



Christian Ethics

Course Syllabus

Florida School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

Spring 2025

L Course 285

Credit: 3 Semester Hours

Dates: 13 January – 23 May 2025

Class Hours: 1:00 PM – 4:15 PM (Thursdays)

Course Introduction and Description

Welcome to Christian Ethics! I am delighted that you have decided to take this course and pray that it will benefit and richly bless your life.

Every day we make multiple decisions that take us closer to God or further from Him. While some may live their life on autopilot at times, God desires so much more for us.

Wisdom on any topic ultimately comes from God (Prov. 1-2, James 3:17). The entire spectrum of wisdom, moral or otherwise, originates and culminates in the Divine (Ps. 111:10, Pr. 1:7, 9:10, Eccl. 12:13). Indeed, through His precepts we gain understanding (Psalm 119:104). Seeking wisdom and truth should be passions of our hearts and minds. As we constantly reflect on truth (Phil. 4:8) we should seek to bind its precepts upon our hearts (Prov. 3:3).

When contemplating the moral life, consider these scriptures. “Thus says the LORD: ‘Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, **where the good way is**; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls’” (Jeremiah 6:16). “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, **to walk in all his ways, to love him**, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but **to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God**” (Micah 6:8)?

Wrestling with certain moral dilemmas can be a wearisome task, even daunting at times (cf. Eccl. 12:12). When we explore the created world, we see our own ignorance at many levels (cf. Eccl. 3:22, 6:12, 7:14, 8:16,17). Sometimes we lack wisdom or understanding in scientific, medical, Biblical, and moral areas. Perhaps the Psalmist words apply, “But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task” (Psalms 73:16). While the task may be difficult at times, we should not lose heart and give up on acquiring moral certainty for God is unchanging (Num. 23:19, 1 Sam. 15:29, Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8, James 1:17) and His word certain and complete (Luke 1:4, Acts 2:36, 2 Peter 1:16,19, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). You can make a good faith effort in all areas of life because God’s revealed word is the standard of truth for all people in all place (2 Tim. 3:16-17). On questions of morality, everything can be tested by God’s ultimate standard (2 Tim. 3:16-17, 1 Jn. 4:1, 1 Thess. 5:21). When we find ourselves within the grips of a great dilemma, we can have confidence that we have done what God requires and lay the rest at His mighty unfaltering feet.

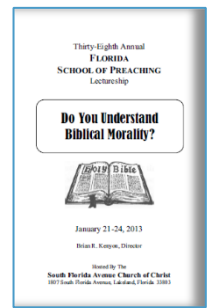
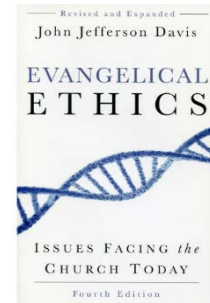
In this class we will delve into an abundant life of virtue as given by God through Christ. The supreme moral life is a life lived in purity of faith where God is center (Matt. 22:37), where the Bible is the supreme moral guide (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Jude 1:3) and where Jesus Christ is the supreme moral example. Indeed, Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). He possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). In life and morality, He is the superlative being, the king of Kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). Welcome to Christian Ethics. Enjoy your journey!

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Correspondence: Correspondence should be through email, if possible. If it’s a short need or question, feel free to text me. I will do my best to respond in a timely matter. Also, feel free to call. If I do not answer, leave a message and I will follow-up accordingly.

Required Texts:

- Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics*. 4th Edition, 2015.
- Kenyon, Brian, ed. *Do You Understand Biblical Morality*. Pulaski: Sain Publications, 2013. [Email the instructor for a digital copy at dnstearsm@gmail.com].



Useful Texts:

- Colley, Glenn. *Awake at Night*. Gurley: Colleyhouse, 2016.
- Geisler, Norman. *Christian Ethics*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Reasoning*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.
- Rae, Scott. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. 4 Ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.

Studies that are Helpful to the Course

Worthwhile ethical analysis and argumentation begins with education in various fundamental areas. This class will not set out to educate in all the following areas, but a basic understanding in these areas is helpful in this course.

