the Module with any online distribution and on any media you distribute that includes the Module.
  - You may translate, adapt, and/or modify the examples and instructional resources for the purpose of making the instruction culturally relevant to your students. However, you must agree that you will not sell these modified materials without express, written permission from Clergy Development.
2. Copyright. The Module is owned by Clergy Development and is protected by United States Copyright Law and International Treaty provisions. Except as stated above, this Agreement does not grant you any intellectual property rights in the Module.
3. Restrictions.
  - You may not sell copies of this Module in any form except to recover the minimum reproduction cost of electronic media or photocopy expense.
  - You may not modify the wording or original intent of the Module for commercial use.
4. Unpublished rights reserved under the copyright laws of the United States.

Clergy Development  
Church of the Nazarene  
6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131  
USA

The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

**Members of the development committee** for the Modular Course of Study were

Michael W. Vail, Ph.D., Series Curriculum Editor, Clergy Development  
Jerry D. Lambert, Commissioner, International Board of Education  
Ron Blake, Pastor, Detroit First Church of the Nazarene, Detroit, MI  
Al Truesdale, Ph.D., Nazarene Theological Seminary (retired)  
Robert L. Woodruff, Ph.D., World Mission Educational Coordinator  
David Busic, Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Bethany, OK  
Michael W. Stipp, Clergy Development

**Series Foreword** written by Al Truesdale

**Journaling Essay** written by Rick Ryding

**Principal contributors** for each module are listed in specific Faculty Guides.

## Series Foreword

### **A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene**

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people: the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, community life, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people, in a form referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe God calls and persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry should continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful

preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be, should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes “the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; ‘in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left’ (2 Cor 6:6-7)” (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ “must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, <sup>8</sup>but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, <sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching . . . able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God’s Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ’s Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation for ministry in Christ’s Church—one’s education in all its dimensions— should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect those standards to be

observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12: 1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules comprising the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

## Contents

Series Foreword .....	iii
Introduction .....	viii
<b>Unit 1: The Nature of Ethical Reflection</b>	
Lesson 1: Defining Ethics .....	1-1
Lesson 2: Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection...	2-1
Lesson 3: Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics ...	3-1
Lesson 4: New Testament Perspectives on Ethics..	4-1
<b>Unit 2: Philosophical Ethics</b>	
Lesson 5: Utilitarianism .....	5-1
Lesson 6: Natural Rights .....	6-1
Lesson 7: Kantianism .....	7-1
Lesson 8: Virtue Ethics .....	8-1
<b>Unit 3: Theological Ethics</b>	
Lesson 9: Patristic Ethics.....	9-1
Lesson 10: Medieval Ethics .....	10-1
Lesson 11: Modern Ethics .....	11-1
<b>Unit 4: Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics</b>	
Lesson 12: Renewal of the Image of God as the Goal of Humanity .....	12-1
Lesson 13: Holiness as Holy Conduct .....	13-1
Lesson 14: Holiness as Social Holiness.....	14-1
Lesson 15: Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation.....	15-1
<b>Unit 5: Ethical Decision-making and Contemporary Issues</b>	
Lesson 16: Facing the Issue of Sexuality .....	16-1
Lesson 17: Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church .....	17-1
Lesson 18: Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life.....	18-1
<b>Unit 6: Character Development and Spiritual Formation</b>	
Lesson 19: Christian Discipleship and the Virtues ..	19-1
Lesson 20: Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making .....	20-1
Resources .....	contained in the Student Guide

## Introduction

### Intended Use of This Faculty Guide

This Faculty Guide serves as an instructor's guide for teaching principles of *Living Ethical Lives* to adult learners who are preparing for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The content is based on intended outcomes defined through the collaborative process conducted at Breckenridge, CO, USA, between 1990 and 1997. The materials prepare the pastor-teacher to present the topic by providing background reading, lesson plans, lectures, instructions to the teacher, and teaching resources for each class session. In most lessons complete lectures, questions for guided discussions, and defined learning activities are provided.

The pastor-teacher who will lead this module should hold a master's degree. Ideally, the pastor-teacher should have participated as a student in a module using this material prior to teaching the material to others. This faculty guide assumes that the pastor-teacher has some basic understanding of ethics and the ministry.

It is further assumed that learners participating in a module using this material will be high school graduates and be adult learners beyond the traditional college age. Learners are assumed to be motivated to learn, and to have adult life-experiences. No prior college classroom experience is assumed on the part of the learners.

### Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module. Every effort has been made to represent accurately the original intent of the principal contributors.

### Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Dr. Henry W. Spaulding, II. Dr. Spaulding is dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, director of the Graduate Program in Religion, and professor of Theology and Philosophy at



Trevecca Nazarene University, where he has taught since 1995. Before that he taught at Eastern Nazarene College between 1982 and 1992. Dr. Spaulding has also pastored on the Georgia and Virginia districts. He received his bachelor of arts in religion and history from Trevecca Nazarene University, master of divinity from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and the doctor of philosophy from Florida State University.

He has published several articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and has written a book titled *Untangling the Sexual Revolution* with Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City. He has also written for *Holiness Today* as well as several other denominational publications. He has presented twice at the American Academy of Religion. Spaulding is a Sunday School teacher and he resides in Hendersonville, Tennessee, with his wife and two children. He also has one married child who lives in Tennessee.

### **Responder**

Each module was reviewed by at least one content specialist to ensure that the content did not represent a single, narrow view or opinion. The responder provided suggestions the principal contributor could integrate into this module.

Frank Garton was the responder for this module and contributed several case studies for classroom use. Dr. Garton, an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene, is senior counselor for Olivet Nazarene University and teaches in the Psychology Department. He was selected as Olivet Nazarene University *Teacher of the Year* in 1988.

Dr. Garton has pastored in Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. He has been active in community activities as facilitator/counselor for grief and loss support groups and seminars, served on the county Board of Health and the American Red Cross. Frank was Olivet's "house captain," for the popular Christmas-In-April project, which rehabilitates the homes of low income and elderly of the community.

For five years he served as Early Morning Host of the *Journeys with Frank Garton* over the WONU radio station. Other interests include photography, cycling, motorcycling, collecting, and reading poetry.

## Revision History

- Third Quarter 2005*, Revision 2, the current version,
- Module Guide edited for gender inclusiveness.
- Second Quarter 2005*. Revision 1,
- The Lesson Overview, Introduction, Body, Close format was established.

## Intended Outcomes for the Module

The *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, and the *International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination* define educational preparation for ordination. Additionally, each region of the International Church of the Nazarene has developed educational guidelines to qualify educational programs for ordination offered within their region.

The USA Region *Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* defines outcomes for the overall ministerial development program. The module assists candidates in developing these skills. Other modules in the program may also address the same outcomes. The specific outcomes that relate to this module are:

### Program Outcomes

- CH1 Ability to apply a basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- CH2 Ability to discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- CH3 Ability to teach and model sexual purity
- CH4 Ability to understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the church
- CH5 Ability to apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity, specifically as they relate to ministers and laity for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness
- CH12 Ability to practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- CX1 Ability to discover sociological dynamics and trends and to apply that information to specific ministry settings
- CX8 Ability to place the ministry context in light of the large schemes of world and national history

## About This Module

A module is composed of two major works: a Faculty Guide and a Student Guide. Both are necessary for the whole body of information and learning activities pertaining to the module topic. You will need a copy of both.

We have tried to design this module to be flexible and easy to adapt to your situation. You as the instructor will need to be familiar with the information, activities, questions, and homework that are provided in both works. In some cases you may need to modify the illustrations or questions to meet the needs of your group.

### **Rationale**

From its very beginning the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition has emphasized the moral implications of the gospel. This theme is not unique to the Holiness tradition because all Christians understand that healthy Christianity bears fruit. The purpose of this module is to call attention to this reality by pointing toward the multiple sources and resources for Christian character found in Scripture, as it has been handed on to each new generation. Special attention will be given to the unique way in which moral reflection has characterized the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

Another trajectory for this module is Christian character. Such things as integrity, fidelity, consistency, and generosity speak to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Part of the importance of this module is to be found in calling attention to the crucial sense in which embodying the faith should be understood as a material outgrowth of the preaching of the gospel. In other words, to preach the gospel without the intention to live it out is unthinkable in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

This module will be organized into six units. Unit 1 will attempt to define ethics and suggest some of the challenges presented to moral reflection. This section will also set out some of the Old Testament and New Testament for moral reflection. Unit 2 will set out in basic terms some of the major schools of philosophical ethics. Unit 3 will do the same with theological Ethics. Unit 4 will treat Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. Unit 5 will deal with several moral questions currently confronting the Church and the Christian. Here the attempt will be to define the issues and the resources evident in the Holiness tradition for confronting the issues. Unit 6 will

conclude the module by addressing the relationship between character development and spiritual formation. The organization of this module is a deliberate attempt to avoid making ethics a purely theoretical exercise. Rather, at every turn the very practical issues of moral decision-making will form the basic argument.

### **Module Development**

One reason for developing this module is for the benefit of extension education. We understand that teachers all over the world are called upon to teach courses not in their area of specialty, but they teach them because they want to see pastors trained and leaders developed for the church. Extension education is basic to rapid church growth. We want to provide this as a resource for extension educators. If it helps others along the way, that's fine too.

Another reason for developing this module is to equip indigenous faculty. We believe a class like this is best taught and contextualized by someone from within the culture of the students. Many fine teachers, who are leaders in our churches around the world, do not have higher degrees in theology but have the skills to teach a module like this effectively. We want to set them free to do so, and in so doing, to actually improve the module and make it more dynamic and meaningful for their context than it would have been had we held onto it and insisted on teaching it ourselves.

## **About This Faculty Guide**

*Note: It is critical to remember that active participation by the learners will enhance their learning. That means you will not be an information giver. This module is not about you. The focus of the module is helping students learn. Your role is to design an environment in which your students will learn. Sometimes you will give lectures. At other times you will guide discussions or assign your students to work in groups. These kinds of activities keep the participants actively involved in the learning process. Learning is a team activity.*

The faculty guide has been written to guide an instructor as he or she prepares to teach this module. It contains complete lesson plans and resources to provide a solid educational design for the topic. You will need to prepare for each lesson well in advance of the meeting time. Often there are background reading suggestions for the instructor, or you may know additional reference materials you want to interject into the lesson. Questions intended to be answered or discussed by the students are in italic type.

**A two-column format was chosen for the faculty guide.** The right-hand column contains the content of lectures, descriptions of activities, and questions to keep students involved. The left-hand column is to give suggested instructions to you, the teacher. It also contains examples you can use to illustrate concepts in the lectures. Whenever possible you should use

examples from your own experience and from your students' real-life context.

Large white space has been left in the left column to allow you to write notes and personalize the faculty guide.

**The faculty guide has three major components:** the Faculty Guide Introduction, the Lesson Plans, and the Teaching Resources. The Introduction and Lesson Plans are in this document and the Resources are contained in the companion student guide. You are reading the Faculty Guide Introduction now. It provides a teaching philosophy for adult learners, background information for organizing the module, and ideas about conducting the lessons.

**Each section of the faculty guide is numbered** with a two-part page number. Page 5 of Lesson 3 would be numbered "3-5." The first number is the lesson number and the second is the page number within the lesson. Each resource sheet is numbered for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1."

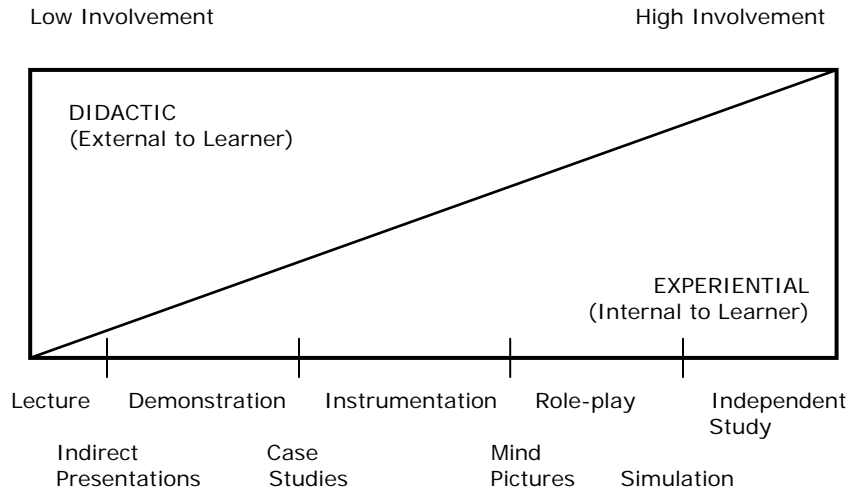
**The Lesson Plans are complete in themselves.** They contain an Overview, Introduction, Body, and Close. The Lesson Overview provides you with a planning tool for preparing and conducting each lesson.

*The Lesson Introduction* should get participants' attention, orient them to the place this lesson holds in the overall module, define the intended objectives, and prepare them for the learning activities.

*The Lesson Body* is the core message of the lesson. The key is to keep the learners actively involved. Even in lectures, ask questions that prompt learners to think about the content, not just hear the lecture.

The following chart shows a continuum of learner involvement in different teaching methods. Lecture requires the least learner involvement, and independent study requires the most learner involvement.

## METHODS CONTINUUM



A variety of learning activities are used to present information and allow learners to experiment with their new knowledge. Each learner has a set of preferred methods of learning and has different life experiences that can color or filter what one actually learns. A variety of learning activities help adults adapt to the learning task—by hearing, by doing, by reading, by discussing, or by combinations of these. The learners should have opportunities to test and clarify their new learning by talking with the instructor and other participants, and applying new knowledge in real or contrived situations as soon as possible.

*The Lesson Close* provides a time for answering questions, reviewing the information, connecting this lesson to future lessons, making assignments, and punctuating the finish. The close does not provide any new information but gives a sense of closure to the lesson.

**Homework assignments** are important learning activities. They provide the student with an opportunity to synthesize classroom learning. Working on these assignments also extends the learning experience beyond the time constraints of class time.

The student—especially the adult student—needs frequent and timely feedback about his or her learning. While interaction with other students helps the learner refine what he or she is learning, feedback from the instructor is also critical to the quality of learning and

ultimately to his or her persistence in the Course of Study.

It is your responsibility as the instructor for this module to provide students with timely responses to homework assignments in order to enhance the learning process. Reviewing and responding to homework will also provide you with critical information about what your students are learning and whether or not the teaching-learning process is succeeding.

Since these modules are preparing the learner for ordination rather than leading to a university degree, a letter grade may not be appropriate. Your response to the learners' assignments should be thoughtful and in most cases it should be written. Its purpose will always be to refine and enhance the learning of the student.

Letter grades will not be issued at the end of the module as a measure of completion. Completion of the module is based on attendance, participation, completion of all homework, and showing competence in the ability statements.

Recommendations for printing You may print this faculty guide if desired. The introduction and lesson plan segments are formatted for printing on both sides of the paper. The resource pages of the student guide should be printed on one side for use as transparency or handout masters.

## About the Student Guide

The Student Guide for this module contains the series foreword, acknowledgments, syllabus, all resources, lesson objectives, and assignments. The Student Guide should be made available to each student in either hard copy or electronic format—CD or floppy disk.

Each resource sheet in the Student Guide is numbered at the top for the lesson in which the resource is first used. The first resource page for Lesson 2 is numbered "2-1." In the Faculty Guide, in the left-hand column, you will be informed when to refer to the appropriate resource.

The first page for each lesson

- Reminds the student of the assignments due
- States the learner objectives
- Gives the homework assignment instructions
- Sometimes includes relevant quotes

For each lesson, there are several support pieces, which we have called simply “resources.” They help guide the flow of the lesson. Some resources are basic outlines that guide the student through a lecture. Others direct small-group activities. For some lessons, data/statistic resources are given. And for some modules homework assignment information resources are included.

You must determine how each resource will be used in your context. If an overhead projector is available, then transparencies can be made by replacing the paper in your photocopy machine with special transparency material. They also can be used as part of a PowerPoint presentation.

The instructor may print resources to use for his or her own lecture outlines. There is space to add notes from the Faculty Guide, from a textbook, or from the additional suggested readings. Add in your own illustrations too!

**Recommendation for printing.** For student use it would be best to print the Student Guide on one side.

## Suggested Meeting Schedule

The module lessons are designed to last 90 minutes each. Each lesson is complete in itself with an opening, a middle, and a closing. They are sequential. Each lesson assumes the learners have mastered material presented in previous lessons. The lessons can be grouped in a variety of ways to accommodate the schedules of your learners.

When lessons are taught in the same meeting, instructors will need to adjust homework assignments because participants will not have time between lessons to prepare homework. It is very important for the instructor always to be looking ahead and planning for upcoming lessons.

Here are three suggestions (out of many) for ways the meetings can be organized.

1. Resident campus: The class can meet two days a week for 90 minutes. Present one lesson per meeting time. Total time: 10 weeks.
2. Extension education: The class can meet one day—or evening—each week for 3 to 3½ hours. Present two lessons per meeting with a break period



between lessons. Participants will need to travel to a centralized location for meetings, so make it worth their time. Total time: 10 weeks.

3. Intensive module: The class can meet five consecutive days for 7 to 8 hours per day. Present two lessons in the morning with a break period between lessons, and two lessons in the afternoon with another break period between the lessons. Participants must complete reading assignments before arriving at the module site, and written assignments can be submitted 30 to 60 days following the class meeting. Total meeting time: 1 week. Elapsed time including reading and written assignments: 2 to 3 months.

The module is divided into 6 units. The progression of these units can be seen in the chart below. Space is given for you to fill in the dates when your class sessions will meet.

Date	Lesson
	<b>Unit 1: The Nature of Ethical Reflection</b>
	1. Defining Ethics
	2. Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection
	3. Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics
	4. New Testament Perspectives on Ethics
	<b>Unit 2: Philosophical Ethics</b>
	5. Utilitarianism
	6. Natural Rights
	7. Kantianism
	8. Virtue Ethics
	<b>Unit 3: Theological Ethics</b>
	9. Patristic Ethics
	10. Medieval Ethics
	11. Modern Ethics
	<b>Unit 4: Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics</b>
	12. Renewal of the Image of God as the Goal of Humanity
	13. Holiness as Holy Conduct
	14. Holiness as Social Holiness

	15. Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation
	<b>Unit 5: Ethical Decision-making and Contemporary Issues</b>
	16. Facing the Issue of Sexuality
	17. Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church
	18. Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life
	<b>Unit 6: Character Development and Spiritual Formation</b>
	19. Christian Discipleship and the Virtues
	20. Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

## Recommended Textbooks

Each module within the Modular Course of Study is intended to be textbook independent. This does not imply that the modules are textbook irrelevant, or that the module content cannot be enriched by selecting and requiring that students study a textbook along with the lessons provided in this faculty guide.

If these modules are adapted for use outside of the English-speaking countries of North America, a specific textbook may not be available in the language of the students. Therefore, the module does not rely on one textbook. The instructor may select any doctrinally sound textbook available to the students.

The following are books recommended by the author as books, which the students should consider for their personal libraries.

Diener, Paul W. *Religion and Morality: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1966, 1978. Provides an even-handed telling of the some of the major contributors and themes of Western moral reflection.

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. Provides an excellent general introduction to the field. It will fit nicely with part of the organization of the module, in that it is organized historically.

## A Hidden Agenda

### **Hidden curriculum issues . . . because the way we teach teaches**

In each session, there are certain methodological and environmental things to consider.

**First**, consider the classroom arrangement. Whenever possible, the room should be arranged to encourage a sense of community. Either the group should sit in a circle or around a table. If the group is very large, chairs can be arranged for easily moving into clusters for discussion.

**Second**, consider how you present yourself as teacher. Standing behind a lectern with your students facing you in rows says you are above the students and have something to give them (although in a very large group this standing to teach may be unavoidable). Sitting as part of the circle makes the teacher a co-learner at the same level as the students. Speak naturally. Pay close attention to your students, and value the things they share. Learn their names. Encourage participation. Remember that you are modeling for them, and the way you teach will teach them far more than the words you say.

**Third**, invite the Holy Spirit's presence in the classroom. Do this each time the class meets.

**Fourth**, the sharing-of-stories activity does more than help the students begin to reflect on their own Christian experiences. It is a way to build community between the students. This is more than an exercise to be checked off. It is vital to set the tone of your intentional community.

When meeting times exceed 90 minutes, consider adding break times. The break between segments is an important time for community building. Remain available to the students during this time. Consider offering coffee or tea during this time as a way to encourage fellowship.

## Journaling: The Key to Spiritual Formation

Journaling is a major assignment of each module in the Course of Study. It is the integrating element that helps draw spiritual meaning and ministerial application from the content of each module whether the module concentrates on content, competency, character, or context. It ensures that the "Be" component of "Be, Know, and Do" is present in every module in which one

*The Syllabus contains this explanation of journaling. Journaling provides the spiritual formation component for the module and is an integral part of the learning experience.*

*Have students read the journaling section during the Syllabus review in Lesson 1 and emphasize that journaling is an assignment for each lesson in the module.*

*When giving assignments in each lesson, assign journal writing each time the group meets.*

participates. What is journaling and how can it be meaningfully accomplished?

### **Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration**

Participating in the Course of Study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each module you will be required to listen to lectures, read books and articles, participate in discussions, and write papers. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The module work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritual formation work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head through your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work faithfully to spend daily time in your journal. Many people confess this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, and an 'ah-ha' that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin.

Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with module material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, and aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your module work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration—weaving together faith development and learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education

together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

## Bibliography

- Albert, Ethel M., Theodore Denise, and Sheldon Peterfreund. *Great Traditions in Ethics*. Sixth edition, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1988.
- Arthur, John A. *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*. Seventh edition, Upper Saddle River, NY: Prentice-Hall, 2004.
- Arthur, William. "The Power of True Christianity: Spiritual Effects." In *Great Holiness Classics*. Vol. 4, *The 19th-Century Holiness Movement*. Edited by Melvin Dieter. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998.
- Atherton, John, ed. *Christian Social Ethics: A Reader*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1994.
- Bailey, Derrick Sherwin. *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. London: Archon Books, 1975.
- Balswick, Jack O., and Judith K. Balswick. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. Second edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989, 1999.
- Baron, John. *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003.
- Bonino, Jose Miguez. "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective." In *Sanctification and Liberation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981.
- Clapp, Rodney. *Families at the Crossroads*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1993.
- Carter, Charles. "God's Ethical Ideal for Humanity." In *Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, Vol. 2. Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing 1992.
- Church of the Nazarene. *Manual, 2005-2009*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2005.
- Clebsch, William A., and Charles R. Jackle. *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers/Harper Torchbooks, 1964.

- Cloyd, Betty Shannon. *Children and Prayer*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.
- Diener, Paul W. *Religion and Morality: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997.
- Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Foot, Philippa, ed. *Theories of Ethics: Oxford Readings in Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, 1986.
- Ford, David. *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.
- Frankena, William K. *Ethics*. Second edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.
- Furnish, Victor. *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979, 1985.
- Geis, Sally B. "Book Reviews." *Christian Century* (Jan 18, 1995): 55-57.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994.
- Grenz, Stanley. *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.
- Gustafson, James M. *Christian Ethics and the Community*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective, 2 Vols.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984.

- Harper, Steve. *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Upper Books, 1983.
- Hart, Archibald. *The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ekklesia Project: A Declaration and an Invitation to All Christians." In *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books/Brazos Press, 2000, 211-215.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self.'" In *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998, 77-91.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P., ed. *The Poor and the People Called Methodists 1729-1999*. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Hinmon, Lawrence M. *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003.
- Jennings, Jr., Theodore W. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Jenson, Robert. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2, *The Works of God*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Kant, Immanuel. "Duties Toward the Body in Respect to Sexual Impulse." In *Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*. Edited by John Arthur. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002, 554-58.
- Kaiser, Jr., Walter. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.



- Klaiber, Walter, and Manfred Marquardt. *Living Grace: An Outline of United Methodist Theology*. Translated by J. Steven O'Malley and Ulrike M. Guthrie. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Labacqz, Karen. "Appropriate Vulnerability: A Sexual Ethic for Singles." In *Christian Century* (May 6, 1987): 435-438.
- Lehmann, Paul. *Ethics in a Christian Context*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963.
- Leith, John H., ed. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc./Anchor Books, 1963.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Second edition, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc, 1966.
- Maddox, Randy. "Nurturing the New Creation: Reflections on a Wesleyan Trajectory." In *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*. Edited by M. Douglas Meeks. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.
- Malloy, Michael. *Am I My Brother's Keeper: The AIDS Crisis and the Church*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990.
- Marquardt, Manfred. *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*. Translated by John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.
- Matera, Frank. *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996.
- McClendon, James, and James M. Smith. *Convictions*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002.
- McNeill, John J. "Homosexuality: Challenging the Church to Grow." In *The Christian Century* (March 11, 1987): 242-246.

- Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon, 2004.
- Milbank, John. *Theology and Social Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1990, 1993.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1960.
- Neilson, Kai. *Ethics Without God*. Revised edition, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990.
- Nouwen, Henri J.M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Leadership*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989.
- Oden, Thomas. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983.
- Ogletree, Thomas W. *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovery Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Porter, Burton. *Reasons for Living: A Basic Ethics*. New York: Macmillan, 1988.
- Powell, Samuel M., and Michael E. Lodahl. *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Fourth edition, Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003.
- Runkle, Gerald. *Ethics: An Examination of Contemporary Moral Problems*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982.
- Runyon, Theodore. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Sanctification and Liberation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981.
- Singer, Peter. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Avon Books, 1977.
- Smith, Timothy. *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

- Spaulding, Henry, II. *Untangling the Sexual Revolution: Rethinking Our Sexual Ethic*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1989.
- Stone, Ronald. *John Wesley's Life and Ethics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Taylor, Richard. *Exploring Christian Holiness*. Vol. 3, *The Theological Formulation*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985.
- Thompson, Marjorie J. *Family: The Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.
- Tracy, Wes, Gary Cockerill, Donald Demaray, and Steve Harper. *Reflecting God*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2000.
- Tracy, Wesley, D., E. Dee Freeborn, Janine Tartaglia, and Morris A. Weigelt. *The Upward Call: Spiritual Formation and the Holy Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994.
- Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-so-Good World*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993.
- Wigger, J. Bradley. *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Wiley, H. Orton. *Christian Theology*, 3 Vols.. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985.
- Willimon, William H. *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Douglas M. Strong, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972.

[This page intentionally blank]

# *Unit 1: The Nature of Ethical Reflection*

## *Lesson 1*

# Defining Ethics

## *Lesson Overview*

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Defining Ethics	Lecture	Resources 1-1—1-4
1:15	The Importance of a Moral Imagination	Guided Discussion	Resource 1-5
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Diener, Paul W. *Religion and Morality: An Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997, 1-43.

Frankena, William K. *Ethics*. Second edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963, 1973, 1-11.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Orientation

*Introduce yourself to the class.*

*Go over the syllabus in the Student Guide. Get contact information for each student:*

- telephone number
- e-mail
- home address

*Read through the Module Vision Statement.*

*Make sure course requirements are clearly understood.*

*Point out the Glossary in the back of the Student Guide.*

*Ask for any questions.*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define ethics
- identify the major streams of moral reflection
- link faith to ethical reflection
- define the relationship between “what is real,” “how we know,” and “how I should act”
- identify the relationship and difference between philosophical and theological ethics

## Motivator

*The vision for ethics this module will develop is practical, faith-oriented, tradition-based, and case study informed.*

Pastor David Joy of Grace Fellowship ministers to a congregation of about 175 people. He has a strong youth group with several young men and women preparing for ministry. Some of these are at college already while others are in high school. Pastor Joy feels a special responsibility to be a source of wisdom for those who intend to become full-time ministers.

One Tuesday morning he gets a call from Jeff, an 18-year old, enrolled in his first year at a denominational college. Jeff is a serious student who was a leader in the youth group before he left for college. When Pastor Joy hears David’s voice he immediately realizes a problem exists.

"Pastor, I have had a problem getting a job and you know I need a job." David continued by saying, "Yesterday, I got a call from a restaurant and they want to hire me as a waiter." Pastor Joy then asked David about the problem. David told Pastor Joy the restaurant serves alcohol and it has a bar, where he would be required to serve occasionally.

David wants to know if serving alcohol would pose a problem for the Credentials Board of the district. David needs a job, and he never intends to drink intoxicating beverages. After all he needs a job to be able to afford his ministerial education.

*The basic problem is that David needs to trust God to provide.*

*While he will not drink alcohol, his presence in the bar will be a temptation and a negative witness.*

*If David begins to compromise this early, he will find other reasons to loosen his values later. This reflects the practical nature of the moral concern.*

*Reflecting on this description, what do you think Pastor Joy should say to David?*

*What values are at stake in his situation?*

*Does David's need for a job justify this job?*

*Should it make a difference that David will only serve and not drink the intoxicating beverages?*

*Does it matter that some Christians do not see a problem with drinking?*

*What does this suggest about ethical reflection?*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Defining Ethics

(45 minutes)

*The purpose of this lecture is to define ethics at a basic level. Philosophical and theological ethics have a long history. In order to give some account of these long traditions the lecture will be divided in the following way:*

- *a basic definition of philosophy*
- *the basic streams of Western philosophy and how they are connected*
- *the two basic branches of ethics*
- *a basic description of how philosophical and theological ethics are related*

*Refer to Resource 1-1 in the Student Guide.*

*The Socrates quote comes from The Apology.*

### A Basic Definition of Philosophy

Ethics is one of the “practices” of philosophy and theology. For as long as human beings have existed, they have looked into the heavens or around the world as they wondered about how things fit together. Philosophy is one of the disciplines associated with these questions. In order to understand ethical reflection it is important to place it in the larger context of philosophy.

A simple definition of philosophy is the search for wisdom. Socrates, the father of Western philosophy, once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” This has been for many throughout history a way to express the spirit of philosophy. Philosophy reaches to every aspect of life. There is no domain of human knowledge that remains closed to the practice of philosophy. Therefore, we have philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, philosophy of art (aesthetics), and so on. This expresses the breadth of philosophy’s reach. Some might go so far as to say that philosophy is about everything.

Philosophy is an activity of reason. It depends on our ability to think clearly and respond responsibly to the challenge of living an examined life. Philosophy is born in wonder, but it remains as an activity of the human intellect/reason.

### The Basic Streams of Western Philosophy and How They Are Connected

The basic streams of Western philosophy are:

- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Ethics

Each of these represents distinct activities, but they are also related. The point of this part of the lecture is to give some account of these streams and show how they are related/connected.

*Refer to Resource 1-2 in the Student Guide.*



**Metaphysics** is sometimes called “first philosophy” because it asks the most basic philosophical question: “what is real?” Typically, when we are young we do not find it easy to distinguish between what is real and what is not real. A child may imagine a stuffed animal speaks to him or her, or pictures on wallpaper have come to life. Knowing the difference between what is real and what is merely imagined is essential to mature thinking and for that matter mature living. Part of what it means to grow up is to learn the difference between what is real and what is not real or imaginary.

A famous metaphysical question goes like this: “If a tree fell in the forest and no one was there to hear it, did it make a sound?” In other words, does sound exist apart from it being heard? Perhaps, sound is objective—that is, sound waves—and if this is the case then whether or not a tree falling is heard, it still made a sound. Many philosophers have raised similar questions about what is real. It seems obvious that how one answers the question of reality is linked to how a person lives. For example, if I think an automobile I see heading toward me is real, then I will get out of the way. Therefore, the question of reality is materially connected to moral reflection.

*Here would be a good time to reflect with the class on what the characteristics of reality are. For example, you might say something is real if it is objective; that is, it is reasonable to believe two people who see the same thing would describe it in more or less the same way.*

*Another characteristic of reality might be something that does not change. After all, if something changes, how would you know if it was real, if it was different each time it was experienced? These are just two ways to get at what is real.*

*Read Genesis 1 and reflect with the class on what it suggests about reality. According to Genesis:*

- *all that is comes from God*
- *all that is depends upon God*
- *human existence is in a special category*
- *creation is good*

**Epistemology** concerns how we know anything. Traditionally, it has been understood that knowledge comes by experience or by reason. Regarding experience knowledge comes by the seeing, hearing, touching, etc. For example, if someone tells us a red car is in our driveway, then we can determine the truth or falsity of it by looking in the driveway. In fact, there is no better way of deciding if a red car is in the driveway than to look. Many things, if not most things

we know come to our mind through experience. The problem arises when we think or talk about things that cannot be experienced. Therefore, some things we talk about require reason. For example, if someone says an elephant is in our driveway—when we live in North America—we may not have to look because it is not reasonable to believe it.

The root word of “epistemology” is the same word translated in the New Testament as faith. When we understand this it is easy to see that faith is another way of knowing something. Faith is the way we know our salvation and it becomes evidence of what is not yet seen.

Epistemology is how we test what we think is real. Going back to the tendency of a child to believe things like stuffed animals speaking or images on wallpaper jumping off the wall and onto a bed, a simple trip to the room will prove to be enlightening. But an adult does not need to make the trip because reason suggests it is irrational to believe such things.

What is real and how we know what is real are connected. Together they frame the question of ethics.

**Ethics** is the most practical stream of philosophy. A simple definition of ethics is “a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.” A basic question for ethics is “What ought I to do?” There is a clear connection between what I think is real and how I act. For example, a Christian believes God created the world and because of this a Christian lives a very different life from someone who does not believe God created the world. Scripture tells us once there was nothing and all that is depends upon the creativity of God. The fact there is a world tells us a great deal about God and thus how we ought to live.

The first ethical question is never what should I do, but what is God like? The Christian defines reality as God and from this will flow all moral decisions.

These three streams of philosophy:

- the question of reality—metaphysics
  - the question of knowledge—epistemology
  - the question of moral action—ethics
- are necessarily linked.

*Before you begin to talk about deontological and teleological ethics you will want to note that there are many ways to categorize philosophical ethics. It is also important to note that major philosophers and theologians in some sense defy simple labels or schools of thought. The decision to categorize two basic streams of ethics is just one way to think about the shape of ethical reflection.*

*Lawrence Hinman, Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003), characterizes ethics in the following way: Ethics of Divine Command, Ethics of Selfishness, Ethics of Consequence, Ethics of Duty, Ethics of Rights, Ethics of Justice, Ethics of Character, and Ethics of Diversity.*

*Gerald Runkle, Ethics: An Examination of Contemporary Moral Problems (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1982), characterizes ethics in the following way: Theories of Self-Realization, Religious Theories, Consequentialist Theories, and Deontological Theories.*

*Burton Porter, Reasons for Living: A Basic Ethics (New York: Macmillan, 1988), characterizes ethics in the following way: Hedonism, Utilitarianism, Self-Realization, Naturalism, Rationalism, Formalism, and Humanism.*

*Theological ethics can be categorized by the same categories as philosophical ethics. Some categorize theological ethics as Catholic or Protestant. Some think of theological ethics as divine command or teleological. Some will group theological ethics more historically, i.e. patristic, medieval, or modern. The recent critique of all theological ethics by Stanley Hauerwas is significant in its call to continually join theology and morality.*

*Perhaps the best course would be to look at several major contributors, and this is what the module will do.*

## Two Basic Streams of Ethics

Ethics has already been defined as “a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.” There are two broad streams of moral reflection: deontology and teleology. We look at each of these as a way of defining the ethical task.

*Refer to Resource 1-3 in the Student Guide.*

*You might want to pause and reflect on how a deontological theory of ethics is evident in Exodus 20:1-17. You should first observe that these commandments are not conditioned by some intended consequence. Each commandment is divinely commanded.*

*Have students list the commandments in their own words and discuss them as deontological.*

*You might want to pause and reflect on how a teleological theory of ethics is evident in Ephesians 4:17-5:14. After reading the passage, notice the following:*

- *Paul urges the Ephesians to live different from the Gentiles because to do so will save them from insensitivity (4:19).*
- *Paul indicates the Ephesians should put away their former ways and be renewed in their minds (4:22-24).*
- *Paul indicates the Ephesians should put away fornication and improper talk in order to inherit the kingdom of God (5:3-5).*
- *Paul indicates the Ephesians should “live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true” (5:8b-9).*

*Refer to Resource 1-4 in the Student Guide.*

**Deontological ethics** is the type of moral reflection characterized by deciding what is right by use of reason unaffected by circumstances. Therefore, there is no interest in consequences of actions. There is a certain form of ethical action that renders it virtuous. Immanuel Kant is a good example of this kind of ethical theory. Kant will be more fully discussed in Lesson 7.

**Teleological ethics** is the type of moral reflection characterized by happiness or the embodying of character. Here the end is crucial to the moral life. Aristotle is the first example of this in Western philosophy. He will be discussed more fully in Lesson 8. Here the moral act establishes a person.

These two basic ways of doing moral reflection are reflected throughout philosophical and theological ethics. These connections will be made more fully in Lessons 5 through 11. They will be connected specifically to Wesleyan-Holiness themes in Lessons 12 through 15. In other words, these two streams—deontological and teleological—will be present throughout this module.

## **A Basic Description of How Philosophical and Theological Ethics Are Related**

The relationship between philosophical and theological ethics enjoys a long history. For example, Augustine, an important early interpreter of the Christian faith, depends upon Platonism/Neo-Platonism.

- Platonism locates the form of the good in an eternal category. The important consideration is that the good is fixed and can be used as a “rule” for determining virtue.

- Neo-Platonism is a late Greek philosophy that pulls a number of things together, especially Plato into a comprehensive system. The important feature here is that goodness becomes evil by being emptied or deprived of the good.

The purpose here is not to spell out all of these connections fully, but to suggest that philosophical and theological concerns share some space.

What philosophical and theological ethics share:

- the use of reason
- a concern for virtue
- dependence upon a metaphysic
- either a deontological or teleological orientation

What makes philosophical and theological ethics different:

- theological ethics presupposes revelation and philosophical ethics does not
- philosophical ethics assumes the cardinal virtues—wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance—but theological ethics completes them with the virtues of faith, hope, and love
- philosophical ethics searches for an appropriate orientation while theological ethics finds its natural orientation in Scripture; for a Wesleyan this is expanded to tradition, reason, and experience
- philosophical ethics is interminable; that is, it has no place finally to arbitrate its perception of virtue, while theological ethics can finally come to rest in a life of faith-lived-in-community

## **The Theological Consummation of Philosophical Ethics**

A philosopher is able to say a person's character is his or her destiny. In other words, choices arise out of the kind of person making the choices. Aristotle understands moral virtues come from action. These habits will provide a sufficient guide for living virtuously. The modern era provides many examples of the link between the human capacity to choose and virtue. One good example of this approach is Jean Paul Sartre, who thought a person constructs life from arbitrary choices. Such freedom quickly becomes absurd, but Sartre still feels that on the other side of this despair true human dignity emerges. Popular forms of this existentialism place choices and self-help at the center of ethics and life. Even theological ethics can easily fall prey to arbitrary choice.

A central conviction of theological ethics is that all human choosing is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Virtue is a faithful response to the call of the Spirit. According to Paul, "It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Jesus says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13a). Theological ethics completes the drive toward virtue toward which philosophical ethics reaches. Scripture and the tradition arising from it understand that no human being has the capacity to do good apart from the Holy Spirit. Left to our own capacities, we will choose selfishly, and after all, the path that leads to destruction is wide.

According to Paul, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you" (Rom 8:9-11). This is the theological consummation of ethics. The Holy Spirit that brought Jesus back from the grave will dwell in the life of the redeemed. This means the moral life for the Christian is the work of the Spirit. Virtue is the work of the Spirit bearing the fruit of righteousness.

## Guided Discussion: The Importance of a Moral Imagination

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 1-5 in the Student Guide.*

The entire point of moral reflection is to engender an imagination capable of virtuous character. Part of what this will mean involves the resources found in Scripture, worship, prayer, and Christian fellowship that will combine to form a character capable of virtue. Thomas McCollough in *The Moral Imagination* characterizes the moral imagination in the following way:

- Capacity to empathize
- Discerning of creative possibilities for ethical actions
- Ability to see in light of the whole
- Leaning toward a hopeful future
- Broadens and deepens the context of decision-making

*Allow for student discussion and response.*

*Possible responses to this question are:*

All of this raises a question: *What makes it so difficult to engender a moral imagination?*

- *we are too busy to feed our minds with those images that contribute to a moral imagination*
- *there is so much need we can get frustrated with how or whether to act*
- *sin blinds us in self-interest*

*There are many other possibilities that may be appropriate to discuss with the class. You might even want to break up into groups for an in-depth discussion.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

The following themes were addressed in this lesson:

- A definition of ethics: a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.
- The major streams of moral reflection: Deontology and Teleology.
- The link between faith and ethical reflection: faith, which is about a relationship to God, implies a different way to live, which is the point of ethical reflection.
- The relationship between “what is real,” “how we know,” and “how I should act”—put simply we cannot know unless there is something to know and we will not act until we know what is real moves us to action. We know God is real by faith and the just live/act by faith.
- The difference between philosophical and theological ethics: philosophical ethics is about a rational attempt to define virtue and theological ethics is about a faithful response to the gospel with a mind made new in Christ.

## Look Ahead

This lesson has sought to define ethics in a basic manner, in order to form a basis for looking more fully at Christian ethics. The next lesson will look at some of the barriers to moral reflection.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay in which you define ethics and reflect on what might make such reflection difficult.

Make a journal entry that locates and discusses at least five scriptural passages that might inform ethical reflection.

## Closing Thought

*Ask the students to read 1 Cor 2:1-13.*

There will always be an important relationship between philosophical and theological ethics. The challenge for a person of faith is to allow the gospel to rule the virtues rather than the virtues to rule the gospel.



While it is tempting to read this as a condemnation of philosophy, it is finally a statement for the true wisdom in the crucified. According to Paul, worldly wisdom uses lofty and plausible words of wisdom, connected to the rulers of this age, and it is destined for destruction. On the other hand, the wisdom of the crucified shaped in weakness, accompanied by demonstrations of the Spirit, rests on the power of God, dependent upon the secret and hidden wisdom of God, and it is revealed.

[This page intentionally blank]

## *Lesson 2*

# Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection

## *Lesson Overview*

### **Schedule**

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection	Lecture/Discussion	Resource 2-1
1:10	Living a Moral Life	Small Groups	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### **Suggested Reading for Instructor**

Diener, Paul W. *Religion and Morality: An Introduction*.  
Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997.

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*.  
Fourth edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003, 16-90.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Collect homework.*

*You will need to evaluate the homework, giving feedback on the content and level of thought, but a grade is not necessary as grades are not the measure of successful completion for a module.*

*Module completion is based on attendance, completion of all work, the level of participation, and overall accomplishment of the ability statements.*

## Orientation

The purpose of this lesson is to understand further the nature of ethical reflection. Remember the basic definition for ethics is “a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action.” The main concern last lesson was to define the relationship between ethics and the general field of philosophy, along with an understanding of the two streams of ethical reflection: deontological and teleological. The concern of this lesson will be to define some of the more significant challenges for ethical reflection.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define some of the major issues that make ethical reflection difficult
- understand the problem presented by egoism
- understand the problem with relativism
- understand the problem with determinism
- define the importance of the distinction between sympathy and morality
- understand the relationship between morality and religion

## Motivator

Mary is a minister in a medium-sized congregation. Her church is on the outskirts of a large, northeastern city. The majority of the members of the church drive into the city in order to work, but most of their life is lived in the suburb. Life is comfortable for most of the people in her church. One day as she walks from her office to the parking lot a woman approaches her. This woman is poor, unkempt, and desperate. The need presented seems real, but Mary is not sure what to do or whether she should do anything.

*What would make it difficult for Mary to act?*

*Some things you might want to consider:*

- *What responsibility does Fred have?*
- *What does Fred need to know in order to act?*
- *What are some good reasons for not acting?*
- *What does the gospel say about this, if anything?*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Major Challenges to Ethical Reflection

(40 minutes)

*This lecture will look at some specific issues that frustrate ethical reflection. The purpose will be to examine challenges as they complicate moral reflection.*

*Refer to Resource 2-1 in the Student Guide.*

The understanding of ethics assumed by this module maintains that moral reflection is dependent upon intellectual and spiritual discipline, Christian character, and an understanding of virtue. Therefore, anything that leads to a lack of discipline, a clouding of understanding character, and/or a loss of the importance of virtue can frustrate moral decision making.

**Egoism** presents a foundational challenge for moral decision-making. Egoism attempts to frame every decision in light of personal benefit. In other words, the point of all action is to establish my rights no matter what it means for you, or least with considerably less interest in the concerns of others. This presents a real challenge for moral reflection.

According to this view, human beings are hopelessly self-interested and selfish. Because of this it is necessary to force people to cooperate for the good of others. Human beings left to their own inclinations will first seek to satisfy themselves, even at the expense of others.

A Christian point of view assigns egoism to sinfulness. In other words, our natural bent is to do what we want, when we want to, and with little regard for others. The solution for this is to surrender one's life to God's grace in faith.

*Egoism presents itself by:*

- *a careless disregard for others*
- *thinking of church as purely a place where "my" needs are met*
- *careless use of natural resources*

*How does egoism present itself?*

**Relativism/Pluralism** attempts to level all moral distinctions by suggesting nothing is more true than anything else. The old saying "When in Rome do as the Romans do" gets at this idea of relativism. A somewhat more technical definition for relativism is as follows: the intellectual conviction that multiple and equal centers of value exist.

Two very important implications of relativism/pluralism need to be understood:

- no fixed understanding of virtue exists
- virtues can contradict one another

Since virtue does not exist, it is necessary to continue to negotiate its precise form in every new generation. Children are encouraged to disregard the moral wisdom of parents and to discover their own truth. Since virtues can contradict, we must be willing to accept those differences as little more than the difference between the taste for different flavors of ice cream.

One more qualification should be made regarding pluralism. There is a difference between good pluralism and bad pluralism. For example, bad pluralism is the lazy acceptance of all values as equal with no critical engagement at all. Bad pluralism is a rather romantic idea that almost always crumbles under the weight of our life together. Good pluralism is the willingness to learn from others but always with discernment. This is really about having an open mind, but not so open that anything goes.

*Good pluralism: openmindedness, willingness to learn, acceptance of others, nonjudgmental, ability to engage differences, etc.*

*Bad pluralism: seeing no difference between right and wrong, equating virtue with passion, disregard for tradition, etc.*

*Give some examples of good pluralism and bad pluralism.*

**Determinism** suggests that in some fashion all human choices are affected by outside forces.

The extreme form of this is called “hard determinism,” which holds that all human freedom is an illusion. Some believe God determines human action in this fashion for His own reasons and for our general good. The most extreme form of this belief is the idea that God determines before our birth whether we are going to go to heaven or to hell. Some scientists go so far as to say our actions are determined by genetics in a way analogous to eye color or height.

According to this understanding there is no freedom and finally there is no responsibility. Simply put, hard determinism is the belief that human beings have no freedom to do other than is determined for them. The challenge this presents to moral reflection is obvious. If we are not free, we do not really decide, or rather everything is decided for us. When this is the case there is little point to talking about moral reflection. Very few people support hard determinism.

The second form of determinism is called “soft determinism.” According to this view our choices are affected, but not compelled. Therefore, a child raised in an abusive home is affected negatively but it is possible to break out of the cycle of abuse. Put positively, it is possible to raise a child in a Christian home and expect that such an environment will contribute to an emotionally and spiritually healthy life.

Soft determinism understands that all people are a part of the environment, but at the same time they can rise above the circumstances. This means God calls all to faith, but some choose not to accept God’s offer, and therefore condemn themselves to hell. According to soft determinism, virtue should be taught as a resource for moral living. It means we are affected by what we experience and what we know, but not controlled. Soft determinism makes moral reflection possible.

Determinism is a particularly difficult problem because it crosses so many domains of theological understanding. It is not possible to examine all of these in an ethics module, but is important to say that hard determinism, when it is understood consistently, effectively subverts moral considerations by its denial of human freedom.

*Some possible factors are understanding of Scripture, friends, family environment, etc.*

*What are some of the factors that might affect human decision-making?*

**Sympathy** as a moral concern is the more or less emotional reaction to a circumstance with little or no interest in moral reasoning. Sympathy moves to action, but such action is rarely guided by moral narratives. The problem with sympathy is that it is more emotional than disciplined. Because of this, sympathy is more reactionary than it is a thoughtful response to an issue. Genuine moral reflection requires that all issues be understood through a set of moral narratives/principles. In other words, moral reflection is never purely a reaction; it is rather a careful response.

The problem with sympathy is that too much can factor into a decision that results in a subversion of morality. For example, one may be emotionally moved with an image of whales caught in the ice off the shore of Alaska, but unmoved by the horror of abortion in America. Or the public may be moved by the suffering of an abused child whose image is flashed over the television, but uninterested in enacting legislation to address the larger social and economic concerns



associated with child neglect. The most basic problem with sympathy is that it is an emotion largely undetermined by moral thinking.

*In the last lesson we talked about a moral imagination. A person with a moral imagination will genuinely care and seek to act in a morally responsible manner when a need is encountered. This is what one would call empathy.*

*Sympathy is the mostly useless human emotion that makes it possible for us to feel sorry or pity, but does not usually end in action. And when action does take place it is rarely moral because such action is not informed by the narratives and principles of morality. Sympathy can become an end unto itself.*

*What is the difference between the capacity to empathize and sympathy?*

**Bad Morality** is the inappropriate moral reflection that justifies a vice in the name of a virtue. It is the narrow vision of a person who needs to be right and seeks to find a principle or narrative that justifies this. One of the great historical examples of this is Hitler's moral justification of exterminating the Jews. He could do this by convincing himself and his nation that it was a good thing to kill millions of Jews. Abortion is another example of how people argue for the morality of killing innocent children in the name of "right to privacy." Bad morality is more likely to occur in a situation where no critical voice can be heard. Bad morality arises out of a need to be correct and it refuses to be critiqued.

Bad morality is about using moral reasoning to justify what is not moral, all the while claiming that it is moral.

