

using your teacher edition



This course on Christian ethics is concerned with developing a certain kind of person who can think and act in the world in ways consistent with God's design for human beings. We follow a biblical method for handling ethics provided by Ken Magnuson in *Invitation to Christian Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues* (Kregel Academic, 2020), which consists of three components: *acts*, *ends*, and *agents*.

ACTS: WHAT'S THE STANDARD?

The component of *acts* most closely resembles the deontological approach, which focuses on rules that guide actions. Biblical truth (reflecting the created order) provides the authoritative, universal moral absolutes that humans need to govern themselves in this world. This course emphasizes four ways that the Bible provides ethical guidance: (1) direct commands, (2) general principles, (3) implications, and (4) descriptions and demonstrations of God's character.

Scripture reveals God's character as the ultimate standard of what is good and right. All human behavior is judged to be ethical or unethical based on whether it reflects the character of God. This course will teach students how to draw a line from God's character, revealed in Scripture and creation, to the daily decisions they must make in the world.

Discerning *creational norms* is also an essential skill for living life according to God's standard. Creational norms reveal God's good and moral design for His creation. Even though we can't go back and observe life in its perfect condition before the Fall, we can still discern from Scripture the reality of creational norms as a showcase of what is good and ethical. No one can excuse sinful and unethical living because all humans have been made in God's image, and therefore are responsible to reflect God in all the ways that a human can.

In Chapters 1–3, foundational matters of ethics are addressed. Rooting ethics in a biblical view of reality is essential for developing the students' ability to reason as Christians about controversial issues. The world-view paradigm—Creation, Fall, Redemption—is explicitly explained as it relates to the field of ethics. The more familiar students are with this biblical world-view, the better equipped they will be to grapple with specific ethical dilemmas that arise later in the textbook.



ENDS: WHAT'S THE GOAL?

The component of *ends* most closely resembles the consequentialist, or teleological, approach, which focuses on the goals or results (the ends) of a given decision or action. Everyone makes choices with a particular goal in mind. Christians have a God-given goal: to glorify God by loving God and others. This course demonstrates the inseparable nature of the goal of ethics from the standard of ethics. God's revelation determines what loving Him and others looks like in the real world.

The goal of any ethical action must ultimately be to glorify God and enjoy Him through conformity to the image of Christ and through the advancement of His kingdom. This course is not a self-help manual on living a good life, nor does it provide a mechanical formula for moral improvement. Instead, God's redemptive work is emphasized throughout the textbook as the necessary condition for all ethical living.

Redemption enables believers to pursue God-glorifying decisions rather than self-centered ones. Christian ethics teaches students how to consider the consequences of their actions from a biblical perspective. To assist students in their pursuit of God-glorifying decisions, they will be prompted to ask the following questions: Will this decision conform me to Christ's image? Will it express my delight in God's law? Will it bless others by helping them to know and love God? Will it cause me to flourish as God intends? Will it advance God's kingdom in the world?

AGENTS: WHAT'S THE MOTIVE?

The component of *agents* most closely corresponds to virtue ethics, which focuses on the person, or agent. To act ethically is not merely to do the right thing; it is to be the right kind of person doing the right thing for the right reasons. Virtuous character is foundational to carrying out God's commands to His glory. How could God's commands be rightly followed by a person whose inward character has not been transformed?

As Bryan Smith notes in the foreword:

God is interested in more than our decisions. It isn't just what we do that matters to Him; it's also who we are... Of course, no textbook can make you a virtuous person. It takes the grace of God to do that. But a textbook can require you to reckon with God's grace by reading about it, meditating on it, and praying for it.

Since Christians do not automatically become virtuous upon their conversion, they need to grow in virtue. Therefore, special attention is devoted in Chapters 4–7 to specific virtues for the purpose of developing Christlike character. Faith, hope, and love—the three central virtues—are foundational to all the rest. Additional virtues covered in the textbook are goodness, prudence, faithfulness, courage, self-control, humility, kindness, and gratitude—to name a few.



CONTEXT: WHAT'S THE SITUATION?

The three main components—acts, ends, and agents—must all be applied to a specific ethical situation. Context is the additional element to making an ethical decision. What is the ethical issue that demands ethical decision-making?