- Apologetics and Christian Evidences — A basic understanding that God exists, the Bible is the inspired word of God, and that Jesus is the Son of God is fundamental for a course in Biblical and Biomedical Ethics (1 Thess. 5:21, Heb. 11:6).
- Hermeneutics — skills in reading and interpreting the whole counsel of God as given in the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15).
- Critical Thinking Skills — for men who will impart the word of life, it is imperative that preachers be honest and able thinkers. Preachers and all people need to consider positions that they do not agree with and consider the challenges against the positions they hold (1 Thess. 5:21). This can be done respectfully without name calling and finger pointing (1 Cor. 14:26).
- Logic and Argumentation — good fact-finding skills (not cherry-picking evidence, bias, limiting presuppositions, and avoiding other lines of contrary evidence) and drawing conclusion that are warranted by the evidence (Is. 1:18, 1 Chron. 12:32).
- Good Communication Skills — Good listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (1 Pt. 4:11)
- Group Participation Skills—loving our fellowman (Matt. 22:39) demands that we engage people in discussion on the moral life personally or individually and publicly.
- Humility — Ethical discourse demands a measure of humility. Truth is true no matter how many or how few believe the truth. However, there is a firm admonition that we can rise in conceit and fall in the process. Indeed we need to take heed to the truth, lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12). If one thinks that they are always right, or their opinions and judgments are infallible, or that they are above being challenged, or that their ideas are golden, it's time for a reality check. We need to be quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19). If Apostles could be wrong, so can we (2 Cor. 12:7, Gal. 2:11).

General Knowledge Objectives

- Understand that all morality must have a point of reference, a starting point to make and justify moral claims. This course will argue that ultimate point of reference is God and that His moral law emanates from His own moral nature as revealed in the Bible.
- Know the Language of Morality: what are various classes of actions (obligatory, optional, or supererogatory acts)
- Define “life”, “death”, “person”, and “human.”
- Understand the importance of acquiring personal attributes, including: Integrity, Patience and Endurance, Kindness, Compassion, Honesty, Transparency, Forthrightness, Courage, Prudence, Leadership, Accountability and Humility.
- Demonstrate an understanding of competing secular and religious sources of morality.
- Become familiar with major principle-based approaches used in applied ethics:
 - Belmont Report: Respect for Persons, Beneficence, Justice
 - Four Principles (a.k.a. Georgetown Mantra, Principlist Approach, Principlism): Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-maleficence, Justice.
 - W. D. Ross Six *Prima Facie* Duties: Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Self-Improvement, Justice, Promise Keeping, Reparation
 - Robert Veatch’s Seven Principles: Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Autonomy, Fidelity, Veracity, Avoid Killing, Justice
- Apply the Principle/ Rule/ Doctrine of Double Effect to cases
- Regarding End of Life, know Biblical precepts, read and apply FL Advance Directive Law (FS 765).
- Understand Legal Language: principal, patient rights and corresponding duties, self-determination, dynamics of patient refusals, policing power, preemption, neglect, harm, Four Counterbalancing State Interests (preservation of life, prevention of homicide and suicide, protection of innocent third parties from abuse, maintenance of ethical integrity of the medical professions), best interest standard, substituted judgment, Evidentiary Standards (preponderance of evidence, clear and convincing evidence and beyond a reasonable doubt).
- Illicit understanding of Religious and Cultural Influences in Christian Ethics
- Apply End-of-Life (EOL) Definitions and Distinctions:
 - Living Will, Advance Directive, Proxy Decision Makers, Surrogate Decision Makers, Durable Power of Attorney
 - Various Orders: Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) and Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR)
 - Defining and Determining Death, Patient Rationality, Coma, Persistent Vegetative State (PVS), Withholding v. Withdrawing treatment (nutrition/hydration), Capacity v. Incapacity, Competence v. Incompetence, Extraordinary v. Ordinary Care, Causation (Acts v. Omissions), Purpose and Intent in medical Acts/ Omissions, Killing v. Letting Die, Physician Assisted Suicide (A.k.a. Physician Assisted Death or Death with Dignity), Euthanasia (Voluntary, Involuntary, Active, Passive), Infanticide, Eugenics, Palliative Sedation, Existential Suffering

Ethical Skills Objectives

- Gather the relevant facts of the case.
 - Identify the parties in the case: patients, caregivers, family, or friends.
 - Examine the following dynamics of a case: biological/medical, psychological, racial, ethnic, social, and spiritual dynamics.
 - Identify the assumptions, values, and interests of the parties in the case.
 - Identify relevant commitments by each party.
 - Identify the relevant ethical language and concepts in the case.
- Clearly identify the ethical question or dilemma. Be able to distinguish the moral question from a medical or legal question or other type of question

- Effectively communicate your own values and commitments. Explain how they lead you to certain resolutions in cases.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify various moral options and possible courses of action in a case.
- Offer moral justification for a given course of action using the Bible, critical thinking and a fair handling of literature.
 - Demonstrate a fair consideration of opposing viewpoints or rebuttals without being derogatory or caustic in a given case.
 - Effectively communicate the rebuttals and why they do not stand