*Bad morality is evident in the logic of 9/11. It is also evident in suicide bombing and terrorism. Bad morality justifies abortion, or the killing of abortion doctors in the name of "pro-life". Bad morality can justify premarital sex in light of extended periods of dating. Bad morality can convince a person that marital unfaithfulness is moral.*

*Give several examples of bad morality.*

**Religion and Morality** is a key issue for Christian ethics. There are those who question the moral implications of religious belief. Kai Nielsen says:

Generally speaking, believers are neither happier nor are they better adjusted than nonbelievers. There are sick, paranoid, and vile believers and

Ethics Without God (Rev. ed., Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), 102.

there are sick, paranoid, and vile nonbelievers; there are sane, humane, and happy believers, and there are sane humane, and happy nonbelievers. Personal virtue and vice seem to be completely independent of doctrinal affiliation.

Nielsen raises very important questions: Does morality have anything to do with religion? Can a religious person not be moral? Must a moral person be religious?

While this is on the face of it a very difficult question, it is in fact a rather simple issue. If we believe human beings are sinful and they are not capable of good acts—morality—apart from the prevenient grace of God, then no morality can arise without the work of God. Therefore, where there is morality the work of God should be noted. Where God is at work in the world one would expect that morality would be noted. Therefore, religion and morality are interdependent realities. Put another way, God saves a person so that person might live a very different and better kind of life.

One can note even in non-Christian religions that religious faith is understood to be accompanied by morality.

*Romans 6 asks two significant questions:*

- *Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?*
- *Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?*

*The answer to these two questions consumes much of the argument of this great chapter of the New Testament. While answering the first question Paul links baptism and resurrection with newness of life. He says, "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v 11).*

*While answering the second question he talks about being slaves to righteousness. There is strong indication that Paul links morality and religion.*

*Consider the argument of Paul in Romans 6 concerning sin and the new life in Christ. What does this suggest about the relationship between religion and morality?*

## **Small Groups: Living a Moral Life**

(15 minutes)

Morality is engendered by preaching, the gospel, Christian accountability, and the continuing work of the

Spirit in the Church. People are more likely to live moral lives if they feed their minds and spirits on things that enrich the soul.

*Divide the class into pairs.*

*Some of these resources are: reading Scripture, prayer, group Bible study, attending worship and Sunday School, reading Christian literature, submission to accountability, etc.*

*Allow the last 5 minutes of this section for the groups to compare lists.*

Reflect on some of the resources available to enrich the soul and mind. Make a list. Place the items in a priority order from most beneficial to less beneficial.

In a few minutes we will compare our lists.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted to define some of the major challenges to moral reflection. We looked at:

- Egoism—the attempt to guide all decisions by self-interest.
- Determinism—the denial of human freedom in the extreme form and the limiting of human freedom in the more narrow sense.
- Sympathy—the substitution of feelings and emotion for morality.
- Bad Morality—the use of moral reasoning to establish a vice in the name of a virtue.
- Religion and Morality—the attempt to separate religion and morality.

Moral reflection requires that we give attention to these challenges in order to avoid subverting the moral enterprise.

## Look Ahead

Next lesson we will look at the resources found in the Old Testament for morality.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Read a newspaper and find a story that reflects either a disregard for moral implications, lazy sympathy, or bad morality. Write a short 2- to 3-page essay that points to these problems.

Make a journal entry that reflects upon the Closing Thought.

## Closing Thought

*Hauerwas, How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 68.*

Stanley Hauerwas, a major voice for theological ethics, says in *After Christendom?* "As Christians we will speak more truthfully to our society and be of greater service by refusing to continue the illusion that the larger social order knows what it is talking about when it calls for justice." The point of this lesson has been to examine several issues that challenge the legitimacy of moral reflection or Christian moral reflection. Perhaps, it might be good for those who have been made new in Christ to stop trying to make the message of holiness easy to embrace, and call again for the world to see

that it is indeed the Church God has called to be the leaven of the world.

[This page intentionally blank]

## Lesson 3

# Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics	Lecture	Resources 3-1—3-5
1:10	Ethics According to Amos	Small Groups	Resource 3-6
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Baron, John. *Understanding Old Testament Ethics: Approaches and Explorations*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003.

Kaiser, Walter, Jr. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 2-15.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

The two previous lessons have focused on the nature of ethical reflection and some of the challenges presented to ethical reflection. It has been noted that ethics has a philosophical and theological history and that in some measure these trajectories are intertwined. It is important to keep our basic definition of ethics in view—a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action—because the emphasis upon healthy character and virtuous action are important for understanding the Old Testament perspective on ethics.

The purpose of this lesson is to define some of the major themes in the Old Testament as they are related to moral reflection.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define and apply the major themes of the Old Testament to moral reflection
- understand the particular importance of covenant for moral reflection
- understand the prophetic voice in the Old Testament for morality
- understand the practical wisdom of the Old Testament for morality

## Motivator

Genesis is an Old Testament book about beginnings. It tells many important stories, one of which is the story of Joseph. The story spans Genesis 37-50. It begins with the depiction of a 17-year-old boy who is obviously his father's favorite. Joseph knows it and is proud of it. He is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and faces several trials along the way, before he ends up in the house of the Pharaoh in a position of



honor. It ends with a much-humbled Joseph who reunites with his brothers and now elderly father. What had been intended for evil actually turned out to be for the good.

Reflect on the transitions in character that took place for Joseph.

*At one level the story of Joseph is about a 17-year-old boy who needed to grow up. But it is also about this same boy maturing to the point that he was capable of being a leader who would save and forgive his brothers. Therefore, a very large part of the story concerns character and forgiveness. Throughout this story the disappointments and growth of Joseph can be noted.*

*What is the importance of this story for moral reflection in the Christian life? What does it suggest for how Scripture should be used for moral reflection?*

- *It illustrates the many temptations along the way for a person of character.*
- *It illustrates the capacity God has to provide sufficient resources for moral decision-making.*
- *It illustrates the importance and relationship of strong family bonds/traditions for moral decision-making.*
- *It illustrates the importance of forgiveness for healthy character.*
- *It illustrates the widening circle of grace that proceeds from a healthy character.*

*What is the importance of this story for moral reflection in the Christian life?*

- *Scripture embeds its moral principles in larger narratives. The best way to understand the moral principles of Scripture is to contextualize them in light of the larger depiction of who God is and what He is doing in the world.*
- *It suggests that most, if not all, scriptural stories are multi-leveled. They can be told to children, but they can only be fully appreciated by mature adults.*
- *The most appropriate manner in which to use Scripture is to define its basic themes. Looking at the particulars is a part of this process, but the particulars can only come into focus through the general themes.*

*What does it suggest for how Scripture should be used for moral reflection?*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Old Testament Perspectives on Ethics

(40 minutes)

*Remind the class of the discussion regarding the relationship between metaphysics and morality.*

There are many ways to think about the Old Testament perspective on morality. Following the logic of Lesson 1, morality always arises out of specific convictions about the world.

A conviction is a belief that endures and defines a particular person or community. Further, because it endures, a conviction will not be surrendered easily and when it is, a significant change emerges. One way to think of Old Testament ethics is in terms of its theological and metaphysical convictions.

### God Creates

*Refer to Resource 3-1 in the Student Guide.*

The Old Testament begins with two stories of creation. Genesis 1 and 2 tell somewhat different stories, but the point is simply this: “whatever *is*, depends upon God.” Therefore, one might say the most basic thing the Old Testament says about reality is that it finds its origin in God. This implies at the very least that evil is a “rootless” fact that pales in comparison to God’s “good” creation. Clearly, the creation stories are intended to suggest that God has a purpose for all creation and in particular He has a purpose for humankind.

Several **theological** implications arise from Genesis 1 and 2:

- there would be nothing if God had not created
- God intends creation to be orderly
- material things like water, earth, and bodies are good
- human beings enjoy a special status and a special responsibility in and to creation
- human beings, as creatures made in the image of God, are made for communion

Several **moral** implications arise from the creation story:

- whatever is moral must find its origin in God
- human beings are to be stewards of creation—be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion (1:28)
- whatever it means to be a human being, it is not possible to be so apart from communion with the Creator

- male and female are co-human in that God made human beings for each other (1:27)

The conviction that God creates is essential to an understanding of Old Testament ethics and becomes even more important in light of incarnation, resurrection, and consummation. It is particularly important when one understands these creation narratives were first told while the Hebrews made their way from Egypt to Canaan. It is as if the story intends these slaves to begin to comprehend their origin. The God who delivers is the God who creates all.

### **God Makes Promises**

*Refer to Resource 3-2 in the Student Guide.*

The Old Testament depicts a God who makes and keeps promises to His people. While there are many places in the Old Testament where these promises are spelled out, one of the first is found in Genesis 6-10. The story of Noah is one every child in Sunday School knows, but those who have matured in the faith come the closest to comprehending its significance.

The world is so evil that Genesis 6:6 reads, "And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." Because of this God determines He will "blot out from the earth the human beings I have created" (6:7b). But the story also adds that, "Noah found favor in the sight of the LORD" (6:8). While God does destroy the earth He saves Noah and His family, along with representative animals. After Noah builds the ark the earth is flooded, but because of the ark, Noah is saved. God makes a promise in Genesis 8:21, "And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind.'" This story is full of theological and moral implications.

Another passage of the Old Testament depicts a God who makes promises. Joel 2:28-3:21 comes from a difficult time in the history of Israel. The best evidence indicates that Joel lived and worked during the Persian period of Jewish history; that is, during the time of the eventual return of the Southern Kingdom to Jerusalem.

God's people had forsaken God and lived wicked lives. These people deserved and received punishment, but as the passage indicates God promises that His Spirit will be upon all flesh. Sons and daughters will prophesy, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, fortunes will be restored, the mountains will drip sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk, and so on. This image is particularly important because it is

quoted in part by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 17-21). Therefore, this grand promise spans the redemptive purpose of God.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God makes promises:

- the love of God always informs His judgment
- God seeks to redeem the world
- God's actions are always purposeful
- God will always be faithful to His nature

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God makes promises:

- purpose always conditions principles
- it is possible to live the life defined in the promise
- there is always hope in life because God is always present in life
- the nature of a God who makes promises informs the shape and expression of godly character in human beings

## God Delivers

*Refer to Resource 3-3 in the Student Guide.*

One of the crucial, turning-point events in the Old Testament is the Exodus. It depicts a God who delivers His people. The telling of this story is found in the Book of Exodus. The Hebrews are now slaves in Egypt. Moses is born as God's agent of deliverance. While at first Moses is reluctant, he eventually becomes a mighty voice in the presence of the Pharaoh.

This event of deliverance/exodus helped define the identity of a group of slaves. The crossing of the Red Sea is perhaps the most dramatic event of the exodus. Here God parts the waters of the Red Sea and allows the Hebrews to walk through it, and God closes the waters on the approaching Egyptians. Once again this story is often told to children in Sunday School. But the importance of this story is less dramatic than theological and moral.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God delivers:

- evil is never more powerful than righteousness
- the power of God is sufficient to sustain His people during times of difficulty
- God is active in history and in the lives of His people and His nation
- God seeks to redeem

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God delivers:

- God will lead His people
- God provides resources for morality

- God's people are to be defined by His nature and not the cultural surrounding
- it is through appropriate worship of God that morality and character are properly resourced

## God Seeks a Relationship

*Refer to Resource 3-4 in the Student Guide.*

There is no doubt the one single and most important theme in the Old Testament is covenant. Basically, this means God seeks to have a relationship with His people and He intends to bless through this relationship.

- God makes a covenant with Noah (Gen 8:21-22) promising never to destroy the earth as He did in the time of Noah.
- He makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:1-14) promising him a multitude of nations.
- No doubt the central covenant of the Old Testament is made to Moses after the exodus (Ex 20:1-21) promising to bless Israel if they obey.

The meaning of this covenant is further expanded in Jeremiah 31:31-34, where the promise put the law within them. The writer of Hebrews interprets the promise made to Jeremiah as being fulfilled in Jesus. It is no exaggeration to say that from beginning to end, the conviction that God seeks a relationship with His creation and in particular with humankind, defines the Old Testament.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God seeks a relationship:

- God's love always reaches to creation
- God chooses to make room for us in His life
- God's relationship with creation is defined as holy love
- God's relationship to creation establishes our capacity to exist

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God seeks a relationship:

- our relationship to God defines our relationship to each other
- morality is not about what we must do, but what we come to do naturally
- any distinction between spirituality and morality is false
- the moral act establishes us as participants in covenantal fidelity

## God Requires Obedience

*Refer to Resource 3-5 in the Student Guide.*

The Old Testament teaches that God calls His people to a standard of holy behavior that makes them a peculiar people. The Ten Commandments make this point. The relationship God seeks engenders a people who honor God, do not make idols, do not take the name of the Lord in vain, remember the Sabbath, honor parents, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet.

The Old Testament is filled with moral implications. For example, "When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back" (Ex 23:4). Leviticus 18-19, sometimes called the "Holiness Code," spells out in great detail the importance of appropriate sexual relations.

Deuteronomy 6:17-18 says, "You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you. Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you." To these passages many more could be added, but it is the deep conviction of the Old Testament that God requires obedience.

*You may want to read the following from Proverbs: 3:31, 4:13, 5:7, 8:5, 13:3-4, 15:4.*

Proverbs spells out in rigorous detail some of the practical wisdom of the Old Testament faith.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God requires obedience:

- the love of God is not permissive but redemptive
- God seeks a relationship with humankind that finally reflects the sanctity of His presence
- God seeks an active relationship, one that is responsive
- God has a will for His creatures

Several **moral** implications arise from the conviction that God requires obedience:

- God is interested in the details of human life, things like honesty, sexual purity, and the treatment of parents
- the moral life is really an outgrowth of a relationship with God
- faith must be embodied

These themes combine to give a basic sketch of the Old Testament perspective on morality.

## Small Groups: Ethics According to Amos

(15 minutes)

*Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students each.*

*Refer to Resource 3-6 in the Student Guide.*

This small-group activity may serve as a basis for understanding the prophetic understanding of moral life. Here the word “moral” would better be understood as covenantal fidelity.

Review Amos for its intertwining of theological and moral implications.

Look particularly at Amos 3; 4:1-3; 6:4-8; 7:7-9; and 9:11-15.

*The following observations seem to follow these passages:*

- *Amos 3—while God brought the Hebrews out of Israel they have not lived the life God intended, maybe they do not even know how to do what is right*
- *Amos 4:1-3—Israel has lived in excess at the expense of the poor; this is not what God wanted and they will be punished*
- *Amos 6:4-8—God seeks to discipline His people, but they do not return to Him*
- *Amos 7:7-9—the righteousness of God (the plumbline) is set as a standard and will be used as a way to judge the people*
- *Amos 9:11-15—in spite of it all God will restore*

*What conclusions do you draw from Amos concerning the prophetic voice?*

*Several conclusions seem to follow:*

- *the particular history informs morality*
- *God is concerned with the poor*
- *justice arises from the righteousness of God*
- *because of God's intention to restore there is hope that moral failure is not the final word for the people of Israel*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has sought to treat some of the basic parameters of moral reflection in the Old Testament.

- Define and apply the major themes of the Old Testament to moral reflection: God creates, God makes promises, God delivers, God seeks a relationship, and God requires obedience.
- Understand that particular importance of covenant for moral reflection: the significance of OT morality is that it is framed by a relationship.
- Understand the prophetic voice in the Old Testament for morality: the prophets call Israel to covenantal fidelity.
- Understand the practical wisdom of the Old Testament for morality: the proverbs represent an example of how specific moral advice arises in a community of faith.

There is richness about the Old Testament vision of a righteous and moral life.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will deal with the New Testament perspective on ethics. It will be important to trace some common themes and to see how they are further developed in the New Testament.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the moral implications of the following passage. Be sure to define the theological issues as well as the moral implications of the passage. Look at Jeremiah 15: 1-8.

Make a journal entry reflecting your interaction with the content of this lesson. Reflect on the "Closing Thought."

## Closing Thought

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is an interesting summary of the law. It affirms that the people gathered before Moses should love God completely, obey the commandments, and teach the commandments to their children. This passage gives us a threefold perspective on the quality



of life indicated by the Old Testament. This is worth reflecting upon as we study ethical living.

[This page intentionally blank]

## Lesson 4

# New Testament Perspectives on Ethics

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:20	New Testament Perspectives on Ethics	Lecture	Resources 4-1—4-4
0:50	Christian Behavior	Small Groups	Resources 4-5—4-6
1:15	Ethics Observations	Guided Discussion	Resource 4-7
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Lehmann, Paul. *Ethics in a Christian Context*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963, 26-44.

Matera, Frank. *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996.

# Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

With this lesson the first unit of this module comes to a close. To this point we have attempted to define ethics, treat some major challenges for ethical reflection, and deal with Old and New Testament ethics. Ethics is dependent upon metaphysics for its place to begin. For theological ethics the nature of God comprises the answer to the metaphysical question.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define and apply the major themes and their moral implications of the New Testament
- define the major theological themes of the New Testament as indicative of the resources for moral reflection
- understand the moral implications of discipleship
- understand the moral implications of the Sermon on the Mount
- understand the distinction and relationship between law and grace
- understand the major themes of Christian behavior

## Motivator

*Possibilities:*

*See yourself in the presence of God.*

*Empathize with the sufferings of others.*

*Do not grab for your rights.*

*Feed your soul and mind with what is right.*

*Be gracious.*

*Be pure.*

*Seek peace.*

*Expect great difficulty.*

Put the Beatitudes—Matthew 5:1-11—into the form of virtues, acquired human excellences.

Observations about the Beatitudes:

- They promise happiness/success.
- They are all followed by promises of the activity of God.
- They define the shape of Christian character.

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: New Testament Perspectives on Ethics**

(30 minutes)

The New Testament is composed of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Epistles, and the Revelation. Together they present a picture of Jesus who is born of a virgin as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promise for a messiah. It also tells the story of the Early Church as it arises from the death and resurrection of Jesus. Along the way it begins to define the character of the believers who have been made new in Christ.

*Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-11.*

The New Testament links faith and life at every turn.

It is also important to see that the Early Church understood itself as standing in continuity with the Old Testament promise. The first book of the New Testament is Matthew and it is full of quotations and allusions from the Old Testament. Throughout the New Testament the themes of the Old Testament can be noted. Chiefly, this is evident in the understanding of the covenant, the emphasis upon a Holy God, and a holy people.

Jesus is the central figure of the New Testament. The pages of the New Testament affirm that Jesus was made flesh—incarnation—in John 1:14. The Cross is also important for understanding New Testament faith in Romans 5:6-21. Paul makes it clear that the Resurrection is pivotal for the Christian message in 1 Corinthians 15. The emergence of the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and its further interpretation in 1 Peter 2:9-12 is crucial for understanding the New Testament.

*You may need to define eschaton= second coming of Christ, and resurrection and the judgment.*

The entire message of the New Testament leans toward the eschaton (Rev 21, 1 Thess 5:1-11, and 2 Thess 2:1-12). While more nuance could be added to this, these themes are sufficient to give some basic understanding of the primitive Christian faith.

This faith was proclaimed to Jews as the fulfillment of the messianic promise and to the Gentiles as hope of salvation and inclusion. There is also no doubt the message of the New Testament is a faith that comes to expression in a moral life. The close connection between theology and ethics can be noted in many New Testament images:

- Kingdom of God
- Mind of Christ
- Life in the Spirit
- Body of Christ
- Temple of the Holy Spirit

Each of these images express the theology of the New Testament, but they also indicate the kind of life that ought to emerge from this faith.

Several specific themes indicate the moral vision of the New Testament.

## **Sermon on the Mount**

*Refer to Resource 4-1 in the Student Guide.*

Matthew 5-7 is one of the best known passages in Scripture. It serves as a basic indication of the teaching of Jesus. The Sermon of the Mount is true to the basic theological perspective of the New Testament, in that along with the theology the moral implications are equally indicated. This fact is made clear in the Beatitudes already treated in this lesson. Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth" (5:13a). This indicates the nature of the Christian message and it expresses the type of life that ought to arise out of a relationship with Christ. In other words, a disciple of Christ is to affect the world where he or she lives positively.

This image is followed by the statement that these same disciples are to be light for the world (5:14). Jesus calls those who follow Him to let this light shine before others, "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (5:16b). These two images serve as a clear indication that moral behavior ought to flow out of a relationship with Jesus. This logic is reminiscent of the Mosaic covenant, in which the blessing of God is linked to the qualitatively distinct life.

The Sermon on the Mount speaks to the importance of the law, but through a transformation not possible with the law. Lest we think this means a lower standard, Jesus says, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (5:20). The ethic of the kingdom of heaven fulfills the law by being a vehicle of grace.

This point is made clear in the following paragraphs.

- First, Jesus shows that murder is linked to hatred. In fact, hatred is a form of murder.

- Second, Jesus indicates that adultery is more than a physical act.
- Third, Jesus suggests that divorce is an accommodation to a “hard-hearted generation.”
- Fourth, Jesus directs that the law of proportionate vengeance must give way to forgiveness.
- Finally, Jesus spells out an ethic of love for neighbor and enemy alike.

All of this indicates something very profound about the New Testament ethic. Some see the words of Jesus as yet a more insidious burden, for now it is our very mind and thoughts that are to be judged. If this is true, the ethic of Jesus is legalistic at a level never before conceived.

But another way to think of this is to suggest that Jesus wants His disciples to understand that any attempt to separate morality—behavior—from faith/ thoughts is a failed project. Anger is wrong because it will always result in violence. Lust is wrong because it leads to sexual immorality. An eye for an eye gives way to forgiveness in the kingdom of heaven. Most of all love must define the character of the Christian life. Therefore, love defines the ethic Jesus sets forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

The theme of the internal and external dimensions of faith is further expressed in **chapter 6**. This chapter begins with the following words, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (7:1). This premise is played out by looking at prayer, fasting, and storing up treasures in this life.

Too often this is taken to mean God is only concerned with the heart and not the external behavior. Obviously, God is not interested in purely external behavior, but it is equally false to conclude God is only interested in our internal state of mind. In fact, the point Jesus seems to be making is precisely that only hypocrites convince themselves the inner and the outer can be separated. Rather it is from the heart transformed by the grace of God that morality emerges.

**Chapter 7** includes these words, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (7:13-14). This closing chapter of the Sermon on the Mount clearly indicates that the ethic proposed by Jesus is not

intended to be easy, but rather calls for daily obedience. The last image of the Sermon on the Mount concerns two houses, one built on rock and the other on sand. Only the house on the rock can stand in the face of the storms of life. The house on the sand is one that "hears the words of mine and does not act on them" (7:26). The house on the rock is the life that matches the inner transformation with obedience.

The Sermon on the Mount is full of meaning for coming to terms with a New Testament perspective on ethics. The love of God is the internal transformation that flows outward into the life that does not hate, lust, or return evil for evil. Therefore, a New Testament ethic is defined by an obedient love.

## Discipleship

*Refer to Resource 4-2 in the Student Guide.*

The comprehensive nature of the Sermon on the Mount can in some measure be understood in the gospel conception of discipleship. Luke 14:25-34 indicates a measure of the meaning of discipleship:

- putting nothing before Christ, not even father, mother, wife, or children
- carrying the cross
- giving up of all possessions

This is a hard saying of Christ, but it indicates that Christian faith is all-consuming. This fact argues against the tendency somehow to transform grace into a permissive attitude that excuses a person from the responsibility of embodying holiness. Therefore, while love is the key to understanding a New Testament ethic, it is important to assign a Christian content to love. This means above all that love must embrace a moral life.

## Grace/Love

Both of the conceptions previously treated—Sermon on the Mount and Discipleship—indicate the centrality of love to a New Testament ethic. For example, Luke 6:32-36 indicates love ought to be expressed even toward enemies. This love is expressed whether or not it is returned. Jesus summarizes the law through love in Luke 10:27, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

One way to think of grace is as the unmerited favor of God. It is the gift of God, freely given, that calls all to a



new life in Christ. Paul puts it this way, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

*Refer to Resource 4-3 in the Student Guide.*

The grace of God results in walking, which is a metaphor for morality. 1 John 4:11-12 also indicates that love should result in action, "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has even seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." The writer adds to this, "For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments" (1 Jn 5:3a).

A perversion of this manifests itself in a lawless grace, that is, a love that requires nothing. Many verses could be added to those indicated, but the point remains the same. The most basic category for New Testament ethics is love: one that reaches to human life and from human life to the world. This represents a merging of the inner and the outer in a life of discipleship.

## Law

The New Testament concern with the law has already been treated in some of the analysis of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus states He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. The best and richest understanding of the law reveals the nature of God. Paul indicates "the law is spiritual" (Rom 7:14a). In Galatians, "the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). The major conclusion regarding the law is that it has the holy purpose of pointing to sin, but it lacks power to deliver. The law also exhibits the tendency to link with human weakness by wrapping itself in the merely external.

*Refer to Resource 4-4 in the Student Guide.*

Matthew 12:1-8 relates an important event that offers a significant perspective on the law. This passage tells the story of Jesus going through "the grainfields on the sabbath" because His disciples were hungry. This angered the Pharisees, who charged that Jesus did what was unlawful on the Sabbath. Jesus responds in the following way, "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath" (12:7-8).

This is followed by the story of Jesus healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. To this story Mark adds these words, "Then he said to them, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind

for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath'" (2:27-28). This puts the law into perspective by suggesting it was always intended to teach/guide humankind; it was never meant to be an end unto itself. The prospect of a graceless legalism always looms large in any Christian ethic.

Two tendencies continually present themselves to theological ethics.

- The first is to raise the standard of righteousness to the expense of all grace.
- The second is to push grace to the extent that all understanding of righteousness is lost.

At any given time in history the Church can swing between these two poles, one taking the law to a place of uncritical legalism and the other taking grace to a place of moral laxity. Either grace or law can become highly problematic, when considered to the exclusion of the other. A New Testament ethic requires grace and law balanced by a continued attendance to the means of grace and grace-saturated accountability. This brings into focus a paradox of sorts. A person cannot be *justified* by works, but a justified person will be *characterized* by works. The words of James suggest this tension, "But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves" (1:22).

## **New Testament Ethics and the Continuing Work of the Holy Spirit**

The image of the moral life in the New Testament is shaped by images of the mind of Christ, life in the Spirit, and embodiment. All of this is conditioned by the conviction that the Holy Spirit has been outpoured. 2 Corinthians 13:13 talks about "the communion of the Holy Spirit" and clearly links this communion with the grace found in Christ. Paul also talks about "sharing in the Spirit" (Phil 2:1). The moral life of the Christian is a participation in the Spirit, which is at the same time a participation in the life of the Son and the Father. It is not possible to live righteously without communion with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit brings unity and hope to the Church and thus to life. The Spirit bestows gifts into the life of the Christian, but finally the Spirit is the gift. Paul instructs Timothy in the following manner, "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim 1:7). The Spirit is the power to live the Christ-like life. According to Paul, the power of the Holy Spirit

engenders joy, peace, and hope in the life of the believer (Rom 15:13). When Paul reflects on spiritual gifts he makes it perfectly clear that while the many gifts are possible, love must pervade all things. The Holy Spirit causes love to abound in the Christian life.

All moral virtues exist due to the work of the Spirit. Virtue does not come from reason or discipline, but from the inspiring and enabling work of the Holy Spirit. Paul prays, "he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit" (Eph 3:16b). The power to sustain the virtues releases those in Christ from the bondage of the law to an entirely new life. The Wesleyan term for this work is co-operant grace. Such an approach to grace makes it very clear that the Spirit calls, but we must respond in order to achieve the kind of life envisioned by God.

A New Testament ethic embodies Christ in the Church and the life of the believer. The Spirit brings flesh to the gospel. The logic of the gospel begins in the proclamation of the risen Lord. The Spirit awakens humankind from sinful slumber to a new kind of life. Simultaneous to repentance the regenerating Spirit begins to sanctify the believer. After the proclamation of the gospel the work of discipleship, which is also empowered by the Spirit, causes the gospel to "take root" in the newly redeemed life. The same Spirit who calls to sinners accompanies the teaching of the gospel and the maturing of faith. The Spirit inspires the deeper work of theological ethics and systematic theology.

Finally, the Spirit leads the cosmos toward eschatological consummation. The point is simple: there is no theological ethic apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. If there is truth in philosophical ethics, then the Spirit is at work even there. Virtue is the work of the Spirit, explicitly in theology and implicitly in philosophy. The Spirit takes from what is of Christ and brings it to bear upon life. So whatever is true, whatever is noble, and whatever is good testifies to the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and in moral reflection.

## **Small Groups: Christian Behavior**

(25 minutes)

*Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the chapters.*

The New Testament is literally full of specific moral injunctions. Ephesians 4-6 is a particularly rich section of Scripture for comprehending behavior in light of faith.

*Refer to Resource 4-5 in the Student Guide.*

In your group examine the moral behavior indicated in your assigned chapter of Ephesians.

You will have approximately 5 to 7 minutes to study your chapter and then each group will give a 3-minute report of the critical emphasis of the chapter.

Chapter 4 includes the following indications of moral virtue:

- maintain unity in the Spirit (v 3)
- speak the truth in love (v 15)
- do not live like the Gentiles (v 17)
- avoid hardness of heart (v 18)
- avoid licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity (v 19)
- put away corrupt and deluded lusts (v 22)
- clothe yourself with the new self (v 24)
- put away falsehood (v 25)
- speak the truth in love (v 25)
- do not sin (v 26)
- share with the needy (v 28)
- no evil talk (v 29)
- put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, malice (v 31)
- be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving (v 32)

Chapter 5 includes the following indications of moral virtue:

- imitate God (v 1)
- live in love (v 2)
- do not even mention fornication and impurity or greed (v 3)
- avoid obscene, silly, and vulgar talk (v 4)
- no fornication or impurity or greed or idolatry (v 5)
- the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true (v 9)
- take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness (v 11)
- be careful how you live (v 15)
- do not get drunk with wine (v 18)
- sing psalms and hymns (v 19)
- give thanks to God the Father (v 20)
- be subject to one another (v 21)
- wives, be subject to your husband (v 22)
- husbands, love your wife (v 25)
- husbands love your wife as yourself, and a wife should respect her husband

Chapter 6 includes the following indication of moral virtue:

- children, obey your parents (v 1)
- fathers, do not provoke your children but bring them up in discipline and instruction (v 4)

*Keep the group reports to the time allotment.*

*Refer to Resource 4-6 in the Student Guide.*

- slaves, obey your earthly masters (v 5)
- masters, do not threaten your slaves (v 9)
- be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power (v 10)
- put on the whole armor of God (v 11)
- fasten the belt of truth (v 14)
- put on the breastplate of righteousness (v 14)
- take the shield of faith (v 16)
- helmet of salvation (v 17)
- pray in the Spirit (v 18)

There are several places in the New Testament where specific behavior is spelled out:

- Let love be genuine and hold fast to what is good (Rom 12:9)
- Love one another with mutual affection (Rom 12:10)
- Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom 12:10)
- Do not lag in zeal (Rom 12:11)
- Contribute to the needs of the saints (Rom 12:13)
- Live according to the Spirit (Rom 8:5)
- Present your bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
- Do not love the world (1 Jn 1:15)
- Live by the Spirit (Gal 5:16)
- Avoid the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
- Embrace the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26)

All of this can be contextualized by the words of Paul in Romans 5:1-5 where everything is tied to character. Reading the New Testament reveals the importance attached to the embodiment of grace into character. Perhaps, the words of Paul to Titus will fully connect theology and ethics, "But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance" (2:1-2).

## **Guided Discussion: Ethics Observations**

(10 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 4-7 in the Student Guide.*

*Discuss each one of these and apply them to concrete situations.*

Frank Matera summarizes New Testament ethics in *New Testament Ethics* with the following observations:

- The moral life of believers is a response to God's work of salvation.
- Believers live the moral life in light of God's coming salvation and judgment.
- The moral life is lived in and with a community of disciples who form the church.
- The personal example of Jesus and Paul instructs and sustains believers in the moral life.
- The moral life consists in doing God's will.
- The moral life expresses itself in love for God,

*Matera, New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 248-55.*

- love of neighbor, and love for one's enemy.
- The moral life is an expression of faith.

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

This lesson has attempted to define in basic terms the New Testament perspective on ethics. We attempted the following:

- Define and apply the major themes and their moral implications of the New Testament: discipleship, grace, and law.
- Define the major theological themes of the New Testament as indicative of the resources for moral reflection: every theological issue in the NT is connected to human behavior. The two cannot be legitimately separated.
- Understand the moral implications of discipleship: faith implies sacrifice in the NT.
- Understand the moral implications of the Sermon on the Mount: salt of the earth, light of the world, righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees, critique of hypocrisy, and building one's life on eternal reality of God.
- Understand the distinction and relationship between law and grace: avoid the extremes of a graceless legalism and lawless grace.
- Understand the major themes of Christian behavior: hold to what is good, love one another, live according to the Spirit, and embrace the fruit of the Spirit.

It is always important to understand the theological affirmations of the New Testament have specific and enduring moral implications. The most adequate way to read the New Testament is as a resource for doing moral theology—virtues defined by faith.

### Look Ahead

The next unit will deal with philosophical ethics. This unit will attempt to define the major ways in which philosophical ethics have attempted to engage conflicts of duty. The next lesson will deal with a major teleological system called utilitarianism.

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

This lesson is the end of the first unit in this module. Write a 3- to 4-page essay that pulls together the

major insights of these lessons. Make sure to connect metaphysics with the process of ethical reflection.

Make a journal entry reflecting on the use of the New Testament in moral reflection.

## **Closing Thought**

Jude 3-4 reads, "Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who long ago were designated for this condemnation as ungodly, who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." It is important to note the connection between the "faith once entrusted" and "virtuous behavior." This is essential to the New Testament perspective on ethics.



## *Unit 2: Philosophical Ethics*

### *Lesson 5*

# Utilitarianism

## *Lesson Overview*

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Utilitarianism	Lecture	Resources 5-1—5-6
1:10	Utilitarianism	Small Groups	Resource 5-7
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Hinmon, Lawrence M. *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003, 135-74.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillian Press, 1966, 230-45.

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Fourth edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003, 91-116.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

The last four lessons have focused on the basic parameters of ethical reflection. The next four lessons will explore some of the major philosophical options for moral reflection. Each will be defined and its limitations discussed.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define utilitarianism
- define the three major types of utilitarianism
- apply the principles of utilitarianism to conflicts of duty
- understand the limitations of utilitarianism

## Motivator

Cathy is a third grade student in Mrs. Franks' class. Cathy is an above average student who finds it difficult to concentrate while her teacher is talking. This is partly because she is fairly bright and partly because she is young. Whenever Mrs. Franks corrects Cathy for being too loud she says, "Now, Cathy, you need to be quiet because no one around you can hear me if you are talking." The lesson Cathy is being taught is that her need to talk is not as important as the need of the whole class to listen. Finally, one day when Mrs. Franks requests that Cathy be quiet and tells her those around her cannot hear while she is talking, the third grader speaks up and asks her teacher, "Why are they more important than me?"

This is a good question to ask, even if it comes from a third grader.

*You might observe at this point that such questions concern*

*Why should my rights be less important than the class as whole?*

*utilitarianism. You might ask the students in the class, as they reflect upon utilitarianism, to consider the common themes of happiness, pleasure, and the greatest number as they relate to a biblical ethical point of view.*

*For example, does Scripture think of morality in terms of rights and happiness?*

*Does "person" mean private in the Christian sense of the word?*

*Does the scripture give a content to happiness that is different from that of utilitarianism?*

*You might suggest the appropriate answer for Mrs. Franks to give might be that while Cathy's right to speak may not always be overridden by the need for the entire class to learn, it is clearly not appropriate for Cathy to think her own needs are more important than all the others.*

*One exception would be if Cathy were ill and needed to inform the teacher. Therefore, Cathy's right to interrupt is related to the significance of her need. In fact, one could argue that Cathy disrupts her own education when she interrupts her teacher and disturbs the class. Therefore, the need to balance the personal with the social is an important consideration for utilitarianism.*

*When, if ever, are my rights to be considered above the rights of the whole?*

*Can we ever be happy without regarding the concerns of others?*

*Can happiness be an appropriate moral end?*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Utilitarianism

(40 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 5-1 in the Student Guide.*

### Basic Definition of Utilitarianism

The entire theory is based upon the "Greatest Happiness" Principle. It is the attempt to define everything in terms of utility. Here the assertion is that this is the supreme and undivided sovereignty of the principle. The attempt is to discover some calculus or process of "moral" arithmetic by means of which uniform results will arise.

Utilitarianism became influential with the work of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who defined utility in terms of pleasure and pain. According to Bentham, we should act in such a way as to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. This position is known as hedonistic or quantitative utilitarianism. Here we are talking about overall pleasure and pain. Sometimes this is called pig's philosophy.

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) sought to revise the emphasis on sensual pleasure made by Bentham. He emphasized happiness instead of pleasure. This is called eudaemonistic/qualitative utilitarianism. This is a significant advance over Bentham.

*Refer to Resource 5-2 in the Student Guide.*

Happiness/pleasure can be characterized in the following way:

- Intensity: pleasure/happiness should be as strong as possible
- Duration: pleasure/happiness that lasts longer is generally better
- Certainty: pleasure/happiness we are certain to enjoy is better
- Remoteness: pleasure/happiness that can be enjoyed immediately is better
- Fruitfulness: the likelihood the pleasure/happiness will be followed by similar pleasures
- Purity: the likelihood of the pleasure/happiness not being followed by their opposite
- Extent: the number to whom the pleasure/happiness extends

These characteristics help make the point that pleasure or happiness envisioned by utilitarianism is about more

than momentary satisfaction. Rather is about enduring pleasure or happiness.

Utilitarianism is a teleological moral theory. That is, it assesses the morality of any action in light of its capacity to engender the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. It also tends to level all moral agents and assume no one has any more moral claim than anyone else. In other words, my happiness is no more important than another person's. What matters is greatest happiness for the greatest number.

## The Various Interpretations of Utility

*Refer to Resource 5-3 in the Student Guide.*

**Hedonistic Utilitarianism** emphasizes pleasure. It is also called quantitative utilitarianism. Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, held this view.

**Eudaemonistic Utilitarianism** emphasizes happiness. It is also called qualitative utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill held this view.

**Ideal Utilitarianism** emphasizes the ideal of justice and freedom. This type of utilitarianism attempts to capture utility in an ideal that renders a greater good to the whole.

## Types of Utilitarianism

*Refer to Resource 5-4 in the Student Guide.*

### Act Utilitarianism

This type of utilitarianism appeals directly to the principle of utility. Moral virtue/action arises from the principle. The crucial question becomes, What effect will my action have on the capacity for the greatest number to have pleasure/happiness?

### General Utilitarianism

This type of utilitarianism is less concerned with action, as in act utilitarianism, than defining the general parameters for morality. General utilitarianism wants to talk in terms of more or less universal parameters. The crucial question becomes, What would happen if everyone were to do the such and such in a particular situation?

### Rule Utilitarianism

Emphasizes the centrality of rules in morality. We determine our rules by asking which rules will promote the greatest general good for everyone.

Pleasure and utility are not the only possible standards of utility, and the 20th century saw attempts to

redefine the standard of utility in terms of ideal goods such as freedom and knowledge and justice (G. E. Moore).

### **An Example of a Utilitarian Argument**

(New York: Avon Books, 1977).

Peter Singer is a well-known ethicist who argues for the moral status of animals from a utilitarian point of view. This is the case in one of his best-known books titled *Animal Liberation*. In this book, Singer thinks most people are guilty of what he calls speciesism; that is, simply to recognize the moral status of one's species, but not that of others.

He thinks this happens when human beings do not consider the rights of lower life-forms. He thinks it is wrong to consider all human life as more important than the life of all animals. This view is utilitarian in the sense that it attempts to level all rights, human and nonhuman. It is also utilitarian in that it questions whether the disregard for the rights of all nonhuman life contributes to some greater good. He specifically questions whether the amount of animal experimentation actually creates a greater good, that is, one that is both pure and extends to enough people.

Singer's argument is clearly utilitarian, but it fails a crucial test for theological ethics. A central Christian conviction concerns the status of human beings in the sight of God as "made in His image." This places particular stress upon the moral responsibility of human beings to be stewards of the non-human and larger biotic world, but it refuses to level human life.

This means while a Christian may embrace Singer's intention to consider the moral status of animals, he or she will do so in a much different manner. For example, a Christian can oppose animal experimentation, but will do so based upon a concern for needless suffering and little measurable benefit. While this is clearly teleological—little benefit—it is not utilitarian in that it does not level the moral status between humans and animals.

### **Things That Commend Utilitarianism**

Refer to Resource 5-5 in the Student Guide.

- The concern for the whole makes a great deal of sense. It makes sense to consider the whole when making decisions. When this is done, any sacrifice a person makes can be justified in light of the larger good produced by it. For example, when we make

decisions as parents for the good of the family we are able to sacrifice for the children, or for the whole of the family. Therefore, the family participates in a greater good. This would be the same principle at stake when one participates in a health insurance group. We may pay more than we need one year, but by doing so those who needed it were able to receive treatment.

- This way of looking at things offers general rules. This view is more connected to rule-utilitarianism, but it suggests the point of utilitarianism is not to prescribe particular actions. What utilitarianism does is define a larger trajectory—the greatest happiness principle—by which moral decisions can be made. Since there appears to be an inherent good at stake in the greatest happiness principle, it is possible for this logic to guide our actions without prescribing them.
- A long history is attached to moral teleology. Since utilitarianism is a teleological view, it requires the active engagement of morally sensitive people in order to provide a sufficient basis for moral reflection. An interest in consequences will contribute to the environment necessary for moral reflection. Therefore, those things that commend all moral teleology tend to recommend utilitarianism.

### **Things That Suggest the Limitations of Utilitarianism**

*Refer to Resource 5-6 in the Student Guide.*

- Happiness can be an elusive moral quality. Happiness can easily become quantitative rather than qualitative. If we use the meaning Aristotle assigns to happiness as self-fulfillment, and further understand that virtue is required, then the moral quality of happiness may be secured. But happiness can become an end unto itself and in fact, it tends to lend itself to such excess.

Ideal utilitarianism is less guilty of this limitation, but even here the ideal of justice or freedom can quickly become empty of any distinct meaning. Happiness, as it is usually interpreted by its proponents, is limited in its capacity to provide direction for moral reflection. Therefore, the basic limitation of happiness as it is defined and employed by utilitarianism is too elusive a concept to be of much use for moral reflection.

- Greatest happiness is difficult if not impossible to calculate. While it seems to be an intuitive argument that the greatest happiness principle is better than less happiness, this is not the case. How is one to go about calculating greatest happiness in particular ways? How is one to understand a particular moral conflict in light of greatest happiness? It appears that greatest happiness, even when it is qualified by intensity, duration, certainty, etc., is nearly meaningless as a vehicle for moral decision-making.
- The leveling of all moral claims cannot be finally sustained. That the desire to count all person's happiness on an equal plane appears to be morally indisputable is not the case. Almost without exception the leveling of moral claims when attached to the greatest happiness principle will lead either to the complete breakdown of moral reflection or to an inordinate sacrifice by some group.

Regarding the breakdown of moral reflection, it would mean that in an effort to secure the happiness of the greatest number of people it would ultimately frustrate moral reflection by the enormity of the criterion. Regarding the inordinate sacrifice of some group, it would be logical to assume the greatest happiness principle requires some unhappiness or lack of pleasure for some group, and this would naturally fall to a group that has little voice. While arguments could be advanced toward both of these criticisms, it is not possible to dismiss them. Therefore, the leveling of moral claims is a limitation for utilitarianism.

## Small Groups: Utilitarianism

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 5-7 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.*

John Rawls, who wrote *A Theory of Justice*, was a major philosopher of the 20th century. This book made a significant contribution to political philosophy. Part of his theory employs utilitarianism. Rawls' theory is a version of what is called the "social contract theory." It asks us to imagine a fictional time, which he calls the original position, in which all members of the society participate in choosing the principles according to how their society will be governed. To guard against unfair advantage, they choose these principles under what he calls the veil of ignorance. No one knows to which race, gender, or socioeconomic class he or she will belong. They don't know whether they will be tall or short, fat or skinny, or even the generation into which they will be born. Since



no one knows their fate in the natural lottery, Rawls believes they would establish principles to maximize their position if perchance they should end up on the short end of the stick.

Two principles are an important part of Rawls' theory:

- Principle of equal basic liberty for all, which guarantees everyone the same fundamental rights and freedoms.
- Difference principle talks about social and economic inequalities as being just only if they benefit all members of the society, especially the least advantaged.

*Circulate between the groups. If they seem to be having trouble, give some guidance.*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

This lesson has attempted to define one of the major philosophical options for moral reflection. We have looked specifically at

- The definition of utilitarianism: a moral theory devoted to the greatest happiness of the most people.
- The three major types of utilitarianism: quantitative, qualitative, and ideal.
- How utilitarian principles can be applied to moral conflicts: it applies teleologically to moral problems.
- The limitations of utilitarianism: happiness can be elusive, greatest happiness principle may be impossible to calculate, and the leveling of all moral claims may not be possible.

### Look Ahead

The next lesson will look at another philosophical option for moral reflection: natural rights.

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on limitations of utilitarianism, offering at least one specific example from current events to illustrate your argument.

Read and respond to Resource 5-8.

Make a journal entry regarding your engagement with utilitarianism.

### Closing Thought

The writer of Proverbs says, "Wisdom is a fountain of life to one who has it, but folly is the punishment of fools. The mind of the wise makes their speech judicious, and adds persuasiveness to their lips" (16:22-23). The writer intends to say wisdom will bless the life of a person and in this flourishing the blessing will widen to others. Therefore, wisdom in the mind of the writer of Proverbs is both personal and social. As one thinks about utilitarianism and its hope for the larger whole, it is of some significance to consider if the scriptural tradition is not much richer in its capacity to engender greatest happiness.

## Lesson 6

# Natural Rights

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Natural Rights	Lecture	Resources 6-1—6-6
1:10	Ethics of Hobbes	Guided Discussion	Resource 6-7
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Hinmon, Lawrence M. *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*. Third edition, New York: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003, 204-67.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc., 1966, 157-64.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 student to read his or her essay.*

*Discuss the students' responses to Pastor Nupastor.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

This lesson will attempt to set forth the basic parameters of the natural rights moral tradition. This way of doing ethics falls within the larger deontological moral tradition. This is because it is less interested in the consequences of actions than their origin in a fixed set of principles or rules that arise from essential rights.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the principles of natural rights
- apply the principles of natural rights
- understand the limitations of natural rights

## Motivator

*Allow a few minutes for the students to read this chapter.*

*The basic problem in this chapter is eating meat sacrificed to idols. Some have no problem with it, but others do. Paul is concerned that some people's liberty becomes a stumbling block for others.*

Paul's letters to the church at Corinth confront many moral issues. Corinth presented many problems for Paul and has long been the symbol for a troubled church. At the root of most of the problems was individualism. One way to think of the problem is a claim for and contention around "rights." Considering this problem, read 1 Corinthians 8 and define the moral issues at stake.

*What is the moral issue?*

You might note that the last part of verse 1 juxtaposes knowledge (which puffs up), and love (which builds up).

When Paul talks about knowledge puffing up, he is saying more facts will not resolve the problem.

*What would you consider to be the most relevant verses?*

*The most relevant verses to look at are:*

- *v 7 deals with conscience—for the Christian it is not conscience, but the Holy Spirit that is the guide,*
- *v 8 deals with food—eating it or not is not really the issue*
- *v 9 when it becomes a stumbling block, then the problem comes into focus*
- *v 13 if a person falls because of your liberty, there is a problem*

For the Christian the high mark of morality is not liberty, but responsibility.

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Natural Rights

(40 minutes)

The language of natural rights is the most practiced way of thinking about moral reflection in the Western world. This way of looking at morality is connected to human rights. This debate has been very important to the 20th century.

*You might want to reflect on its significance for the discussion of natural rights.*

*One possible answer is—rights are very difficult to maintain. Another response is that human selfishness always finds ways around the respect of others' rights. One possible Christian response might be that sin makes us violent and unconcerned for others.*

*Refer to Resource 6-1 in the Student Guide.*

Rousseau said, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."

*The question is—if a person is free, then why is he or she so often in chains?*

When we talk about rights, we must understand that two parties are present:

- rights holders—gives permission, obligates others
- rights observers—refuses to interfere, limits the claims

The first are those who have the rights. The second are those who are called to recognize or honor these rights.

To say I have a right is to say I have permission to act or I have an entitlement, to act, to enjoy, or to demand. Rights usually place a duty or obligation on another. This can be negative (refrain), or positive (assist in the successful exercise of the right).

It is also true that to have a right is to have a certain responsibility.

### There Are Several Ways to Think of Rights

**Negative Rights:** Life, liberty, property, pursuit of happiness

- These rights place an obligation on the rights holder—avoid interfering with life, with expressions of liberty, with holding property, and with pursuing happiness.

*Refer to Resource 6-2 in the Student Guide.*

**Positive Rights:** Basic subsistence, basic health care

- These rights place an obligation toward the rights holders to provide minimal subsistence needs of food, shelter, and clothing, and provide basic health care.

**Absolute Rights:** Strongest kind of right

- These rights cannot be overridden by other considerations; sometimes these rights are called “trump cards.”

**Prima Facie Rights:** At first glance it appears to be the case, a real right, but there is a question as to whether it applies.

- It is also called a presumptive right, one we initially presume to be relevant, but it is subject to further scrutiny.

## Justification of Natural Rights

Refer to Resource 6-3 in the Student Guide.

Natural rights are those belonging to people simply by virtue of their nature.

Four main approaches to justifying rights:

Can be found at [www.un.org/rights/50/decla.htm](http://www.un.org/rights/50/decla.htm).

