

The Importance of Ethical Behavior

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**Ann Gibson, PhD, CPA
Andrews University**

Ethical Behavior

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We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather we have these because we have acted rightly.

Aristotle

Ethical Behavior

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Ethics:

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

Webster's Dictionary

Ethical Behavior

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Ethics is not the same as:

Feelings

Obeying the law

Following one's culture

Ethical Behavior

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The Parable of the Sadhu

Bowen McCoy

Harvard Business Review

May-June, 1997

Ethical Behavior

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Ethics are the moral principles that govern a person's behavior and actions.

In a situations involving ethics, we must make a choice.

The issue: one choice may be better or worse than another. **How does one choose** the best choice?

Ethical Behavior

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As Christians, we **look to Scripture** to guide our understanding of what ethical behavior looks like.

We look to Scripture to help us choose rightly.

Counsel from Scripture

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Deuteronomy 10:17-19:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who **shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.** He **defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow,** and **loves the alien,** giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.

Counsel from Scripture

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Leviticus 19:35-36:

Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin.

Counsel from Scripture

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Jeremiah 9:23-24:

This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises **kindness, justice and righteousness on earth**, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.

Counsel from Scripture

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Micah 6:8:

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Counsel from Scripture

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Psalm 15:

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?

Counsel from Scripture

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**He whose walk is blameless,
And who does what is righteous,
And speaks the truth from his heart;**

**And has no slander (backbite) on his tongue,
Who does his neighbor no wrong,
And casts no slur (reproach) on his fellowman;**

Counsel from Scripture

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Who despises a vile man,
But **honors those who fear the LORD;**
Who **keeps his oath, even when it hurts;**
Who **lends his money without usury,**
And **does not accept a bribe against the**
innocent.

He who does these things shall never be shaken.

Counsel from Scripture

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Matthew 7:12:

So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Back to Nepal

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First: The climb is rugged with challenges. Many factors require focus at the same moment.

It is difficult to make ethical decisions in such situations. Ethical dilemmas will be ambiguous and can easily be missed.

Back to Nepal

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Second: Ethical choices can mean temporary setbacks in achieving goals, or that a goal is not achieved. or is achieved in a delayed or alternative fashion. To do the “right thing” may be costly—in time, in money, in immediate success.

Back to Nepal

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Third: In a group situation, like the mountain climb, some pressed to go on despite the ethical dilemma confronting them in their quest to reach the goal. Not everyone saw the ethical dilemma; certainly not all saw it as a roadblock.

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.

Back to Nepal

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

Ethical Judgment Traps

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Scripts:

Procedures that experience tells us to use in specific situations.

Used in familiar situations; a “shortcut” in our relationships and speech.

Ethical Judgment Traps

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“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

Ethical Judgment Traps

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Busyness and Distractions:

Darley and Batson study on students at the Princeton Theological Seminary: *Would the students stop to help someone in distress?*

The study concluded: Ethics becomes a luxury as the speed of our daily lives increases.

Ethical Judgment Traps

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Moral Exclusion:

Individuals or groups are seen as “outside” the boundaries where moral considerations and fairness apply.

Exclusion often is supported by one’s language.

Exclusion often is supported by using stereotypes.

Ethical Judgment Traps

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Take care:

Ethical dilemmas will be ambiguous.

Doing the “right thing” may be costly.

Defining dilemmas as “either/or” easily leads to the disregard of ethics and values.

It is easy to pass accountability off to the group rather to take personal responsibility for choices.

Ethical Judgment Traps

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Take care:

New or unexpected situations may lead to an ethical relapse,

Scripts may cause one to act “automatically” rather than “see” the ethical dilemma.

Being focused, driven, and busy may cause one to miss the ethical situation.

Stereotypes due to our education or our culture may lead to moral exclusion of individuals.

The Power Question

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Power:

The ability to affect other people's behavior and get them to act in certain ways—usually in a way that the one who holds the power wants the less powerful person to act.

The Power Question

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Primary types of power:

Legitimate power (position power)

Coercive power (the ability to punish the offender)

Reward power (the ability to give or withhold rewards)

Expert power (the power based on specialized knowledge or skill)

Referent power (power based on personal and coworkers' respect and loyalty)

The Power Question

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For the Christian, power is to be used to empower the OTHER rather than to use the power for oneself.

The Power Question

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The Widow and the Lawyer

Kent Hanson

Grace at 30,000 feet and other Unexpected Places

The Power Question

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Meekness is “power under control.”

Jonathan Wilson

“The disposition of one who has the power and who could act on the basis of that power but restrains or directs that power . . . so it is properly proportioned to the circumstances and to the proper telos [end].”



The Ethical Standard

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Since an overseer (elder) is entrusted with God's word, 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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