Class Expectations

- Speak the truth in love (Eph. 5:15). Do not compromise love in the name of truth, nor truth in the name of love.
- Preserve and strengthen your faith because whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).
- Do contemplate difficult moral situations, but do not become unstable and double minded in all our ways (James 1:8, 4:8).
- Seek truth and knowledge before offering your viewpoint moral issues (2 Peter 1:5)
- Be quick to hear all the facts and be slow to speak (James 1:19, Prov. 18:17).
- Understand that there is a time aspect to moral dilemmas and issues (1 Chr. 12:32, Eccl. 3).
- Do avoid quarreling while gaining understanding and wisdom (1 Tim. 3:3, James 4:1)
- Seek, as far as possible, not to offend because one offended “is harder to reach than a strong city” (Prov. 18:19, NET).
- Do avoid whispering if it tears down another (Prov. 26:20).
- Avoid rivalry, vain glory, factions, and deceit (Phil. 2:3).
- Do avoid selfish ambition, self-righteousness, self-aggrandizing or pride that undermines the glory of the cross (Phil. 2:3, Jas. 3:14-16).
- Avoid strife and seek peace (Prov. 20:3, 28:25).
- Avoid the works of the flesh: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions (Gal. 5:20).
- Avoid foolish and ignorant controversies that breed quarreling (2 Tim. 2:23, Titus 3:9).
- Avoid unnecessary division (Titus 3:10).
- Delight in the moral law without grumbling or questioning (Phil. 2:14)
- Maintain the spirit of unity and the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3)

A Word of Encouragement

- Be diligent and work for the Lord. “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).
- Couple Zeal with Knowledge. “I bear them witness that they [Israel] have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Romans 10:2).
- Exhibit humility and respect towards classmates and faculty. “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

- Look for work and do it whole heartedly (Eccl. 9:10)! Do not look for a way to get out of work. “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets’” (Prov. 22:13)!
- Be thankful for the discipline you get through FSOP. “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).
- Take challenges seriously and don’t give up! “He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing” (Prov. 29:1).
- Don’t be surprised at natural consequences. If you give attention to making your bed, you’ll be comfortable where you lay. If you wait to the last minute to do your work or seek help, you’ve waited too long. Don’t be surprised if your grade reflects this behavior. “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).
- Give heed to the Bible’s whining policy -- “Do everything without grumbling or arguing . . .” (Philippians 2:14, NET).
- Follow God’s word on contentment – “ . . . for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

Course Assignments and Requirements

2 Ethics Bulletin Articles - Persuasive/ Position

- 1) **Explanation.** Throughout the course you will find topics that peak your ethical interest. The topics can be a Bible passage, Bible topic, a current event, or some other ethical issue that piques your curiosity. You’ll write a persuasive bulletin article that takes a position and coherently makes a case. As you write, you’ll consider rebuttals and close doors of opposition.
- 2) **Expectations. This Bulletin article will consist of:**
 - a) A typed 600-700 word, double spaced, 1 inch margin, 10-12 point font, MLA format, 5 references, with proper grammar, punctuation, diction, and Biblical citations. Your research you MUST consult a minimum of 5 references. (One Bible translation can count as a reference). On a separate sheet identify these sources. This paper will be emailed for grading by specified due dates on the course calendar.
 - b) Content of the Articles
 - i) Briefly and concisely give the relevant facts of the issue (or issues) or case stating the parties involved and their interests
 - ii) Clearly state the ethical question, dilemma, or claim. (More on this to come on analyzing an ethical dilemma.) Get to the heart of the matter and clearly state what the ethical issue is or what the moral question is in the article or account. The ethical issue is _____. The moral question is -- given _____ should mankind _____?
 - iii) State the parties’ respective positions, if known.
 - iv) Given the question, list the relevant potential options.
 - (1) Out of these options, which option(s) are obligatory (what must be done, if applicable)?
 - (2) Out of these option(s), what is optional (are various courses of action morally permissible)?
 - v) Considering the various options, what does the Bible detail on each option. Which course of action is morally justified? Given dilemma X, the Bible teaches Y, Z, A, B, etc.
 - vi) Consider rebuttals and potential pitfalls in your position. Remember iron sharpens iron. Briefly show why the rebuttals prove to be unsuccessful.
 - vii) Persuasively present your point of view – what you resolve to do and how to accomplish.
 - c) Grading of Papers

Expectation	Percentage
Followed Directions in (2)(a)	20

Concisely State Facts	10
Clearly Stated the Moral Question/ Dilemma	10
Identified the Parties/ Participants and their Value Commitments	10
Identified Options and what was obligatory and/or optional	15
Biblical Research on the Pros and Cons	15
Took a Biblical Position and argued persuasively	20
Total	100

Memory Verse Quizzes

Memory Verses administered through the LMS. Typically, these are fill in the blank exams.