- Self-evidence—these are taken for granted; an example of this would be the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Rights
- Divine Foundation—John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), refers to God as the ultimate source and foundation of human rights; places rights in the moral structure of the universe
- Natural Law—natural order created by God; do not have to have a theistic foundation; have to be careful about drawing normative conclusions on the basis of descriptions
- Human nature—some foundational characteristics or group of characteristics of human nature entails the recognition of their rights. These are rights-conferring properties, distinctly human: ability to reason, capability of making free choices, ability to have interests and to make plans, and capability of being autonomous. Generally, we can appeal to two criteria:
  - the more essential a property is to being human, the stronger it will be as a rights-conferring property
  - rights-conferring properties are limited to those characteristics that are morally good or morally neutral

*Refer to Resource 6-4 in the Student Guide.*

## **Examples of Arguments That Appeal to Human Nature**

- Establish that some characteristic of human nature, such as the ability to make free choices, is a rights-conferring property, that is, a property that is essential to human life, either morally good or morally neutral
- Establish that certain empirical conditions, such as the absence of physical constraints, are necessary for the existence or the exercise of that characteristic.
- Conclude that people have a right to those empirical conditions.
- These establish the right, but there is also the need to establish the obligation.
- Conclude that people have a duty not to interfere with the pursuit of those empirical conditions.
- The final step in arguments for positive rights is to conclude that people—state, society, or some other specified party—have a duty to provide those empirical conditions.

Any discussion of natural rights must involve reflection upon political power. The reflection on political power relates to the human community. It also relates to our understanding of the nature of humanity, especially as it is reflected in groups.

## **Things That Commend Natural Rights**

*Refer to Resource 6-5 in the Student Guide.*

- Natural rights establish the essential dignity of human beings. Natural rights are born in the so-called Age of Reason, the period that saw the Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, and the French Revolution. These documents and the events that surrounded them have caused a deeper appreciation for the basic right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights intend to extend to all people regardless of economic status, gender, ethnicity, and so on. The basic dignity of human beings seems to be an intrinsic value.
- Natural rights are rational and translatable. Reason is able to establish natural rights, and this means these rights can be translated beyond particular



cultures. International law and organizations like the United Nations are visible examples of how the language of natural rights can engender a conversation of moral importance across different cultures. Because natural rights seem to be culture neutral, they can become a vehicle for guaranteeing and enforcing basic rights for all. They do not seem to depend upon a particular history or religion to be useful.

- Natural rights lead to fixed moral principles. One of the major concerns of moral theory is the capacity to name value or right that will not change. The language of natural rights offers those who hold the view a way to talk about and apply principles that are fixed. The reason for this is the claim that reason is capable of establishing timeless principles that can serve as a signpost for all subsequent moral reflection.

### **Things That Suggest the Limitations of Natural Rights**

*Refer to Resource 6-6 in the Student Guide.*

- Natural rights tend to diminish the Christian understanding of gift. The logic of natural rights leans toward entitlement, but the logic of the Christian faith is gift. Accordingly, the theological ethic is less interested in what reason can produce than in the way that gift changes the terrain for moral reflection. The question, of course, is whether rights or gift is more persuasive.

Natural rights can only lead to a tournament of rights that in turn leads to interminable moral reflection. The abortion debate is largely conducted along the natural rights trajectory. This means the natural right of privacy is pitted against the natural right of life. The result is often manifested not as a rational discourse, but as an emotive discourse where each side trades images intended to inflame. The logic of gift, at least, has some possibility of transformation.

- Reason cannot establish the moral claims of natural rights. The centrality of reason for natural rights is clear. It is by the resources of reason that moral claims are grounded in defensible categories. Yet, the question regarding the capacity of reason to provide either the ground or defense of moral claims remains. In fact, reason may not be the objective vehicle it appears to be or needs to be for natural rights to be satisfactory. Reason can

certainly be of some service, but it cannot complete the journey because moral decisions are much more than rational.

Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th-century philosopher, makes it clear that only faith can take us to the place where the most difficult decisions can be made. Part of the reason for this is that reason, when it is faced with the most difficult decisions, can only resign to the situation. Rather faith, when faced with these difficult decisions, can still hope. Emotion may be necessary and it is always important in the midst of difficult choices. Neither faith nor emotion is allowed by the rationality of natural rights. Since natural rights do not allow for either, it is limited in its capacity to establish its moral claims.

- Natural rights are insufficient by themselves to engender a moral life. This criticism is akin to the prior point. Natural rights envision a world where the rights of others can be established, respected, and embodied in the normal course of life. Yet, when one realistically reflects on this vision, it is difficult to find these values actually lived out.

This fact is not difficult for a theologian to understand because of the understanding of sin. Yet, for a person who attempts to adhere to these ideals, the sad fact is that they remain unrealized. For example, although the United Nations depends upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it still needs coercive force or the threat of it to be effective. This is the same for the moral life. Anyone who faces the day-to-day challenges of living out the ethical ideals of natural rights will be confronted with his or her insufficiency. While the image depicted by natural rights is morally praiseworthy, it is finally insufficient.

- Natural rights too easily become detached from the narratives that sustain them. All the criticisms advanced in this section are linked to this final point. A theology of gift transcends the capacity of reason to establish the moral life. Since life is richer than objective rationality, the morality it requires must include more than reason. Because of what the moral life requires it is not possible for reason to be fully sufficient.

These three criticisms are made even more clear in the light of natural rights to detach themselves from the larger narratives that give them life and meaning. For

example, it will do little good to post the Ten Commandments on the wall at the courthouse unless the larger narrative of exodus and covenant are also attached. It does little good to tell a person to be moral unless that morality is informed by a particular history or tradition.

Rules, no matter how clear or how loudly demanded, can be ineffective unless the totality of a story calls us to action. Rights established by reason cannot finally be meaningful apart from a particular narrative. There is a kind of rationality linked to narrative, but it is very different from the rationality of natural rights.

## Guided Discussion: Ethics of Hobbes

(15 minutes)

It is interesting to note the relationship between human nature and moral reflection. In other words, how a philosopher understands human nature will determine in some sense the shape of this ethical reflection. One of the ways in which this becomes evident is with the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in *Leviathan*. Hobbes concludes that all human actions are motivated by self-interest.

Given the fact that human nature is selfish and power-mongering, Hobbes tries to imagine what human beings would be like in a "state of nature," that is, in a condition prior to any civil state, any rule by law. Concepts like right and wrong, justice and injustice, and property are concepts governed by the law, hence dependent on law. These concepts cannot be meaningful apart from power. Furthermore, the concepts of law are themselves dependent upon power. A law with no power behind it is not authoritative because it cannot be enforced.

*Refer to Resource 6-7 in the Student Guide.*

Hobbes proposes two concepts that are significant for our consideration.

- First, he proposes the "Right of nature" is the freedom for self-preservation: passion. Human nature is most foundationally defined as the search for freedom and the desire to survive. The problem is that these two "rights" come into conflict with each other. This leads to the need for another principle.
- Second, Hobbes proposes the "Law of nature" as a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a person is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his or her life: reason.

For Hobbes reason is necessary to counter our passion. Therefore, our right to freedom is countered by our right rationally to impose a rule or law that establishes the maximum amount of freedom. He calls this the social contract enforced by a civil authority.

*Allow for discussion.*

*The Christian understanding of the self concerns how a person is related to God. All that we have is a gift from God. If we have rights, they are bestowed by God; that is, they are not natural rights. From a Christian point of view we are born to be graciously related to God, but naturally we are estranged from God and others by sin/original sin. The law comes not by reason, but as a gift of God intended to show us how to be and who God is.*

*A theological understanding of the self is informed by the reality of God, the nature of sin, the possibility of being conformed to the likeness of God, and the call to God's community of the self. Most of all a theological understanding of the self is not about personal rights, but personal responsibility.*

*The Christian point of view is very different from that of Hobbes. The Christian point of view is ruled by the understanding that life is shaped by grace. The Christian point of view is informed by the call to be the Church, as the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All of this suggests a very different point of view from Hobbes' point of view.*

This raises a question: *How does a theological understanding of the self inform moral reflection, especially where rights are concerned?*

*How would a Christian point of view be different from Hobbes' point of view?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted to

- Define the principles of natural rights: negative rights, positive rights, absolute rights, and prima facie rights.
- Apply the principles of natural rights: they are applied rationally, politically, and fall most naturally under the rubric of deontology.
- Understand the limitations of natural rights: they diminish the Christian understanding of gift; reason cannot finally establish the moral claims of natural rights; in and of themselves natural rights cannot engender the moral life; and natural rights too easily detach themselves from narratives.

The issue of natural rights is in many ways the most natural way to think of ethics in the secular mind-set. It informs the United States Constitution and much of the conception of Western democracy. This, of course, is antithetical to the Christian point of view.

## Look Ahead

Next lesson we will look at the most important philosopher of the modern period: Immanuel Kant. We will look at his moral theory that made a significant contribution to modern ethics.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page analysis of 1 Corinthians 4 and use it to critique the logic of moral rights.

Read Resource 6-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with this lesson.

## Closing Thought

Romans 14 is an interesting chapter of the New Testament. Paul addresses a conflict between new Christians and more established Christians. Some of the new Christians are offended by the behavior of the older Christians. Paul counsels, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (14:19). He stated earlier, "Let us therefore no longer

pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another" (14:13). All of this suggests that from a Christian point of view rights give way to mutual concern. We ought to be less interested in contending for rights and more concerned with mutual upbuilding.

## Lesson 7

# Kantianism

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:25	Kantianism	Lecture	Resources 7-1—7-7
1:05	Ethics of Kant	Small Groups	Resource 7-8
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Hinman, Lawrence M. *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Theory*. Third edition, Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003, 175-203.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc., 1966, 190-98.

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Fourth edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

# Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

Immanuel Kant is probably the most important philosopher of the modern period. He made contributions to the field of philosophy in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. His philosophy affects all philosophy in the West. This is clearly evident in the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, as well as many other philosophical schools in the 20th century.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the principles of Kantianism
- apply the principles of Kantianism
- understand the limitations of Kantianism

## Motivator

Capital punishment is a significant moral dilemma in our time. Some Christians line up in favor of capital punishment while some firmly seek to stop all such practices. At the core of this debate is whether punishment can rehabilitate or whether it can only give a person what is deserved. Those who underscore rehabilitation argue that killing another person is really a hopeless act and it denies all possibility of rehabilitation. Those who support capital punishment argue that it might serve as a deterrent for those who contemplate capital crimes. Those who refuse to accept capital punishment argue that killing a killer is not less brutal than the original offense.

*How do you respond to these arguments?*

*A Kantian argument would not understand punishment to be*

*Can punishment rehabilitate? How do you defend your conclusion?*



*capable of rehabilitation. The primary reason for this conclusion is that this would link one's action to a consequence.*

*Kantianism determines morality on the basis of universal principles. This means capital punishment is either moral or immoral based on a logic disconnected from consequences. If it is never justified for government to take the life of someone, then capital punishment is immoral. If it is justified for a government to respect human life by always seeking to protect it, then capital punishment can be moral.*

*Scripture does not prohibit capital punishment (stoning); nor does it prohibit punishment. In both cases, the justification appears more toward deontological than teleological.*

*Regarding the general rehabilitation question, the Christian faith teaches the possibility of transformation by the grace of God. It does teach that punishment can be justified, but not on the basis of its consequences.*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Kantianism

(40 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 7-1 in the Student Guide.*

Ethics, like physics, is partly empirical and partly deductive. Ethics, according to Kant, must first and most importantly be based on pure reason without recourse to experience.

*These will be examined later.*

Its ground must be found in pure reason. Kant understands that everything works according to laws. Since only human beings have the capacity to operate according to reason, they are alone able to will rationally. When the reason latches onto specific principles, these become imperatives or duties. These imperatives are expressed as “ought” or “shall.” There are two types of imperatives, either categorical or hypothetical. This is the basic starting place for Kantian ethics.

A primary source for his ethical theory is *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). It is comprised of a critical examination of purely practical reason and establishes the supreme principle of morality. The order of inquiry is from common moral knowledge to the supreme principle (analysis), then back to application in practice (synthesis).

*Refer to Resource 7-2 in the Student Guide.*

*The reason for this is that morality must first be rational and principled.*

*Kant has no problem with practical principles, since morality by its very nature must lead to action that is practical. His problem is with common sense principles that are devoid of pure moral principles.*

*For Kant moral judgments follow a particular form that is first rational, then practical or first thought and then enacted by way of pure principles.*

### Three Theorems of Kantian Ethics

- When practical principles presuppose a material object as a determining foundation for the will, they are empirical and as such cannot formulate moral law.
- Any practical principle is at the same time to be understood under the general principle of self-love or one’s own happiness.
- If a rational being can think of one’s maxims as practical universal laws, one can do so only by considering them as principles that contain the determining grounds of the will because of their form and not because of their matter.

Another source for Kantian ethics is *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*. He argues in this book that ethics:

- Rest solely on the pure part
- This is necessary because of the tendency toward corruption

*Refer to Resource 7-3 in the Student Guide.*

The *goodwill* should be understood as *rational will* and action is focused from the beginning on the will, motive. The goodwill's motive is to do its duty for the sake of doing its duty. Whatever it intends, it does so because of its duty.

The goodwill, which is the rational will, acts not merely in accordance with duty but from duty.

- nothing is good without qualification, except the goodwill
- it is good not because of its ability to attain
- not effect, but in conception
- importance of pure reason

A central idea in Kant's work is that the moral worth of action performed from duty lies not in its purpose but in the maxim—rule, principle—by which it is determined.

The law determines the will objectively; subjectively I am determined by respect for the law; this subjective element is the maxim of my action, that I ought to follow the law whatever my inclination may be.

The goodwill wills as obedient to the moral law; this leads to the conception of duty. Duty consists in observing the categorical imperative.

The categorical imperative expresses the form of moral law. All moral principles must partake in universality. He admits that "some actions are such that their maxims cannot without contradiction, be even conceived as a universal law." The categorical means no "ifs" are relevant to moral reasoning. Kant is not interested in inclination, because it is a useless guide.

### Three Forms of the Categorical Imperative

*Refer to Resource 7-4 in the Student Guide.*

*This is the primary form of the categorical imperative.*

*This is a practical imperative.*

*Kingdom means the union of different rational beings in a system by common laws. The end*

**First Form:** Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law.

**Second Form:** Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.

*is abstracted from the whole to form a single system. It is important to understand this end exists in the will of rational beings joined into a system. This system expresses universal law. It is because of this that it should not be understood as consequence but as deontological (universal).*

*The upshot is that humankind has a dual citizenship: in the world of the senses their actions are explainable in terms of natural causation, this heteronomously, law imposed from the outside, perhaps, coercively; but as a denizen of the intelligible world, the causality of their will is and must be thought of under the idea of freedom, as autonomous, a law that emanates from the inside as an expression of the meaningful order of things.*

*Refer to Resource 7-5 in the Student Guide.*

**Third Form:** Act always as if you were legislating for a universal realm of ends.

## Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

Hypothetical imperatives are expressed as practically necessary for possible action as contributing to something else. This type of imperative envisions an end. It is an object of practical reason.

Categorical imperatives are expressed as necessary without reference to an end. It is an object of pure reason.

Kant values freedom because it is necessary to make “judgments” both moral and otherwise meaningful. Kant finds “in freedom” the condition of the possibility of a categorical imperative. Freedom cannot be proven. The conditions of the possibility of a categorical imperative are to be found in the idea of freedom. The idea of freedom is practically necessary. The practical necessity of freedom involves regarding our self as a part of the world of sense—natural law/causality—but also the intelligible world/reason.

## Things That Commend Kantianism

- Kantianism resists being controlled by the situation. Ethics can too easily become reactionary. When ethics become reactionary, the particular situation controls moral reflection. This leads to a situation where the facts of the case can eclipse the principles at stake in the situation. When ethics become reactionary, they allow appropriate compassion to become a lazy and purely emotional sympathy. An example of this would be the process

*Refer to Resource 7-6 in the Student Guide.*

of raising children. While the tears of a child who has been disciplined are painful, this cannot be a sufficient reason for not disciplining a child. Discipline should arise from principles and not from a fear of the situation.

- Kantianism does not attempt to offer support to cultural mores. Culture is in many ways the form of normal life. Styles of dress, music, movies, literature, television, and so on, are affects of culture. All people learn to think in a certain environment, and in uncritical ways reflect the specific cultural prejudices of their culture. This can become a barrier to morality. Kantianism is a reasoned and critical option for moral reflection because it arises out of reason. Kantianism is not interested in the specifics of culture because morality cannot be located anywhere but in rational principles expressed as universals. It is important to see that these universals are not in any way dependent upon particular historical data.
- Kantianism places responsibility for moral decision-making on the individual. Kantianism requires personal engagement in moral decision-making. Freedom is a crucial concept in Kantianism. Therefore, Kantianism resists the emerging “victimology” that informs too much moral theory. Accordingly, Kantianism raises the moral compass above gender, ethnicity, and economic status, which too often serve as excuses. Morality according to Kant is something human beings are capable of because we are rational and therefore capable of willing appropriately.

### **Things That Express the Limitation of Kantianism**

*Refer to Resource 7-7 in the Student Guide.*

- Kantianism becomes abstract too easily. The most serious deficit of Kantianism is what in some measure commends it. It has been observed that a strength of Kantianism is its ability to resist being reactionary. But Kantianism gives too much up in its tendency toward abstract universality. Morality requires a narrative or a history in order to be understood. For example, the principle of “marital fidelity” is meaningless apart from a particular history that informs marriage and fidelity. People are not faithful to marriage because they are informed by a universal principle. Rather people are faithful to marriage vows because of a history that informs the moral rule. Morality is by its very

nature the practical and actual embodiment in time of particular virtues. Kantianism clouds this picture by wrapping everything in abstract categories.

- Kantianism depends upon reason only. This particular criticism has already been explored in previous lessons. The point to be understood concerns the idea that reason is most useful as a vehicle of the will to embody virtue. No one can credibly argue that morality can survive apart from the engaged intellect.

In fact, morality is a type of rationality, but this fact should not eclipse the importance of history, narrative, and even personal experience. In other words, morality always involves resources beyond reason, even if it includes reason. The near sole dependence upon reason is a limitation of Kantianism.

- Kantianism is closed to new insight. One particular comment made by Kant regarding his discovery of the philosophy of David Hume is revealing, "The writing of Hume awakened me from my dogmatic slumber." While this is often used to show that Kant appreciated some aspects of empiricism, there is another point that usually goes unnoticed: rationalism is dogmatic by nature.

This point is underscored by William James, an important American philosopher, in his famous essay titled "Two Types of Philosophy." He compares empiricism and rationalism in this essay and one comparison suggests rationalism is more likely to be dogmatic than empiricism. This is not the place for a sustained analysis of either James' essay or empiricism versus rationalism.

But moral reflection is dependent upon its capacity to learn; that is, never to be finally done. In fact, morality must remain active in the attempt to embody virtue. Therefore, moral reflection is dependent upon new insight in order to proceed. Kantianism needs to be finished and this might contribute to a moral absolutism that finally refutes the attainment of a living faith or virtue.

Alasdair MacIntyre offers his assessment of Kantian ethics:

Because it detaches the notion of duty from the notions of ends, purposes, wants, and needs it suggests that, given a proposed course of action, I

*From A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1966), 198.*

may also ask whether in doing it, I can consistently will that it shall be universally done, and not ask what ends or purposes it serves. Anyone educated into the Kantian notion of duty/will, so far, have been educated into easy conformism with authority.

MacIntyre adds:

But the consequences of this doctrine, in German history, at least, suggest that the attempt to find a moral standpoint completely independent of the social order may be a quest for an illusion, a quest that renders one a mere conformist servant of the social order much more than does the morality of those who recognize the impossibility of a code which does not to some extent at least express the wants and needs of men in particular social circumstances.

*Ibid.*, 198.

## Small Groups: Ethics of Kant

(20 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 7-8 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.*

Immanuel Kant talks about the sexual impulse in a famous lecture. The essential points he raises are:

- Human beings have many inclinations, one of which is sexual.
- The sexual impulse is primarily to enjoy the flesh of another.
- While human beings can use others for many purposes, it is only in the sexual impulse that another can be made into an object of indulgence.
- When another is made into an object of indulgence, there is little concern for the general happiness of that person.
- The sexual impulse can lead to using another for no other reason than satisfaction of desire.
- When a man and a woman come together according to the sexual impulse, they satisfy desire and not human nature; therefore it is immoral.
- Uses of sexuality that are immoral are: masturbation, homosexuality, and certain sexual acts between men and women, i.e., sodomy.
- While the sexual impulse is immoral, it is possible for sexual love to be moral when sexual expression is more than the satisfaction of desire.

*This analysis comes from Immanuel Kant, "Duties Toward the Body in Respect to Sexual Impulse," in Morality and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy, ed. John Arthur (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002), 554-58.*

This argument provides a clear picture of how deontological argument works. Reflect on the basic steps of Kant's argument.

What types of sexual expression does this argument allow, if any?

What types of sexual expression does this argument call immoral, if any? Be sure to state the essential Kantian principle.

*Bring the class back together to summarize the discussion.*

The basic Kantian principle can be stated as follows: any act whether sexual or otherwise is only moral to the extent that it treats the other as an end in itself. Based on this principle all sexual acts that intend only to satisfy the desire are *de facto* immoral. This means the only way for the sexual act to be moral is in the context of a human commitment to the other that intends the happiness of the other as its first duty. It does not justify any sexual act within the context of marriage, because not all acts are justified in principle. The Kantian principle denies the morality of homosexual acts, adultery, premarital sex, pornography, and all virtual sexual expression.

In light of recent interest in homosexuality, we may want to explore this more fully. It may appear the basic Kantian principle might justify the homosexual act. Accordingly, it might be argued that monogamous homosexual expression can satisfy the basic criterion of intending the happiness of the other as the first duty. Yet, Kant's argument is that homosexual activity violates human nature and therefore can only be an expression of impulse.



# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted to

- Define the principles of Kantianism: pure reason, practical reason, duty, goodwill, and categorical imperative
- Apply the principles of Kantianism: the ultimate form of deontology
- Understand the limitations of Kantianism: too abstract, depends upon reason only, and closed to new insight

Kantianism is the best example of deontology. This means it makes moral judgments based on universal truth. These truths become a duty for those who intend to act morally.

This way of thinking about morality has a natural affinity with the Christian faith. For example, the Ten Commandments are not mere suggestions and they are true no matter what experience teaches. The Ten Commandments were true during the exodus and they are still true in our time. While there are other ways to think of theological ethics, the deontology of Kant is one natural ally.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will treat virtue ethics. This way of doing ethics will provide a fertile ground for moral reflection in the Christian tradition.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on the Ten Commandments. Express these commandments in the form of universals.

Make a journal entry that reflects an interaction with the material of the lesson.

## Closing Thought

Paul writes the following words to the Church at Philippi:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure,

whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil 4:8-9).

These verses illustrate the manner in which a Christian ethic depends upon the capacity of the true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and excellent to engender the kind of life capable of embodying godliness. Deontology helps one to recognize the relationship between what the mind is fed and what the person does. Paul sees this truth and it is one we should think about seriously.

## Lesson 8

# Virtue Ethics

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Virtue Ethics	Lecture	Resources 8-1—8-6
1:10	Virtue Ethics	Guided Discussion	Resource 8-7
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Hinman, Lawrence M. *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Moral Philosophy*. Third edition, Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003, 269-305.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc., 1966, 57-83.

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Fourth edition, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003, 173-90.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You might want to spend some time before you begin this lesson reviewing the moral theories already treated. Remind the class that the module will also treat theological ethics and Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. While the philosophical portion of this module is essential, the real importance of the module is evident in the theological ethics section.*

This lesson brings to a close Unit 2. This unit has attempted to give an account of some of the major philosophical moral theories. We began by looking at utilitarianism, which judges morality by its capacity to produce the “greatest happiness.” Next we looked at the natural rights tradition, which looks to fixed and rational rights as the basis for moral reflection. The third theory we looked at was Kantianism, which wraps itself around pure rationality and universal duty. Along with these the virtue ethics tradition forms the basic philosophical trajectory for moral reflection of this module.

The point of this lesson is to look at what is probably the most adequate of the moral theories: virtue ethics.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define virtue ethics
- apply virtue ethics
- understand the limitations of virtue ethics

## Motivator

Anne Paris is an experienced youth pastor. In fact, she is the exception as far as youth ministry goes because she has been doing it for 20 years. Her children have grown up and they are raising their own families, but Pastor Anne is still energized by youth ministry. During her time in youth ministry she has seen the life of teenagers change. Family structures have eroded, previously settled moral concerns like homosexuality have opened again, the Internet has raised new sexual temptations, and the list could go on. Pastor Anne

understands that if there was ever a time for seasoned youth ministers to engage youth it is now.

Recently, Pastor Anne has moved to a new congregation. This particular youth group has always had the “chips and dip” kind of youth pastor. They have spent all their time in activities that invite new people to come, but never disciplined those in the youth group to mature in understanding and to grow spiritually. Pastor Anne sees very few virtues among the young people. In fact, the vast majority of the youth think of Pastor Anne as primarily responsible to entertain them. She may be called “pastor,” but she might as well have a Wendy’s cap on and be taking orders for the menu at the next youth event.

Pastor Anne wants to begin the process of discipling the youth group so they will attain some of the virtues of the Christian life.

*Based on your understanding of the Christian faith and the moral life, how should Pastor Anne begin?*

*The point of this exercise is to encourage the students to reflect upon the relationship between mature Christian life and the virtues. Along with this it is hoped this exercise will link virtue to history/tradition and friendship/association.*

*Here is one way for Pastor Anne to proceed:*

- *begin a Bible Study with as many of the teens as are willing*
- *disciple the youth workers and teach them a deeper, more adequate faith*
- *locate potential leaders in the youth group from the Bible Study*
- *talk about the unique history of the youth group*
- *provide opportunities for and encourage friendships to emerge, especially between senior high and middle school—always male-male and female-female*
- *expose the youth group to teens who have mature faith from other churches, maybe bring Christian students from university/seminary settings to show them what virtue looks like in a young person*
- *establish a basic set of Christian practices as a central concern of the youth group, i.e., prayer, corporate worship, communion, and Bible Study*

*Be sure to underscore that each of these suggestions link virtue to tradition and friendships.*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Virtue Ethics

(40 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 8-1 in the Student Guide.*

Aristotle (385-322 BC) is one of the best examples of a virtue ethicist. He is one of the greatest philosophers of the West. He has significantly influenced Christian thought, especially through Thomas Aquinas. He was a student of Plato's, but he charted another course.

When he was 17, he went to study at the Platonic Academy. His primary interest was to reaffirm the existence of a public and knowable reality and to answer the question, "What is the good life for man?" The answer was the reinterpretation and reformulation of the traditional beliefs of the Greeks. He became the tutor to Alexander, son of King Philip of Macedonia in 342 BC. He set up a school in Athens in 335 BC and called it the Lyceum.

Ethics is an important concern for Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle's ethical theory is a good example of teleological ethics. It is understood as a practical discipline associated with action.

Aristotle talks about three kinds of life:

1. Enjoyment
2. Statesman
3. Contemplation

The three kinds of life are shaped by three levels of activity.

- The first is unreflective and its virtues diminish quickly. Whatever arises from those acts that reach for enjoyment will soon pass, and they are dependent upon our physical capacity to act toward their achievement. Most people live from one enjoyment to another. This is not a particularly virtuous way to live.
- The second reflects an action for the other and it is a more mature way to live. It is both a recognition of the other and the desire to work for others in a more public way. This kind of life begins to exhibit some of the virtues of a moral life.
- The third life is the most mature in that it is given to the one activity that will last for a lifetime. Therefore it is the one activity that can span the entire range of life. It is here that the virtues are understood as activity or habits.

*Refer to Resource 8-2 in the Student Guide.*

Nicomachean ethics is the best source for understanding Aristotle's ethics. He argues that the first principle of ethics is the conception of the good. One defines the good by the end toward which it aims. Aristotle employs reason, balance, and contemplation in order to comprehend moral reflection. All action aims at some good. For example, when I am hungry I act to satisfy the hunger. If I am in school, it is in order to achieve some better kind of life. If I read it is to learn, which is some good end. According to Aristotle, it is quite simple: we act toward some good end. This means action reaches beyond itself toward some higher good. The reason grasps the good, but it is the will that acts to embody the good. Therefore, it is essential that the reason and the will are joined if virtue is to result.

Politics is the master science of human good for Aristotle. Happiness is the first principle of politics. This recognizes the basic role of association/friendship in the life of virtue.

The nature of happiness, for Aristotle, is the person who exercises his or her reason and cultivates it, and has it in the best condition. They seem also to be the most beloved of heaven. The wise person is the most beloved of heaven, and therefore, we may conclude the happiest. Happiness is the most pleasant.

Virtue is both intellectual and moral for Aristotle. Intellectual virtue is fostered by teaching, and it demands experience and time. Moral virtue is the outcome of habit. Good habits aim at the good, and bad habits aim at evil. This means virtue is a human excellence achieved by habituated behavior toward the good. Virtues come to rest in character. Therefore, some refer to virtue ethics as character ethics.

Alasdair MacIntyre characterizes habits/practice. This will illuminate the way in which a practice/habit works within a virtue ethic. According to MacIntyre a practice:

- Is coherent
- Is complex
- Is socially established
- Embodies internal goods
- Is informed by standards of excellence
- Enhances the human powers to achieve excellence
- Provides a pathway toward the extending human excellence

Virtue ethics is dependent upon the habits/practices that engender character.

*Refer to Resource 8-3 in the Student Guide.*

*This is defined in After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (2nd ed., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.*

*Refer to Resource 8-4 in the Student Guide.*

Virtue exists for Aristotle as a mean between two vices: deficit and excess. In other words, a virtue/mean is neither too little nor too much. The mean is an attempt to mediate between a narrow, un-Greek repudiation of nature and the sophistic attempt to use nature as the exclusive factor in determining action.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Vice</b>	<b>Virtue/Mean</b>	<b>Vice</b>
Facing Death	Cowardice	Courage	Foolhardiness
Bodily Actions	Profligacy	Temperance	Insensitivity
Giving Money	Prodigality	Liberality	Illiberality
Claiming Honors	Vanity	Pride	Humility
Social Contact	Obsequiousness	Friendliness	Sulkiness

*You might suggest at this point that several examples of virtue ethics within theological ethics will be treated in Unit 3 of this module.*

Aristotle's ethical theory is both teleological and virtue-oriented. It has provided a way to think about character, virtue, good habits, and happiness for generations.

Virtue ethics asks a simple question: "What kind of person should I be?" This character can be envisioned in narratives or in principles, but it comes to rest in persons. Therefore, a virtue is an acquired human excellence.

### Things That Commend Virtue Ethics

*Refer to Resource 8-5 in the Student Guide.*

- Virtue ethics are embedded in tradition, history, and narrative. The very point that has been raised as a limitation for other philosophical moral theories exists as a strength for virtue ethics. The virtues espoused by this theory are rendered more meaningful in the light of the history and narratives that surround it. A simple ideal is just that until it is illuminated by a narrative that shows the way. Of course just any story will not do. Many might tend to think stories are for children, but it does not matter how old we get; stories contextualize life.

You might want to conduct a simple experiment the next time you get together with a group of adults. Just listen to the stories told. Some will be told so others will laugh. Others will be for information. Some will be to recall some memory. All of this suggests we locate ourselves in stories. These very stories are the places where values are preserved and rendered meaningful. Virtue ethics understands this and develops it in order to adequately accomplish moral reflection.

- Virtue ethics appropriately emphasizes character. Ethics is often understood as the science of choice.



Quandaries call ethics to action. While there is no doubt ethics is about resolving these so-called conflicts of duty, it cannot be allowed to become merely a moral logic. Virtue ethics understands that whatever else we bring to the table in moral reflection, we bring a person or an agent. No amount of principles or rules will be sufficient if the agent does not bring a mature character to the situation. Whatever else is present, a person's character is crucial.

Character results from the embodiment of good habits such that an agent is rendered free. This freedom to act morally is not like learning how to pitch a ball, even though this process is practiced. Freedom is the result of having been shaped by the truth. In other words, good character is the habituated life of a person whose life has been and is being shaped by the truth. Virtue ethics understands this aspect of moral reflection, and it represents one of its strengths.

- Virtue ethics recognizes the importance of practical rationality. We noted in the previous lesson that Kant wanted to rescue ethics from the particular situation because he thought only pure reason could guarantee virtue. He finally admits that all ethics is practical, so he introduces the hypothetical imperative and practical reason, but his deepest commitment in ethics is to pure reason.

Virtue ethics clearly accentuates reason, but it understands better than any of the other positions that ethics is a practice of practical rationality. This means even as the stories or the history inform moral reflection, a certain way of thinking can be noted that embodies the way moral decisions are made. From a Christian point of view we recognize this in light of the way narratives point to virtue. For example, the stories of the faith have a beginning, middle, and end. The embedded telos of the story embodies a practical logic that points to virtue.

Sometimes it is easy to assume that moral reflection is just for the intellectual elite. Yet, uneducated people still reflect on moral questions. When these issues arise, people of whatever level of education seek to resolve the situation. When this happens, practical rationality is employed to bring resolution. If only in the sense of mimicking the narrative or history, this rationality is at work. Virtue ethics understands this and uses it with ever

more sophistication. This is not to diminish education; rather it is to remind us all that practical rationality is essential to moral reflection whatever the level of education or sophistication. Virtue ethics recognizes and celebrates practical rationality.

*Refer to Resource 8-6 in the Student Guide.*

*Please note that the writer of this module is a virtue ethicist, so the criticism of this position in no way reflects the considered opinion of the writer.*

## **Things That Express the Limitations of Virtue Ethics**

- Virtue ethics can become mere traditionalism. One significant challenge for virtue ethics is to maintain a living faith of the dead (tradition) as opposed to a dead faith of the living (traditionalism). Virtues can become frozen within the particulars of tradition and history, and when this happens virtues become just as meaningless as if they were objects of pure reason.

It is not a defense at all to say something is virtuous simply because it has always been done that way. First, nothing has always been done that way. Second, anything that will not submit to the “prophetic” criticism is already expressing a supreme lack of security. When virtues become mere traditionalism, they do more to hide virtue than engender it. Therefore, virtue ethics must always be willing to allow its virtues to be in conversation with the people involved in moral reflection.

- Virtue ethics can become reactionary. The challenge for ethics, at the point of a mere response, is the “hot-button” issue that makes it significant. Virtues cannot be thrown about in order to respond to the latest issue. When virtues become merely reactionary, they lose their meaning and to a large extent they lose their importance.

The best way to teach a virtue is to teach a history within a tradition. This becomes a language that can interact with the multiple levels of the particular context and still maintain its thread of meaning. Some are tempted to juxtapose moral precision with moral intelligibility, but this is a false alternative. Either without the other is meaningless. If we are very precise, but give no attention to making ourselves understood, the virtue is lost. If we are understood—intelligible—and what we say is incorrect, the virtue is lost.

When virtues become merely reactionary, they follow a similar path and the result is the same: the virtue is lost. Therefore, virtues must never become the result of a reactionary attitude to difference or to moral challenges. Rather virtues must arise out of the essential history, language, tradition, and faith of a people who are intent upon more than telling a story, but are most interested in *being* the story.

- Virtue ethics, because it is teleological, can easily dismiss the labors of historical wisdom. It has already been noted that virtue ethics is linked to history, tradition, and narrative. This is the native hope of virtue ethics, and it necessarily seeks to embody character in time, that is, actual character. But another dimension of virtue ethics is its emphasis upon teleology. After all, character is in part the result of the practices and habits informed by virtue reflected by virtue ethics.

The challenge for any virtue ethic is never to allow the labors of historical wisdom to become secondary. Teleology does not require historical wisdom, but it flourishes in just this way. Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* laments the fact that modern ethical reflection has lost the category of tradition and with it the labors of historical wisdom, and the result has been the loss of virtue.

When this happens, moral reflection has more in common with choosing the flavor of ice cream than the hard business of living morally. The former is nothing more than the expression of a preference, the later is participating in a history, tradition, and narrative with the result of living virtuously. Teleology is not enough to insure morality/virtue. When virtue ethics becomes a mere teleology, it runs the risk of losing its grip on virtue.

## Guided Discussion: Virtue Ethics

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 8-7 in the Student Guide.*

*Discuss each of these reasons with the students. Share examples or call for the students to share.*

It has already been noted that Aristotle thought certain virtues could not be achieved without forming associations. One such association is the making of friends. Having friends is important for several reasons.

- First, friends offer us objective knowledge of ourselves. They can actually function much like a mirror in our life.

- Second, friends protect us from boredom by calling us toward things we might not otherwise consider. Friends open us to a larger world than we might otherwise be able to see.
- Third, friends call us to live more than a private life. Friends encourage us to be public persons, that is, to reach outward.
- Fourth, it is likely that without friends we will not achieve the virtue necessary to a healthy character. This means friends free us to be good by joining us in that endeavor.

The bond in character friendship is a love of virtue, but this is no impersonal, abstract good; rather it is an embodied good, a good friendship taken to heart and enfolded in the life of another.

*Allow for response.*

*The central Christian understanding of God as triune, and of humankind made in the image of God provides a clue to the importance of associations. For example, since God lives in everlasting relationship and created human beings in His image, we are called to live in relationship to others. The covenant in Scripture is a testimony to the importance of relationships. The Ten Commandments specifically relate our association with God to our relationship with each other.*

*Here are some specifics concerning the role of friendship:*

- *friends encourage one another in the midst of the dark moments of life*
- *friends hold us accountable to our commitments*
- *friends show us by the way they live that it is possible to be what the gospel calls us toward*
- *friends provide a safety net for us by providing resources*
- *friends remind us what virtues look like when they are enfolded*

*You may want to remind the students that the perfect friendship is among equals, that is, those at a similar level in the attainment of virtues. One should be cautious about forming too many friendships with those who are dependent upon us.*

*What are the ways in which friendship is linked to the attainment of Christian life?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted to

- Define virtue ethics: narratives, practical rationality, and habits.
- Apply virtue ethics: this theory can be either, but its most practiced forms are teleological.
- Understand the limitations of virtue ethics: can become mere traditionalism, can be reactionary, and can dismiss the labors of historical wisdom.

This lesson has also linked an active/engaged life and friendship to virtue ethics.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will begin Unit 3 of this module. This unit will characterize some of the major themes and persons who reflected on morality from the Christian point of view. You should also note that special care will be given to Wesleyan-Holiness ethical reflection in Unit 4.

The next lesson will deal specifically with patristic ethics, that is, the ethics of the Early Church.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to give specific instructions on how you want the students to respond to Resource 8-8.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a suggested curriculum of virtues for a specific age-group. This should just be a full outline at this point.

Read and respond to Resource 8-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

## Closing Thought

Proverbs 22:1 says, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold."

Proverbs 21:16 says, "Whoever wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead."

Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom for the future."

These are just three proverbs found in the Book of Proverbs. Yet, as they reflect the practical wisdom of life they depend upon something much bigger and more important. These proverbs depend upon a particular history. Because of that they praise a good name, understanding, and the willingness to listen. These proverbs suggest that virtue is really about the kind of character capable of freedom. The other side of this is that the virtue frees us to live ethical lives. The writer of the proverbs is correct when he says, "An intelligent mind acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (18: 15).

## *Unit 3: Theological Ethics*

### *Lesson 9*

# Patristic Ethics

## *Lesson Overview*

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:25	Patristic Ethics	Lecture	Resources 9-1—9-9
1:15	<i>City of God</i>	Guided Discussion	Resource 9-10
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993, 25-60.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Douglas M. Strong, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996, 1-64.

# Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 student to share his or her essay/outline.*

*In pairs have the students share their responses to the case study.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You may want to outline briefly the material treated in the module to this point.*

- *Lesson 1 defined ethics, introducing it as an essential practice of philosophy. The two major streams of moral reflection were treated in this lesson: deontology and teleology.*
- *Some of the major challenges (things that make ethics more difficult) were treated: egoism, relativism/pluralism, determinism, sympathy, bad morality, and the relationship between religion and morality.*
- *The module defined briefly both Old Testament and New Testament ethics.*
- *The module set forth the major schools of philosophical ethics: utilitarianism, natural rights, Kantianism, and virtue ethics.*

*Now that this material is covered this lesson will begin to unfold the theological vision of moral reflection.*

*For some students who have had the church history modules this will be a review.*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts*

This lesson and the two that follow it will give a survey of theological ethics. For the past eight lessons the module has introduced the practice of moral reflection. The primary material treated has been philosophical, but with this lesson the specific task of this module will come into sharp focus.

The patristic period is crucial in the development of Christian theology. The term "patristic" literally means father; therefore, this is the period of the Church Fathers. These men were those who literally hammered out the Christian faith in the period immediately following AD 100. The period normally treated as the patristic period is AD 100-600. It includes such people as Clement of Rome and Ignatius and extends to the last great thinker of the patristic age, Augustine of Hippo. Technically, one would associate patristic ethics with the earliest days of the Church followed by the Greek apologists and other important theologians.

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the Early Church
- use the resources of moral reflection in the Early Church for contemporary moral problems
- define the ways in which moral reflection in the



learners to key information and concepts.

patristic church inform Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

## Motivator

Imagine you are in the same position as those in the Early Church. There is no New Testament to which a person can refer. The first generation of disciples is dead. The basic patterns of worship in the Church are developing. There have been questions about what Jesus meant when He said those who had seen Him had seen the Father. There are those who see the Church as a threat to the Jewish faith. There are those who see the Church as little more than a sect within the Jewish faith. There are those who think it is best to embrace the Jewish faith again. There are those who think Jesus has come already. There are those who are attempting to separate faith from behavior. All of this is going on in the Early Church.

*This exercise may take several directions, but here are a few thoughts that might shape this exercise.*

Given this situation, define briefly what you think the Christian faith is about.

**Theological conviction:** *The emerging Christian faith stands in continuity with Israel and the old covenant.*

*What is essential about the Christian faith? What are the moral implications of these conclusions?*

**Moral conviction:** *The Christian faith must embrace the moral imperatives of the law while it realizes that in Christ all has been made new.*

**Theological conviction:** *Jesus was the Christ of God.*

**Moral conviction:** *The moral life is informed and shaped by the way God is in His life. The Christ is the paradigm of the moral life.*

**Theological conviction:** *Jesus was truly a human being.*

**Moral conviction:** *Since Jesus was a physical human being, a person with real flesh, it is possible to be moral in our physical life.*

**Theological conviction:** *God is triune, that is, God is Father, Son, and Spirit.*

**Moral conviction:** *Since God is an unfolding story—Father, Son, and Spirit—we have the grace and resource for the moral life.*

**Theological conviction:** *God has called the Church into being.*

**Moral conviction:** *We are called to be together as God is together and with us. The church is a community of non-coercive*

*discourse intending to provide vision and resource for the Christian life.*

*There are many other ways to talk about this, but these are some of the things you may want to talk about.*

*You might want to underscore the fact that the patristic church was in this precise position. This fact underscores the importance of studying Early Church history as recourse for moral reflection.*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Patristic Ethics

(50 minutes)

*If all of your students have had the church history modules, you might have them give key information they remember. And then spend more time in discussion.*

*Refer to Resource 9-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Regarding the struggle with classical culture, it might be important at this point to note a few moments along this pathway. First, Greek philosophy is born in the struggle to account for stability in the midst of transition. The Greeks were concerned that if everything changed, then we could never really know anything. The pre-Socratics attempted to resolve this in many ways, but somewhat unsuccessfully. It was Plato who first proposed a comprehensive answer to the dilemma. He argued that there is a place where the true forms exist eternally, that is, without change. Everything we see is a reflection of these forms. Yet, what we see is distorted because of sensory distortion. The examined life is one that turns away from experience to reason where the forms can be apprehended. A second proposal comes from Aristotle who feels that what is changeless is matter, but we only know matter as formed. Since we see many different forms, we make the mistake of believing nothing remains the same. An example of this would be a lump of clay that takes the form of a statute, vase, or a brick as well as many other forms. What remains is the matter and what changes is the form.*

*The implications of this for morality are obvious. For Plato moral reflection is the rational attempt to comprehend what does not change and then live in that reality. For Aristotle moral reflection is the*

The patristic period—AD 100-600—is essential for Christian understanding. There is a sense in which this period belongs to all three of the great Christian traditions, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant. The Patristic period begins with a struggle on two fronts.

- First, the Early Church needed to define itself in light of the history of Israel. The initial movements in this history can be traced back to the New Testament, but they continue well into the patristic period. Just what does it mean to say the Church is the new covenant and the sign of the second covenant is baptism? Why does the Christian Church call the Hebrew Bible the Old Testament? What will the Church do with the Law now that grace has been defined by Jesus on a cross?
- The second struggle for the Early Church was to define itself in light of classical culture. At first this takes shape with the attempt to use philosophical categories to express the faith. The philosophy of Plato and its later version in Neo-Platonism were very important in shaping the Early Church's theology. These two struggles—Judaism and classical culture—helped shape much of the way patristic theology and ethics emerged.

*attempt to form a virtue in the middle of too much and too little as the reach for the good.*

Another reason this is such an important period relates to the debates internal to the church that helped shape the Christian faith. During this period the Church settled the question of the divinity and humanity of Jesus. First at the Council of Nicea (325) and then with the Definition of Chalcedon (451) the Church determined to affirm Jesus as both human and God. While this was not a precise working out of how this was possible, it was an affirmation of both.

Scripture was canonized during the patristic period. Early on there were several versions of what was to become the New Testament. The late 4th century witnessed the final and definitive version of the New Testament and a joining of it to what was to become the Old Testament. This process was initiated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a desire to define the faith in the face of emerging heresies.

This period of time was crucial for defining the liturgy and patterns of worship for the Church. This period began to set in place the most basic Christian doctrine: the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the Church, salvation, sacraments, and so on, were hammered out in basic fashion in the patristic period. These 500 years truly belong to everyone.

Along with doctrine, and in fact materially connected to the doctrinal development of the Early Church, the process of defining ethical convictions began. These issues can be understood by reading the theologians of the Early Church. We will now survey some of the people and issues that captured the attention of the Early Church as they developed a basic ethic.

## **Clement of Rome**

*Refer to Resource 9-2 in the Student Guide.*

Clement of Rome (ca. AD 96) is a very early theologian in the patristic period. His concerns shed a great deal of light on the issues that concerned the Church. He counsels his readers to define themselves by God. Clement further depicts God as creator and giver. Clement worries the very gifts of God will become a source of condemnation for those who do not live worthy lives. Clement understands God is very close to human life and that no secrets can be kept from Him. Christians should not be concerned with offending people; rather they should be concerned with offending the God who has gifted them for holiness.

Clement urges his readers to be eager to do what is good. Clement does not employ the language of morality; rather he defines this good behavior as holiness and faithfulness. Therefore, the moral reflections of the Early Church were inseparable from the theological affirmation. The holy life is motivated by the vision of good that can be seen in the acts of God toward creation. Holiness is embodied salvation in some sense for Clement of Rome.

Two things are very evident in the moral reflections of Clement.

- First, moral advice grows materially out of theological convictions.
- Second, the language of morality or virtue is defined in such a way that it is clear whatever life emerges from the gospel is both a gift of God and a response in time by a human creature.

Those within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition know this as holiness in heart and life.

### **The *Didache***

*Refer to Resource 9-3 in the Student Guide.*

The *Didache* (early 2nd century AD) is essentially an early attempt to order the faith for purposes of instruction. It contrasts life and death, or for our purposes virtue and vice. It is extremely helpful for understanding how the Early Church joined faith to morality. This document unpacks the teachings of the gospel and specifically connects these teachings to moral imperatives.

The first of the ways defined in the book is called the “way of life.” This way embraces the love of God and neighbor. It blesses those who intend harm. The way of life abstains from carnal passions. It turns the other cheek. It is one that gives to needy. The way of life is defined by integrity, honesty, graciousness, and character. It avoids even the appearance of evil. The way of life honors family and the means of grace. It avoids the attempt to appear good while really being evil. The *Didache* admonishes that those who seek to inherit eternal life should listen to the gospel and then do the gospel.

Another way characterized in the *Didache* is the way of death. Wickedness and blasphemy define this way of being in the world. Such things as murder, adultery, lust, fornication, robbery, idolatry, dishonesty, malice, greed, coarse talk, and so on, characterize this way that leads to destruction. Those who live this way of death plot against righteous people. These people are

vain, look for profit, have no pity on the poor, and in fact they are oppressors.

This early document from the 2nd century illustrates the importance the Early Church placed upon morality. They understood that what one believes, if he or she truly believes it, will serve as a guide to behavior. The Early Church expected a life born of God to bear the fruit of righteousness. The Early Church, relatively untouched by deontology or teleology, set about the task of linking faith and virtue.

If it is the righteousness of God that informs patristic ethics, then an argument could be made for deontology. This is because the fixed good in the life of God is known and applied by faith as a Christian duty. If the end of a Christian life is to reflect the glory of God, then an argument could be made for teleology. This is because the meaning of life is determined by holy end as a consequence of "righteousified" living.

*Refer to Resource 9-4 in the Student Guide.*

## **Justin Martyr**

Justin Martyr (ca. AD 155) belongs to that group of Early Church theologians called apologists. They were called this because these men sought to offer a reasoned defense of the Christian faith to Jews and pagans. These theologians offer a clear insight into the early doctrine and ethics of the Church. Justin counsels his readers to live as honorable citizens of the empire. They should pay taxes. Christians should pray for their rulers. Justin believed we will be judged by our actions. In other words, faith must be embodied or else it is not the faith.

Justin is very critical of an early heretic named Marcion who did not believe God could have created the universe. Many in the history of the Church have had difficulty with the Christian teaching that in God the material and the eternal are joined. The life of the Spirit takes shape in the routine life of physical human beings. Therefore, a holy God can and does create matter, and He redeems it as an enfleshed God.

Justin is clear in his understanding that evil is not created by God; rather human beings freed to be like God can become evil. When this happens goodness is inverted and it becomes evil by human action. Justin even believed those who live in accordance with reason are Christians, even though they were called godless. This is an early testimony to how firmly some early Christians linked Greek philosophy and the Christian faith.

