**BIBLICAL ETHICS LECTURE NOTES**

1. **Fondational definitions and distinctions[[1]](#footnote-1)**
   1. to act ethically or morally means to act in accord with accepted rules of conduct which cover moral (as opposed to non-moral) matters.
   2. To have ethics or a morality is to hold a set of beliefs about that which is good and evil, commanded and forbidden.
   3. To “do” ethics or moral philosophy is to reflect on such issues as the meaning of terms such as “good” and “ought” and the method of justifying ethical rules.
   4. *Judgments of value* are judgments about what is good and bad, desirable or undesirable.
   5. *Judgments of obligation* focus on what is right and wrong and on what one must do or forego.
   6. Taken together, the theory of value and the theory of obligation comprise the whole field of ethics.
   7. Normative ethics deals with which actions are morally right and obligatory
      1. Normative theories about what is right and obligatory presuppose some notion about the meaning of concepts such as right and good.
   8. Meta-ethics itself can be subdivided as follows: 1) discussions about the meaning of ethical terms and concepts such as right, ought and good; and 2) considerations of how ethical judgments (whether of value or of obligation) can be justified or established.
   9. Prescriptive (“must,” “should,” and “ought.”) vs Descriptive (“is,” “had,” and “happened).
      1. Distinction is important because sometimes it is assumed that an act is morally right and even obligatory just because it is being done. On the contrary, merely describing what is done does not in itself set forth moral obligation. In fact, ethicists debate whether it is possible to move from statements of fact to statements of value and vice versa. That is, can one derive statements of *ought* from statements of *is*?
   10. Moral responsibility and freedom of action
       1. no one is morally guilty for failing to do what he could not do or for doing what he could not fail to do. That is, moral responsibility presupposes freedom of action. Moral “oughts” imply that the agent can do his duty.
       2. Evaluate the statement
   11. An action is *morally permissible* if one may do it or refrain from it without incurring any moral guilt.
   12. An action is *morally obligatory* if there is a moral command which mandates it or forbids it. Infringement brings moral censure.
   13. *Morally supererogatory* deeds are not duties but are praiseworthy, because they produce good which goes beyond what duty demands.
   14. What makes an agent moral in doing an act
       1. if he does an act that is morally good or refrains from doing a morally evil act. But what about motives
       2. if good comes from what he does (consequences are the key)
       3. Three factors
          1. the agent must have acted freely
          2. the agent’s motives for doing what he did
          3. he must do an act which is morally right to do
2. **Survey of Ethical systems**
   1. Naturalism and Non-Naturalism
      1. naturalistic theories hold that ethical sentences assert some fact (empirical or metaphysical, e.g.) and that the terms in them can be defined in non-ethical terms.
      2. Non-naturalists think ethical terms such as “good” and “ought” are not definable in non-ethical terms. In fact, they hold that some of these terms are indefinable or simple and unanalyzable, just as yellowness or pleasantness are.
   2. Cognitivism and non-cognitivism
      1. Cognitivists think ethical judgments state facts which may be verified or falsified. Hence, ethical judgments are items of knowledge.
         1. Since cognitivists believe this about purported facts which are natural or non-natural, both ethical naturalism and non-naturalism are cognitivist theories.
      2. For non-cognitivists, ethical statements do not assert any kind of fact. They are meaningful, but not as raising items of knowledge
         1. *Emotivists* hold that moral utterances merely vent an emotion or express an attitude. Thus, to say murder is wrong is to express a negative attitude toward murder (“I don’t like murder”), but in so doing one is not asserting anything about whether murder really is or is not good or bad.
         2. *Prescriptivists* think ethical judgments do more than express emotions, but they do not regard them as statements of fact. Instead, they interpret them as expressing a command. Thus, “murder is wrong” means something like “you must not commit murder,” this says nothing about justifying this prescription as proper. Prescriptivism does not even suggest whether commands are justifiable. It simply holds that moral utterances should be understood as merely giving a command.
3. **sources of moral norms**
   1. Reason-based systems
      1. Argues that ethical norms are generated from and discernible by reason
      2. Some Christian systems in this category also hold that revelation plays a role, but even if revelation provides some norms, reason alone could have generated those norms
      3. In secular ethics one of the most famous reason-based systems is that of Immanuel Kant. Kant derived his categorical imperative (“act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”) from reason alone
      4. the most significant Christian reason-based system is natural law ethics. Thomas Aquinas is the prime example of a Christian thinker who held this system.
         1. Stemming from him, natural law ethics has been especially associated with the Roman Catholic tradition
         2. According to natural law theories, the end (the goal toward which it strives) of each thing in the natural order is built into the thing itself. Thus, by observing an object in nature, one can discern easily its intended purpose in the natural order. This end immediately indicates how the thing should act
      5. built into the structure of things is a set of laws governing conduct. Those laws will be closely related to each object’s intended end or goal
      6. Natural law theories also hold that such laws of conduct are universally known and that they are known by reason apart from special revelation
      7. Moreover, since human nature and the natural order do not change, whatever ethical norms are derivable from nature do not change from time to time and place to place
      8. natural law theories typically claim that what reason discovers by reflecting on the natural order is consistent with what man intuitively knows through his conscience
         1. essential to the notion of natural moral law are the “features of universality, unwrittenness and intuitively perceived or rationally discoverable moral knowledge of the divine will apart from special historical Biblical revelation.”
      9. Proponents of natural law ethics use various Scriptures to support their views, but the central passages are Rom 1:18–32 and 2:14–16.
      10. Natural law ethicists think biblical revelation of moral norms is important, but they hold that even without that revelation everyone can know by reason alone the basic principles of right and wrong. Consequently, one need not be a Christian or even a theist to know the moral law
   2. Prescription-based systems
      1. these theories hold that ethical norms originate from an authority figure who mandates them
      2. That person may or may not choose rules on the basis of what seems rational, but that is not the key for prescriptive theories. The key is that someone or some group decides what is to be law and sets that forth
      3. Prescriptive theories often appeal to God as the prescriber, but not all theories do.
      4. Undoubtedly, the most influential prescriptive theories claim God as prescriber. Such theories are often labeled divine command theories, and there are varieties of them. The key, of course, is that God’s will determines the norms
         1. Divine command theories can be roughly divided on this matter in terms of the question raised pointedly in Plato’s *Euthyphro*. That dialogue discusses whether an act is right *because God wills it*, or whether God wills it *because he knows it is right*
         2. Divine command theories vary in their answer to Plato’s question, but during the Middle Ages divine command theorists typically chose the former option.
         3. On the contemporary scene some divine command theorists give the impression that God chooses his commands completely arbitrarily; others hold that God’s choices are not purely arbitrary, though they do not always explain God’s rationale for his choices
   3. Relation based-systems
      1. Here the key idea is that actions are shaped either
         1. by the sense of excitement or gratitude one feels as a result of a relationship with some person or group, or
         2. by how some crucial principle relates to each new situation
      2. In relation-based systems the emphasis may be responding to a person and/or because of one’s relation to that person (God or Christ, e.g.), or the focus may be responding to a situation (e.g., what is the loving thing to do in this situation?), or both (e.g., what would Jesus do in this situation?).
4. **criteria for Good and Bad actions**
   1. What makes good acts good and bad acts bad?
   2. Two main answers
      1. Teleological (consequentialist) theories
         1. Consequences (results), then, determine which acts are good and which evil
         2. what is morally good or bad, right or wrong, obligatory or forbidden is determined by the non-moral value produced when the act is done. If the deed generates more non-moral good than evil, the *act* is considered *morally* good.
         3. For a teleologist, what is good in the non-moral sense may vary
         4. Many teleologists have been hedonists, identifying good with pleasure and evil with pain
         5. Others have identified good with power, knowledge, self-realization, or other non-moral goods.
         6. Despite this variation, whatever non-moral good is the key for a given theory, those acts are *morally* good that produce the greatest amount of that *non-moral* good, and those actions are morally evil that remove or reduce such non-moral good
         7. Teleological theories are generally of two sorts.
            1. The first kind focuses on producing the greatest good for oneself (ethical egoism)
            2. The second type emphasizes producing the greatest good for the greatest number (ethical universalism)
         8. The most commonly held teleological theories are utilitarian.
         9. Two kinds of utilitarian theories exist
            1. act utilitarian theories: an act is morally right and obligatory if it would produce the most utility (the best consequences) under prevailing conditions. Since this means one must calculate the effects of his action in each situation, no general rules such as “telling the truth produces the greatest general good” should be stated.
            2. rule utilitarian theories: claims that an act is right if it would be more beneficial to have a code of moral rules permitting that act than one which excluded it. Thus, rule utilitarianism looks for the rules that as a whole produce the greatest utility, and it prescribes them. On a rule utilitarian theory, like situations are handled in like ways, whereas with act utilitarianism, like situations are not necessarily treated the same way.
      2. Deontological Theories
         1. deny that morally good acts are determined by the non-moral consequences they produce
         2. The key for deontological theories is that an act is right because it is one’s duty to do it, and it is one’s duty for some reason other than the consequences stemming from the act. Deontologists do not ignore consequences altogether. They only claim that consequences are not the basis for deciding the moral rightness or wrongness of an action
      3. Mixed Theories
         1. Some ethicists favor a theory which mixes deontological and teleological concerns
         2. They believe that determining right and wrong must involve consulting rules. However, they are concerned that consulting rules alone might obligate one to do acts which are possibly arbitrarily chosen and may even have detrimental results for human well-being
5. **Number and Nature of Ethical Norms**
   1. Antinomianism: there are no norms of any sort
   2. *Generalism:* there are no *universal* norms but only general ones
   3. *Situationism*: there is only one norm, and it applies universally
   4. *non-conflicting absolutism*: This view says there are many ethical norms that are all universal in nature
   5. *ideal absolutism*: there are many ethical norms, they are universal, and they do conflict
   6. *hierarchicalism*: there are many norms that are all universal. Those norms are hierarchically ordered on the basis of their significance. When norms conflict (and they will), one must determine which is the higher rule and obey it. If one does this, he commits no sin by breaking the lower norm
   7. Feinbergs (modified divine command theory) norms reflect God’s character and there are inherently right and wrong acts, also by reflecting on God’s attributes and the world he made, reason can see the reasonableness of what God has prescribed.