1 Orally Delivered Sermon

1 Sermon: You will be expected to deliver a 25–30 minute sermon on the assigned dates. You will be expected to prepare one sermon on ethics. The weight of your grade will come upon evaluation of your delivery. You may prepare an expository sermon or topical sermon according to your preference. On the day of delivery, an outline and PowerPoint will be email to the instructor. Use an outline that flows with your form of delivery. Some people bring full manuscripts into the pulpit, some use minor notes. You will be evaluated on the following.

___/ **15 points.** The **outline must** include the following at a minimum:

1. Title and text of the sermon
2. Thesis and main objective of the sermon (I want people to know _____ and believe _____. I want people to do _____.)
3. Introduction – that draws people in
4. Body – 3 Supporting Proof Points
5. Conclusion

___/ **15 points.** The **PowerPoint must** include:

1. A visually appealing title slide that could be used as thumbnail. (go to unsplash.com)
2. Slides that accentuate, but not detract from the oral delivery.

___/ **110 Points.** The **oral delivery** will be graded on a 1-10 scale (2 = Poor, 4=below average, 6=average, 8=above average, 10=excellent):

1. ___ Introduction and Conclusion (1=boring, does not grab attention, lacks confident, 10=busts out of the gait)
2. ___ Handling of the text (1= does not communicate, misunderstands or misapplies the text, 10=has an excellent handling, synthesis and understanding of the text in context and larger context)
3. ___ Logic and Communication (1=lots of vague unthought-out/through statements, 10=chooses words effectively, timely, doesn't leave a lot of doors open)
4. ___ Engagement (1= yawn, what's the next meal, 10=take us to the throne of God, the cross, sitting on the edge of our seats)
5. ___ Organization (1= the audience has no concept of the flow, where the speaker is coming from/ where they are now/ or where they are headed, 10=organization is clear and precise (e.g., first, second, etc.)).
6. ___ Verbal Skills (1=lots of uhs, ums, poor handling of pronunciation, enunciation, inappropriate English, 10=opposite).
7. ___ Appearance (1= sloppy, beard untrimmed, or facial hair unkempt or bed head, 10=appears well kept, dressed nicely, and understands the expedient issues surrounding appearance - that appearance can be a vehicle for effectively and impactfully delivering of the word of God).

8. _____ Body Positioning and Poise (1=nervous, distracting habits apparent, hand gestures are inappropriate or overdone, 10=stands tall and communicates confidently, hands gestures are appropriate)
9. _____ Eye contact (1=reads the outline, makes no eye contact, 10=outline is there to help and occasionally glances).
10. _____ Application (1=no practical how-to, rubber-meets-the road is offered, 10-lots of how-to, rubber-meets-the-road is offered)
11. _____ Time and overall Mastery (1=has no concept of time, tends to ramble, 10 = respectful to audience limitations and masters the material)

Communications Skills, Attitude, Class Participation

You will be expected to be engaged in the class in a constructive way throughout the semester. Your attitude and vocalization must be one that is constructive to ethical discourse.

Readings

Credit for readings will be all or none. Readings can be found below in the course calendar and must be completed in a timely manner to enrich your participation and discussion.

Tests

More information on the tests will be given as we approach these dates.

Grading Summary

Assignment	Percentage
2 Bulletin Articles	20
Memory Verse Quizzes	20
1 Sermon	15
Communications Skills, Attitude, Class Participation	5
Readings (all or none)	5
Test 1	15
Final/ Test 2	20
Total	100

Grading Scale (Per FSOP Catalogue)

92 - 100	A – Excellent	4 QPS*	I - Incomplete	0 QPS*
83 - 91	B - Above Average	3 QPS*	WF -Withdraw while passing	0 QPS*
70 - 82	C - Average	2 QPS*	WF -Withdraw while failing	0 QPS*
62 - 69	D - Low Passing	1 QPS*		
0 - 61	F - Failure	0 QPS*		

Accessing Course Materials through Online Platform

You will be able to access the course materials (Syllabus, PowerPoints, Notes, Videos, etc.) by the logging onto the FSOP learning management system (LMS). You will be responsible for regularly checking into the system to find uploads through the semester and materials necessary for your progress. Be sure to download all the course materials **by 15 May**.