It constitutes any early orthodox theology that suggests God who creates has left His fingerprints on creation in the form of a rudimentary rationality. In order to believe this the modern separation of sacred and secular must be avoided. Accordingly, God creates one world and expects us to be like Him with our feet firmly on the ground and our eyes fixed on Him.

Justin also affirms the Christian responsibility to care for the needy, the widows, and the orphans. Because Justin totally dismisses the separation between the material and the spiritual, he thinks Christians should be concerned with such earthly matters as hunger and sickness.

## Tertullian

*Refer to Resource 9-5 in the Student Guide.*

Tertullian (early 3rd century AD) was also an apologist. He is best known for the rhetorical question: "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" His answer is, "Absolutely nothing." Tertullian is unrelenting in his call for Christians to live a distinctive life characterized by morality.

He takes up the question of child murder in his writings. Tertullian concludes that murder is always wrong and he includes within this condemnation the practice of abortion. He calls it a "speedier man-killing" and it is just as wrong to do this as it is to murder a mature human being. He tends to oppose adoption because it might lead to incest once the history of the child has been forgotten.

Tertullian condemns all forms of vengeance in his writing. He feels the wrath of the mob almost always acts immorally. Tertullian is afraid of the "mass mentality" that can come to characterize actions of groups. He counsels his readers to love their enemies, for this is a Christian duty.

Tertullian reflects on the characteristics of Christian society. These characteristics are:

- common Christian profession
- commitment to Christian discipline
- a unique hope in the world to come

Such a society will pray and worship, seek to embody good habits, love one another, and seek to live in the truth.

Tertullian's moral reflection is very practical. He needs no theory because he has a theology of a holy God. Because of God there is no need for Athens—the philosopher—to be consulted. Rather the very faith of

the community that seeks to name God in their worship is sufficient as a resource for the moral life.

### **Clement of Alexandria**

*Refer to Resource 9-6 in the Student Guide.*

Clement of Alexandria (ca, AD 215) is an able theologian in the Early Church who offers a good deal of insight into Christian morality. His theology reflects philosophical depth and indebtedness to Greek categories of thought. Clement read Scripture and found much that connected with philosophical sensibilities regarding God.

He was particularly impressed with the transcendence of God. That led him to be fairly reserved in making theological claims about God. Yet, because his theology was mature he talked a good deal about morality. For example, he reflected upon the difficulty of the rich getting into heaven. Clement felt the rich can too easily feel exempt from the struggles of faith a poor person might expect. He also felt rich people tend to presume too much and accept too much praise for their station in life.

Clement thought those who beg and those who ask are likely to inherit the kingdom of God, but the rich are not likely to participate in these activities. In fact, the rich are so identified with their possessions that the very suggestion they could be sold and given to the poor is impossible to conceive. The reason for this might be that the rich have become their possessions. Clement thought the rich possess at the expense of the poor. This callousness keeps the rich out of heaven, according to Clement.

Clement also instructed his readers to give attention to the body so its craving may not be unwisely satisfied. He did not so much deny the importance and role of the material in life as he decried its excess. He argued against slavish habits. He spoke against talking while we are eating since our jaws are too full to be understood. Here he was not so much dispensing table manners as he was suggesting that those who continue to fill themselves with the desires of the flesh will have little time to speak the truth. It is crucial to understand that Clement had no problem with the material world; rather he was concerned with the ability to apply limits.

The theology and moral reflection of Clement of Alexandria illustrates a continuing tension in the Early Church. The language and thought forms of Greek philosophy led to the necessity of walking a very tight



line. On one hand, Scripture and the Christian faith give credence to the sharp distinction between “life in the Spirit” and “life in the flesh.” One leads to life and the other to destruction.

Yet too often this juxtaposition has led those in the Church to miss the middle ground. Put very starkly, “life is the flesh” is not the same as “life in the physical.” In fact, “life in the Spirit” must be lived in the physical. When Paul denounces the flesh he is not denouncing matter. Rather Paul denounced living in the physical as if this is the end of all things. The Early Church struggled to pull together transcendence and immanence, but it always had a Christological language for such an endeavor. The Christian faith is lived in the material world with the spiritual reality as inspiration.

### **Ambrose**

*Refer to Resource 9-7 in the Student Guide.*

Ambrose (339-397) is best known as the preacher whose sermon convinced Augustine to convert. Yet, he was an important theologian and ethicist in his own right. The familiar tension between the rich and the poor and the condemnation of greed find expression in his theology. He also emphasized the familiar admonition to love both neighbor and enemy alike. He feared that as Christians became more affluent they would forget that all good gifts come from God.

Ambrose urged Christians to offer hospitality and show compassion to those in need. He also counseled that women not be treated as slaves or coerced into action. He urged that husbands love their wives. Ambrose argued that children be loved by parents and trained for citizenship in heaven. It was important that children learn the difficult task of picking up the cross.

### **Augustine**

*Refer to Resource 9-8 in the Student Guide.*

Augustine (354-430) is in some sense the last of the patristic period and the first of the medieval period. His theology as well as his moral vision sum up the Early Church and anticipate the medieval church, even extending to the Protestant Reformation. Augustine has affected the Church’s self-understanding in dramatic ways. He was born to a Christian mother and a pagan father. He struggled with guilt his entire life. Before his conversion he fathered a child out of wedlock. His pilgrimage to the Christian faith was long, but his conversion was dramatic and transforming. It

was from the ashes of his broken, pagan life that one of the clarion voices of Church history emerged.

Augustine had an acute moral sense. Even before he was a Christian he sought to live his life, however unsuccessfully, morally. He was convinced as a Christian that an objective moral order existed and human attempts to embody it were doomed to failure. It was finally his nuanced doctrine of Christian charity that enabled him to define a Christian morality. Augustine refused to be satisfied with any morality that fell below the pattern set in Jesus Christ.

Augustine's moral philosophy focused on the human will as it is pulled in two directions. First and most naturally, human life is grounded in self-love. Human beings love themselves first and last. Yet, human beings were created to love and worship God. Augustine calls this flawed human love cupidity. This kind of love is disordered. It reaches in all directions attempting to find peace, but is always latches onto that which crumbles to nothing. A life based on cupidity is futile and pointless. Augustine felt his preconversion life was one defined by cupidity.

On the other hand Augustine thought our life can be defined by charity, that is, an ordered love. Such a life is defined by paying attention to the life as God would have it to be. Charity is possible only as a person participates in the life of God in faith. What is finally real and therefore good is found in God. Goodness is God-ness for Augustine. The crucial issue for Augustine was that the will participates in God, and only in this way can Christian virtue emerge.

According to Augustine we are born with an earthly, disordered love. While all love finds its origin in God, it is expressed as sinful pride because of the disordering of cupidity. Therefore, cupidity is a deficit or an inversion of what is truly good. Cupidity can only be love "in reverse." After all a love designed to participate in God is expressed as idolatrous in the disordered life. By contrast, charity is of one piece and it opens life up to the community of faith as a mutual sharing in the triune life of God. Here is where the moral life flourished for Augustine.

Augustine was fully committed to the idea that human beings are created by God as social beings. This places him firmly in the classical tradition of political philosophy. He believed God calls human beings into the Church so they will be saved. He believed sin corrupts the world, as is evident in the degree of violence

*This is part of the just war tradition and a full treatment of this tradition is beyond the scope of this lesson.*

*This work of Augustine will be the focus of the Guided Discussion section.*

*Refer to Resource 9-9 in the Student Guide.*

present. Augustine believed it was possible to wage war so long as the war is a response to a prior evil, proportionate, and respects the lives of innocents.

The greatest achievement of Augustine's thought is the *City of God*. He sets forth a comprehensive treatment of the Christian faith in this book.

## **The Importance of Patristic Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Theology**

The importance of patristic ethics is not exhausted by learning a few details about the first thinkers in the Christian faith. The following will offer a few reasons why it is important to think about the patristics when doing moral reflections.

**First**, the patristic theology gives us a picture of the most significant issues that faced the generation that followed the New Testament. Therefore, it is clear that in the generation that followed the era of the primitive church—New Testament church—the nature of God and its relationship to morality were important. It is also clear the Early Church struggled with what to do with the wealthy and the material. The answers that arise from reading patristic theology continue to be important.

**Second**, reading the Early Church fathers will help to define such central theological and moral convictions as eternal and temporal, infinite and finite, material and spiritual in the attempt to distinguish classical Greek culture from the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith. This will keep Christians from being lost in the thought forms of the prevailing culture. The temptation to surrender a Christian identity by degrees is as important now as it was then.

**Third**, reading the Early Church fathers will remind those in the contemporary church to refuse a merely intellectual faith. Wesley would call an intellectual faith a form of religion or a form of godliness. The very practicality of Early Church ethics makes it very plain that the business of being a Christian is about how one uses money or treats his or her children. The message of heart holiness is one of integrity of thought and life. This is what the Early Church understood, and it is what the contemporary church cannot afford to forget.

## Guided Discussion: *City of God*

(10 minutes)

Refer to Resource 9-10 in the Student Guide.

Augustine was the first systematic theologian of the Christian Church. The *City of God* is a masterpiece of Christian thought in that it attempts to treat the Christian faith comprehensively. The *City of God* is at one level an early statement of the Christian faith, but at another level it is the affirmation that two realities—City of Man and City of God—define life.

Augustine sought to defend the Church from the charge that it had so destabilized the Roman Empire that it actually contributed to its fall. He argues that the City of Man will always pass, because it latches on to what cannot last. It is fixed on the “earthly” and upon self-love/self-interest. The City of Man exhibits a disordered love. There is a sense in which the City of Man is built of sand and cannot last in the face of the pressures of history.

The City of God is just the opposite. It is founded on a love ordered by God and a love of the eternal. The City of God will survive the twists and turns of history because it is fixed upon what will finally last. The *City of God* stands as a clear statement of what God calls the faithful to be in all periods of history.

Using the basic categories of the *City of God*, characterize Christian behavior/ideals/virtue for the 21st century.

*On an overhead, whiteboard, or flipchart have the students list things that fit under the heading of City of Man. Do the same for City of God.*

*There are many possible answers to this question, but here are a few examples: City of Man—self-absorbed, me-first, shallow Christianity, Sunday Christian, go to the church with the most entertaining music/pastor, low expectations morally, give little to the church, etc.*

*Some possibilities for the City of God: other-directed, reflective praying Christian, forgiver, committed to the faith whatever the music and whoever the pastor is, committed to stewardship of time and talent, faithful to the means of grace, etc.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has dealt with the

- Major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the Early Church: comprehending itself in the face of the Hebrew faith, contending with classical culture, and defining the faith in a pagan culture
- Resources of moral reflection in the Early Church for contemporary moral problems: struggle with the law, struggle against a permissive grace, sexual ethics, wealth, and others
- Ways in which moral reflection in the patristic church inform Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection: picture of the NT Church, eternal/temporal, infinite/finite, material/spiritual, and warning against a merely intellectual faith.

This period of history was crucial for the development of the Christian faith. Any serious attempt to think and act as a Christian must understand and embody the wisdom and insight of this period.

## Look Ahead

Next lesson will deal with the medieval period in order to examine its moral wisdom.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page essay of the major insights of patristic ethics and how they might be important for ministry in the Church of the 21st century.

Read Resource 9-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement of the material of this lesson.

## Closing Thought

Athenagoras, an Early Church father, lived around AD 177. He lived during a time of persecution in the Church. It is interesting he chose to defend the Church in his writings by saying Christians do no wrong. He actually goes so far as to suggest that it is by the behavior of the Christians that those in power will know they are religious. Many Christians died in these days because they refused to accommodate to pagan

culture. Those who live in the 21st century have much to learn from the intellectual tenacity and the moral conviction of these early Christians.

## Lesson 10

# Medieval Ethics

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:25	Medieval Ethics	Lecture	Resources 10-1—10-8
1:10	Moral Reflection	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996, 65-119.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Douglas M. Strong, eds. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 61-107.

# Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You may want to remind the students in the class about the overall historical task of this section of the module.*

*It would be good if you could show the class a picture of a Gothic cathedral. You can find examples on the Internet.*

The medieval period is an important one in the history of the Christian faith. It is a period of time when Western civilization gathered its resources after the near destruction of the West. It is also a period of real renaissance. Perhaps the best symbol of this period is the Gothic cathedral. The moral reflection of this period is important for the self-understanding of the contemporary church.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the medieval church
- apply the resources of moral reflection in the medieval church to contemporary moral problems
- define the ways in which moral reflection in the medieval church informs Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

## Motivator

Monasticism is an important renewal movement within the history of the Church. Much of this renewal is evident during the medieval church period. The most significant and lasting monastic movements were communal. While there is a good deal of variety among the various monastic movements, a common theme of monasticism is a desire to separate from the society for the purpose of living a devoted and holy existence. Therefore, monasticism represents a movement *from* society in general and *toward* a more intense communal life devoted completely to God. These monastic movements did in fact serve as an important force for spiritual renewal in the Church.

The concern for spiritual and moral renewal has been a continuing issue for the Church. Part of the mission of the Church is to speak the gospel to the world in



evangelism. Another equally important mission for the Church is to hear the gospel itself and be renewed by it. Monasticism is one example of the Church hearing the gospel and thereby being called to spiritual and moral renewal.

Consider as a class how the Church might hear the gospel again in this generation.

*What are the factors involved in the spiritual and moral renewal of the Church?*

*Is monasticism the only real way for this kind of renewal to happen?*

*Several points need to be emphasized in this discussion.*

- *First, emphasize the relationship between the gospel and spiritual/moral renewal. When gospel is spoken faithfully, it can be a force for spiritual and moral renewal.*
- *Second, when renewal happens it is not because of human design, but the movement of the Spirit. Yet, we as human beings are called to be faithful in the telling and living of the gospel.*
- *Third, it should be emphasized that a strong sense of community is important to spiritual and moral renewal. It might even be said that strong churches are essential for strong spiritual and moral living. We tend to reverse this by saying that a strong church is the gathering of spiritually and morally strong families. But the Church is not our construction; rather it is the work of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel and the administering of the sacraments.*
- *Fourth, monasticism is not the only model for spiritual and moral renewal in the Church. But it does exhibit the essential characteristics for such renewal.*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Medieval Ethics

(45 minutes)

*The students who have had the history modules will be familiar with much of this information.*

*Refer to Resource 10-1 in the Student Guide.*

The patristic period was dominated by the early attempt to define the Christian message. Much of this period was characterized by persecution. But the Edict of Milan (AD 413) changed everything for the Church. From this time it was legal to be a Christian, and the Church turned its attention to the broader concerns of culture. The medieval period spans roughly 800 years. This period of time can be characterized by two relatively distinct periods.

- First, a time of outward stagnation during which the West collected its scattered forces, emerging from the terrible destruction that had occurred with the fall of the Roman Empire.
- Second, a period of real renaissance—12th century—during which cultural, intellectual, and religious advance took place.

*Thomism refers to the philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas.*

The central philosophical and theological problem of the medieval period was to find a place for “this worldly” ends in a scheme of life that is still “other worldly” in orientation. Thomism is an attempt to solve this dilemma. The classical philosophers felt the answer to the questions could be obtained here and now. On the other hand, the Christian view was tied to the belief in an omnipotent God who was at the same time a loving Father.

Scholasticism is a way of doing theology that emerged during the Middle Ages. In fact, it was the educational tradition of the medieval schools. Scholasticism is an attempt to understand revealed truth rationally. The scholastic method employs analogy, coordinating, systematizing in an attempt to comprehend better this world in light of the world to come. Therefore, the issue of faith and reason is central to the medieval period and to the scholastic method.

*Refer to Resource 10-2 in the Student Guide.*

The universals/particulars debate is very important for understanding the medieval period. The foundational problem can be stated in this manner: apart from revelation humans have but two modes of cognition, perception and reason. Perceptions know particulars and reason knows universal truths. That which is universal is the most reliable and the most likely to be associated with divine truth. The particular is important but it must

never assume an importance beyond the universal. Several schools of thought contributed to this debate:

- **Extreme realism**—the universal is a thing that exists extra-mentally and prior to sense objects. The realists held that ideas are general concepts or universals that have an existence independent of all things or experiences. Ideas are real in the sense that they are not created by the individual's experiences.
- **Moderate realism**—the intellect is able to abstract from sensible particulars their common natures. It is not an image, the passive result of the impression of sense objects in the mind, but a concept formed by the intellect itself using the data supplied by the mind.
- **Conceptualism**—universals do exist as mere concepts. Our knowledge is thus of doubtful validity when it goes beyond the particulars we have experienced and studied.
- **Nominalism**—universals stand for names, therefore universals have no reality at all, and their reality is simply the sound of the voice.

Extreme realism was associated with Plato and moderate realism was associated with Aristotle. Conceptualism was not held by any important philosopher or theologian. Nominalism was important because it brought with it a ready-made way to reformulate the universals and associate them with human subjectivity.

Christians tended to associate ordinary knowledge with experience, and doctrines with facts/universals. This helped the Church protect its doctrines. This developed into the "twofold truth." A twofold truth is something that can be true in one realm—reason—and not necessarily true in another realm—experience. It was just such a distinction that allowed the Roman Catholic Church to proclaim that the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus, when to the eyes and taste they continue to appear to be bread and wine.

**Christian humanism** has a long tradition arising from the medieval period. This way of seeing the world attempts to maintain the delicate balance between theology and philosophy. This approach appealed to many in the medieval world for it allowed for both:

- maintaining a philosophy of nature
- building up a theology of super-nature

This is precisely what is intended in making sense of this world in light of the world to come. Accordingly, whatever knowledge furthers humankind's understanding of our eternal destiny and of God's universal rule is good; all other knowledge is superfluous and irrelevant. Christian humanism struggled with an increasing tendency to obliterate the sharp medieval line of demarcation between the realm of theology and that of philosophy, natural theology. Christians tended to diminish grace in favor of a growing preoccupation with good works and the pursuit of virtue.

The attempt to balance this world in light of the world to come, the emergence of scholasticism, the universals/particulars debate, and Christian humanism did a great deal to define the intellectual climate that characterized medieval ethics. The influence of the Church upon Western European culture was at its height during this period. It is important for the progression of this module to see what issues became important for moral reflection during this period of Western civilization.

*Refer to Resource 10-3 in the Student Guide.*

**Rule of Benedict** is one of the most important indications of the life monasticism envisioned. The Benedictine order was one of the most influential monastic communities in the Middle Ages. This order was established by Benedict of Nursia at the very end of the patristic period.

The Rule of Benedict talks about the tools for good works:

- love God with all your heart
- renounce yourself and follow Christ
- a different way of acting than the world
- do not return evil for evil
- avoid pride and too much wine
- place hope in God alone
- live in fear of Judgment Day

*This translation of the Rule of Benedict is found in J. Philip Wogaman, Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 67.*

Each of these is expanded upon, but even these basic statements indicate the seriousness with which this monastic community sought to live out the moral implications of the Christian faith. It is clear this community felt the love of God had a great deal to say about such things as anger, grudges, deceit, hollow greetings, and even laziness.

The Benedictine community placed a good deal of its moral advice on obedience. This included the

acceptance of authority. The modern Western world resists authority, even to the point of questioning authority. This has led to a good deal of advance in the West because the freedom to question every authority has at one level contributed to creative proposals.

Yet, there is a sense in which resisting authority severs some of the most basic bonds of morality. The Benedictine community preaches obedience as the first step toward humility. In other words, the virtue of humility is possible within the context of obedience/ acceptance of authority. Humility opens the eyes toward the heaven that informs this world. If one wants to be humble, then it is important to fear God, to imitate Christ, submit to one's superior, and embrace suffering.

Beyond this it is important that a person who desires humility will be transparent with one's spiritual advisor and accept the most menial treatment. A person seeking humility will be convinced both outwardly and inwardly that he or she is of the least importance. A Benedictine seeking humility will work toward the common good of his brothers and sisters. A humble person will speak less and listen more. There will be little laughter in the Benedictine community. When such a person speaks they will do so gently. All of this can be summed up as the way of living for Christ in every aspect of life.

Several things can be easily noted regarding the Rule of Benedict.

- First, this rule is defined by the nature of God as it was observed in the life of Christ. This community believed a profession of God led to a humble life.
- Second, there is an unmistakable seriousness about this community. They were so introspective that they felt a continual call to confess sin and be held accountable to the community.
- Third, there is a ready acceptance of authority and a linking of that authority to virtue.
- Fourth, there is an understanding that the moral life is linked to a community that actually empowers the person to be virtuous.
- Fifth, the morality that emerges out of the community is defined by an ability to be compassionate.

*Refer to Resource 10-4 in the Student Guide.*

**Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) is an important representative of medieval thought. His moral convictions can be in part defined by the manner in which he talks about love. Bernard talks about four degrees of love:

- when person loves oneself for one's own sake
- when person loves God for one's own good
- when person love God for God's sake
- when person loves oneself for the sake of God

It is easy to detect how each of these loves builds on the other and how each intensifies according to the clarity of its comprehension of God.

The most basic level of love is the natural love of oneself. This leads to a basic appreciation for the other, at least to the point where we see ourself in the other. The most interesting thing to note here is that we actually begin to love God when we love ourselves. God is already at work in the life of a person who loves in this basic way.

The next level of love is to love God, but to do so as a way to maintain one's own good. Since God is the fountain of all good, including love, it is to our benefit to love God intentionally. At this level love, even though it is directed toward God, is mostly a self-love again.

The third level of love is the love of God for God's sake. According to Bernard, it is at this level that the sweetness of the Lord begins to turn the heart of God. Once a person experiences this pure love that is freely given and characterized by truth and action, one begins to love God for God's sake.

The final degree of love is when a person begins to love oneself for the sake of God. This kind of love is truly God-like. It is to begin to see as God sees. Such love is highest because such a love frees humanity to be so full of God that all else is to be understood in reference to it.

The importance of Bernard of Clairvaux can be located in the filling of love with a content that exceeds the emotional interpretations apparent in the modern world. Wesley would call this kind of love an "expelling love." Such a love is capable of defining all of life through the life of God. When love is an emotion it is merely a response to another or a tentative offer to another. Love so conceived is pale and weak in light of the description given by Bernard of Clairvaux. A person who loves as Bernard urges raises morality to a level of divine centrality.

*Refer to Resource 10-5 in the Student Guide.*

**Thomas Aquinas** (1225-74) is a towering figure in the history of the Christian faith. He may be the single most important theologian in the first 1300 years of

the Church. Thomas sought to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation. The key problem in the medieval church was how to reconcile “this worldly” ends in light of “other worldly” concerns.

His *Summa Theologica* is a massive intellectual and spiritual achievement. For Thomas, reason is a gift of God and can only be understood in the context of the reality of God. While revelation brings higher truth, reason—as is all knowledge—is a gift of God. This refusal to juxtapose reason and revelation advances the basic medieval problem—how to live this life in light of the world to come—by refusing to allow this life to be rendered unimportant because of the next life.

Thomas defined ethics as actions performed by human agents. He makes a distinction between “acts of a human being,” which are all activities or operations that can truly be attributed to human beings, and another dimension of human agency called “human acts,” which constituted the moral order. Ethics is most interested in the latter, but it has a stake in the former as well.

Thomas’s method is scholastic in that it is a deliberate asking of questions, raising of objections, and clear answer. As Thomas developed his theology and moral philosophy he employed this method.

Moral philosophy considers human operations insofar as they are ordered to one another and to the end. An example of a question raised in the *Summa Theologica* is, “Whether goodness differs really from Being?” The response Thomas makes to this is instructive for understanding his method and moral philosophy. He first observes that Being and goodness are not the exact same thing. Since perfection is ultimate goodness, it is only appropriate to apply goodness/perfection to one Being and that is God.

Yet, as all of us participate in the Being of God we participate relatively in goodness and perfection. The way goodness is expressed is Being as something that is desirable. Final or ultimate goodness is only found in God, but as we desire goodness we actually desire God. For Thomas, God has no desire since He is fully what He will be. Creatures are left to desire if they are to be good and in this they participate in Being.

A moral act for Thomas is defined as an act willingly and knowingly performed or engaged. Therefore, a human act must be reasoned, must claim some good as its end, and the agent must know why it is done. A

*Refer to Resource 10-6 in the Student Guide.*

moral act must be intended (order of intention) and done (order of execution).

According to Thomas, a virtue makes the one having it good and renders his or her activities good. It insures a steady love of the good. Thomas proposed that faith, hope, and love are the theological/Christian virtues. These complete the cardinal Greek virtues in the mind of Thomas.

Since Thomas is deeply impacted by the philosophy of Aristotle, he embraces the language of habits. He thinks habits provide the capacity, but can be used properly and improperly. Bad habits are not good because they are perpetuated. Bad habits exhibit imperfect character because they do not aim at the good. Good habits endure, but they render a good character because they aim at the good. Moral virtue disposes to the end and enables prudence to judge efficaciously about means to be chosen. All moral doctrine, if it is to address human agents as they actually are, must come under the guidance of Christian revelation.

Thomas addressed the issue of natural law at several places in his writing. He asked whether natural law is the same in all people? He observed that people are naturally inclined to natural law. Thomas made a distinction between speculative reason (deals with necessary things/universal principles) and practical reason (deals with contingent matters). Natural law is the same in all people according to Thomas. This is partly evident in the natural aptitude for virtue, excellence by training observed in all people.

*Additional study of Aquinas takes place in modules Examining Our Christian Heritage 1 and Investigating Christian Theology 1 and 2.*

The theology and moral reflection of Thomas Aquinas is rich enough to engage an entire module. Therefore, it is impossible to do justice to his thought in the space allowed in this lesson. Yet, it is important that anyone who earnestly desires to think and act as a Christian be acquainted with Thomas Aquinas.

First, it is important to understand that because he was informed by Aristotle he developed philosophy from a teleological point of view. He was interested in happiness as self-fulfillment. He further understood that happiness was only possible as it envisions what is ultimately good.

Second, because Thomas was a medieval theologian he was convinced that reason and revelation are two sides of the grace of God. Reason is graced understanding and revelation is graced understanding. Thomas helps



us to get a glimpse of what the world looked like before reason was made a purely human capacity and revelation was made an emotion or a private understanding.

Thomas worked in a day when God was the definition of ultimate being, and it was the business of the philosopher and theologian to find a place in the mind of God. After Thomas and the onslaught of nominalism, God had to find a way into the mind of human beings. This way of seeing things is totally evacuated by Thomas.

Third, Thomas defined virtue as an acquired human excellence, but did not see human agency as operating apart from the grace of God. Therefore, Thomas gladly joined the cardinal and theological virtues in his thought.

*Allow for response.*

*What did you think about the little story you read about Thomas Aquinas?*

*Refer to Resource 10-7 in the Student Guide.*

**Julian of Norwich** (1342-1420) represents the mystical tradition in the late medieval period and how it is connected to moral reflection. She emphasized the creative intention of God and the implication that human beings are to be united with God in life. She defined this relationship in terms of marriage. Human beings are created to be wed to God, and defined for all of life by this relationship. Julian developed her understanding by a continuing meditation on the Trinity.

Julian's contemplation of the Trinity led her to talk about three properties: father, motherhood, and lordship.

- The fatherhood of God brings protection and bliss for human life.
- The property of motherhood is defined by the Christ who, in knowledge and perfection, connects our sensuality to salvation. Jesus, as the second member of the Trinity, is our mother, brother, and savior.
- The third property defined by the Holy Spirit, the gift and reward of grace, is brought to bear upon human life.

She feels that all we are to be becomes evident in the triune movement of being, increasing, and fulfillment.

Julian offered a robust Trinitarian reflection that illustrates how coming to terms with the nature of God informs the moral life. Her analysis is the linking of ontology (metaphysics), to axiology (moral reflection)

through a reflection on the Trinity. She particularly developed the idea that Jesus is our mother. Julian developed this in the following comments: taking on human nature, in Jesus we have godly will, incarnation, the mother's service is nearest, readiest, surest, and truest, feeds us with himself, brings us into the godhead, and attaches us to himself. This analysis is informed by the mystical tradition.

*Refer to Resource 10-8 in the Student Guide.*

## **The Importance of Medieval Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics**

Most people think of the medieval period as a relatively unimaginative and unimportant time in the life of the Church. This is clearly not the case, as the foregoing analysis suggests. It is important that the theologians of the medieval period be integrated into moral reflection in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

First, medieval moral reflection will underscore the importance of comprehending grace more broadly. Grace can become so specialized in its definition that it is restricted to justification. While grace is evident in justification, it is also evident in creation and the full purpose of God in the world. The most dramatic way in which this becomes evident is in reason or the way we think.

Second, medieval moral reflection is important in the way it calls attention to the appropriate understanding of authority. Without authority there is no place to make moral decisions. The modern world has largely disconnected the bonds of authority under the banner of human freedom. Here freedom is most often defined as the capacity to do what we want, when we want. The medieval period calls our attention to the importance of obedience and community for the moral life. These ideas are the very texture of the medieval period, but they have been lost in large measure in the modern world.

Third, the medieval period is important because it recognizes the importance of keeping theology and ethics together. Faith becomes action in the medieval period. For Julian of Norwich, it is the trinity that drives her to think about morality. For Thomas, morality needs both the cardinal and theological virtues. For Bernard of Clairvaux, love must have the content of faith in order to inform human action. Wesleyan-Holiness theology can learn from the medieval period the importance of keeping theology and ethics together.

Perhaps holiness theology has a bigger stake in this than is usually thought, because it is unthinkable to believe one's understanding of a holy God would be disconnected from being holy in thought and deed. Therefore, medieval theology is a good resource for Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ethics.

## Guided Discussion: Moral Reflection

(15 minutes)

*You might want to emphasize at this point in the discussion that Aristotle understood politics to be the master discourse for moral reflection. This is because he understood that the moral life is caught up in our life together.*

Marsilius of Padua (1280-1343) is an important, if relatively underemphasized, medieval theologian. One of his writings is titled *Defensor Pacis*, a document that reflects the political implications of the Christian faith.

Marsilius argues we ought to wish for peace and once it is achieved we ought to work for it to be maintained. In order to do this it will be necessary for individuals and community to work together. He defines a citizen as a person who is capable of making these kinds of choices. Marsilius is convinced that when people have a stake in the government, the appropriate level of authority will be understood and acted upon. The real problem is when people refuse to become the "active" citizens necessary for the authority and peace to be conserved. Peace is dependent upon the active participation of citizens.

Marsilius applies this logic to the church by acknowledging that for many, church means little more than priests, deacons, bishops, and other ecclesiastical officials. There is a sense in which these are the only citizens of the Church. But Marsilius adds that for some the Church is more than this, because it can mean the whole body of believers and all those who seek to follow Christ. Just as his analysis of politics indicated that peace can only be conserved as it becomes the active work of its citizens, then the church with its spiritual task can only hope to be about the task if it is the whole body of the faithful.

This will extend to the resolution of issues according to Marsilius, who feels general councils ought to include both priest and nonpriest. The real issue and the real authority is to be located in the faithfulness of each.

*How does the contribution of Marsilius of Padua inform the business of moral reflection?*

*Allow for discussion.*

*Marsilius underscores several things that are important for moral reflection:*

- *he makes the point that it should involve everyone*

*What makes his contribution significant?*

*How does this affect our denomination?*

- *virtue requires active lives*
- *faithfulness is important for virtue*
- *the authority necessary for the moral life is caught up in engaged lives of those who follow Christ*

*What does this mean for the local church?*

*The specific issue of the significance of this is twofold.*

- *First, Marsilius anticipates, in some sense, some of the themes of the Reformation in his emphasis upon the common task of piety for both priest and nonpriests.*
- *Second, he understands the church is more than its ministry, but that the church needs its faithful ministry along with its laity to conserve the essential call to virtue.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

During this lesson we have attempted to:

- Define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the medieval church: the idea of obedience, the linking of theology and morality, the importance of community, church, and authority, and the orientation of all of life as theological.
- Apply the resources of moral reflection in the medieval church to contemporary moral problems: we did this by talking about monasticism as spiritual moral renewal and by talking about Marsilius and an open politic.
- Define the ways in which moral reflection in the medieval church informs Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection: we did this showing how grace ought to be thought of more broadly, how authority ought to be retrieved as an appropriate category, and how theology and ethics ought to be materially connected.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will deal with moral reflection in the modern Church. We will begin with the Reformation theologians—Martin Luther and John Calvin—and we will conclude with some theologians who are still working, such as Stanley Hauerwas and James Gustafson.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the relationship between spiritual renewal and moral renewal using some of the information in this lesson.

Read Resource 10-9. Be prepared to discuss what you have read. Come with questions and your own ideas.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

## Closing Thoughts

John Hus (1372-1415) was an early reformer in the Church. He believed Scripture ought to be more important in the life of the Church and in the life of the individual. He was burned at the stake for his views.

He generally wanted to reverse the normal course of things and hold the Church along with its ministers and laity to the gospel. He talked about a twofold faith:

- an unformed faith that can even be exercised by demons and that does not save; rather it merely trembles in the presence of God
- a formed faith that exists in love and does save

He is clearly interested in the latter kind of faith because he sees it as a foundation for all the virtues of the Church life. John Hus calls us to scriptural faith, one that is formed in love and flourishes into the kind of life that embodies itself in a virtuous life.

## Lesson 11

# Modern Ethics

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:25	Modern Ethics	Lecture/Guided Discussion	Resource 10-9 Resource 11-1 Resource 11-2
1:10	Situational Ethics	Small Groups	Resource 11-3
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Wogaman, J. Philip. *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 108-284.

\_\_\_\_\_, and Douglas M. Strong, eds. *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996, 121-382.

# Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 or 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

The lesson brings to a close Unit 3 of our module. This unit has attempted to look briefly at the issues and theologians of the Christian faith who have reflected on behavior. The patristic period witnessed the formation of a genuine vision of the world based on the New Testament witness to the Christ event. As the gospel reached out to the classical world, it was shaped in some measure by the philosophical sources of Greek and Roman culture. With the Edict of Milan and the official toleration of the Christian faith, theology began to define Western culture. The moral wisdom of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas both summarized the best of the patristic church and the medieval period.

*Although John Wesley falls in this period he will not be treated. The next unit will deal extensively with Wesley's theology and ethics.*

The forces of Western culture—rise of nationalism, recovery of classical culture, and the breakdown of the medieval guild system of economics—contributed to a very different world. The Reformation changed the course of Christian theology and ethics. This lesson will attempt to give account of some of these changes spanning from the 16th century to the present.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the modern church
- apply the resources of moral reflection in the modern church to contemporary moral problems
- define the ways in which moral reflection in the modern church inform Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection

## Motivator

Ron Sider is a contemporary evangelical ethicist. He received his Ph.D. from Yale University and currently teaches at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. His



unique interest has been to call attention to the complacency of the Church in general and the evangelical church in particular, to poverty. For his part he has chosen to live at the poverty level with his family by giving all of his salary to the poor beyond the bare necessities of life. Therefore, his life and his teaching are joined together for the purpose of expressing an authentic ministry to the poor.

*Allow for response.*

*What are the challenges of living as an authentic Christian in an age of hunger?*

*What makes it difficult for Christians to be effective when they are rich?*

*Do you think the Church has become complacent?*

*How does the life of Jesus affect our concern for the poor?*

*How do you feel about his decision to have his family live at the poverty level?*

Ron Sider raises many uncomfortable questions for the contemporary Church. He wants the Church to consider if its lavish lifestyle has the effect of diminishing its witness. He forces the Church to see that the poor exist to some extent because the Church cares more for its air conditioning and carpet than for the hurts of humanity. It is difficult for Christians even to understand the problem because the culture of materialism has captured our minds and hearts. People like Ron Sider force Christians to consider whether culture has begun to define them. The life of Jesus suggests that a simple lifestyle, free of the entanglement of things, is better.

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture/Guided Discussion: Modern Ethics**

(45 minutes)

**The modern period** spans from about 1400 to the present. Its first echoes can be heard in the early renaissance, but its full impact is yet to be fully realized. Historically, the modern period is associated with a number of different movements that together created a new world. These movements were the Scientific Revolution, Renaissance, European Nationalism, and the Reformation. You read a brief statement about each of these movements as part of your homework. Each of these will be examined briefly in order to locate modern Christian ethics more fully.

John Milbank, a contemporary philosopher/theologian of great significance, feels modernity was born when theologians in the Church created secular space. He feels philosophers like Duns Scotus and William of Ockham allowed this pagan idea to become orthodoxy within the Church. Secular space is a place where reason is allowed to function apart from God. Secular space is the modern idea that two realms exist, one defined by faith, revelation, and piety, and the other defined by reason, science, and secular ethics.

Modernity has contributed to the idea that there is reality outside of God. There are many implications of this, according to John Milbank, but this is the basic trajectory of modernity. We will now move on to look briefly at the movements that combined to create modernity.

*Refer to Resource 10-9 in the Student Guide. The students were to have read this for homework.*

*List each of the movements on an overhead, whiteboard, or flipchart. Have the students give responses to the question and list them under the movement.*

*Again list the people and the key ideas on the overhead or board. Help the students identify what*

*From your reading and perhaps other readings, what is the major or key factor of each of the movements?*

We will now turn our attention to a representative group of Christian thinkers who have worked in theological categories.

*What are the major or key ideas we need to know about each of these theologians?*

*they should remember about each of these individuals.*

*Don't hurry through this but do cover all the individuals.*

*Refer to Resource 11-1 in the Student Guide.*

*Tillich*

*Stackhouse*

*How does their thinking impact Christianity today?*

Several themes have been noted in modern theological ethics, both positive and negative.

The positive points:

- Modern theological ethics illustrate the continuing importance of Scripture for moral reflection.
- Modern theological ethics illustrate the social vitality of moral reflection.
- Modern theological ethics still shows the importance of the Church for moral reflection.

The negative points:

- Modern theological ethics is not as even in its dependence on Scripture as the patristic and medieval period.
- Some modern theological ethicists are willing to revise significant theological convictions in order to be relevant.
- The move to a public theology runs the risk of being more public than Christian.

## **The Importance of Modern Ethics for Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics**

Theological and ethical reflection is contemporary by necessity. While there is a natural resonance with patristic and medieval theological and moral reflection, we must be willing to speak in the present. When moral reflection takes place in the present, it will need to be aware of those voices that have shaped modernity.

*Refer to Resource 11-2 in the Student Guide.*

Wesleyan-Holiness ethics needs to read modern theology and especially contemporary theology. Such a practice will reveal several issues that are of continuing importance.

- First, modern ethical reflection reveals a continuing interest in materially linking salvation and ethics. This is clear in the work of Luther, Calvin, and even Schleiermacher.
- Second, modern moral reflection places a good deal of importance on social constructions. This is evident in Rauschenbusch and Gutierrez. The interaction between the Church and society is a part of this picture.
- Third, modern theological ethics reveals a renewed interest in sanctification. This is most developed in

the work of Hauerwas, but it can be noted in some of the themes of Rauschenbusch and Stackhouse.

## Small Groups: Situational Ethics

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 11-3 in the Student Guide.*

*Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.*

*Allow the students to discuss and struggle with the situation before giving the closing statements.*

Situational ethics is a flawed way of doing ethics. There are several reasons why situational ethics cannot work.

- First, situational ethics allows the situation to become so important that it loses any contact with the narratives and principles that make moral decision-making possible. You will remember that in Lesson 2 the issue of sympathy was discussed. We concluded there that while sympathy can be a good thing it is never sufficient for making moral decisions. Fletcher's understanding of love is much more like sympathy.
- Second, situational ethics gives no Christian content to love. The NT tells us love is willingness to lay down one's life for another. It also says whatever love is, it must be defined by the holiness of God. Therefore, using love as the norm for moral decision-making as Fletcher does empties its meaning of any real association with Christianity.
- Third, Fletcher's definition of love as the only norm is disconnected from any Christian narrative that might help to inform it. Without the Christian faith, which names the God of Israel and the Church, there is no possibility that love will be sufficient.

Some might suggest that Christian ethics are by their very nature situational. Such a comment misses the point. All moral decision-making is situational, whether Christian or non-Christian. The question is not the situation, but what is brought to the situation. An authentic theological ethic will address the situation, but it will do so with the resources of the Christian faith, which will in turn define the meaning of love.

*You may want to repeat this paragraph.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted to:

- Define the major issues and concerns of moral reflection in the modern church: linking redemption and ethics, importance of the social concerns of the church, a need for public theology, and a continuing reflection upon Scripture
- Apply the resources of moral reflection in the modern church to contemporary moral problems: the vitality of Scripture and a theology of redemption, an emphasis upon the social setting of the church, and a deliberate engagement with culture
- Define the ways in which moral reflection in the modern church informs Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection: a renewed emphasis upon sanctification, linking salvation and ethics, and understanding the Christian life as social.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will begin Unit 4, which will treat Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection. Lesson 12 will reflect on the significance of Wesley's conception of the renewal of the image of God and its importance for moral reflection.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Select five themes of the modern period and reflect on their importance for moral reflection.

Read and respond to Resource 11-4.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this section.

## Closing Thought

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) was an important voice to the Church of Denmark. He felt a call to be a witness for authentic Christian faith to a church that had largely slipped into an intellectual faith. Therefore, his vocation was to write books that would call the church back to the place where it understood its mission as more than a verbal confession of faith, but as a journey to be taken. One of his many important books is titled *Fear and Trembling*. It tells the familiar

OT story of Abraham and Isaac and compares it to the story of Agamemnon. The latter is the story of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter to appease the gods as he attempts to sail for Troy. This is a well-known ancient story, but Kierkegaard uses this sacrifice of Iphigenia as a comparison to the sacrifice of Isaac. He concludes that the difference between Agamemnon and Abraham is a matter of faith. Agamemnon resigns himself to his fate, but Abraham never loses hope because of faith. Both acted, one in resignation and the other in faith.

Kierkegaard's point should not be lost, for it reminds us that a theological ethic is formed in faith, hope, and love. At least part of the reason for this is that we do not stand alone as Agamemnon; rather we stand in the presence of a great cloud of witnesses as we attempt to embody Christian character. Much of the modern period has worked hard to separate itself from the theological resources of the Church, but in the end any ethic that attempts to act morally apart from these resources is doomed to an absurd freedom.

## *Unit 4: Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics*

### *Lesson 12*

# Renewal of the Image of God as the Goal of Humanity

## *Lesson Overview*

### **Schedule**

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide Resource 12-1
0:20	Renewal of the Image of God	Lecture	Resources 12-2— 12-10
1:00	The Christian Ethic	Guided Discussion	
1:15	Case Study	Small Groups	Homework
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### **Suggested Reading for Instructor**

Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 478-504.

Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994, 367-420.

Maddox, Randy. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

# Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Return homework and collect essays.*

## Orientation

This lesson begins a very important unit for this module. The previous three units have set out a foundation for moral decision-making in the context of the Church. The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is a rich resource for the joining of faith and morality.

This unit will be composed of four lessons. This lesson will link the Wesleyan idea of the renewal of the image of God with the moral life. Lesson 13 will deal with the convergence of holiness and personal conduct. Lesson 14 will treat the social implications of the message of holiness. Lesson 15 will look at the broadest ethical implications of the Wesleyan-Holiness message.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- explain the theological importance of the renewal of the image of God
- define the ethical implications of the renewal of the image of God

## Motivator

*Refer to Resource 12-1 in the Student Guide.*

Read Article Ten in the *Manual*, Church of the Nazarene.

Note the phrases that speak specifically of the renewal of the image of God. Then reflect on the phrase to determine whether there is any moral significance.

**Theological phrase:** believers made free from original sin

Moral significance: freedom from sin is freedom to act morally/righteously



**Theological phrase:** brought into a state of entire devotement to God

Moral significance: devotement to God is the beginning of virtue

**Theological phrase:** holy obedience of love

Moral significance: remember this is wrought by God, so obedience and the act of God are linked

**Theological phrase:** empowering the believer for life and service

Moral significance: the power for life and service are the result of a clean heart and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit

**Theological phrase:** processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality

Moral significance: this phrase links spiritual development and character

*The underlying thought of this exercise is to call attention to the link Wesleyan-Holiness theology makes between spiritual renewal and character/ethics.*

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: Renewal of the Image of God

(40 minutes)

*For those students who have had the modules Examining Our Christian Heritage 2 and Exploring John Wesley's Theology, this will be review.*

*If all of the students have had the modules mentioned above you may want to shorten the lecture time and spend more time in discussion and small groups.*

*Refer to Resource 12-2 in the Student Guide.*

*Briefly go through the list.*

John Wesley (1703-91) lived in a turbulent century, one in which infant mortality was high. For example, 19 children were born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley, but only 7 survived to adulthood. Perhaps, the most significant event of his early life was a fire that nearly claimed the young Wesley's life. Samuel was rector of the church at Epworth, England. Several members of the church were unhappy with Samuel, and they set fire to the parsonage. Everyone made it out of the house, but they looked up to see John standing at a window. A human ladder was formed and John was saved from the fire. Wesley came to believe he was a brand plucked from the fire according to God's purpose. He lived his entire life believing God had saved his life in order that some purpose might be realized.

Wesley was profoundly influenced by his family. The austerity and affection is paradoxical. One gets the picture of a large and strict family who loved one another.

Wesley remained attached to his family throughout his life. This is apparent through his relationship with Charles.

Wesley's Aldersgate Experience—May 24, 1738—was a transforming event in his life. On this night as a passage was read from Romans Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed." From this point he felt he was a child of God. Two important emphases came into focus from this experience.

- First, he came to appreciate more fully Luther's conception that faith lays hold of the promise to forgive.
- Second, the influence of pietism that faith conveys the power of God into the heart of the believer is consciously brought in view.

John Wesley explains this to his brother Charles:

- By Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him—this happened at Aldersgate.

- Salvation includes remission of all past sins, deliverance from fear, and also deliverance from the strength of sin.

Aldersgate propelled Wesley into a new dimension of his life. This experience reached the yearning of his heart, and the doubts and fears of not being saved were largely subverted. Wesley went on with a new confidence to preach about the renewal of the image of God in the believer. A new optimism about the possibilities of reflecting the grace of God in concrete ways began to characterize his life and thought. Now he had a theology that would allow him to link faith and morality.

*Refer to Resource 12-3 in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to remind the class that catholic Christianity is not Roman Catholic. Wesley did not accept the authority of the pope, he did not believe the Lord's Supper was literally changed to flesh and blood, and he held the authority of Scripture over tradition.*

*One way to think of the relationship between justification and Christian perfection is to talk about the three dimensions of salvation: pardon (salvation begun), holiness (salvation continued), and heaven (salvation finished).*

*Another way of putting this is deliverance **immediately** from the penalty of sin, **progressively** from the plague of sin, and **eschatologically** from the very presence of sin. From Randy Maddox, Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).*

Wesley's theology is catholic Christianity in the best sense of the word. Three particular doctrines provide the parameters of his theology: original sin, justification by faith alone, and holiness of heart and life. These ideas are grounded in soteriology and the practices of the church, which engender them. This suggests Wesleyanism is through and through a theological point of view grounded in the saving grace of God. It is because of this that a highly speculative theology edges away from the spirit of Wesleyanism.

The gift of Wesley to the church is a theology that intends to engender a redeemed humanity. Therefore, its native home is not epistemological propositions nor continual appeals to make sense to the world. The meaning of Wesleyanism is wrapped up in the Christian hope for life, that it will mature by the grace of God through an appreciation of our mutual relationships in the church, including the graces of the church characterized by happiness.

Wesley's theology is a rich resource for reflection on the convergence of theology and ethics. The particular interest of this lesson is to point out those aspects of his conception of the renewal of the image of God and morality. Therefore, we will reflect with particular attention on those aspects of this thought that have special importance for moral reflection.

## Salvation by Faith

Salvation by faith is a matter of crucial importance for Wesley. The Aldersgate experience is variously interpreted either as his evangelical salvation or his entire sanctification, but whatever is the case one fact

*Refer to Resource 12-4 in the Student Guide.*

is clear: it comes in a moment by faith. Wesley is thoroughly Protestant in his understanding that salvation is a gift of God that comes by faith. He had tried for years as a student and then as faculty member at Oxford University to “behave his way into salvation.” He failed miserably at his human attempt to deserve salvation. Aldersgate convinced him that the assurance of salvation comes in a moment by faith. The prevailing picture of salvation for Wesley is a gracious gift. Such an understanding of salvation leads naturally to moral considerations.

*Some of the students will have read this sermon as part of other modules.*

Wesley’s sermon “Justification by Faith” links this conception of salvation to behavior/morality. He affirms that God has made human beings so they might reflect the glory of God. Wesley calls humankind “upright” and “perfect.” God did this in order to call humanity to obedience. The original righteousness of humankind made no allowance for disobedience, but that is exactly what happened. The result was that humankind made in the image of God lost the original fellowship with God.

Yet, God in the fullness of time made another “common head of humankind” and through Jesus Christ called all to a justifying grace. Wesley characterizes justification by faith in a number of ways.

- First, it is sanctification in some degree, for it is a basic rendering righteous to humankind.
- Second and primarily it is a “clearing from accusation.” This means in justification by faith we are freed from the penalty of sin. We are no longer guilty. Wesley is careful to say this does not mean God fools himself into thinking we are what we are not. Rather justification by faith reveals God’s intention not to act upon what He knows, but rather to count us as righteous by faith. In other words, God pardons us.

*Western Christianity refers to both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.*

Forensic is the theological term for justification by faith. This way of looking at salvation has dominated the imagination of Western Christianity. This way of looking at salvation is cast in legal terms. Justification is acquittal or pardon. The person is indeed guilty. The person actually did that for which he or she is charged or condemned. But now in the eyes of the law/court he or she is to be treated *as if* he or she is innocent. The condemned person is not innocent, but he or she is to be treated that way by the good graces/judgment of the court.

Generally, one is not justified or acquitted because of the moral laxity of the court. Rather one is acquitted so

as to have the opportunity to live as if one is innocent. In other words, he or she is “freed” to live. One way of thinking about this understanding of grace is to think of a barnyard, soiled by the presence of chickens, pigs, horses, and cows. Such a yard is unclean, but on the morning after a free coat of snow, it looks clean. There is a sense in which the forensic grace of God operates in this way. This is a relative holiness.

