ET 307 Christian Ethics in Daily Living

Diploma and Certificate Levels

Student Handbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region

Note to students of this course:

This student handbook was prepared by:
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Much of the material contained in the handbook is derived from *Living Ethical Lives,* published by Resource Institute for International Education, Clergy Development, Church of the Nazarene International, Kansas City and from the course *Ethics for Living and Leadership* by Dr. Jack Robinson and Development Associates International*.* Permission has been granted by Dr. Robinson to reproduce the articles located in the Appendices of this handbook.

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Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene, Africa Region

ET 307 Christian Ethics in Daily Living
Syllabus

Diploma Level and/or Certificate Level

Location of the Course:

Course Dates:

Name of the Instructor:

Instructor's Contact Details:

Course Description
This course will examine the biblical concepts of certain values (like Christian stewardship) and behaviors, and how to apply these values in daily life, within the African context.

Course Rationale
From the beginning, the Church of the Nazarene emphasized Christian ethics as one of the major purposes of Wesleyan theology with an emphasis on Entire Sanctification, or living a holy life.

God wants His people to live ethically, giving order and respect to the things of God in the world. It is good to know that the Bible contains two messages: first, the message of salvation—believe and you will be saved (Acts 16:31); and, second, the message of morality (Mark 11:17). The biblical purpose of the message of holiness is to build an ethic by which God's people may live.

This course helps the Christian pastor and layperson to emphasize the ethics of Christian holiness and will help one to integrate the word of God into the African context.

Program Outcomes
The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

CN 4 Appreciation of the theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
CN 5 Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective
CN 10 Knowledge of the basic theory and art of communication, especially that which concerns preaching and teaching
CN 13 Understanding of the principles of interpersonal relations]

CN 14 Application of the fundamentals of personal and community health

CP 14 Ability to manage personal finances as well as those of the church, including the preparation of reports with integrity
CP 16 Ability to manage one's time

CR 1 Ability to give value to Christian morality and how to apply this ethic to life
CR 5 Ability to express humility and interdependence in all of one's personal relationships
CR 6 Ability to give value to relationships through openness, righteousness, and honesty
CR 10 Ability to set an example of Christian stewardship
CR 11 Ability to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength
CR 12 Ability to exert self-control
CR 13 Ability to live the experience of entire sanctification

CX 2 Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
CX 5 Ability to interpret on scientific and biblical bases the Christian position on magic, spiritism, medicine and traditional healing

Course Outcomes for this module
For achieving the competencies listed above, this module organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course.

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify key ethical problems found in one's local context. (CX 2)

2. Compare and contrast the motivation for ethical behavior in the Old Testament (ritual purity) and New Testament (Christ-like love). (CN 4, CR 1, CR 11, CX 5)

3. Differentiate between legal behavior and ethical behavior in terms of motivation, purpose, and requirements in daily living. (CN 4, CN 13, CR 5, CR 11, CX 6)

4. Identify the problems and potential solutions for maintaining sexual purity (CN 13, CN 14, CR 6, CR 12, CX 2).

5. In small groups identify the problems and potential solutions for maintaining financial integrity (CP 14, CR 10, CX 2)

6. Demonstrate the best methods to handle money from the local church, personal loans, and earnings for the family (CN 10, CN 13, CP 14, CR 10, CR 12, CX 2)

7. Model and teach appropriate relationships with the opposite sex (CN 13, CR 5, CR 6, CR 11)

8. Understand the importance of holiness in establishing a biblical perspective on power—personal, political, and spiritual—in relation to life in the Spirit and interaction in private and public life (CN 5, CN 13, CP 16; CR 5, CR 13, CX 2)

9. Appreciate the various philosophical perspectives and historical development of ethical thought and moral behaviors throughout history, and show how principles gained from this study influence the ministry in your local context (CN 6, CX 5)

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	35%
Competence	10%
Character	40%
Context	15%

Course Recommended Reading

The Manual Church of the Nazarene. 2005-2009. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House.

Dunning, H. Ray. Reflecting the Divine Image: Christian Ethics in Wesleyan Perspective.

Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998.

Foster, Richard. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

Hammon, Peter. *Biblical Principles for Africa*. Christian Liberty Books, Cape Town, S.A, 2003.

Harper, Steve. *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Upper Books.

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

Kasongo Munsa. *A letter to Africa about Africa*. Transworld Radio-Africa, 2005

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Second edition, Notre

Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

Maddox, Randy. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*.

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

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.

Powell, Samuel M. and Michael E. Lodahl. *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Spaulding, Henry, II. *Untangling the Sexual Revolution: Rethinking Our Sexual Ethic*.

Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1989.

Taylor, Richard. *Exploring Christian Holiness*. Vol. 3, The Theological
    Formulation.

Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985.

Thompson, Marjorie J*. Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual
    Life*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995.

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.

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

Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of
    Wesleyanism*. Kansas

City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972.

Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance to all course sessions and preparation of all assignments prior to their deadlines. A student that is absent that misses eight hours of class sessions will have a reduced final mark by 25%. If the student misses two full days of class, they will not be able to pass the course.

2. Respond to a scenario given in class according to the impact African and Islamic world-views on Ethics. A guided class discussion will be used to evaluate how students understand how the ideas relate to the real-life scenario. (Course outcome 1 and 9)

3. Identify the differences in ethics from an Old Testament perspective and New Testament perspective. Organize an in-class debate on which perspective better fits one's local ministry context. Students either individual or in groups will represent the perspective on a moral issue from the traditional African worldview. The audience will respond with the biblical Christian worldview. Note differences and similarities. (course outcome 2 and 3)

4. Participate in role plays and group discussions on maintaining sexual purity and financial integrity in the ministry and local contexts. (course outcome 4, 5, 8)

5. Give an oral presentation in front of the class an idea for a sermon series or biblical study on how to teach youth about maintaining sexual purity (course 7, 8)

7. Prepare for a group discussion on course outcome 8. (May be used as an option for a final exam.)

Course Evaluation

Class attendance	5%
Class participation and discussion	10%
Scenario response and guided discussion	10%
Debate participation	10%
Role plays	10%
Presentation on impact of the traditional worldview on Ethics	10%
Oral Presentation: Sermon series or Bible study outline	15%
Group discussion on Holiness and Ethics	15%
Exam	15%

Course Schedule

Session 1 Defining Ethics

Session 2 Biblical Perspectives on Ethics

Session3 Ethics in Relation to Worldviews

Session 4 Ethics in Daily Life: Our attitudes and actions toward God (Exodus 20:1-11)

Session 5 Ethics in Daily Life: How to treat other human beings (Exodus 20:12-17)

Session 6 Ethics among Believers in the Local Church (Integrity and Confidentiality)

Session 7 Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-making

Educational Assumptions

1. The work of the Holy Spirit of Christ is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit's presence within and among us.

2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.

3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the learning leader and the reading assignments, but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason that so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.

4. Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

Learner's Ability to Complete Course Work

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Qualities and Availability

The instructor has committed to preparing the content and being familiar with the objectives of the course. The instructor's life and attitude inside and outside of the course should reflect the lifestyle of Jesus Christ—the main subject of the New Testament story. Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Foreword

The following statements and most of the material of this course are from the course materials for *Living Ethical Lives, from which much of the following course, is derived,* published by Resource Institute for International Education, Clergy Development, Church of the Nazarene International, Kansas City and from the course *Ethics for Living and Leadership* by Dr. Jack Robinson and Development Associates International.

Ethics is a science, a field of knowledge, an academic discipline. It has a long history in literature, going back to ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle before the time of Christ. 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.

Small Group Activity Guidelines

Educational research demonstrates that shared-learning activities, such as small group projects and discussion groups, raise the student's ability to gain and retain knowledge for practice outside the teaching environment. Students are able to develop critical thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis as they work in small group. Assigning small group projects help students to:

1. Learn how to work together in a team environment through positive interdependence.

2. Understand group processes, including process management, conflict management, synergism, collaboration, resource utilization, individual accountability, shared knowledge, cooperation, planning and problem solving.

3. Effectively and efficiently develop oral and written presentation skills.

4. Be better prepared for social interaction at work.

5. Explore and integrate a broader range of ideas and expertise.

6. Respond to different learning styles.

7. Supplement the knowledge of the facilitator/teacher.

8. Develop a sensitivity to and awareness of cultural and gender diversity.

When engaged in small group activities, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. When considering the formation of groups, take into account that it is desirable to balance the small groups by gender, age, geographical origin, local language, and experience. Try to bring as much diversity as possible to the group.

2. Select a spokesperson(s)/Leader(s) for the group to keep the team on task and for reporting back to the rest of the class about the small group's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The spokesperson(s) should also serve as the recorder(s) for the group.

3. Select a timekeeper for the group. Most small group activities should not exceed twenty minutes. The timekeeper's task is to keep the group moving forward and on task to complete the assignment within the allotted time frame.

4. During the course, students are encouraged to try to participate in as many small group roles as possible—spokesperson, recorder, timekeeper.

5. Solicit the facilitator/teacher's assistance at any time the small group is unable to stay on task.

Characteristics of Effective Writing for Students
(adapted from Avila University, Kansas City, Missouri)

Main Idea
The paper is focused on a major point. The writer arrives at the point through clearly explaining why and how the major idea is important. The reader has very little doubt that the main idea is really the writer's main idea. The main idea is present from the beginning to the end of the paper, instead of several unrelated ideas scattered throughout. The paper shows a clear sense of purpose.

Well-Organized
The paper is clearly developed. Transitions are clear from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. In other words, the writer has not simply made a series of unrelated or vaguely related statements. Rather, each statement and paragraph carries the reader closer to an understanding or appreciation of the writer's goal—the main idea of the paper.

Support
The writer provides specific, concrete, and appropriate information from memory, observation, reading, interviewing, or other sources. The paper is well developed with examples, details, illustrations, and anecdotes.

Style
Sentences are varied, and word choices are accurate. There is an absence of "clutter" or "padding." Phrasing is clear and direct. Tone is handled consistently; sentence length and word choice are appropriate to the audience and purpose of the paper.

Mechanics
Punctuation, grammar, spelling, and aspects of format are correctly written. The writer has prepared the paper carefully with attention to appearance and other details. Opening paragraph, closing paragraph, and title are strong and contribute to the sense of purpose, focus, and unity of the writing assignment.

Proofreading

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is my major point of the paper?

2. Have I supported generalizations, opinions, and conclusions with specific examples from the course material, texts, or personal experience?

3. Have I avoided using unnecessary words and clichés?

4. Have I proofread for spelling, punctuation, and typographical errors?

Session 1: Defining Ethics

Lecture:

Ask the question: How do we define ethics?

The basic streams of Western philosophy are:
Metaphysics (What is real?),
Epistemology (How do we test what we think is real?) and
Ethics (_____**?**).

These streams of Western philosophy relate directly to questions common to all humanity:
1) the question of reality—metaphysics,
2) the question of knowledge—epistemology,
3) the question of moral action—ethics

Western philosophy defines Ethics as: "a disciplined reflection the formation of a healthy character and its relationship to virtuous action."

Ethics is the study of human morality, of human behavior, of human conduct. By "morality," we mean the set of judgments that people make about what is right or wrong, good or evil, within an individual, between individuals, or between groups of people. Christian ethical thought and actions are guided by the moral standards by which God desires his people to live their lives regardless of who they are or where they live or what they do. Because Christian ethics focus on God's will for His people and how to accomplish it, the central subject of this course is appropriate for all Christians, not just in a particular geographical region or a particular culture. It applies to all men, women and youth who are children of God and who sincerely want to please him.

The Christian life is more than ethics but not less. God's will includes callings, gifts, responsibilities and activities for specific groups and individuals that do not apply to everyone. These elements form important parts of the Christian life for different people. But the ways in which we carry out these elements of God's will are in the sphere of Christian ethics.

God's will includes not just **W_____** we do as followers of Jesus but **H_____** we do it. The Christian life embraces the ways in which God wants all Christians to live as they carry out their daily lives and work. This is the heart of Christian ethics and is at the heart of what God desires of all of us if we are to please him. Understanding God's moral will, and making decisions and carrying out actions that reflect it, constitute the central challenge of this course.

The purpose of this course is not to examine the whole spectrum of ethical theories, though such a study is useful for understanding the various moral orientations of the people we encounter from day to day. As Christians, we believe that the appropriate foundation for human conduct is rooted in the character of God and is disclosed to us through divine revelation found in the Bible, Christian community, and through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

God's character and moral will for human beings has been revealed to us first through the Old Testament fathers and prophets and finally, most clearly of all, in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore, our primary, though not exclusive, concern in this course is to understand and apply the moral will of God to our lives. Although Christian behavior is properly influenced by diverse categories of ethical theory, we accept the religious or divine commands of God himself as having final moral authority for us. Therefore, we seek to evaluate all of our moral obligations in the light of God's revelation.

Oral Presentation: Sermon series or Bible study outline
Our understanding of what it means to please God can be assisted by examining the lives of people who showed in their lives what this means. The author of the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews gives inspiring examples of faithful men and women from histories in the Old Testament. Let's look at one of these models presented to us in Hebrews 11 to try to understand the ethical dimensions of his actions. They should use the model given below.

A Model of Ethical Living: Abel
Obeying God's word (Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 11:4)
Read the biblical texts from Hebrews 11:4 and Genesis 4:1-16 before
continuing the lecture below.

The story of Cain and Abel is a sad one. These two men, children of
Adam and Eve, brought sacrifices to God (Genesis 4:1-16). We read that
God had respect for Abel and his offering but not for Cain and his
offering. The assumption here is that Abel was making his sacrifice in
obedience to God's word in a way that Cain was not (Hebrews 11:4).
The apparent jealousy of Cain led him to murder his brother Abel, thus
bringing God's judgment upon himself.

We can analyze the way Abel lived as follows:
- His ethical challenge: to respect God's word
- His ethical action: to make an appropriate sacrifice
- His temptation: to follow his older brother, Cain, whose offering
  was not acceptable
- The cost of his doing what was right: the loss of his life
- The reward of his doing what was right: God's approval

Questions for Reflection or Discussion:
1) As you think about your life and work, write down two or three moral
issues that are of concern to you at this time.
2) Why do you believe that God wants His people to engage in some
concentrated thought, discussion and decision making with regard to
moral issues that affect our lives and that of our colleagues? Explain.

Oral Presentation on a Sermon or Bible Study
(Meets partial credit for the course requirement 5 in the syllabus)

Have students present a brief outline of a sermon or Bible study that concerns the moral issue of sexual purity. They should NOT preach a sermon. They should orally present the outline in five minutes or less or write their responses in the following format.

