

Let's Talk about GLO #1: Christian Faith and Ethics

CELT Presentation, Mequon, WI, October 2019

Presentation Summary:

The study of Ethics offers a natural place to introduce important elements of the Christian faith. Simple tips will be provided on how instructors and program directors can apply basic Christian teaching to problems and moral dilemmas in a helpful, nonthreatening manner.

University Global Learning Outcome Christian Faith(GLO #1):

Our graduates are grounded in the Christian faith while also recognizing other major worldviews and how they differ from a Christian understanding of the world.

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. Benefits of an Ethics Course; students can
 - a. Understand moral perspectives of others,
 - b. Understand their own moral foundations,
 - c. Take the best possible reasoned course of action in an ethical dilemma,
 - d. And explain their actions to others more clearly.
3. Six Ethical Perspectives. Ethics is the study of ethical theories behind our moral pronouncements.
 - a. Existentialism (Choice)
 - b. Utilitarianism (Outcome)
 - c. Ethical Relativism (No Universal Standards)
 - d. Deontology (Duty)
 - e. Teleology (Goal)
 - f. Virtue Ethics (Character)
 - g. Comparing Ethical Perspectives
 - i. Emphases of Secular Ethical Systems
 1. Existentialism: I must make my own choices
 2. Utilitarianism: focus on outcomes
 3. Relativism: all ethical systems are equally valid and acceptable
 - ii. Emphases of Biblical Ethics
 1. Duty: follow rules; focus on the morality of an act
 2. Goal: All things exist and happen for a purpose; God has a plan.
 3. Virtue: character; the strength to do what's right.
 - iii. Car Analogy
 1. Virtues are like the car's motor
 2. Rules are like the steering, keeping us on the correct path.
 3. Having an intact vehicle is useless unless we have a purpose for it (telos).
4. Features of Christian Ethics
 - a. Community: The focus is on others, not just ourselves. The Bible stresses community and dependence rather than autonomy. See 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 about the use of our bodies.
 - b. Clarity: the Bible is prescriptive, i.e., clearly tells us what are our duties.
 - i. The Golden Rule (Luke 6:31).
 - ii. The Second Greatest Commandment (Mark 12:31).
 - iii. Humility as a virtue (Philippians 2:3).
 - iv. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). Every human life has inherent value, value given to us by God.
 - c. Power: to change our life, power external to us given by the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Christian ethics is a type of Virtue Ethics. See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (English Standard Version).
 - ii. Concerned with the character of people, the "new man" and not actions alone.

- iii. The Holy Spirit helps us to lead a life patterned after that of Christ Himself.
 - iv. Is the best way to make a lasting change in our lives (the **power** to live a moral life).
 - d. **Motive:** While Christian Ethics is informed by both Law and Gospel, “we must sharply distinguish between the Law and the Gospel in the Bible” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, St. Louis: CPH, 2005, Question 6, p. 51).
 - i. **Law versus Gospel**
 - 1. **Law:** “In the Law God commands good works of thought, word, and deed and condemns and punishes sin” (LC, Q7). **See Mark 12:30-31.**
 - 2. **Gospel:** “In the Gospel, the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ, God gives forgiveness, faith, life, and the power to please Him with good works” (LC, Q8). **See John 3:16. This is the chief motivation for Christian ethics.**
 - ii. **The Gospel Motive:** We want to live moral lives out of gratitude for what Jesus has done for us.
 - iii. **Vocation** means “calling.” Work is much more than a job. Every work or social function is a distinct calling from God. God has a plan which we are eager to help fulfill.
 - e. **Forgiveness:** Jesus has suffered and died in payment for the worst of sins! “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9, King James Version).
 - f. **How do we decide?** Learn the facts, apply appropriate ethical standards, take action, ask for God’s forgiveness if we err.
5. GLO #1: Practical Tips
- a. For the classroom
 - i. Present major views of a moral issue.
 - ii. Explain the traditional Christian perspective about an issue (use CTCR docs for help).
 - iii. Stress forgiveness.**
 - iv. Don’t grade on the student’s views, but on how well their views are supported.
 - b. Others: present the Christian view without fear of “saying the wrong thing.” Feel free to seek help!
6. Questions and Comments

Resources:

- ◆ Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. *Abortion in Perspective*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1984.
 - ◆ ———. *Christian Care at Life’s End*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1993.
 - ◆ ———. *Christian Faith and Human Beginnings: Christian Care and Pre-Implantation Human Life*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2005.
 - ◆ ———. *Christians and Procreative Choices: How Do God’s Chosen Choose?* St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1996.
 - ◆ ———. *Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981.
 - ◆ ———. *Transhumanism: An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2011.
 - ◆ ———. *What Child Is This? Marriage, Family, and Human Cloning*. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2002.
- ◆ Eyer, Richard. *Holy Lives Holy People: Law & Gospel in Bioethics*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2000.
- ◆ Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013.
- ◆ Montgomery, John Warwick. *Human Rights and Human Dignity*. Dallas, TX: Probe Ministries International, 1986.

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