How should the life of the set free, to new life, behave? If salvation—freedom from the penalty of sin—and justification come as a pure gift by faith, then ought that life respond in moral behavior? The simple answer is yes, but the reality is that salvation begun is not yet salvation complete, so a certain futility characterizes life.

Yet, the influence of this conception on moral reflection is important to consider.

- First, Wesley believed human beings were originally created to obey the perfect law. Because of the Fall this is not possible, but this did not change the reason for which we were created. God called us good at creation, and He has not changed His mind about us. Yet, we are inclined to evil and that continually because of the sin. The gift of salvation is the process by which God begins to restore us.
- Second, since salvation is a gift, it tells us God desires to renew us, and it calls us to renewal. Thinking of our new life as a gift changes the usual logic of command and duty. The character of life that will arise out of the gift of God is not slavish obligation, but joyous doxology.

## Therapeutic Salvation

*Refer to Resource 12-5 in the Student Guide.*

Therapeutic salvation represents another dimension of Wesley’s theology with moral implications. His emphasis upon justification by faith has its deepest roots in Western theology. Wesley’s emphasis upon “original righteousness” is another indication of his debt to the Western paradigm. Many in the early to mid 20th century believed the genius of Wesley’s theology was its marriage of the Roman Catholic understanding of perfection with the Protestant understanding of faith. Those who reasoned this way thought Wesley’s understanding of perfection by faith matched rather well with the holiness emphasis upon entire sanctification.

There is much truth in this construction, but it missed a major dimension of Wesley’s thought. Understanding Wesley’s theology is not possible apart from making

room for his understanding of salvation as therapeutic. This puts front and center his emphasis and appreciation for Eastern theology. In fact, this way of looking at things casts holiness as the renewing of humankind into the glory of God. Much about this way of looking at the faith is beyond the trajectories of this module, but some treatment of it is essential for understanding how Wesley linked salvation and morality.

*This discussion is found in Dunning, Grace, Faith, and Holiness (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 479-98.*

*Theosis*, divinization, and sanctification are basically synonymous terms. Each term suggests that while grace pardons, it also extends to a deeper work in the heart of the believer. H. Ray Dunning talks about the negative and the positive side of the renewal of the image of God. The negative side emphasizes an instantaneous moment and a definite eradication of sin. The positive side emphasizes the continuity of the Christian life from new birth to final salvation as well as the infusing of love.

The major emphasis here is that grace does more than cover the sin, and the person is more than acquitted. Therapeutic salvation is the freedom from the power of sin. Such an understanding of sin is more than acquittal; it is the engendering of an entirely new way of living. Going back to the image of an unclean barnyard, therapeutic salvation cleans the mess under the fresh coat of snow.

*Some of the students will have read this sermon.*

*Refer to Resource 12-6 in the Student Guide.*

One of the many places Wesley addresses therapeutic salvation is in the 1741 sermon titled "Christian Perfection." He takes on the difficulty of the word "perfect" in this sermon. He is careful to say that perfection does not imply freedom from ignorance. Christian perfection does not preach freedom of mistakes or infirmities either. Wesley does not believe perfection testifies to a freedom from temptation. From this he goes on to suggest that Christian perfection is freedom from all outward sin.

Wesley believed as well that perfection suggests human beings could be free from evil thoughts and evil tempers. All of this indicates that for Wesley, believers could have a perfect will, that is to say, their lives could be set on fire by the expelling love of God. In other words, the love of God could become so pervasive that it expels all other lesser loves.

*Some of the students will have read this sermon.*

Wesley addresses this fullness of faith in another sermon titled, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," first published in 1765. Here Wesley reflects on the free mercy of God that extends from the first dawning of

grace to its consummation in glory. He makes the distinction between relative (justification salvation) and real (sanctification salvation), in this sermon. He links both of these and clearly indicates that real salvation embodies the promises of grace made in relative salvation. Two of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion—Anglican—indicate part of the resources Wesley brought to this question.

Article XI “Of the Justification of Man”

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely expressed in the Homily of Justification.

Article XII “Of Good Works”

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, can not put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ; and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

The language of these articles would have been well known to Wesley. Good works grow out of a true and lively faith as fruit grows out of a tree. Salvation is first and last a matter of faith, but faith is more than pardon for Wesley; it is works of righteousness. Wesley believes justification becomes evident in “fruits meet for repentance.” The renewal of the image of God begins in the gracious offer of God, but it must be believed in order to become effective in the life of a believer. Humankind is saved by faith in order that the fruit of salvation—morality—might emerge.

Wesley defines Christian Perfection in the following way:

- Loving God completely
- No wrong temper—nothing contrary to God
- All thoughts, words, and *actions* governed by pure love

Perfection is therefore the therapy of grace that heals a human being from the disease of sin. This brings a very important issue to the surface. If sin is merely a dark substance that can be removed or covered by grace, then a fully scriptural notion of salvation and faith is lost. Wesley understood this, and his theology

seeks to address a broader, more scriptural understanding of faith, grace, and sin.

*Refer to Resource 12-7 in the Student Guide.*

*This module will work out the implications of this in Lesson 14, Social Holiness.*

The writers of the New Testament depict sin in terms of forgiveness, pardon, and gift. Most of Western theology seizes upon this, but fails to account for those many places in both the Old Testament and the New Testament where behavior is addressed and expected. A theology of pardon can only suggest behavior, it cannot provide for it. Put another way, forensic salvation frees us from the penalty of sin, but it does not heal of us of the disease of sin. Therapeutic sin is not something, rather it is an unhealthy relationship to everything. When sin is understood as a sickness, then grace can be easily understood as the process of gracious healing. Since it is grace, it is gift and as gift it is instantaneous. The life that is “being healed” endures by gift and is embodied in a holy character.

One more aspect of Wesley’s definition of Christian perfection needs to be noted. Thoughts, words, and actions are included. Pure love works itself out into action. The foundational point Wesley is making here suggests that spiritual renewal becomes Christian morality. Salvation bears fruit. One way to define such fruit is virtue.

*Refer to Resource 12-8 in the Student Guide.*

*This term is introduced in Maddox, Responsible Grace.*

## **Co-operant Salvation**

Co-operant salvation reflects another crucial aspect of Wesley’s understanding of salvation. One might go so far as to say the case of Wesleyan-Holiness theology stands or falls on co-operant salvation. One may think of salvation like a mother cat grasping her baby kitten in her mouth in order to save it from harm. This scenario makes it clear that the total responsibility of salvation is in the grasping of the sinner by God.

Such an understanding of salvation makes grace irresistible. On the far side of this understanding, salvation could be thought of as the baby spider monkey desperately clinging to the tail of her mother as she swings through the trees. Here the total responsibility for salvation is the willingness and capacity of the baby monkey to hold on to the mother. When this view is held, apostasy is lifted to an unbiblical level.

There is a third option and this comes very close to the meaning of co-operant grace. A baby kangaroo is safe so long as he stays in the pouch of his mother. No matter where the mother goes the baby is safe so long



as he stays in the pouch, but the baby can get out of the pouch. When this happens, the penalty belongs to the baby.

Co-operant salvation affirms that God calls us and empowers us to accept grace in faith, but He does not compel us to believe. Once we accept the offer in faith of God's grace, no power on or above the earth is able to separate us from God, but we are able to get out of the pouch to our own harm. Therefore, a co-operant understanding of salvation is both scriptural and Wesleyan. The scriptural image of covenant comes to mind. God offers the covenantal relationship, but the benefits of the covenant are contingent upon abiding in the relationship. Hosea paints this covenantal relationship in terms of marriage. It shows the anguish of God as Israel is unfaithful to the marriage. Hosea paints a dim, but honest picture of what happens outside of the pouch.

*Some students will have read this sermon.*

Wesley's understanding of co-operant salvation is very plain in his 1738 sermon titled "On Working Out Your Own Salvation." Wesley talks in this sermon about "preventing grace," which accounts for any good a person is able to do and draws a person to salvation. The good that flows from a person saved by grace is in fear and trembling. Wesley characterized this as working with earnestness of spirit and utmost diligence. The logic Wesley sets forth is based on the fact that because God works we can work.

Wesley's understanding of co-operant salvation is evident in his essay titled, "The Character of a Methodist," where he argues for the fruits of a living faith and the labor that distinguishes it from the world. Therefore, Wesley argues for a living gospel that becomes evident in the character of the Methodist.

Wesley also addresses this in a discourse titled "The Law Established by Faith." He argues here that the law is established first in doctrine, but in order to do this faithfully its literal and spiritual meaning must become evident. When this happens, Christ will be fully preached and holiness is produced in heart and life.

Faith, according to Wesley, establishes the law in the heart and in life. Faith establishes the law in a human person and it leads the believers to walk in newness of life. Wesley concludes, "So shall you daily increase in holy love, till faith is swallowed up in sight and the law of love established to all eternity!" This is a bold joining of faith and morality.

The Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of co-operant salvation exhibits clear moral implications.

- First, it makes the point that salvation is manifest in graciously empowered action. Salvation is not primarily intellectual assent. Rather salvation is a response in time to an always-present offer of grace.
- Second, salvation implies that it be embodied in acts of righteousness. These acts do not save a person, but they arise from a saved person. Profession of faith leads to visible expression of the faith. This will become more and more clear as we examine the nature of a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic.

## The Logic of Spiritual Renewal and Holiness Ethics

*Refer to Resource 12-9 in the Student Guide.*

The logic of spiritual renewal and holiness ethics is clear in Wesley. The simplest way to describe this is spiritual renewal works itself out into a life of holiness. Pure love or expelling love shapes the will and begins a process of restructuring our historical dispositions—culturally conditioned habits—in light of God’s grace. The renewal of the image of God in us is spiritual renewal and as such it bears the fruit of righteousness. Since sin is primarily a disease, the habits of moral reflection, as they are graciously effected by God, become in time a character defined by the gospel. This is what renewal of the image of God means and it is how morality arises.

*Refer to Resource 12-10 in the Student Guide.*

## A Preliminary Sketch of the Intellectual Space of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology

*You may find this helpful to provide context for this lecture or to conclude the lecture. These comments arise from the conviction that Wesleyan-Holiness theology occupies a unique and important intellectual space. Further this intellectual space once it is understood will free Wesleyan-Holiness theology toward creative expression.*

- The central themes of Wesleyan theology: optimism of grace, soteriology, and a creative combining of Protestant/Catholic/Orthodox theology. Randy Maddox reflects in *Responsible Grace* on what it means to be a Wesleyan:

It would mean—at the very least—to bring theological activity into the service of nurturing contemporary life and witness, just as he did. I believe that it would also mean to bring the orienting concern of *responsible grace* to that situation-related theological activity. In this process it will undoubtedly be necessary to deal with issues that Wesley did not treat, to develop areas of doctrine that he only touched on, to nuance claims that he boldly asserted, and assert boldly some claims that he played down.

*Maddox, 256.*

It will even mean disagreeing with Wesley at times, out of faithfulness to the Gospel and his own wider vision. Indeed, it could conceivably mean eventually deciding—in responsible dialogue with the Gospel of grace, the broad Christian community, and the wisdom of experience—that there is an even more adequate orienting concern that should guide our practical-theological activity than ‘responsible grace.’ But if that day should come, it would be itself a contribution from taking Wesley as a theological mentor.

- A Wesleyan-Holiness theology connects the inner and the outer expressions of holiness. The tendency to disconnect the inner and the outer reflects a loss of confidence in Wesleyan-Holiness theology. It appears that in an attempt to avoid the charge of “works-righteousness” or legalism those within the Wesleyan-Holiness camp have abdicated a very crucial theological claim, namely that grace takes root in character.
- A triune metaphysic pervades Wesleyan-Holiness theology. In other words, it is the very life of God that informs the understanding of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Rather than looking to philosophy to provide the categories of a Wesleyan-Holiness, theology looks to the material expression of the Christian faith to provide the categories.
- Knowing as transformation is crucial for a Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Knowledge is not primarily about storing copies of experience as ideas in the mind. Rather, knowledge is participation with the triune life of God and allowing that to transform everything else. A sanctified mind participates in the life of God and such a perspective transforms all other relationships in the world. It also means knowing is a form of worship.
- Practical rationality characterizes Wesleyan-Holiness theology. This is the precise place where morality presents itself. Wesleyan-Holiness theology will not allow itself to become only a metaphysics; rather it becomes a morality. This means Wesleyan-Holiness theology represents a way to go on.

The material in this module has indicated that the moral question is always a part of the Christian faith. Previous lessons have documented how the moral question has presented itself in the Christian tradition.

Yet, the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition embodies theology and morality at a level unprecedented in the Christian tradition. The joining of spiritual renewal and morality constitutes the very fiber of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. This will become more evident in the three lessons that follow in this unit.

## Guided Discussion: The Christian Ethic

(15 minutes)

Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 499.

According to H. Ray Dunning, "The Christian ethic, when understood as an extrapolation of the *imago Dei*, is an extension of the creation ethic toward the achievement of full personhood. This means that in the fullest religious sense it is an ethic that enhances rather than perverts the humanity of man." The theological connection between creation and salvation is a central theological tenet of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. This is part of the genius of the doctrine of the Trinity, for it links the God who creates with the God who saves. Therefore, the most adequate understanding of salvation is renewal of the image of God. Through the Holy Spirit the work of salvation is the sanctifying of our humanity by renewal.

Let us reflect on the significance of understanding the Wesleyan-Holiness concept of the renewal of the image of God by discussing the following questions:

*The doctrine of creation affirms the power of God to bring being out of nothing. It also affirms that all being is dependent upon God. The doctrine of creation that matter/being is not intrinsically evil. Linking creation with re-creation/redemption testifies to the seriousness with which Scripture and the Christian tradition links embodiment and holiness. Putting this very plainly, holiness is the material re-creation that joins body and spirit by faith toward the full renewal of the image of God in humankind. Christian behavior is actual and material. A holy life is being renewed—re-created—by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Holiness embodies the life of God in the life of the believer. Embodiment is about having a concrete spirituality. Holiness is not primarily a theory. Holiness is the re-creation of a human heart to the extent that it becomes an externality. Such an understanding of holiness means intention is not enough. Moral behavior speaks to the engendering of holiness.*

*What does creation/re-creation suggest about Christian behavior?*

*What does holiness as something embodied in life suggest?*

*Too often Christianity becomes a crutch for wallowing in self-pity and guilt. God does forgive and His love does endure, but the grand purpose of God is to renew life in the dry bones of human beings. This is a message of hope for a hurting world. For some this comes to mean the message of the Christian faith is judgmental. Truthfully, this has from time to time characterized the life of the Church. But the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition offers the hope that things do not have to stay the same. Christians do have a hope that one day Jesus will return and re-create the world, but the kingdom of God is also now. Holiness is a message of hope because it is about the renewal of the image of God.*

*How does “renewal of the image of God” present a hopeful message regarding Christian behavior?*

*Spirituality is often considered to be something that hovers over the ground. God is Spirit and to have God embodied in a human life is spiritual. The renewal of the image of God is a spiritual work. From the “inside-out” a holy life is “spiritual,” but this same life when seen from the “outside-in” looks like character. Therefore, the renewal of the image of God is the inner transformation that comes to rest in the objectivity of character. In turn, the character becomes the moral agency of a holy person.*

*How does “renewal of the image of God” link spirituality and character?*

## **Small Groups: Case Study**

(10 minutes)

*Divide the class into groups of 2 to 3 students each.*

*If you are spending more time with this section and less time with the lecture you may want to call the class together and give some guidance and instruction concerning the procedures as defined by the Manual.*

*Collect the homework papers.*

In your group read each other’s response papers and discuss the approach each of you took in your response.

How did you differ in your response?

How did you agree?

Challenge each other.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

In this lesson we attempted to:

- Explain the theological importance of the renewal of the image of God: the conception of spiritual renewal as it is evident in Eastern theology as a therapy lends itself to an outward reaching faith. This is evident in the way Wesley understood perfection.
- Define the ethical implications of the renewal of the image of God: Wesley talked about working out our salvation and he also talked about establishing the law by faith. The outward move of Wesley was expressed in such places as the "Character of the Methodist."

## Look Ahead

Next lesson will look specifically at the relationship between holiness of heart and holy conduct. We will look at the historical ways in which holiness has located itself in specific behaviors.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay that outlines a basic holiness ethic that appropriately honors a material holiness.

Read and respond to Resource 12-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

## Motivator

*A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology  
(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of  
Kansas City, 1994), 36.*

J. Kenneth Grider says, "We have also taught, at various points in our theology, doctrines that are peculiarly suited to our homing instinct for the moral." As we reflect on the meaning of ethics in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition it is important to remind ourselves of the comment made by Grider. Two things are especially important for our consideration.

- First, holiness is not best expressed in hard and fast moral conclusions. Rather it is best understood in the spiritual depths of love that have come to rest in a human life.

- Second, holiness ethics is not so much a finished product, but the labor of a life that has been renewed into the image of God.

The biggest temptation for a holiness ethic is to be a mean-spirited legalism that is often expressed as “holier than thou” attitude. The comments of Professor Grider suggest that a holiness ethic is a basic direction for life.

[This page intentionally blank]



## Lesson 13

# Holiness as Holy Conduct

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Holiness as Holy Conduct	Lecture	Resources 13-1—13-7
1:15	Credibility Gap	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Klaiber, Walter, and Manfred Marquardt. *Living Grace: An Outline of United Methodist Theology*. Translated by J. Steven O'Malley and Ulrike M. Guthrie. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001, 311-414.

Taylor, Richard. *Exploring Christian Holiness*. Vol. 3, *The Theological Formulation*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985, 208-11.

Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972, 165-83.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 student to read his or her essay.*

*Call on several students to state how they responded to the case study.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

The last lesson focused on the relationship between spiritual renewal and moral behavior. Renewal and virtue are but two sides of the same reality according to the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

*You might want to take a few minutes at this point and reflect on the meaning of conduct. The bulk of this module has dealt with virtue, which has been defined as an acquired human excellence. Therefore, to talk about virtue is in some measure to talk about what human beings can and should act upon.*

This lesson focuses on the concrete forms holiness has taken and what this suggests about the message of holiness.

*In other words, a virtue is both what a moral person envisions when taking action and what a person does. Understanding this makes it possible to comprehend holy conduct as holy virtue.*

*When Wesley envisions holy conduct, he is thinking in terms of virtues that have been given to the Church as they are located in Scripture and tradition. This means we need to understand that conduct in order to be truly moral participants in something much larger than what is at the disposal of human willing, but it can never be considered apart from such willing.*

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the connection between Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ethical behavior

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

- delineate the difference between Wesleyan-Holiness deontology and Wesleyan Holiness teleology
- understand the logic of the General Rules and The Covenant of Christian Conduct of the Church of the Nazarene

## Motivator

Pastor Ann Flanning is the new senior minister of Central Church of the Nazarene. This is a lower- to middle-class church in Waltham, Massachusetts. The church is in transition between a traditional Church of the Nazarene and a church with more social justice ministry to the city. This transition has caused several issues to arise in the fellowship. Many of these issues are moral in nature. Pastor Flanning is well trained in holiness theology and is working on a Ph.D. at a nearby university. So she understands the significance of the issues for the church and is prepared to speak to the most significant issue: drinking.

There are those who have joined the church who have a passion for social justice. These people appreciate Pastor Flanning, but they do not share her moral stance on social justice that includes drinking. Pastor Flanning has worked hard to build a coalition for social justice, but this dispute threatens to create a problem that will debilitate the ministry of her church. Yet, if she fails to address the issue, the church she saves will not be a Holiness church.

*The historic moral standards of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition clearly preclude drinking alcohol. Therefore, Pastor Flanning cannot accept this behavior and remain true to her theological tradition.*

*Since spiritual renewal is linked to holy conduct, the first step is consciously to instruct the church on the theological sources that inform the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.*

*The issue to emphasize here is that apart from the spiritual resources of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, it is not possible to maintain the moral standards. Pastor Flanning cannot hope to deal with the drinking issue apart from the theological/faith resources.*

*Reflecting on the connection between holiness and holy conduct, what should Pastor Flanning do? Should she compromise the usual standards of conduct associated with the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition? Are there any resources for her to address this question with her congregation?*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Holiness as Holy Conduct

(45 minutes)

Refer to Resource 13-1 in the Student Guide.

*In fact, Timothy Smith asserts that there is a historical relationship between "Methodist perfection and . . . moral ability." Timothy Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 114.*

The relationship between holy faith and holy living is an historical reality. Before Aldersgate, Wesley had tried desperately to behave himself into spiritual peace. After Aldersgate, Wesley found spiritual peace and from that point onward the fruit of righteousness flowed from his life. There is strong evidence in his writing that holy conduct was always connected to heart holiness.

Wesley sets out some of this in *The Character of a Methodist*. He explains that the term "Methodist" was not so much chosen as assigned. While the term was meant to malign, Wesley links it to holy behavior. Wesley does not seek to define a Methodist by opinions, words/phrases, actions, customs, or even laying stress on religion. A Methodist is one who understands that salvation means holiness of heart and life. The mark of a Methodist is a consuming love of God expressed in joy. This in turn leads to another mark—happiness. This in turn leads to hope, prayer, and a pure heart.

A Methodist is free from revengeful passions, envy, malice, and wrath. Wesley sees a Methodist as one who avoids these negative attitudes and behavior. The other side of a Methodist is to do the will of God, that is, to present one's body as a living sacrifice. In fact, everything a Methodist does seeks to embody the will of the Master. Holy conduct is at the very heart of ethics, but in reality it exceeds morality by seeking to glorify God. The language of virtue has been employed throughout this module, but there is a sense in which Wesley's theology of conduct is less about virtue than the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Walking worthy of the vocation to which we have been called is a spiritual journey manifest in holy conduct.

In *Advice to the People Called Methodist*, Wesley says all love expressed in human life springs from God. He affirms that the sole source for holy conduct is God and the love that flows from His life. Wesley calls the conduct of the Methodists universal holiness. He is willing to be very specific in the way he talks about the kind of life that arises from this principle of love: abstain from fashionable diversions, reading plays,

*Acknowledge that we are not recommending that we use this model for 21st-century Christian conduct.*

romances, and books of humor. Wesley recommends that talk of a merry and diverting manner, be avoided.

Instead, Wesley leans toward plainness of dress. He also expects Methodists to abstain from liquor. Holy conduct for Wesley includes not speaking against people, especially ministers. These behaviors suggest that Wesley made the connection between faith and virtue. Yet, he understood that there is no way for a person to love in such a way that no offence will ever be taken. Holy conduct offends those who are not willing to live such a life. The very unity of life that leads to holy conduct makes the Methodists more noticeable and thus more offensive.

*Refer to Resource 13-2 in the Student Guide.*

The sermon titled "On Visiting the Sick" presents another perspective. Wesley argues early in this sermon that walking/living as God commands is necessary for the Christian. He refers to visiting the sick as a Christian duty. Wesley also refers to visiting the sick as a labor of love. Depending on how one interprets the moral task Wesley espouses either deontology or teleology as his moral theory. Near the end of the sermon he suggests that parents teach their children to visit the sick. Holiness is embodied for Wesley in holy conduct. This is more than what is to be avoided; it is also what ought to be done.

*It might be interesting to point out at this point that for a Christian to act upon the duty enjoined by Scripture and tradition is finally to embody a character capable of freedom.*

*Directions to Band-Societies* depicts a very specific understanding of holy conduct. Some examples of these directions are:

*This can be found in Wesley's Works, VII: 273-74.*

Abstain from doing evil

- No buying nor selling on the Lord's Day
- No spirituous liquor
- Be honest
- No back talking
- Use no needless self-indulgence

Maintain good works

- Give alms
- Reprove all sin in your sight
- Be frugal
- Take up the cross daily

Constantly attend to all the ordinance of God

- Be at church
- Be at the Lord's table
- Attend to the ministry of the word
- Use private prayer
- Read the Scripture
- Fast

*Wesley's Works, XI: 169.*

Wesley in other places addresses such issues as Sabbath breaking, swearing, and drinking. For example, in reference to a drunkard Wesley says, "You have forced the Spirit of God to depart from you; for you would take none of his reproof; and you have given yourself up into the hands of the devil, to be led blindfold by him at his will."

*Refer to Resource 13-3 in the Student Guide.*

Wesley is a rich resource for understanding the nature of holy conduct. Virtually every important piece of his writing carries with it moral importance. His theology is also in an important sense a theological ethic. Wesley does not recognize any theology that is not at the same time an ethic. Even a brief survey of his work reveals several important aspects of a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic.

- First, such an ethic is nourished by an understanding of the love of God that reaches toward humankind.
- Second, the love of God calls humankind toward a religious vocation manifested in holy behavior.
- Third, a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic reveals God, concern for how money is used, integrity, and even what comes out of the mouth.
- Fourth, a moral life arises in the context of attention to the means of grace.

When Wesleyan theology joined with the American Holiness Movement in the 19th century one result was the Church of the Nazarene. Debate has taken place for many years on whether the Church of the Nazarene is primarily Wesleyan or American Holiness. Truthfully, the issue is far more complex than this seeming dualism. Yet, a common interest between both expressions of holiness is the connection between holy faith and holy living. All voices in the holiness camp agree that holy living is crucial to the message of holiness.

## Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition

*Refer to Resource 13-4 in the Student Guide.*

Two general camps within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition help to define holiness as conduct: Wesleyan-Holiness deontology and Wesleyan-Holiness teleology.

*H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, 3 Vols. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), 3:7.*

**Wesleyan-Holiness Deontology** is evident in the work of H. Orton Wiley who says, "As theology is the science of God and the mutual relations of God and man, so ethics as the science of duty, has to do with the end, the principles and motives of obligatory conduct." He seems to think of Christian ethics as revealed in the sense that it is centered in divine

revelation. This is important for him because it separates “natural” and “revealed” ethics.

*Ibid.*, 3:36.

In fact, ethics grounds the demand, which becomes a duty in God. Out of this he attempts to locate the principles of Christian ethics in liberty, love, and conscience. The business of ethics is the “application of moral principles in the regulation of human conduct.” As Wiley expands his discussion of Christian ethics he carefully connects duty at all levels. He talks about duties to God, duties to oneself, and duties we owe to others. Wiley’s ethical reflection centers on duty, principles, and right.

*This appears in “God’s Ethical Ideal for Humanity,” in Contemporary Wesleyan Theology (Salem, OH: Schmuel Publishing 1992), 2:955.*

Charles Carter is another Wesleyan-Holiness theologian who develops a fundamental deontological vision for ethical reflection. He begins his treatment by noting the importance for principles in Judeo-Christian ethics. He also talks about the business of ethics as the application of absolute principles to particular situations in an attempt to define the meaning of an ethical situation. Carter also reveals his deontological commitments by his reference to the Decalogue, which “was designed by God to be the *objective moral norm and directive* for man in his fallen, perverted, subjective moral state.”

Carter looks at Scripture as the grace of God in Christ that saves, supports, and directs the believer in the way of right conduct toward God and one’s fellow human beings. He laments the lack of ultimate norms in situation-based ethical reflection. Carter finds that any ethical system, which is Christian, much less Wesleyan must work from ultimate, objective, universal norms. He finds these contained in Scripture. Perhaps these are found in the Christian tradition, but all moral norms must be measured against the righteous character of God as it is revealed in Scripture through the Holy Spirit.

*Taylor’s analysis of ethics can be found in Exploring Christian Holiness, Vol. 3, The Theological Formulation (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985).*

Richard Taylor is another prominent Wesleyan-Holiness theologian whose moral reflections are deontological in character. He talks about the ethical standard that is to “mark holy living.” Even Taylor’s talk of liberation from the law is couched in a higher moral expectation. He expects the conduct of holiness people to be blameless. Taylor thinks it is the duty of the Church to set ethical standards and raise ethical issues as the teaching office before the world. He looks at the life of holiness as living out of the duty inherent within the Christian faith. There is even some suggestion that holiness people have a special responsibility to live a moral life. The language of duty, fixed landmarks,

*Refer to Resource 13-5 in the Student Guide.*

*Dunning's most fully developed analysis can be found in Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).*

*Dunning summarizes this discussion, "Historically, the holiness movement has utilized all three of these approaches, but the most adequate attempts to justify the holiness life-style used some version of the teleological approach." Grace, Faith, and Holiness, 502.*

*Dunning feels the teleological vision for moral reflection is the most Wesleyan approach.*

standards, etc., indicates that moral reflection for Taylor, and thus holiness is deontologically conceived.

**Wesleyan-Holiness Teleology** is another way of thinking about conduct in the Holiness tradition. The work of H. Ray Dunning, however, is an example of such a perspective. Dunning underscores the importance of a theologically informed ethic. Dunning thinks the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is positioned to make a real contribution to moral reflection. He even goes so far as to suggest that Wesley saw sanctification as an ethical concept.

Dunning offers a brief section on Christian ethics in his *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* where he talks about three approaches to ethics within the Holiness Movement.

- He talks first about those who seek to conceptualize ethics as rules for conduct in the Bible and then apply them to contemporary life.
- Second, he talks about ethical reflection in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition that seeks to define its center in law, obligation, and duty.
- Third, he talks about the teleological vision within Wesleyan-Holiness theology, which focuses on goals, ends, and happiness.

According to Dunning it is important to define an ethical principle for moral reflection. Such a principle is necessary so the difference between right and wrong will be clarified. He also suggests the principle should be transcendent, so our ethic will not be shaped by the standards of contemporary culture.

The shape of ethical reflection within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is developed under the rubric of relation to God. One of the ways in which this becomes evident is that Dunning prefers the term "obedience" to "duty;" here Dunning is talking about a principle of discrimination. Such an understanding avoids the legalism which often attaches itself to deontological schemes. Relation to God is the substantive element, which "umpires," "arbitrates," and "guides" one's life toward holiness. A principle of separation, which acknowledges God as absolute sovereign and loving Father informs Dunning's ethical scheme. These two principles offer Dunning the matrix to develop a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic.

### Summary

While there are many ways to think about holiness as conduct/virtue, these two general options are representative. Conduct according to Wesleyan-



Holiness deontology is about duty, absolute principles, and high moral standards. Wesleyan-Holiness teleology is about character, continual attention to holiness, and love. Both dimensions of the tradition include people of integrity. The point is not to see these positions so much as opposite as to see how deontology and teleology have affected the conception of holy conduct.

### **“Rings and Things” Holiness**

“Rings and Things” holiness refers generally to a period of time in the history of the Holiness Movement when moral norms were located in such things as outward appearance. This view made the moral and theological error of equating holiness and legalism. This type of holiness tended to locate holiness in appropriate dress: no sleeveless dresses or shirts, no cutting the hair for a female, no makeup, no wedding ring, and so on.

During this time a foundational shift took place where sin as pride began to be replaced with sin as sensuality. The shift away from pride to sexual norms contributed to a “rings and things” understanding of holiness. Therefore, people dressed plainly, but gossiped, judged, and displayed hardness toward others, all of which were inconsistent with holiness. The association with legalism had the general effect of taking the joy out of holiness. It also misplaced the point of holiness to a purely outer understanding. The entire point of holiness is the joining of a heart that has been cleansed to the life that is obedient. In other words, when our conduct expresses our deepest faith, then holiness is authentic.

*Refer to Resource 13-6 in the Student Guide.*

### **Covenant of Christian Character**

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene sets forth the Covenant of Christian Character that connects the Articles of Faith and rules of conduct. These rules affirm the connection between a commitment to God and the holy life.

- The first rule can be simply stated as obey Scripture. Examples of this are: loving God, evangelism, courteousness, do good whenever possible, support the ministry, and attend the means of grace.

It is important to understand that holy conduct is an *embrace* of life not a *flight* from life. Some might even go so far as to call this the general rule for well-being.

*Refer to Resource 13-7 in the Student Guide.*

- The second rule can be simply stated as avoid all evil of every kind. Several examples are provided of this rule: avoid taking the name of the Lord in vain, profaning the Lord's Day, sexual immorality, destructive habits, quarreling, dishonesty, and indulging in immodest dress.

It is important to note at this point that Christian perfection is both positive (doing what is good) and negative (avoiding what is evil). Whenever one walks in the direction of well-being he or she walks away from ill-being.

- The third rule is simply to abide in hearty fellowship. These three rules are a very basic statement about what holy conduct looks like: do good, avoid evil, and abide in hearty fellowship. While the examples have shifted over the years the general principles are indisputably justified as descriptions of holy conduct.

The major point to be made is to understand that the balance between doing good and avoiding evil can best be held together in light of the fellowship of believers.

*It is important to note that Wesley makes this point even more clearly in his Directions to Band-Societies.*

Following the Covenant of Christian Character in the *Manual* there is a section titled the Covenant of Christian Conduct. This section spells out in some detail the idea that faith and life meet in the vision of holiness engendered in the Church of the Nazarene. The specific items mentioned in the covenant are:

- Christian Life—Here the *Manual* clearly connects faith and life. This is essential to holiness.
- Marriage and Divorce—Here the *Manual* affirms the sanctity of marriage and God's intention that one man marry one woman for life. Yet, the Church sees that we live in a fallen world where that may not be possible.
- Abortion—The sanctity of life is affirmed.
- Human Sexuality—The importance of clear Christian teaching on human sexuality is affirmed and homosexual behavior is condemned.
- Christian Stewardship—The basic principle of understanding that God owns all and we are stewards is the underlying thought here. Storehouse tithing is affirmed.
- Church Officers—The importance of church leaders affirming the doctrine of entire sanctification is underscored here.
- Rules of Order—*Roberts Rules of Order* will be used for the business of the church in conjunction with the *Manual*.

These aspects of the Covenant of Conduct indicate that the Church of the Nazarene and, for that matter, the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is determined to link faith and morality.

The similarity between the rules of the Church of the Nazarene and the directions offered by Wesley is easy to note. It suggests a logic that connects doing good, avoiding evil, and availing oneself of the means of grace. Whatever the particular moral standard, theology is understood to be connected to ethical considerations.

## Authority

Looking at the moral convictions of Wesley and some of those in the Church of the Nazarene raise an important issue: authority. Can the holy life hope to be maintained apart from a vigorous ecclesiology? Wesley talked often about holy conduct, but not without giving attention to small groups and attendance to the means of grace. The Church of the Nazarene makes a similar move by affirming the importance of hearty fellowship and attending the means of grace.

Article XI, "The Church," affirms the importance of obedience to Christ and mutual accountability. The article also talks about holy living. Part of the issue concerns authority. One implication of both Wesley and the Church of the Nazarene is that the moral life requires recognition of authority.

*You might mention at this point that the next lesson will treat more fully the social aspects of Wesleyan-Holiness ethical reflection. Here we will look at the Church as one aspect of social holiness.*

The logic underlying the General Rules and the Covenant of Christian Conduct is similar to the general direction of this module. The simplest way to understand this logic is faith embodies a particular ethic. The fact that the General Rules follow the Articles of Faith is important. What the Church thinks about God determines the shape of its ethics. The obvious links between Article XI, the General Rules, and the Covenant of Christian Conduct suggest a thorough understanding of Christian morality as faith affirmation.

## Guided Discussion: Credibility Gap

(10 minutes)

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop raises a concern in *A Theology of Love*, called "The Credibility Gap":

Our problem is a credibility gap. Of all the credibility gaps in contemporary life, none is more real and serious than that which exists between

*Wynkoop, A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), 39.*

Christian, and particularly Wesleyan, doctrine and everyday human life. The absolute of holiness theology may satisfy the mind but the imperfection of the human self seems to deny all that the perfection of Christian doctrine affirms.

Professor Wynkoop is suggesting a problem exists between what we *claim* holiness does in the heart and life of a believer and what *actually happens* in the heart and the life of a believer. The moral claims can sometimes exceed the experience of holiness people.

*This is a big question that requires a good bit of reflection in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. A very good place to begin the discussion is the distinction Wesley makes between will and tempers.*

*The question is how do we temper these claims regarding moral conduct without weakening the call to Christian holiness?*

*The will refers to the love that captures the heart of the sanctified person. It is analogous to the love that captures the heart of a husband for his wife. When this is true we will to be faithful in the big things and in the little things. Our love is clear and our intention is pure, but we may need to learn how to be a good husband. We may need to rethink the ways we have seen men treat women or husbands treat wives.*

*How do we know when our moral claims regarding human conduct have outstripped our theology?*

*These are historical dispositions or tempers and they will take some time to redeem in our life. It is possible that a sanctified person will struggle with smoking or alcohol, but as the will expels all other loves there will be no room for that which damages our ability to love God perfectly.*

*Another possible resource is the distinction between carnality, which is dealt with in entire sanctification, and humanity, which is all the bad habits living in the world have brought.*

*The business of spiritual renewal is to deal with the first, carnality. The business of moral reflection is to deal with the latter.*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson has attempted the following:

- Define the connection between Wesleyan-Holiness theology and ethical behavior: the connection is clear when holiness is defined as a result of grace and it is also evident in the relation of attending to the means of grace and moral standards.
- Understand the logic of the General Rules and Covenant of Christian Conduct in the Church of the Nazarene: the same logic present in Wesley is evident in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will deal with the moral significance of social-holiness.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

Read and respond to Resource 13-8.

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the Covenant of Christian Character contained in the *Manual*, paragraph 27. Reflect on the significance of the connection between faith and ethics, and the moral maxims of doing good and avoiding evil.

## Closing Thought

William Arthur, an important spokesperson of the 19th-century Holiness Movement, connects the being filled with the Holy Spirit and duty in the following:

*William Arthur, "The Power of True Christianity: Spiritual Effects," in Great Holiness Classics, vol 4, The 19th-Century Holiness Movement, ed. Melvin Dieter (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1998), 219.*

Whatever is meant by being "filled with the Holy Ghost" is, but these plain words, laid upon us as our duty . . . Looking at it in the aspect of a duty, and thinking of the moral height that the expression indicates above our ordinary life, we shrink.

[This page intentionally blank]

## Lesson 14

# Holiness as Social Holiness

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Holiness as Social Holiness	Lecture	Resources 14-1—14-7
1:10	Practical Implications	Small Groups	Resource 14-8
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Atherton, John, ed. *Christian Social Ethics: A Reader*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1994.

Malloy, Michael. *Am I My Brother's Keeper: The AIDS Crisis and the Church*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990.

Ogletree, Thomas W. *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

Pohl, Christine D. *Making Room: Recovery Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.

Powell, Samuel M., and Michael E. Lodahl. *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students read each other's essays.*

*Call on students to give their response to Resource 13-7.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You may want to remind the class that the current unit intends to survey the resources presented by Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. Lesson 12 dealt with the link between spiritual renewal and morality/behavior. Lesson 13 dealt with the association of conduct with Wesleyan-Holiness theology. All Christian traditions make a similar link between faith and action, but it is actually Wesleyan-Holiness theology that provides a theology capable of sustaining such a link. This happens chiefly through a conscious embodying of a therapeutic understanding of salvation.*

This lesson will address the relationship between Wesley's social theology and his ethics. The basic concern here will be to show how understanding a Wesleyan-Holiness emphasis upon the social nature of life contributes to a clearer understanding of the moral imperative.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

- By the end of this lesson, participants should
- define the social aspects of Wesley's theology
  - articulate how the social theology of Wesley is also a moral theology
  - apply the social holiness themes of Wesley to specific moral concerns

## Motivator

Wesley says in a sermon titled "On the Church":

In the meantime, let all those who are real members of the Church see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. 'Ye are the light of the world!' Ye are 'a city set upon a hill,' and 'cannot be hid.' O 'let your light shine before men!' Show them your faith by your works. Let them see, by the



*Wesley's Works, vol. VI, 400-401.*

whole tenor of your conversations that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man: Let it overflow to every child of God. By this let all men know whose disciples ye are, because you 'love one another.'

*What does this statement made by Wesley suggest about social action and the social nature of moral action/reflection?*

The theme of this lesson is how the theological resources of Wesley come to bear upon social action. This lesson will look at several biblical models that suggest this. The lesson will look at Trinitarian theology and ecclesiology as resources for social action and the social construction of moral reflection. Other aspects of this issue will be examined as well. This brief quote from a sermon by Wesley includes several themes that bear on the concern of this lesson.

- First, it states very clearly that Wesley understood the Church as a place where we walk in a holy life together. He sees part of this walk as social action.
- Second, the quote suggests that such images as light and being set on a hill, position the Church to show what faith means. For Wesley faith becomes an external act made manifest in such mundane things as conversations. Yet, it is in these things that the Church shows forth its love and its hope.
- Third, it is important that the Church be a place where love abounds and extends to every child of humanity. The most important point to emphasize is that social action in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition arises from a profound conviction that holiness itself is social.

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: Holiness as Social Holiness**

(40 minutes)

Social action arises from the social construction of the faith. It recognizes the fact that theology and moral reflection take place in a community. The purpose of this lesson is to explore some of the resources in Scripture, and in the Christian tradition that interprets the biblical witness.

*Refer to Resource 14-1 in the Student Guide.*

#### **Biblical Models**

Scripture presents several images that suggest the social construction of faith and value. While only some of these concerns can be treated, they will suggest the richness of the scriptural witness to the social construction of faith and value.

The **Old Testament** depicts a people called to live out a common faith. This is evident in the covenant God made with Abraham to become a people. The faithfulness of God is manifest in a binding covenant with Moses calling for certain behavior. The tribes of Israel are held together by faith in God and a common mission in the world. Israel is a community of faith bound by a social identity located in a God who creates, calls, delivers, and demands obedience. Because of their faith in God these people can welcome the alien and stranger.

The common life of the people engenders a capacity to act morally. The call of the prophets is to Israel. For example, Jeremiah 34: 13-22 links the covenant with the fact the people had not released the slaves as agreed. The following words make this point very clear, "Therefore, this says the LORD: You have not obeyed me by granting a release to your neighbors and friends; I am going to grant a release to you, says the LORD—a release to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine. I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth" (17). The command to release Hebrew slaves was linked to the covenant with God. The social implications of the covenant become evident in this judgment.

Another example of social aspect of Israel's faith can be found in Ezekiel, "When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their

enemies' lands, and through them have displayed my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God" (39:27-28a). These two examples could be multiplied several times. The identity of the people as God's people brings with it the importance of responsible living. Israel is called to be holy, to show the world who God is by their behavior.

The **New Testament** carries with it several images that link the social construction of faith with morality. Jesus calls disciples together in order to accomplish a mission to the world. He sends out 70. After the Ascension the disciples are told to stay together and wait. After Pentecost Acts 2:42 says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles, teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." The Early Church sought to define the faith, but this was simultaneous with having all things in common and distributing to the poor.

Paul calls the church at Colossae to specific moral practices. The husband is to love his wife. Children are to obey parents. Masters are to treat slaves fairly. Paul urges, "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (4:5-6).

It is interesting that Paul directs these comments to the church and expects that the church will act in this way. Acts 6 tells about how the Early Church moved early on to appoint deacons so the Hellenists might be treated fairly in the distribution of food. Paul takes up an offering for the church at Jerusalem.

There are many other images of how the New Testament church combined a social construction of the faith with social action. Suffice it to say that the church saw itself as a whole in doctrine and in ethics. It would be incomprehensible that a different ethic would pertain to the church at Thessalonica than the church at Corinth. Therefore, when the church acted it was as a whole.

## **Trinitarian theology**

The doctrine of the Trinity and Trinitarian theology is an attempt to tell the entire Christian narrative. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit define what is real for the Christian faith. For some the Trinity is a metaphysical puzzle not meant to be understood. Truthfully, no human mind can penetrate its meaning for to do so

*Refer to Resource 14-2 in the Student Guide.*

would mean the human mind could fully understand God. But even though we cannot fully penetrate its meaning some of the implications of such a doctrine can be drawn.

The most basic implication is that God is being-in-communion. God is constituted by the everlasting fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This means the most basic thing that can be said of God is that He is one in everlasting fellowship. Being is not solitary, rather it is communion.

This social aspect of understanding God spills over into the creature created in the image of God. Human beings are called to be as they fellowship in God. This very way of being leads human beings to comprehend existence as communion, first with God and as such to the world, others, and finally the self. Just as God exists in communion human beings exist in communion. This aspect of human existence links sociality with morality. We are called in holiness of heart and life to embrace the world either in adoration of God or in invitation. Trinitarian theology is one of the ways in which the social construction of reality/faith connects to morality and as such social action.

Wesley thinks of the Trinity as a foundational Christian doctrine. He is not interested in contending for a term, but the Trinity is so important that it must be part of Christian reflection. Wesley thinks the Trinity is central to a vital understanding of religion. In fact, Wesley says:

Therefore, I do not see how it is possible for any to have a vital religion who denies that these three are One. And all my hope for them is not that they will be saved during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance,) but that God, before they go hence, will "bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

*Wesley's Works, vol VI, 206.*

The vision of what is real as communion depicted in the Trinity is essential to the Christian faith. This means by the very nature of God the Christian faith conceives of everything as grounded in communion with God, including moral action. When the Christian acts it is in the power of the triune God and in some measure in the triune God.

*Refer to Resource 14-3 in the Student Guide.*

## **Ecclesiology**

The doctrine of the Church is also important to the identity of Christianity and to social action. At the most basic level this means God calls us to be together. When Paul writes to the Church at Corinth, which was full of individuals seeking to establish themselves, he reminds them they are the “church of God that is in Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2a). This is important for comprehending morality. First Corinthians 6 suggests that what one person does involves the entire church. First Corinthians 8 indicates that personal, ethical convictions should not become burdens placed on other Christians. Paul says, “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (8:9). Paul develops this same kind of logic in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Paul urges the Church to think and to act as a whole. This is clearly the logic of 1 Corinthians 13 where what divides the church gives way to what unites the church. Love is expected of all. When Paul writes he does so to the Church. The same logic that suggests we are beings in communion leads to an enriched understanding of the Church as a moral agent.

Learning to think of the Church as a place for moral discourse and action is a central Christian teaching. When the Church is true to its own calling as a structure of grace, it confronts the structures of evil. Any fair reading of the New Testament makes it plain that problems existed. Until Jesus comes the Church will struggle with living out the gospel entrusted to her, but this does not diminish the fact that the Church is called to incarnate Christ to the world.

When the Church is a community of “truth tellers” it incarnates Christ. When the Church takes up the cause of justice for the poor, it incarnates Christ. When the Church calls the world to understand its lostness, it incarnates Christ. The Church is the community of the incarnation and as such it acts as “a body” to the world. This is how the Church is to be in the world as a source for social action.

One of the more well-known comments by Wesley connects to social holiness:

So widely distant is the manner of building up souls in Christ taught by St. Paul, from that taught by the Mystics! Nor do they differ as to the foundation, or the manner of building thereon, more than they do with regard to the superstructure. For the religion these authors would edify us in, is solitary religion . . . For contemplation is, with them, the fulfilling of the law, even a contemplation that "consists in a cessation from all works."

Directly opposite to this is the gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. "Holy solitaires" is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. *The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.* "Faith working by love" is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. "This commandment have we from Christ, that he who loves God, love his brother also" and that we manifest our love "by doing good unto all men; especially to them that are of the household of faith."

And in truth, whosoever loveth his brethren, not in word only, but as Christ loved him, cannot but be "zealous of good works." He feels in his soul a burning, restless desire of spending and being spent for them. "My Father," will he say, "worketh."

*Wesley's Works, vol. XIV, 321-22.*

*Refer to Resource 14-4 in the Student Guide.*

*Stanley Hauerwas teaches at Duke Divinity School. He is treated as a representative Wesleyan ethical reflection because of his association with a Methodist seminary and some of the themes of his work. The particular work where Hauerwas develops the idea of the church as social ethic is A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 9-12.*

## **The Church as Social Ethic**

According to Stanley Hauerwas, the gospel has social significance chiefly in the narrative structure of Christian convictions. Therefore, he avoids reducing the social ethics of the Church to principles and policies. For Hauerwas the fact that God has formed a people, by the call of the Spirit around the story of Israel and the story of Jesus links convictions and sociality.

Hauerwas understands that all social ethics require a narrative. This issue has been addressed several times in this module already. Ethical reflection requires history and tradition. Principles and policies are not enough to carry the weight of moral reflection. Since the Church is formed around specific narratives, these stories form a peculiar people. The very theological and moral identity of the Church depends upon being knit together in the narrative structure of the gospel. Since

the Church is formed by the narratives of faith, it is apparent that its ethics are so formed.

Hauerwas argues that the ability to account for human existence is crucial to justifying the truthfulness of a social ethic. The agent of any moral action in the Christian faith is shaped in some sense by the question, "What would Jesus do?" But in fact the question ought to be, "What did Jesus do?"

The Church has a story and as such the question of what would Jesus do is unnecessary, because we know what Jesus did. Paul understands the Christological form of the moral life. In order to live a truthful life a person/Church must have a narrative account of the life of Christ. In other words, the Church has such a narrative and it is this very fact that constitutes the possibility of a truthful life and thus a social ethic.

Since the Church is formed by a truthful narrative, the call to provide the skills that will ensure moral action is essential. These skills may be as simple as storytelling, but as complex as welcoming the stranger into the midst of the Church. Israel was called to welcome the alien and the stranger as a testimony both to the memory of being in Egypt and as a way of living out the covenant. The social aspects of the faith and ethics of the Church render it more open to difference. This also makes the Church capable of understanding that truthfulness is a gift engendered in the narrativity of the Christian faith.

Since the Church is a gift of God, constituted by the response in time by human beings, its very existence is sufficient. The Church does not need nor should it seek the blessings of prevailing culture. All the Church needs to do is be itself in the world as a testimony to faith and value. Part of what this comes to mean suggests the importance of the Church as a pilgrim people. The journey of faith requires skills formed in the very narratives constituting the life of the Church. Surely the Church, as well as the people made new in Christ present in the Church, will need to face the dangers and possibilities of life in the world. The social reality of the Church is a significant resource for moral action.