Description of the Moral Situation the Scripture Responds to:

The ethical challenge:

The ethical action needed:

The temptation to not do what is right:

The possible costs of doing what is right:

Session 2: The Possible Rewards of Doing What is Right
Old and New Testaments Perspectives on Ethics

A. Old Testament perspectives on Ethics

God Creates

The point is simply this—"whatever *is,* depends upon God." This implies at the very least that evil is a "rootless" fact that pales in comparison to God's "good" creation.

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)

God Makes Promises

The Old Testament depicts a God who makes and keeps promises to His people.
- Genesis 6—Noah
- Joel 2:28-3:2—return of the Southern Kingdom to Jerusalem

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

One of the crucial, turning-point events in the Old Testament is the exodus. It depicts a God who delivers His people.

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 the appropriate worship of God that morality and character are properly resourced

God Seeks a Relationship

There is no doubt that the one single and most important theme in the Old Testament is covenant.
- 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.

Several **theological** implications arise from the conviction that God seeks a relationship:
- God's loves 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

The Old Testament teaches that God calls His people to a standard of holy behavior that makes them a peculiar people.
- Leviticus 18-19
- Deuteronomy 6:17-18
- Proverbs

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

Group Exercise: Oral Presentation 2: Sermon series or Bible study outline

A Model of Ethical Living: Noah
Here is another person mentioned in the Faithful Witnesses Hall of Fame presented to us in Hebrews 11.

Believing God's promise (Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:5-22; 2 Peter 2:5)
Read the above biblical texts before continuing the lecture below.

      Noah was a man who lived in an evil human environment. Human society was so corrupt and full of violence that God decided to destroy the human race (Genesis 6:5-13). But Noah's life pleased God. He was just and walked with God. So, God told him how to build an ark that would save him, his family, and the earth's living creatures (Genesis 6:14-22). Noah obeyed God's word to him and also preached justice to his world (Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5). God's judgment fell, but Noah and all those with him in the ark were saved. Here is a summary of how Noah lived:

What was his ethical challenge?

What was his ethical action?

What was his temptation?

What was the cost of his doing what was right?

What was the reward of doing what was right?

B. New Testament Perspective on Ethics

Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on 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.
- "You are the salt of the earth"—a disciple of Christ is to affect the world positively where he or she lives.
- Be light for the world—"so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven"

The ethic of the kingdom of heaven fulfills the law by being a vehicle of grace.
- First, Jesus shows that murder is linked to hatred.
- 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.

Jesus wants His disciples to understand that any attempt to separate morality (behavior) from faith (thoughts), is a failed project; love defines the ethic Jesus sets forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 6
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
This closing chapter of the Sermon on the Mount clearly indicates the ethic proposed by Jesus is not intended to be easy, but rather calls for daily obedience.

Discipleship

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

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

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 ever 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 John 5:3a).

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 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.

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.

A New Testament ethic requires grace and law balanced by a continued attendance to the means of grace and grace-saturated accountability.

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 13:12-13 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—there are two operators: God initiates, people respond. 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 universe toward a final consummation in the last days. 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

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 indications 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)
- slaves, obey your earthy 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)

Christian Behavior

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 (Romans 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 John 1:15)
- Live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
- Avoid the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
- Embrace the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26)

Session 3—Ethics in Relation to Worldviews

In the previous session we considered a Christian world-view and its influence on ethics. We would like to analyze two other world-views (African and Islamic) and the ethical patterns that spring from them.

What is a Worldview? (by Kasongo Munza. *A Letter to Africa About Africa*. Transworld Radio-Africa, 2008.)

Webster's dictionary defines worldview as: "a comprehensive, especially personal, philosophy, or conception of the world and of human life." Every culture has its own worldview. It is usually not something a person goes around thinking about. Worldview is assumed and subconscious.

Compare a worldview to putting a pair of colored glasses. Some sunglasses are pinkish in color, some are green and some are brown. When a person wears one of these their view of the world seems normal to them, and only changes when they remove one set of glasses and exchange them for another color.

Cultures are a result of their respective worldviews. Worldview helps the individual deal with life within his culture

An African World-view

Why do we often find it difficult to live as God wants us to live and thus fall short of all that God designed us to be and to enjoy? One reason is our natural tendency to put ourselves and the groups to which we belong at the center of our lives rather than God. But even when we want to obey God and to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, we find obstacles not only within our self-centered, flawed human nature but also in the habits, practices and ways of thinking of our society. Our manner of treating other people, which is learned from childhood, may not be in harmony with the ways of God. Our parents, our families, our schools, our religious leaders, our tribal chiefs, our peers in society, our employers, and our political authorities have all taught us ways of thinking and acting that may work against some of the commandments that the God of the Bible has given us.

This is true in every society, time and place. These kinds of influences always pose problems for those who follow Jesus faithfully.

The pressure to conform to what others expect of us is often very strong. In fact, to go against the will of our families or our ethnic group or our religious leaders can actually be dangerous. During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 people who refused to participate in the slaughter were considered enemies and killed by members of their own tribe. If obeying God's commands brings us into conflict with the values and habits of our social group we become vulnerable to loss of status and respect, loss of security, loss of membership in the group, or even loss of life.

Many of the patterns of thinking and acting in our African families and societies are in harmony with God's commands. Respect for parents and elders, sharing of resources with those in need, the high value placed on human relationships, and many other values parallel biblical teachings. For this we are grateful. But in every society, there exist ways of thinking and acting that contradict God's will. The roots of these wrong attitudes and actions are often to be found in beliefs we hold that do not reflect the truth about God, ourselves and the world. The false beliefs need to be exposed to the light of God's Word so that we can clearly see the difference between right paths and wrong paths and choose the paths of moral faithfulness to him.

Questions for Discussion
Discussion on *African World-view: Foundation of Traditional Ethics in Africa* by Paul Mpindi (See Article #1 in Appendices at end of handbook)
-- Is this idea of seeing God primarily as a way to meet my own needs part of your tradition? What is wrong with this notion?
--How might this utilitarian notion of good and evil influence moral behavior?
--Think of ideas or actions from your context that are culturally acceptable but that violates Jesus' command of loving God and neighbor.

Presentation on impact of the traditional worldview on Ethics Group work

In the table below are found five ideas from Mpindi's description of an African world-view. (See Article #1 in appendices) Please fill in the blank cells with phrases that show similarities or differences with the dominant world-view of your culture.

	Mpindi's description of African world-view	Similarities to my culture	Differences from my culture
World-view structure	Hierarchy and harmony		
Supreme Being	Distant creator		
Mediators	Divine (spirits and ancestors) & human		
Goal of life	Community and individual well-being		
Concept of good	Utilitarian (what serves ours/my interests		

Presentation on the African Worldview on Moral Issues

Have the students create a list of moral issues. Have students either as individuals or in groups prepare and present the perspective from the traditional African worldview. Have the audience respond with the biblical Christian worldview. Note similarities and differences on the board and in writing.

Meets course requirement 1 in the syllabus

An Islamic World-view

One alternative worldview and basis for ethics is Islam. Islam is a major religion in Africa today. It shares with Christianity belief in God as Supreme Being, eternal, all-powerful, all knowing, far above this world yet seeing all that goes on within it. But Islam does not share the Christian teaching that God is truly near to us or that there is one God in three persons: the Creator (Father), Word (Son), Spirit (Holy Spirit) so that there is within God fellowship, harmony, love, and communication. Nor does Islam accept Christ as the divine, eternal Word of God expressed in fully human form, revealing to humankind what the invisible God is like.

Islam agrees that God created the world but not in a different state than it is now. Islam does not agree with the biblical teaching that humans were created in God's image, for it teaches that God is entirely unlike man.

From an Islamic perspective all people commit faults, but all do not commit transgressions that disqualify people for paradise.

One of the great deceptions of Islam is the idea that if God so wills, one's good deeds will outweigh his bad deeds and bring him material blessings now and paradise in the end. There is no sacrifice for sin and no savior. God may forgive whomever He wants to forgive, but there is no assurance of salvation.

Ethical Implications
In Islam the basis of ethics is fear of God and the desire for his approval. Ethical behavior is a fulfillment of duty and obedience to God's laws. It is motivated by the importance of observing the religious rules of behavior and is motivated by fear of the Last Day. In Christian teaching the basis of ethics is love for God and gratitude for what He has done. Ethical behavior is an expression of love for God and man, in response to the experience of God's grace. It is motivated by a changed nature, the result of one's spirit being renewed through the Holy Spirit who dwells in those who are in Christ.

Islam teaches the following:
God also gave man the basic knowledge of 'good' and 'bad' at the time of his inception. Thus, according to Islam, every individual has been bestowed a clear standard of judgment of 'good' and 'evil' by God. (…) It is precisely for the stated reason that man, on the Day of Judgment, shall have no excuse for any voluntary and conscious deviation from these values in his life, even if he has remained ignorant of the teachings of any prophet. (…) Every person, irrespective of whether he is a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, an atheist or an agnostic, knows that defrauding others is wrong. He defrauds others not due to any misconception about the 'goodness' or the 'badness' of defrauding others, but to gain some immediate and quick material gains from such an act. The same is the case of all other basic moral values. The excuse of ignorance, in the case of these basic moral and ethical values, shall therefore not save an individual from punishment on the Day of Judgment, as, in reality, there has never been ignorance in this sphere." (*Principles of Islamic Ethics* - An Introduction; by Moiz Amjad of Pakistan, 2000)

This view, that we all know intuitively what is right and wrong, is not supported by Scripture. Whatever moral knowledge humans had in the beginning has been corrupted by the influence of our fallen natures. This is why we need the special revelation of God to teach us the truth about God's moral will and the example of Christ to illustrate it in practice. Islam teaches that the Qur'an only reminds people of the ethical values they already know. It also teaches that *"the Qur'an has applied the basic ethical principles on practical life situations and has prescribed or prohibited a particular code of conduct."* (Ibid) It is at this point that Islam becomes legalistic, binding people to rituals about what they can eat, what they can wear, and how they must worship. In Christ, there is freedom from binding ritual and the encouragement to exhibit the moral direction of God's law in ways that express love to one another in appropriate ways. Why be ethical as a Muslim? Because the articles of Islamic faith demand it. (Ibid) Why be ethical as a Christian? Because the love of God for us, that we have seen and experienced in Jesus Christ. wins our love for him in return and motivates us to love one another as he taught us.

In the **Appendices (Article #2)**, there is a more in-depth analysis of Islamic ethics and moral practices and their impact on Christians, especially in Africa, written by Moussa Bongoyogk. If Muslims are living in your context, this is especially important reading for you.

Debate on Worldview and Ethics

Ask students to suggest a moral dilemma in the local context. For example: what is appropriate dress for a Christian believer: Organize an in-class debate Put students into two groups. One side must support the Biblical Christian perspective, and the other group must support the Islamic perspective as described above. Spend at least 5-10 minutes in preparation and 20-30 minutes in debate.

Meets course requirement 3 in the syllabus.

Scenario Response

Create a scenario that depicts a moral dilemma, without using real names or places, perhaps from real life experience. Have students evaluate the appropriate ethical response from Christian perspective in light of the context of traditional African and Islamic worldviews.

Meets course requirement 3 in the syllabus.

Session 4—Ethics in Daily Life: Commandments 1-4

(See the study map "The 10 Commandments," by Stephane Tibi located in the appendices.)

The First Commandment:
>**"You shall have no other gods before Me."**

The emphasis is on God's Authority.
You shall have no other gods before Me. Every other commandment derives from this one. (Mark 12.28-31).

Who is the Supreme Authority?
1) For the atheist and the agnostic
    - It is either the human being, or the society or science.
    - The outcome is Humanism
2) For the polytheist or traditionalist.
    - It is the spiritual world inhabited by gods and invisibles forces.
    - The outcome is Dualism and Relativism.
3) For the theist.
    - It is God who created the universe, and He has the final authority.
    - Christian Ethics is based upon that authority.

Negatively, Israel is to reject the false gods of the surrounding nations. Positively, the people are to give glory and adoration exclusively to God, their creator and deliverer.

Immediately, heart attitudes are challenged by this command. God's people are to devote themselves wholly to him with their hearts and with their worship. He is to be the ultimate reference of all their actions. Christian Ethics means to act and demonstrate that the God of the Bible is the only authority in our life.

The Second Commandment
"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them."

God did not want his people to form a carnal idea of him. Hence, he was not to be represented by any visible shapes. Nor were any images to be worshipped. God is spirit, and he desires spiritual worship as Jesus later taught (John 4:24). The only authorized object on earth worthy of worship is Jesus of Nazareth, the God-man, who is the exact representation of God's nature (Hebrews 1:3).

Idolatry is to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust, instead of, or besides that one true God, who has manifested himself in his word. (Heidelberg Q. 95)

The Third Commandment
"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

God's people were not to profane the name of God, for it represents all that he is. They were to think and speak of God only with the honor he is due. He is wise, just and good, and words were always to reflect his dignity. This command has special application to oaths. An oath is calling God to witness the truth of what we say. It is a form of divine worship. To swear falsely is to profane God, to rob him of his truth.

The Fourth Commandment
"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work...."

Rediscovering the Christian Work Ethic.

At the very dawn of history God called man to work. God ordained work before the fall. Work is not part of the curse. Adam was commanded to tend the garden before he fell into sin (Gen.2:15). Labor is a God-given responsibility. Work is not a curse to be avoided, nor is it an undesirable activity only pursued when necessary. In the Bible we are commanded to: *"be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed..." 2 Timothy 2:15.*

God is a worker. God worked to create the world and He works to sustain it. He is also constantly at work fulfilling His purpose in history and in the life of every person. (Philippians 2:13). As our Lord Jesus declared 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17).

God called His work *"good"*, confirming that work has intrinsic worth. Work is no disgrace- the disgrace is idleness. *"He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer."* Proverbs 18:9.

God created man in His image as a worker. Before the fall, God assigned to men and women the task of caring for His earthly creation and cultivating the garden they lived in (Gen 1:26-29; 2:8,15*)*. Work is a gift to us. By assigning responsibilities to Adam and Eve, God was making them significant and valuable. By working diligently they reflected God's image. This was the first partnership. Adam and Eve were created as co-workers with God. God planted the garden and man cultivated it.

All legitimate work is an extension of God's work. *"Therefore...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* 1 Corinthians 10:31.

This is what Christian Ethics of Work is all about: **The quality of our daily work should witness to our faith in Christ. One of the best sermon illustrations is the daily testimony of a Christian doing his work with integrity and diligence.**

The Scriptures are scathing in recording God's denunciation of laziness: Proverbs 6:6-11; Ecclesiastes 10:18; Matthew 20:6; Proverbs 24: 30-34; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10. (Take time for students to look up and read each of the passages.)

The fourth commandment concludes the first part of the law that explains what God expected of the hearts and actions of his people regarding the worship of him. He, the only worthy and true God, the creator and savior of his people, commanded exclusive worship of himself, rightly forbidding the worship of any other gods that in reality were no gods at all.