In Chapters 9–13, each section will raise an ethical difficulty (an issue or scenario). Then each section will direct you to consider the Bible's teaching on how one ought to act. Each section will direct you to consider the end consequences to an individual or a society that does or does not conform to the biblical standard. And each section will direct you to consider the virtues and vices that motivate an agent's (a person's or society's) response. Because we live in a world that is full of sinful responses (both your own and others' responses that affect you), each section will conclude with how to biblically respond to troubling situations you may find yourself in.

All the components must work together. Magnuson summarizes the necessity and usefulness of all the components by saying the following:

The nature and character of God (corresponding to virtue ethics) is the source from which God's commands are given (corresponding to a form of deontology), and God's purposes or ends (corresponding to teleology) flow from his character and are indicated by his commands. Likewise, a person's character (virtue ethics) provides the foundation for keeping God's commands (deontology), which work together to fulfill the purposes for which human beings are created (teleology).

[TAKEN FROM PAGE 45 OF *INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS: MORAL REASONING AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES*
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using your teacher edition product objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to do the following:

- 1** **Compare** and contrast various ethical systems.
- 2** **Apply** an approach to ethics that will enable them to grow in virtue and to relate biblical wisdom to a variety of ethical situations.
- 3** **Defend** biblical Christianity in a culture of competing truth claims and diverse lifestyles.

using your teacher edition

teacher edition features

1 Lesson Plan Overview
CHAPTER 4: Becoming Like Christ

845 Overview
846 Instructional Aid
847 pgs. PowerPoint presentation

PAGES	OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	ASSESS
63-66	<p>4.1 Virtues and Vices (1 day)</p> <p>4.1.1 Define virtue and vice. 4.1.2 Identify virtues and vices. 4.1.3 Analyze the place for virtue in actual ethics. Virtue (teacher)</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1.1 The Important Place of Virtue in the Bible <p>SA/PRESS PROVE*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtue "Virtual" 847 pgs., Chapter 4 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking 8 Through 4.1
66-72	<p>4.2 Christlikeness and Counterfeits (1 day)</p> <p>4.2.1 Explain the importance of Christlikeness to growing in virtue. 4.2.2 Apply the Christian's role in analyzing Christian virtue. 4.2.3 Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in virtuous living. 4.2.4 Distinguish Christian integrity from legalism, moralism, and authenticity. 4.2.5 Formulate a plan for being authentic. Virtue (teacher)</p>	<p>TEACHER EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.2 Counterfeits and Integrity Chart <p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.2.1 Probing the Spiritual Discipline <p>SA/PRESS PROVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 847 pgs., Chapter 4 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking 8 Through 4.2
73	<p>Review</p> <p>Recall concepts, terms, and Scripture memory from Chapter 4.</p>		<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4 Review
	<p>Test</p> <p>Demonstrate knowledge of the material from Chapter 4 by taking the test.</p>		<p>ASSESSMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4 Test SA/PRESS PROVE 847 pgs., Chapter 4 Test Book

*Digital resources for homeschool users are available on homeschool.com.

3 CHAPTER 4 Overview
What makes Christian ethics unique?

4.1 Explain the relationship between virtue and ethics.
4.2 Assess the importance of Christlikeness to the development of ethics.

Terms to Remember

- virtue
- vice
- legalism
- moralism
- authenticity

Scripture Memory

- 2 Peter 1:3, 5-7

04
Becoming Like Christ
What makes Christian ethics unique?
CHAPTER 4

- Lesson Plan Overviews appear at the beginning of each chapter. Each section is allotted a certain number of days of instruction. Review and test days are always allotted one day of instruction each.
- Biblical Worldview Shaping themes are listed under the objectives they relate to.

- Essential questions are probing worldview questions that the chapter or section aims to answer.
- Terms to Remember are terms that are integral to the chapter's content.
- Each chapter incorporates a Scripture passage relevant to the topic that the students are expected to memorize.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Why is studying ethics relevant to me?

Objective

- Explain the value of studying ethics.

Terms to Remember

- ethics
- Christian ethics

What Is Ethics?

What is ethics all about?

Objectives

- Define ethics.
- Relate ethics to philosophy and biblical worldview.