The Church does not seek to control history, but to live out of control. The Cross stands at the center of Christian reality. The body of Christ is cruciform; that is, the Church follows the slaughtered Lamb. Jesus submitted to death on a cross and calls those who follow Him to pick up a cross. Therefore, the social

ethics of the Church do not seek to master the world by manipulation. The primary form of social action for the Church is to embody the life of the one who submits to death. The Cross is the reality of a people who live before the world in the reality of the story of the gospel.

The Church depends upon leaders who recognize the gifts of the Spirit. God equips the Church with such gifts in order that it will be capable of being both universal and particular. The variety of the gifts testifies to the several ways in which God is capable of leading the Church into action. It also forces the Church to recognize its dependence upon God.

The Church does not so much have a social ethic as it is in its very life a social ethic. Ethics are embodied in the Church's commitment to kindness, friendship, and the formation of families. The very life of the Church is the embodied gospel.

These eight points argue for:

- the narrative structure of ethics
- an adequate account of human existence is essential
- the Church must provide skills for moral action
- the Church is simply called to be itself
- the Church lives out of control because it trusts God

These points suggest together that the Church is a social ethic. Its action arises out of it being in the narratives of Israel and Jesus.

## The Permeable Self

The idea of the permeable self arises in the wake of the emergence of the Church. Hauerwas repeats the understanding that for many the Methodist Church was to be an order within the Church catholic. This understands that the "Methodist family" was from the start committed to a wide-open understanding of itself.

One implication of this understanding of the self includes looking at the self as constituted by the Church. The prevailing images of "body" and "temple" are at their very heart social metaphors. A Christian is

*The last two points made by Hauerwas are not essential to the argument of the Church as social ethic. He argues that too often the Church has embraced liberalism as its social strategy. His last point is that too often the Church has existed to provide an apologetic for the prevailing culture.*

*Stanley Hauerwas presents a powerful argument for the role of the Church for moral reflection. Too often the Church is factored out of moral decision-making. The prevailing image of our culture is that moral decisions are made by the lonely individual struggling to do what is right. The Wesleyan-Holiness conception of moral reflection is driven by the social reality of the Church. We are called as persons-in-community gathered by the resources of the Church to be holy agents of the gospel. The Church acts in the resources and with the skill provided by Word and Spirit.*

*Refer to Resource 14-5 in the Student Guide.*

*Stanley Hauerwas makes an argument for the permeable self in "The Sanctified Body: Why Perfection Does Not Require a 'Self'" in Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 77-91.*

*"Methodist family" is a term that includes all those affiliated denominations who think generally in Wesleyan categories. There is great diversity in the Methodist*



*family ranging from United Methodism to the Church of the Nazarene.*

a person-in-community. Therefore, when a Christian acts the Church acts and vice versa.

Because the Church is one, persons in the Church are united in faith. The permeable self suggests that all action is social for the Christian. Accordingly, the Church frees individuals to be holy/moral as they are united in the narratives of the gospel. This freedom arises partly in the recognition that individuals do not possess sufficient resources for moral living. The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition comprehends the moral life in the life of the Church. Persons are called to the Church in order to be conformed to the image of God, that is, to be moral agents in the world.

## Eschatology

*Refer to Resource 14-6 in the Student Guide.*

Eschatology is the branch of philosophy that deals with "last things." From the very start the Church looked to the second coming of Christ. It was just such a concern that motivated Paul to write to the church at Thessalonica. Many had come to believe Christ had returned already or was about to return. These reports led to widespread confusion and loss of faith. Paul writes:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage one another with these words (1 Thess 4:13-18).

These words are meant to encourage those in Thessalonica by calling them to remember their hope in Christ. Yet, the power of these words and the rest of the argument in 1 and 2 Thessalonians comprehends salvation in the broadest possible terms. Eschatology casts the Christian life and all action arising from it against the horizon of history. Revelation 21:1-2 casts a similar vision:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The Wesleyan-Holiness hope is that in the end all of history will be taken up into the glorious kingdom of God where even the presence of sin will be no more. But the companion hope is that heaven has already come down in the reality of the Church in history. When the Church gathers in, the hope of Kingdom and heaven comes down. The very social existence of the Church as a social ethic is the hope made evident by the faithfulness of God's people.

## Conclusion

This lesson has attempted to make the case for connecting the social construction of faith to social action. What is the difference between social work undertaken by society and ministry undertaken by the Church? On the surface they appear to be the same. After all in both cases the needs of those who are hurting are addressed.

Yet, the very meaning of social action in the Christian sense is found in the understanding that the gospel is the inspiration for such action. The explicit reflection on the meaning of the gospel leads to social action in the name of Christ. When the Church is faithful to its own message it reaches toward a hurting world with a cup of cold water. In fact, Jesus indicates it is possible that as a cup of cold water is extended to the hungry, thirsty, and naked, the very presence of Christ is manifest. A strong and vital faith is a social faith.

*The next lesson will take up the breadth of social holiness and conduct by looking at the Wesleyan-Holiness gesture toward justice and reconciliation.*

*Refer to Resource 14-7 in the Student Guide.*

The following conclusions can be drawn from the material of this lesson:

- The Christian faith is social.
- The sociality of the faith is engendered in the Church.
- God calls us to the Church so we might be whole.
- Wholeness in the Christian sense is expressed in holy conduct.
- Holy conduct reaches fullness in social action.
- Social action weaves all history in the reality of God's kingdom both in the present and at the consummation.
- Morality considered within this trajectory is Wesleyan-Holiness theology appropriately understood.

## Small Groups: Practical Implications

(15 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 14-8 in the Student Guide.*

In your group work together to state some practical implications based on the points by Samuel Powell.

*Divide the class into groups of about 3 students each.*

*Allow the groups to work for a while before offering any suggestions or ideas.*

*The first point made by Powell concerns the relationship between holiness and ethics.*

- *First, holiness concerns a healthy relationship with God that extends to others, the world, and even the self. This works itself out in terms of the way we understand others (made in the image of God), how we treat the world (stewards of God's creation) and the self (determined by the Word of God).*
- *Second, the association of holiness and ethics suggests the importance of faith, so we do not think it is about getting better and better on our own.*
- *Third, the association of holiness and ethics reminds us that holy behavior is engendered in the practices of the Church. A life nourished by the gospel bears the fruit of the Spirit, which is morality.*

*The second point made by Powell concerns the importance of the Church.*

- *First, the Church is a place where the practices of faith take place. This means the Church has a history that bears witness to the historic practices of baptism, Communion, prayer, Bible study, accountability, and so on.*
- *Second, the Church is a place where authority comes into focus. Just as accountability calls out specifically to persons where a personal relationship exists, it requires the call to act toward the other. For example, a parent has the authority to call a child to accountability. A pastor speaks out of the authority of a call to preach the gospel and ordination by the elders of the Church. Yet, sometimes it is the*

*friend who has nurtured a relationship with us that speaks the truth in love.*

- *Third, the Church constitutes a call to participate in the God who calls her into being. One of the classical marks of the Church is "holiness." This holiness is that of Christ and not the sum total of the membership. It is important for the Church to avoid the inherent perfectionism of reducing holiness to the sum total of the good behavior of its members. The other way to look at this is to understand that holiness takes place as all members participate in the life of the Church.*

Social holiness is one way to insure that holiness is not reduced to moral perfectionism.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

This lesson dealt with the following:

- Define the social aspects of Wesley's theology: the several models in the Old and New Testament, Trinitarian theology, ecclesiology, the Church as a social ethic, the permeable self, and eschatology all testify to the social nature of faith and value.
- Articulate how the social theology of Wesley is also a moral theology: Wesley thought of holiness as social, thus he put a medical journal together and sought to comprehend the church as responsible to minister to the least of the world.
- Apply the social holiness themes of Wesley to specific moral concerns: the most important issue is to understand that the social aspects of the faith in Wesley are also a call to Wesley. Both the beginning exercise and the guided discussion indicate some of the resources of Wesley for specific moral concerns. The next lesson will address some of these issues directly.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will be the last one in this unit. It will deal with the way in which Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection embraces the search for justice and reconciliation.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write an essay on the various social structures of life that affect the way life is lived. Especially, reflect in this essay on how these social structures are in turn affected potentially or actually by the gospel.

Read and respond to Resource 14-9.

Make a journal entry that reflects an engagement with the material of this lesson.

## Closing Thought

*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).*

David Ford's *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* is a fascinating reflection on the relationship between self and salvation. One of the more interesting conceptions in the book is called "facing." Ford reflects on the fact that the face is both personal and the basis upon which

community takes place. After all the face shows emotion, presents the self, and worships God. We know and are known by our face. A community is constituted by faces all turned to God in the case of the Church. When we think of social holiness it is essential that we see it as a way of locating a person.

Social holiness is about finding a face in a community constituted in Word, Spirit, and Sacrament.

## Lesson 15

# Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation	Lecture/Discussion	Resources 15-1—15-5
1:15	Liberation Theology	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Heitzenrater, Richard P., ed. *The Poor and the People Called Methodists 1729-1999*. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 2002.

Jennings, Theodore W., Jr. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.

Marquardt, Manfred. *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*. Translated by John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Meeks, M. Douglas, ed. *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*. Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon, 2004.

Runyon, Theodore. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Sanctification and Liberation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981.

Stone, Ronald. *John Wesley's Life and Ethics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.



# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 student to read his or her essay.*

*Call for responses to Resource 14-9.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You may want to point out that this lesson shares some theological and moral space with the previous lesson. This fact may cause some confusion so you will want to be ready to explain the similarity and difference between the lessons. The previous lesson pushes the moral enterprise from personal holiness to the reign of God in the cosmos. This lesson will link the resources of Wesleyan-Holiness to a specific Christian agenda toward social justice.*

*The two lessons are connected by a common theological assumption that all holiness is social holiness. The difference between the two lessons is that the previous one made the case that Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection reaches naturally to social issues. This lesson will show how specific social concerns are addressed with the resources of Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection.*

This lesson concludes our consideration of Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. When this lesson concludes you should have a basic grasp of the parameters of Wesleyan-Holiness ethics.

- First, a link was defined in Wesleyan-Holiness tradition between spiritual renewal and moral reflection. Wesley taught that a heart made new in Christ embodies moral action.
- Second, holy conduct is associated with Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection. While legalism or “rings and things faith” has often characterized the holiness tradition, this is not its native home. Holy conduct arises from a heart defined by expelling love.
- Third, the social nature of Wesleyan-Holiness theology comprehends the essential relatedness of things. This relatedness results in the message of holiness to reach toward the world. It means the Church is the expression of holy action in the world.

This lesson develops Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection with one more consideration—the relevance of Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection on poverty, oppression, and systemic evil.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- articulate the moral significance of grace, justice, and reconciliation within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition
- define some of the resources within Wesleyan-Holiness theology for moral reflection for confronting issues of social justice

## Motivator

*This short writing is contained in Wesley's Works: Vol XI, 174-78.*

Wesley writes "A Word to a Smuggler" in 1767. Wesley defines smuggling as "the importing, selling, or buying of run goods." He further locates the problem as not paying duty. Wesley thinks of smuggling as robbery. Failure to pay one's taxes is robbing the king, in this case King George. Wesley goes on to say that believing in the Bible makes it clear smuggling is something Christians are prohibited from doing. Not only is smuggling robbing from the king, but it is robbing from all honest people.

Reflect on the implications of Wesley's words about smuggling.

*What do they suggest about human nature?*

*What does it suggest about sin?*

*What might it suggest about grace?*

*How does this short essay inform moral reflection?*

*While this is a short essay it reveals many of Wesley's ethical convictions.*

- *First, human beings are constituted by association with rulers and others. This suggests that moral reflection is social philosophy, reflection upon justice.*
- *Second, sin reaches toward the other. When a person smuggles they not only steal from the king but from all honest people.*
- *Third, while Wesley does not talk about grace, the comments about smuggling suggest grace is likewise social. Therefore, if robbery ripples out to injure others, one might conclude that kindness would as well.*

*All of this suggests that moral reflection connects the larger social concerns of society. Essentially, Wesley is saying Christians have a social responsibility to pay taxes.*

# Lesson Body

## Lecture: Grace, Justice, and Reconciliation

(45 minutes)

### Social Justice

Social justice extends moral reflection to society. Typically social justice issues include moral reflection on racism, sexism, nationalism, and oppression of the poor. Since Wesley is an 18th-century person, an authentic Wesleyan response to some of these issues will necessarily be constructed from themes in his theology. Since Wesley understood holiness as social, meaning it involved a mutual journey toward righteousness, his theological perspective reaches naturally to the social. The last lesson examined the theological resources within Wesley for social action, so there will be no need to make those connections here. Wesley addressed several issues that reflect his concern for social justice.

*Refer to Resource 15-1 in the Student Guide.*

### Stewardship

Stewardship is an important consideration for Wesleyan-Holiness ethics. Wesley's sermon titled "The Good Steward" preached on Luke 16:2 begins with the idea that human beings are entrusted by God with temporal things. Humans are entrusted with soul, body, worldly goods, and talents. The point of being a steward is to dispose of what has been given according to what God commands. The emphasis brought by Wesley makes the point that Christians are called to use what God gives in order to accomplish His will. This means human beings will be held accountable.

"The Danger of Riches" is another sermon preached by Wesley that reaches social concerns. This sermon suggested that riches place a special responsibility upon a person. For Wesley riches indicated the special importance of stewardship. In fact, riches might even suggest poor stewardship. He seeks to broaden the understanding of "desire of the flesh" in this sermon. These desires tempt humankind to want more than is necessary. When this happens, life is taken to a dangerous place. The desire for riches blinds one to the need of others. Such a life represents poor stewardship.

*Randy Maddox has an important essay titled "Nurturing the New Creation: Reflections on a Wesleyan Trajectory" in Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon, 2004), 21-52.*

## Economic Considerations

Economic considerations are an important consideration for Wesley. His most primitive statement on economics is "Gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can." Wesley understood that everything belonged to God, so we are to be stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Wesley also thought we should be careful about accumulating wealth because living beyond the necessities of life was wrong. This meant for Wesley luxuries were immoral. The goal would be to redistribute wealth to those who needed it.

A famous tract written by Wesley, titled *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions* (1773), lays the problem squarely at the feet of those who insist upon living life wrapped in luxury. He proposed in this tract that distilling be prohibited, exporting horses be taxed along with using carriages, large farms be banned, luxuries be diminished, half of the national debt be abolished, and all unnecessary pensions be abolished. This is both specific and wide ranging, but it clearly suggests Wesley took a great deal of interest in economic issues.

## Facing the Poor

Facing the poor is very important for a Wesleyan-Holiness understanding of moral action. Poverty was a significant problem in 18th-century England. Wesley linked spirituality with economic justice. Poverty existed because of misplaced governmental policies and greedy merchants. He talked about inflation and taxes as contributing to poverty. He advised his followers to visit the poor. Literacy and self-determination were important for Wesley because they led to the empowerment of the poor. Wesley's concern with actually facing the poor was shaped by the sense that the poor might have some ability to determine their own future.

Wesley was concerned that wealth had a corrupting influence.

- First, it seeks influence and power in order to secure wealth.
- Second, it is won at the expense of others and having more than is necessary.

Actually knowing those caught in poverty is one path toward dealing with the problem. Visiting the poor can lead to transformation according to Wesley. The concern for the poor was so important for Wesley that

it led to the formation of a new society called the Strangers Society, which focused on the poor, sick, and strangers. The important thing about this is that Wesley wanted to make sure the Methodists did not get too preoccupied with themselves. This outward look is essential to justice and reconciliation. Wesley's concern for the poor exceeded most of his other interests, even the emphasis he put on education.

*Allow for response.*

*The fact Wesley devoted so much time to the poor is significant. This along with the interest of the early Church of the Nazarene to work with the poor suggests the importance of ministering to the poor. Wesley saw that poverty was more than people who did not have economic resources.*

*Poverty is also about structural and systemic issues. Poor people need to be able to read, and they need to have access to medical care. The Church needs to reach the least of these in order to be faithful to the gospel. Holiness is not just about spiritual freedom, but about economic freedom.*

*Refer to Resource 15-1, second page.*

*What is the Christian responsibility to the poor?*

## **Injustice and Oppression**

Injustice and oppression were important concerns for Wesley. He spoke against all forms of exploitation. He was particularly critical of merchants who preyed on the poor. Wesley was also critical of those who produced and sold intoxicating beverages. Such practice merely added to the pain of humankind. The Church of the Nazarene from its earliest days raised a voice in protest to intoxicating beverages. This protest extends to drugs in our time.

Doctors were another topic of Wesley's critique, as they refused to serve those who needed them the most. Wesley saw this as sinful and unjust. Lawyers are particularly culpable for the practice of injustice. Those who sell their services to the wealthy seldom have much concern for the poor. The practice of law should not become a platform for injustice and oppression of the poor and needy. For Wesley oppression took the form of war, colonialism, and slavery.

## **Human Rights**

Human rights concern the rights that uniquely pertain to humankind. Natural rights moral reflection locates

these rights as universal claims across cultures and time. Rights can, however, be linked to other moral systems. Wesley lived during a period of time of revolution.

He did not find the American argument for freedom compelling. For one thing, he thought a cry for freedom coming from slave owners should not be taken seriously. Wesley thought of slavery as a terrible institution, with no moral status. Slaves were human beings and ought to be treated as such. Therefore, he denied that slavery was legal or necessary for commerce. Yet, Wesley did not need to appeal to law or economics for his argument. The doctrine of creation where God creates humankind as unique creatures argues against slavery. The idea that God loves all creation and humankind argues against slavery.

Another place that suggests Wesley's interest in human rights is his willingness to consider women in his work. The rights of women arose in Wesley partly because of his strong mother and his sisters. He observed his mother taking leadership in his father's absence. Wesley saw women at work in the ministry and he saw God bless their efforts. He made a specific place for them in his societies. In fact, according to Wesley, women were especially religiously sensitive.

*Allow for response.*

*Human rights as natural and universal principles capable of navigating transcultural conversation need to be questioned theologically. The main reason for this is that rights attempt to self-sustaining moral principles. Wesleyan-Holiness ethical reflection tends to think about humans as called to humanity by the Word of God. Therefore, human rights are a gift from God and they are sustained by tradition and community. This means slavery is immoral not because of some inherent right that needs to be observed, but because God created the enslaved person in His image. Creation and an ethic of love guide Wesleyan-Holiness ethics to a more appropriate place than natural human rights can.*

*Wesley clearly made an important place for women in his ministry. He did this because he saw God at work in their lives. The holiness movement has traditionally made a*

*How ought human rights figure into a Wesleyan-Holiness ethic?*

*What does the treatment of women suggest about the Christian faith?*

*place for women in the ministry. Making a place for women affirms that the basic category is human, not male. A place for women means room is allowed for the work of the Holy Spirit in men and women. Making a place for women reflects an openness to God's work wherever it occurs.*

*Wesley's Works, VI, 291.*

*Allow for response.*

*Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection respects the importance of creation. Stewardship accompanies Wesley's interest in creation. Since the trajectory of Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection is less about rights than responsibilities, nature can be understood as an important issue. Christians should be faithful to nature and the environment because God created it.*

## **Environmental Concerns**

Environmental concerns were not especially important during the time of Wesley. These issues are far more important in our time. Environmental ethics reaches beyond human concerns to nature and subhuman creatures. For Wesley stewardship included the care of the environment. Since God created the world to enjoy, and since He gave humankind a special status in creation, it becomes a responsibility.

Wesley's sermon titled "The New Creation" presents a broad eschatological understanding. He says, "For all the earth shall be a more beautiful Paradise than Adam ever saw." Wesley paints a picture of broad renewal in creation. The idea here is that God's work extends to the breadth of creation. Clearly, Wesley saw all of nature as participating in God's salvation. While it is tempting to juxtapose nature and grace in Christian theology, the emphases of a Wesleyan-Holiness moral reflection suggest that nature participates in the reconciliation that God promises.

*Should Christians be concerned about nature?*

## **A Theology of Compassion**

Grace, justice, and reconciliation adequately reflect the Wesleyan-Holiness understanding that grace fosters justice and reconciliation. The issues already discussed in this lesson illustrate the breadth of Wesley's social ethics. Perhaps grace, justice, and reconciliation come into clearest focus in a Wesleyan-Holiness theology of compassion. Here compassion is empowered by grace as it reaches toward justice and reconciliation.

The great need of our time is for the church to think again about “the other” as an occasion to embody compassion. We would all do well to remember the passion of Phineas Bresee for the kind of church that remembers the lowly, toiling nature of Christ. Our early identity was shaped from the “looked-down-upon” segment of society, a place where the gospel met human need in holy evangelism. It would have been unthinkable in those early days to separate evangelism and compassion. Part of the gesture toward compassion envisioned here is informed by a gospel, which extends the sphere of beauty engendered in holiness. I hope to develop this in three interrelated movements: Trinity, Truthfulness, and Sanctification.

*Refer to Resource 15-2 in the Student Guide.*

### **The Triune God**

All theological reflection begins and ends in the worship of a triune God. Therefore, a theology of compassion is first of all the worship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christian ethics is the confession of faith in concrete circumstances. It is the foundational Christian affirmation that God exists as a being-in-communion, which offers vision and conviction to the Christian life. Compassion, therefore, begins in the life of a God who lives as the loving friendship, the self-giving relationship, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Compassion is first a doxological reflection of the God who exists in relation while reaching toward humankind. God seeks communion with creation, and this constitutes a gesture toward mercy and desire to draw all history into the life of God.

Compassion, in order to be genuine, arises from our need for God to sustain our life together. Compassion does not exist as some disembodied duty or holy *teleos* for the Christian. It is a practiced hope. Therefore, if we are to find the meaning of compassion, it will be in the worship of a triune God. Compassion will not be found in a therapeutic model of Christianity, which can only be sustained by an association of persons seeking to find purpose in human need or Christian responsibility. Such a situation is really an attempt to treat compassion as a duty, which comes from the outside.

*Refer to Resource 15-3 in the Student Guide.*

### **Truthfulness**

Even as compassion arises from a sense of the triune God, it finds its initial embodiment in a commitment to truthfulness. Truth is sustained in a community formed



by the triune God. The truth comes to human beings when they are lost in the illusion of self-sufficiency. It is also evident in the willingness to look beyond the façade, which often hides the truly important. It is not always pleasant, at least at first, but it is part of the redeeming presence that is evident in compassion.

Long before we learn our first word, much less begin to speak sentences, our character is being formed. Character gives a person a “sense” for the truth. It requires courage and patience. The instituted sacramental life of the church helps form truthfulness and character. In this way we begin to restructure life along the lines of the gospel. Baptism teaches us who we are and the Eucharist reminds us of our past as it envisions the future.

A Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory understands that grace and thanksgiving come to expression in compassionate ministry to those in need. It should be evident that the importance of truth as it is sustained through the instituted sacraments resides in its “Spirit-engendered” concreteness.

The sacramental life of the church disciplines the church in the truth. The Church is the visible re-narrating of life through the lens of a triune God. The emergence of the Church in history constitutes the reality of a new and unique community extending the “body of Christ” in time. Of course, the narrative is an outgrowth of the story of a triune God sustained in the church and the practice of truth. Therefore, the Church must be patient in the face of the hurts and injustice of the world. Nurturing friendships and serving our neighbor is both the mission of the Church and an expression of Wesleyan-Holiness social ethics.

## **Sanctification**

The importance of this grand doctrine of the Holiness Movement and the Church of the Nazarene may in fact turn out to be our true genius. It may help us realize the best of our theological heritage as it points to the future. The Holiness Movement has continued to believe the grace of God is sufficient to cleanse the heart, nourish our relationship with God, and empower us to service.

If there has been a fault line in this theological affirmation, it has been the tendency to be captured in the liberal democratic assumptions regarding selfhood. When the self is construed atomistically, especially regarding sin and grace, the real genius of

*Refer to Resource 15-4 in the Student Guide.*

sanctification runs the risk of being lost. When we continue to think of sanctification as a personal victory over a mountain of sin, inherited and actual, we lose sight of what is really important about holiness.

All too often it seems “holiness folk” tend to get locked into holiness ethics and lose sight of a holy God. We tend to seek security in lifestyle and miss our mutual dependence on God. We begin to seek an experience instead of a God who is being-in-communion. We may seek our confidence in rigorous standards, then through time place the standards first, instead of Spirit-engendered praxis. Sanctification is an important key to understanding a theology of compassion.

A more adequate understanding of compassion will require a full accounting of holiness. The emphasis on holiness for understanding compassion is important for many reasons.

First, it reminds us that as the people of God we are pilgrims on the way to God’s future. We are not seeking to establish a kingdom on earth. Liberty, fraternity, and equality—which seem so obviously linked to the Enlightenment—cannot hope to engender compassion beyond some intellectual or moral consensus. As exodus people we know our conscience may mislead us, but our confidence when placed in the triune God can form us into a compassionate people.

Second, it reminds us of our eschatologically framed journey. It is not a hope that presumes, nor it is a hope lost in despair. It is not stranded in an understanding of the Christian life which detaches one from the difficulties of life. An eschatologically informed faith understands the hope of the gospel does not deny the present as much as it frames it in an optimism of grace.

Third, it reminds us that worship is not merely a segmented span of time when we sing, pray, and listen/preach. Rather worship is a description of the character of life when it is lived in community. When life is so lived, it is the best, if not only justification of our claims about the truth and compassion.

*Refer to Resource 15-4, second page.*

Compassion is an expression of the worship of a triune God. It begins to find embodiment in truthfulness, and is finally justified in holiness. If we are to sustain compassion in our time, it will be through our worship of the triune God, which is formed by the truth and incarnated in a community of character as it returns to the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Compassion does not hang in empty space, and it is not a rationally defined and justified virtue. It is not about securing self-worth or individual rights; neither is it about how we feel. Compassion is envisioned by the Spirit as human selfhood is reoriented to a new life, one that reaches outward. This is only possible when we understand that embodying compassion is a doxological enterprise.

Compassion is not about pointing to proofs, or building carefully crafted arguments based on rationality; nor is it about saying, "look, there is a compassionate deed." Compassion is about introducing a person to a new way of being in the world engendered by Scripture and the Spirit as one is nourished by truthfulness, patience, and sacramental life. We will be able to "go on" as a compassionate people only as it is understood to be a gesture of a truthful story.

*Refer to Resource 15-5 in the Student Guide.*

### **Specific Resources for a Wesleyan-Holiness Social Ethic**

Several important resources exist for a Wesleyan-Holiness social ethic.

- First, optimism of grace defines much of Wesley's theology. This means hope always exists for personal and social transformation. It is not enough to feed the poor for Wesley. He sought to provide resources for a better life, i.e., medical care and a primitive credit union.
- Second, Wesleyan-Holiness social ethics brings an interest in concrete needs. Embodiment makes sense within the parameters of holiness because faith becomes incarnate in a real life.
- Third, Wesleyan-Holiness social ethics is communally mediated. From the start Wesley sought to hold people accountable as well as to provide resources for a whole life.

### **Guided Discussion: Liberation Theology**

(10 minutes)

One of the most important and spiritually significant theological movements over the last several decades is Liberation Theology. This way of looking at the world seeks to pull theology from its exclusive moorings in metaphysical categories. Such a path has caused Christianity to locate itself within Western civilization and as such to lose sight of the eschatological hope that once informed it. Along with finding too much comfort in prevailing culture, work with the poor and the oppressed has been overlooked. Western Christianity has denied its social responsibilities for a

*"Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective," in Sanctification and Liberation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 49-63.*

*You will want to note that a great deal separates Wesley (18th century) with Liberation Theology (late 20th and now 21st century). Even given this understanding Bonino's analysis of Wesley misses the point.*

*Historically, it misses the point that Wesley actually did a great deal to face the issue of hunger, lack of access to medical care, and even issues like slavery.*

*Theologically, Wesley always understood salvation in broader terms than just personal, and certainly his understanding of holiness reaches to concrete social circumstances. Wesley does link spiritual and physical concerns in his theology.*

*You might want to call attention to the fact that Wesley's conception of the Church is both theologically sound and connected to the day-to-day concerns of the life. In fact, this would be a good time to talk about the way Wesley's theology of sanctification does exactly what Bonino would gesture toward.*

*You might want to observe that sanctification is a holistic understanding of salvation. When appropriately understood holiness is the moral integration of life.*

purely personal salvation trajectory. Liberation Theology is a radical judgment on the kind of faith that thinks of liberation in totally personal categories.

Jose Miguez Bonino addresses the issue of a connection between Wesley's theology and Liberation Theology. Bonino argues that Wesley is too individualistic to be truly interested in social liberation. He suggests that if Wesley's theology is to reflect liberationist themes, it will be necessary to consider the following.

- First, theological anthropology needs to find a way to affirm human dignity without naive populist acceptance.
- Second, Wesleyans need to move beyond simple generalization. Bonino believes only when Wesley more fully embraces the systemic aspects of selfhood will he be able to embrace the liberationist perspective.
- Third, sanctification needs to be taken beyond the spiritual to the more concrete aspects of faith according to Bonino.

*Reflecting on what you have learned about Wesley's moral theology, do you agree with Bonino's characterization?*

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

In this lesson we attempted to:

- Articulate the moral significance of grace, justice, and reconciliation within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Wesley understood that grace is both personal and social, or rather that it is social-completed personhood. The issues of human rights, poverty, women's rights, and environmental concerns are all linked to grace in Wesley's moral reflection.
- Define some of the resources within Wesleyan-Holiness theology for moral reflection for confronting issues of social justice. The Wesleyan-Holiness tradition provides a perspective to address social issues. These resources are optimism of grace, concrete orientation, and communal faith.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson begins a unit on contemporary moral issues. This unit will address sexuality, confidentiality, and family life. These lessons will apply the general parameters for moral reflection discussed in the module to specific moral issues.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a social issue of significance to the Church. Be sure to employ Wesleyan-Holiness themes.

Read and respond to Resource 15-8.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

## Closing Thought

Wesley preached a sermon titled "On Riches," based on Matthew 19:24. This verse warns that riches can be a dangerous thing. Wesley thinks that to be rich means in this passage anyone who has more than their own necessities. This means true religion is inconsistent with having so much stuff that it begins to choke the spiritual life. Wesley understands that riches make faith more difficult. They also make it more difficult to love our neighbor. Wesley thinks riches make humility less likely.

In fact, all Christian virtues are hindered by riches. Wesley also observes that the temptations to riches are all unholy tempers. Ron Sider, an ethics professor, thinks it is paradoxical that rich Christians live in a hungry world. The tendency for Wesleyan-Holiness people to ignore the danger of riches is a denial of their own theological roots. Comprehending holiness of heart and life means to consider possessions and what they say about one's spiritual journey.

## *Unit 5: Ethical Decision-making and Contemporary Issues*

### *Lesson 16*

# Facing the Issue of Sexuality

## *Lesson Overview*

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:20	Case Study	Guided Discussion	Homework
0:30	Facing the Issue of Sexuality	Lecture	Resources 16-1—16-9
1:05	Homosexuality	Small Groups	Resource 16-10
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Grenz, Stanley. *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.

Hart, Archibald. *The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt*. Dallas: Word Publishers, 1994. While this is not an ethics book, it is helpful in locating some of the issues.

Jenson, Robert. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2, *The Works of God*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 73-111.

Spaulding II, Henry. *Untangling the Sexual Revolution: Rethinking Our Sexual Ethic*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1989.

# Lesson Introduction

(20 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 or 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

This unit will examine three specific ethical problems: sexuality, personal integrity and confidentiality, and family life. Lesson 16 will examine the ethical issues that converge around human sexuality. Particular attention will be given to premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality. Some attention will be given to how moral principles are applied to moral concerns.

Sexuality is a particularly difficult problem because it lies so close to human existence. Human beings are sexual, that is, they act as male and female. There is great potential for human fulfillment and human destruction in sexual matters.

Those in the ministry need to pay special attention to sexual ethics and human sexuality. Many pastors each year wreck their lives and those of their family because of inappropriate sexuality. Spiritual issues often converge at the point of sexual frustration. Those in the ministry can be vulnerable because of the need to be loved and admired. Therefore, ministers need to be very careful and submit to accountability on these issues.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the moral resources within the Christian tradition for dealing with the challenge of human sexuality
- apply a basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- teach and model sexual purity



- apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness

## Motivator

Diane is a college chaplain at a large midwestern university. She graduated from seminary five years ago with a passion for ministry to young people. Diane comes into contact with the usual problems associated with college students: self-esteem, substance abuse, interpersonal adjustments, struggles with faith, and sexual concerns.

One morning Diane is greeted by a freshman named Rachel, who announces she is in love with Brent, a graduate student. In fact, Rachel knows Brent because he is her professor in her English class. Actually, Brent is a teaching assistant, who is finishing his Ph.D. They were immediately attracted to each other and began to see one another outside of class.

They share a common Christian background and this has led to a moral conflict. Rachel and Brent have a strong desire to have sexual intercourse, but the problem is that marriage is not an option. Rachel's parents are opposed to the relationship and they are threatening to make her come home. If the relationship is discovered by the departmental chair Brent will be dismissed as a teaching assistant. This will mean Brent will not be able to finish his graduate work. Another concern for Rachel and Brent is neither is ready for marriage even if they feel it is time to have sex. Rachel wants to talk to Diane about what she should do.

*Allow for discussion.*

*There is a sense in which this moral dilemma is easily resolved. It is simply wrong for Rachel and Brent to have sex. The Bible is clear on this issue and the broad preponderance of the Christian tradition speaks to the immorality of premarital sex.*

*The question this situation raises concerns how to talk about sexual ethics to a generation grounded in the faith, but questioning those very values.*

*One way to address the issue might be to think about the dangers of assuming a level of*

*Based on what we have been learning in this module, what advice would you give Rachel?*

*intimacy inconsistent with the level of commitment in the relationship.*

*Another area to look at might be the effect of this relationship upon others. For example, what would it mean to Rachel's parents? What would it mean to the church where Rachel grew up? All of this applies to Brent as well.*

*What does this mean for the kind of future hoped for by Rachel and Brent? These are at least some of the issues that might shape a discussion between Diane and Rachel/Brent.*

## Lesson Body

### Guided Discussion: Case Study

(10 minutes)

*Allow for discussion.*

*What did you advise Roger Nupastor to do with his problem?*

*Are there areas where a pastor should stay impartial?*

*How do you teach/preach, Christian love and the unity of the body, when people in your congregation stand opposed to each other?*

*Collect homework papers.*

### Lecture: Facing the Issue of Sexuality

(35 minutes)

Human sexuality is a broad and important topic in Christian moral reflection. All human acts are at the same time sexual acts. This means we know ourselves first as male or female. Humankind as male or female constitutes a particular way to “be” in the world. While early in our life the importance of male or female does not seem significant in the scheme of things, maturity changes this. As long as human beings live, sexuality will be a part of how life is embodied.

*Refer to Resource 16-1 in the Student Guide.*

How should we address a moral issue?

- First, it is important to know the precise issue at stake.
- Second, it is important to define the resources that can be brought to bear upon the issue.
- Third, it is important to define the narratives and practices that shape the character of the human agent.
- Fourth, the particular resources of practical wisdom should be brought to the problem.

A moral problem does not drive ethical reflection. Rather the life freed by the truth is capable of living a moral life.

### Application of Moral Theories

This module has defined four moral theories:

- Utilitarianism
- Natural rights
- Kantianism
- Virtue ethics

*Refer to Resource 16-2 in the Student Guide.*

All of these theories fall under two major branches of moral reflection: deontological and teleological. Applying deontology to sexual ethics is a matter of determining what is right and then in good faith fulfilling that duty. Thus, we are to avoid premarital sex because it is our duty. Likewise it is our duty to be faithful to the one we have married. Finally, homosexuality is wrong because it cannot be universalized.

Teleological theories argue that attending to consequences is the correct trajectory for moral reflection on sexual issues. Therefore, the consequences of premarital sexual activity, adultery, and homosexuality argue that they are immoral. Looking at utilitarianism one could argue that the greater good is served by avoiding premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality. Similar arguments could be made for all of these theories.

## **The Sexual Revolution**

*Refer to Resource 16-3 in the Student Guide.*

The sexual revolution refers to that period in American life which led to a more open and informed discussion of human sexuality. Attitudes toward premarital intercourse, the open marriage, and homosexuality were liberalized considerably during this period (1960-1971). There was also the sense that human sexuality, at least by some, was put in touch with its Hebraic/Christian roots. This tension between exploitation and the appropriate expression of sexuality makes any sweeping generalizations about the sexual revolution unwise.

It is necessary to examine the 1960s for a clear understanding of the sexual revolution. The '60s can be divided into

- the first '60s (1960-1967)
- the second '60s (1967-1971)

The first period is characterized by the Civil Rights Movement, situation ethics, and radical theology. During this period humanity celebrated its newfound identity; it was a time of hope and possibility. By contrast hysteria, panic, chaos, and disintegration characterized the second period. The decade that witnessed the moving speeches of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. had also witnessed the brutal slaying of both. The morality that celebrated its autonomy in the first '60s was hopelessly lost in ambiguity, meaninglessness, hurt, and disease in the second '60s.

The historical and cultural forces that resulted in the sexual revolution actually reached back into the previous century. Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Charles Darwin figure very importantly into the undercurrents that eventually were manifest in the sexual revolution. Suppression of a serious discussion of sex was replaced by the serious study of sex. A shift away from strict control of sexual expression to a more tolerant attitude can also be noted. The more recognized excesses associated with the sexual revolution followed these shifts and undercurrents.

The Bible boldly affirms that human sexuality is a gift from God. This God-given capacity, when used properly, can be an act of worship. The task is to affirm the biblical appreciation of sexuality without getting caught up in a lifestyle that distorts God-given parameters.

One trajectory of a biblically informed understanding of sexuality is gift. Simply put, God created human beings as sexual beings. While some within the Christian tradition have held negative views of sexuality, this has been unnecessary. A healthy person is capable of sexual relationships within the boundaries of a Christian ethic. A proper understanding of human sexuality will require that we look beyond the pessimistic images that often have dominated the Christian tradition.

The words of the Bible tell a positive story, “May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love” (Pro 5:18-19, NIV). The gift of human sexuality is the capacity it presents to participate in creation. Paul often calls upon the Church to avoid sexual immorality (Col 3:5) because of its centrality to Christian morality.

### Three Interlocking Narratives

Three interlocking narratives combine to present the resources of Christian morality for sexual behavior. The **first narrative** is self-respect, and it arises from an understanding of creation. Human beings should respect themselves by living in a manner consistent with the God who created them. Human beings can live with self-respect because they comprehend their origin. Such respect is not self-generated; rather it arises from the address to God. Human beings are called to their humanity by the Son of God in the power of the Spirit. When a person begins to see who

*Refer to Resource 16-4 in the Student Guide.*

he or she is in the presence of God, the trajectory of sexual expression is defined by God. Such a life is appropriately respectful.

When sexual behavior is contemplated, it is important to ask several questions.

- First, we must learn to ask about consequences. What will this do to other people? Does my action bring a brighter future or the reverse?
- Second, we must learn to ask what controls us. When action is determined by appetite alone, it translates into human misery. The clear message of the Bible is that appetite need not control sexual expression.

The **second narrative** is responsible freedom. Appropriately understood, human sexual expression ordered by God frees a person for a full life. Sexual expression is not an isolated event; rather it is part of a larger whole. Sexual acts, if they are defined by Christian morality, are never selfish. Sexuality renders human beings responsible, but in that very responsibility freedom emerges. Living responsibly results in freedom. This means that according to the Christian tradition it precludes exploitation, coercion, and the dehumanization of the other.

The **third narrative** comprehends human sexuality as a call to relationship. Previous lessons established the centrality of covenant to scriptural ethics. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament talk about the love of God in relational terms. Both Testaments make the point that such a relationship results in human flourishing. Theologically, the doctrine of the Trinity testifies to the conviction that God is everlasting communion. Further human beings are created in the image of God and as such are made for communion/relationship. Sexuality is a call to relationship, commitment, and mutuality. The mystery of human sexuality is connected to God-inspired and God-empowered relationship.

## Locating Sexuality in the Church

Human existence is self-transcendent. This means human beings naturally look beyond themselves to the world and others. Humans learn to speak because it opens up new possibilities for growth and understanding. Human self-transcendence makes community possible. Therefore, healthy community engenders healthy people. God created humankind as male and female and intended that together they would find fulfillment. The Church is a polity—polity is

*Refer to Resource 16-5 in the Student Guide.*

a way of talking about the social aspects of life—which creates healthy human beings. In other words, the Church, when it is faithful, engenders healthy sexuality. Actually, the Church equips its members to be sexual by locating life in truthful narrative and calling each other to accountability.

Outside of the Church other versions of sexuality emerge. For example, feminist sexuality and chauvinistic sexuality reduce all such relations to power. Sexual expression becomes a tournament between the people God created to live in mutuality. Some feminists advise that lesbian relationships alone offer freedom and mutuality. The chauvinist perspective makes the female into the servant of the man. When this happens, the woman must give up her identity as a condition for sexual relationship. This is an unhealthy form of sexual expression. The man is called to love the woman as Christ loved the Church. Such a pattern of love secures the self by locating it in the body of Christ. Male and female are made for each other and find completion in that way.

Another unhealthy form of sexuality is virtual or generic sexual expression. This way of being sexual is to become lost in fantasy and generality. Healthy sexuality is always concrete and humanizing. Virtual sexuality is a poor substitute for the actual expression of intimacy between male and female in the context of marriage.

Yet another form of unhealthy sexuality is really about being self-absorbed. This is the love of oneself in another. Such sexual expression is selfish. Homosexuality is the chief expression of this form of sexuality. Unhealthy sexuality comes down to the denial of the parameters set forth in the Christian tradition.

The model of human sexuality is co-humanity. Here the emphasis is upon the fellowship God intended by the creation of male and female. The male exists for the female and the female for the male. A genuine mutuality arises from this understanding of sexuality. It reduces the tendency to turn sex into a tournament or competition between men and women. The emphasis is not on sexual intercourse, but the concrete association and mutual fulfillment of each other. It argues against the view that the only way for a man and a woman to relate is physical intimacy. Yet, it does not diminish the importance of sexual intimacy within the context of marriage.

*You may want to draw a distinction at this point in the lesson. A person does not have to participate in sexual intercourse in order to be a healthy human being. But all healthy human beings must find comfort in being either male or female. For some, celibacy will be the pattern of life and as such the pattern of a healthy life. Here intimacy will be achieved without sexual intimacy and within the boundaries of God's intentions as they are revealed in Scripture and*

*interpreted in the Christian tradition. An unmarried Christian can still be whole, capable of intimacy without physical intercourse.*

*Refer to Resource 16-6 in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to address the question of masturbation at this point in the discussion. If we define premarital sex as sexual intimacy between two people of the opposite sex, then masturbation does not fall into this category. Some psychologists argue that masturbation is a normal activity especially by adolescent males. Some theologians, pastors, and ethicists argue that the regular practice of masturbation might help an adolescent control his sexual urges without intercourse or oral sex. A reasonable argument can be made that masturbation is not a sexual act because it does not include another person. Masturbation still presents a moral problem because it can lead to fantasy and even obsessive behavior. Therefore, while from a moral point of view masturbation is not premarital sex, it still may present a moral dilemma in that it can easily become an unhealthy and thus immoral behavior. Pastors and counselors ought to be very careful about recommending this practice.*

*You may want to discuss the contents of the following article: Karen Labacz, "Appropriate Vulnerability: A Sexual Ethic for Singles," Christian Century (May 6, 1987): 435-38. She argues for a new ethic because the traditional virtue of celibacy is simply no longer adequate. Part of the reason is that the single need no longer fear pregnancy when engaging in sexual intercourse. She proposes that vulnerability presents an*

## **Premarital Sex**

Premarital sex refers to sexual activity prior to marriage. The most obvious form of this behavior is sexual intercourse between two people who are not married. The scriptural term for premarital sex is "fornication," from which we get the word "pornography." Oral sex between unmarried people is also premarital sex. Petting would also be included under the rubric of premarital sex. The reason premarital sex is more than intercourse relates to the level of intimacy implied in oral sex and petting.

The New Testament unequivocally labels premarital sex as immoral. It represents an earthly passion that needs to be brought under the rule of the Spirit. Those who argue for the morality of premarital sex point to the early onset of puberty and the increasingly later age when someone gets married. If puberty begins at 10 or 11 and the average age of a first marriage is 25, the sexual tension among young people extends more than a decade. For some this period can be too much to bear.



*adequate model for sexual intercourse prior to marriage. She thinks of vulnerability as a fundamentally human intention. Vulnerability is the condition for all sexual activity because it opens up the possibility of submitting oneself to the other in mutuality. Labacqz finds the usual "thou shall" and "thou shall not" to be inadequate for sexual ethics in our time. On the other hand, vulnerability as the capacity to be genuinely open to the other might offer a more appropriate pathway to sexual expression.*

*After discussing the proposal made by Karen Labacqz you will need to make a few remarks. First, she is correct: all sexual activity should be conditioned by openness. Her caution should be heeded that even among married people sexual activity can be immoral if both parties are hiding from each other. Second, the covenant of marriage is the place where intimacy and vulnerability meet. Sexual activity among singles, even when both are vulnerable to one another, still lacks the commitment necessary for it to become a moral behavior.*

Those who want to argue for premarital sex point to the fact that the primary barrier arises from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Since the prohibition is religious, it is not necessary for all to accept it as immoral. Another argument against the immorality of premarital sex is that the sexual impulse is rooted in human nature. Therefore, denying the expression of sexual intimacy is a violation of our basic humanity.

Regarding premarital sex the issues become clear.

- First, sexual intercourse requires a deep commitment to the other that is lacking in any relationship other than marriage. The opportunity for deep emotional pain is multiplied when sexual intimacy precedes the commitment of marriage. While it is still possible to experience great disappointment even within marriage—such as adultery and spouse abuse—when sexual activity takes place before marriage the dangers are exponentially multiplied.
- Second, the resources of the Christian tradition, especially prior to the modern period, present a nearly uniform message: premarital sex is immoral and dangerous.
- Third, the narratives of the faith make it plain that even when prevailing culture condones sexual license the resources of faith need to be heeded. The God who created human life and designed it to operate in particular ways provides direction. The practical wisdom arises from the Christian tradition that while vulnerability and the increased distance

*You may want to look at the following scriptural passages and discuss them with the class: 1 Cor 6: 12-20, Gal 5: 19-21, 1 Pet 1: 13-16, and Levs 18: 7-29.*

between the onset of puberty and the average age of marriage are real, they are not sufficient to justify premarital sex.

*Refer to Resource 16-7 in the Student Guide.*

## **Adultery**

Adultery can be defined as engaging in sexual intercourse outside of one's marriage either with a married person or with a single person. Those who argue for the morality of adultery point to the fact that it is not reasonable to think two people could remain interested in one another for a lifetime. These people point to the fact that the prohibition against adultery relates to a time when people did not live so long. Now that people live into their eighties and beyond the prospect of fifty plus years with only one person is not realistic.

Others argue that an occasional extramarital relationship can enhance the relationship one has within marriage. The inadequacy of universal rules makes the prohibition against adultery inadequate. In fact, altering the nature of marriage to include the other relationships is both more honest and more realistic. These are some of the arguments that seek to condone extramarital sex.

The Christian tradition argues against adultery. Exodus 20: 14 simply states, "You shall not commit adultery." The major voices of the Christian tradition are united in the prohibition of adultery. Marriage is the most basic institution of society and as such its sanctity is integral to healthy people. Part of the importance of maintaining a healthy marriage is the ability to make and to honor commitments. Marriage helps to demystify sexuality as well. It helps to make the point that ultimately sensual pleasure is only a part of what makes marriage important. While sexual pleasure is important, if it becomes the only reason for marriage, the relationship will be immature. Marriage places sexuality within a wider trajectory, one that opens life toward emotional depth.

Restricting adultery to either sexual intercourse or oral sex denies that reality of emotional adultery. Marriage is more than the sanctity of physical sex; it is the building of a "house" where two people live together in emotional intimacy. This means marriage is less about an address and more about the depth to which people give themselves to one another. Therefore, a man or a woman may never have a physical sexual relationship outside of marriage but all the same be unfaithful.

Emotional adultery is immoral because it violates the trust that should be reserved for the husband or wife.

The basic issue with adultery concerns the appropriate boundaries of sexual relationships. The issue regarding adultery is about boundaries, whether we are talking about physical or emotional relationships. The resources within the Christian tradition are exceptionally clear that God intends marriage to be the way in which human beings experience sexual wholeness/intimacy.

Matthew 19: 1-12 recognizes that we live in a fallen world, one where divorce is almost inevitable, but even then the bias of God toward marriage is clear. First Corinthians 7: 1-40 makes a strong case for marriage and sexual faithfulness within marriage. Hosea even goes so far as to compare the sin of Israel to adultery. All of this suggests the Christian tradition is strongly connected to sexual intimacy—including emotional intimacy—solely within the context of the marriage. The narratives of the faith line up on the side of marriage as a sacred relationship. The foundational trajectory of this in the Scripture and the Christian tradition is the covenant. The practical wisdom of the faith suggests that life works best when marriage is the place for sexual intimacy, commitment, and family.

## **Homosexuality**

*Refer to Resource 16-8 in the Student Guide.*

Homosexuality is addressed in specific ways in the Bible. Leviticus 20: 13 says, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.” Paul addresses the issue in Romans 1: 26-27:

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

No one can seriously doubt the Christian tradition has universally condemned the practice of homosexuality. While some argue that what Scripture reveals excludes loving and committed homosexual acts, the arguments lack persuasive power. Whatever else can be said, Paul appears to link homosexual activity with the refusal to acknowledge God.