Oral Presentation 3: Sermon series or Bible study outline

A Model of Ethical Living: Abraham

Now let us look at one of the most well known characters of the Old Testament. Like us, Abraham was not always a perfect model. But he also faced a difficult ethical conflict. Hebrews 11 recognizes the importance of his positive example for us all.

**Surrendering to God the person one loves most
(Hebrews 11:8-19; Genesis 22:1-18)**
(Read the two biblical texts before continuing the lecture below.)

Abraham was one of the great models of faith in the Old Testament. The author of Hebrews gives several examples of faith and obedience from his life (Hebrews 11:8-19). Perhaps his most severe test was when God asked him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-18). All his hopes for the future were focused on Isaac. But Abraham trusted God's character and promises and so obeyed his word. In the end, God honoured Abraham's faith and obedience by providing an animal substitute for Isaac. So, Isaac did become the means through which Abraham's descendants came: the nation of Israel and Jesus Christ himself. Here is an analysis of how Abraham lived.

The reward of his doing what was right:

What was his ethical challenge?

What was his ethical action?

What was his temptation?

What was the cost of his doing what was right?

What was the reward of his doing what was right?

Session 5—Ethics in Daily Life: How to treat other human beings (Exodus 20:12-17)

Commandments 5-10: Commandments 5 to 10 explain how God desires his people to treat their fellow human beings, those created in God's image and loved by him.

Fifth Commandment
"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

Jesus repeated this commandment to the Pharisees and scribes calling upon them to do good to their parents instead of neglecting them (Matthew 15:4-9). The way in which children treat their parents will differ from one ethnic group to another. The principles of obedience to parents by young children and the honoring of parents by adult children remain consistent with the teaching of both Old and New Testaments. Honor, gratitude and obedience to parents are the substance of this command. The ones who lovingly transmitted to us life here on earth are the first ones to whom God asks us to give special honor. Insult, ingratitude, and contempt for parents are violations of this command. Ideally, parents are to be cherished and at very least to be honored.

Sixth Commandment
"You shall not murder."

This command is sometimes seen only as a prohibition against killing. While the illegitimate taking of another person's life is clearly forbidden by God, the command goes much deeper. The apostle John wrote, *"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer"* (1 John 3:15). Jesus taught that anger and hate toward a brother put one in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:22). Again, we see God issuing a command that does not stop with the external act but goes on to challenge the attitude of the heart.

The basis of this commandment is twofold. First, every human being is created in the image of God. We must not violate this reflection of God in every human being but must rather hold the person of every human being sacred. Second, all people are bound together in the unity of what

it means to be part of the human race. Plotting to shed another's blood or seeking to do what jeopardizes another's safety is a blow against our common humanity and makes one guilty of breaking this commandment against murder. We are obligated to seek the safety and well-being of others if we are to obey the positive side of this command. (Even though most of the commandments are presented in a negative form, each has a positive message.) The positive thrust of this command is that, instead of murder or revenge, we are to love our neighbors, including our enemies, as we love ourselves.

All of the commandments concerning our relationship to other people are commands against diminishing or terminating their lives. We are to do exactly the opposite, that is, to preserve and enhance the life of our neighbor as an expression of the respect they deserve and of the love we owe them. In this sense, all of commandments 5 through 10 are commands against murder, that is, against the reduction or ending of the life of another. And they are at the same time commands to love all others, that is, to increase the well-being of the lives of all others.

Question for Discussion
How then can Christians justify participating in war or supporting those who do?

Oral Presentation 4: Sermon series or Bible study outline

Acting responsibly toward the State (Romans 13:1-7)

Submission to government's authority has always been a subject of Christian concern from the 1st century to the 21st. Some have sought to withdraw from the State, others have despised the State, and still others have accepted uncritically the State's exercise of power.

(Read the biblical text before continuing the lecture below.)

Romans 13:1-7

The apostle Paul presents the State, in this case the occupying, non-Christian Roman Empire, as an expression of the providence of God. In spite of its repressive potential, Paul sees the State as a sort of servant of God to promote good (Romans 13:4). The consequence of this view is to recommend that Christians submit themselves to duly constituted authorities (13:5). Paul is speaking of submission in the sense of positive obedience in a way that parallels the need of Christians to submit to one another in the framework of the Christian community.

However, there are limits to State power suggested in this passage by the very fact that Paul sees such power as delegated by God. When the State assumes the sacredness that only belongs to God, when the State confuses its power with the ultimate authority that belongs to God alone, then there are grounds for resisting the State. There are times when obeying God and obeying human authorities cannot be done at the same time. In such a case Peter declared that one must choose to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). The reason for the conflict between the Church and the Roman Empire in the first century grew out of the refusal of Christians to recognize the emperor as divine.

To the extent that State power is exercised in a way that does not violate a Christian conscience, informed by the Word of God, there is an obligation to be obedient citizens, to pay taxes, to respect authorities, and to give rightful honour them. If resistance or change is needed, let it be attempted in so far as possible in ways that are constitutionally legitimate. If Christians recognize the divinely appointed legitimacy of the State, let Christians also do what they can to assist the State to carry

out its functions in a way that honours God and brings justice to all citizens within its sphere of authority and responsibility.

Questions to Discuss
1. Is there positive biblical teaching in your church regarding the role of the State and the Christian's responsibility toward it?
2. What documents and people are available to assist Christians in better understanding their privileges, protections and responsibilities as citizens of your country?

3. How can the church as a community of God's people support the principle of the State and its constitutional role while avoiding dangers of participation in the politics of a particular party? What can individual Christians do that the church cannot do?

4. In light of Paul's teaching, how do you feel about your own level of conformity to the laws of your State? Are you satisfied with your actions as a citizen? Explain.

Seventh Commandment
"You shall not commit adultery."

Marriage was instituted by God and represents a covenant within which a man and woman may live together under God's blessing. Adultery breaks the vows of faithfulness contained in the marriage covenant. Celibacy is a legitimate option for those capable of maintaining their sexual purity. Like the behavior required in other commandments, sexual purity (refusing the temptation to adultery and fornication) is grounded in purity of heart and mind. Jesus was very explicit about this when he referred to this commandment. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery;' but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matthew 5:27-28).

In short, we should not do in our minds what we do not wish to do in our actions. The adulterous thought leads to the act, and both are forms of disobedience to God's commandment. Here we are challenged with what we might call *"the ethics of the mind."* Are we obeying God in our minds and hearts? One of the consequences we reap today by violating this commandment is the spread of the terrible AIDS epidemic.

Eight Commandment:
"You shall not steal."

The path to disobeying this commandment begins with longing for that which belongs to others. To obtain the goods or money or ideas of our neighbors through deception or injury to them in any way is to be guilty of theft. But violation of this commandment extends to every kind of right that we take away from our neighbors to their hurt.

Failure to perform our duty to others is also a form of theft. An employee may defraud his employer through waste, neglect, using paid time for personal business, or the divulging of his secrets. An employer may mistreat an employee or withhold what is his due in a variety of ways. Such failures to give what is owed to others may result from the inaction of almost anyone: rulers, pastors, church members, parents, children, the aged, teachers, students, and every person who has responsibilities to others.

Questions to Discuss:
What is bribery?
How is bribery related to the 8th commandment? What makes it wrong?

Definition:
"Bribery is giving a gift or promise of a gift, either tangible or intangible, to another person to get him to provide some improper favor."

How many different kinds of bribery have you seen in the past year? This is a way of life for many people and acceptable in many societies, even if it is against the law. And the pressure to participate in this type of corruption can be enormous.

The giving and receiving of bribes is a form of injustice according to the Scriptures. Moses prohibited it (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19), the prophets denounced it (Isaiah 1:23; Amos 5:12; Micah 3:11; 7:3), and God himself will not receive a bribe (Deuteronomy 10:17). The man who is approved by God does not take bribes (Psalms 15:5; Proverbs 15:27; Isaiah 33:15). However, the wicked man does accept a bribe (Psalms 26:10; Proverbs 17:23). Bribery is a vice that corrupts the mind (Ecclesiastes 7:7) and perverts justice (1 Samuel 8:3). It is a form of stealing and violates the eighth commandment.

Questions to Discuss
1. Is it possible for Christians in your society to resist the temptation to give or receive bribes of one kind or another? How?

2. Reread the comments above on the eighth commandment and note any ways mentioned that would make a thief sense their guilt. Can you think of other types of theft not mentioned here?

3. What temptations to theft are faced by leaders or managers in a Christian organization or church?

Ninth Commandment
"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Because our God is the God of truth, the One who sees and judges truly, the One who desires truth in his people, we must strive for truth in our relationships with one another. Speaking falsehood can injure our neighbor in two major ways. Untruths can rob someone of his or her good name and reputation. In a court of law or even in private conversation untruths can also rob a person of legitimate privileges and possessions. *"A good name is to be more desired than great wealth"* (Proverbs 22:1). To rob someone of his or her good name is to injure someone no less than to rob that person of his or her material goods. Willingness to pass on or listen to slander (misrepresentation and false statements) and gossip (habitually revealing personal or sensational facts or rumors) is forbidden by this commandment. So is the creation of untruths in our minds and hearts as well as the desire to hear them. Our responsibility is to be as truthful as possible in order to promote the good name and prosperity of our neighbor.

Questions to Discuss

Have you ever been hurt by the untruthful words that someone spoke about you to others? How did you feel? What did you do about it? Did you find it easy to forgive?

Part of how we treat people is how we speak about them. What have you said or listened to recently that is destructive of another person?

Write down some ways you and your colleagues could obey this commandment more completely.

Role Play: The temptation to distort the truth
Meet course requirement 4 in the syllabus

This is a very sensitive subject that has special application to church leadership but can trouble leaders of other Christian organizations. Because they want to see God work in miraculous ways in our lives, preachers are sometimes tempted to promise more dramatic divine interventions and material blessings than God promises. Also, because many church leaders teach that the most advanced spiritual maturity is linked to the spectacular work of the Spirit in our lives; preachers are tempted to be sensational in what they say about the miraculous works and blessings of God that they and we have a right to expect in our lives. Sensationalism offers a cheap way to authenticate the preacher and his or her authority.

This is a problem that the apostle Paul had to face in several forms. One evidence of this problem was the divisions Paul saw in the church of Corinth concerning which apostolic leader people should follow (1 Corinthians 1:10-12). Paul affirms that the important thing is not who the preacher is, or how spectacular his preaching may be, but the truth of the message preached (1:21). It's the message of the gospel that God uses to bring salvation. The preaching of any deviation from the truth of God's message deserves strong condemnation, according to Paul (Galatians 1:8).

 (Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-31 before continuing the lecture below.)

Fidelity to the truth of the message of the gospel does not mean that the message will appear to be very spectacular. It sounds weak to the Jews and foolish to the non-Jews (1:18-25). Why is this? God intentionally chose the lowly things of this world to bring us salvation so that boasting would not be in the apostle or preacher that one follows but rather would be in Christ (1:26-31). At the center of this message is the cross of Christ (1:23; 2:2). Paul does not emphasize the power of social and religious hierarchies in 1 Corinthians 1. However, the value of weakness and humility as seen in Christ's life and death is elevated.

The gospel is clearly not about the wisdom and sensationalism of preachers who are only considered to be clay vessels (1 Cor. 4:7) and even the refuse of the world (1 Cor. 4:13). The gospel is rather about

the power of God to save through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet, it's tempting to tell people what they want to hear rather than the truth that God wants them to hear. This is an ethical challenge.

Another form of the problem that Paul faced was the tendency of certain leaders to preach about the glorious future hope of Christians as though that time were already here. It is tempting for preachers today to present the gospel as a kind of illusion, promising health, wealth, and happiness. They want to announce the breaking in of the divine world upon our own world at the present time so that we don't have to deal with the difficulties and realities of life as they really are. But such a life was not the experience of Christ's apostle (2 Cor. 6:1-10). Paul who, as an apostle, did signs, wonders and miracles by God's power, accepted the weakness and sorrows and hardships of this world that are part of the reality in which he and we have to live (2 Cor. 12:12). He understood that perseverance was essential to doing God's will. God loves us with a patient love, and we also must share in this love and patience that faithfully waits for the consummation of all things that Christ will bring.

So, our ethical responsibility is to reject the enticing unreality of sensational religion and false knowledge. Instead, we are to accept our present reality in faith, love and hope of the world to come. We have experienced an internal transformation by God the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17), yet our external situation may remain the same (2 Cor. 7:20). We live under the cross, outwardly in distress (2 Cor. 4:16-17), groaning for the glorious future day (2 Cor. 5:2), but accepting with patience and perseverance our present circumstances. We know that we are not yet perfected, not yet glorified. But we also know that our resurrection will come, that as Christians we look at this present world in the light of what God had done for us in Christ, and that we have work to do while we are here (2 Cor. 5:14-20).

Therefore, rather than seeking the sensational escapes from real life that preachers of illusion or false teachers and leaders may seductively offer, we seek to live in love, in unity, in faith, and in perseverance. And we live this way precisely in the midst of the real-life situations where God has placed us. The preaching and living of this truth represent the narrow gate and the straight way of which Jesus spoke. Yet this reality is not totally negative. Jesus promised his disciples: *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

Questions to Discuss

1. Why do some people listen to spiritual leaders who have spectacular ways of communicating without considering if these leaders are faithful to the Scriptures in their preaching?

2. Which is more common: The preachers that talk more about the power of God to give people what they want or preachers that speak about the love of God and the suffering of Jesus Christ and the importance of sharing in his sufferings for the good of others? Give some reasons for your opinion.

3. Why does perseverance seem to be such an important value for Paul? What is the importance of perseverance for you?

4. Can you write down some ways in which leaders are tempted to distort the truth in communications with their employees, church members, or friendships beyond what might be said while preaching?

Tenth Commandment
"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Of the six commandments that outline the duties that we owe our neighbor this tenth commandment focuses most directly on the state of the mind and heart. According to this commandment, it is forbidden to desire something that leads to our neighbor's loss. Our hearts are to be preoccupied with that which is to the good and advantage of our neighbor. In this commandment, God forbids his people from not only the choices and actions of hatred, murder, adultery, theft and falsehood but also from entertaining thoughts in these directions. In brief, God desires pure, loving hearts that do not permit themselves to cultivate thoughts contrary to the law of love.

In our hearts, the biggest ethical battles of all are won or lost. It is with reason that Proverbs 4:23 offers ancient wisdom: *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."* All the expressions of God's will in the Bible do not help us if our heart's greatest desire is centered on ourselves. We will surely live a life of covetousness. To covet means to desire something that belongs to someone else. Such impurity of heart does not enable us to see God (Matthew 5:8), nor help us to do his will.