**The Ground of Christian ethics: the character of God[[2]](#footnote-2)**

1. The point of Christian ethics is not to be as liberal as we can be, or as conservative. It is, rather, to be as biblical as we can be.
   1. non-Christian ethics is incapable of providing a basis for moral decision
   2. Jesus rebuked both the conservative Pharisees and the liberal Sadducees; Paul rebuked both legalists and libertines.
   3. a Christian ethical decision is the application of God’s revelation (normative) to a problem (situational) by a person (existential)
      1. Christian ethics comes not from an abstraction, an impersonal fate, or chance, but from the Word of the living God.
   4. God is not only a fact, but also a norm
      1. 1 John 1:5 (cf. Matt. 4:16; Luke 1:79; 2:32; John 1:4–9; 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; 1 John 2:8; Rev. 21:23).
         1. That physical light is associated with God’s moral purity in 1 John 1:5.
      2. But light does not refer only to God’s moral excellence. It also refers to the communication of that excellence, the revelation of it, to human beings. The light of God’s essence is a light that we are to walk in (1 John 1:7; Ps. 119:9,10,105).
      3. The light reveals good and evil (John 3:19–21)
      4. We should not walk in darkness (Matt. 6:22–23; John 8:12; 12:46; Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 6:14)
      5. To dwell in the light is to dwell with God; to dwell in darkness is to be apart from him. Indeed, we are to *be* the light (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8)
      6. When sinners see a manifestation of deity, they are often filled with a sense of moral guilt (Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8). God’s very being is ethically normative
   5. God’s word is always one with God himself
      1. The speech of God, his word, has divine attributes,
         1. attributes of righteousness (Ps. 119:7),
         2. faithfulness (v. 86),
         3. wonderfulness (v. 119),
         4. truth (v. 142; John 17:17),
         5. eternity (Ps. 119:89, 160),
         6. omnipotence (Gen. 18:14; Luke 1:37; Isa. 55:11),
         7. and perfection (Ps. 19:7–11).
         8. It is an object of worship (Pss. 56:4, 10; 119:120, 161–62; Isa. 66:5).
         9. And indeed, God’s word is God (John 1:1).
   6. Human ethical responsibility is essentially to imitate God. We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27). It is our nature, that which distinguishes us from all other creatures and gives us a special relationship to God.
      1. Because God has dominion over all things, we are to have an analogous dominion, under him (Gen. 1:28).
      2. Even after the fall, we are to be holy as he is holy (Lev. 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15–16), perfect as he is perfect (Matt. 5:48).
      3. We are to work six days and rest the seventh, for that is what God did (Ex. 20:11).
      4. We are to reflect the light of God’s moral purity (see above)
   7. The imitation of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) is also a major theme in biblical ethic
      1. We are to love one another, as Jesus first loved us (John 13:34–35; 1 John 4:9–11).
      2. We are to follow Jesus (Matt. 16:24; 19:21).
      3. We are to wash one another’s feet, according to his example (John 13:14–15).
      4. We are to be sent into the world as he was sent (John 17:18; 20:21).
      5. We are to value one another above ourselves, as Jesus did (Phil. 2:5–11).
      6. Even Jesus’ sufferings and death are exemplary (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 3:16).
      7. Paul speaks of himself as an imitator of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1)
   8. Distinction between biblical imitation of God from coveting God’s prerogatives
      1. Gen. 3:5: “In one sense, as we have seen above, being like God is the heart of godliness. But Satan was suggesting that Eve could be like God in another way, by rebelling against him and placing herself on the throne. There are some attributes and acts of God that we can never imitate.”
         1. “We are not omniscient or omnipotent; we cannot create a universe; we cannot redeem a race of sinners. None of us can ever be an ultimate ethical authority.”
   9. At the most basic level, then, God himself is our source of ethical obligation. Our ultimate norm is personal, not impersonal. We have ethical duties, because God is intrinsically worthy of obedience and imitation, and because all creatures are inevitably confronted with the revelation of his standards.
2. The Word of God as the Norm
   1. The word through Nature (Rom. 1:18-21)
      1. creation clearly conveys some significant truths: God’s existence, his nature, and his wrath against sin
      2. nature does not teach people the way of salvation (Rom. 10:13-17)
      3. unregenerate people suppress it (Rom. 1:18) and exchange it for a lie (Rom. 1:24) and God gives them up to their depravity (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).
      4. But for the believer, natural revelation is important also in other ways:
         1. It gives us information that is useful in interpreting Scripture, such as information about ancient culture and languages.
         2. It shows us the contemporary situation to which we must apply the Scriptures.
         3. It gives us regular occasion to glorify God for his creation (Ps. 19) and providence (Pss. 104, 146, 147)
      5. “If the created world did not reveal God, Scripture itself would be useless. We cannot interpret Scripture unless we can understand the situations from which Scripture arose and the situations to which we seek to apply it. If the created world did not reveal God clearly, it would thereby cast doubt on the ethical conclusions we seek to derive from Scripture. So general revelation, like Scripture, is necessary, authoritative, clear, and sufficient for its own purposes.”
   2. Revelation through Persons
      1. Some revelation comes to human beings through personal appearances of the divine persons of the Trinity.
         1. When God appears in visible form, that revelation is called theophany.
         2. When the Son of God took on flesh and dwelled among us (John 1:14), that revelation is called incarnation.
         3. When the Holy Spirit comes to reveal God in and to us, that revelation is called by various names, depending on its function: inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16), illumination (1 Cor. 2:9–12), demonstration (1 Thess. 1:5), revelation (Eph. 1:17).
      2. Existential revelation, however, also includes revelation through human persons. Human beings are in God’s image, so we are revelation. That image is not lost, but marred or defaced by the fall. But God’s grace renews that image in the image of Christ. In this renewal, God writes his word on our heart (Jer. 31:33–34; cf. Deut. 6:6; Prov. 3:3). This means that there is a change in our most fundamental dispositions, so that our deepest desire is to serve God.
      3. Because of redemption, human beings can serve as revelation in still another way: as examples for imitation.
      4. Reason for dissenting from opposition to preaching biblical characters as exemplas.
         1. Some argue that preach Scripture exclusively as a redemptive-historical narrative and never point to a Bible character as a moral example.
         2. But biblical writers often present the characters in their narratives as positive or negative examples. Saul, for instance, is largely a negative example, and David is usually a positive one. God has given us these examples as an important means for our ethical and spiritual growth
   3. God’s word also comes to us as human words and sentences. This is sometimes called “special revelation.”
      1. This revelation includes, first, the divine voice, spoken directly to human beings, as to Adam and Eve, to patriarchs such as Noah and Abraham, to the people of Israel gathered around Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19–20, to Moses, to other prophets, and to the apostles.
      2. Without God’s grace, we inevitably suppress and distort the truths of natural revelation (Rom. 1:18–32). We can interpret nature rightly, therefore, only when we hear and believe the message of the gospel. But that is available only in Scripture. So we need Scripture if we are rightly to interpret any other form of revelation. As Calvin says, we need Scripture as our “spectacles” to see the natural world correctly

