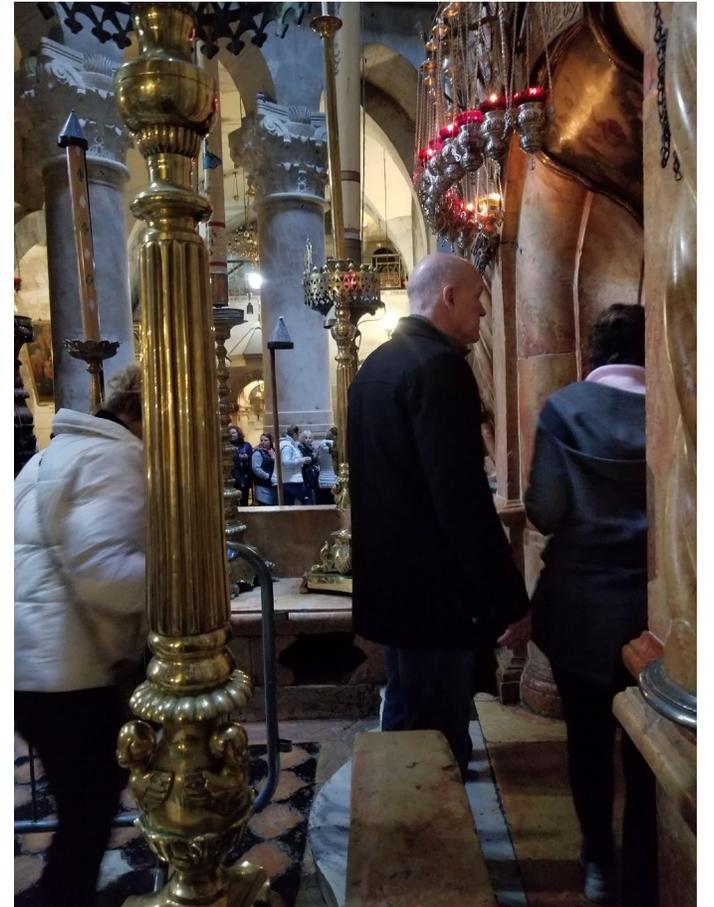


AN INTRODUCTION TO
CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Introduction

Welcome to our 8th lecture on *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*. It is wonderful to be with you again after having been away in Israel for the past two Sundays. Thank you for praying for our team of 32 men and women who came together from the U.S., London, Wales, and Israel to visit the historical sites recorded for us in the Old and New Testaments. The Lord was with us and revealed Himself to us in many ways through His Word and by His Spirit. We have returned home with much gratitude.



Mike and Nancy Gebhart Entering the Empty Tomb of Jesus Christ

Introduction

From the beginning of our study, I made the claim that when we consider the eternal existence of the triune God and embrace the truth that He has clearly spoken through Creation, His only-begotten Son, the *imago Dei*, and His inspired, infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Word, it is not difficult to accept the reality that we can actually “think His thoughts after Him” (analogical thinking) and live our lives in ways that are pleasing to Him. It is a great comfort to know that there is a “God who is there” (Schaeffer) and that He has disclosed Himself to us so that we might do that which is good in His sight and seek to live for His glory alone. The Psalmist’s words are deeply true and reassuring: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).



Introduction

Since the age of 17, with the reading of *The Screwtape Letters*, I have discovered that C.S. Lewis is a very able and wise guide to clear the fog about many issues, including ethics: “Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live forever, and this must be either true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live forever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are gradually getting worse – so gradually that the increase in seventy years will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years. In fact, if Christianity is true, Hell is the precisely correct technical term for what it would be.”

What Is Your View of God?

