

ADVANCED CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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ASSIGNMENT ONE

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Portrait of Christ with the Woman Taken in Adultery, by Guercino, 1621. Depicts Jesus and the woman taken in adultery

INTRODUCTION

Christian ethics is a system of moral principles that guides Christians in their everyday lives. It draws on various sources, including the Bible, Christian tradition, natural law, and personal discernment.

Assignment

Part one:

Discuss the major sources of Christian Ethics

Part two:

Analyze any four benefits of Christian Ethics to your life and profession.

Part One: Major Sources of Christian Ethics

1. The Bible:

- Scripture Passages: The Bible serves as the foundational source of Christian ethics, providing moral guidelines and principles. For example, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) outline fundamental moral precepts, including commands to love God and neighbor, honor parents, refrain from murder, theft, adultery, and false witness.
- Historical Examples: Throughout history, individuals and communities have looked to the Bible for guidance in ethical decision-making. For instance, during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, Christian leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. drew inspiration from biblical teachings on justice, equality, and nonviolence in their struggle against racial segregation and discrimination.
- Personal Reflection: As a Christian, I have personally found solace, guidance, and moral clarity through reading and meditating on Scripture. The stories, teachings, and ethical principles found in the Bible have shaped my understanding of right and wrong and influenced my moral choices in various life situations.

2. The Teachings of Jesus Christ:

- Scripture Passages: Jesus' ethical teachings, as recorded in the Gospels, offer profound insights into moral living. For example, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) contains teachings on love, forgiveness, humility, and righteousness, challenging believers to embody these virtues in their daily lives.
- Historical Examples: Throughout history, followers of Jesus have sought to emulate his example of love, compassion, and self-sacrifice. For instance, the early Christians demonstrated radical love and care for the marginalized and oppressed, even in the face of persecution.
- Personal Reflection: Jesus' teachings on love and forgiveness have deeply impacted my approach to relationships and conflict resolution. His call to love one's enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44) has challenged me to extend grace and compassion even to those who may wrong me.

3. The Tradition of the Church:

- Scripture Passages: The Christian tradition encompasses the theological insights, ethical reflections, and spiritual practices of the Church throughout history. The writings of early Church fathers, such as

Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, provide valuable perspectives on moral theology and ethical living.

- Historical Examples: The ethical teachings and actions of prominent Christian figures have left a lasting impact on history. For instance, the social justice activism of figures like Dorothy Day, who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement to serve the poor and promote peace, exemplifies the Christian commitment to social transformation and solidarity with the marginalized.

- Personal Reflection: Engaging with the rich tradition of Christian thought and spirituality has deepened my understanding of ethical principles and enriched my faith journey. Learning from the wisdom of past theologians and saints has broadened my perspective and inspired me to live a life of faithfulness and integrity.

4. Natural Law:

- Scripture Passages: While natural law is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, some passages affirm the existence of moral principles inherent in creation. For example, Romans 2:14-15 suggests that Gentiles, who do not have the Mosaic law, still demonstrate an awareness of moral truths through their conscience and actions.

- Historical Examples: Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas developed natural law theory as a way to articulate the universal moral principles discernible through reason and reflection on the created order. Natural law has informed Christian ethical positions on issues such as human dignity, justice, and the sanctity of life.

- Personal Reflection: Reflecting on the concept of natural law has deepened my appreciation for the moral order embedded in creation and the human capacity to discern right from wrong through reason and conscience. Natural law theory provides a helpful framework for understanding the ethical dimensions of various social and political issues.

5. Community and Worship:

- Scripture Passages: The Bible underscores the importance of community and worship in nurturing faith and fostering ethical living. Hebrews 10:24-25 exhorts believers to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another."

- Historical Examples: Throughout history, Christian communities have played a central role in shaping moral character and promoting social justice. For example, the early Christian community in Acts 2:42-47 is described as sharing their resources, caring for the needy, and worshiping together in unity.

- Personal Reflection: Being part of a Christian community has provided me with spiritual support, accountability, and opportunities for growth. Gathering with fellow believers for worship, prayer, and fellowship strengthens my commitment to ethical living and reminds me of the importance of love, compassion, and service in Christian discipleship.

Part Two: Benefits of Christian Ethics

1. Guidance for Moral Decision-Making:

- Scripture Passages: Proverbs 3:5-6 advises, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."
- Historical Examples: During times of moral crisis, individuals have turned to Christian ethics for guidance. For instance, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, relied on Christian principles in his opposition to Nazi atrocities during World War II.
- Personal Reflection: Christian ethics provide me with a reliable moral compass in navigating life's complexities. By aligning my decisions with biblical principles and seeking God's wisdom through prayer, I find clarity and confidence in choosing the right course of action.