**Personal Ethics: The Life of Integrity**[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Ps. 15
   1. *He who walks with integrity*
      1. This term is something of a summary of all that follows. Integrity here does not mean sinless, but it does describe a person who by God’s grace “sins less”. It refers to one who is *whole, complete, sound*.
   2. *He who works righteousness*
      1. He actually *does* what is righteous, rather than merely *talks* about it
      2. *Doing* what is right and lawful and good and honest is eminently pleasing to God, whether it be in private or public, in the church or in the office
         1. Prov. 11:1; 20:10; 20:23
            1. What is it that is so horrible that God would regard it as “abominable”?
            2. The writer is referring to an ancient practice among unscrupulous merchants or buyers (cf. Prov. 20:14) One cannot easily pass it off as shrewd bargaining or rationalize it by insisting that “everyone else does it.” It is, quite simply, *abominable* to the Lord.
            3. “Is it not a solemn thought, that the eye of God marks all our common dealings of life, either as an *abomination* or a *delight*?” (Charles Bridges)
            4. Do we get comfortable with saying everybody is doing it?
   3. *He speaks truth in his heart*
      1. correspondence between what he thinks on the inside and what he says on the outside
      2. does not resort to hypocrisy, feigned praise, or flattery
      3. doesn’t mean we are to speak everything in our hearts (cf. Eph. 4:29 and numerous Proverbs). It *does* mean that when you speak, you speak the truth
      4. Cheating in a game?
   4. *He does not slander with his tongue*
      1. The piel root of “slander” רָגַ֨ל means to spy out (Gen. 42:9-34; Jos 2:1 6:22f)
      2. the sense that one goes looking for things in the life of another to use against them
   5. *He does no evil to his neighbor*
   6. *He does not take up a reproach against his friend*
      1. initiating and rejoicing in gossip
      2. the person of integrity will neither contribute to slander nor tolerate it.
      3. Spurgeon said, “If there were no gratified hearers of ill-reports, there would be an end of the trade of spreading them.”
   7. *He is one in whose eyes a reprobate is despised but who honors those who fear the Lord*
      1. The “reprobate” is someone known for evil; someone hardened in perversity; someone unrepentant and proud of his/her sin (1 Sam. 2:30)
      2. Whom do you admire? Whom do you praise?
      3. What would society (not to mention the church!) be like if we all suddenly ceased to praise, honor, reward, show deference or grant special privileges to the reprobates of our world: musicians, politicians, traditional rulers, false teachers
   8. *He swears to his own hurt and does not change*
      1. The NIV renders this, “He keeps his oath even when it hurts!”
      2. In other words, *his honor is more important than his wallet*. He is willing to make material and physical sacrifices to be honest.
         1. Often, if there is no risk of loss or painful consequences, one will never know if one has integrity.
         2. Moral conviction vs moral *convenience*: the pressure to suffer loss for standing your ground or keeping your word brings that out.
   9. *He does not put out his money at interest*
      1. See Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–38 (Dt. 23:19–20)
      2. The primary aim of this legislation was to protect the poor. In other words, it was motivated by compassion
      3. The purpose for making loans in today’s world is to make money, to develop industry, to expand capital, etc
      4. But for an Israelite to charge interest on loans made to a fellow-Israelite would aggravate the crisis that had produced the need for obtaining the loan in the first place, driving him yet farther into debt (Neh. 5:1-5).
   10. *He does not take a bribe against the innocent*
       1. Often the poor were taken to court and exploited by the rich who could easily afford to pay a bribe to thwart justice (Deut. 16:19-20).
   11. *What profit is there in integrity?*
       1. He who does these things will never be shaken
   12. Discussion
       1. Various Scenarios
   13. Integrity
       1. fulfills his/her promises
       2. speaks the truth, is honest, and does not lie
       3. Sincerity
       4. manifests a wholeness of character, including kindness, compassion, mercy, and gentleness
       5. committed to the pursuit and maintenance of justice and fairness
       6. loves as, when, and what God loves
       7. humble
       8. integrity is law-abiding
       9. integrity is fundamentally committed not simply to laws and rules but to people
       10. integrity manifests a high degree of consistency