“There is a story about a schoolboy who was asked what he thought God was like. He replied that, as far as he could make out, God was ‘the sort of person who is always snooping round to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it.’ And I am afraid that is the sort of idea that the word *Morality* raises in a good many people’s minds: something that interferes, something that stops you having a good time. In reality, moral rules



C.S. Lewis

1898-1963

Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford
Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge

What Is Your View of God?

are directions for running the human machine. That is why these rules at first seem to be constantly interfering with our natural inclinations. When you are being taught how to use any machine, the instructor keeps on saying, 'No, don't do it like that,' because, of course, there are all sorts of things that look all right and seem to you the natural way of treating the machine, but do not really work."

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Ethics: Directions for Running the Human Machine

- Ethics is “living under God’s law, in God’s world, in the presence of God himself” (John Frame).
- “Biblical ethics is concerned with the manner of life and behavior which the Bible requires and which the faith of the Bible produces” (John Murray).
- “Christian-theistic ethics deals with man’s *summum bonum* (highest good), man’s standard of living, and with man’s ethical motive, and obtains its light on all these problems from the Scriptures” (Cornelius Van Til).
- “Christian ethics is any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us about which acts, attitudes, and personal character traits receive God’s approval, and which do not?’”

Am I the Landlord or Tenant?



C.S. Lewis
1898-1963

“Does it not make a great difference whether I am, so to speak, the landlord of my own mind and body, or only a tenant, responsible to the real landlord? If somebody else made me, for his own purposes, then I shall have a lot of duties which I should not have if I simply belonged to myself.”

- C.S. Lewis



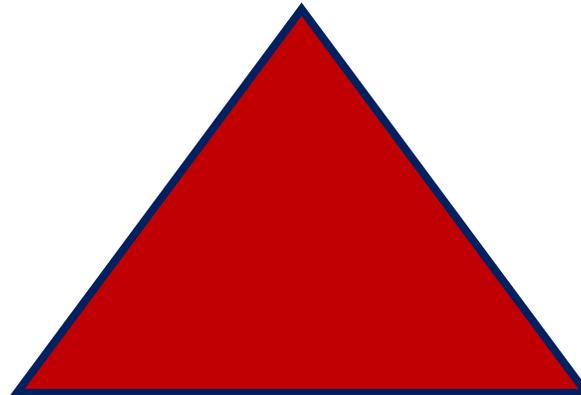
Applying the Triperspectival Model

From the beginning, the goal of our study has been to learn what God Himself says about how we may “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). It was never intended to be a course to simply satisfy intellectual or theological curiosity. Theology, in fact, is “the application of the Word of God by persons to all areas of life” (Frame). “All theology,” he maintains, “is addressed to people to help them think and live to the glory of God.” And so, today, we will take what we have learned during the past seven weeks and seek to apply the Triperspectival Model in one area of the Christian life. We will examine *forgiveness* in the light of this ethical model.

Exercise: How Do I Forgive Others?

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

What does the whole Bible say about forgiveness?



SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

What are the facts of the situation?

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

What am I thinking, feeling, believing?

