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CSCI 325

08 September 2020

### Placing Ethical Codes into Faith

Charleston Southern University provides students with the opportunity to combine their spiritual and intellectual walks; there is an abundance of spiritual resources to help every student in their respective walk and encounter with Christ during their years at CSU. This is important because it gives the average student the opportunity to grow with the Lord without the intellectually and morally degrading pull from the gravity of the outside world. For new adults, this time is essential. Students grow to learn and understand the word of God, the perfect ethical standard for life. Without this basis, as has happened so often in history, employees, managers, and even CEOs experience an ethical debasement. If adults look to the ethical standards posted by every company and every organization, they will find that these codes of ethics differ vastly. Through the comparison of the IEEE, ACM, and Biblical codes of ethics, personal ethical dilemmas, technical consequences of ethical choices, and preparation to handle these struggles, the reader will be able to use an analysis of my individual preparatory measures to determine the best method of guiding oneself through ethical struggles in the field of computers.

The IEEE Code of Ethics sums up in two main statements: “To uphold the highest standards of integrity, responsible behavior, and ethical conduct in professional activities,” (para. 2) and to treat everyone equally, ensuring that your coworkers do the same (para 9, 13). It is not profound by any means, and it uses the term “ethical conduct” in the code that is supposed to define ethical conduct for the IEEE. There is never a clear definition for what the “highest standards” of integrity are. The reader instead leaves with some ways that he/she can be mildly

righteous should they find themselves in the public spotlight. This code of ethics does not even define “Ethical design,” rather it simply refers to something greater. In comparison, this is no better than the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) code of ethics. In contrast to the vagueness of the IEEE, the ACM code does provide a detailed outline for “fundamental ethical principles that form the basis for the remainder of the Code.” (para. 3). But in comparison with the IEEE, these “fundamental ethical principles” immediately start with “Contribute to society and to human well-being, acknowledging that all people are stakeholders in computing.” (para. 5). It definitely sounds nice, but what is good for one group may not be good for another, this is the “common good” referred to by secular philosophers throughout history. Also, this code of ethics is fundamentally based off of an ill-defined common good relating to “local and global environmental sustainability” (para. 8). It is certain that environmental sustainability is far below money on the priority list of some of the world’s poorest populations. In contrast to the IEEE, the ACM code of ethics is exceptionally clearer. But in comparison, it still falls short by defining the basis of ethics on the subjective matter of environmental sustainability, providing little objective help with discerning ethical dilemmas.

As a symptom of this biased fundamental morality, the most prominent dilemma a young professional will face is their inability to stand firm on the faith that their code of ethics will deliver them from adversity within the company. Not many people would have the resolve to call their supervisor and tell him/her they cannot do the work as a new employee due to the company’s ethical code, a code which the company used to appoint their supervisor to his/her position in the first place. This is where all ethical codes and many young professionals fall short. People cannot place their faith in any company’s code of ethics because they cannot see a direct line to self-advancement. Even if they could see this track of advancement, it would be

selfish to take it because the only reason would be to advance themselves; therefore, it would still be unethical. Using company standards, a young network engineer fresh out of the army would not be able to tell a customer, “No, I will not use Wireshark to troubleshoot your connectivity issues on a DoD network,” Or tell their supervisor attempting to assist a customer, “No, I will not tell you the first half of a classified IP address over an unclassified medium, then hang up the phone, pick up a different unclassified phone, and tell you the other half of the classified IP address. No, I will not do it no matter how much you say that it is okay and has been done before.” One who is caught violating a code of ethics, would be crucified by the same people who asked him/her to break it, using that same code as condemnation. An example of this would be Edward Snowden, who revealed that the NSA is spying very intrusively on the citizens of the United States. Snowden was in direct compliance with the ACM point 3.1, “The public good should always be an explicit consideration.” Both the government and Snowden twisted this to justify their actions. This only reinforced this societal code of brushing aside morality for advancement, and it is one reason that young professionals even face this dilemma of being a yes-man versus adhering to an ethical standard.

One can take precaution against such folly by reading and practicing God’s word, which is also how I prepare for moral dilemmas and life in general. No matter how high one holds their company’s ethical standard, it will never cover every possible scenario. Without a firm base for these codes, they invoke the follower to use their flesh for discernment. God has no standard for evil, and our flesh is nothing but evil. Allowing humans to practice their own will when writing a code of ethics is a recipe for failure every time. Allowing God’s sanctification in one’s life is the only possible method for choosing an upright path with confidence, regardless of consequence.

The Bible is clear about how to navigate such precarious circumstances-- Listen to God. The Bible says:

For the Lord gives wisdom;  
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
He stores up success for the upright;  
He is a shield for those who live with integrity  
so that he may guard the paths of justice  
and protect the way of his faithful followers.  
Then you will understand righteousness, justice,  
and integrity — every good path. (Proverbs 2: 6-9, CSB).

There is not a single code of conduct in existence that can stand without the Bible. Even the military code of conduct admits, “I will trust in my God...” (DoD, Article VI). The lack of underlying structure and vaguely righteous ideas of the IEEE make it impossible to place faith in. The subjectivity of the clearly defined ACM code makes it just as baseless. Despite the differences in the two, the commonality is that they are both incredibly idiosyncratic. Various codes of ethics point to some convoluted common good, such as environmental sustainability as with the ACM. On their own, every single code of ethics falls short; every course of action outside of God’s will is worthless and unethical. I would be woefully unprepared if attempting to abide by those codes if they were my only preparation, but with God’s word I feel extraordinarily prepared to take on the challenges in the workplace. The aforementioned examples of ethical dilemmas in a DoD workplace were real ethical dilemmas that I have dealt with since exiting the army in 2019. Given my response in the face of those scenarios, God’s glory continues to show in preparing me for these dilemmas. The reason I am prepared is not

because I have read and understand different codes of ethics within my industry, though I have, but because the perfect example of Proverbs makes it clear: God alone may “guard the paths of justice.” So, one should prepare by knowing the word of God “so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.” (Ephesians 6:13, CSB)

### Works Cited

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