



Christian Ethics

Teaching Notes

Rev. David Chibanga

Lusaka

Lesson 1

Introduction

Here we seek to understand what the highest good is and that which is used as an acceptable means of measuring what is right or wrong, moral or immoral. In short the standard by which we conduct ourselves. How can we be objective in order to reach this “highest good”? Moral uprightness is sought not only in human philosophy and reason, but also in the Christian religion. Christian ethics is rooted in the Bible. Scripture alone offers the correct understanding and interpretation of Christian ethics. In this first lesson we will explore definitions of Christian ethics by leading scholars and find one as our working definition for this course. We would make a distinction between “Western emphases on ethics with that which is African.” We would then move on to the five steps we would use to our approach to African Christian Ethics.

Now here before we establish the direction with which our course will take let me ask a question to you students and before I give you a working definition for our course – *what is Christian Ethics?* PAUSE, allow students to share some answers.

Part 1

Definition: - Christian ethics is behaviour according to the reasoning of Christ. (Paul Lehmann 1963)

Lehmann makes a distinction between morality and ethics. The former being behaviour according to custom while the later being behaviour according to reason.

Barnette, on the onset of his book entitled “***Introducing Christian ethics***” argues that Christian ethics is defined in a variety of ways. He cites people who have written on this subject such as L.S. Keyser, an American Lutheran scholar, who defines this discipline as “*the science which treats of the sources, principles, and practices of right and wrong in the light of the Holy Scriptures, in addition to the light of reason and nature.*” Emil Brunner, Swiss theologian, declares that Christian ethics is “*the science of human conduct as it is determined by Divine conduct.*” George Harkness, American Methodist theologian, conceives of Christian Ethics as “*a systematic study of the way of life exemplified and taught by Jesus, applied to the manifold problems and decisions of human existence.*”

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, African theologian makes a distinction between personal ethics and social ethics. Personal ethics deals with individuals’ obligations or duties, or in other words, with what is required of them. Most western societies emphasize personal ethics because in the west the individual’s desires, satisfactions, decisions

and accomplishments take precedence over those of the community. Social ethics, on the other hand, deals with community morality and emphasizes communal values and interpersonal relationships at the expense of the individual's desires and decisions.

In Africa the focus falls on the social ethics rather than personal ethics, for African peoples emphasize the community rather than individual. Individuals are not neglected, but they are expected to fulfil their roles in a way that fits with their conduct. For example, a man may marry not because he wants to but because his parents want to have grandchildren.

Part 2

5 Steps for Ethical Decision-Making in Africa

1. Analyse the situation.

What exactly is the problem we are facing? Be as specific as possible. Describe the situation that you are facing and what the choices are? What are the different options that you can do in this situation? The case studies in the following lessons include different questions that can be used to think about the choices to be made.

2. African Moral Framework

How is this issue viewed/understood within our community? What is considered valuable or important?

3. Old Testament Ethical Foundations

Which OT passages are relevant to this situation? What principles or wisdom apply?

4. New Testament Ethical Principles

Which NT passages are relevant to this situation? What principles or wisdom apply?

ALSO, what is the relationship between the OT and NT teachings on this topic?

- Does the NT agree with the OT?
- Does the NT correct or change the OT?
- Does the NT expand the basic principles taught in the OT?

5. Biblical Perspective toward Modern Zambian Ethical Needs

According to biblical teaching, what is the ethical (good, true, just) response to the problem we are considering?

ALSO, HOW can an individual Christian or a community of Christians obey the teaching within modern Zambian culture?

Part 3

Christian ethics is classified broadly in terms of two important ethical questions:

1. What is true, right, and good in the eyes of God?

This part of ethics begins with the problem of the goal or end of man. Under this category the vision of God, human perfection, and the kingdom of God, are considered the ethical goals of man. In other words, this kind of ethics is trying to understand what is true, right, and good in the eyes of God.

2. How can Christians live according to what God has said?

There is known as the ethics of obedience. This kind of ethics aims to describe how Christians can obey God's instructions and live according to what we know is true, right, and good. Theologians who follow this method are more concerned with the demand of God than the goal of man in ethics. It is an ethics of radical obedience to the will of God.

Is there a difference between ethics and morals?