*You may want to look at Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition (London: Archon Books, 1975), to find an argument for homosexual behavior. A better and more balanced treatment is found in Victor Furnish, The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979, 1985).*

*Sally B. Geis reviewed two books on the issue of homosexuality in the Christian Century (January 18, 1995): 55-57. The two books are Bruce Bawer, A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society (New York: Poseidon, 1994); and Mel White, Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994). According to Geis, Mel White tells a compelling story of struggle and self-hatred arising from his feeling of homosexuality growing up in an evangelical home. Geis suggests that Bawer wants homosexuality to become accepted. She concludes her review in the following way, "In a time when churchgoers are deeply divided over the meaning of homosexuality, I doubt that any Christian could read either of these books without being moved to deep sadness as well as serious reflection over what gatekeeping means in our time. On whom should the gate be slammed shut? Who has the right to issue the invitation to the table?" (57)*

*The image of gatekeeping misses the point because the issue is what level one gives the authority of the Bible. The issue is not whether the Church seeks to minister to homosexuals, but the honesty that will be allowed in the situation.*

Those who have watched men and women struggle with homosexuality feel genuine sympathy, but this should not result in condoning the behavior. While no one feels sympathy for the male who dresses like a female and marches in a gay-pride parade, one does struggle to condemn the woman who has been sexually abused by her father and now her husband. It is possible to understand her confusion on sexuality when the first real warmth she has experienced comes from another woman.

So long as homosexuality remains a principle, it can easily be handled. But when the principle has a name and a face, things become more difficult. Yet, even situations like this do not justify the practice of homosexuality from a moral point of view.

The condemnation of homosexuality is in large measure connected to the assumption that such behavior is freely chosen. Some are now arguing that scientific literature is concluding that for some homosexual behavior is physical and not psychological. Yet any understanding that takes the Bible seriously will find it difficult to mount an argument in favor of homosexual behavior.

Following our model for addressing moral concerns, a brief look at homosexuality can be attempted.

- First, the major issues associated with a moral reflection on homosexuality begin with the clear condemnation in the Bible. Is homosexuality a

choice? Is it realistic to expect homosexuals to become heterosexual?

- Second, what are the resources that can be brought to bear upon the problem? This will include a serious exegetical analysis of the relevant scripture passages. It will extend to theological trajectories and normative interpretations. It might also include any careful scientific and psychological research in the area.
- Third, treatment of the narratives that inform this problem in the Christian tradition will become important. Some argue it is possible to conceive of homosexuality as being conducted responsibly. This would mean homosexuality can result in freedom and even be respectful of committed relationship. Yet, it is not possible for homosexuality to satisfy the criterion of self-respect. The doctrine of creation suggests that God made male and female for each other to enjoy. While it is possible to have many close same-sex relationships, the Christian tradition rightly labels homosexual—sexually intimate relationships—behavior as immoral.

When theologically construed, homosexuality arises from the Fall. God created humankind in His image. Perfect fellowship with God characterized the relationship between human beings—Adam and Eve—during this time. If this relationship had continued without interruption, all people would have lived in obedience to God and in harmony with one another. Sadly, this fellowship was broken by disobedience. Foundationally, this disobedience arose out of a desire to transcend the limits of humanity, in order to be equal to God. This act of disobedience, far from making humankind more like God, actually severed the perfect fellowship. The result was the loss of relationship and the nurturing growth that would have followed.

Every person, all cultures, and human existence have been affected by this loss of fellowship. Murder, war, hatred, envy, and so on, have followed the Fall. Sexual existence suffered a similar fate. Therefore, sex intended for freedom has instead become a source of bondage. Homosexuality is one manifestation of this sickness that has taken hold of humanity following the Fall.

### **Personal Commitment**

After looking at premarital sex, adultery, and homosexuality, it is important to note that the

pastoral ministry will confront all of these. A pastor will need to be able to deal with premarital issues with youth and singles in the congregation. Adultery will be an issue in most places of service. The emotional wreckage of a failed marriage will call for pastoral service. Homosexuality will increasingly appear as an issue to be confronted in the Church. Yet, the foundational issue for a pastor is not only about being able to talk about these issues. The real need is to develop a set of commitments to sexual health early in your ministry.

*Refer to Resource 16-9 in the Student Guide.*

Perhaps, a simple statement/covenant will be helpful.

I will endeavor in my ministry to:

- Be committed to a faithful marriage
- Be honest with myself when temptation comes
- Be alert to the things I allow myself to think about, talk about, or look at
- Talk to my spouse about any advance made by a person in or out of the Church
- Never allow emotional attachments to form with anyone other than my spouse

## Small Groups: Homosexuality

(20 minutes)

*Divide the class into groups of 3 students each.*

*Refer to Resource 16-10 in the Student Guide.*

*John J. McNeill, "Homosexuality: Challenging the Church to Grow," in Christian Century (March 11, 1987), 242-46.*

Homosexuality is an emerging issue in our time. John J. McNeill addresses the issue in an article published in *The Christian Century*. McNeill wrote a book titled *The Church and the Homosexual* in order to move the Church toward the embrace of homosexual behavior. In fact, McNeill struggled with his own homosexuality until he came to accept it. He argues that this same struggle is replayed in the lives of other gay people.

McNeill seeks to make several arguments that support homosexuality. He argues that God does not intend all people to be heterosexual. He also argues that homosexuals represent part of God's creative plan by providing special gifts. Finally, McNeill argues that love between gays is healthy. All of this leads McNeill to wonder why there is so little debate regarding homosexuality in the Church.

McNeill reflects on what makes a sexual act fully human and what the Bible says about homosexual acts. He concludes that since sexuality is primarily about relationship, proper logic would lead to accepting homosexual acts as normative. McNeill also concludes that the Scripture nowhere condemns loving committed homosexual acts.

McNeill is just one of many voices in the world today challenging the traditional stance against homosexuality. The challenge of this issue hits at the core of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Does the sanctifying grace of God have the capacity to re-narrate the lifestyle of homosexuality?

*Allow the groups time to discuss this issue before adding any closing thoughts.*

Reflect on homosexuality in light the resources of Christian holiness.

The main argument **for** homosexuality is that love is not restricted to heterosexual intimacy. If a homosexual lives in a committed relationship with a person of the same sex, he or she has every right to engage in that relationship. Further, the homosexuality condemned in the Old Testament and New Testament does not refer to monogamous relationships. Therefore, just as the Bible condemns fornication and adultery, it condemns abusive homosexual relationships. These arguments are prevalent with those who seek to justify homosexuality.

The chief argument **against** homosexuality consists in understanding the doctrine of creation. God created humankind with male and female as each other's complement. Homosexuality is hopelessly narcissistic; that is, it seeks to love oneself in another. The biblical pattern for sexuality is the love of one's other or complement. A man and a woman are different and this reality makes love possible as God intended. God created male for female and female for male. From this ability to love one's other the family will emerge.

Theologically speaking the therapeutic understanding of grace and salvation open the door to the healing in time of sinful dispositions and what Wesley would call historical tempers. Grace in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition forgives and heals. Homosexuality arises from the Fall and the disordered love—cupidity—that characterizes the human condition. Holiness is the ordering of that love after the image of God. A theological understanding of homosexuality reveals that despite what McNeill argues, accepting homosexuality is inconsistent with the Christian tradition.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

In this lesson we attempted to:

- Define the moral resources within the Christian tradition for dealing with the challenge of human sexuality: Scripture, Christian tradition, and practical wisdom.
- Apply a basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community: a deontological theory reflects upon the unconditioned duty never to engage in premarital sex, adultery, or homosexual relationships.
- Discern and make theologically based ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context: the Christian tradition provides clear guidance regarding the fact that sexual activity is only moral within the context of marriage.
- To teach and model sexual purity: the importance of teaching and living a life of sexual purity is central to the Christian life and to Christian ministry.
- Apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness: the Christian tradition offers both a theology and an ethic of sexual health. As God is faithful to the Church and the world, He requires that we learn to be faithful in sexual matters.

## Look Ahead

The next lesson will take up the question of integrity and confidentiality. These issues are crucial for the practice of ministry

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Develop a basic "Code of Sexual Behavior" for pastoral ministry.

Read and respond to Resource 16-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.



## Closing Thought

The Song of Solomon gives a scriptural example of how spirituality and sexuality are best understood together. The writer says:

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful!  
Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is  
like a flock of goats . . . your teeth are like a flock  
of shorn ewes . . . your lips are like a crimson  
thread . . . your neck is like halves of a  
pomegranate . . . your neck is like the tower of  
David . . . your two breasts are like two fawns (4:1-  
5).

While the imagery is a bit foreign, it is clear that the Bible understands that physicality is not a barrier to spirituality. Further, it is apparent that the love between a male and a female mirrors the love of God for creation. Human sexuality serves as a clue to the intensity and concreteness of the love of God.

[This page intentionally blank]

## Lesson 17

# Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:25	Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church	Lecture	Resources 17-1—17-9
1:10	Paul Tillich	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Clebsch, William A., and Charles R. Jackle. *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers/Harper Torchbooks, 1964.

Oden, Thomas. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983.

Trull, Joe E., and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Being a Good Minister in a Not-so-Good World*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993.

# Lesson Introduction

(25 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students share with each other their Code of Sexual Behavior.*

*Call for response to Resource 16-11.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*You may want to call attention to the fact that the last lesson concerned sexual integrity. Morality dictates that one act with integrity regarding sexual relationships. The most basic level of such integrity is honesty and accountability. Evil presents itself in life primarily as self-deception. It is relatively easy to tell yourself this is appropriate or justified, but integrity requires that honesty prevail. This is evident in sexual matters, but it is also apparent in broader concerns as well. The point of this lesson is a look at integrity in a much broader way.*

Deceit is too often the manner in which the world operates. To *seem* is better than to *be* for many in the world. Success is more about clothes than integrity. Recent moral failures of high profile ministers have contributed to a distrust of ministers. The purpose of this lesson is to examine the integral nature of integrity and confidentiality in the pastoral ministry—and for that matter for all life.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

- By the end of this lesson, participants should
- define the moral significance of integrity
  - articulate the parameters and importance of confidentiality
  - understand and teach ethical theories and nurture ethical behavior in the Church
  - discern and make theologically-based, ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
  - apply Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness

## Motivator

Pastor Stan Hill is the senior pastor of a thriving suburban church. About two years prior he called Morris Brown to be his youth pastor. Since Morris's wife is a Christian counselor, she was employed part time to lighten the load of the pastor. The first year and half was a joyous time of ministry for Pastor Hill and Morris Brown, along with Morris's wife. But about six months ago trouble began to emerge, first in small ways and then in more evident ways.

The problem began when it was discovered that Morris Brown's son, who is 14, had gotten involved with a girl in the youth group, who is 17. The girl, Jane, was now pregnant. Morris feels his son was seduced by the older girl, and he wants the church to censure her and her family. The church is quickly choosing sides on this matter. Pastor Hill feels that while this is a difficult moment in the life of the church and the life of Brown's family, it is also a time for ministry to both Jane and Brown's son.

Much of the problem is that Morris's wife has been in a counseling relationship with Jane and some of her friends for two years. As the counselor, she knows certain things about Jane and some of her friends. One day when Susan—a friend of Jane's—came for counseling, Morris's wife verbally attacked her and threatened to divulge certain confidential information to her parents because Susan had not sided with the Browns.

While Pastor Hill is sympathetic to the pain Mrs. Brown feels, he is concerned she is allowing her personal pain to compromise her professional responsibility. On top of this Morris Brown has long wanted to become a senior pastor himself, but Mrs. Brown was too attached to the Church and would not consider leaving. So Morris allowed this situation to unravel in order to convince his wife that it is time to leave the Church.

He asks Pastor Hill for a week off so he can interview and preach a trial sermon in a small church. During that next week Morris decides to take the church and resigns to the board, saying he does not know what he is going to do, but the time has come to leave. All of this leaves Pastor Hill looking like an uncaring pastor and the church looking unconcerned for the future of the Brown family.

*This is a difficult situation that bears directly upon the issue of integrity and confidentiality.*

*The most obvious moral concern is the threat to break confidentiality on the part of Mrs. Brown. She entered into a confidential counseling relationship with a friend of Jane's. Now that her counselee is not willing to join in criticism of Jane, she feels justified in threatening her. This behavior is unprofessional and immoral. This is especially the case since Mrs. Brown is dealing with teens.*

*Morris is also acting with questionable integrity in allowing this crisis to anger his wife to the point that she is willing to leave the church. It is also improper to allow the church, who loves him, to believe he is just resigning when in fact he is planning to go to a nearby church as senior pastor.*

*The real challenge in this situation is how to call the Browns to moral and professional integrity. There are people being hurt in the situation through the lack of a commitment to integrity and confidentiality.*

*Considering the issue of integrity and confidentiality, what should Pastor Hill do?*

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: Integrity and Confidentiality within the Church**

(45 minutes)

The Christian life, and particularly the pastoral ministry, depends upon a vigorous reflection of integrity. The ability to live the life of integrity reaches every aspect of the pastoral ministry. For example, the coherence between what is said in the pulpit and around the table at dinner in the parsonage is essential. Integrity reaches to how numbers are reported to the denomination and the truthfulness of the illustrations. Integrity dictates that a pastor who preaches does so out of personal toil with the Bible. This means when ideas are used they are clearly acknowledged. Integrity demands that bills be paid and the truth be told. A life of integrity is not easy because it requires sacrifice, but such a life is richer and better. The purpose of this lesson is to examine this issue in more detail.

#### **Integrity Defined**

*Allow for response.*

*How do you define integrity?*

*Refer to Resource 17-1 in the Student Guide.*

The simple definition for integrity is wholeness. The entire movement of Scripture and the Christian tradition is to argue for the importance of integrity. Psalm 7:8, says, "The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to my integrity that is in me." This psalm of David asks for God's intervention in the midst of a crisis on the basis of integrity. Here the integrity is to be located in David.

Psalm 51 comes from another chapter in the life of David. This is a time when David had failed miserably by his involvement with Bathsheba and his complicity in the death of her husband. This psalm affirms the need for restoration. David gives us a clue to the meaning of integrity by referring to a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

1 Kings 9:4-5 reflects on the meaning of integrity in the following way: "As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne

over Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'There shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.'" It should be noted that even though David failed God with Bathsheba, he is called a person of integrity.

Therefore, integrity does not include perfection, but it does require honesty. When David fails he admits it and pleads with God for mercy. Talk about integrity cannot be allowed to become a legalism. Job 2:9-10 says, "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.' But he said to her, 'You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips." From this we learn that integrity cannot be merely a reflection of circumstances.

Integrity means to be real, authentic, and whole. A person of integrity is capable of being the same whether in the presence of others or alone.

Plato's *Republic* includes a story titled "The Ring of Gyges." The story is intended to argue against what Socrates and Plato suggest is the true nature of justice. The story is about a man who finds a ring that if turned around makes a person invisible. The point of the story is that when the *just* man is invisible he behaves exactly like the *unjust* man. Therefore, justice is only done in order to appear just and not because a person is just. There is no such thing as justice, only that which gets us what we want. "The Ring of Gyges" argues that being real, authentic, or whole is nothing but an act and as such there is no such thing as integrity.

Yet, Socrates and Plato argue that justice is about a rightly ordered soul, one where the reason rules both spirit and desire. Therefore, it is possible to live with justice and integrity. The Christian faith argues along a similar path as that of Plato and Socrates; the difference is that integrity begins in faith, not in reason.

## **Integrity the Problem**

All talk about integrity must confront the human tendency to locate too much worth in appearance. The senses are very powerful mechanisms in human life. Aristotle locates three levels of life: enjoyment, statesman, and wisdom.

*Refer to Resource 17-2 in the Student Guide.*



Children most naturally prefer ice cream over vegetable soup, but too much ice cream makes life less enjoyable. When Aristotle defines action as the desire for happiness, he means at the basic level we want to do that which contributes to happiness. Human beings act in order to be happy. The most basic level of happiness is enjoyment. Therefore, our first actions are determined by what makes us happy.

Yet, a life of mere experience or mere enjoyment is a limited life because nothing lasts very long. Such a life can be frustrating. Plato's *Republic* reflects on freedom in a democracy as that which is determined by desire. Such a society eats to the point of gluttony only to diet. One day is fine beverages and the next it is water. Desire and enjoyment are not finally capable of guiding life.

The life of the statesman widens one's perspective to others, but even here life cannot be complete. Integrity comes with wisdom because such a life is capable of finding the eternal in the midst of the particular. The basic problem with integrity is that much of life is concerned with appearances. When life is lived this way, the search for meaning is reduced to grasping at shadows.

Human life most naturally reaches for what the senses reveal. This kind of life can be dangerous because what we see, feel, taste, hear, and smell may not be what is important. This fundamental problem is quite apparent in modern philosophy. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, separates the body from the mind; thus he sees them as connecting only on occasion. The problem is that he places the essence of humankind in thought. While this does not have to result in viewing what the body does as unimportant, it often does.

Morality is about linking thought with action and embodiment. The mind has a great possibility of convincing the body it is fine to proceed. Modern philosophy presents a powerful case to human beings for saying something like, "At least I intended to do the right thing!" Intention can become the pathway to a life that lacks integrity. When will and action are separated too far, then it can become highly problematic.

David Hume, an 18th-century philosopher, thought of virtue as artificial. For him this meant virtues were proposed for mostly selfish reasons. Thomas Hobbes would mostly agree with this. Yet, if virtues are only animated by human intentionality, they can change

when moods, cultures, and conditions change. Such a circumstance diminishes the importance of talk about integrity.

Jean Paul Sartre, a 20th-century philosopher who consistently pointed to the dark side of life, often pointed to the lack of integrity in everyday life. One of the terms he used to express this was “bad faith.” Sartre understood bad faith to be our tendency to lie or allowed ourselves to be lied to while we try to convince ourselves. So a person with an ugly sweater, knowing it is ugly, attempts to convince himself or herself it is pretty by asking you whether it is ugly or pretty. When you say it is pretty, even though the person knows it is ugly, he or she continues to wear it. This is bad faith and it is the exact opposite of integrity.

Martin Heidegger, another 20th-century philosopher, diagnoses the fundamental problem of modernity as the loss of Being among the things of life. For Heidegger authenticity emerges when we understand the stakes of life, that is, “being-towards-death.” A life of integrity is one that faces its own death. Translating this into a Christian understanding, the only way to live an authentic life is to see everything in light of its end, eternity.

Another dimension of the problem with integrity relates to perfectionism. The Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory often runs scared at the accusation of works righteousness. It appears that any emphasis upon integrity can either be reduced to intentions or become perfectionism. Both courses are problematic. The linking of the inner and the outer already discussed in a previous lesson goes to the heart of what integrity means.

*You might mention this was addressed in Unit 4.*

Jesus directly addresses this issue by saying, “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Mt 6:1). Jesus goes on to illustrate what this means. Hypocrites have no integrity because they do not really fool themselves and they rarely fool those around them. Perfectionism leads either to extreme frustration in life or false claims about oneself.

## **Integrity and Scripture**

The Bible speaks clearly to the importance of integrity in the ministry. Paul writes to the troubled church at Corinth concerning his ministry. He says, “In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Cor

9: 14). He goes on in the next verse and makes it clear that he bases this judgment on nonselfish criteria, for he does not claim this right for himself. In verse 16 Paul writes, "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" In other words, Paul preaches out of sense of integrity; he can do nothing else. He does not preach to be paid, even though he deserves to be paid. Paul preaches out of sense of duty to the gospel entrusted to him.

*Refer to Resource 17-3 in the Student Guide.*

Paul gets very specific in his letters to Timothy regarding the importance of integrity. Here Paul talks about the qualifications for being a bishop or a deacon. Regarding a bishop he says the following:

- Above reproach
- Married only once
- Temperate
- Sensible
- Respectable
- Hospitable
- Apt teacher
- Not a drunkard
- Not violent, but gentle
- Not quarrelsome
- Not a lover of money
- Must manage household well
- Must keep children submissive
- Not a recent convert
- Must be well thought of by outsiders

Such is the life to which those who desire to preach must aspire.

Paul characterizes a deacon in the following way:

- Must be serious
- Not double-tongued
- Not indulging in much wine
- Not greedy for money
- Hold fast to the mystery of faith with a clear conscience
- Let them be tested
- Married only once
- Manage children and household well

The meaning of integrity becomes very important in the case of the bishop and deacon. At least part of the reason for this connects to what they represent. The pattern of integrity expected of a person *in* ministry follows very closely the pattern *of* ministry. A person in ministry is to do what is good—hold fast to the mystery of faith, be temperate, serious, etc.—and they are to avoid doing harm—not violent, not a lover of money, not double-tongued.

Some of what this means relates to the difference between ministry as a profession and ministry as a vocation. While ministry is a profession with rules and responsibilities to go along with it, the meaning goes much deeper to a vocation. A profession claims status, but a vocation seeks to answer a call responsibly. A profession is about a career, and vocation concerns ministry.

A person who follows God in any job or work is fulfilling a vocation. All Christians have a primary responsibility to praise God in all they do. Therefore, a school bus driver can be fulfilling a vocation as he or she drives. Although the primary reference is to pastoral ministry as a vocation, it is not the only way to understand ministry.

### **Integrity and Morality**

*Refer to Resource 17-4 in the Student Guide.*

Deontological moral theories emphasize duty or goodwill and as such integrity means living without being conditioned by circumstances. The moral arising from this theory offers reason as a way to live a coherent life. The categorical imperative is about universalizing action. This process is about the kind of integrity that makes it possible to live a moral life.

Teleological moral theories are interested in the end toward which action reaches. It requires that life become actively engaged. Aristotle talks about good habits as virtues. These virtues form the basis for a character capable of integrity. In fact, character is the definition of integrity.

Morality is about formation of character. The moral agent or person makes choices, but most importantly the moral agent brings character. The thread that binds the history, personality, education, and practice of character is integrity at least in the virtuous person. When integrity characterizes the life of the pastor, it means his or her life is whole.

### **Integrity and Holiness Theology**

*Refer to Resource 17-5 in the Student Guide.*

Theologically speaking, integrity is spelled holiness. The teaching of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition holds up the whole life or the life of integrity as a possibility by the co-operant grace of God. While moral reflection tends to make character an achievement of reason, the holiness tradition understands that apart from God no integrity would be possible. The manifestation of integrity in the life of holiness is conviction. Persistence

is the major component of a life defined by conviction. There may be a good deal that comes and goes, but a life of integrity manifests itself with the kind of tenacity that will not cave in to the demands of the situation.

Therefore, convictions will not be given up easily, and when they are, a different kind of person emerges. Integrity is who we are when no one is looking. Therefore, by coming to understand one's convictions it is possible to begin the process of self-understanding. Convictions fall into three general categories: moral, doctrinal, and philosophical. Moral convictions concern how life is lived. Doctrinal convictions reflect one's theological understanding. Philosophical convictions define worldview.

*This discussion is informed by a book written by James McClendon and James Smith, Convictions (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002).*

Convictions operate at three levels: cognitive, affective, and volitional.

Understanding the connection between holiness theology and convictions will make more evident what guides our love and identifies us as moral agents. Holiness as a moral conviction allows freedom in the face of pluralism.

*Refer to Resource 17-6 in the Student Guide.*

Let's look at a proposed list of moral, doctrinal, and philosophical convictions.

### **Moral Convictions**

- The moral life arises out of the gospel.
- The moral life is sustained in a community of noncoercive discourse.
- There ought to be a qualitative difference in the Christian life.
- Life is foundationally sacred.
- It is important to define the levels of covenantal responsibility.
- Understanding the meaning of stewardship and living in light of that reality is foundational to living out the Christian life.
- Moral convictions engender human freedom.

### **Doctrinal Convictions**

- God continually and graciously seeks to make Himself known—Father, Son, and Spirit—as He enjoys His creation and is enjoyed by His creation.
- Humankind, while existing in a condition of co-determination, is finally defined by grace-empowered freedom.
- Human character is formed in worship.
- Jesus the Christ has entered history without privilege and has subverted the power of evil.

- The Spirit calls the community of faith into being through the preaching of Scripture.
- The Church exists to be the community of incarnation and a community of noncoercive discourse, which provides a structure of grace.
- The gracious offer of a transformed life, both as gift and grace-empowered response.
- The presence of the Rule of God is both reality and promise.

### **Philosophical Convictions**

- All things are related—relational ontology.
- The community with which we identify shapes us.
- We exist as a prayer in the presence of God.
- Most of life is in between.

These convictions only represent the process where integrity of action, belief, and thought emerge. The point is that integrity requires the hard work of understanding the convictions that shape and guide life.

Some practical convictions regarding integrity would include:

- I will always endeavor to be honest in my communication.
- I will honor my family as a matter of first importance.
- I will consider the way in which I use money as a way of testifying to my faith.
- I will never allow myself to be in a situation of sexual temptation.
- I will endeavor to grow in understanding by reading and formal education.
- I will never handle money as a pastor in my church.

*You might want to spend some time reflecting on these kinds of practical concerns.*

### **Pastoral Confidentiality**

Pastoral confidentiality enjoys a long tradition in the Church. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states:

It shall be the duty of every minister of the Church of the Nazarene to hold in trust and confidence any communication of a confidential nature given to him or her by a counselee of the congregation while he or she is acting in his or her professional character as a licensed or ordained minister of the Church of the Nazarene. The public dissemination of such communication without the express written consent of the declarant is expressly condemned. Any Nazarene minister who violates the above

*Refer to Resource 17-7 in the Student Guide.*

*(Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2005), paragraph 433.14.*

regulation subjects himself or herself to [disciplinary sanctions].

It is important that confidentiality is described as a duty. Often missed is the further qualification that this communication must be “of a confidential nature.” This means not all communication with a minister is necessarily confidential. For example, many things a pastor will hear are not priestly in nature, but administrative. Another point of this policy is that a minister must not discuss the information in a public setting. If a minister does this, he or she has compromised the priestly office. Confidentiality is essential to the pastoral ministry as a priestly function of the Church.

Pastoral confidentiality originated in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council [Canon XXI]:

Let the priest be discreet and cautious, so that he may pour wine and oil into the wounds of the injured person like a skilled physician, diligently inquiring into the circumstances both of the sinner and of the sin, so that he may wisely understand what advice he should give and what remedy he should apply, trying different tests to heal the patient.

Let him guard with greatest care against exposing the sinner even slightly by word or sign or in any other way. But if he should need wiser advice, let him ask for it cautiously, without any mention of the person, for if anyone dares reveal a sin uncovered to him in the place of confession, we decree that he not only be deposed from the office of priest but also be dispatched to a monastery of strict discipline to do penance for the rest of his life.

*John H. Leith, ed., Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc. Anchor Books, 1963), 56-59.*

The purpose of confidentiality is for the priest to be in a position to render service to the hurts, spiritual and emotional, of the Church. The integrity to hold in confidence information shared in a counseling setting speaks to the character of the minister. Other helping professions require confidentiality, but the context of pastoral confidentiality arises in the delicate issues related to the priestly work of the minister. Pastoral care would have little meaning apart from the trust guaranteed by the integrity of the pastor. From a deontological point of view confidentiality becomes an unconditional duty. Teleological consideration teaches that the consequence of pastoral confidentiality is dependent upon character and its consequence is

character. Either way the importance of confidentiality is essential to the practice of ministry.

*Refer to Resource 17-8 in the Student Guide.*

Confidentiality is not without practical and ethical problems.

*State laws vary, so ministers need to know what the guidelines are in their state.*

**First**, it can be ambiguous ethically. For example, what should be held in confidence? If a person tells you something that, if kept in confidence, will injure another person or even the person talking, then confidence must be questioned. Sometimes confidence is extended too far for it to be useful. The abuse of a child would be an example of this. If it is an administrative concern, confidence does not apply.

**Second**, sometimes confidence only pretends to protect the counselee when in fact it protects the counselor. When keeping the information does not affect the counselee and only protects the counselor legally, then its moral standing is questionable. Anytime that confidence is mostly about the counselor, its moral status should be questioned.

**Third**, too often confidentiality lacks accountability. It can be a veil for the pastor who cannot seek consultation and therefore cannot render the service needed. Confidence can be a place for the counselor to hide from himself or herself.

**Fourth**, confidentiality tends to expand beyond appropriate borders, perhaps to the point where any positive result is impossible.

**Fifth**, confidentiality can hide the real issue, which can be about power. If a person knows your secrets he or she may exert some power over you. This can lead to a temptation to exert that power in dangerous ways. The moral issues at stake radiate around the appropriateness of privacy both for the counselor and for the counselee.

Integrity solves the problems. The character of the pastor is the one thing that is always brought to the circumstance. All of the issues above can be dealt with if integrity characterizes the work of the pastor.

*Refer to Resource 17-9 in the Student Guide.*

If confidentiality is to have true integrity, the following should characterize it:

- Confidentiality should be explicitly requested and granted.
- Before one grants a confidence it should cause one to ponder why such intimacy is required and what purpose confidence will serve in this context.



- One should consider very carefully the long-term effect of a confidence and determine whose need it serves.
- One should consider the way the offer of confidence changes the relationship.
- One should limit the range of the offer of confidence with increasing discipline.

The duty of ministerial confidence needs to be placed within the context of the church. In fact, confidence is incomprehensible apart from the constituency it intends to serve. The Church is not just a collection of individuals. Rather the Church is a community of persons who are formed by the Holy Spirit into a new reality, a body. While confidence is morally required in many circumstances, it can contribute to problems in other situations. For example, holding a confidence regarding one member of a family may compromise the safety of the entire family.

If the self is not atomistic, then confidentiality becomes a virtue as it seeks the health of the entire community where the interests of the person are best secured. This means counseling with integrity requires that the pastor do more than hold secrets. It requires that the pastor establish a covenant with the counselee in order to offer perspective and direction in Christian integrity. Too often confidentiality becomes a lazy holding of a secret. Integrity requires the pastor to examine his or her motives and seek the positive good of the counselee, and that is not always to hold a secret.

There are too many situations regarding confidentiality for all of them to be worked out here. The point is to understand that a character shaped by the truth will often be in situations where discernment will be required. Integrity is therefore a character trait necessary for those who seek to offer counsel.

## **Guided Discussion: Paul Tillich**

(15 minutes)

Paul Tillich was, until his death in 1965, a prominent theologian and a man of many contradictions. He was a vocal critic of Hitler in the days prior to World War II. In fact, Tillich was removed from his tenured position at an important German university largely because of his support of the Jews and his criticism of the Nazi party. He was then invited by Union Theological Seminary in New York to join the faculty. Tillich would hold this position for 20 years before spending some time at Harvard University and Chicago University.

During his lifetime he became a major voice for the Christian faith. He sought to address the prevailing theological and moral issues of the time. Even now, after his death, Tillich remains an important theological resource. Yet after his death Tillich's wife, Hannah, wrote a book that spelled out Paul Tillich's many sexual affairs. Apparently, all the time he was addressing important theological and ethical issues Tillich was living a life well below the usually accepted norms.

Several have stepped up to say that part of this was Hannah's imagination, but no one denies Tillich was unfaithful to his wife. For those who found inspiration in Tillich's writing, the contradiction of a theological genius and immorality has been painful. One person went so far as to suggest that while Paul Tillich's genius as a theologian and a philosopher were nearly unparalleled in his time, he never matured emotionally beyond an adolescent.

Reflecting on the need to join faith with morality into a life of integrity, think about the way in which a person can avoid the contradiction that characterized Tillich.

*Allow for response.*

*The prominence of Tillich did not and does not excuse adultery. In fact, it accentuates the fact that Tillich began at some point to think of himself as an exception to the pedestrian codes by which most people are expected to live.*

*His moral failures are no more significant than those of the home mission pastor or the new youth pastor.*

*Allow for response.*

*How does a minister avoid the contradiction?*

*What life lessons emerge from looking at Tillich's life?*

- Integrity demands moral accountability.
- No one is above the norms of Christian behavior.
- One must always be careful about intellectualizing the faith.
- When a person of prominence is found to be a hypocrite, the damage to all others cannot be fully accounted for.
- One should be careful not to allow the great failures of Tillich to become an excuse for smaller, less evident failures.

- The fact that Tillich was finally unsuccessful in his attempt to live the faith he reflected upon does not suggest that no insight can be found in his writing. His moral failure merely reminds us that integrity is essential for an enduring contribution.
- For many Paul Tillich is the symbol of a lonely intellectual who found it impossible to avoid the contradictions that finally compromised his moral theory and maybe even his theology.

# Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

## Review

In this lesson we

- Defined the moral significance of integrity: integrity is about character, and since that is what we bring to moral choices, it is crucial.
- Articulated the parameters and importance of confidentiality: confidentiality must be asked for and granted; it must never be about the seduction of a secret; and it must be granted only for therapeutic reasons.
- Understood and taught ethical theories and ethical behavior in the Church: deontological theories reflect on integrity as a duty and teleological theories reflect on integrity as an activity resulting in character.
- Discerned and made theologically-based, ethical decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context: while the challenges to integrity are multiple, holiness is one to locate the moral life.
- Applied Christian ethics to the issues of integrity of the minister and the congregation for authentic Christian faithfulness and public witness: the integrity arising from the public presence of the minister, especially as linked to his or her private life, is the product of sustained moral reflection.

## Look Ahead

Next lesson we will look at the importance of the family as a part of modeling morality.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page covenant of integrity for pastoral ministry.

Read and respond to Resource 17-10.

Make a journal entry reflecting upon the content of this lesson.

## Closing Thought

*You may want to read the entire psalm to the class.*

Psalm 1 contrasts two kinds of people. The first kind of person follows the advice of the wicked, takes the path of sinner and scoffers. The second kind of person

delights in the law and because of that does not take the advice of the wicked or walk the path of the sinner or sit with the scoffers. The second meditates on the law day and night. While the first kind of person is driven away like chaff, the second kind of person is like a tree planted by streams of water.

A person of integrity does not take the easy way out, but in the end he or she endures. The point of talking about integrity is to affirm the importance of planting one's life in the truth. This never leads to an easy life, but it embodies an enduring life.

[This page intentionally blank]

## Lesson 18

# Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life	Lecture	Resources 18-1—18-6
1:10	The Changing Family	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Balswick, Jack O., and Judith K. Balswick. *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*. Second edition, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989, 1999.

Clapp, Rodney. *Families at the Crossroads*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Family: The Forming Center*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996.

Wigger, J. Bradley. *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*In pairs have the students share their Covenants of Integrity.*

*Call on students for response to Resource 17-10.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

*His other two associations are community and state. For him the state was equal to what we would call country. Aristotle also talks about friendship as a fundamental association.*

*This is the final lesson that specifically reflects upon a moral concern through the lens of Christian ethics. This lesson in some ways will be the place where the previous two lessons are best understood. For example, sexuality is intended to be worked out and taught appropriately in the family. Likewise one learns about integrity in the home from people who model it.*

The family is an essential element in any society. Whether we know them or not, everyone has a biological mother and a biological father. God intends for all people to grow up in a safe and edifying family. Aristotle understood that human beings require associations in order to achieve ends that would otherwise remain closed to us. For Aristotle the fundamental association is the household. Therefore, he understood that in this basic association our basic needs are met. Aristotle also understood that the household is required in order for deeper and more complex associations to be possible.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- articulate the importance of the family for the moral life
- understand the ethical theories and how they teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- discern and make theologically informed decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context
- understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church



- practice faithful stewardship of personal relations, including marriage and family

## Motivator

Mark Callum is the children's pastor at Salem Point Church of the Nazarene. His children's group is composed of 85 bubbling faces and voices. Mark has been the children's pastor for six months at Salem Point. This is already the best place he and his family have ever been. The possibilities for ministry seem almost limitless with this group. Then one Sunday after church he feels a tug on the leg of his pants. He turns to see a little boy named Stephen, who is crying. Mark drops to one knee so he can look Stephen in the eyes and asks what is wrong.

Through more than a few tears Mark learns Stephen's mother and father are arguing every day. Just this morning Stephen heard the word "divorce" and it scared him. Stephen tells Pastor Mark he often hears his mother crying at night. Stephen says he is very sad most of the time these days. In fact, Stephen, usually a well-behaved child, has become somewhat of a problem at school. Pastor Mark would have to admit that Stephen is a little more trouble to handle in children's church. After a few minutes Stephen's parents arrive and he leaves with them. Just before he walks out the door Stephen turns to wave good-bye to Pastor Mark.

That afternoon Pastor Mark calls his senior pastor, Russell James, to tell him about the conversation. He wants to know what to do now. Pastor Russell has been the pastor of this church for 20 years. In fact, he married Stephen's parents and he baptized Stephen after he was born. Stephen's parents are active in the church. Joy, Stephen's mother, is on the church board. Frank, Stephen's father, is a tenth-grade Sunday School teacher. Both of his parents sing in the choir. Their attendance at services has been regular, but recently there have been many times when they came and left in different cars. Pastor Russell is reluctant to intervene, but Pastor Mark feels a responsibility to act upon the information shared by Stephen.

Pastor Russell is committed to helping the families of his church grow in the faith together. He has always attempted to model Christian leadership in his family and in the church. In fact, the church has an annual family retreat. Finally, Pastor Russell and Pastor Mark decide to pay a visit to Joy and Frank. After a little time of talking together, Pastor Russell speaks directly

to the plea of their son, Stephen. First they try to brush the comments aside, but then admit they have been fighting a good deal. Then, Frank says this is a private, family matter and should not concern the church.

*This presents a difficult situation for both Pastor Russell and Pastor Mark. Frank and Joy are active members of the church. They are leaders in the church. The challenge of Pastor Russell is to help Joy and Frank avoid a divorce. The challenge for Pastor Mark is how to talk to Stephen without setting up an alternative to family engagement.*

*The pastoral staff will need to keep close to Frank, Joy, and Stephen. As they pray and look for opportunities to minister, they need to affirm the moral significance of the family. While divorce does not automatically disqualify someone from service, a refusal to avail the family of the resources of the church may indicate a less than serious commitment to the family.*

*Pastor Russell has to find ways to help Frank and Joy understand their stewardship of Stephen and the effect of their conflict on him in a number of areas. The most important thing Pastor Mark can do is stay close to Stephen, without becoming a way for Stephen to withdraw from the family. Most of all the pastoral team needs to pray that God will soften Frank's heart so the family might be saved.*

*Reflecting on this story, what should be the next step, if there even should be a next step, for the pastoral team at Salem Point Church of the Nazarene?*

*What is the importance of the family in the Christian tradition as you reflect on the story?*

## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: Setting an Example for Believers in Family Life**

(40 minutes)

The family is in transition in our time. The traditional family, with a mother and father who raise children, is no longer the only possibility. The single-parent home is becoming more prevalent, even in the Church. New technology is allowing women who have never been married to have a child and raise him or her alone. Adoption, which has been with us a long time, presents another option for parents who want children but cannot conceive themselves. Because of the shrinking world, some of these adopted children come from other countries. The gay and lesbian community seeks to find ways to adopt children, including changes in the law. Men often fail to fulfill their moral responsibilities to their families and force women to carry the bulk of the burden. The purpose of this lesson is to consider the moral implications of the family.

#### **The Bible**

*Refer to Resource 18-1 in the Student Guide.*

The Bible begins with a story about a family. God creates the first human and then says, "It is not good that the human should be alone; I will make for it another human as its partner" (Gen 2:18). The implications of this are easily apparent, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

The relationship between a man and a woman is the place where much of life takes place. Earlier we read, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). Taken with the verses in Genesis 2 several things emerge.

- First, God creates humankind in His image; that is, He creates human beings for communion. Since the Christian faith teaches that God is triune, we understand that God is an everlasting communion. When God creates human beings in His image, that means humankind is a communion. Therefore, humankind as the image of God in history lives the way God lives: in communion.
- Second, Adam and Eve—male and female—are human together. Since God made humankind for

communion, it is unnatural for them to live alone or in isolated ways. After all, human beings learn to talk very early so that it is possible to share ideas and life.

- Third, God created the second human as something different. God didn't create a perfect copy of the first so they would be alike in every way. Rather God created something very different and very good. This pattern of difference enriches life as it turns love into something other than idolatry. It is unnatural to love oneself or one's likeness as an end. God designed the female as the counterpart to the male, in order to complete the creation. The pattern of the relationship of male and female mirrors God's love for the world. God loves the other as He reaches to the world through the Spirit, just as He calls humankind to love God as males and females.
- Fourth, the story of creation links sexual expression to the male-female relationship. After the creation of Eve we read, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion." (Gen 1:28b). Sexuality has become an idol in the modern West. Songs are written about it and plays depict its many joys and pitfalls. The pattern God intends for human sexuality is between a man and a woman. All other forms of sexual expression are immoral because they violate God's intentions. The importance of covenantal responsibility demands that sexuality unfold within the boundary of commitment.

Much of the story of God in the world can be told in the context of the family. God saved Noah and his family. In fact, the history of the Bible is in some measure the history of families. When God describes His blessing for Abraham and Sarah, He does so by talking about their many descendents. Time will not permit a full treatment of the family in the Old Testament, but it is essential to the very texture of the narratives of the faith. Perhaps a few illustrations will make the point:

- Joseph saves Israel by saving his family.
- The tribes of the settlement period are really families.
- Jesus is born into a family.

While there are certainly other examples, these suggest family is a primary category for moral consideration.

## Paul and the Family

*Refer to Resource 18-2 in the Student Guide.*

Paul addresses the issue of the family in several places. There is no place where he makes the concern for the family more vital than in Ephesians. The family is so constituted that it needs to be shaped by the general rule Paul sets forth regarding mutual subjection. Ephesians 5:21 sets the ontology so to speak for the family, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." The way the family lives is the way life is to be lived, in mutual subjection.

Some would want to read this passage as little more than an anachronism. Surely, Paul is either a male chauvinist or he is locked in a time when women were little more than property. Yet, to read this passage as an argument that wives are to do what husbands say is unwarranted by the very words of the text. The issue Paul unfolds here is less about who is in charge than it is about how the husband and the wife are constituted into a living reality, capable of fruitfulness and co-dominion.

In fact, husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies (5:28). Then Paul quotes Genesis by suggesting it is fitting that a man leave his father and mother to be joined to his wife (5:31). The logic of this passage is stunning.

- First, **everyone** is to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Second, this includes wives being subject to husbands.
- Third, this also includes husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the Church, and as their own body.
- Fourth, because God created us to live in families, it is fitting that when the time comes the man and the woman become a separate family.

The Church is the bride of Christ and His love for the Church sanctifies it as a vehicle of salvation. The presence of the Church shows to the world in very concrete ways what God is up to in the world. The family is a place where each is subject to the other and each is loved to his or her own fulfillment. It is a place that shows the world what God is doing. But the argument is even better than that, because Paul seems to be saying the family is the place where He begins the process of regenerating humanity. A healthy family is where people are sanctified for wholeness in the world. Paul calls this "a great mystery" (5:32a), and he applies it to Christ and the Church.

*"Sanctified" here refers to the "setting apart for God's purpose and glory."*

Paul is primarily writing about how Christ loves the Church in the passage (5:25—6:4), but the implications for the family are inescapable. One place of obvious importance is the authority. It seems obvious that Paul is teaching that husbands have authority over wives. Yet, such an interpretation is a serious misreading of the passage. One way to think of this is reflected in Romans 7:1-3:

Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

This passages contrasts two ways of being in the world. One way is bound to the law and its demands. From this point of view authority presents itself as an unequivocal demand. Translated into family life this means strict parameters of authority apply. The other way suggested in the passage is that in Christ the old way of thinking about authority has come to an end.

This new way of understanding authority is not demand but love. Translated into family life, authority is understood in terms of mutuality and love. Authority is no longer coercive, rather it is persuasive. What the law could not demand, a husband and a wife will freely give. The family is not a place of obligation. The family is a place where love opens up lives in an atmosphere of mutual self-fulfillment.

*Refer to Resource 18-3 in the Student Guide.*

*Put in very specific terms, the trash will be taken out not because somebody ordered it to be done, but out of love for the family and the need for it to be done.*

*You may want to pause at this point and reflect upon the change implied in the transition from law to grace in terms of authority.*

*The early church was characterized by house-churches. They were communities of Christians who shared the Lord's Supper, sang hymns, and prayed in various homes. Christians are urged to demonstrate their love for family and commitment to God by providing for their own family. To fail at this is to be worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5:8).*

The family is also where children are formed in order that they might contribute to society and the Church. Paul is direct in his words to children and parents, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph 6:1). The ability to recognize appropriate authority remains an essential element of life. Children need structure, and parents are responsible to provide it. Without structure and recognition of authority, a child will be lost in the ambiguity of moral decision-making. The first significant moral question a child faces should be a long way toward maturity. This means children are first taught to obey, so later they will be capable of exercising freedom.

Admittedly, raising children is difficult in our generation. Raising them effectively takes time and patience. Paul goes on to say, “And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (6:4). Family life requires discipline on the part of parents. Sometimes the days will be long and seemingly thankless, but the patient discipline of godly parents is a moral imperative.

The family is a place where each member becomes a steward of the resources entrusted to it. In other words, the family is a place where people learn to pull together, sacrifice for one another, and accomplish more together than they could alone. Spiritual leadership is necessary for this to happen. As the family learns stewardship it becomes the place where leadership is given to the Church and to society.

It should not go without notice that Paul places these words in the midst of broader concerns of the Christian life. Thus his message to the Church at Ephesus is the same as the message for the Church today: family is part of the way God intends to form people.

## **Family and Moral Reflection**

A survey of the place of the family in the Bible suggests its importance. The two major moral theories treated in this module provide some evidence of the importance of the family. We have already considered Aristotle in this lesson, as well as on virtue ethics. If morality is fostered in association, then the health of one’s family is one predictor of virtue. A child is shown how to live by the example set by parents and even older siblings. If Aristotle is right, then virtue is born in the active engagement of family life. Perhaps the primary place for moral reflection is the family.

*Refer to Resource 18-4 in the Student Guide.*

Deontological theories of moral reflection are not concerned with virtues that arise from associations like the family. Rather deontological theories suggest there is an ought-ness about family responsibility. The categorical imperative sets forth the universal necessity of attending to the family, not because of its results, but because it is the right thing to do. Therefore, if a husband and a wife decide to have children, they have a moral duty to provide the environment for healthy growth.

Ethics is a disciplined reflection on the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action. Character is formed in a family and virtuous action is first learned in the family. No one would suggest that the family is the only place to build character and virtue. Yet, the very best place to learn how to be moral is the family.

## The Pastor and Family

*24 hours, 7 days a week.*

*Refer to Resource 18-5 in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to talk a little bit about the pastor and the importance of a healthy marriage as a place to begin thinking about the family. Some possible places to think about this are:*

- *Decide from day one that marriage is important and difficult. In other words, success in marriage does not just happen.*
- *Listen to one another.*
- *Try to understand one another.*
- *Be honest in the context of love.*
- *Take time for one another.*
- *Make Christ the center of the marriage.*

*Remind the class that single-parent households may be inevitable. While this is not the ideal way to raise children, it may be the best*

Pastoral ministry is a 24/7 proposition. A pastor never truly goes on vacation or fully relaxes. Often the telephone rings in the home of the pastor to call him or her to some immediate crisis. Suffering and human need do not fit neatly on the schedule. This can result in family life becoming very difficult. A pastor needs to stand ready to serve, but the family should not be allowed to become a routine second on the agenda. Work cannot be allowed to become more important than family. In fact, the pastor needs to model Christian discipline in the way he or she makes room for the family. Therefore, it is essential that the pastor make time for the family. There is no excuse for routinely not spending time with the greatest gift a pastor can receive, a family. The pastor's commitment to family should be public. This will show others in the congregation how to maintain family.

The argument for the priority of family life begins with understanding how crucial it is for children to have an environment of trust. This environment begins with parents who love one another in practical ways for



*option for some. Here the work of the one parent will be significant, but possible. The point is that children need to see how to love and the way this happens is in the life of parents or parent.*

children to observe. A healthy family will not be an exclusive clan, rather it will be open for receiving friends and neighbors. A healthy family does not cling to its members. The true test of a healthy family is the ability to let go and bless the children as they start families of their own.

Good families are a result of discipline, commitment, and Church. Paul describes the Church as a body, an organic whole that while including differences is finally one. Therefore, the Church as the family of God teaches its families how to be together in difference. When we come to church we cannot all talk at the same time. We cannot sing only the songs we most like. We cannot all sit in the same seat at the same time. The Church teaches us to focus on what matters. the worship of God. Strong churches engender strong families. Weak churches result in divided families. Bringing one's family to church is one way to keep the family strong.

## **Lessons Best Learned at Home**

Most lessons in life that have moral significance come with some measure of pain. It is not easy to do the right thing in the fallen world into which we have been thrown. Therefore, the best place to learn some of these lessons may be the home. The reason for this is that the family can be a place where people feel safe because they know they are loved. Here are a few lessons best learned at home:

- It is not always going to go my way.
- I am important, but I am not the only one.
- It is important to share.
- I can trust those who are older than me.
- There is a place to run when things get tough.
- Sometimes I need to say, "Forgive me."
- Sometimes rules mean freedom.
- I matter to someone.
- Life goes on.
- Integrity matters.
- Sexuality has a place.

There are many other lessons to be learned at home.

*Refer to Resource 18-6 in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to pause and reflect on the lessons in morality first learned at home.*

## **Guided Discussion: The Changing Family**

(15 minutes)

Recent discussion about gay marriage has centered around the definition of marriage and family. Traditionally, marriage has been defined as a union between a man and a woman. Therefore, traditionally the family has been understood as a mother and a

father raising their children. The escalation of divorce around the world began to change family to at least one adult and one child. The number of children raised in single-parent homes is on the rise. Remarriage after divorce has resulted in "the blended family." There has been a move to find a way to legalize marriage between homosexuals, thus changing once again the nature of the family.