Suggested Reading

- Frame, John M. *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008. Pages 3–40.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018. Pages 23–40.
- Magnuson, Ken. *Invitation to Christian Ethics: Moral Reasoning and Contemporary Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2020. Pages 14–22.

Engage

THE PLACE OF ETHICS IN PHILOSOPHY

Guide a visual analysis of the diagrams on page 2 in order to help orient students to the discipline of ethics and its place in the larger discipline of philosophy.

What does the tree represent? *the discipline of philosophy*

What are the four branches on that tree? *ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and aesthetics (Students will learn more about these other branches later.)*

Which branch does this book focus on? *ethics*

What ought the tree to be rooted in? *the Bible*

What might the sun, which is essential

Introduction to Ethics

Why is studying ethics relevant to me?

What Is Ethics?

Just do the right thing. Is that sufficient for you to be considered an ethical person? Or is ethics about something more than just making the right choices? How about one's motive, like seeking to please God? What about the standard that guides one's choices, like adhering to the Bible in obedience? Certainly, we have all done wrong things, made wrong choices, displeased God, and disobeyed the Bible's teaching. So we all have to come to grips with this topic—ethics. Is an ethical decision the same thing as a moral or right decision? Before this question can be answered, there needs to be a greater understanding of what ethics is and what the standard for ethics is. We'll get to those things in the foundations for ethics in Chapter 1. Ethics sounds like a good thing. But we'll need to start with some definitions to begin understanding everything that is involved in ethics.

FOUNDATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies how man ought to live. Ethics concerns itself with determining what is right and what is wrong. Ethics seeks to identify what is objectively good. Chapter 2 will provide a brief overview and critique of various secular ethical systems. As can be expected, there are right and wrong approaches to ethics.

The focus of this textbook's discussion of ethics will be Christian, not secular. Even though the term used is ethics, the emphasis is on ethics from a Christian viewpoint—one flowing from a biblical worldview. To truly know how to live in this world, we need a knowledge of God and His wisdom as revealed in His Word (Prov. 2:6, 9:10). Any morality that people rely on to govern themselves is based on something. Only Christian ethics, based on understanding God and His ways through Scripture, is truly ethical.

You will learn in subsequent chapters that ethics has to do with acts (actions that conform to God's Word), agents (individuals who exemplify virtues and have certain motives), and ends (consequences).¹ In addition to these three elements, one must consider the circumstances of the ethical decision that must be made. More elaboration on this ethical model will be presented in Chapter 8.

Christian ethics seeks to determine how man ought to live in particular circumstances through studying God's Word, discerning God's creational norms,² and using moral reasoning. For the ethics to be truly Christian, a thorough consideration of the acts, agents, ends, and specific situation is necessary.

to growth, represent? What might the stained-glass outline allude to? *God; pointing to God's glory in worship*

What are three key elements in the work of ethics? What must those three elements be applied to? *Acts (principle), agents (person, motivation), and ends (ultimate goal) must be applied to a situation (or context or circumstances). Another way to remember the key elements is to say it this way: principles must be applied by people to particular situations with the pinnacle in mind.*

Instruct

THE RELEVANCE OF STUDYING ETHICS

Ask the students this introduction's essential question to help them understand the

relevance of studying ethics.

Making choices that align with Scripture is an essential part of Christian living. Learning about ethics will help you to do this in a manner that expresses your love for the Lord and for others. Since being a Christian does not automatically ensure we will make the right choice in every circumstance, we should be willing to invest some time and energy to grow in our ethical reasoning. Given the confusion of ethics in our culture, the urgency to study ethics could not be greater. As you develop the skills of ethics, you will be armed to navigate the confusion in a way that both guards your own heart and assists those needing clear ethical guidance for their own lives.

What is ethics all about?

THREE KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Now that we have defined ethics, let's consider three key relationships that will help you understand how ethics fits with related areas of study.

