



ETHICS BEYOND *RULES*

HOW CHRIST'S CALL TO LOVE

INFORMS OUR MORAL CHOICES

KEITH D. STANGLIN



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Ethics beyond Rules

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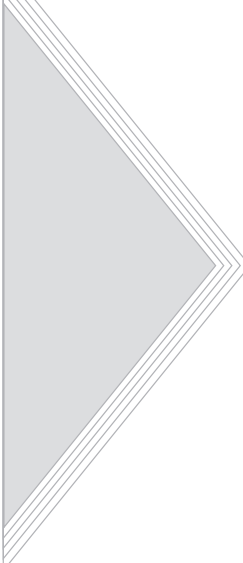
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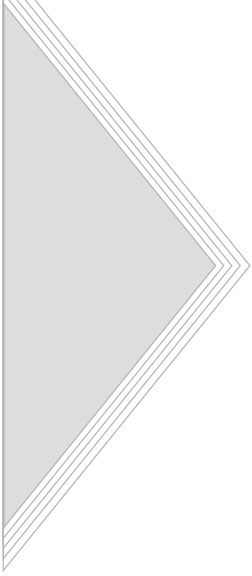


CHAPTER 1

Is There Such a Thing as Right and Wrong?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever changed your mind about a moral practice? What made you change your mind?
2. What would life in this world be like if we denied the reality of sin, if the very idea of right and wrong were eliminated from our vocabulary? What do you think would be the consequences if you had not been raised with the concept of sin, and if you raised your children with no concept of sin?
3. Have you heard someone say, “That’s good for you, but not for me,” or “That may be right for their culture, but not for ours”? What topic were they discussing?
4. If the majority opinion is the final arbiter of right and wrong, what are the implications?
5. How have you been influenced in a negative way by “the crowd”? How do you think secular culture has influenced Christians or the church in non-Christian directions? What will you do to resist these influences?

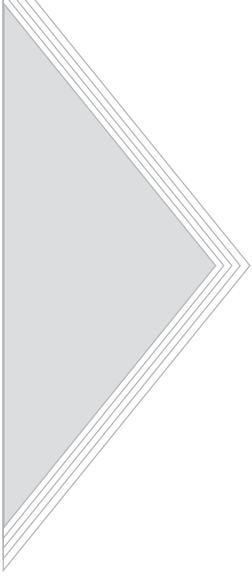


CHAPTER 2

Why Be Good?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If invisible, would you act morally? Are you more prone to do the things you know are wrong when no one is looking? Are you more likely to do *good* things when someone *is* looking?
2. What is the purpose(s) of Christian ethics?
3. What are the things and ideas that distract us from the goal?
4. Is there any way that suffering and happiness could go hand in hand?
5. Do you think that downplaying perfection leads to settling for mediocrity?
6. In what concrete ways could you become more like God?

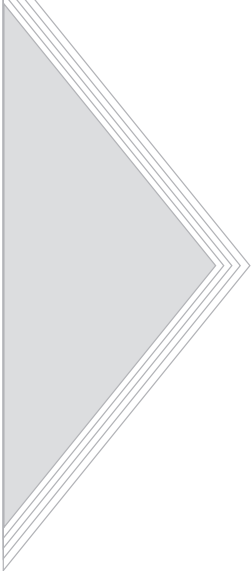


CHAPTER 3

Ethics beyond Rules

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are Christians really free to do anything that they want?
How can this be understood in a biblical way?
2. Can you think of something that you used to do only when told to do it, but now you do it freely without being told?
Why do you do that thing on your own now?
3. Are there any areas of life where you feel like you don't need rules to do what is good? Are there any areas where you acknowledge you do need rules to do what is good?
4. What used to tempt you that no longer does? What still tempts you?

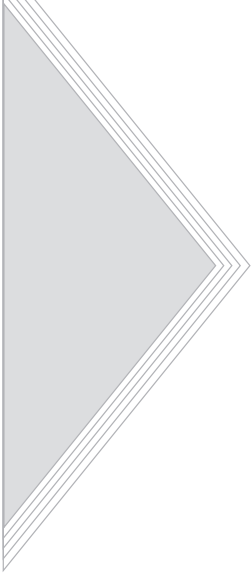


CHAPTER 4

What Does Love Require?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the parents of Todd (the alcoholic) should show love to him?
2. What is “tough love”? Have you ever been the recipient of “tough love”? How did you respond?
3. Does love look different toward someone who repents than it looks toward someone who does not repent?
4. What do you think about the saying, “Love the sinner; hate the sin”? Does the church have a harder time with the first half or with the second half of the saying? How can we strike the balance effectively?