**Liberty vs legalism: Rom. 14[[4]](#footnote-4)**

1. How is a Christian to act with regard to matters not explicitly addressed in Scripture?
   1. How is a Christian to conduct himself/herself in situations on which the Bible is silent?
   2. Alternatively, we could ask: “What is the nature and extent of Christian freedom”
   3. Three types of freedom
      1. Freedom from the condemnation of God (Rom. 8:1)
      2. Freedom from slavery to sin (Rom. 6:14)
      3. Freedom from the conscience of other Christians (1 Cor. 10:28-29)
   4. Paul teaches at some length on the third kind of Freedom
      1. There are a number of issues on which the Bible does not provide an explicit “yes” or “no”
      2. These are issues that do not affect our acceptance with God, i.e., they do not pertain to whether or not one is a Christian
      3. drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation; going to cinema clubs; watching TV, working on Sunday, eating food in a church building, engaging in mixed swimming, playing draft, playing cards, dancing nfuh, njang, smoking, wearing makeup, wearing jewelry, purchasing insurance
   5. These matters fall within the domain of Christian liberty
      1. Unfortunately, some Christians insist on elevating their opinion on such matters to the status of divine law
      2. They feel compelled to impose their convictions regarding the moral status of such practices on the conscience of other believers
   6. How we know Paul is dealing with matters of Christian liberty in Rom. 14
      1. According to v. 3. “*God has accepted him*.”
      2. Paul’s plea for ‘welcome,’ ‘mutual acceptance’ v1 indicates that he is addressing matters not relevant to justification
      3. Paul’s counsel “*Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind*” (v5)
      4. So Paul is articulating principles to guide the believer in his/her dealings with other believers when they face ethical decisions not directly addressed in Scripture; issues which God has neither commanded nor forbidden; matters of individual ***conscience***
      5. These are not issues such as theft, lying, sexual relations or other such matters on which the Bible gives clear guidance.
   7. Rom 14 and 1 Cor. 8-10 are very similar but they differ in at least three respects:
      1. (1) In Romans 14 there is no mention of food or drink *offered to idols*; (2) The observance of days as special is in Romans 14 but not in 1 Cor. 8–10; and (3) The weakness of Romans 14 involved a *vegetarian* diet, i.e., a scrupulous attitude toward *all* meat, whereas in 1 Cor. there is no reason to doubt that the weak would have eaten meat *not* offered to idols
   8. “*Who is the weak brother?*” Or again, “*What constitutes weakness and strength?*”
      1. He is a vegetarian (v2, 21)
      2. He regards some days as having special importance (v5)
      3. He does not drink wine (vv 17, 21)
      4. entertains scruples on secondary matters; has misgivings about the moral and spiritual propriety of such practices; has not sufficiently understood the truth of ***1 Tim. 4:4–5; 1 Cor. 10:25–26; Rom. 14:14a***.
      5. *Weakness in faith*, therefore, is **not** a failure to believe the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is, rather, a failure to understand the implications of such doctrine in the area of practical freedom
      6. They had failed to grasp the truth of 1 Cor. 8:8 - “*But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat*” (cf. Mark 7:14–15)
      7. These believers feared that
         1. partaking of certain foods and drink or participating in certain practices they would be *spiritually infected* in some way
         2. partaking would weaken them in their walk and perhaps expose them to even greater evils
         3. They believed that there was spiritual value or moral virtue in *abstinence* per se. To deny oneself is inherently good and to indulge oneself is inherently bad
      8. misconception about the nature of *weakness*, as Paul conceives it: Many have understood *weakness* to be synonymous with *excess*. The weak brother, so some have thought, is the one who can’t restrain himself and is given to over-indulgence in such matters as eating and drinking. The *strong* are those who have the will-power to abstain and should be careful not to place before their weaker brethren an inducement to indulge their vices. NO ***Weakness in Rom. 14 is not intemperate overindulgence but overly scrupulous abstinence***.
      9. “a weaker brother or sister,” is “not a vulnerable Christian easily overcome by temptation, but a sensitive Christian full of indecision and scruples. What the weak lack is not strength of self-control but liberty of conscience” (Stott)
      10. We must remember that ***abstinence per se is not weakness***. The decisive factor is one’s *motive* for abstention. To abstain for non-religious reasons does **NOT** make one *weak*
   9. What, then, constitutes *strength*? The strong, quite simply, are those who correctly perceive the truth of 1 Tim. 4:4–5 and Rom. 14:14a. Paul was strong (cf. 15:1). The strong are those who, by reason of their knowledge of God and grace, enjoy the full range of Christian liberty without being condemned in their conscience
2. “*How are the strong and the weak to relate and respond to each other in regard to these matters on which they embrace differing convictions*?”
   1. The strong is to “***accept*** the one who is weak in faith.” *Accept* = both *recognition* by the Christian community as a member of the body of Christ, and brotherly *reception* of him/her into the routines of Christian fellowship.
   2. The strong must not “regard with contempt” the weak (v. 3a)
   3. The must not judge the strong (v3b).
   4. The third question to be addressed is: “*Why are the weak not to judge the strong*?”
      1. God has accepted them v3b
      2. The Christian has but one master v4a
   5. The reason why neither party should judge the other is that *both are aiming at the same target: serving and glorifying God*. Paul’s point in vv. 5–9 is that the ***purpose*** of both the strong and the weak in all they do is their devotion to God
   6. According to vv. 10–12, ***all*** will give account to ***God, not to each other***
3. “*What responsibility does the strong brother have toward his weaker brother*?”
   1. Paul answers this question in vv. 13–23. His main point is that ***the liberty of the strong must be qualified by love***.
      1. is the exhortation in v. 13a directed to the strong or weak brother, or both?
      2. Probably both
         1. Both strong and weak are rebuked for judging in vv10-12
         2. Opposite of is putting stumbling block which only the strong could do v13b
         3. V14-15 makes sense if the strong are view.
      3. “Why does Paul place so much of the burden on the strong brother? the weak brother is **bound** by his conscience; there is no flexibility or freedom for him to adjust his behavior, for in doing so he would be violating what he sincerely believes is God’s will. The strong brother, on the other hand, is at liberty in his conscience either to partake or abstain.
   2. Note
      1. V13: stumbling block; anything that becomes an occasion for falling into sin
      2. V14-15 reiterate 1 Tim. 4:4-5; Mark 7:14ff; Acts 10:15, 28.
      3. The key is the distinction in v. 14 between, on the one hand, what is ***objectively true*** and, on the other hand, one’s ***subjective perception*** of that truth. Objectively, nothing is unclean *in itself*. But, ***it may become unclean if you THINK is to be so***. See 1 Cor. 8:4, 7
      4. V16: Christian liberty is itself a good thing. But when wrongly used, that is, in defiance of love and in disregard for the conscience of a weaker brother, it can bring disgrace on the gospel
      5. V17-18: The essential character of God’s kingdom, that which attests its presence in the heart of the believer, is not eating and drinking whatever you want, nor for that matter *not* eating and drinking whatever you *don’t* want, but rather righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit

**Gambling**

1. Definition[[5]](#footnote-5)
   1. A type of transaction between two parties in which something of value is transferred from one to the other solely on the basis of an uncertain outcome of some event or on mere chance.
   2. The term is sometimes used in reference to a life decision, but most often it denotes a game in which winners are created at the expense of losers through the wagering of money or valuables. Playing a game of chance for pure amusement is not necessarily considered gambling. Rather, it is the betting—the staking of money on an outcome that is in doubt—that is at the heart of gambling.
2. Why Gambling is Sinful[[6]](#footnote-6)
   1. the dependence on chance: Gambling assumes a world of random chance, for which the chief virtue is luck. “The worldview of the Bible affirms the active sovereignty of God over all events, persons, and time—and thus there is no place for luck. The Christian trusts in God, not in the vain hope of a winning lottery number or a favorable roll of the dice.”
   2. Direct attack on the work ethic presented in Scripture. Both the Old and New Testaments consistently teach the dignity of honorable work, and the proper reward for labor and industriousness. “The worker worthy of hire is rewarded. Lazy, slothful, and unproductive persons are undeserving of financial rewards, and were a scandal to the early Church. Gambling severs the dignity of work from the hope of financial gain, offering the hope of riches without labor, and reward without dignity.”
   3. Treatment of the poor. “Rather than offering genuine hope and a way out of poverty, gambling operators prey on those who are most desperate. The Old Testament prophets proclaimed God’s devastating judgment against those who “devour” the poor, and yet gambling proponents entice those at the bottom of the economic ladder to risk everything, though they end up with nothing. The concentration of lottery ticket outlets in lower-income neighborhoods is no accident”
   4. “The basic impulse behind gambling is greed—a basic sin that is the father of many other evils. Greed, covetousness, and avarice are repeatedly addressed by Scripture—always presented as a sin against God, and often accompanied by a graphic warning of the destruction which is greed’s result. The burning desire for earthly riches leads to frustration and spiritual death.”
   5. Desire to be Rich:
   6. It undermines self-control in some cases: gambling can develop into a psychological compulsion. It can become addictive
   7. the ramifications of the practice on others, such as family members, the community in which gambling occurs and society as a whole.
   8. Gambling glorifies chance, undermines the sense of stewardship, generates profits from the losses of others and appeals to the vice of covetousness.

**civil disobedience**

1. Prudential? Permissible or Obligatory (not only is it not a sin to do it, it *is* a sin *not* to do it):[[7]](#footnote-7)
   1. Arguments for
      1. Divine Law supercedes Human Law: if the government passes a law that conflicts with biblical morality, the individual is not only permitted but also obligated to disobey that law.
      2. *The Good Samaritan Argument:* Intervention to save lives is a moral duty no less than it was the Samaritan’s moral duty to render aid to the man beside the road.
      3. The Argument from Self-Defense: It is certainly permissible to defend oneself against an unjustified attack. One also has a right, even if it is not a moral obligation, to defend someone else who is the object of an unjustified attack.
      4. The “Necessity Defense:” All would agree that it is morally permissible (if not obligatory) to break a window in a burning house in order to gain access for the purpose of rescuing someone trapped inside. Under normal conditions, *breaking and entering* is against the law. But in this particular case, it was **necessary** to violate the law in order to preserve a life
      5. Prov. 24:10-12
   2. Arguments Against
      1. Civil disobedience is morally obligatory, we believe, in cases where one is directly compelled to do what is evil or a sin, but not when the law simply permits someone else’s sin”[[8]](#footnote-8)Direct civil disobedience occurs when a law that demands or forbids something is directly violated. For example, when the apostles were forbidden to preach the gospel in Acts 4, they directly violated the law. Indirect civil disobedience occurs when the breaking of a law is only indirectly related to the problem. The Feinbergs point to the case of those who trespass on government property to protest the nuclear arms race. In other words, “direct disobedience involves breaking the law when it compels *me* to sin or do evil [as in the case of being forbidden from preaching the gospel]. Indirect civil disobedience occurs when the law allows someone else to sin, and we break a law to protest what they are doing” (Feinbergs/93).[[9]](#footnote-9)
      2. there is never a case in which it is biblically or morally right to break a good law in order to protest a bad one. Or again, there is never a case in which it is biblically or morally right to break the law in order to protest *others’* doing of evil.

**suicide**

1. In order for an act to be suicide, one need not die directly by one’s own hand. A person might persuade another to do the killing, but this would still be suicide.
   1. the diabetic in despair who, although in otherwise good health, stops taking his insulin in order to end his life
2. a person who commits suicide is one who ***acts on the desire to die***.
3. Does suicide violate the command not to murder?
4. Is suicide unpardonable?

**Ethic of work**

1. Work is a gift of God; given before the fall
2. Work is also fallen and how shall we deal with that reality?
   1. The goodness of our work calls for hope. Its fallenness calls for perseverance—every vocation battles sin and brokenness
3. We spend the bulk of our time at work
4. How do you serve faithfully?
   1. Example of a pharmacist and abortifact.
   2. Should a believer work for a government that is attacking Christian value?
      1. Work pleases God only if it is honest and lawful: no Christian prostitute or Christian human trafficker
      2. But we will usually find something we disagree with in big companies. What if we told every believer to leave? Leaving is probably not an option (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-10).
      3. How can you work with integrity in a difficult work place
         1. Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 37-50)
         2. Moses (Exod. 1-2). Moses couldn’t stay because his Pharoah was genocidal (Heb. 11:25)
         3. Believers can work for evil masters under certain circumstances. Can I do good or can I not?
         4. Obadiah in 1 Kgs 16ff. Elijah calls for drought as a sign of judgment against Ahab but Obadiah stayed there to work.
            1. Obadiah saved lives of the prophets. Two Christians may respond in two different ways in the same situation. When Elijah and Obadiah meet neither of them criticizes the other.
            2. Hushai who overthrew the counsel of Ahithophel
5. Equality of Work
   1. Equally pleasing to God
   2. Appropriate gifts
   3. Some work is more strategic (cf. Rom. 15:20)
   4. Are you uniquely equipped for a certain task?
   5. My food is. . . .
6. 2 Thess. 3:6-15
7. The Lord Sees our Work and He Rewards it (Matt. 25:34-40).