First, consider how ethics relates to a biblical worldview. Developing a Christian ethic can only follow from the worldview framework found in God's Word: its presentation of reality in its Creation, Fall, Redemption storyline. The application of a Christian ethic follows from a careful consideration of the three ingredients of a biblical worldview: (1) the metanarrative; (2) beliefs and values, and (3) personal and group behavior, which form culture. Your personal behavior and cultural engagement will be enhanced by your current study of ethics if you have already studied biblical doctrines and developed a biblical worldview. Unless you are grounded in the teachings of the Bible and you embrace a biblical worldview, you won't be able to consistently make ethical decisions. All ethical systems come from and reflect a worldview.



Second, consider how ethics relates to philosophy. Philosophy has been described as "the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of all the world." Philosophy uses reason to answer questions about the world and life. There are at least four main branches of philosophical study: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. You will learn more about these four branches in Chapter 2, but for now notice that ethics is one of philosophy's main concerns. Ancient Greek philosophers tried to figure out the meaning of life and how to live in the world without appealing to God or His Word. Even pagan philosophers realized that wisdom was needed to make good applications from reality to life. Christian philosophers have contributed to this discipline; so, as philosophy developed, it didn't remain totally godless. Each philosophical tradition has its own version of an ethical system.

Most secular philosophers maintain that wisdom can be obtained through reason and intellect alone, rejecting God's revelation. But man cannot be the final authority in his search for wisdom (Jer. 17:7-9; Mark 7:21-23). One of the problems with secular philosophy is its inability to explain truth, reality, and morality apart from God's revelation and thus its failure to consis-

tently employ Christian ethics. Nevertheless, philosophy has had a major impact on ethics, using reason to arrive at some good answers to challenging scenarios. But a strict reliance on secular approaches to philosophy isn't an option for believers who want to develop a Christian ethic. Nevertheless, Christians shouldn't fear the helpful tools philosophy has harnessed (e.g., syllogisms, deductive and inductive reasoning, epistemological reflection, and math).

Third, ethics relates to world religions in that the teachings and practices of a religion influence the ethic that flows from those beliefs and traditions. Ethics is a component of religion as well as of philosophy. For example, Hindus in a high caste live "ethically" according to their religious worldview when they refuse to help Hindus who are part of lower castes. The high-caste Hindu religion guides their beliefs and behavior. An ethic based on biblical Christianity, however, compels believers to be compassionate to others and to love all people indiscriminately (Luke 10:29-37). In this example, Scripture informs the religious practice which then forms the ethic of biblical Christians. The expression of one's ethics and the practice of one's religion are closely tied together.

metanarrative
an overarching
storyline that at-
tempts to explain
all reality

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS 3

RELATING ETHICS TO PHILOSOPHY

Use a **Think-Pair-Share** to prompt students to analyze the relationships of categories.

What are the four main branches of philosophical study? *metaphysics (reality), epistemology (truth), ethics (morality), and aesthetics (beauty)*

What does philosophy use to answer questions about the meaning of life and how to live in the world? *human reason*

One of the problems with secular philosophy is its inability to explain what three things apart from God's revelation? *truth, reality, and morality*

How does ethics relate to philosophy? *Each philosophical tradition has its own version of an ethical system. The ethics flow from philosophical assumptions about the world.*

RELATING ETHICS TO WORLD RELIGIONS

Use a **Think-Pair-Share** to prompt students to analyze the relationships of categories.

How do world religions affect the ethics that develop downstream from religious beliefs and traditions? *The teachings and practice of religions influence ethical behavior in that society.*

What role does Scripture play in forming the ethic of biblical Christians? *Scripture informs the religious practice which then forms the ethic of biblical Christians.*

Of the three related areas of study (biblical worldview, philosophy, and world religions), which one is the most practical in how a person lives out the specifics of one's ethical system? Explain your answer. *World religions; it is here that the "nuts and bolts" of one's worldview and philosophy find their expression.*

DEFINING ETHICS

Ask the students this section's **essential question** and use a **Quick Write** to help the students understand what ethics is about.

What is ethics all about?

How would you distinguish Christian ethics from non-Christian ethics?

How would you distinguish ethics from morality?

How would you break down the key elements in an ethical system?

See page 2 and the top of page 3 for possible answers.

RELATING ETHICS TO BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Use a **Think-Pair-Share** to prompt students to analyze the relationships of categories.

