

Christian Ethics? - Glenn Colley

Last Monday night we were sitting around a table at Chili's with some other Christians and talking about values, when we realized we all held similar views on all the major moral issues in our country. We also observed that we had all been reared by parents who had a firmness about obeying them and about doing the right thing every time. We agreed there had to be a connection. It reminds me of a parable the Lord taught in Matthew 20:1-16 in which He described a householder hiring day labor throughout the morning. While this isn't the main point of the parable, key in on what he told the potential employees as he offered the position: "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you" (vs. 4). The salary was offered based on the ethics of the householder. The men trusted that he would do what was right and they got right to work.

The Greek word for *ethics* and the Latin term for *morals* or *morality* both come from the same root word, *ethos*, meaning custom or a habitual mode of conduct. The difference is that *ethics* is defined as the general science of right and wrong conduct, and *morals* refers to the conduct itself. In a time when so many Americans are given over to relativism wherein almost nothing is viewed as always right or always wrong, it is a joy to hear of someone doing the right thing even if it costs him.

Author John C. Maxwell was asked one time to write a book on business ethics. He responded, "There's no such thing." he question came back, "What do you mean?" He said, "There's no such thing as business ethics—there's only ethics. People try to use one set of ethics for their professional life, another for their spiritual life, and still another at home with their family. That gets them into trouble. Ethics is ethics. If you desire to be ethical, you live it by one standard across the board."

Ethics come from a man's core value system, and how one determines right is based on his code of ethics. There are two aspects to ethics: first, the ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil, and propriety from impropriety. Second, the commitment to do what is right, good, and proper.

The greatest guideline for ethics is from the lips of our Lord—so broad that it works for men,

women and children of all ages; so practical that it works for people handling lots of money and people who have none; so timeless that it may be adopted by any people of any generation, and is found in Matthew's book of the New Testament as he quotes Jesus Christ. I heard it called one day "The gold standard," and when I was a kid we called it the golden rule. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7:12). Different world faiths all tout a form of this principle with their own influence added. Buddhism says, "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself." Confucianism says, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." I heard a Nigeria proverb put it this way, "One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts." But observe, all these say "Don't harm another." Yet Jesus is proactive. Their philosophy would have you avoid deliberately running over your neighbor's rose bush. Jesus would have you go and help your neighbor plant his rose bushes. A higher consciousness.

This illustrates again the value of Christianity in this old world. Don't allow this country's declining respect for the followers of Jesus to convince you that unbelievers are right. The Bible is a book containing absolutes. They are absolutes whether or not people object to them, and whether or not they believe them. It is wrong to lie (Rev. 21:8). It is right to help the fatherless and widows (Ja. 1:27). It is wrong to steal from another (Eph. 4:28). It is right to do good to all men, even our enemies (Eph. 5:32, Rom. 12:20-21). It is wrong to commit fornication or adultery (Gal. 5:19-21). It is wrong to hate your brother (I Jn. 3:15).

"There's no such thing as business ethics—there's only ethics." And ethics, like faith, come from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). No one has ever improved upon the pure and right value system that Jesus taught. No wonder they call Him the Master Teacher. If you will let Him, He'll teach you how to live a simple and ethical life. And that's a life in which a man can sleep at night (Psa. 127:2).