**Rest**

1. Rest is a restorative break from labor and worldly striving. In the Bible it is an essential feature of the Sabbath—a day of rest on which no work was to be done. As a time of peace and calm, free from work.
   1. Rest represents a break from physical labor and worldly striving. It provides a time for mental and spiritual restoration.
   2. In the midst of the sufferings and struggles of existence, people may long for rest.
   3. Rest requires a safe place, so the concept may be used to indicate peace (e.g., Deut. 25:19; 2 Sam 7:1) and possession of land on which to rest (e.g., Josh 1:15).
   4. The promised land symbolizes God’s promise of rest after Israel’s time of wandering in the wilderness (Deut. 12:10).
   5. Death, as the ultimate end to all earthly striving, is also regularly described as a time of rest (Job 3:17; Rev 14:13).
   6. Rest comes to symbolize salvation itself.
2. Rest or sleep is a gift of God (Ps. 127:1-2).
   1. What about Sleepless nights (Ps. 132:4-5; 2 Cor. 6; 11; Acts 20:7-12)
3. Sleep
   1. Used over 150x. Some of which is metaphorical but much of it is literal
   2. Sleep is good. Sleeplessness is viewed as a misfortune (Esther 6; Dan. 2; 6)
   3. We sleep well when we feel safe (Prov. 3:24; Eccl. 5:12)
   4. Too much sleep is a sign of laziness (Prov. 22:13; 26:14, 15)
   5. **Staying awake is an act of faith and going to sleep is an act of faith.** 
      1. If God has redeemed us eternally, we can certainly trust him with the details of our lives (Ps. 4:8)

**Politics and Governance**

1. **Government as a gift of God’s common grace**
   * + 1. Gen. 9:1-6.
       2. Societal governance is an instrument to rein in man’s depravity
       3. Exodus 21-23:9 (cf. Deut. 4:5-8)
       4. The removal of leadership (governance) is presented as judgment (Isa. 3:1-8)
       5. Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; Acts 21:27-26:32
          1. Acts 21:27ff
          2. Acts 23:6ff
2. **Believers, the Political Process and Governance**
   * + 1. All believers have
          1. a temporary citizenship (Acts 16:35-40; 21:39; 22:23-29; Acts 17:26; cf. Jer. 1:1).
          2. an ultimate citizenship (Phil. 3:20).
       2. All believers are called to an ultimate goal: 1 Cor. 10:31
       3. We fulfill this ultimate goal by obeying the greatest commandment (Luke 10:25-37)
          1. Loving God supremely
          2. Loving neighbor as self
3. **Some Implications[[10]](#footnote-10)**
   1. In His sovereignty, our Creator has put each believer within a cultural context in order that we may display His glory by preaching the gospel, confronting persons with God's truth, and serving as agents of salt and light in a dark and fallen world.
   2. love of God leads us to love our neighbor--and love of neighbor requires our participation in the culture and in the political process.
   3. humanity is confronted by two cities--the City of God and the City of Man. The City of God is eternal, and takes as its sole concern the greater glory of God. In the City of God, all things are ruled by God's Word, and the perfect rule of God is the passion of all its citizens.
   4. The city of man is filled with mixed passions, mixed allegiances, and compromised principles. Though the City of God is marked by unconditional obedience to the command of God, citizens of the City of Man demonstrate deadly patterns of disobedience, even as they celebrate and claim their moral autonomy, and then revolt against the Creator.
   5. The City of God is eternal, even as the City of Man is passing. But this does not mean that the City of Man is ultimately unimportant, and it does not allow the church to forfeit its responsibility to love its citizens. Love of neighbor--grounded in our love for God--requires us to work for good in the City of Man, even as we set as our first priority the preaching of the gospel--the only means of bringing citizens of the City of Man into citizenship in the City of God.
   6. We must know that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven, and we must set our sights on the glory of the City of God. But we must work for good, justice, and righteousness in the City of Man. We do so, not merely because we are commanded to love its citizens, but because we know that they are loved by the very God we serve.
   7. Two extremes: either ignoring the City of Man or considering it to be our main concern.
      1. A biblical balance establishes the fact that the City of Man is indeed passing, and chastens us from believing that the City of Man and its realities can ever be of ultimate importance.
      2. Yet, we also know that each of us is, by God's own design, a citizen--though temporarily--of the City of Man. When Jesus instructed that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, He pointed His followers to the City of Man and gave us a clear assignment. The only alternatives that remain are obedience and disobedience to this call.
   8. Love of neighbor for the sake of loving God is a profound political philosophy that strikes a balance between the disobedience of political disengagement and the idolatry of politics as our main priority.
   9. As evangelical Christians, we must engage in political action, not because we believe the conceit that politics is ultimate, but because we must obey our Redeemer when He commanded that we must love our neighbor.

**Economics and Poverty[[11]](#footnote-11)**

1. The Bible has quite a lot more to teach about economics than most people realize. It speaks to important economic concepts like the meaning of work, the value of labor, and various other economic issues. Note that the Christian worldview does not demand or promote a particular economic system.
   1. So, Christians must allow the economic principles found in Scripture to shape our thinking while simultaneously recognizing that we can act in light of those principles in any economic, cultural, or generational setting.
2. 12 Theses on a Christian Understanding of Economics
   1. Must seek to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31)
   2. Respects human dignity
      1. Doesn’t view humans as things to be used but bearers of God’s image
   3. Respects Private property
      1. The Tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17; Acts 4:32-37)
   4. Takes full account of the power of sin
      1. “Taking the Bible’s teaching on the pervasive effects of sin into full account means that we expect bad things to happen in every economic system. A Christian economic understanding tries to ameliorate the effects of sin” (cf. Eph. 2:1-3).
   5. Rewards righteousness
   6. Rewards initiative, industry and investment
      1. “Initiative goes beyond action. It is the kind of action that makes a difference. Industry is human work done corporately. Investment is part of the respect for private property found in Scripture.”
      2. Cf. 2 Thess. 3:10-11
   7. Seeks to reward and incentivize thrift
      1. Luke 12:15
      2. Matt. 6:25-34
   8. Upholds the family as the most basic economic unit
      1. In the “economic theory embedded in the beginning of the Bible, the dominion mandate is central, but so is the divine institution of marriage. The pattern of leaving and cleaving described in Genesis 2 is fundamental to our economic understanding”
      2. Adam and Eve were the first economic unit. The result is that the family (biblically defined) is the most basic and essential unit of the economy.
   9. Must respect community
      1. “The doctrine of subsidiarity — which emerged out of natural law theory — teaches that meaning, truth and authority reside in the smallest meaningful unit possible.”
      2. “If the family unit is deficient, no government can meet the need of its citizens. When the family is strong, government can be small. When the family is weak, however, the government must compensate for the loss. By focusing on the family, we respect and better the community.”
   10. Rewards generosity and proper stewardship
       1. “Christians who are committed to the economics of the Kingdom and to the good of the next generation must live with a future-oriented financial perspective. We each have the responsibility, whether we have a lot or a little, to see that our generosity endures far beyond our lifespan.”
       2. “Spirited generosity, which is so clear in Scripture, is essential to a Christian economic worldview.”
       3. Prov. 13:22
   11. Respects the priority of the church and its mission
       1. “Christians must embrace economic priorities that the rest of the world simply will not understand. Christians must invest in churches, seminaries and international missions. These are distinctive Christian financial commitments. Our ultimate financial commitment is not to ourselves or to our own investments but to the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, Christians should always be ready to experience upheaval in economic priorities and arrangements because urgent kingdom issues can intervene at any moment.”
       2. Matt. 6:25-34
   12. Focuses on eschatological judgment and eschatological promise
       1. “This life and its resources cannot deliver ultimate joy. The Christian worldview reminds us that we must live with the recognition that we will give an account to the Lord for our stewardship of our resources. At the same time, Christians must look to the eschatological promise of the New Heavens and New Earth as our ultimate economic hope. We must lay up treasures in heaven and not on earth.”