What do ethical systems reflect? Why is this significant? *A worldview; ethical systems come out from and reflect worldview commitments. A worldview flows out of the teaching of God's Word and one's worldview and is more foundational than one's ethical system.*

What are the three key ingredients of a worldview? Why is this significant? *A metanarrative, beliefs and values, and personal and group behavior (which form culture); ethics reflects a metanarrative, beliefs and values, and the behavior of people or groups.*

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS 3

FIVE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW THEMES

Guide a discussion of the worldview themes and their relationship to ethics in order to reinforce the importance of biblical worldview integrated throughout the rest of the book and in all of one's ethical efforts.

Which five biblical worldview themes impact your study of ethics? authority, creation order, man's chief end, virtue, and wisdom

How does each theme impact your study of ethics and your actual ethical living? See page 4 and compare student answers to the explanations found there.

How can these worldview emphases help you to apply ethics to your life? Recognize God as the ultimate authority in all things. Align your way of thinking with God's creation design of the world. Seek to glorify God now and look forward to enjoying Him forever. Develop virtuous character that reflects God's character. And grow in wisdom, so you can make ethical decisions and be a productive contributor to society and to God's kingdom.

What is an example of how at least one of the biblical worldview themes impacts your life ethically? One example relates to authority. If you seek to please God, then you won't accommodate a culture that rejects God's authority and thus justifies living immoral lifestyles.

Assess

Guide a summative assessment by directing students to answer the questions in Thinking It Through: What is Ethics?

Thinking It Through: What Is Ethics?

1. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies how man ought to live. Ethics concerns itself with determining what is right and what is wrong. Ethics seeks to identify what is objectively good.
2. Christian ethics seeks to determine how man ought to live in particular circumstances through studying God's Word, discerning God's creation norms, and using moral reasoning.
3. Ethics relates to biblical worldview in that sound Christian ethics relies on a solid biblical worldview to guide it and provide a framework. A biblical world-

RECURRING BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW THEMES

1 Authority

There is only one God who made all things, and He is the ultimate authority. Fallen humans replace the true God and His revelation of Himself in His Word with other authorities such as reason, intuition, feelings, or religious texts. Truly ethical behavior can come only from submission to God and His Word.

2 Creation order

God created not only the physical universe but also the moral norms by which people and societies function. Fallen humans twist God's moral order, and they make this twisted perspective seem normal. Christians should demonstrate why Christian ethics make better sense of the world God made than the alternatives.

3 Man's Chief End

God created mankind with many purposes that can be summed up in one "chief end," namely, "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." Fallen humans replace this true goal for life with many false alternatives that leave the true God out. Christians demonstrate that right behavior is only found when one makes God the center of all motivations.

4 Virtue

God's goal is not merely for people to do the right thing but also to become the right kind of people. Fallen humans tend toward either external adherence to manmade rules or to displaying an "authentic" self, free from all constraints. The development of true virtue can only happen when the Holy Spirit regenerates a person and begins the work of sanctification.

5 Wisdom

Wisdom is the ability to discern creation norms, communicate them to others, and live by them. The fool lives against the grain of the creation order and develops sophisticated defenses for why he or she does so. The Christian grows in wisdom by learning how to apply the Bible and creation norms to situations the Bible does not explicitly address.

These worldview emphases constitute a helpful way to apply ethics to your life. Recognize God as the ultimate authority in all things. Align your way of thinking with God's creation design of the world. Seek to glorify God now and look forward to enjoying Him forever. Develop virtuous character that reflects God's character. And grow in wisdom, so you can make ethical decisions and be a productive contributor to society and to God's kingdom.

Thinking It Through: What Is Ethics?

1. Define ethics.
2. Define Christian ethics.
3. How does ethics relate to biblical worldview, philosophy, and world religions?
4. Summarize the five biblical worldview themes that are woven into this textbook.



view also helps Christians to make sense of the opposing worldviews.

Ethics relates to philosophy in that philosophy is used to arrive at ethical conclusions. Philosophy has had a major impact on ethics, using reason to arrive at some good answers to challenging scenarios. Christians can use tools that philosophy provides in formulating and explaining Christian ethics.

Ethics relates to world religions in that the teachings and practices of a religion influence the ethic that flows from those beliefs and traditions. A religious authority informs the religious practice which then forms the ethic of that religion.