Yes! One author (Lehmann) says that morality is behaviour according to custom while ethics is behaviour according to reason. While other scholars may use these two words interchangeably, it is obvious that both words have to do with behaviour. What is that acceptable human behaviour that is taught, believed, and practiced as a norm within a given human setting? We would agree that these beliefs and practices differ according to that particular society's view and what is practiced within those societies or communities. For instance, according to reason most disciplines have codes of conduct acceptable within the particular discipline.

Example: Professional fields such as medical, accounting, engineering and marketing have ethics according to their own standards.

Also, people from different continents cultures and races similarly have morals according to their standards.

Beliefs and customs are either passed on orally or are written down to be observed by people in their different domains. It is this idea of morality that will be examined in this course. The introduction offers a glimpse of the definition and a slight history of ethics. We would examine in this lesson the ethics that is Christian.

Coming to reason it is also understandable that ethics be introduced and practiced because if the humans are left without engaging in right behaviour chaos and disorganisation may be the order of day.

Ethics offers a safe net and guide to human behaviour that can be deemed as acceptable. Conscience demands that man must behave in an appropriate manner for the betterment of his life and also the environment in which he resides.

Christian ethics then is rooted in the life and teaching of Christ.

In examining the principles guiding the ethics that are Christian:

1. We must be ready to understand doctrine.
2. We must ask these questions
 - a) What is the major emphasis on a life of one who calls himself /herself a Christian?
 - b) What are the guiding principles that must be believed upon and practiced?
 - c) Can we discover the practical teachings and lessons of Christian dogma and apply them to every situation that confronts us as Christians?

These questions above provide a healthy discussion on Christian ethics. In order to conform to the standards that God has placed upon Christians, it is required first all, to understand who God is!!! God is holy! And as such He requires for Christians to be holy. "But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "you shall be holy, for I am holy." (1Peter 1:15-16)

Holiness is the setting apart of an object to God. It is both a position and a process. As a position, God justifies the sinner by grace through faith in Christ alone this action is known as justification – what God does for you. And as a process God works out in you those actions that are godly through the process known as sanctification- what God does in you.

In this way God's righteousness and justice and acceptable decision- making in our Christian ethical behaviours and conduct are upheld and sieved through the lenses of Holy Scripture.

The transforming power of conforming to Christ or God's standard is engraved in the gospel. When we speak of the gospel we mean the finished redemptive work of Christ on Calvary. When the gospel is proclaimed to individuals the convincing, convicting and converting power is Gods. God the Holy Spirit works through sinful man and produces godly sorrow that leads to repentance. This process causes sinful man to turn to God by accepting the gospel – death burial and resurrection of Christ as an acceptable atoning sacrifice for man's sin. The stamp of ownership is then placed upon a repenting sinner the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire the possession of it. The Holy Spirit is a seal of ownership. (Eph 1:12-13)

When the work of God above transforms a person into a Christian then the fruit of repentance and the evidence of a correct Christian ethical conduct is revealed and practiced. "For it is He who works in you both to will and to work his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13)

Outside of the gospel Christian ethics is practically impossible to engage in. It is not just a bunch of rules and regulations that are to be observed and carried out; it is a relationship journey, a relationship with the Living God

Part 4 – Review and Discussion

1. How does Lehnmann define Christian ethics? What 2 distinctions does he make?
2. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop makes a distinction between the emphases of African and western ethics. How does he explain this?
3. What are the 5 process steps of ethical decision making we learned in this lesson?
4. Explain the ethics which begins with the end of man.
5. Explain the ethics of obedience.

Lesson 2

Introduction

This lesson gives the biblical base to Christian ethics as a solid foundation upon which all ethical issues and questions are anchored. In the first lesson, we learned that Christian ethics is understood better through Christian doctrine. And Christian dogma is derived from the bible. What are these important teachings that Scripture gives to us which need to be fully grasp, as Christian ethics that is authentic? First of all, let us listen to Christ himself as he answers the lawyer from the sect of the Pharisees a religious leadership group of his day, as to what the greatest commandment was? And secondly, we will explore ten things you should know about Christian ethics.

Part 1

Christianity has its roots from a Judeo-Christian heritage. The religious leaders of Jesus' time had two main groups, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. When he had silenced the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection in Mathew 22:23-33 the other leader a lawyer from the sect of the Pharisees in Mathew 22:35-40 posed a question to test Jesus about what the greatest commandment was in the Law, Jesus responded "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

This answer that Jesus gave to the Lawyer gives us the ultimate goal of true worship that God expects of us. If Christian ethics is an ethics of obedience then adherence to this answer offers us something we need to heed. Sproul says Jesus quotes the command to love God with all ones being which flows from the Shema, Israel's ancient confession that her God is one (Deut 6:4,5). Rabbinic Scholars in the first century recognized the supremacy and centrality of the obligation to love God unreservedly and pre-eminently.