For those who want to please God, the catechism in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer summarizes the way these last six commandments direct us to treat others:

"My duty towards my neighbor is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me; To love, honor and aid my father and mother; To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters; To hurt no one by word or deed; To be true and just in all my dealings; To bear no malice nor hatred in my heart; To keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering; To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity; Not to covet nor desire other men's goods, but to learn and labor truly to get my own living and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me."

Questions to Discuss

Are there people in your life, church, organization who seem to be better off than you are, and you find yourself struggling with envy of them, and you wish to have what they have, and even to take some of it away from them?

What is God asking you to do through this tenth commandment to defend your mind and heart against attacks of jealousy? Write down your thoughts.

Concluding Remarks on the Ten Commandments

- **The Ten Commandments shape our expressions of love.**

In the keeping of these commandments a person is exhibiting the image of God, for they reflect his character. Love to God, which flows out in love to neighbor, is the heart of God's moral will for his people. As we have just seen, these commandments begin to make specific how that looks in daily life. In keeping God's commandments out of gratitude and love for him we begin to fulfill his moral purpose for us, and we find meaning in our lives.

- **Non-Christian worldviews challenge some of these commandments.**

The greatest obstacle to following the commandments is being more focused on ourselves rather than loving God and neighbor. People are seldom prepared to do good to neighbors with the same passion or attention given to one's own self. Western secular worldviews put self at the center of life. African traditional religion puts the family, clan and tribe at the center of life. Neither worldview is concerned first with God and with neighbor as Jesus defined neighbor.

The most remote stranger is included in Jesus' notion of neighbor as the parable of the Samaritan shows (Luke 10:29-36). In this parable the action of the despised Samaritan was to be considered an example to follow. Jesus told the Jewish teacher of the law, *"Go and do the same."*

In short, every individual in the whole human race is our neighbor, worthy or unworthy, friend or foe. It is no wonder that people have trouble living a morality that reflects God's commands. Everyone has grown up in societies with worldviews and values that conflict with this Christian worldview and with the universal command to love that it embraces.

- **These commandments lead us toward honor in God's kingdom.**

Loving ones enemies (Matthew 5:44-45). Refraining from vengeance (Leviticus 19:18). Treating every person as a neighbor. Loving God with all our heart, soul and strength. Who can do this? This calls for commitment and sacrifice. This requires the grace and strength of God as well. Yet, it is to this kind of life that God calls us. Jesus said, *"Whoever annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:19).

Session 6—Ethics among Believers in the Local Church (Integrity and Confidentiality)

*How do you define **integrity**?*

The simple definition for integrity is wholeness. The entire movement of Scripture and the Christian tradition is to argue for the importance of integrity.

Some components of integrity
- broken spirit and a contrite heart
- does not include perfection, but it does require honesty
- cannot be merely a reflection of circumstances

Integrity means to be real, authentic, and whole.

Integrity the Problem

All talk about integrity must confront the human tendency to locate too much worth in appearance.

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, then the search for meaning is reduced to grasping at shadows.

Morality is about linking thought with action and embodiment; 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.

Another dimension of the problem with integrity relates to perfectionism.

Perfectionism leads either to extreme frustration in life or to 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 Corinithians 9:14). He goes on in the next verse and makes it clear that he bases this judgment on unselfish 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.

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.

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 regulation subjects himself or herself to [disciplinary sanctions]. Paragraph 433.14.

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.

Oral Presentation 3—Sermon series or Bible study outline

A Model of Ethical Living: Moses

Let's look at one more example of a person who faced a difficult ethical decision, Moses. The right way appeared to him as the hard way, the costly way. Jesus seemed to agree that this is generally true when he spoke about the narrow and wide gates. Jesus said, *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14).

Sometimes a person must consider giving up social, economic and political power in order to do God's will: (Exodus 3:2-14; Hebrews 11:24-29)

Bible reading:
Read the following biblical texts before continuing the lecture below (Exodus 3:2-14; Hebrews 11:24-29).

Moses' life is another biblical example that can instruct us. Instead of accepting the easy life of being the adopted son of the most powerful leader of Egypt, Moses chose instead to identify himself with, and suffer with, the slaves of the Pharaoh, the oppressed descendants of Abraham (Hebrews 11:24-29; Exodus 3:2-14). He heard God through a burning bush call him to confront Pharaoh and to demand the release of the Hebrew slaves. Moses reluctantly obeyed, led the people to the Red Sea, and saw God miraculously deliver them from the king of Egypt through the sea. God then made Moses the leader of his people for the next 40 years.

Here is a summary of how Moses lived:

What was his ethical challenge?

What was his ethical action?

What was his temptation?

What was the cost of his doing what was right?

What was the reward of his doing what was right?

Session 7—Understanding the Church as a Resource for Moral Decision-Making

The Church

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.

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.

The sense in which the church seeks to teach and live out Christian virtues very easily takes the form of duty and goodwill.

Article XI, "The Church"

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.

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.

- As a historical reality, the Church 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.

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.

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 of England. 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 simply this: obedience.

Session 8: Seven Steps in Making Moral Choices

Change in our lives seldom takes place without conscious effort. Of course, some of our attitudes and actions do not need to change. They just need to be continued. As we seek to evaluate our lives as individuals and as Christian communities in the light of God's word, we can rejoice at the evidences of God's Spirit working among us to accomplish his purposes in ways that please him. It is always appropriate to affirm the good that we see in people.

Nevertheless, as we consider the challenge of living Christ-like lives we need to be sensitive to the changes that need to be made in ourselves and in our environment. This is part of what truly loving God and neighbor implies. How does an individual or a group go about making moral decisions and changes in attitudes and behavior? We would like to propose seven key steps in a process that can help us all to live more faithfully as followers of Jesus.

Step 1: Identify a moral problem that needs to be addressed.

This can be done through prayer, discussion with others, and personal reflection. This course has introduced a few moral issues and listed a number of others. The problems that we need to deal with differ from time to time and place to place. A good first step is to identify a high priority problem that needs our attention.

Step 2: Describe the nature of the problem or practice that is in question.

Whom are the people engaging in this practice? Who is affected by it? What beliefs and attitudes contribute to it? When and where does it take place? What are the results of this practice? Why does it pose a problem to you? These are some the questions that may help to describe the various aspects of the problem.

Step 3: Find the biblical teachings and examples that shed light on the moral issue or practice in question.

Some issues have been dealt with directly in the Scriptures, and biblical texts can be found that will offer explicit instruction. Other moral problems we face today present themselves differently from what we find in Scripture. In such cases, biblical texts that provide general guidance on how we treat other people may be most helpful. The Decalogue (Ten Commandments) and the Sermon on the Mount are

examples. In any event, it is important to look to the Bible for the guidance it contains.

Step 4: Distinguish between the aspects of the issue that are in harmony with biblical teaching and those aspects that are in conflict with biblical teaching.

A particular moral practice may have both elements, so it is necessary to see what aspects of a moral issue we can accept and what aspects we must reject. There may be parts of the issue on which the Bible does not offer much explicit guidance. However, it still may be important to point out what aspects of the problem are prudent and what are unwise for Christian attitudes and behavior. Prayerful and careful discernment are needed here both in the analysis of culture and in the interpretation of Scripture.

Step 5: Write down the position that you believe, or your group believes, represents the will of God for you regarding the moral issue in question.

State your position on the issue (*This I believe...*) and state your reasons, both biblical and other, for holding a particular position (*I hold this position for the following reasons :...*). This statement is a summary of your conviction or that of your group about what you believe, before God, is right for you or for those in your group. It may not necessarily be right for all people everywhere, but it is what you believe God expects of you if you are to be faithful to him.

Step 6: Write down what you or your group are actually going to do about this issue.

There are a number of actions that you or your group will want to take in order to bring about changes in the beliefs, attitudes, intentions and practices in one's own life and in the general life of your church and beyond. These actions need to be specific. They need to be possible to carry out. And they need to be scheduled for implementation within a particular time frame. (*These are the actions I/we will take... This is when I/we will do each of these actions...*)

Step 7: Design a structure for accountability.

Who will insure that I/we actually do what is proposed? Who will help me/us evaluate progress and discuss possible modifications in my/our action plans as we go along? Who will pray with me/us regularly and offer encouragement in the moral responsibilities I/we have

accepted? A person or group to whom one is accountable for doing what one intends to do is extremely important if good intentions are to result in real changes in one's attitudes and patterns of life.

A great challenge

When we consider becoming more faithful followers of Jesus we are really considering changes in our ways of thinking and doing. This is cultural change at an individual or group level, and it is not easy. We are beings of habit, and habits change slowly. But if we practice new patterns of life for a long enough time, they begin to push out the old patterns and they gradually establish new patterns that are more pleasing to God.

This path requires courage, determination, persistence, prayer, encouragement of others, and the grace of God. But it is possible to make progress. Our progress is not destroying the old self-centred nature with which we are born. Rather, our progress is letting the Holy Spirit overrule the old nature with a greater authority and power that enables us to see God-centered patterns emerging in our lives and fellowship in spite of the pressure we may always feel from the old nature.

We do not have to live according to the old nature but are enabled rather to live according to the nature of Christ within us. It takes conscious effort and hard work. It is often a real battle, as the Apostle Paul said. But if all of God's people would fight together for moral victory in their lives and churches, our own transformation would not only please God. It could change our world as well.

Analytical Instrument for Ethical Questions

1. Identification of the practice or ethical problem that we wish to address

2. Description of the practice or ethical problem as it appears in our context

3. Biblical passages and examples that shed light on the practice or problem

4a. Aspects of the practice that are in harmony with biblical teaching
4b. Aspects of the practice that are in conflict with biblical teaching

5a. Summary of our position regarding this question
5b. Reasons (biblical or extra-biblical) that convince us of this position

6a. Actions that we want to carry out as a result of our conclusions
6b. People who will participate in these actions
6c. Schedule for the performance of these actions

7a. People to whom we will be accountable for these actions
7b. Schedule for meetings to pray, to evaluate progress, and to make decisions regarding desirable modifications to the plan of action

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Oral Presentation on Making Moral Choices

Have students think of a moral choice involving sexual purity or financial integrity. They should then use the content of this course to support the right moral choice. They should orally present in five minutes or less or write their response in the format found in the Seven Steps for Making Moral Choices. The presentation should be concise and no longer than five minutes.

Meets partial credit for course requirement 5 in the syllabus
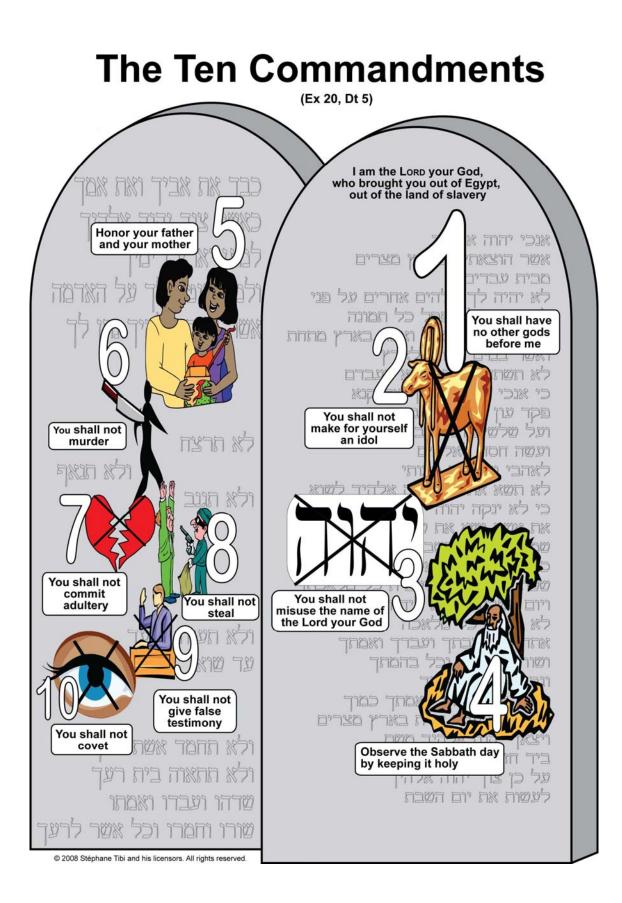

Final Group Discussion
Evaluate each other's oral presentation on moral choices in light of the process delineated in this last section of the course. Or, the instructor may choose one or two of the presentations as an example. Work as a group to review the moral choice according to the Seven Steps of Making Moral Choices. Focus on how holiness helps us make better moral choices.

Meets course requirement number 7 in the syllabus

Congratulations! This marks the end of the work required for successful completion of this course. We hope it represents a new step forward in your effort to model well and to lead those you influence to greater ethical fidelity as they follow Jesus Christ.

Appendices

I. *The Ten Commandments* (Study Map)—by Stephane Tibi

II. Article #1-- *African World-View: Foundation of Traditional Ethics in Africa*—by Paul Mpindi

III. Article #2 --*Brief Introduction to Islamic Ethics*—by Moussa Bongoyok

IV. Student Course Report

The Ten Commandments

(Ex 20, Dt 5)

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery

1 You shall have no other gods before me

2 You shall not make for yourself an idol

3 You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God

4 Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

5 Honor your father and your mother

6 You shall not murder

7 You shall not commit adultery

8 You shall not steal

9 You shall not give false testimony

10 You shall not covet

Article #1

African World-view: Foundation of Traditional Ethics in Africa
By Paul Mpindi (reprinted from *Living Ethical Lives* with permission)

Introduction

Strictly speaking, there is no African world-view that presents a unified vision of the universe for all peoples of the continent. Rather, there are multiple African world-views, different readings of the world by each tribe and ethnic group. But many scholars agree that in spite of the diversity of the tribes throughout the continent, the careful student of African cultures will notice a constant, a central line that seems to run through the different world-view systems. Various African world-views all seem to include a group of beings who hold power and supernatural forces on which depend the equilibrium and harmony of both African and world-wide community. In other words, the African world-views are all dependant upon a basic hierarchy of beings who support and maintain universal order and harmony.

The key word that situates, explains and localizes these different beings that compose the African world-view is the word "harmony." As in Egypt, where the world-view is characterized by Maat, or in Israel where the ideal view of the world and society is represented by Shalôm, (the notion of equilibrium, stability, complete well-being of life), in Africa, the world-view is controlled by the idea of harmony. For Africans, in order that life be good, it must be harmonious in all its aspects.

According to the African world-view, a harmonious life is not the result of the coordinated work of man to render his life better. Harmony, in the African view of the world, depends upon the balance and stability of all the forces of the universe. In other words, harmony experienced in the life of an individual results from the harmony between the individual and the different members of his or her community; the harmony between the community of the living and the community of the recently deceased; the harmony between the recently deceased and those who have been dead for a long time and have been integrated into the world of the domain of the ancestors.