2. Promotion of Virtuous Character:

- Scripture Passages: Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- Historical Examples: The lives of saints and Christian reformers illustrate the transformative power of Christian ethics in shaping virtuous character. For instance, the humility and compassion of Saint Francis of Assisi continue to inspire Christians worldwide.
- Personal Reflection: Practicing Christian virtues cultivates inner qualities that contribute to my personal well-being and relational harmony. As I strive to embody virtues such as love, patience, and integrity, I experience greater fulfillment and meaningful connections with others.

3. Enhancement of Ethical Leadership:

- Scripture Passages: Mark 10:42-45 teaches, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve."

- Historical Examples: Ethical leaders like William Wilberforce, who advocated for the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, exemplify Christian principles of servant leadership and social justice.

- Personal Reflection: Integrating Christian ethics into my leadership approach empowers me to lead with humility, compassion, and integrity. By prioritizing the well-being of others and serving with selflessness, I strive to make a positive impact in my professional sphere and beyond.

4. Integration of Faith and Work:

- Scripture Passages: Colossians 3:23-24 encourages believers, "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."

- Historical Examples: Christian professionals like Elizabeth Fry, a prison reformer in the 19th century, exemplify the

5. Cultivating Strong Moral Character:

- **Develops Virtues:**

- **Scripture:** Proverbs 11:3 states, "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the devious destroys them." This verse emphasizes the importance of honesty as a core virtue.
- **Historical Example:** William Wilberforce, a British politician in the 18th century, exemplifies this benefit. Driven by Christian principles, he tirelessly campaigned for the abolition of slavery, demonstrating integrity and perseverance in the face of opposition.
- **Personal Anecdote:** Resisting the urge to take credit for a colleague's work demonstrates honesty and builds trust within a team environment.

- **Promotes Self-Discipline:**

- **Scripture:** Galatians 5:22-23 lists the "fruit of the Spirit" as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Self-control allows individuals to resist temptations that could lead to unethical behavior.

- **Historical Example:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor, resisted the Nazi regime despite personal danger. His commitment to his faith and moral principles led him to speak out against injustice.
- **Personal Anecdote:** Saying "no" to unethical practices, even when pressured by colleagues or superiors, requires self-discipline but ultimately upholds one's moral compass.

6. Fostering Positive Relationships:

- **Focus on Love and Respect:**

- **Scripture:** Matthew 22:37-39 states, "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 neighbor as yourself." This passage emphasizes love and respect as foundational for positive relationships.
- **Historical Example:** Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving the poor and sick in Calcutta. Her work embodied Christian love and compassion, fostering positive relationships with those most marginalized in society.
- **Personal Anecdote:** Actively listening to a colleague's perspective and treating them with respect, even in disagreement, demonstrates Christian love and builds a stronger working relationship.

- **Promotes Forgiveness and Reconciliation:**

- **Scripture:** Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." Forgiveness is essential for healing broken relationships.
- **Historical Example:** Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for his fight against apartheid in South Africa, emerged advocating for reconciliation and forgiveness. This embodied Christian principles and paved the way for a more peaceful future.

- **Personal Anecdote:** Choosing to forgive a colleague for a mistake, seeking to understand their perspective, and working towards reconciliation fosters a more positive work environment.

7. Guiding Decision-Making in Difficult Situations:

- **Provides a Moral Compass:**

- **Scripture:** Proverbs 2:9 "For then will discretion protect you, understanding guard you, discerning speech will preserve you, delivering you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things." Discernment, guided by Christian principles, helps navigate complex situations.
- **Historical Example:** Florence Nightingale, a pioneer of modern nursing, revolutionized healthcare practices despite strong opposition. Her unwavering commitment to ethical patient care exemplifies using Christian principles as a moral compass.
- **Personal Anecdote:** When faced with a deadline pressure that might compromise quality, reflecting on Christian work ethic can guide one to prioritize ethically sound work over expediency.

- **Promotes Social Justice:**

- **Scripture:** Micah 6:8 states, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This verse emphasizes the pursuit of justice as a Christian imperative.
- **Historical Example:** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, advocating for racial equality and justice. His non-violent approach was rooted in Christian principles.
- **Personal Anecdote:** Speaking out against unfair treatment of a colleague or advocating for ethical business practices reflects Christian concern for social justice in the workplace.

8. Provides Meaning and Purpose:

- **Connects to Something Greater:**

- **Scripture:** Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Christian ethics connects individual actions to a broader purpose – serving God and contributing to a better world. This can provide a sense of meaning and motivation in one's work and personal life. (Example: A teacher sees their work as nurturing young minds and contributing to society's well-being).

- **Offers Strength and Comfort:** Christian ethics provides solace and strength during challenging times. Trusting in God's plan can offer comfort and resilience in the face of difficulties. (Example: A professional experiencing workplace conflict finds strength and guidance in prayer and faith).

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