The vertical responsibility of love due to God is paramount, because everything comes from God and His eternal power. Loving Him with all heart, mind and soul is a complete love that cannot be measured by any instrument and by placing his love in his care is just the correct direction were love belongs, and to teach us how to love, He demonstrated to us His love for us He gave it all in Christ Jesus.

The horizontal responsibility of loving your neighbour as yourself is expected from the believer, and also packed with the ethical demands of not only holding in high

regard your neighbour and his possessions but also the debt of love owed to him by you.

The ethics of the 10 Commandments in the OT comes into play here again - not as though a legalistic framework is being re-introduced - but that the fulfilment of it is seen in Christ. The first four commandments have to do with the vertical relationship with God and the last six have to do with the horizontal relationships with man.

Part 2

10 Principles for Understanding Christian Ethics

1. *Christian ethics teaches us how to live.*

- It asks what the whole bible teaches us about which acts, attitudes, and personal character traits receive God's approval and which ones do not.
- This means that Christian ethics teaches us how to live. It is important to study Christian ethics so that we can better know God's will, and so that each day we can "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him" (Col 1:10).

2. *The ultimate basis for Christian ethics is the moral character of God.*

- God delights in his own moral character, which is supremely good, unchanging and eternal.
- His moral standards for human beings flow from his moral character and therefore they apply to all cultures for all history (although the Bible also contains many temporary commands intended only for specific people at a specific time).
- God is love, so he commands us to love (1John 4:19).
- He is holy, and he commands us to be holy (1 Peter 1:15),
- He is merciful, and he command us to be merciful (Luke 6:36)
- He is truthful, and he commands us not to bear false witness (Titus 1:2; Exodus 20:16)
- God's moral character and the historical fact that he has given us moral commands provide the basis for a Christian answer to the question of how we can move from "is" statements to "ought" statements in ethics.

3. *Christian Ethics is based on the Bible.*

- One of the purposes of the Bible is to teach us how to live a life that is pleasing to God (Col 1:9-10; 1 Thess 4:1; 2Tim. 3:17)
- Because it is the word of God, the Bible is a higher authority in ethics than tradition, reason, experience, expected results, or subjective perceptions of guidance while these other factors can never override the teaching of Scripture. They can still be helpful for us in making a wise decision.

4. Christian ethics is essential to proclamation of the gospel.

Some Christian speakers today downplay or omit any call for unbelievers to repent of their sins, but evangelism in the New Testament clearly included a call to repentance. Just before he returned to heaven, Jesus told his disciples “that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”(Luke 24:47). Similarly, Paul proclaimed the need for repentance to pagan Greek Philosophers in Athens, warning them that the final judgement was coming “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31; see also Acts 2:38: 3:19;5:31,11:18; Hebrews 6:1)

“Repentance” in the New Testament is not merely a “change of mind” but includes both sorrow for one’s sins and a sincere inward resolve to turn away from sin and to turn to Christ in faith (Hebrews 6:1;Acts 16:31)

But how can unbelievers repent of their sins if they do not even know what God’s moral standards are? I do not believe that widespread revival will come to any nation apart from widespread, heartfelt repentance for sin. Therefore gospel proclamation today must include an element of teaching about God’s moral standards, which means about Christian ethics.

5. Christian ethics teaches us how to live for the glory of God

The goal of Christian ethics is to lead a life that glorifies God (“do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor. 10:31). Such a life will have (1) a character that glorifies God (a Christ –like character), (2) results that glorifies God (a life that bears abundant fruit for God’s kingdom), and (3) behaviour that glorifies God (a life of obedience to God, lived in personal relationship with God)

Although we are justified by faith in Christ alone and not by works, extensive New Testament teachings about living a Christian life show that our day-by-day obedience as justified Christians is an important part of the Christian life. Understanding obedience correctly requires that we avoid the opposite errors of legalism and antinomianism.