So, African world-view is fundamentally based on hierarchical relationships of beings according to their power and force in the world of the living. The hierarchy of beings in African world-view is a descending one. It begins with the Supreme Being, continues with spiritual intermediaries (spirits and ancestors), and ends with human mediators (fetishists and elders of the community). The following paragraphs give a brief analysis of the different elements of an African world-view and their impact on the moral life of traditional and modern African people.

A. The Supreme Being: God

In spite of their different nuances, all African world-views begin with an affirmation of the existence of the Supreme Being, the existence of God. The Supreme Being is known by the Bakongos as Nzambi, by the Bangala as Nzakomba, by the Akans as Onyame, by the Ewe as Mawu, etc.

In an African world-view God, the Supreme Being, is One, uncreated and creator of all that exists. God is the Supreme Being because he is "force." God is force because

he is the ultimate power from which derive all supernatural and natural powers that impact the life of the human community. An African world-view localizes God, the Supreme Being, in the heavens, the distant and inaccessible domain from which he communicates his power in favor of human beings through a chain of powerful beings, the mediators. But why does almighty God live in the heavens so far from humans that they are incapable of entering into direct contact with him? Here the multiplicity of African traditions furnishes multiple

replies to the question. Many creation stories explain the transcendence of the Supreme Being as a consequence of the unintentional mistake of man. For some, the transcendence of the Supreme Being is explained as the consequence of his aversion to the noise of mortar and pestles made by women in their daily cooking. The Ashanti of Ghana, for example, explain how God went away in the following manner: In the marvelous past, God lived near humans, surrounding them with his presence. But one day a vigorous young wife, preparing fufu by pounding manioc in her mortar,

lifted her pestle so high that it hit God in his celestial location. God was irritated and so retreated into his own heaven. In order to show his indignation and anger toward the human community, God from then on sent lightening and rain to dampen humans.

Others consider God's distancing himself as the result of human drunkenness and insults against the divine mediators. Drunken men would have soiled the heavens, considered to be the face of the gods, by rubbing their dirty hands on it. As a result, God, the Supreme Being, accompanied by his celestial guests, retired to the deep heavens to avoid being polluted by the impurity of humans.

Thus, in spite of their diversity, all the African creation stories explain the transcendence of God as the result of the unintended mistakes of man. Because of the imprudence of man and his erratic

b. The ancestors

The ancestors are the port of entry of the divine into the human world and the port of exit of humans toward the divine. The ancestors are the elders of the community who have died a good death, that is, who have lived in harmony with the community as a whole during their time on earth and who have not injured any member of the village community. The bad, those who have worked against a good life for their neighbors, even if they die old, do not join the community of ancestors. Instead, they join the community of demons, the negative forces that destabilize the community of the living. The bad, the demons, are opposed by the ancestors with the help of the good spirits with the aim of protecting the human community from their evil actions.

So, the ancestors are the humans who have lived a good life and through death have joined the domain of the gods. Their most important role is intercession to the spirits and to God himself, in favor of the human community. According to Mbiti, the ancestors are the perfect intermediaries in the African world-view because they speak a double language: they speak the language of the humans whom they recently left through physical death. But they also speak the language of the spirits, the language of God, the Supreme Being in the domain where they live from now on. Africans worship the ancestors, giving them sacrifices and offerings because having lived in the community they are the best protectors of their interests with respect to the different "forces" and "powers" that rule the universe. The offerings and

sacrifices made to ancestors are to encourage their ministry of intercession. But the ancestors don't intercede only to the gods in favor of the living. Because they are part of the supernatural world, ancestors have the power to reward the living when they take care of them through offerings of libations, or to punish them when they neglect to give them offerings or to follow the traditions and taboos that they have established. For the majority of Africans the different blessings of life: progeny, good harvests, health, the punishment of the wicked (those who don't live according to tradition), come from the activity of the deceased ancestors favoring the community of the living. Among the Akan of Ghana, for example, the girl who prepares to leave her parental roof the day of her marriage will not omit giving an offering of libations and a prayer calling on the ancestors to grant their blessings on new couple. The ancestors are invoked in the following terms: *"Nanamon* (i.e., ancestors), *your daughter by the name of . . . is today married and is being taken to the matrimonial home. We ask for blessings on this union. We ask for children, children in abundance, twins. Give her material wealth so that not*

only we all shall enjoy the fruits of it, but also that there may be children to continue the family tradition and give you due honor." So, the African individual may not have any relation with the supernatural world, with the spirits and the Supreme Being without passing through the mediation of the ancestors. Try to bypass the ancestors in seeking the intervention of God in the world of men is to attract their anger and punishment. Many prayers formulated by the African man are addressed only to ancestors who in their turn intercede in favor of him who has already nourished the ancestors through libations and sacrifices. The ancestors are therefore powerful mediators and may not be approached by just anyone without risking harm. Why, then, are ancestors key mediators in an African world-view? The important position occupied by ancestors in an African world-view comes from the fact that because they have lived and exercised the function of elders in the community, the ancestors are the founders of the traditions and taboos that guide the whole of individual and communal life of the African. The ancestors establish the moral, religious and customary values on which the life of the village is founded. The ancestors are the founders of families, of clans, of tribes and of villages. Ancestors are the pillars, the hinges of existence in Africa because they understand the whole of human reality. The ancestors are the foundations of the African community because in the past they lived in the natural world and live presently in the supernatural world, in the world of the gods. They are, therefore, powerful mediators, the door of entry for the living into the world of the gods.

2. Human mediators

Directly tied to the positive mediation of the ancestors are the human mediators. There exist in the majority of the African communities seven kinds of human mediators who enter into contact with the ancestors to the profit of the community: the traditional priest, the diviner, the traditional healer, the fetisher (sometimes called witch doctor), the village chief, the elders of the village, and the heads of families.

a. The traditional priest

The traditional priest is the person responsible to carry out the rites of entry to the ancestors in order to seek their mediation with the spirits in favor of the individual or community that has offended the Creator. The traditional priest's function is often hereditary. The knowledge of the rites and incantation formulas is passed from one

generation to another for the survival of the community. The function of the priest, being highly sacred, may not be assumed by any but one particular family, enjoying often the attention and respect, if not the fear, of the village community. The individual or the community, victim of the misfortune of life, seeks the intervention of the priest for the restoration of the broken harmony of his life. But it happens often that the priest who knows the rites and formulas for resolving such problems doesn't always know which rite to use for a misfortune difficult to understand. So, the diviner intervenes if the traditional priest himself doesn't have divinatory knowledge.

b. The diviner

The diviner is often called a medium. The diviner or medium is the person gifted with supernatural capacities that permit him to enter into a trance and to be possessed by the spirit of the gods or of the ancestors. The diviner in a trance enters the distant and mysterious domain of the spirits and receives messages in favor of the individual or community that is suffering. Through the medium, the spirits or the ancestors reveal the cause of a sickness or a death or a natural calamity. To the diviner the spirits also reveal the punishment to inflict on the guilty person or community or the sacrifice to offer to appease them. In the structure of the traditional African society the diviner functions often as an assistant to the priest; the diviner assists in the diagnosis of the cause of the suffering and identifies the appropriate sacrifice to offer. Often in the traditional African sacrificial system one individual, the traditional priest, may also be gifted with divining powers.

c. The traditional healer

The traditional healer is the person in the village who is gifted with rare natural and supernatural knowledge. The healer is the person who has mastered nature; he knows the plants, herbs, mosses and healing clays. The botanical, zoological, and geological knowledge of the healer is real and can be felt. The healer knows the natural juices and beverages capable of healing or killing. The natural knowledge of the healer is based on supernatural knowledge. The traditional healer receives knowledge of medicinal plants from the ancestors, protectors of the clan. The majority of the traditional African healers also have divinatory powers that render them much more effective in the diagnosis of the sicknesses of their patients.

d. The fetisher

The function of the fetisher is somewhat complex. It includes the functions of the traditional priest in the invocation of certain incantations and practical rituals; the functions of the diviner in entering into contact with the supernatural world in order to diagnose the nature of the misfortune in question; the functions of the traditional healer in knowing the medicinal plants in case of physical problems; and finally the capability of casting spells when necessary to combat sorcerers. The primary role of the fetisher is to ward off the misfortune that is affecting the individual or the community. But his role also includes defending the individual and the community against those who would cast damaging magic spells on them. His role also involves casting even more deadly spells on the perpetrator in retaliation. So, the fetisher plays the role of defending the individual and the community in the face of evil attacks from their enemies. The fetisher is capable of doing so because he holds esoteric knowledge that enables him to release the positive power of the spirits in favor of the individual and the community or the negative power of the demons against the enemies of his patients.

e. The village chief

In the traditional African world-view the village chief is not strictly speaking a mediator of the power of the gods for the community. He is on the contrary the temporal representative of the community before the gods. As representative of the community, the village chief is the guarantee of the tradition of the ancestors, the law and the customary practices that guide the village or clan. The village chief has the responsibility of applying the demands of the tradition and of the gods in order to assure the harmony of the community. But to be effective, the function of the village chief requires an opening to and a knowledge of the supernatural world, even if this knowledge is only partial. In other words, the ideal village chief is the one who is at the same time the civil and customary administrator of the population but is also to some extent a fetisher, a traditional healer, a diviner, and a traditional priest. In brief, the ideal chief is one who has the capacity to see and to

understand what is going on in the natural world but also to see and understand what is going on in the supernatural world.

f. The village elders

The elders of the village are the assistants of the village chief. They are his eyes and ears to hearand see what there is in the village that might break the harmony of the community and weaken it. Like the village chief, the elders guarantee the traditional order instituted by the ancestors. They must consequently function to some extent as fetisher, traditional healer, diviner, and traditional priest. The natural and supernatural knowledge of the village elders are for assuring the protection and continuity of the village community. g. The family head

That which the village chief and the elders do for harmony and protection at the village level the family head does at the level of the family. In African tradition the head of the family is the person responsible for the respect and maintenance of the customs left by the ancestors. The family head sees that no member of his family is the cause of a misfortune either for the family or for the rest of the community. To carry out his task the family head is not a fetisher or a diviner or a priest. Nevertheless, to be an effective protector, the family head should be gifted with a double vision. He needs to be capable of seeing and understanding what is going on in the world of the living but also what is coming from the supernatural world.

The Goal of Life

Thus, the hierarchy of beings mentioned above contributes to one single goal: the conservation and promotion of harmony (or well-being) in the life of the individual and of the village community. It is important to mention here that the harmony sought in an African world-view implies the absence of suffering at both individual and communal levels. In other words, for the African, harmony means that the young woman newly married becomes pregnant in the first months of her marriage. It means also that she carries her pregnancy to full term without great difficulty; that she gives birth to a healthy child without too much pain; that the child grows up without often falling ill, etc. Harmony means for the African that no member of the community falls ill for a long period of time. Harmony means that the agricultural activities, hunting, and fishing go along normally without material or human loss. Harmony means, finally, that no member of the community experiences a premature death, and that if death arrives, it touches only those who have reached old age and are full of days. Death, a good death, is one that strikes only those full of days. The death of old persons is

good because it is an open door toward the domain of the ancestors for those who have lived a good life on earth.

The immediate consequence of the understanding of life as harmony, rendered possible by the positive activity of the Supreme Being, expressed through the channels of divine and human mediators, is the utilitarian function of African religion. African religion is utilitarian in that it only exists to repair or prevent unfortunate events that destabilize harmony in the life of the individual and the community. It is recognized that African man is profoundly religious. But it is important to mention that the profound religiosity of the African doesn't come from his love or his attachment to the Supreme being or to the spirits or the ancestors. African religion is utilitarian because the African man invokes, prays, sacrifices, respects taboos before the god or gods not because he loves them and wants to serve them. The African appeals to ancestors, to spirits as well as to the Supreme Being with the single goal of interesting them in his cause and in pushing them to help. In other words, if he could live a harmonious life without such help, then he would have no need of ancestors, spirits or the Creator. African man would be a true atheist in such a case. So, the African doesn't seek God, the Creator, through his traditional mediators except for the single reason of asking him for social liberation or for the power to protect him from all misfortune. In other words, the African man doesn't love God for nothing. He always loves him for something immediate, tangible, visible and palpable in his life. Is he sick? He invokes God through the ancestors and spirits. He offers him sacrifices in order that he will cure him. Is the village experiencing drought?

The community sacrifices so that the ancestors will invoke the spirits and so the spirits will invoke the creator God so that he will make it rain. The constant search for balance, for harmony in the life of the African, raises the question of the origin or the cause of disorder, of the evil that breaks the desired harmonious life. In other words, it's important to ask why the harmony in the life of the individual and the African community is often broken by sickness, suffering, natural calamities and death. What is the origin, if not the nature, of the physical, social and religious evil that affects man?

C. The conception of good and evil in the African world-view

Because of its utilitarian conception of religion, an African world-view explains good and evil as a function of their usefulness or harm to the life of the individual and the community. In other words, an action is good or bad, not in itself, but as a function of its consequences in the life, not first of all in the individual, but above all in the life of the community. So, a good action is good, not because it is good in itself, but because it reinforces the cohesion of the village community. As a result, no action is bad in itself unless it disturbs the traditional order established by the ancestors. The good of the community is the ideal followed in an African world-view. It is in favor of the good of the community that Africans pray, sacrifice and seek to appease the spirits and the gods who are angry with them. But why do ancestors, gods, and the Supreme Being get angry against an individual and a village community and take away their harmony? Traditional harmony is broken in the life of the individual or the African community if, and only if, one of its members, or the entirety of its members, violates the law and the customs established by the ancestors. The ancestors who participate in the divine force but who remember their kin in the world of the living come in the night in dreams and visions to reveal to the village chief, to elders, to the fetisher, to the traditional priest, the desires and will of the gods. By a group of

taboos the customary law establishes the negative words and actions not to be said or done so as to avoid the wrath of the gods. The responsibility of every individual and of the community as a whole is to respect the tradition of the ancestors. Evil and suffering come, individual and communal harmony is

broken, when the ancestors are not obeyed, when the taboos are violated.

Of what do the taboos consist? Taboos form a body of words and actions not to be done in order to avoid irritating the ancestors and the gods who don't fail to punish those who disobey them and thus bring unbalance to the individual or the community. The taboos are founded in the traditional wisdom based on observation and experience of daily life. By observation the ancestors have identified the relationship between the cause and effects of daily experience. A certain word, spoken in the morning or at night, is followed by such-and-such a psychosomatic reaction that harms the individual and the community. Such an action done in a given context produces a negative result in the life of the individual and the community. But since the ancestors did not understand the "scientific" reasons that link the causes to the effects that have negative consequences in the life and consciousness of the individual, they created narratives, mythical reasons, and taboos that forbid a certain word or a certain action. Thus, the pregnant wife is forbidden to walk for several hours. Why? Because the gods don't like pregnant women to go looking for their husbands. The disobedient wife will be surely struck by the gods; her feet will swell! The taboo is thus created, forbidding the forced march of women because the ancestors had noticed the relationship between the cause: a prolonged walk, and the effect: swollen feet. Thus,

not understanding the scientific cause of edema, the ancestors created a taboo to support their customary prohibition.