*How do you define marriage?*

*How do you define family?*

*How does the church reach out to the "families" that come through the door?*

*What should the response be to a gay couple who wants to worship at your church? What would Jesus do? How much does God love these individuals?*

*The Church must find a way to minister to these people other than condoning immorality.*

*How do we reach out to the children who come from homes where mixed messages of morality are taught?*

## *Lesson Close*

(5 minutes)

### **Review**

This lesson has attempted to:

- Articulate the importance of the family for the moral life: the home is the place where character is formed and everyone is freed to become a healthy person.
- Understand the ethical theories and how they teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community: the major ethical theories, whether deontological or teleological, present the possibility of modeling the kind of family that contributes to community.
- Discern and make theologically informed decisions in the midst of a complex and/or paradoxical context: the Bible presents much of its narrative through the lives of families. One learns how to live at the feet of godly parents who show us more than tell us about morality. In fact, stability of the family makes it possible to live with integrity in a complex world. The household is the place where people are first taught the faith.
- Understand and apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church: the Church engenders family. Spiritual leadership points to the importance of family and depends upon the family to continue.
- Practice faithful stewardship of personal relations, including marriage and family: one of the ways God blesses the world is through the family. Yet, this only happens when the family acts as a proper steward of the resources entrusted to it.

### **Look Ahead**

The next lesson will begin the final unit of the module. The theme for the last unit will be Character Development and Spiritual Formation. The next lesson will explore the connection between character development, spiritual formation, and morality.

## Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- or 3-page essay on the important lessons in morality learned at home.

Read and respond to Resource 18-7.

Make a journal entry that engages the material of this lesson.

Bring your journal to the next class session. The journal will be checked for your faithfulness to completing this assignment. All the individual entries will not be read, but the seriousness of thought will be evaluated.

## Closing Thought

Proverbs 31: 10-31 is a compelling passage of Scripture. This passage characterizes the blessing of a capable wife. She brings trust to the heart of her husband. This woman clothes herself in strength and dignity. She has wisdom and is not idle. The writer of the proverb says, "Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her" (31: 28). The picture painted in this passage presents a morally good woman whose life blesses her husband and children. It suggests those in her life are given the opportunity to prosper. The home forms the character of those who live in it. The writer of this proverb describes a healthy home where morality emerges.

## *Unit 6: Character Development and Spiritual Formation*

### *Lesson 19*

# **Christian Discipleship and the Virtues**

## *Lesson Overview*

### **Schedule**

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Christian Discipleship and the Virtues	Lecture	Resources 19-1—19-9
1:10	Self-examination	Small Groups	Resource 19-10
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### **Suggested Reading for Instructor**

Cloyd, Betty Shannon. *Children and Prayer*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

Harper, Steve. *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: UpperRoom Books, 1983.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.

Tracy, Wes, Gary Cockerill, Donald Demaray, and Steve Harper. *Reflecting God*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2000.

Tracy, Wesley, D. E. Dee Freeborn, Janine Tartaglia, and Morris A. Weigelt. *The Upward Call: Spiritual Formation and the Holy Life*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994.

Willimon, William H. *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 1 student to read his or her essay.*

*Call for student responses to Resource 18-7.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

This lesson begins the last unit in the module. The intent of this lesson will be to link character, spirituality, and morality. Matthew 28:19-20 reflects the words of Jesus before he ascends to heaven:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

*This module has emphasized character at every turn. Plato understood that those who would rule by reason needed to be educated in order to develop a character capable of leadership. Aristotle directly links character to habits as they come to rest in the virtues. Aquinas followed this same line as well. Augustine understood that caritas orders our love thus making the virtues possible. Wesley formed societies to engender holiness. Moral reflection depends upon a human agent sufficiently formed by the practices associated with discipleship.*

These verses are sometimes called the Great Commission. They are linked to the grand purpose of evangelism, but at an equally important level these verses speak to discipleship. This is further linked to baptism, teaching, and obedience. Morality cannot survive apart from discipleship. Paul offers the following advice to Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). As we begin this lesson, it is good to be reminded that the Christian faith maintains a clear connection between discipleship and character.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- define the relationship between character development, spiritual development, and morality
- apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community

- apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church

## Motivator

*Henri J.M. Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Leadership (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989).*

*Character concerns agency. This means morality is less about teaching a person how to respond to specific problems than it is about forming a particular kind of person.*

*Since character is important and the kind of person who can be less concerned with relevance and popularity is essential for virtue, it is important to embody certain practices. For example, the study of the Bible both privately and corporately contributes to character. The practice of prayer is essential as well. Attention to reading Christian literature will contribute to a Christian character. Public worship is important for character development. Acts of mercy can contribute to a deeper understanding of the connection between character and morality.*

*True freedom does not come from being taught a grid for decision-making, but rather from being formed in the truth of the gospel. Discipleship and spiritual formation are after all about being formed in the truth of the gospel.*

Henri Nouwen writes in *In the Name of Jesus* about Christian leadership. He reflects in the book on his transition from Harvard University to L'Arche. The former is a prestigious university and the latter is a place to serve the handicapped. He observes that his understanding of Christian leadership had been most moved by the desire to be relevant, popular, and for power. Nouwen had even thought these were essential for ministry. He indicates that the move to L'Arche helped him see that ministry is about prayer, vulnerability, and trust. The character of a minister, one who will be capable of living out the vocation, requires a consideration of character. Discipleship and spiritual formation are essential to the formation of character.

*How do you think discipleship and spiritual formation are linked to character? Use the insights of Nouwen to discuss this issue.*



## *Lesson Body*

### **Lecture: Christian Discipleship and the Virtues**

(40 minutes)

Discipleship and spiritual formation contribute to the kind of character that is capable of moral virtue. Some believe practice makes perfect, but in reality practice only makes permanent. Habits are not good just because they are accomplished. Rather habits are good because they have been attached to what is good and then have been habituated. Discipleship and spiritual formation are good because they arise out of the narratives and practices of the Christian faith. New believers are informed about how to live so they might mature in the faith. Such maturity will become evident in moral virtue. Yet, it is not just the new believer who needs to be formed by the gospel. Rather it is the “good” work of the Spirit and the Church to contribute to the formation of people capable of virtue. We will now consider some of the aspects of discipleship and spiritual formation as they contribute to moral virtue.

#### **Theology Assumptions of Discipleship**

*Refer to Resource 19-1 in the Student Guide.*

Spiritual formation and discipleship suggest several important theological assumptions.

**First**, the holiness of God calls those who have been awakened by the Spirit to respond in obedience to the gospel. The nature of God is the first question of all discipleship and moral virtue. The law reveals the nature of God and points to the shape of the Christian life. The love of God connects to the love of neighbor in the Christian tradition. Therefore, the foundational assumption of discipleship is that the nature of God inspires virtue.

**Second**, the offer of God’s grace must be the occasion for a response of growth and virtue. The idea of co-operant grace is essential to a Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory. God does not overpower a person, making it impossible to do otherwise. The Bible is full of examples of people who did other than God desired. The Bible does not teach that God makes people do evil, and it certainly does not teach that evil is consistent with God’s intentions. Therefore, the proposition of human freedom is woven into the very meaning of what it means to be made in the image of God. Through the Fall human beings interrupted the

pattern of maturity intended by God. Yet, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the power of sin has been subverted and human beings have been freed by faith to salvation and virtue. Wesley saw putting our salvation to work as an essential element of holiness. Discipleship is predicated upon the proposition that virtue is inspired by God, but worked out by human beings.

**Third**, evangelism and discipleship are but two sides of the same reality. The preaching of the gospel as a call to the lost is at the same time a call for the lost to embrace a new worldview. The results of evangelism would be rather minimal if they were not followed by the work of discipleship. The fallen world in which Christians live presents a continual challenge for living out a redeemed life. The work of discipleship concerns the hard work of a faith seeking understanding. The capacity for virtue depends upon discipleship. A commitment to evangelism is a commitment to working out the logic of the virtues in life.

**Fourth**, all action arising from the Christian life is gracious. The recent emphasis upon a practiced faith is really recognition that faith is less theory than praxis. John Milbank, an important theologian in the Anglican tradition, closes a very important book by suggesting that theology is about a reorientation to the narratives, logic, and praxis of the Christian faith.

Essential to Milbank's argument is the conception that all human action is a *poesis*. Virtue arises from the narrative, logic, and praxis of the Christian faith. Therefore, virtue is inspired by God, informed by the narratives of faith, determined by the logic of the incarnation, and embodied in the concrete practices of the Church.

Theology and Social Theory  
(Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers,  
1990, 1993), 381.

*Poesis is a Greek word for making. It can also mean creativity. When Milbank uses it, he means to suggest the human action is less about arbitrary action than it is about a response in time to a transcendent reality.*

*You might want to call attention to the fact that theology and ethics are in some measure the same thing. This point has been made several times throughout the module. A healthy, practiced faith will be embodied in virtue. No real virtue can be sustained apart from the renewing and regenerating work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Holiness is embodied faith, therefore virtue is concrete holiness. Theologically considered, faith without works is dead, but works apart from faith easily becomes idolatry.*

*A good book for thinking about the resources for discipleship is Wesley D. Tracy, E. Dee Freeborn, Janine Tartaglia, and Morris A. Weigelt, The Upward Call: Spiritual Formation and the Holy Life (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994).*

*Refer to Resource 19-2 in the Student Guide.*

## Defining the Resources for Discipleship

Discipleship, spiritual formation, and virtue arise out of specific resources. The practice of **communal and personal worship** is essential for discipleship. More than anything else, worship presents an orientation for life. The foundational point here concerns living in the conscious presence of God. Human beings were made to worship God. Perhaps the primary vocation of human life is to worship God. We were made by God to love God and thus to love one another. Apart from worship there is no possibility for virtue. If worship is orientation, then it is also memory. Assembling for worship is a practice of remembering the narratives of the faith that contribute to faith and virtue. Worship includes prayer, singing, preaching, sacraments, and mutuality.

Another resource for discipleship and virtue is serious **study of the Bible**. The careful reading and study of Scripture will allow life to be shaped by the narratives of the faith. Today, even educated and well-read people can be relatively ignorant of the Bible. A number of years ago Alan Bloom, a late professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, observed that although his grandparents were uneducated they had a great advantage over their much more educated grandchildren. The advantage related to the Bible narratives that informed and shaped the lives of his grandparents, but not the grandchildren.

Too often secular culture has shaped our lives. Secularity cannot be a satisfying resource for virtue. The main reason for this is that secularity is based on the lie that the immediate is sufficient. The study of Scripture can be a resource for virtue because it tells the story of God in time. Another way to think of the study of Scripture is as a means of grace. The same Spirit that inspired Scripture is at work in the heart of the one who reads the Bible.

Scripture is a means of grace because the regenerating work of the Spirit is accomplished therein. The Bible can be a resource for discipleship and virtue because learning to listen to it is a discipline of growth. This will require not just knowing, but doing the word. It will also mean that the entirety of the Bible will be examined. The hard sayings along with the comforting sayings are essential for spiritual formation and virtue.

**Prayer** constitutes another resource for discipleship and virtue. We will look at the Lord's Prayer more carefully in a few minutes, but it will be considered as

a resource at this point. Just as worship reorients life, so does prayer. Human life in the best sense of the word is prayerful; it becomes a conversation with God. Most importantly prayer is a conversation with God, but as such it reaches to the world. Prayer is internal, but it is also external.

Prayer brings peace but it also calls for action. A person may pray on his or her knees, but prayer is also about a particular kind of journey. Prayer is about the saturation of my will/affection into the presence of God so that attitude and action will be faithful and virtuous. The passion for virtue is located in the passion for God. Prayer is one place where the passion for God is shaped. Prayer is adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession.

**Self-denial** is another practice associated with discipleship and virtue. One example of self-denial is silence. A person who is not able to be alone is probably not able to be a part of the community. While human beings are created for communion with God and others, sometimes it is necessary to locate life in what is finally real. This can also be a way of slowing down for the purpose of introspection, prayer, and quietness.

Fasting is another form of self-denial. Fasting is mentioned often in the Bible and in the Christian tradition. It is absolutely essential that fasting not become an end unto itself. For example, it is said that Buddha fasted until one could press on his stomach and feel his backbone. Buddha found that this rigorous self-denial did not bring enlightenment.

Likewise fasting in and of itself will never be sufficient as a resource for discipleship and virtue. Fasting is saying no to food for a time in order to devote time to prayer. The loosening of our preoccupation with satisfaction can be the occasion for spiritual growth. Appropriate fasting can be a way to teach the correct relationship to the material world. The Christian faith does not disparage materiality when it is true to Scripture, but it never confuses the material with God. Fasting and self-denial is a way of appropriately orienting life.

Another powerful resource for discipleship and virtue is **reading Christian literature**. This presents a powerful resource for spiritual growth. The sermons of John Wesley can be a place of inspiration and direction in life. A careful look at the Christian tradition will reveal several high points like Augustine's *Confessions*.

The reading, study, and meditation upon Christian wisdom can be a source of growth and wisdom.

**Journaling** can also be an important practice. Sometimes writing down our thoughts and prayers can contribute to discipleship and virtue. The simple expression included in the journal can be a rich resource in two distinct ways. First, it can help a person to see what is really there. Just as actually saying something will help one see what he or she really thinks, so journaling can illuminate our deepest prayers. Second, a journal can provide a history that can provide another dimension for spiritual growth. Another benefit of journaling is the time devoted to reflection and the disciplined ordering of thoughts in a prayerful trajectory.

*Read Matthew 6:9-13.*

*Refer to Resource 19-3 in the Student Guide.*

### **Praying the Lord's Prayer**

The Christian tradition includes many resources for comprehending prayer and the life that flows from such prayer. There is no better way to think about the resource for prayer than the Lord's Prayer. A consideration of this prayer can illuminate the meaning of discipleship and virtue. The prayer begins "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." The importance of orienting life toward God is essential. The reality of God constitutes the cornerstone of spiritual life and the source of virtue. The affirmation that God is holy is also important to who God is and what we are called to be. Yet, the most important part of the beginning of prayer is to understand that God is called Father. Therefore, the idea of relationship constitutes an important part of discipleship and virtue.

*Remind the class that a virtue is an acquired human excellence, therefore it is acted upon.*

The second stanza of the Lord's Prayer is "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The most foundational form of life for a Christian is the embodiment of the kingdom of God. The merging of heaven and earth constitutes the horizon for Christian virtue. The spiritual disciplines engender the life that seeks to embody virtue. Doing the will of God constitutes spiritual growth and as action arises from this trajectory, the virtues come.

The third stanza of the prayer is "Give us this day our daily bread." The juxtaposition of the kingdom of God and bread effectively communicates how heaven and earth meet in the Christian life. Living a prayerful life joins the basic needs of life with the horizon of history. There is often a tendency to think of the virtues as ideals suspended above the earth. Things like bread hardly seem to matter, except we all know they do

matter a great deal. Part of the message of the Lord's Prayer is that spirituality connects to the mundane matters of life. Living the kind of life indicated by this prayer speaks to the joining of faith and virtue.

The fourth stanza of the prayer is "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Perhaps one of the most difficult issues to confront in life is forgiveness. All those who are in Christ have been forgiven and thus they are called to forgive. One of the easiest places to retard one's spiritual growth is failure to forgive. Because we have been forgiven (spiritual) and called to forgive (virtue), the extent of the link between discipleship and virtue seems complete in this stanza. Failure to forgive allows one to be victimized over and over again. Forgiveness allows a person to bring the hurt to God in light of the willingness to extend grace to others. Forgiveness arises from the health of a disciple of Christ and the lifestyle of forgiveness is a virtuous life.

The final stanza of the Lord's Prayer is "And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." This verse calls to mind the real world where there is evil and frustration. Spiritual growth takes place in the presence of disappointment and evil. The fact that this prayer acknowledges the reality of the world is important for our consideration. It is fairly easy to be "spiritual" in church or at a prayer retreat. While church and retreats are important, the whole purpose of spiritual formation is to be equipped for a life of virtue. The reality of evil does not argue that virtue is impossible. Rather it argues why virtue is essential.

The Lord's Prayer has long been a standard for prayer and spiritual direction. It acknowledges the reality of God, reaching to daily bread, forgiveness, and contending with evil. If life is a conversation initiated by God, then prayer is the life of virtue. One cannot be spiritual—in the Christian sense—without being virtuous. Likewise the virtues cannot be sustained apart from the spiritual formation. The Lord's Prayer testifies to the marriage of discipleship and virtue.

## Inspiration

Inspiration comes from the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth and the attainment of virtue. Because of this an account of discipleship and spiritual formation demands that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit be considered. The basic meaning of spirit—Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma*—in the Bible is wind or breath.

*Refer to Resource 19-4 in the Student Guide.*

*You may want to say at this point that the purpose here is not to offer a full account of the doctrine*

*of the Holy Spirit. Rather the attempt here is to show how spiritual life and the virtues are inspired.*

Spirit is one way to refer to God without any anthropomorphism. But the most important reference to the Spirit is the outgoing activity of God. Spirit is how God is and to speak of God reverently is to speak of Him as Spirit. The power of God is manifest as Spirit. In other words, God is as He acts as Spirit. The characteristic sphere of the Spirit is that of prophecy (2 Sam 23:2; Neh 9:30; Isa 1:7). Second Peter 1:21 says, "No prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." God's Spirit is God acting. Jesus refers to the Spirit in John 7:37-40:

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.' " Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The eschatological dimension accentuates the importance of the Spirit for a New Testament understanding of spiritual formation and virtue. Thirst is satisfied in Jesus through the Spirit. Yet, the purpose of being satisfied finds its fulfillment in an outward flow. Thus, spiritual formation becomes virtue in the life of the Christian. The apostolic church considered itself to be living in the latter days, the age of fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the pouring forth of the Spirit upon all flesh.

*Refer to Resource 19-5 in the Student Guide. Because of time, tell the students about this resource and allow them to read through it on their own.*

Several specific passages indicate the role of the Spirit and its importance for understanding the Christian faith.

*Refer to Resource 19-6 in the Student Guide.*

The Christian religion owes its existence to the intensity of the conviction of the apostolic church that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place. Church membership was participation in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2: 1).

It is the only hope of unity (Acts 4:32; Eph 4:3; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:18).

The Holy Spirit bestows certain gifts upon the Church (1 Cor 12:12-31). Paul directs the attention of the Church to greater gifts (1 Cor 12:31; 13:13; Gal 5:22-true fruit of the Holy Spirit). The Spirit is the Spirit of power (2 Tim 1:7; Acts 1:8-10; 10:38; Rom 15:13; 1 Cor 2:4; Eph 3:16).

The Spirit guides, leads, and directs (Acts 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 20:23, 28), but does not override the personality of those who are thus directed.

The Spirit, in fact, is the Spirit of liberty releasing people from bondage to the law (Gal 5:13-18; Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:6, 17; John 8:31-33).

The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life (Jn 6:63; 1 Cor 15:45) breathes life into the new creation, the Church. After their baptism in the Holy Spirit Christians walk in newness of life, the life of the new creation, the life of the Age to Come (Rom 7:6). The inward testimony of the Spirit is given to all Christians, whereas the gift of prophecy is given as a special charisma only to the particular ministry of "prophets" within the Church (Rom 12:6, 1 Cor 12:10, 29; Eph 4:11).

*Refer to Resource 19-7 in the Student Guide.*

*This comes from a handout she gave in class at Trevecca Nazarene University in the early '70s.*

According to Mildred Bangs Wynkoop:

- the Holy Spirit is free
- the Holy Spirit always hides himself and spotlights Christ
- the Holy Spirit maintains the unity of the Godhead
- the Holy Spirit always produces clear thinking, rational judgment, sharp awareness, the ability to discriminate and the power to make contrary choices
- the Holy Spirit seeks to decompartmentalize the divided heart and heal broken fellowships
- the Holy Spirit reasons, communicates, convinces, satisfies the moral judgment
- the Holy Spirit stimulates a strong desire to learn, to use the mind, to push ignorance back where error lurks
- the Holy Spirit leads to truth
- the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God in the heart
- the Holy Spirit leads to straight thinking
- the Holy Spirit pushes us onward

The Holy Spirit is God present in the ongoing process of life. The Holy Spirit is symbolized at least in the following ways: union, worship, reconciliation, presence, and sacrament. The Holy Spirit operates in terms of human personality through unfolding grace. The Holy Spirit is evident in the regenerating work of God in the person. The Holy Spirit is wrapped up in the lifelong quest for meaning, and this goes at least to some extent beyond the usual religious dimension. The Holy Spirit calls the community of believers into being and maintains its common quest. The Holy Spirit is our guide into greater self-understanding as well as the riches of God's wisdom. The Holy Spirit is the eschatological gift.



Spiritual renewal arises out of the intention of God to have a gracious relationship with humankind. Spiritual renewal is formed by the reality of God. Spiritual renewal must be understood in terms of humans as a relational being. Spiritual renewal suggests the fundamental meaning for all of life that the presence of God implies. Spiritual renewal is dependent upon a dynamic vision of reality.

The Holy Spirit inspires unity and clarity in the Christian life. A scriptural understanding of the Holy Spirit provides a better way to talk about virtue and spiritual growth than mere subjectivity. The Holy Spirit represents a call to an unambiguous life. The Holy Spirit is the divine dimension of life as exhibited in the delicate tissues of life. It is the divine presence, which is the drive toward a virtue.

## **Discipline**

*Refer to Resource 19-8 in the Student Guide.*

Discipline is the other side of inspiration in the attainment of virtue and spiritual formation. While inspiration arises in response to the call of the Spirit, it is as discipline that the reason begins to order life around the gospel. Discipline is about the will and its capacity to reach consciously to a specific end. Paul appears to be talking about this very thing:

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained (Phil 3:12-16).

Paul combined the inspiration that comes from the goal in Christ Jesus with the discipline of pressing toward the goal. Discipline expresses itself in service, work, perseverance, and obedience.

We have already talked about practical rationality in a previous lesson. The connection of this type of rationality attaches to Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Reason grasps the world. Spiritual formation reaches to virtue by a reason that attaches to the historical patterns, traditions, and narratives of faith. Christianity assumes an active life, one that engages the concerns

of life in the optimism of the grace. Discipline, then, is practical rationality.

## **A Wesleyan Vision for Spiritual Formation**

Wesley joined the Holy Club at Oxford in order to form his life and others in the community toward the Christian faith. This was never able to satisfy the yearning of his heart until his heart was strangely warmed at Aldersgate. This transformed his life. While he gave up the rigors that nearly destroyed his faith, he never lost interest in a life centered on the disciplines.

*A good source for reflecting on this is Steve Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983).*

*Refer to Resource 19-9 in the Student Guide.*

*If time is short you can refer the students to this list and not spend time going through it in class. It is almost identical to the list earlier presented in Resource 19-2.*

The Wesleyan vision for spiritual formation goes something like this:

**Prayer:** Wesley prayed privately. He worked with the prayers of others. This included the devotional classics.

**Scripture:** Sometimes Wesley is called a man of one book, but he was well aware of the traditions that have informed the understanding of Scripture.

**Lord's Supper:** Wesley thought the primary means of grace could be located in the practice of the Eucharist.

**Fasting:** The self-denial of food for a time for the purpose of prayer contributes to spiritual formation.

**Christian Conference:** This aspect of spiritual formation recognizes the social aspect of the Christian faith.

**Prudential Means of Grace:** This is expressed as doing good, doing no harm, and attending to the means of grace.

It is through careful attention to these practices that the life of a Christian is formed and the virtues are attained.

## **Small Groups: Self-examination**

(15 minutes)

*Divide the students into groups of 3 students each.*

*Refer to Resource 19-10 in the Student Guide.*

Part of the meaning of discipleship and spiritual formation involves the practice of honest self-examination. In order actually to accomplish this, one must be capable of living between the overly sensitive guilt consciousness of a person who is constantly "down on himself or herself" and the person who has no "self-awareness" at all. Introspection and self-

examination are essential, but they can become ends in themselves. When this happens, a person can become so self-absorbed that spiritual formation becomes a journey into self rather than a journey into God.

*Thompson, Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 84.*

*Check the students' journals during this time. Reassure students that you will not be reading each individual selection but will be looking for faithfulness to the assignment. Journaling is a requirement for completion of the module.*

Marjorie Thompson indicates that all Christian self-examination depends upon two basic insights. The first insight is that God truly loves us. The second insight is as human beings we come to God in our weakness and brokenness. From these two insights a person can be prepared to think about the implications of self-examination. She goes on to point toward specific practices that can engender self-examination. One of these practices is "examination of conscience," which helps bring us to the place where we can comprehend our failings, even our trespasses. Another practice Thompson points to is "examination of consciousness," which enhances our ability to see both the positive and negative dimensions. This means such things as attitude and specific behaviors are understood in a much broader trajectory of life.

Consider the importance of self-examination.

Reflect upon specific ways in which "examination of conscience" and "examination of consciousness" can contribute to spiritual formation and discipleship, and thus character.

*Regarding "examination of conscience" the importance of bringing one's life into the presence of God is essential. Such a practice is different from the sometimes unhealthy process of self-doubt and self-condemnation.*

*"Examination of conscience" is about seeing oneself and not surveying the attitudes of others.*

*Two other aspects of "examination of conscience" need to be considered. First, such a practice will only work as it becomes a part of the daily formation of spiritual life. Second, such a practice will not be fully effective apart from a friend who will help a person see.*

*Regarding "examination of consciousness" the role of both external and internal reality needs to be considered. This process concerns placing one's life in a larger context than "examination of conscience" allows.*

*A prayerful life is a conscious life, one capable of the communal resource of the Church and the ongoing transformation of the Holy Spirit. When life is conscious in this sense, the confession of sin becomes more than an acknowledgment of failure. The confession of sin becomes a pathway to spiritual formation. Likewise the events of life can be the occasion for seeing the hand of God at work. Spiritual formation is about seeing the truth as it informs life.*

## Lesson Close

(5 minutes)

### Review

In this lesson there was an attempt to:

- Define the relationship between character development, spiritual development, and morality: Character is about moral agency having been formed by the spiritual disciplines.
- Apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community: whether as deontology where disciplines and virtue become duty, or telos where the theories are woven into Christian character.
- Apply the unique ethical dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church: the Church needs leaders who are mature spiritually and able to lead the congregation into the attainment of virtue.

### Look Ahead

The next lesson is the last one of the module. The module will end with the Church as a resource for moral reflection.

### Assign Homework

*Direct students to the Homework Assignments in the Student Guide.*

Write a 2- to 3-page essay on a particular spiritual discipline and illustrate how it enhances moral reflection.

Read and respond to Resource 19-11.

Make a journal entry that reflects your engagement with the material of this lesson.

### Closing Thought

*Reflecting God* says:

The soul is like an unopened package. Or so said John of the Cross. Only God knows what gifts He has put into that gift parcel. All our private devotion and self-examination only get as far as removing the wrapping and the string. The real contents of God's gift package will never be known even to us, according to John, until the worshipping community helps us discover the contents of the mysterious unopened package of the soul. Among our worship brothers and sisters we discover our identity and our gifts.

*Wes Tracy, Gary Cockerill, Donald Demarary, and Steve Harper, Reflecting God (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2000), 119.*

Life is a journey inspired by God, coming to rest in morality. Attention to the spiritual disciplines builds character and as such makes the virtues possible.

## Lesson 20

# Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

## Lesson Overview

### Schedule

Start Time	Task or Topic	Learning Activity	Materials Needed
0:00	Introduction	Orient	Student Guide
0:30	Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making	Lecture	Resources 20-1—20-8
1:10	Theology and Ethics	Guided Discussion	
1:25	Lesson Close	Review, Assign	Student Guide

### Suggested Reading for Instructor

Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988, 505-38.

Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991, 469-91.

Gustafson, James M. *The Church as Moral Decision-Maker*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1970.

# Lesson Introduction

(30 minutes)

## Accountability

*Call on 2 students to read his or her essay.*

*Call on several students to share their ideas on the case study.*

*Return and collect homework.*

## Orientation

We come now to the last lesson in this module. It is fitting that our final lesson reflects upon the role of the Church in moral decision-making. After all the Church has faithfully passed on the Christian tradition from generation to generation. The Church canonized Scripture and hammered out the essential doctrines of the faith. Worship has been defined and practiced in the Church. Therefore, as we approach this last lesson we are really defining the way Christians have come to see morality together.

*You may want to briefly review how this module has been organized.*

*Unit 1: The Nature of Ethical Reflection*—the intent here was to define ethics, reflect on what makes it difficult, and to see how moral reflection connects to the Bible.

*Unit 2: Philosophical Ethics*—the agenda here was to look at four major philosophical theories for moral reflection. We looked at utilitarianism, natural rights, Kantianism, and virtue ethics.

*Unit 3: Theological Ethics*—this unit surveyed theological ethics historically. We looked at patristic, medieval, and modern ethics. We noted that deontological and teleological themes were present in all periods.

*Unit 4: Wesleyan-Holiness Ethics*—since the major interest of this module is to examine ethics in a Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory, four lessons were located in this area. We concluded that for Wesley behavior is materially-connected faith. Holiness transcends morality by introducing the idea of grace.

*Unit 5: Ethical Decision-Making and Contemporary Issues*—attempted to discuss three areas of ethical



issues. This unit looked at sexuality, integrity/confidentiality, and family life.

*Unit 6: Character Development and Spiritual Formation*—in this last unit discipleship/spiritual formation along with the Church as a resource for moral decision-making form the basis of discussion.

Ethics can be organized in many ways. This module presents only one pathway of the several that could have been chosen. The real point is to live the kind of life that will reflect the virtues of the Christian faith.

## Learner Objectives

*Instruct students to locate objectives in the Student Guide.*

*Restating the objectives for the learners serves as an advanced organizer for the lesson and alerts learners to key information and concepts.*

By the end of this lesson, participants should

- articulate an understanding of the Church as a resource for moral decision-making
- apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community
- apply the unique dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church
- practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and the family, personal finance, and professional conduct
- place ministry context in light of the large schemes of world and national history

## Motivator

*We considered Niebuhr in Lesson 11.*

One of the major theological voices of the 20th century was Reinhold Niebuhr. He wrote a book titled *Moral Man and Immoral Society* in which he argued that human beings are less likely to be moral in groups than alone. Therefore, he emphasizes personal accountability over ecclesiological responsibility. His theology reflects a bias that emerged at least in the United States. Whether it is democratic society or the pragmatic orientation of the United States—perhaps, Western European culture—significant suspicion exists regarding institutions.

Some of this distrust is well deserved regarding large business, but the problem is that this same distrust exists in large measure for the Church. When this happens, spirituality is understood to be a personal project undertaken in spite of the Church. Whether Reinhold Niebuhr intended this attitude is hard to determine, but for many the institutional church is more of a problem than it is a resource.

*Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960).*

*The first thing that should be mentioned is the Church is not a human invention. Rather this Church is called together in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. While the Church as the bride of Christ has in the past been guilty of excesses and has discouraged some of its "prophets," it is still the incarnation of God in the world. Somehow the Church bears witness to the gospel and Christian virtue in ways that continue to surprise us.*

*Here are some specific ways in which the Church is a resource for moral reflection:*

- *The Church has a history, one that locates the virtues.*
- *The Church is a people and as such it is a people ready to bear each other's burdens.*
- *The Church is entrusted with the means of grace and as such with the virtues engendered by them.*
- *The Church is commissioned to preach the gospel.*
- *Because the Church has the gospel it is able to be its own critic.*
- *The Church can be a place of encouragement and accountability.*

*The Church by its very concreteness and having received its life from the Spirit can be a resource for moral reflection.*

*Considering the anti-institutionalism engendered in contemporary culture, what might the Church bring as a resource to moral reflection?*

## Lesson Body

### Lecture: Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

(40 minutes)

*Refer to Resource 20-1 in the Student Guide.*

The Church has existed from the very beginning. Paul reminds the Church at Corinth that they are “the church of God that is in Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2a). This means the Church has its feet planted on the ground, but its eyes are fixed on God. The Church is not a concept. It is real people with real problems and possibilities who are given a new name and a better way to be in the world. Peter makes this very point:

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:4-5).

*A similar argument could be made for Israel when the prophets call the nation to covenantal faithfulness. The prophets complained of the excesses of the people, injustice shown to the poor, sexual immorality, and rebellion against the Lord.*

This makes the point eloquently that the Church is a concrete new reality. Much of the history of the Early Church is told around the concrete church in Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and so on. While some New Testament letters are written to individuals and to churches dispersed over a large area, most of the New Testament is written to churches.

Paul addresses a wide range of moral issues in his correspondence with Corinth. For example:

- He addresses the issue of sexual immorality of a terrible sort (1 Cor 5:1-2). He finds it particularly repugnant that they are not embarrassed by this.
- Paul also argues against Christians taking other Christians to court (1 Cor 6:1-8).
- He defines wrong, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10).
- Paul gives directions regarding marriage (1 Cor 7:1-16).
- He talks about Christians eating food offered to idols (1 Cor 8:1-13).

- Paul addresses the freedom and responsibility of Christians (1 Cor 10:23—11:1).
- He defines the ultimate gift for a Christian as love (1 Cor 13).
- Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58).

The consistent manner in which Paul links the Christian faith with virtue is unmistakable. It is equally clear that it is the Church that Paul addresses. He does so because it is within the ministry and accountability provided therein that virtue should be engendered.

Church, as it seeks to comprehend its moral discourse, can take the form of either deontology or teleology. The sense in which the Church seeks to teach and live out Christian virtues very easily takes the form of duty and goodwill. The virtues in this sense constitute a call to a certain kind of life. These virtues are not conditioned by circumstances. From the teleological perspective the practices of the Church seek the formation of Christian character. Therefore, it is in the life of the Church that Christians are formed by the preaching of the Word and the administering of the sacraments, all in the power of the Spirit.

*Refer to Resource 20-2 in the Student Guide.*

### **The Church: A Theological Account**

One way to understand the Church is as a community of inheritance. While this is primarily eschatological, it is also present in the preaching of the gospel, the means of grace, and the gifts of the Spirit. The Church is a new people who are defined by God. The Church is a new thing called into being in the Spirit through the preaching of the Word. It continues to exist in the faithfulness of God and the obedience of the new community. The Church is a community of noncoercive discourse.

The earliest self-understanding of the Church is as a spiritual society, which replaces Israel as the people of God in the world. In fact, the Church exists both in continuity and discontinuity with Israel. All Christians are made one in Christ, despite their different origins and backgrounds. The Church is the repository of true Christian teaching. The Church gathers the faithful throughout the world together, in order to enable them to grow in faith and holiness.

## Models of the Church

*Students who have had the modules on Theology will be familiar with Avery Dulles.*

*Refer to Resource 20-3 in the Student Guide.*

One of the celebrated typologies for understanding the Church is set forth by Avery Dulles.

The first model proposed by Dulles is the Church as **Institution**. This is associated primarily with the Roman Catholic Church. This understanding of the church sees the Church as a perfect society, but not necessarily institutionalism. The importance of the disclaimer regarding institutionalism goes to the matter we considered in the opening motivator. The Church's tasks are understood as teaching, sanctifying, and governing. Authority is understood as hierarchical. Moral reflection in this model of the Church has clear lines of authority along with the kind of tradition that is bound to form the virtues.

The second model for understanding the Church is **Mystical communion**. Augustine, the 5th-century bishop and theologian, thinks of the Church in this way. The Church as mystical communion is very organic because the emphasis is placed upon "body of Christ" and "people of God." This view makes an important distinction between *gesellschaft*—society—where the institution is governed by explicit rules and *gemeinschaft*—community—where face-to-face associations are pervasive. The latter understanding does not specify the character of associations contained therein. Moral reflection takes place in either case, but Augustine favors the face-to-face associations that true accountability requires. Emphasis is placed on the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit in this view. God gifts the Church with virtues.

The third model for understanding the Church is **Sacrament**. This view characterizes the theology of Karl Rahner, who was a 20th-century theologian in the Roman Catholic Church. For Rahner the sacraments mediate God's grace. The Church exists as Eucharist—the Lord's Supper—most essentially meaning thanksgiving. Rahner places emphasis upon the church's incarnation into society. The Church becomes an actual event of grace. This grace is sacramental and as such the virtues are embodied as the Church is incarnate in the world.

The fourth model of the Church is **Herald**. Many Protestants hold this view along with Karl Barth, who was a 20th-century theologian. The central moment of the life of the Church is the preaching of the gospel. The pulpit is the most prominent thing on the platform. Emphasis is placed upon being a witness before the

world. The Church is often understood as a lighthouse to the community around it. The challenge of this understanding of the Church can be the linking of teaching and morality. Yet, it is from the pulpit as Scripture is preached that people are called to new life and to embody the virtues of the gospel.

The final model for understanding the Church is **Servant**. The person most often associated with this view is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was martyred in a Nazi prison camp in the last days of World War II. According to this view the Church operates between the tensions of the secular and the sacred. The Church is only the Church when it exists for others. Significant stress is placed upon justice, peace, and social issues in this view. The moral implications of this view are evident. The Church is the place on earth where the virtues of justice and peace come into view.

Each of these views has limitations and possibilities. The most important thing that arises from this analysis is the understanding that the Church is a resource for moral reflection.

### **Article XI, “The Church”**

*Refer to Resource 20-4 in the Student Guide.*

The moral life requires an adequate ecclesiology. The Church of the Nazarene for much of its history had an implicit understanding of the Church, but in 1989 it adopted an explicit statement. The importance of this moment in the life of the Church cannot be overstated. The adoption of this article singled an important moment of maturity in the Church of the Nazarene. The article is composed of four paragraphs. Each paragraph addresses a different aspect of the Church: nature, marks, mission, and historical reality.

The foundational affirmations of Article XI are:

- The Church is a community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, and the Body of Christ.
- The Church is called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.
- The Church is called to unity and fellowship in the Spirit—worship through preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, ministry in his name, obedience to Christ, and mutual accountability.

- The mission of the Church is to continue the redemptive work of Christ—in the power of the Spirit—holy living, evangelism, discipleship, and service.
- Historical reality: organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists as local and universal, sets apart persons for ministry, and lives now under God's rule as it anticipates the coming of the Lord.

Several things are important for the considerations of this lesson.

- First, the Church is called to obedience to Christ and mutual accountability.
- Second, the mission of the Church includes holy living, discipleship, and service. Each of these has moral significance.
- Third, while the Church lives now under the rule of God it anticipates the coming of the Lord. The statement of faith is also a moral theology.

*You might mention this was addressed in some measure in Lesson 14.*

The adoption of Article XI signaled among other things the explicit recognition that the holy life is lived together. Ecclesiology is required for the moral life.

## Leadership and the Church

*Refer to Resource 20-5 in the Student Guide.*

*Those students who have had the Leading the People of God: Servant Leadership for a Servant Community module may have some thoughts and ideas to add to this portion of the lecture.*

The particular interrelationship between power and influence and what it suggests for leadership has moral significance. Leadership is both a responsibility and a gift, it is a burden and it is a trust. Simply put, influence is more important than position, character over strategy, patience, ability to make difficult decisions, willingness to confront, and finally understanding.

**First**, we must distinguish between power/position and influence. The easiest mistake to make regarding leadership is to confuse power and position with influence. Leadership is really a matter of influence and not power or position. The former is about persuasion and the latter is about coercion. The moral importance of influence over position/power is about character and comprehending that God is Lord and not us.

**Second**, leadership is not really about a life strategy; it is about character. There is no formula for leadership, only the context character provides. Character prepares for leadership. The difference between strategy and character is rather important. Strategy reduces things to a level of shallowness that rarely serves us well. Character is about a texture of

life that embraces the complexity of life in its attempt to be influential.

Character is alone capable of preparing us for a life of influence. One of the most important implications of this idea is that an emphasis upon character prepares us to be an influence even in the places that appear to be far away from where people are looking. Character obliterates the cherished distinction between inner and outer, or public and private. It is because of this that we need to understand the only hope one has of being an influence is to forget the formulas and do the real work of developing the habits necessary to form a character capable of influence.

**Third**, leadership is about patience, the kind that has a grasp of the truth. The hardest thing in the world is to be patient, but leadership requires just such a skill. Patience is about knowing and acting upon the truth. The ability to be an influential leader is dependent upon patience and our patience is testimony to our vision of truthfulness. Patience is about the truth and our capacity to envision it.

**Fourth**, leadership is about the ability to make the difficult decisions. There is no way to be a leader and not be put in situations of making difficult decisions. The first, and in some sense the most difficult lesson about leadership is that you simply cannot make everybody happy.

**Fifth**, leadership is about the capacity to confront. Part of the way we influence is in the willingness to look at a person and speak truthfully. This means leadership takes courage, the courage to be a person of conviction when it really counts. Sometimes one cannot maneuver around the problem. Sometimes if one tries to cover it up it will only get worse. Influence is about the willingness, the courage, and the vision to confront. Here confrontation should be understood as a positive act, not done in anger or desperation. Confrontation is about the expression of our true conviction regarding what really counts. It expresses our willingness to stand somewhere and lead by that very willingness.

**Finally**, leadership is about understanding. Influence arises out of a mature understanding. The kind of leadership that has a chance to be an influence must be informed. Chiefly, leadership and influence must be informed by the moral and doctrinal convictions of a mature understanding. Leaders who are capable of moral leadership are people who have taken the time



to reflect. Sometimes our inability to be a leader of influence relates to a lack of understanding. It takes time to understand. It takes time to stitch things together with wisdom. The premise that leadership arises most clearly through an informed mind is central to theological ethics. Leadership is about a character shaped by a broad understanding. Understanding is an achievement of a lifetime in the context of a community of moral discourse.

John Wesley was a leader of significant influence. Out of his spiritual distress arose the capacity to adapt, reflect, commit, and lead. He never held a high position in the Church. In fact, because of his convictions he was not allowed to preach in many places in England. Yet, out of his own spiritual and intellectual growth he drew from the traditions of the Church and practical wisdom, becoming an important influence in his time. Wesley did not start out to become important or influential. His life was not given to a strategy for success. Wesley sought to be faithful and obedient to the grace that transformed *his* life. The last and most important lesson of leadership is just this, obedience.

The Church is a place where leaders emerge out of the preaching of the gospel through the Spirit. Through the practices of the Church the skills of hope and patience are learned so the people of God might be equipped to witness to the world and offer praise to God.

### **Toward an Understanding of the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making**

*Refer to Resource 20-6 in the Student Guide.*

The Church exists as the new relationality of those who have been discovered in the call of God through Christ and the Spirit. This new relationality arises in the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel to include a new way of being in the world. The Church is a community where the virtues touch the world as a witness to the redeeming grace of God.

The Church exists to embody the continuing presence of God through the power of the Spirit and as such to be the community of the Incarnation. As the incarnation of Christ, His Body on earth, the virtues engendered by grace become concrete in the ongoing life of the Son through the fellowship of the saints. The Church is manifest to the world in worship, sacramental faithfulness, spiritual unity, transmission of the faith, discipline, and healing presence through the gifts of the Spirit:

- kerygma, the report of the gospel
- leitourgia, the celebration of the story
- diakonia, service
- koinonia, fellowship

These essential practices illustrate the link between theology and ethics.

The Church is characterized by a fundamental tension between its grounding in history and its fulfillment in the future. The Church struggles never to make absolute the relative as it is empowered by the vision of the consummation. Virtues do not represent an easy way to live, only a better way to live. At all times the Church must struggle to speak to culture without accommodating culture. The virtues must always be an outgrowth of the faith once delivered to the saints, but they must be continually acted out.

The Church is that community that is bound by the grace of God and who intends to be a place where that love becomes incarnate in freedom, mutuality, respect, justice, and expectation.

*To this point we have looked at the Church as it figures into the New Testament understanding of the moral life. The lesson looked at models of the Church and how they are related to moral reflection. Next the lesson examined Article XI in order to note the moral dimensions of the doctrine. Now the lesson will suggest that one of the purposes of the Church is to engender moral discourse.*

*Refer to Resource 20-7 in the Student Guide.*

## **The Church as a Community of Moral Discourse**

The Church exists to invite the world into a redemptive and moral discourse. This conversation begins as the Church considers its doctrinal heritage as a way of life. Theology as an essential practice of the Church calls the community of faith to assess critically the claims placed upon it. The responsibility to be the leaven of the world becomes a conversation first within the community, but always extending to the world. Therefore, it is essential that the Church speak to the issues that confront the world as a matter of witness. It is also essential that this conversation be understood as noncoercive. Such a process will inevitably require patience.

Since the Church is a community of moral discourse, it requires external relations. The ordering of life that defines part of the agenda of moral reflection and ecclesiastical life forms the structure of conversation. It refuses the merely internal moral reflection that finds expression in the language of intention. This suggests a commitment to a particular history as it is enfolded in the life of the Church. A concrete form of this is accountability. Such a move allows for a sustained practice of moral discourse.

*You might want to discuss the Ekklesia Project at this point in the lesson, which seeks to recognize the fact that the Church is called to a new mode of life. Stanley Hauerwas, "The Ekklesia Project: A Declaration and an Invitation to all Christians," in A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity (Grand Rapids: Baker Books/Brazos Press, 2000), 211-15, sets the basic principles of this project: The triune God is the origin and ultimate goal of all things and we are called to give allegiance to God. Those affiliated with the project affirm that claims made about Jesus are more important than those of the state.*

*Communal worship is at the heart of the Christian life.*

*The Church affirms pacifism as the true expression of the Christian life and as such opposes the culture of death apparent in the world.*

*A refusal to accept the divisions imposed on the Body of Christ.*

*The Ekklesia Project seeks to reassert the importance of the Church and its practices for an ongoing moral conversation in the world. This project reflects one way in which the Church can serve as a resource for moral reflection in the world. It also illustrates the manner in which the usual doctrinal convictions of the Church serve as a resource for moral reflection. This means the Trinity, as a basic conviction is real, serves as a place for conversation. Likewise Christology helps to define how life is lived in the flesh. Most importantly worship is broadened beyond public services to the shape of life. The Church is the place where worship nourishes service. The Ekklesia Project reminds us that the Church is a resource in several ways: doctrine, community, peace, and unity. It is in this way the Church serves as a resource.*

The pastor bears a special responsibility in this moral discourse. The minister is set apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and offering guidance to the life of the Church. The minister must be prepared to equip the saints for service in the world by edifying them through an engagement with the traditions of the Christian faith. The special task of the minister is to be instrumental in the moral discourse that constitutes part of the mission of the Church. This means the minister is charged with the task of reminding the laity of the vast resources for moral reflection.

## Moral Discourse and Specific Issues

*Refer to Resource 20-8 in the Student Guide.*

The moral discourse of the Church is shaped by theological tradition, but it is also about specific concerns.

- First, the Church seeks to be a resource for gender relations. Part of the vocation of the Church is to show the world how men and women as well as husbands and wives can enjoy renewed relationships in light of the gospel.
- Second, the Church can be a place where family and ministry is nourished by the gospel.
- Third, the Church can teach the narratives and principles from which personal finance can be a reflection of Christian virtue.

All of this is an expression of stewardship. Gender relationships, marriage, family, and personal finance become a part of the particular moral discourse of the Church. All of these relationships and responsibilities are ordered by God.

## Guided Discussion: Theology and Ethics

(15 minutes)

Stanley Hauerwas is one of the more important theological ethicists living and working today. His importance, in part, relates to his stubborn refusal to separate theology and ethics. For Hauerwas theology is ethics, and any appropriate ethic is theological. Early in his career he wrote a book with William Willimon titled *Resident Aliens*. This book attempted to make the case that the Church is an alien in culture. In other words, it does not depend upon the world to underwrite its theology or its ethic. For Hauerwas the Church is called to tell the world that it is the world. The argument made in this book is important, for Hauerwas is really saying the Church is an ethic as it is narrated by the practices of the Christian faith.

Reflecting on the material of this lesson and this module consider Hauerwas' proposal and its significance for morality.

*The most obvious conclusions to be reached from the proposal made by Hauerwas are as follows:*

*Ethics would never be an attempt to accommodate to secular understanding.*

*All faith affirmations would have moral implications.*

*The Church would be essential to Christian self-understanding and*

*moral reflection.*

*We would see resources for  
Christian virtue in the means of  
grace (baptism and communion).*

*We would see the importance of  
Bible study, prayer, and  
accountability for Christian virtue.*

*Stanley Hauerwas and William  
Willimon present a challenge that  
is Wesleyan-Holiness to the core:  
all holiness is social holiness, all  
holiness is churchly.*

## *Lesson Close*

(5 minutes)

### **Review**

This lesson has attempted to:

- Articulate an understanding of the Church as a resource for moral decision-making: through preaching of Scripture, fostering a community of accountability, and ordaining people to the ministry the Church seeks to extend the resources for moral decision-making.
- Apply basic understanding of ethical theories to teach and nurture ethical behavior in the Christian community: either as deontology or teleology the resources of moral discourse are evident in the life of the Church.
- Apply the unique dimensions of spiritual leadership in the Church: leaders are nurtured and mature in the life of the Church. This leadership is first evident in the family; it is sustained in the ministry of the Church.
- Practice faithful stewardship of personal relations including gender relationships, marriage and the family, personal finance, and professional conduct: the Church raises specific questions about these issues, thus equipping its membership for life.
- Place ministry context in light of the large schemes of world and national history: the church exists in a particular way in history. The course of Western history has been determined by the life of Christ witnessed in the ministry of the Church.

### **Look Ahead**

This is the end of the module, but it is not the end of moral reflection. Leave this module with the conviction that Wesleyan-Holiness is about living a life engendered by Scripture and Spirit that will embody the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

To quote Paul, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Phil 4:23).

### **Assign Homework**

Covenant with God to live a life worthy of the name Christian.

## Closing Thought

Paul, who we first meet as an enemy of the Christian faith, became one of the chief spokespersons for the Early Church. His life and faith have left an indelible mark on the Christian faith. Timothy was a prized son in the faith who in his own right carried the faith to another generation. While Paul is in prison he writes for one of the last times to his spiritual son Timothy. The words he speaks are important for understanding the importance of the Church:

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline (2 Tim 1:3-7).

Not only do we see the affection of Paul for Timothy, but we see the way faith is found in the Church. Paul talks about ancestors and when he addresses Timothy he praises Lois and Eunice. Paul knew no one could stand alone, and more than that, God called the Church together through Spirit and Scripture so the faith might live in the generations that would come. Paul encourages Timothy by reminding him of his ordination, laying on of hands. Paul worked all of his life to plant churches, instruct churches, and see that the gospel might continue. Christian virtue requires the Church.

[This page intentionally blank]