**Culture and Family**

A. God created the family (Gen. 2:24-25; Eph. 3:14-15)

B. The family was to have a key function in Adam’s fulfillment of his commission (Gen. 1:28)

C. Later the family was to be key in ensuring continuity of covenant faithfulness (Deut. 6:4-7)

D. Various ways the family is under attack in our days.

E. Culture is also God’s idea—not commanded but inevitable outcome of God’s providential ordering of humanity (Acts 17:26; cf. Gen. 11)

F. The key ways we relate to culture are The Indigenous and Pilgrim Principle of Christian Living

a) Pilgrim Principle: Refusal to conform (Rom. 12:1-2)

b) Indigenous: Becoming all things for all people (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

G. Rejecting all impulses of denigrating other cultures

**Ethnicity and Reconciliation[[12]](#footnote-12)**

Ethnocentricism:

*ethnocentrism* is the conviction or the feeling that one’s own ethnic group should be treated as superior or privileged.

**Textual Responses**

1. Luke 4:16-30
2. Matt. 8:1-4
3. with his coming, a radically new way of defining the people of God is here, namely, faith in him (Luke 10:33; 17:16; Mark 7:26; Matt. 2:1; Mark 11:17; Matt. 28:19;
4. Eph. 2:11-22
   1. Vv11-12
   2. Vv19-22
   3. V13
   4. V14
   5. V15
   6. V16
   7. V18
5. Eph. 3:4-6
6. Rom. 9:6
7. Rev. 5:9-10

**Theological Responses**

## Total Depravity (Rom. 3:10-20; 8:7-8; Eph. 2:1-3; Gen. 6:5)

## Image Bearing ((Gen. 1:27; 5:1; 9:6; James 3:9)

1. Definite (Limited Atonement)[[13]](#footnote-13)[Eph. 5:25; John 10:15; 17:9, 19; Rom. 8:32-33
2. Rev. 5:9 (cf. John 6:44, 65; 6:37; 10:16; 11:51–52)
3. Unconditional election excludes ethnicity (Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:11, 16; Gal. 1:15\
4. Justification (Rom. 3:21-31)
   1. One God
   2. God has one way of justifying people
   3. He is the God of all peoples

**Application**

**Col. 3:1-12**

**-Racial divide**

**-Christ is all and is in all.**

**-Gal. 2:11-16**

**Ecology and Care of Creation**

**A. Theology of Creation Care**

* + - 1. God has made a good world, full of fertility and productivity and beauty allowing humanity and the non- human creation can flourish
      2. Psalm 104:14-15
      3. Psalm 104:17-18, 21-22
      4. All is God’s good creation and displays his goodness, power and glory. So it is a good world for humans to enjoy, but we must not think that the world exists only for the sake of humans (Job 38-42).
      5. Humans are given the role of caring for the creation and developing the creation. We commonly use the imagery of ‘stewardship’ to describe this role (cf. Prov. 12:10)
      6. Sin brought a curse on the ground so that production and agriculture became difficult (Gen 3:17-19; Rom. 8:19-23).
         1. Deuteronomy 28: destruction of a fertile land (Deut 28:17-18), of failing crops (v40) and drought (vv23-24), of locusts (38, 42) and worms (39), of disease (vv21-22, 27, 35, 59-60), and of destruction and exploitation by invaders (vv30-33, 51-52).
      7. Human actions often exacerbate the effects of sin on ourselves our families and our society, similarly, human actions often make worse the curse on creation. The curses of Deuteronomy are partially effected by an invading army. The famine and death announced by God with the opening of the seals in Revelation 6 are largely the result of war (Rev 6:1-8). We can easily see the same pattern through human history, as the human race has exploited the natural environment for its own greed and destroyed it in war.
      8. Rich, developed nations have a far greater impact on the environment, than do poorer and less developed nations. Yet it is the poor and vulnerable who often suffer most directly from the degradation of the environment.
         1. Nations such as Bangladesh face increased flooding due to deforestation as well as changes in the sea-levels.
         2. Food and water shortages impact the poor disproportionately, and land degradation has had a severe impact on agricultural production in poor areas of the globe such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
         3. In Kenya, for example, from 1981–2003 productivity declined across 40% of cropland, while the human population doubled. In general, Africa is expected to suffer most from land degradation.
         4. Hundreds of elephants, wildebeests and zebras dead in Kenya amid prolonged drought (<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/05/africa/elephants-dead-kenya-intl>)
      9. While the effects of the curse on creation are exacerbated by human action, God in his ‘common grace’ limits the effects of sin and allows the world still to flourish through human actions.
         1. He restrains sin (Gen 3:22, 23; 4:15; 20:6), he restrains his own wrath (Gen 6:3; Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9) and he limits the disintegrating effects of his judgement on sin.
         2. Civil government has an important role in this (1 Pet 2:14; Rom 13:3, 4; 1 Tim 2:1, 2). God has promised to sustain the world and he does so in his ‘common grace’ (Gen 8:21-9:11; 2 Peter 3:7).
      10. “The creation waits in eager expectation” for the revelation of the children of God because it will then share in our “glorious freedom” (Rom. 8:19–21).
      11. In the Biblical presentation of God’s redemption creation itself will be redeemed (Isa 65:17-25; Rom 8:18-21; 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1-4).