Taboos function as the narrative support, the justification or rationale for behavior prohibited by the ancestors. The taboos form the foundation of religion and of traditional morality in Africa. In Africa, the individual is forbidden to worship a particular god, to eat a certain food, to speak a particular word, or to perform a certain action simply because the ancestors have ordered it. So, an action is good, not because it is good in itself, but because it has been commanded by the ancestors. The ancestors have ordered all taboos for the sole reason of promoting harmony in the life of the individual and the village community. For the Nuer of Sudan, for example, the taboo, "thek", represents the quasi religious respect that the individual should have toward the things and actions indicated by the ancestors as contrary to the harmony of the community. Whoever violates a taboo exposes himself and the rest of the community to impurity with regard to the sacred, and ritual impurity attracts the anger of the ancestors and the gods. In conclusion, good and evil are relative and utilitarian in an African world-view. The good is good, not because it is good in itself, but because it has been judged useful and profitable by the ancestors for the life of the individual and the village community. Good and evil are therefore realities that are limited to the context of each village, each tribe, and each clan. There are numerous examples to show that an action judged good in a village or tribe is considered bad in another village and tribe. There exist tribes in Africa for whom the act of stealing is laudable if it is done against an unknown person, a foreigner. There exist cultures in Africa that permit their young men and young women to freely experiment with their sexuality before marriage without it being

considered bad. There exist tribes that permit their important guests to pass the night with the older girls of the family without it being considered a violation of the moral order. In short, in Africa an action is good because it conforms to the tradition of the ancestors. The ancestors are the guarantee of the moral, religious and customary order of the community. The immediate consequence of the relative and ritual conception of good and evil in an African world-view is the absence of the notion of original sin [the belief that humans are born with a nature that tends toward sin] such as is taught in the Bible. Since evil in an African world-view is essentially the disturbance here and now of the harmony of the universe, it is therefore not a fatal flaw, not an inherent disposition inherited from the ancestors. In an African world-view evil is not a sin committed against a god or against the supreme God. In Africa evil is a fault, an inadvertence, an unfortunate "faux-pas," but not fatal, and is always accompanied by a solution, a ritual solution understood and practiced by the traditional priest. Thus, even though bad, the evil, the fault, the bad action that brings the wrath of the gods and with it the rupture of creational harmony, is not a dramatic, irreparable act from the human point of view. In the African world-view all faults are pardonable with the aid of rites of reparation established by the ancestors and practiced by the priests. Thus, in Africa, men do not fall into a fault because they are born sinners, but simply by inadvertence, by negligence. Consequently, traditional African man doesn't suffer from an original guilt. He does not carry within himself a sinful nature, an evil nature.

African man is born and raised in balance and harmony. His person, his nature is not sinful. His world is not bad but rather harmonious. The evil that has entered the world, the evil that breaks creational harmony, though unfortunate, is not fatal, because it is always dominated and mastered through traditional ritual.

D. African world-view in the light of biblical world-view

Rereading the world-view of an African in the light of the Bible reveals elements of continuity and discontinuity between the world-views. The following paragraphs treat the understanding of God, of man, and of good and evil in two world-views.

1. The Supreme Being in the Bible and in African world-view

The first point of visible convergence between biblical teaching and traditional African teaching is the existence and nature of God as Supreme Being. In the Bible, God is presented as the eternal God who exists in and of himself. He is the first and the last (Isaiah 44:6). He has neither beginning nor end. In an African world-view God is also described as the Supreme Being. The Bakongos describe him as the one above and below apart from whom no other exists. Because he is the Supreme Being, God is the creator of all that exists in the visible and invisible world. The Bible teaches that visible reality, the universe, comes from the creative activity of God. In addition to the visible world, the biblical God is also the creator of the invisible world, the spiritual world. Visible celestial armies (the stars) and invisible celestial armies (angels) exist by the creative activity of God (Genesis 1:1-31). According to the Bible God is not only the creator of the universe, he also supports and maintains its existence by his wisdom. An African world-view shares a similar vision of the Supreme Being. In Africa, the Supreme Being is the origin of the visible and invisible world. He is also the guarantee of the stability and the continuity of the universe and of the village community. A second element of convergence between the Supreme Being described in the Bible and in African tradition is in the notion of his transcendence. The biblical God, like the God of African tradition, is above all the

Transcendent Being, the one who lives in light inaccessible to humanity. And in the Bible as well as in the African tradition God's separation from the world of humans is the result of the fault of man. The account of man's sin in the Bible, as in the ancient African myths, explains the distance of the Supreme Being with respect to human beings. In the biblical description of the consequences of man's sin, the entrance into the garden of Eden where man and God met was barred by angels armed with a flaming sword (Genesis 3 :24). In the African stories, great rivers that are impossible to cross bar entrance to the divine domain. The first difference between the biblical and African world-view is found in the significance of the fault that caused the spiritual separation between God and man. In the Bible the first sin was an act of open rebellion of the creature against the Creator. Because of this rebellious act against the express order of God forbidding the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the disobedience of man was severely punished. God's punishment affected not only the man

himself but also the whole of the universe. The animal kingdom was struck through the punishment against the serpent who from then on had to crawl on his belly and eat the dust of the earth. The woman from then on had to give birth in pain and be emotionally dependant on her husband. The vegetable kingdom was also struck by God's punishment, requiring toil and sweat for man to harvest its fruit. All of the universe was marked by death. Finally, rebellious man, deprived of material blessings, was struck by the worst punishment of all: spiritual separation from God. The creator God who had appeared in the garden of Eden each evening to commune with his creature became inaccessible. And human life lived far from the Creator became a burden, a permanent disorder that manifested itself in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. Contrary to the catastrophic image presented in the Bible regarding the consequences of human disobedience in the beginning, an African traditional world-view does not present the first fault of man as an act of rebellion against his creator. The first human fault that caused the Supreme Being to withdraw from man is not really considered to be a fault or a sin against the creator with grave consequences. It was rather an inadvertence, an inconvenience, a small discomfort that man created for God, either by the incessant noise of traditional villages too near the heavens or by the women's pestles bumping the heavens. As a result, an African world-view does not consider man to be guilty before God. The distance between Creator and creature is not synonymous with divine wrath against the human race as the Bible teaches (Romans 3 :23-24). It is rather a convenient retreat of the Supreme Being, thus preventing humans from disturbing his solitude. Because African man doesn't suffer guilt before his Creator, as a result he has no need of spiritual salvation in order to restore communion with his Creator. An African world-view affirms the continued transcendence of the Supreme Being, remaining permanently at a distance that will never be bridged either by man or God. However, the distance itself is not a source of anxiety for the African man because this distance is overcome by the presence of the mediators who convey the positive power of God into the domain of the living. 2. The divine mediators in the Bible and in an African world-view. The Biblical world-view reveals the God of the Bible as not only transcendent but also immanent. In the introduction to the Letter to the Hebrews the author writes: *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 1:1-3) In the Bible, the distant God came near "in various ways." The appearances of God in the Old Testament occur in three forms: He speaks to his people and communicates to them his will through prophets such a Moses. He also appears indirectly in the Old Testament in the form of an angel, as the Angel of the Lord, as he did with Abraham concerning Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19). Finally, God appears more directly to his people through an epiphany as he did to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3). In addition to these three principal mediations of the immediate presence of God, the Old Testament adds another series of human mediators who convey the presence and Word of God to his covenant community. The priests and the elders of Israel are all representatives of God to his elect people. All the mediators of the Old Testament were charged to convey the Word and the saving power of God in the life of his people. The angel of the Lord intervened often in Old Testament accounts in order to bring deliverance to his people. The deliverance of the people by God corresponded to the punishment of their enemies by the activity of the angel of the Lord. The prophet intervened through his prophetic Word to revive the people from their spiritual stupor and to bring them back to the path of faithfulness to the Lord. The prophetic message always contained an element of judgment either against Israel or against the enemies of the sacred nation, along with an element of final salvation in favor of the elect people. The priest conveyed divine wisdom, the

source of Shalom at the individual and national level. The priest was also the guarantee of the availability of the Supreme Being through the sacrificial and ritual system of the holy nation. The elders of the village who functioned as both traditional judges and juries at the gate of the city exercised their function as socio-religious controllers who supervised the application of the Word of God in the daily life of his people. But in spite of their effectiveness in communicating the presence and Word of God in the life of his people, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews considered all the mediations just mentioned as insufficient. He writes that in the last times, God revealed his immanence, his presence in the world, through the manifestation of his eternal Son, the Christ *" whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the*

exact representation of his being…." The eternal Son of God is presented in the New Testament as God himself who took human form with the purpose of sharing and conquering the misery that has invaded us since the first sin. The Christ of the gospels is not only a mediator among mediators. He is "the" unique mediator who came manifesting the immanence of God. In Christ, God enters the world and the life of his worshippers to liberate them from the curse of the law and to give them the benediction of the new life received freely in him. As the apostle Paul affirmed, *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them…."* (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Thus, in the New Testament the distance that appeared between God and man in the Garden of Eden has been overcome. In Christ, God has come back into the world to give his life to those who receive him. The proximity of God in Christ is such that for those who receive his offer of grace, God doesn't just come near them, but he

lives within them. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."* (John 14:23)

Here, then, is the end of any possibility of continuity between biblical and African world-view. As in the biblical world-view, an African world-view is full of mediators, mediators who convey the power of the Supreme Being to the village community. As indicated above, even if they are called gods, the spiritual mediators are not considered to be divine beings. According to African world-view, the mediators, in spite of their various services to the community, cannot erase the distance that separates the human community from the Divine Being. These mediators don't have the power or the function of bringing near the distant God. Their role is only to convey the power of the Supreme Being to the life of the community. The African Supreme God is inaccessible, incapable of becoming immanent. Here revealed in all its clarity is the special mediation of Christ in the Bible that has no correspondence with a traditional African world-view. As we have already said, Christ is Emmanuel, *"God with us."* The concept of Emmanuel is completely absent from a traditional African world-view. There, the Supreme Being doesn't come toward man. Rather, it is man who must go toward the Supreme Being through the mediation of the ancestors and the spirits.

3. The impact of the uniqueness of Christ's mediation on biblical and African ethics

The study of African world-view has revealed the critical function played by the ancestors and the elders in establishing and regulating moral order in the traditional African society. It has already been stated that African morality is utilitarian because it is based on a utilitarian vision of religion. The ultimate aim of religion and of the African man's world-view is realizing individual and community harmony. In other words, the African individual and community worship the ancestors and offer sacrifices to the Supreme Being, but not out of love. The African man has not spiritual love for the ancestors or for the Supreme Being. The African man worships the ancestors and God, keeps their laws and customs, not because he loves them (in contrast to the psalmist in Psalm 119) but simply because the ancestors and God are the only ones who can guarantee the harmony and stability that he needs to live. Thus, the African is not profoundly religious as is often claimed. He is not profoundly moral either as is often claimed. African religiosity and morality does not rest on the love of the divinity or on the ideal of law or of justice. The religiosity and morality of the African man rests on the love of himself and the desire to live a life of harmony, free from suffering. Thus, traditional religion and morality are fundamentally utilitarian.

It has also been shown above that the good is good, not in itself, but only to the extent that it

contributes to the balance of the individual and the village community. Evil is evil, not in itself, but only in that which prevents harmonious individual and village community life. So, stealing is not bad in itself but only to the extent that it creates disorder in the life of a village community member. By contrast, in the New Testament the uniqueness of the mediation of Christ brings all universal reality to his person. Christ is God become man in order to save humans from the captivity of sin. In the Gospels Christ affirmed that all the mediators apart from him are *"thieves and robbers"* and that he alone is the gate for his lambs, he alone the only way, the truth and the life, that none comes to the Father except through him. (John 10:7-8; 14:6)

As a result, because of the perfection of his mediation and the uniqueness of his person, all those who want to follow him must not only deny themselves but also renounce dependence on their religious and social systems in order to enter his kingdom. And the members of his kingdom are called to live from then on according the ethics of the kingdom that he reiterated in his Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) As already said, the ethic of the kingdom is an ethic based on the

character of God himself and reflected in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man. This is the same ethic that God had revealed to Moses in the Decalogue of the Old Testament, an ethic that reflects the character of God.

The uniqueness of the mediation of Christ, the only savior of humanity, raises the question of how to understand good and evil and the reality of the sin from which he cam to liberate humanity. The Christ of the Bible did not die to save man from an ancient inadvertence [an unintentional mistake] but from the sin that made man a rebel against God. Christ came to reconcile man to God because of the continuing enmity caused by man's sin. So, an understanding of the person, work and new life brought by Christ is impossible if the nature of good, evil and sin is not well understood.

A study of African world-view reveals an inadequate notion of sin and its consequences in the relationship of man with God. In other words, the traditional African does not know from what grave danger Christ can deliver him since he does not consider himself a rebel against the Supreme Being. He believes he has not offended the Supreme Being but has simply made him uneasy, not by his sin but by his mistake.

As already mentioned, utilitarian religion gives rise to utilitarian ethics, founded on a notion of good and evil that is relative to the needs of the community. This making relative good, evil, sin and its consequences puts African world-view in conflict with the teaching of the Bible.

In the Bible, good, evil, and sin are not subjective, relative ideas that change according the to the desires or needs of the individual and community. Good, according to the Bible, is an unchanging reality. Good is good in itself. It is good for everyone, everywhere, because it is grounded in the nature and essence of the Supreme Being. The Bible teaches that good is good because it exists perfectly only in God who is the supreme good, though it is reflected in the commandments that he gave to his people. (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)

The immediate consequence of identifying good with the person of God is that human morality also needs to be rooted in the nature of God. Now the nature of God is revealed to us in the Bible. So, the Bible functions as the primary moral reference in order to guide human conduct and action. In other words, anyone who wants to know if an action is good or bad should refer to what the Bible teaches. In his letter to Timothy the apostle Paul teaches: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) In conclusion, it is correct to affirm that the Bible calls into question the utilitarian aspect of traditional religion and morality. Instead of the search for individual and community harmony as the foundation of good and evil as the traditional African world-view teaches, God, the Supreme Being, as revealed in the Bible is the

foundation of Christian morality. The requirements of Christian morality are not only relevant for those who belong to the redeemed community but are also relevant for all humanity by virtue of their identity with the person of God who is the supreme good. The Bible calls into question not only African world-view but also every human world-view with the aim of transforming them toward the light of the being and nature of God revealed in Scripture.