Late Work

Students are encouraged to lay out a calendar early in the semester to avoid cramming and last-minute procrastination where less than your best is given. Work must be submitted on time by the beginning of class upon the due date. In the event this deadline is not met, a 20% daily deduction will be assessed. Extenuating circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Class Sessions / Dates/ Memory Verses

(For the readings, FS = the 2013 FSOP Biblical Morality Text and EE = the Evangelical Ethics Text, RPD = Reading will be Posted Digitally, TBD = To Be Determined)

Class	Date	Assignments and Topics (Tentative)	Reading	Memory Verse
1	16-Jan	Introduction to Christian Ethics. Syllabus and Course Expectations. What Makes Right Acts Right? Apologetics Basis of Ethics		
	23-Jan	Lectureship		
2	30-Jan	Introduction to Moral and Ethical Language, Essential Definitions. Process for Resolving Moral Conflict.	EE 1-16	Mt. 22:7-8
3	6-Feb	Desire/Motive/Intent. Categories of Human Action and Punishment. Does Moral Neutrality Exist?	FS 61-83, FS 396-411	Ps. 1:1-2
4	13-Feb	Bible Silence. Principle Based Approaches.	FS 515-544	Ps. 1:3-4
5	20-Feb	Bulletin Article One Due. Testing Moral Claims		Ps. 1:5-6
6	27-Feb	Moral Status of Human Life. Abortion. Contraception and IUDs.	RPD, EE 131-160	Pr. 2:1-3
7	6-Mar	Exam 1. Morality and the Human Conscience. Morality, Culture, and Tradition.	FS 381-395	
8	13-Mar	End of Life (Part 1)	FS 329-347	Pr. 2:4-6
9	20-Mar	End of Life (Part 2)	FS 580-613	Pr. 2:7-9
	27-Mar	Spring Break		
10	3-Apr	Bulletin Article Two Due. FS 765 and POLST Orders. Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide	RPD, EE 161-197	Pr. 2:10-12
11	10-Apr	Topical/ Cases	EE 198-207	Jer. 10:23
12	17-April	Sermon Delivery – Outlines + PPTs	FS 249-280	Mic. 6:7-8
13	24-April	Sermon Delivery – Outlines + PPTs	FS 614-621	Deut. 10:12-13
14	1-May	Topical/ Cases	FS 638-650	Rev. 21:7-8
15	8-May	Topical/ Cases (WBS Videos)		
16	15-May	Final Exam/ Last Day of Class		

Absences

Credit students will be granted three (3) excused absences. An excused absence is one that the instructor is informed about ahead of time (except in emergencies), or is a genuine reason for missing class. For each absence exceeding the three-absence limit, the student's final course grade will be adjusted downward by 5% per absence. Credit students will be accountable on Sector Exams for material covered in missed class sessions.

Potential Topics/ Case Studies in Ethics

- Refusing Life Support
- Is Friendly Fire Immoral?
- Is Capital punishment justified?
- Racial Preference, Racial Profiling, and Racism
- Medical Marijuana
- Gambling
- Emergency Contraception
- Preachers and Conflicts of Interest
- Rationing in the Church, Society and Healthcare
- Does God Condone Cruel and Unusual Punishment?
- Late Term Abortion
- Birth Control/ Plan B/ "Emergency Contraception"
- Use of Embryonic Stem Cells in Research or Medical Practice
- Ignoring Civil Rights, Paternalism, Coercion and Force
- Brain Death, Persistent Vegetative States, Terri Schiavo
- Civil Disobedience
- Conscientious Objection
- Governments, Policing, and use of Deception
- Christians Serving in the Military/ Police Force
- Forgoing Medical Treatment/ Disconnect the Ventilator
- Caring for the Incompetent
- Prison Issues – Chemical Castration, Treatment of Pedophiles
- Refusing Life Sustaining Measures: CPR, Turning off the Defibrillator
- Tolerating Medical and Surgical Risks
- Dietary Preferences - Organic Preferences/ Whole Foods/ Duties to Society and the Earth
- Polygamy
- Homosexuality
- Transgenderism
- Euthanasia/ Physician Assisted Suicide
- Club Scene, Proms and Erotic Dancing
- Tattoos and Body Piercing
- Social drinking, vaping, tobacco use, social marijuana use
- Case studies on the Conscience
- Truth Telling and Withholding Information