6. Obeying God brings numerous blessings to our daily lives.

The New Testament teaches at least seventeen specific kinds of blessings that come to us in connection with living in obedience to God’s commands in Scripture. These blessings include the joy of deeper fellowship with God (John 15:10); the joy of pleasing God (2 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 1:10); the joy of becoming a vessel for “honourable use” by God (2Timothy 2:20-21); the joy of being an effective witness to unbelievers (1 Peter 2:12; 3:1); the joy of

increased answers to our prayers (1Peter 3:10-12; James 5:16; 1John 3:21-22); the joy of closer fellowship with other Christians (1John 1:7); the joy of a clear conscience (1 Timothy 1:5,19); and several other blessings.

God intended that obedience to him would not be burdensome (1John 5:3) but would bring us great joy. For this reason, when Christians are not “conformed to this world” we discover that following the will of God is a path of life that is for us “good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2)

7. Wilful sin brings several harmful consequences to our daily lives.

It is not too popular to talk about sin today, but it is a huge topic in the Bible. Searching for the English word “sin” (and other words with the same root such as “sins” or “sinner”) shows that it occurs 440 times in the New Testament alone. And my copy of the Bible in the English Standard version (ESV) has 235 pages in the New Testament. This means that the topic of sin is mentioned in one way or another, on average nearly two times per page through the entire New Testament. We would neglect such an important topic at our peril.

The New Testament mentions several harmful consequences that come from wilful sin in the life of a Christian. These consequences include a disruption of our daily fellowship with God (Ephesians 4:30; 1 John 3:21), the awareness of God’s fatherly displeasure and the possible experiences of his fatherly discipline (1Cor. 11:30; Hebrews 12:5-11; see also Ephesians 4:30; Revelation 3:19), and a loss of fruitfulness in our Ministries and in our Christian lives (John 15:4-5).

Christians should pray daily for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 6:12; 1John 1:9), not to gain justification again and again, but to restore our personal fellowship with God that has been hindered by sin.

8. Christian ethics teaches us to consider four dimensions of any action, and nine possible sources of information.

Christian ethics is not concerned only with our right and wrong actions. We are complex people, and life itself is complex. Therefore, in studying Christian ethics, God wants us to consider not only (1) the action itself but also (2) a person’s attitudes about the action, (3) the person’s motives for doing the action, and (4) the results of the action.

In seeking to know God’s will, sometimes we must make a decision instantly, with no time to ponder the situation (see the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:12). But at other times, we are able to ponder a decision at some length. When we have more time to ponder a decision, we can consider as many as

nine possible sources of information and guidance: (1) the Bible, (2) knowledge of the facts of the situation, (3) knowledge of ourselves, (4) advice from others, (5) changed circumstances, (6) our consciences (7) our hearts, (8) our human spirit, (9) guidance from the Holy Spirit. We need wisdom from God in order to evaluate these factors rightly in making a decision.

9. We should never think that God wants us to choose a “lesser sin.”

Although several evangelical ethics books claim that, from time to time, we face situations of “impossible moral conflict” where all our choices are sinful and we must simply choose to commit the “lesser sin,” this idea is not taught in scripture. It is contradicted both by the life of Christ, “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), and by the promise of 1Corinthians 10:13, which says that God will always provide a “way of escape”

The “impossible moral conflict” view easily becomes a slippery slope that in actual practice encourages Christians to sin more and more.

10. Using the Old Testament for ethical guidance requires an understanding of the history of redemption.

Many Christians have read the Old Testament and wondered how we should understand the detailed laws that God gave to the people of Israel under the leadership of Moses. This requires an understanding of the “history of redemption” – the overall progress of the main storyline of the Bible.

The *Mosaic covenant*, which began at Exodus 20, was terminated when Christ died. Christians are no longer directly subjected to the laws of the Mosaic covenant but now live instead under the provisions of the *new covenant*.

However, the Old Testament is still a valuable source of ethical wisdom when understood in accordance with the ways in which the New Testament authors use the Old Testament for ethical teaching, and in light of the changes brought about by the new covenant. The New Testament authors explicitly reaffirm all of the moral standards found in the Ten Commandments, except they do not reaffirm observance of the Sabbath as a requirement for new covenant Christians.

Understanding the progressive development of the Bible from the old covenant (under Moses) to the new covenant (inaugurated by Christ) is especially important when thinking about the Bible’s teaching regarding civil government today. It is important to remember that God’s wise laws about crimes and punishments that he gave to the civil government of Israel as a nation then are in many ways different from God’s wise purposes for the civil governments of secular nations now.