God, through his incarnation in Christ and revealed in the Bible, is the foundation of Christian ethics and of universal ethics.

E. The foundation of Christian ethics in African context

A comparative study of traditional African world-view in the light of biblical world-view reveals

important elements of continuity and discontinuity for the writing of a Christian ethic in African

context. The traditional African world-view does not first appear to be too far from a biblical worldview. Both world-views are based on the person of the Supreme Being, Yahweh in biblical language and Nzambi or Nzapa or Zakomba or Mungu in African societies. The essence of the Supreme Being for traditional Africans corresponds in part to that of the biblical God. He is the Being above which no other can be conceived. Thus, the two world-views profess both the transcendence (distance) and the immanence (proximity) of the Supreme Being. But African an world-view exhibits a divine transcendence that is absolute, unlike that of the God of the Bible. Through the unintentional action of the human community, the African Supreme Being became completely separated from man, beyond all possibility of reconciliation. The God of the Bible, by contrast, manifests himself both as the God who is distant and the God who is near. In spite of his separation from humanity because of man's original disobedience, God did not totally distance himself from man. As the author of the letter to the Hebrews affirmed, God revealed himself to his people at different times and in different ways. But the final and complete revelation of God has been made in Christ, the eternal Son of god who came to fill the spiritual void that separated us from God. In Christ God reunites all things, "things in the heavens and things on the earth" (Ephesians 1:10). It is by virtue of the uniqueness of his person and work on behalf of humanity that Christ affirmed himself to be "the way, the truth and the life" and that "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The immediate consequence of the uniqueness of the mediation of Christ for the reconciliation of man to God is that this mediation renders void and invalid other mediation. Thus, the unique and complete mediation of Christ obliges those who say they belong to him to renounce those elements in their particular world-view that are in conflict with a biblical world-view and to adopt a world-view compatible with the reality of Christ. A biblical world-view becomes the foundation for the physical, spiritual and moral existence of the Church. So, a "world-view conversion" is needed for those Africans who are committed to following Christ. In African context believers who give their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord need to make a commitment to renounce all aspects of their world-views and world-views that contradict the place of Christ in a biblical world-view. A world-view conversion in African context does not mean the complete rejection of all traditional African values. Rather, it means the rejection of traditional African values that conflict with the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In African world-view, the roles of the mediators, the spirits, and the ancestors, conflict with

the Lordship of Christ. In the moral area, ancestors and their taboos function as the foundation of African moral life that in many respects contradicts biblical teaching.

Therefore, for Christian Africans to be at the same time Christians and Africans, they must change the central part of their traditional world-view. In the place of spirits, genies, and ancestors, there must from now on be found the unique person of Jesus Christ. Schematically, the necessary change from a traditional world-view to a Christian world-view can be seen as follows:

Traditional world-view

Supreme Being

spirits, ancestors, village elders

village community

individual

Christian world-view

Supreme Being

CHRIST

Christian community

village community

individual

But for this world-view change to occur, Christ needs to be presented in all his power as is the case in the Gospels. The world-view conversion, foundation of a new African Christian ethic, finds its foundation in sound biblical theology. The Christ of the Gospels is presented as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), but also as the strongman who comes to destroy the adversary who holds the souls of humans under his dominion. The Christ of the Gospels pardons sins, heals the sick, multiplies the bread, feeds the hungry and thirsty crowds, and finally raises the dead.

A comparative study of Christ's function shows that he accomplishes and surpasses the functions filled by the mediators in an African world-view. Traditional African world-view teaches that Africans invoke the spirits and the ancestors when they are confronted with the different hazards of life: But for this world-view change to occur, Christ needs to be presented in all his power as is the case in the Gospels. The world-view conversion, foundation of a new African Christian ethic, finds its foundation in sound biblical theology. The Christ of the Gospels is presented as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), but also as the strongman who comes to destroy the adversary who holds the souls of humans under his dominion. The Christ of the Gospels pardons sins, heals the sick, multiplies the bread, feeds the hungry and thirsty crowds, and finally raises the dead.

A comparative study of Christ's function shows that he accomplishes and surpasses the functions filled by the mediators in an African world-view. Traditional African world-view teaches that Africans invoke the spirits and the ancestors when they are confronted with the different hazards of life: sickness, famine, drought, sterility, death, etc. Christ is presented in the Gospels not only as the savior of souls but also as the savior of the body, the savior of all of man. In the Gospels Christ is not only the one who says, *"my son, your sins are forgiven,"* but also the one who says to the paralytic, *"Rise, and walk,"* and to Peter and his companions, *"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."* (Luke 5:4) In short, the Christ of the Gospels is a holistic Christ, a Christ who comes to save man from all his problems, spiritual and physical.

Thus, the Christ of the new Christian African world-view is the universal Lord who comes to

communicate to African man the seriousness of his spiritual separation from God, that he seems to ignore, and the urgency of his conversion. The ears of the African man need to resonate with the frightening words of the apostle Paul, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23)*; "For the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). We have noted above that traditional African man does not have a sense of original and universal guilt. The Bible presents man as a being in revolt, a rebel against his creator who lives in disobedience and whose soul is stained by sin. The African does not have this idea of open rebellion against his creator as the source of sin. The idea of the original fault, even if it exists in African myths, is less dramatic than in the Bible. In other words, traditional Africans do not feel themselves to be sinners to the point of having a conscience accused of sin against the Creator. No, the African Nzambi, Nzapa or Nzakomba is not, *a priori* angry with man. To the contrary, he is man's ally making available his power to counteract the action of demonic forces that are none other than deceased wicked humans who have been prevented from rejoining the happy community of the ancestors. So, it's something new for the African man to hear the apostle Paul say: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) The biblical *"all"* is astonishing for the African man who sees in the Creator an ally rather than someone whom man has made his adversary. The evangelistic task in African context must therefore begin by introducing into the world-view of the Christian African the notion of the universal guilt of the human race. African man must understand that if he experiences physical sickness, demonic attacks, and death, it is not because of the activities of the evil dead. It's really because of the sin committed by our first ancestors, Adam and

Eve. The African who is deeply communal will not have great difficulty in identifying himself with the universal guilt of humanity. This understanding of universal guilt opens the door to understanding the universal grace of God manifested in the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus becomes the exceptional mediator, this lamb of God, who takes away not only the sin of the village or clan but the sin of the whole universe. The ability of Jesus to remove the sin of all humanity places him above all traditional mediators whose activity is limited to members of the family and clan. But the soul of the African saved from the pollution of sin dwells in a real body that lives in a hostile world. To attach himself exclusively to Christ, the spiritual mediator, changing his traditional worldview, the African man needs hope for the physical aspect of his salvation also. To replace the traditional African world-view with a Christian African world-view, the foundation of Christian ethics in Africa, Christ the savior of the soul must also be presented as Christ the savior of the body. The New Testament presents Christ as the one who came to restore man in his totality. The inaugural message of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth was taken from the prophet Isaiah.

Luke wrote: *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The Scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:*

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the

poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-21)

Luke added the following account of the meeting between Jesus and the messengers sent by John the Baptist to discover whether he was indeed the long awaited Messiah. Luke writes:

John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'" At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers: "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Luke 7:18-22) These two passages show that the mission of Jesus was not only the spiritual liberation of man from the captivity of sin. The mission of Christ also addressed the liberation of man from the physical consequences of sin in his life such as sickness, demon possession, and even hunger. A Christ who travels the streets of the African cities, healing the sick, exorcising the demons,

resurrecting the dead, distributing bread, offering work to miserable crowds, doing all this with power and authority, could not help but fulfill the African and render obsolete the power of the traditions that enclose him in syncretism. This vision of the world where Christ reigns as King of kings and resolves all the problems of human suffering and injustice attracts us deeply. We have the biblical promises of such a world, and we have the testimony of the New Testament that Christ in his first coming manifested his power in various areas of human concern. So, it is justifiable to present Jesus Christ as savior of body and soul, of individual and society, even of all creation. (Romans 8 :18-25). But when are we going to experience the glory of all that? From time to time, through the direct intervention of God, we see in our lives now miracles similar to those Jesus accomplished when he was on earth. These interventions bring us joy and strengthen our faith. But these dramatic incidents are not yet universal, neither promised unconditionally to believers in Jesus. The universal reign of Christ awaits the hour when God will bring this present age to its conclusion and will inaugurate the new age to come, an age of the power always present in Jesus but of which we receive only a foretaste now.

Among the benefits that humans desire, Christ offers here and now the pardon of our sins and the restoration of relationship between us and God that our sins had broken. In Christ we are offered his Spirit as our comfort and as the source of the moral fruit he wants to bear in us. We are assured of his presence to the end of our life here on earth. He intercedes for us before the Father. In Christ we are protected now and forever from every power that would separate us from him and his love. Christ is preparing an eternal place for us. At his second coming we will be raised from the dead. He will be our confidence in the day of judgment. He responds to our prayers according to his will. He gives us his joy and peace as we live according to his commandments. His love for us will continue eternally. And he is committed to progressively changing us to reflect increasingly his character of love and justice.

What will it cost us to accept Christ's offer? First, that we recognize how our sins have separated us from God and that therefore we must repent and put our faith solely in Jesus Christ. There is no question of adding Jesus to our traditional beliefs and practices. He is the exclusive Savior, the exclusive mediator between the Supreme Being and us. Then, having begun by faith in Christ, we must continue by faith to show our love and gratitude by a new life of obedience to him and to his commandments. This commitment will put us in conflict with many of our traditional habits. We will be obliged to suffer at times the misunderstanding of our loved ones, even persecution from certain individuals or groups. We will be committed to following the example of our Master who, here on earth, had no place to lay his head, who gave himself as a sacrifice for us all. Everyone will not take up their cross and follow this Jesus. But for those who accept this challenge to be a disciple of Jesus, this course in Christian ethics has been prepared in order to shed more light on their path.

Article #2

Brief Introduction to Islamic Ethics
By Moussa Bongoyok (abridged)
(Translated from the French by J. Robinson and reprinted with permission)

An introduction to Muslim ethics in a course on Christian ethics, even if brief, may appear
strange. But how can one speak effectively about Christian ethics to churches and believers in Africa without accounting for the religious context in which they live? The African continent is 48% Christian and 41% Muslim1. No contextual expression of Christian ethics may ignore Islamic ethics. This is particularly important since the Christian community is called to live its distinctives through exemplary witness and conduct among its neighbors. This brief introduction is designed to assist Christians better understand Muslim ethical values in order that they might better live out their own. (…)

I. Ethics in Muslim thought

(…) It is with much caution that one must speak of Islamic ethics as a distinct area of study
because *"The moral, civil, canonical and penal laws of Islam are not rigidly separated from one another and cannot be identified as isolated systems and disciplines".*2 Any approach to Islamic ethics must therefore take into account Islam as a whole. In Islam, morality is synonymous with the law3. Woodberry rightly says that the ethical orientation of Islamic law (sharī'ah) can be seen in five categories: obligatory, recommended, indifferent, reprehensible and forbidden4. Muslim law embraces all aspects of the life of Muslims, individually and communally, privately and publicly. It touches areas that are religious, social, military, marital, political, economic, hygienic, even including dress, in short, all the details of daily life. Thus, in Islam, ethics occupies a much larger place than in Christianity.

II. The importance of ethics in the light of contemporary events

The world in which we live is comparable to an airplane traveling through a zone of strong
turbulence. In reality, Islamic terrorism is at the heart of international events and is discussed not only in the great western capitals but also in the very small villages of the Mandaras mountains in the far north of Cameroon. Osama Ben Laden and those who are closely or loosely associated with him have become heroes for many of the world's Muslims, even for moderate Muslims. This phenomenon has attracted the attention not only of the authorities but also of men and women concerned about moral questions because ethics seems to be at the heart of the Islamic battle. In the eyes of the principle radical Muslim theologians, the Islamic battle is a war unleashed against evil. It is revealing that the "Christian" West is perceived as the great vehicle of the degradation of morals, and the United States is called "the Great Satan". The invasion of the media, of western culture and ideologies that highlight sex, homosexuality, violence, alcoholism, materialism and similar evils, is perceived as a serious threat by many Muslim groups. Western supremacy in the world evidenced by globalization and its corollaries of pride and distain for other cultures further complicates the situation. How can this be remedied? An answer requires a

multidisciplinary approach and involves an education of people in Islamic ethics so that this will be taken into account in relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. Such an answer must include an objective outline of Islam in all of its diversity. (…)

IV. Some characteristic traits of Islamic ethics

One could devote a whole book to characteristic traits of Islamic ethics, but we will limit

ourselves here to raising a few that, in our view, merit special attention, given the basic orientation of this course. First, it is helpful to realize that beyond some internal dissimilarities, Islamic ethics are based primarily on the prescriptions of the Qur'an and of the Muslim tradition (sunna). In cases where theQur'an and the tradition diverge, the Qur'an takes precedence. So, in spite of differences of viewpoint, of interpretation or of sources attributed directly or indirectly to Muhammad, Muslim theologians try to harmonize their teaching with these two sources. In matters of conduct, Muhammad is the model that Muslims follow. Another important characteristic of Islamic ethics is connected with the notion of sin. Following L. Lovonian, Bousquet affirms that *"sin for Muslims is first of all the breaking of a ritualistic prohibition and beyond that a revolt against Allah through unfaithfulness; it is not moral impurity"*5.

So it is clear why the Christian notion of original sin is foreign to Islam because, in Muslim thought, the sin of Adam did not affect humanity. It is useful also to realize that in Islam there exist two types of sin: the minor and the major. The Qur'an declares6, for example: *"If you avoid the major sins which are forbidden, We will wipe out the minor sins from your account, and We will admit you to an honorable place (Paradise)"* Surah 4:31.7 Though the minor sins are inherent in human nature and therefore without major consequence for the eternal destiny of the believer, the major sins merit special attention. The Muslim who does not repent of a major sin must pay the penalty. Though specialists on Islam don't agree on their number, the seventeen following sins are considered to be the major sins: unbelief, the continued commission of minor sins, loss of hope in the grace of God, considering oneself protected from the wrath of God, false witness, false accusation of a Muslim in respect to adultery, false oaths, sorcery, consumption of alcohol, taking the goods of orphans, exacting excessive interest, adultery, crime against nature, stealing, murder, flight from battle in the

face of enemy infidels, disobedience to parents.8 Though these are major sins, they can be pardoned. The only unpardonable sin according to Muslim doctrine is the *shirk*, the association of other divinities with God. Allah never pardons polytheists.9 Islamic ethics takes age into account. So, in Islam, even if children are encouraged to practice religion, only those who have reached the age of puberty are required to observe the commandments. A child does not have moral obligations toward God10.