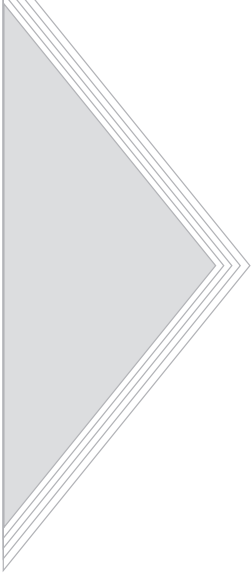


CHAPTER 5

The Use of the Bible in Ethics

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss biblical passages and principles that are relevant to various ethical issues that are not specifically mentioned in Scripture, for example:
 - a. gun control
 - b. using marijuana
 - c. euthanasia (physician-assisted suicide)
 - d. sex with a fiancé
 - e. speeding
 - f. others?
2. Can you think of any biblical characters whose moral actions are ambiguous? How can you know whether they serve as a good example to be followed or a bad example to be avoided?

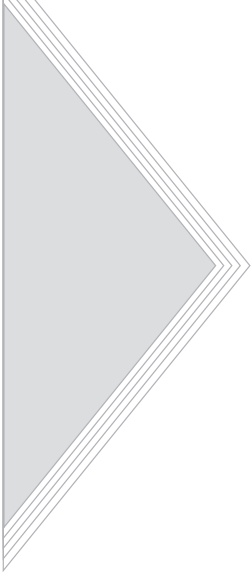


CHAPTER 6

Sexual Ethics

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you were growing up, were you warned against premarital sex? What reasons were offered in favor of sexual purity?
2. What reasons would you give to encourage people to preserve sexual relations for marriage?
3. The topic of sex is frequently avoided in churches. What do you think is the most important but neglected thing that churches should be teaching about sexuality?
4. What are the consequences of making pleasure the sole or primary motivation for sexual relations?
5. How can churches do a better job of welcoming and incorporating single people?

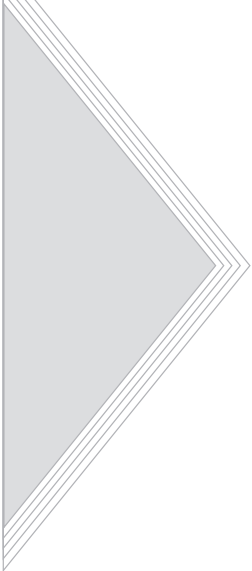


CHAPTER 7

Homosexual Practice

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For those who support homosexuality, where do you think they would draw the line on acceptable sexual activity?
On what ground?
2. Why do you think parents so often encourage their children in their gender dysphoria?
3. How can Christians and churches balance showing love without endorsing homosexual practice?

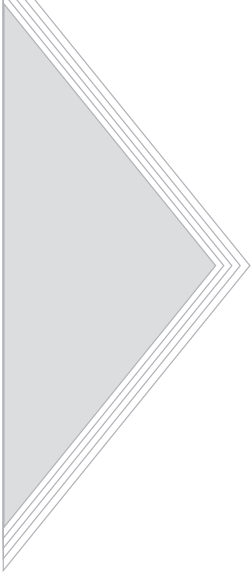


CHAPTER 8

Abortion

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Bible does not specifically address abortion, but what passages provide some principles for thinking about this issue?
2. Besides those mentioned in the chapter, what other reasons would you give to affirm that an unborn baby qualifies as a person?
3. Why do you think a woman would choose or be pressured by someone else to have an abortion?
4. Have you ever witnessed or seen a recording of an abortion (through ultrasound)? Did it change or reinforce what you thought about abortion?

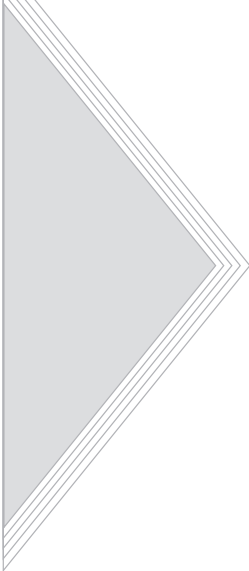


CHAPTER 9

Wealth and Consumerism

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does our society think about and use money?
2. Are Christians less materialistic than non-Christians?
How would we know or be able to tell?
3. In what ways do we Christians use money well? In what ways do we use it poorly?
4. How is the act of giving a “grace”?
5. Do we give out of a feeling of guilt or of joy?