Part 3 – Review & Discussion

1. How do we best understand Christian ethics?
2. How did Jesus answer a lawyer of his day concerning the greatest commandment?
3. On the ten things to know about Christian ethics mention 2.
4. Why is Christian doctrine important to understand Christian ethics

Lesson 3

Introduction

This lesson will provide an African overview of marriage in selected ethnic groups in Zambia and how it is viewed and practiced. Marriage is a small unit of society. Thus it is important that any study of ethics deals with the ethical issues of family. It is important from the onset that we define what we mean by marriage. Essentially it ***is a type of union of a man and a woman that God established at creation.*** From the ancient union of one man and one woman, various peoples and cultures emerged and populated the world. The different peoples of the world have now come to understand marriage differently in accordance with their own world views, cultural customs, beliefs, and core values.

Again ask this question to your students, “*What is marriage?*”

PAUSE, allow the students to share their thoughts.

Definition

Marriage ***is a holy matrimonial union of a man and a woman that God established at creation.***

Although there are various kinds of marriage unions invented by man’s craftiness, disguised in his belief systems, customs, culture and worldview, we would consider the biblical and ultimate union as stipulated in the Holy Scriptures the Bible.

As regards the question of what marriage is for, it is possible to argue from Scripture that there are five major reasons:

1. **Unity** - The desire for unity is rooted in Genesis 2:24 with its insistence that a man and his wife become “one flesh.” This unity was upheld by Jesus in Mathew 19:3-6. This motive for marriage is strong in Africa, where a man without a wife is considered incomplete, not a real man. This same applies to a woman without a husband. The very idea of an unmarried man or woman is inconceivable in most traditional African societies.
2. **Companionship** - The desire for companionship is also rooted in the creation ordinance where God states, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him.” (Gen 2:18). This motive, too, is important in African culture, where an unmarried person is regarded as lonely, miserable and helpless. Marriage is imperative if one is to have companionship, love respect and dignity.

3. **Procreation** - In Genesis 1:28, God commanded the couple he had just made “be fruitful and increase in number” and Psalm 127:3-5 celebrates the joy of having a large family- a joy that Africans share.
4. **Love and pleasure** - in Ecclesiastes 9:9, the listener is instructed to “Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love”. This motive for marriage has not been prominent in Africa, but there can be no doubt that when there is love and pleasure, a marriage stands a better chance of surviving and being a good environment for raising children.
5. **Curbing fornication and adultery** - In 1Corinthians 7:1-2, Paul advises marriage as a protection against sexual immorality.

The above reasons are not exhaustive but offer valuable insights of the beauty of marriage.

Challenges to Biblical Marriage in Zambia

However, there are challenges and problems that have crept in because of the fall of man in Gen 3. This has brought a significant effect on marriage. Sin and rebellion against God have turned what had been intended to be a loving permanent and lifelong relationship into one that can produce hatred and divorce. Sin has also affected the whole human body, including its reproductive system. Consequently, we now have to deal with painful child-bearing, infertility, impotence and barrenness. Not to mention what they refer to as toxic, abusive marriages and other forms that has made many people rule out the intended beauty and picture of marriage. These are but a few issues that show the bad side of marriage this side of the fall.

Here in Zambia, there is a huge amount of sensitization going on in rural and peri-urban areas including the many compounds in the cities where young girls are preferred to get married off early and begin to reproduce at a very tender age.

- **Bride Price** - There is a Bride Price on each girl born in almost all the Zambian tribe customs and beliefs about marriage. The names of these charges are different according to ethnic group or tribe in the Bemba language there are two processes the first payment for commitment is a small amount usually before the main bride price is charged. it is called “ubusonge” which is taken by an expert elderly man called “Bashibukombe”-(the middleman or grooms representative and the negotiator usually accompanied by a delegation from the prospecting groom’s family preferably uncles or aunties). When this “Bashibukombe reaches the lady’s home, this act now symbolizes the seriousness of the

man who wants to marry. It shows respect to the ladies family and also brings honor to the man's family. In these pre-marriage meetings questions are asked about the status of both the would be bride and also the groom. Questions would include does the man have children? Has he been married before? Some questions would apply to the lady depending on the answers to these questions the bride price is affected. Usually if the lady has no children has not been married before her price tag is higher.

In extreme cases, Parents would sell off their girl child almost as a business and preferred to receive a bride price for a young girl than to let her go to school and be educated.