Implications

1. Humans can, and should, take some responsibility for the natural environment.
   1. We certainly can’t control it ourselves, for it is Christ in whom all things are held together as he sustains them with his word (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3). Yet, for good or ill, our actions impact the environment
2. some secular arguments for environmental care are merely pragmatic and self-serving, appealing simply to what will make life comfortable for this generation.
   1. The Christian worldview critiques this by insisting that the natural environment is valuable in its own right, and that present generations have responsibilities to future generations.
3. Christians should not retreat from environmental concerns simply because we can see that other approaches to environmentalism are flawed.
4. “Many of the world’s poorest people, ecosystems, and species of flora and fauna are being devastated by violence against the environment in multiple ways, of which global climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, water stress, and pollution are but a part. We can no longer afford complacency and endless debate. Love for God, our neighbors and the wider creation, as well as our passion for justice, compel us to “urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility (CTC I.7.A).”[[14]](#footnote-14)
5. Some of the key issues
   1. Deforestation and land degradation
   2. Loss of biodiversity
   3. Climate change
   4. The accumulation of pollution

**Response[[15]](#footnote-15)**

**The individual level**

**•** As an individual, I must intentionally take practical steps to ensure the environment where I live is clean. I must take interest in what goes on around me. Be aware of where I am or live. Know my surroundings well. Most Africans do not know their surroundings very well or rather we care little for our surroundings. We need to overcome this ecological illiteracy. We must develop ourselves to become ecologically literate. This involves, according to Orr, “knowing, caring, and practical competence.” Knowing our environment is not enough, we must care. Not only must we care, but we must also act responsibly based on the knowledge and passion we have. We must learn some practical skills to make our environment become more beautiful and habitable.

• I must develop sensibilities and values that enhance mutuality and my interdependence on creation and do all I can to enhance this interdependence. We can engage in practices that can restore some of our depleted resources by engaging in tree planting, cleaning our communities and other practical things we can do to create awareness for people to care for their environment. This can be both an individual and a community activity. Some practical things like recycling used bottles, cans, and paper can help build certain attitudes toward creation care.

**The community level**

• Create awareness of the importance of caring for the earth and the danger of not doing so. Human survival is dependent on how we treat and care for creation. This creating of awareness must happen at the personal or individual level as well as at a corporate or community level. We must be aware and show concern for our living environment. Our environment will affect the quality of our lives. Therefore, at the community level we should seek to have a clean environment. We must take good care of our immediate environment wherever that may be. For example, where we have unclean neighborhoods, we can organize a community—cleaning day to clean our environment. We can plant trees in our neighborhoods and ensure a clean environment that is pleasing to the eye.

**The national level**

**•** We should have clear environmental policies and develop laws that deal with environment degradation and deal with those who despise creation and abuse it. Our governments should take serious interest in issues related to ecology and develop national policies that will protect the environment from the exploitation of those who seek to develop infrastructure and other facilities to ensure they do not contribute to the destruction of creation.

• We must examine some of the historical, political, economic, social, and religious forces that have shaped our world and the way we view the earth and our environment and change our attitudes and behavior toward creation bearing in mind some of the principles we have enlisted in this chapter. Some of these activities should include.

• Conservation or preservation—We care for what we love. What we love we try as much as possible to protect, preserve, and even will it to posterity. Based on our love for God and his creation, we must make firm commitments as Christians in particular and humanity in general, to preserve and conserve nature by caring p 300 for it. This will involve the restoration of the forest we have destroyed, and cleaning the rivers and water resources we have by stopping the pollution of these resources. We must replenish our renewable resources such as forests. We must also change or renew our minds and attitude towards nature. Humanity’s life and survival depends on how we preserve and care for our environment.

• We must respect animal rights, develop policies to conserve and protect our animal species from human exploitation, and from extinction; protect the rights of our future generation by bequeathing to them a good creation to sustain their lives and that of their children. We must also develop the use of land and land policies that are grounded on biblical principles and not on modern humanistic and utilitarian ethical values.

• Education is critical. We must teach people about conservation and preservation techniques that will help enhance and replenish the destructive tendencies of people concerning creation. For example, we must encourage and promote tree planting, cleaning of environment, water, rivers, etc., good sanitation by encouraging and ensuring the proper disposal of human and industrial wastes. We must have curriculum developed to teach environmental care in our schools and universities. In addition, we must make this environmental course foundational for all students.

• We must deal with greed and address our sinful nature of consumerism. Exploiting nature and the earth’s resources to meet our insatiable desires can be detrimental to the life of the earth. Humanity is called to preserve and nurture life and not to destroy it. This attitude of greed is already having a toll on human life. We see it in the injustices that are rampant in all human societies in forms of economic exploitation and unfair and unjust social systems that have threatened the lives of many marginalized people.

• Avoid wasteful use of our natural resources. As we pointed out the world’s resources are limited. Wanton use of these resources cannot be replenished. We must learn to use the resources of the earth responsibly.

**Church and pastoral level**

**Edward Brown suggests five ways we can mobilized the Church to care for creation:**

**•** We need a form of worship that will help us to develop a sense of appreciation for the wonder, awe, and beauty of creation. Such worship must create or result in a passion and love to care for God’s good creation. This can be facilitated by our liturgy. Our liturgy must emphasize the importance of creation in our worship. For example, water for baptism; oil for anointing and healing; bread and wine for the Eucharist or Holy Communion; the lights and colors, the voice and instruments, the smell of incense, wax and fire all of which are so much a part of liturgical celebration, and are also elements of creation.

• Our teaching and preaching should build on the interconnectedness of humanity to creation and the comprehensive nature of God’s redemption for the whole of creation and our part in this plan.

• We must determine to instill these values, the awe, wonder, respect and love of creation in our children’s lives and point them to the God in whose creation they live.

• We must educate our communities about the importance of caring for the world in which we live to promote our wellbeing.

• We must make sure that our missional outreach programs incorporates creation-care teaching and earth-healing ministry within traditional church planting and evangelism.

• Appreciate creation as the source for your sustenance.

• Stewardship—we must use resources with caution and modesty, restore and replenish the diminishing species and life forms, serve, keep and entrust the care of Creation to the next generation of humanity. We must prevent overuse and misuse of the earth’s resources. Proper care must be taken to ensure we replenish those resources that can be replaced when used. We should encourage recycling of paper, bottles, plastics, etc.

1. This section is taken from chapter 1 of John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Following John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* part 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from Sam Storms, *Christian Ethics* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adapted from Sam Storms, *Christian Ethics* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006).

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Pocket Dictionary of Ethics. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Much of this is from https://www.christianity.com/blogs/al-mohler/a-christian-understanding-of-gambling.html?utm\_source=nextArticleBox&utm\_medium=link&utm\_campaign=next-article-box [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Sam Storms, *Christian Ethics* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006), 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sam Storms, *Christian Ethics* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sam Storms, *Christian Ethics* (Oklahoma City, OK: Sam Storms, 2006), 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/13/engaging-the-city-of-man-christian-faith-and-politics [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Adapted from https://albertmohler.com/2016/10/12/12-theses-christian-understanding-economics [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Adapted from Piper, *Bloodlines.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. God intended for the death of Christ to obtain more than these two things—more than (1) saving benefits after faith, and (2) a bona fide offer of blood-bought salvation to every person on the planet. Specifically, did God intend for the death of Christ to obtain the free gift of faith (Eph. 2:8) and repentance (2 Tim. 2:25)? Did the blood of Jesus obtain not only the benefits that come after faith but also the gift of faith itself? [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Lausanne Global Consultation on Creation Care and the Gospel issued a Call to Action in November, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. James Nkansah-Obrempong, Foundations for African Theological Ethics (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2013), 298–302. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)