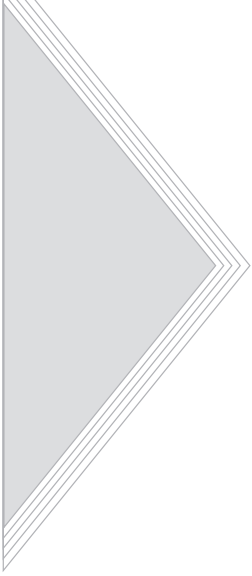


CHAPTER 10

The Use of Technology

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the last five years, what is the longest you have ever gone without your smartphone? Was it voluntary? How did you feel about it?
2. If you have a social media account, have you ever thought about deleting it? Why? If you don't have an account, why don't you?
3. What are the ways you use the technology around you for good and noble purposes? What percentage of the time would you say that's what you use it for?

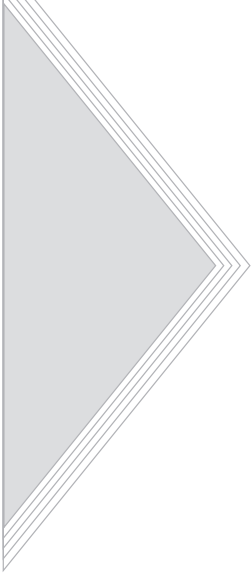


CHAPTER 11

Politics

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some important similarities between managing a family or homeowners' association and a state or federal government? What are some important differences?
2. Where do you fit on the spectrum between American civil religion and Christian nonparticipation?
3. How have people in general or Christians in particular been unnecessarily disrespectful of and insubordinate to the government?
4. In addition to voting, how have you attempted to persuade politicians or the public to your opinion?
5. Has Christian political involvement ever made the church look bad? What lesson should we learn?

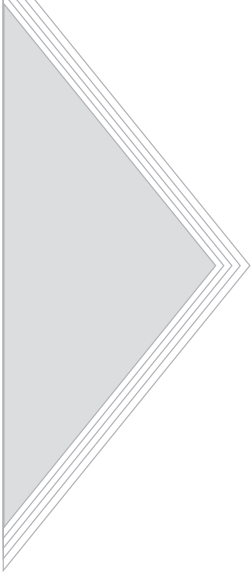


CHAPTER 12

Identity and Race

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is racism a difficult topic for you to discuss with others? If so, what makes it so difficult? If not, why do you find it easy?
2. How do you imagine the color of your skin has affected your experience of the world? Has it created privilege and/or hardship for you in various circumstances?
3. What nuances do you think are missing in most discussions of race?
4. In what ways have you seen identity politics infiltrate the church?
5. Has it changed or broadened your perspective to have friends from backgrounds different than your own?
6. What concrete steps can you take to improve race relations in your spheres of influence?

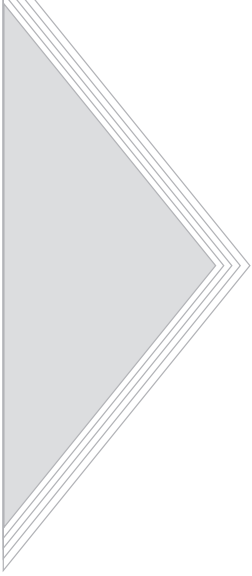


CHAPTER 13

In the World but Not of It

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Give a concrete example of successfully striking the balance of being in the world but not of it.
2. Give a concrete example of losing the balance on one side or the other.
3. How do you think outsiders view the church's relationship to the world?



CHAPTER 14

Engaging the Battle

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Besides a journey, can you think of another metaphor that describes the Christian life? What does it do better than the metaphor used in this chapter?
2. What are the “flaming arrows” that threaten to kill us spiritually?
3. How can the different pieces of the armor of God defend us against these arrows? Give concrete examples.
4. If you regarded the Christian life primarily as a battle, would it change the way you live your life?
5. What would spiritual boot camp look like? In what ways could our experience of church life be more like boot camp?

For Further Reading

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