That is why many organizations are out there discouraging this scourge. Churches are being asked to join in to sensitize the populace. Marriage is meant to be a joyous occasion celebrated by all parties involved and not what is seen today like a business.

At times the bride price would range from 20 thousand kwacha (1000 US dollars) to sixty thousand kwacha and higher (3000 US dollars and beyond).

- **Procreation** - Almost all ethnic tribes in Zambia and Africa at large believe that the major reason for marriage is procreation. A marriage that fails to produce children is thus in crises. It appears that having children is higher than the marriage union itself.

Many divorces have occurred due to the fact that there are no offspring in the marriage.

In Bemba a woman who is infertile is referred as Ng'umba- a term that is literally feared by all women because of the stigma that is associated with it. In Eastern province various terms are used In Chichewa such as – chhimbwira, wosabereka and ngomwa for eunuch. This are dreaded terms because usually it is a woman that is blamed more than a man.

- **Polygamy** - Another vices include the traditional belief held by Tonga people of the Southern province, the Namwanga people of the Northern Province, some tribes in the central and eastern provinces who hold on to the tradition of polygamy.

Multiple-wives can be a symbol of wealth and ego for men. There is even a popular television show showing in Zambia as today in 2022 a program known as Mpali.(polygamy). In this soap opera the main character Mr. Nguzu has a farm and about seven wives.

- **Gender-based Violence** - Other traditional norms such as wife beating viewed as a way that a man loves a woman is gender-based violence, and toxic to marriage.

The above-mentioned customs and belief systems must be sieved through the Holy Scriptures and those that contradict the intended purpose of marriage be done away with.

The other issue to be addressed is the African understanding of marriage. This has led to many ethical issues relating to marriage not being adequately addressed it surprises the western world view to see how marriage in Africa is associated to society and has an impact on the meaning and expectation, aspirations of this union.

For instance at an African wedding, it would not be unusual for the Pastor to tell the bride:

“You are married not to your husband John, but to his family. That means you have to identify completely with all his relatives, look after them, care for them, go out of your way to make them happy. If you do that, you will have no cause for regret. And the groom he says “You John you have to do likewise to your wife relatives, her people are your people.” The whole extended family here is involved- parents, Brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, grandchildren, cousins, nieces, and nephews – the whole extended family, and the entire village.

The responsibility for a man and woman becomes overwhelming.- but at the same time the advantages of the extended family becomes useful whenever you want a task that requires more hands to be done. It becomes easy to be done because many hands of the extended family come to help you.

At the same time when you are successful you are expected to help them.

The question is how do you keep the balance and blend in without breaking?”

The four case scenarios such as:

1. Early marriages
2. Bride price
3. Childlessness in marriage
4. Extended family members

Can we use the five–step process for ethical decision-making that is appropriate for these Zambian problems?

Review and Discussion

1. What is marriage?
2. Name the 5 reasons given in this lesson as to what marriage is for?
3. According to this lesson what has caused the problems and challenges in marriage?
4. Mention the five step process for decision making approach we are using
5. How do these five step process help us in making a correct decision?

Lesson 4 – Case Studies

Introduction

This is a practical lesson and as such we must make a deliberate effort to bring a familiar encounter and find a solution. In this lesson, we will consider familiar situations and try to use the 5-step process of decision-making to find a decision that follows the way of wisdom and righteousness described in the Bible.

Review the 5-Step Process

1. Analyse the situation.

What exactly is the problem we are facing? Be as specific as possible. Describe the situation that you are facing and what the choices are? What are the different options that you can do in this situation? The case studies in the following lessons include different questions that can be used to think about the choices to be made.

2. African Moral Framework

How is this issue viewed/understood within our family, neighbourhood, church, or community? What is considered valuable or important? What do others say should be done?

3. Old Testament Ethical Foundations

Which OT passages or verses are relevant to this situation? What principles or wisdom apply?

4. New Testament Ethical Principles

Which NT passages are relevant to this situation? What principles or wisdom apply?

ALSO, what is the relationship between the OT and NT teachings on this topic?

- Does the NT agree with the OT?
- Does the NT correct or change the OT?
- Does the NT expand the basic principles taught in the OT?

5. Biblical Perspective toward Modern Zambian Ethical Needs

According to biblical teaching, what is the ethical (good, true, just) response to the problem we are considering?

ALSO, HOW can an individual Christian or a community of Christians obey the biblical teaching within modern Zambian culture? What should they do?