4. Possible answers:

- Authority: the ultimate authority of God as revealed in His Word
- Creation Order: God's design and plan for creation
- Man's Chief End: to glorify God and enjoy Him forever
- Virtue: becoming the right person with the help of the Holy Spirit
- Wisdom: rightly applying the Bible and creation norms to rightly relate to the world

Why Study Ethics?

At the end of the day, everything you do is motivated by one thing or another. You do some things because you want to. You put on a jacket because you are cold. Or you wear a coat because your shirt underneath is dirty or wrinkled. And maybe you pull on a hoodie just because hoodies are comfy. But many things you just have to do, whether you like it or not. Helping pull weeds in the flower beds around your house and brushing your teeth before bed might fit this category. These things simply need to be done. Pulling the weeds may be motivated by the consequences of disobeying your parents' instructions. And brushing your teeth before bed is a habit, thanks to your parents and the dentist's drill.

What are the personal benefits of studying ethics?

Do you need to be properly motivated to study ethics? Technically you don't need to be; perhaps you study it simply because you have to. But you will get so much more out of this course if you want to study it. The same can be said if you have a "mild" attitude toward your driving lessons. But if you don't pay attention and you don't put some effort into them, you might not pass your driving tests! You know you will personally benefit from being well-motivated for both driving lessons and this course. And the end results of both are very rewarding.

No one wants to be ill-prepared. Sure, there is skill in adapting, but no one wants to plan to be ill-prepared on purpose. Expanding your knowledge, growing spiritually, and improving your Christian testimony are all good reasons to study this material. But there are even more benefits of learning about ethics. Below is a brief elaboration on these good reasons for and benefits of studying this subject.

YOUR KNOWLEDGE

You should be motivated to study this textbook, not only to be prepared for all the tests that will be coming your way but also to be prepared for life. Yes, life is full of ethical questions. Questions like whether doing a "greater good" justifies committing a "lesser sin." Or questions about who you should vote for in local or national elections. You will encounter an untold number of ethical situations that are difficult to untangle. You won't have straightforward answers for every ethical curiosity, but you will have a background in Christian ethics and a biblical framework at your disposal. Learning about *faux* ethical approaches will also help you identify them and avoid them as you try to use a solid ethical model.

Knowing about ethics has another benefit. Studying ethics will familiarize you with commandments and principles from Scripture used to construct the Christian ethic, which contrasts with the secular ethics you will study. As you learn what God requires of His children, you will be challenged to align your life with what brings God glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

There is much knowledge to be learned in this course, but it is not knowledge merely for its own sake. Without insightful, accurate knowledge of ethical principles, ethical models, and ethical issues, your ability to make ethical decisions would be severely limited.



Why Study Ethics?

What are the personal benefits of studying ethics?

Objectives

- Summarize the reasons to study ethics and the benefits of doing so.
- Explain the value of gaining spiritual wisdom in order to please God by making ethical choices.
- Formulate a plan to study ethics in a wise and godly manner.

Suggested Reading

- See What Is Ethics?

Engage

WHAT GETS YOU MOTIVATED?

Use a bell ringer activity to allow students to share what motivates them.

What top three activities motivate your life the most? Persuade a classmate who may not be interested in that activity to get involved in at least one of those activities. Students may or may not be able to persuade a classmate to be motivated by the activities that motivate them.

What are some common reasons you're motivated to engage in an activity but someone else may not be? Usually, one person finds the activity fun, interesting, or beneficial in some way while the other person

does not. Whatever the reason, if you're motivated about something, you must value it.

BENEFITS OF STUDYING ETHICS

Ask the students this section's essential question to help them understand the personal benefits of studying ethics.

What are the personal benefits of studying ethics? Expanding your knowledge, growing spiritually, and improving your Christian testimony are at least three benefits of studying ethics.

Instruct

THE BENEFIT OF STUDYING ETHICS: EXPANDED KNOWLEDGE

Use direct instruction to clarify the pitfalls and benefits of an expanded knowledge.

The Bible warns that knowledge puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1). You could be motivated by an expanded knowledge to benefit yourself in order to be highly esteemed by others. You could be motivated by an expanded knowledge to benefit yourself by outmaneuvering others, using your knowledge against them to get ahead for yourself. This is a pitfall.

