

Christian Ethics for NGOs

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Ann Gibson, PhD, CPA
Andrews University

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The ethical choices of Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 5:1-11

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Ethics is not:

Feelings

Obeying the law

Following one's culture

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Morality:

The fundamental commitments with which we order our lives.

Ethics:

Concepts/rules for living.

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Dictionary Combines Morality and Ethics:

The moral principles that govern a person's behavior and actions.

Webster's Dictionary

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When confronted with an ethical situation:

- Think about the situation
- Analyze and interpret
- Consider the alternatives
- Make a choice
- Act on our choice

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These principles come from one's world view.

For Christians, one's world view comes from one's view of God, based on Scripture.

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I Corinthians 15:32

“If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”

Paul, quoting Epicurus (342-270 BC)

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I Corinthians 15:20, 58

But Christ has risen from the dead!

We should live today in light of the fact that one should stand firm, and always give their work to the Lord, for labor in the Lord is not in vain.

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Pictures of God:

God who **plans and acts**

God who **expresses joy**

God who **delights in beauty**

God who **thinks and works**

God who **cares for what He has created**

God who **seeks a relationship** with His
creation

Genesis 1 and 2

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Pictures of God:

God who **shows no partiality**

God who **takes no bribes**

God who **administers justice** for the
fatherless and the widow

God who **loves and cares** for the stranger

Deuteronomy 10:17-18

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Pictures of God:

An **honest God** who requires we use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin.

Leviticus 19:35-36

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Pictures of God:

A God who **exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness** in the earth, and **delights in these things.**

Jeremiah 9:24

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Pictures of God:

A God who requires us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

Micah 6:8

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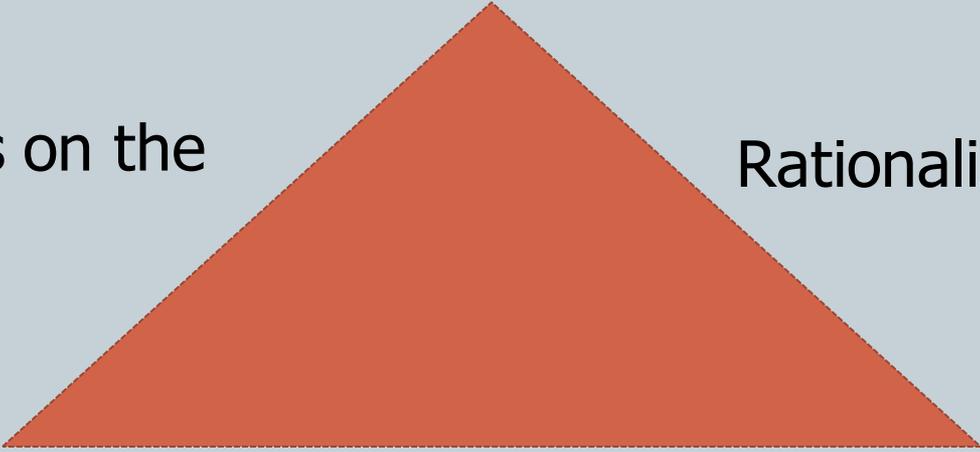
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Ethical Pressure Points:

Pressures on the
individual

Rationalization

Perceived Opportunity



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Common Rationalizations:

1. Calling an unethical act by a different name.
2. “Everybody does it!”
3. “That’s the way we do things here.”
4. “We were only following orders.”
5. “It’s a gray area.”

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“I looked up the word ‘cheat’ in the dictionary and decided it didn’t apply, given that it meant ‘to gain an advantage on a rival or foe.’ I didn’t view doping that way. I viewed it as a level playing field.”

Lance Armstrong, January, 2013

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When Good People Do Bad Things at Work:

- Not all misdeeds are done by bad people.
- Unethical acts can result from failings rather than selfishness and greed.
- Good people can inadvertently make unethical decisions.
- Ethical actions require more than just good intentions.

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Ethical Judgment Traps:

- Scripts
- Busyness and Distractions
- Moral Exclusion

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1. Scripts

“When I was dealing with the first trickling-in of field reports that might have suggested a significant problem with the Pinto, the reports were essentially similar to many others that I was dealing with (and dismissing) all the time . . . I was making this kind of decision automatically every day. I had trained myself to respond to prototypical cues, and these didn’t fit the relevant prototype for crisis cases.”

Dennis Gioia, Ford Company Recall Coordinator

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2. Busyness and Distractions

“After the data was weighed and the variables analyzed, only one variable could be used to predict who would stop to help and who wouldn’t. The important factor was not personality type or whether a student’s career or the parable of the Good Samaritan was foremost in his mind. It was whether or not he was in a hurry . . . The study made it hard not to conclude that *ethics becomes a luxury as the speed of our daily lives increases.*”

John Darley and Daniel Batson

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3. Moral Exclusion

Some people are seen as outside the boundaries where moral considerations and fairness apply.

This mind-set is:

Influenced by culture

Included in language

Spread through stereotypes

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Signs of Ethical Collapse:

1. Pressure to maintain those numbers.
2. Fear and silence.
3. Young 'Uns and the Bigger-Than-Life President/CEO.

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4. Weak Boards.
5. Conflicts of Interest Not Addressed.
6. Mentality: Success is All that Matters.
7. Goodness in Some Areas Atones for Evil in Others.

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Slippery Slope Challenges:

1. Taking things that don't belong to you.
2. Giving or allowing false impressions.
3. Saying things you know are not true.

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4. Buying influence or engaging in conflicts of interest.
5. Hiding or divulging information.
6. Fudging the numbers.

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The Parable of the Sadhu

Harvard Business Review
May-June, 1997

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1. Ethical choices can mean that a goal is not achieved or is achieved in delayed fashion.
2. When there are groups responsible for making ethical decisions, each person defers to the next, with the deceptive comfort that ultimate accountability does not lie with any one individual.

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3. Changing one's values (in this case, respect for life) in a different setting (in this case, a grueling mountain climb) may seem justified, but ultimately achieving the goal produces a gnawing feeling of "At what cost?"

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4. Business parallels:

- The climb is rugged with challenges.
- There are often limited windows of opportunity for success.
- Ethical choices can mean temporary setbacks in achieving goals.
- Others are willing to go on to reach the goal, despite ethical dilemmas confronting them.

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5. Defining dilemmas in the either/or conundrum produces choices that disregard ethics and values.
6. Values need to be put in place at the beginning so that when we are confronted with ethical dilemmas, our values are not compromised for the goal.
7. At the end, McCoy regrets the ethically shallow choice made on the mountain that day.

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Psalm 15:

In answer to the question: Who may abide in
Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

Responds.....

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He who **walks uprightly,**
And **works righteousness,**
And **speaks the truth in his heart;**

He who **does not backbite** with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

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In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he **honors those who fear the LORD;**
He who **swears to his own hurt and does not
change;**
He who **does not put out his money at usury,**
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things shall never be moved.

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Since an overseer (elder) is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Titus 1:7-9

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“We try to live in such a way that no one will ever be offended or kept back from finding the Lord by the way we act, so that no one can find fault with us and blame it on the Lord.”

2 Corinthians 6:3

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