Situation 1 – Money Problems

A Zambian man is married and living with his children, and his monthly income barely supports his wife and children. He struggles with keeping up with the house bills as well as the general provisions for his family.

He finally gets a good paying job, and his immediate and extended family from both his side and the wife's side decide to move into his house so that they too can be provided for by their relative's new job. Besides his wife and children, he has a couple of more relatives who join him for upkeep and provision. He is again stretched and struggles to maintain his new large family.

The man comes to you as a leader in the church for advice on what he should do. How will you counsel him to handle this situation as a Christian?

Use the 5-step of decision-making approach to lead a discussion with the class and find a solution to this problem. Slowly guide them through thinking about the problem, the normal response from the community, and the Bible's teaching about this topic before helping them think through the way that Christians should respond.

The class may be divided into two groups one to oppose against the idea and the other to propose this idea. Choose one leader to represent the group and defend your answers we would use the five-step process to come up with a concrete decision.

Situation 2 – No Children

A Zambian married man has stayed together with his wife for quite a number of years, but there are no children in their home. The relatives are demanding for children, and the community is talking about them. They almost seem to be outcasts in their community. They are pressured to consult witch doctors in order to conceive. Even some of their family and members of their church are encouraging them to do this and assuring them that God will forgive them later. Suggestions are coming from every corner.

The couple are close friends to you and your spouse, and they come to you asking what they should do. They are desperate for children, but they are also deeply committed to their faith in the Lord Jesus.

How do we arrive at the right ethical decision using the five-step approach?

Lesson 5

This lesson has two parts:

1. Class Presentation of the 10 Principles for Understanding Christian Ethics
2. Final Project.

Part 1 – Class Presentation

In lesson two (2) we learned the 10 Principles for Understanding Christian Ethics. For this activity, divide the class into two groups.

1. Group one will be responsible to study and present numbers 1-5 on the list of 10 Principles for Understanding Christian Ethics.
2. Group two will be responsible to study and present numbers 6-10 on the list.

Groups should be given 30 minutes to work together and prepare their presentation. They should review the parts of the list they have been assigned, discuss them together to be sure that each member of the group understands each part clearly, and they should decide how to present and explain the parts of their list to the rest of the class.

After 30 minutes of preparation, allow each team 5-10 minutes to make their presentation. They can choose one spokesperson, or they can take turns presenting as a group. Each group should list and explain their five principles, and they should be able to talk about how understanding these things can help Christians to live more faithful and obedient lives when they face difficult ethical decisions.

For example:

List the Principle:

Principle #2 - *The ultimate basis for Christian ethics is the moral character of God.*

Describe the Principle: (students might include any of these comments or a combination of several)

- God delights in his own moral character, which is supremely good, unchanging and eternal.
- His moral standards for human beings flow from his moral character and therefore they apply to all cultures for all history (although the Bible also contains many temporary commands intended only for specific people at a specific time).
- God is love, so he commands us to love (1John 4:19).

- He is holy, and he commands us to be holy (1 Peter 1:15),
- He is merciful, and he command us to be merciful (Luke 6:36)
- He is truthful, and he commands us not to bear false witness (Titus 1:2; Exodus 20:16)

Explain why the Principle is important:

God's moral character and the historical fact that he has given us moral commands provide the basis for a Christian answer to the question of how we can move from "is" statements to "ought" statements in ethics.

Part 2 – Final Project

For the final class project, students should remain in the same groups they were in for the class presentation. Each group must be assigned one of the case study situations we have studied in lesson 4.

Instruct each group to carefully consider the situation that they have been assigned, then work together to follow the 5-step ethical decision-making process. Groups may submit a written report or make a spoken presentation to the class of their findings. In either case, the groups should explain in detail exactly what they discussed together for each of the 5 steps in the process and how they made their final decision. This should include specific verse references from the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as a clear explanation of what they would recommend the person in their situation should do as a Christian.

If this project is completed in class, the groups should be allowed up to 60 minutes to work together. As an alternative, groups may be allowed to work on their project overnight and present their report or presentation the following day.

How to Grade the Final Project. Watch and listen closely as the teams work together to apply the 5-step process to the situations that they have been assigned. If all the team members demonstrate that (1) they have learned and understand all five steps, (2) they are able to connect relevant biblical passages to the problem at hand, and (3) they can give clear explanations of how they would counsel a Christian to respond to the situation in a way that is consistent with biblical teaching, then award the entire group a passing grade for the class.