On the other hand, you might be a person who wonders how someone could consider that expanded knowledge is of great benefit. You're not really all that motivated or interested in gaining a greater knowledge. This is another pitfall. God does not want us to operate in life out of ignorance (1 Pet. 1:14).

Knowledge, however, is vital to the Christian. You've probably heard the common saying that "knowledge is power." Although that saying can be abused (see the first pitfall described above), it contains a truth to be embraced. Having knowledge equips and enables us for our tasks in life. It helps us to avoid errors. It directs us to rightly pursue what is true, good, and beautiful. It is a key component for making ethical choices.

Christians must thoroughly know the principles in God's Word to guide their ethical living. Christians should know common, flawed ethical approaches promoted by the wisdom of the world to avoid falling prey to persuasive but destructive lies. You should be motivated to increase your knowledge for these reasons.

THE BENEFIT OF STUDYING ETHICS: SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Provide a journaling opportunity for students to reflect on their own spiritual growth. Reinforce the biblical necessity of genuine Christians pursuing spiritual growth. Also, reinforce connecting spiritual growth to ethical living.

Based on Colossians 1:10 and 2 Peter 1:5–10, what must Christians pursue? *spiritual growth, growth in spiritual works and knowledge, and adding virtues to their faith*

How does personal spiritual growth relate to ethical decision-making in everyday life? *Personal spiritual growth relates to ethical decision-making in everyday life. It is also involved in responding rightly to ethical issues in the culture, like abortion, civil disobedience, racial discrimination, stem cell research, and homosexuality.*

The Spirit will produce fruit in Christians, demonstrated in how they live, which involves their ethical decision-making. Christians seek to grow in making the right choices as they yield to the Spirit's control. They rely on Him to help them grow more obedient to Christ.

Can you see spiritual growth in your own life? How does that spiritual growth affect your ethical decision-making? Can you see a difference in your life in the last year? *Students should provide some concrete examples. Prompt students to share their thoughts if they wish.*

How do you hope that this class will help you benefit in your own spiritual growth? *Students should provide some concrete examples. Prompt students to share their thoughts if they wish.*

THE BENEFIT OF STUDYING ETHICS: CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

Guide a discussion about the benefit of studying ethics to bolster a solid Christian testimony in order to encourage students to focus on the value of such a pursuit.

Why is it important to develop ethical character and behavior as a testimony to a watching world? *Poor ethical character and behavior in the lives of professing Christians undermines a Christian witness. Stellar ethical character and behavior, though leading to persecution at times, will allow opportunities for greater witness to others. In addition, Christians may have a preserving influence on the society around them. Ethical living lifts high the name of Christ, pointing to His glory.*

YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH

Another good reason to take this course seriously (and a benefit of doing so) is personal spiritual growth. Unit 2 is dedicated to growth in Christlikeness and specific virtues as the key to ethical Christian living. Every ethical decision is tied to Scripture and to the character of the person making the decision. Learning how to apply what you learn about ethics directly to your Christian living is both a goal and a blessing of this course. Thinking through issues like abortion, civil disobedience, racial discrimination, stem cell research, and homosexuality allows you to apply biblical truth and wisdom for spiritual growth in your life. This course is a tool to help believers be "fruitful in every good work" and increase "in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). If you know the Lord, this course will also help you be more prepared to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) with everyone you encounter.

YOUR TESTIMONY

One more motivation to pay close attention to the content of this textbook is to develop a better Christian testimony before a watching world. Yes, the world loves to draw attention to the inconsistencies and sins of Christians. Believers are called to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). One effect of salt is preservation. When a society is left to its own devices, much unedifying work that society on a downward trajectory (Gen. 6:5, Rom. 1:24–32). Believers who seek to live their lives according to a Christian ethical system showcase the value of what is right and shine light on the damage done by what is wrong. And Christians who are strong in their faith can remain faithful to the gospel message of Christ in the face of philosophical and religious opposition (Acts 5:20–42). This kind of testimony lifts high the name of Christ and draws attention to His unique and

authoritative claims (John 14:6). Strong Christian testimonies—deeply rooted in Christian ethics—can continue to preserve a society even when most oppose God and His will.