Formalism and legalism also characterize Islamic ethics. In reading the writings of the

specialists, one can easily conclude that the outstanding characteristic of Muslim ethics is legalism. Bergstasser and Schacht summarize this very well when they write that the law is the *"veritable epitome of the Islamic spirit, the most decisive expression of Islamic thought, the essential core of Islam"*11. The Muslim, man or woman, is by definition a person submitted to Allah. Allah is the absolute Master, and the believer, man or woman, is his slave. In this context, Muslims owe him total

submission. One does what is good because Allah orders it, or one avoids evil because Allah forbids it. Here in this world, as in the next, Allah punishes the one who breaks his commandments and rewards the one who observes them. Al-Naraqi writes on this subject: *Man's moral virtue wins for himself eternal Happiness, while moral corruption leads him to eternal unhappiness. That's why man must purify himself of all the vile traits of his character and adorn his soul with moral and ethical virtue.*12

Kevin contends that the central argument of the Qur'an concerning human moral obligation is *"gratitude toward the benefactor"*13. He bases his arguments on verses 5-7 of Surah 39.

However, this is not apparent in real life because the fear of divine punishment seems to be the determining factor in Muslim conduct. One of the consequences of legalism in Islamic ethics is its anti-utilitarianism. Many specialists have observed that, in great measure, there is a gap between theoretical moral theology and social reality. The personal or social benefits of obeying the law of Allah are not a central preoccupation of the Muslim. What counts above all is to conform to the will of Allah. In Islamic ethics duties toward non-Muslims are limited because one's neighbor is first of all the Muslim. The Muslim world-view includes a clear distinction between the Muslim and non- Muslim community. The world is divided into two camps: the dār al-islām (the territory of Islam) that is made up of the Muslim community (ummah), and the dār al-harb (territory of war) thatincludes all those who do not practice Islam. According to this logic non-Muslims do not have to be treated with the same consideration as Muslims. The people of the book, mainly Jews and Christians14, are sometimes admired (cf. Surah 3:113-114). Muslims are even called to respect them (cf. Surah 29:46), and they benefit from having a special status in the eyes of God (cf. Surah

2:62). Even so, they remain no less outside the Muslim community. Muslims are not to be friends with Jews and Christians (cf. Surah 5:51) but to fight against them until they submit (Surah 9:29). According to the celebrated Muslim commentator, Ibn Kathīr, even if they submit they must never be honored above Muslims because they are despicable, disgraced and base.15 At the same time, it is worth noting that many Muslims work for dialogue, peace and harmonious cohabitation with believers of other religions. That deserves congratulation and encouragement. In sub-Saharan Africa one often finds Muslims, Christians and followers of traditional religion in the same family. They maintain fraternal relations in spite of religious differences. We cannot pass over in silence the idea that actions are justified by their intentions because this notion also characterizes Islamic ethics. The fact that acts are judged by their motivations creates certain difficulties at the practical level. We emphasize also that in Islam the one who is in a position of power seems to be granted a special ethical status. In reality, anarchy is more to be feared than the evil committed by those in authority. The evil of the one in supreme authority is moderated by his concern for order. But anarchy is perceived as the worst of evils16. Finally, it is important to raise the notion of virtue. In Islamic ethics virtue is defined in the framework of obedience to the will of God and of the pursuit of eternal happiness. That is why Donaldson does not hesitate to see this as hedonism.17 But a serious examination of the principal Muslim virtues shows that one cannot make such a judgment so simply. For example, al Naraqi writes: *"These are the moral virtues: Wisdom, Courage, Chastity and Justice. The negative qualities opposed to these*

virtues are: ignorance, cowardice, lust, injustice and tyranny."18 These four cardinal virtues cannot be contained in hedonist box. The Qur'an and the Islamic traditioncite additional virtues including piety, mutual brotherly assistance, compassion, gratitude, hope, respect for elders, respect for parents, hospitality, sobriety, generosity, honesty, politeness, moderation, modesty, patience, humility and obedience. Certain Muslim works, such as al-Ghāzalī, offer excellent descriptions of virtues encouraged by Islam. Until now we have not made reference to sexual ethics. This is because it deserves a more detailed treatment.

V. Sexual Ethics in Islam

The aspects of Muslim ethics tied to sexuality deserve particular attention because of their

importance. Zeghidour writes the following in his preface to the excellent book of Bosquet that treats fairly the Muslim sexual ethic: "*It is not an exaggeration to say that sexuality occupies a place in Islamic doctrine as fundamental as it does in psychoanalytic theory.*"19 Such a remark seems a bit exaggerated, but it is evident that many Qur'anic verses and entire chapters of the hadith [narrations of the life of Muhammad and the things approved by him] deal with sexual ethics. In Africa the sexual ethics of Islam constitute one of the main areas of Islamic influence on Christians who live in Muslim contexts. One reason for this is that Muslim conjugal life is generally much closer to African traditional practices than it is to the practices taught by Christianity. In reality, Christian ethics is sometimes more influenced by western culture than by biblical teachings. The scope of this study does not permit us to fully treat this subject. For that, we recommend reading the work mentioned above [Georges-Henri Bousquet *L'éthique sexuelle de l'islam* (Paris : Desclee de Brouwer, 1990)]. But we note that in Islam marriage is strongly recommended, even obligatory for those able to marry. "*Marry the unmarried people among you and the good people among your slaves, men and women…*" orders the Qur'an in Surah 24:32. The Muslim tradition strongly accents this idea by reporting, among other references, the declaration of Muhammad: "*O young people! Whoever among you is capable of marrying should do it, and whoever is not capable of it should fast, because fasting reduces sexual drive.*"20 As this text reveals, the sexual dimension is at the heart of Muslim marriage.21 The Muslim may legally marry up to four wives because it is written in the Qur'an: "…*It is permitted to marry two, three or four wives who please you, but if you are afraid of not treating them justly, then one only or some ofthe slaves whom you own*" Surah 4:3. Certain sources speak of the possibility that a Muslim may have concubines in addition to his legitimate wives.22 The Shi'ites also accept temporary (mut'a) marriage as an acceptable practice. The marriage of pleasure may last one or several nights and automatically terminates at the end of the period agreed upon at the beginning. One day a Muslim transporter of merchandise between two African countries assured me that he practiced temporary marriage during his travels. He did not see anything wrong with that, though he already had four legal wives in his household.

In sexual matters, the man has more rights than the wife. This is evident, among other places, in Surah 4:34. In heaven, virgin women are part of the reward of the faithful (Surah 2:25). It should also be noted that in Islam zina (fornication, adultery, and every blamable sexual act) is strongly condemned (Surah 4:15-16; 24:2). Every physical appearance and any promiscuity that stirs up sexual appetites are also condemned. This is why clothing, especially of the women (Surah 24:30-31), and

encounters of persons of the opposite sex are strictly regulated. Homosexuality is also condemned by Islam. The Qur'an is quite clear about this: *"Do you commit carnal acts with the males of this world? Do you abandon the wives that the Lord created for you? You are but transgressors."* (Surah 26:165-166). Although the text here is directed explicitly toward men, Muslim theologians are generally of the opinion that the same condemnation applies to lesbianism.

Certainly sexual ethics is an area in which African traditions and Islamic values intersect.

But the encounter between Islam and African religions goes even farther than that.

VI. Islamic Ethics in Africa: Between Conservatism and Adaptation to the Context

Islam has had a great impact on African traditions, but the reverse is not less true. Alili saw

that clearly when he wrote: *The brotherhood became the instrument of an extraordinary expansion of Islam in black Africa, in Indonesia, in India, in central Asia, in the Caucuses and in the Balkans. This islamization occurred through the phenomenon of inculturation, that is, the more or less radical awareness and transformation of the dogma and practices of Islam by the cultures that received the new religion.*23

Kasene stresses the same idea, affirming that regardless of their religion the African man or

woman shares the sense of belonging and the sense of the life of their community. While

recognizing the disturbing effect of cultural influences from east and west he notes that:

*In terms of morality, the African traditions have much to offer. The African value of solidarity with its accent on mutual assistance, respect for older persons and consideration for the youngest, generosity, honesty, hospitality, particular attention to the transmission and preservation of life, the sacredness of sex, the importance of commitment to marriage and family life, regard for the poor, for orphans, widows and foreigners, and the great value attached to infants, constitutes a good base for morality.*24

In Africa, many Muslims revert to practices that are foreign to Qur'anic prescriptions and

Muslim tradition. Certain of them spring from African religions. To be more precise, here are a few examples:

- Among the Haussa the [Muslim] "malam" and the [traditional] "feticher" are both useful for

societal balance.25

- Many Muslims of northern Cameroon give money to their parents who have remained

pagan so that they can engage in worship of the ancestors in their name for the purpose of

attracting their blessings and repelling evil spells.

- The nomadic Peulhs continue to use certain incantations and to observe certain taboos

that date from the pre-Islamic period.

-The Sereres worship the Pangol (intermediate spirits between God and humans)26

In his article "Church Planting Among Folk Muslims" Richard D. Love observed that the
following elements characterize popular Islam: spirits, demons, blessings, maledictions, healingand sorcery. He found among other things that formal Islam is cognitive, institutional, oriented toward truth, legalistic and dependant on the Qur'an and the sacred traditions. By contrast, popular Islam is sentimental, mystical and preoccupied much more with daily life and its multiple needs such as health and prosperity, depending mainly on supernatural powers and spiritual revelation.27
This reality is a great factor in the expansion of Islam among the followers of African religions because they find the Muslim religious life much less demanding than Christianity that tends toward a break with ancestral customs and generally condemns syncretism. This observation is especially important for Protestantism which, in several ways, is much more rigorous. Muslim syncretism is understood by Muslims themselves and is condemned by the preaching and teaching of radical Muslim groups and preachers influenced by Wahhabism and similar movements.

VII. The Influence of Muslim Ethics on Christians in Africa
As we have observed above, Muslims and non-Muslims live in symbiotic relationships in
many families of Africa, especially south of the Sahara. Even if they are not of the same family, the same clan or the same ethnic group, the good neighborly relations and ties of solidarity result in the sharing of the great events of life. People rejoice together at the birth of an infant and when
someone experiences social promotion, success or happy events. During Christmas celebrations it is not unusual to find Muslims buying new outfits for their wives and children and slaughtering a sheep or a goat for them if they don't join Christians directly during the festivities. Christians also share in the joy of Muslims during the feast of the end of Ramadan ('Īd al Fitr) and that of the sacrifice ('Īd al Adhā). They visit one another and weep together in cases of sickness, of death, of fires, and of various calamities. The neighbor is first of all a member of the community before being a Muslim, a Christian or a follower of another religion. All these encounters favor ties of unity and friendship among diverse religious communities and deserve to be encouraged. However, if Christians are called to maintain excellent human relations with neighbors without any distinction and to love them with the love of Christ, they must nevertheless remain vigilant in order not to copy the habits that conflict with Christian ethics. We will mention three examples of this among many
others. First, there is the great influence of the legalistic character of Muslim ethics on Christians who live in heavily islamized contexts. Now, it is important to avoid the trap of legalism. Contrary to the Islamic tendency, Christian ethics are not simply a matter of law. As Ulrich has well noted, other factors such as faith and love must be taken into account.28 Love for the Lord and for one's neighbor transcend legal requirements. The Christian obeys the law but in complete liberty and in gratitude toward his or her Lord. The [biblical] Letter to the Galatians treats this issue in depth.

A second example touches marital life. The husband must treat his wife as a partner equal to himself, must live a conjugal life in reciprocal love and fidelity, must achieve mutual understanding with her in intimate areas. Marriage is one of the domains in which the Christian community can stand out distinctively. The question of monogamy is also important here because polygamy is a great temptation for Christians, especially when they are confronted with the problem of sterility. But they must resist falling into this trap and remain faithful to biblical teachings.

A last example relates to occult practices. A very large number of African Muslims do not hesitate to use talismans and occult practices in order to succeed in life, to protect themselves against the influence of the evil eye, to avoid danger, to disarm visible or invisible enemies, to attract the favors of a girl or a boy, to heal a stubborn malady, and to dispel sorcerers, to cite only a few examples. Without necessarily having bad intentions, certain of them recommend to Christians that they act in the same way, offering concrete examples of where occultism has given the anticipated results. Unfortunately, many Christians succumb to the temptation to give themselves to such practices. Sometimes, they take the initiative themselves to seek the services of Muslim marabous with all the consequences that this has for their own spiritual life and for the testimony of the Christian community to which they belong. Christian spiritual leaders are responsible to teach about sorcery and occult practices while underlining the protective power of the Lord and the privileges of those who belong to him. The Christian community is also called to surround and effectively support the faithful who have endured testing or have been weakened by various existential problems.

Conclusion

Islamic ethics present similarities with Christian ethics, but they are different from them by their all encompassing character and by many aspects of their specific teachings. In the African context, in addition to the teachings of the great schools of Islamic law, Muslim ethics have been impacted by the influence of African traditional customs. Having undergone this local influence, they in turn influence the Christian community in one way or another.

So, the importance of understanding morality within Islam in an African context is evident. It enables a better understanding of Muslim neighbours and their moral convictions in order to avoid offending them in these areas and to preserve good neighbour's relations. It permits Christians to better distinguish the ethical similarities and differences so that they can see the implications for their own actions. It also makes it possible to build bridges that encourage a harmonious community life which is an ideal framework for positive Christian witness. In all of this, ethics offers a genuine field of collaboration between Christians and Muslims in an era when the world seems to favor pornography, homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, human cloning and similar vices. Medical ethics and environmental ethics 29 are also excellent fields for common action. God desires that the followers of different religions be able to live together. Without denying their own ethical convictions and without remaining silent concerning the Good News of salvation freely offered in Jesus Christ, Christians have a duty to respect and love Muslims. They also have a divine responsibility to

distinguish themselves by exemplary conduct as salt of the earth and light of the world.

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13 A Kevin "Ethic" in Jane Dammon McAuliffe *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* Vol. II (Leiden: Brill, 2002) p. 55.
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16 Cf. Bousquet p. 32.
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Course Report

Course: ET307 Christian Ethics
Student Name:
Location:
Instructor:

Assignment	Percent	Points
Attendance	5% _____	50 _____pts
Participation (Note-taking/discussion)	10% _____	100 _____pts
Scenario response	10% _____	100 _____pts
Debate participation	10% _____	100 _____pts
Role play	10% _____	100 _____pts
Presentation on Worldview and Ethics	10% _____	100 _____pts
Oral Presentation: Sermon or Bible Study	15% _____	150 _____pts
Group discussion on Holiness and Ethics	15% _____	150 _____pts
Exam	15% _____	150 _____pts
STUDENT TOTAL	100% _____%	1000 pts _____pts

Final Letter Grade   Signed _____

_____   Date _____