

Ethics Vs. Morals From the Christian Perspective

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For Christians, morals and ethics should be absolute standards set by God.

by Contributing Writer

According to dictionary definitions, ethics and morals are closely related. While morals deal with distinguishing between right and wrong, ethics are the rules of conduct recognized by a particular group, often based on socially influenced moral ideals. For Christians, ethics and morals are based on God's character and law, yet are distinct terms with different actions and biblical examples pertaining to each.

Morals

Morality is usually defined as principles (normally internal) which guide differentiation between right and wrong. Many Christians, however, define moral actions as either sinful action or God-honoring action. Christians believe that morality is set by God and modeled by his son, Jesus. According to the Christian perspective, morality shouldn't differ from person to

person. For some Christians, not only murder, theft, and adultery, but coveting, idolatry, homosexuality and other actions or lifestyles are considered immoral because of absolute proscriptions set by the Bible.

Biblical Examples of Morals

Although the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 are seen by the Abrahamic religions to be a concrete example of morals, some Christians believe that not every commandment still applies to modern Christians. Many suggest a better standard for morality would be the ministry of Jesus himself. From a Christian perspective, Jesus lived a sinless and moral life. Christians believe that they should adhere to the model of Jesus' actions towards the poor, treatment of outcasts, resistance of temptation, and other actions as the standard for Christians morality. Some verses dealing with Christian morality include Romans 12:2, and Mark 7:20-22.

Ethics

Ethics runs deeper than the internal compass and describes a social system or societal structure of moral codes that govern virtuous action. From a secular perspective, ethics change from group to group and society to society. From a Christian perspective, however, ethics should be concrete and governed by God. Christian ethics does not change from society to society, as secular moral codes may, since Christians are a single group adhering to the ethical code of the Bible, rather than multiple sects adhering to differing laws and customs.

Biblical Examples of Ethics

Although the Bible contains numerous passages dealing with Christian ethics, a few stand out as general ethical principles for Christians to live by. In Mark 12:31, Christians are commanded to love their neighbor as they love themselves, an ethical standard or social code that governs all areas of life. Although the passage does not deal with right and wrong, as morality does, loving others as an abstract principle sets a societal standard for Christians. Likewise, the "golden rule" in Luke 6:31, Colossians 3:23 which calls Christians to do all work for the Lord, and many other verses deal with Christian ethical standards.

Moral and Ethical Christians

Christians believe that people have fallen into sin, and that people are therefore born with a tendency to sin rather than do good. By nature, Christians believe no man is moral or ethical, rather that we live in a constant struggle to become "moral" while attempting to live our lives in a manner that aligns with Christian ethics.

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- Bible Suite: Mark 12:31(<http://bible.cc/mark/12-31.htm>)
- Bible Gateway: Luke 6:31(<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+6%3A31&version=NIV>)
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- Bible Gateway: Mark 7:20-22(<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+7%3A20-22&version=ESV>)
- Bible Gateway: Colossians 3:23(<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+3%3A23&version=ESV>)

Resources

- Bible Gateway: 1 Corinthians 5:9-13(<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+5%3A9-13&version=NIV>)
- Bible Gateway: Exodus 20 NIV(<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+20&version=NIV>)

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