Believers are also called to be "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). The "good works" (Matt. 5:16) this passage speaks of include behavior that is tied to a decidedly Christian ethic. Neither your own smarts nor your own feelings, no matter how much you trust them, qualify as an arbiter in your ethical decision-making. Jesus is the Light of the World, and it is the message of His gospel that shines light into the darkened hearts of sinful people (John 8:12, 2 Cor. 4:4). Believers are commissioned to reflect Christ's light and make an impact on this dark world. Consider your own testimony and how you can improve it through studying ethics.



How do you hope that this class will help you benefit in developing a better testimony for Christ? *Students should provide some concrete examples.*

If you value spiritual growth, a solid Christian testimony, and a thorough knowledge of biblical principles to guide your understanding of right and wrong, then you should value the study of ethics. And if you value the study of ethics, then you should be motivated to actively engage in this course. Look to the Lord to give you this motivation and to help you maintain it as you seek to please Him.



ETHICAL CHOICES, WISDOM, AND PLEASING GOD

We just looked at some reasons to study ethics and the benefits of doing so. In fact, every subject you study benefits you in some way. English—so you can communicate well. Math—so you can create things and understand much of God's orderly universe. History—so you aren't ignorant of the people and events that have led up to the present. Bible—in part, so you can learn how to live for God. Believers usually learn early after their conversion that they no longer live for themselves but for their Lord (1 Cor. 6:18–20). As we saw above, the more knowledge you have of God and His Word, the more opportunity you have to obey Him. And the purpose of knowledge is to gain wisdom for life, a life that is lived to glorify God (Prov. 1:3–7).

A key passage for the study of ethics is Colossians 1:9–12. The main goal for believers in this passage is found in verse 10: "walk worthy of the Lord." This one phrase is where the rubber meets the road for Christians. What someone thinks and believes directly affects their actions. But

what someone thinks and believes is directly tied to what verse 9 says about believers being "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Believers can't do the right thing (that is, make the ethical choice) without knowing how to arrive at that choice. Have you ever noticed that the Bible doesn't come out and give you answers to common yet high-impact life decisions—questions like where to go to college, what career to pursue, who to marry, how many children to have, what neighborhood to move into, or what church to join. Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding are not just about having information. Christians need the Holy Spirit to give them wisdom and understanding so that they can move from what they know generally about God's will from Scripture to making the best choice in a given situation. When Christians have spiritual wisdom and understanding, they will be able to truly "walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10).⁴

Apply

THE NEED FOR WISDOM

Guide a discussion about the need for wisdom in order to help the students understand its importance in living ethically.

Walk students through Colossians 1:9–12. Then return the focus to the first question.

What do you need to walk worthy of the Lord, to be pleasing to Him (Col. 1:9–10)? *the knowledge of His will along with wisdom and spiritual understanding*

If your purpose should be to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, walking worthy of Him, then what does that imply as the alternative possibility (Col. 1:9–10)? *that you could walk in an unworthy manner that displeases Him*

Although believers have been justified by faith alone, they are still responsible to live obediently, just as a loving son or daughter seeks to please a loving parent. It is possible to grieve God by how you live (Eph. 4:30).

What does a worthy walk that pleases God look like (Col. 1:10)? *being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God*

How can you possibly live such a life (Col. 1:11)? *only by the strengthening power of Christ that helps you patiently persevere with joy (delight in Him)*

What can be your response to this work of God in your life (Col. 1:12)? *thanksgiving that the Father included you in His inheritance as one of His saints, rescued from darkness to live in the light*

Why do you need wisdom to walk worthy of the Lord? *You must apply the knowledge of God's will specifically to your life. You have to make the connection between what the Bible says is God's moral will and the situation you are seeking to apply that to. That takes wisdom.*

What are three examples of God's clear moral will discerned from Scripture and three examples of how that would be applied in ethical situations that might not be immediately clear, requiring wisdom? *One example could be God's clear moral will to tell the truth. A situation of ethical difficulty might arise when telling the truth could hurt someone else that you believe you're supposed to be a loyal friend to (a competing virtue). You must rightly determine the priority of your obligations.*