The Triangle of Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

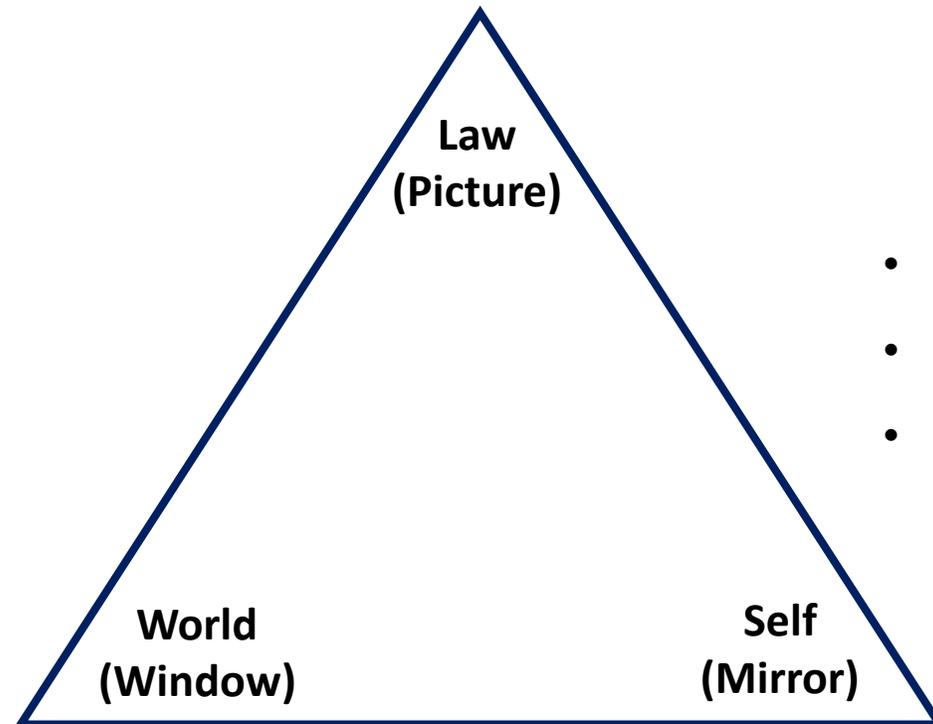


SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

The Triangle of Necessary & Sufficient Conditions

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



- Do I **understand** what God says about forgiveness?
- Will I **believe** what God says about forgiveness?
- Will I **obey** what God says and actually forgive?

SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

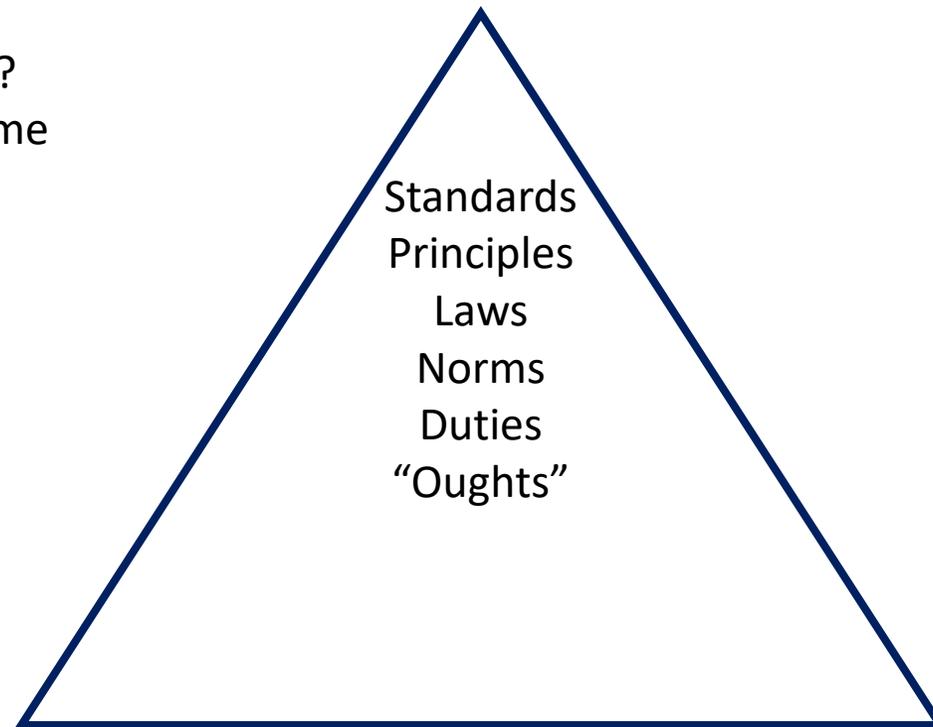
EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

The Deontological Perspective

What “Binds” Us? What Does God Want Us To Do? What Is Our Duty?

“Scripture contains a complete transcript of God’s will for ethics” (Frame).

- What does God say about it?
- What does God’s Word tell me to do?
- What norms, laws, and principles has God revealed about it?
- What is authoritative?
- God’s will revealed through nature, history, conscience, theophany, prophecy, and Scripture.



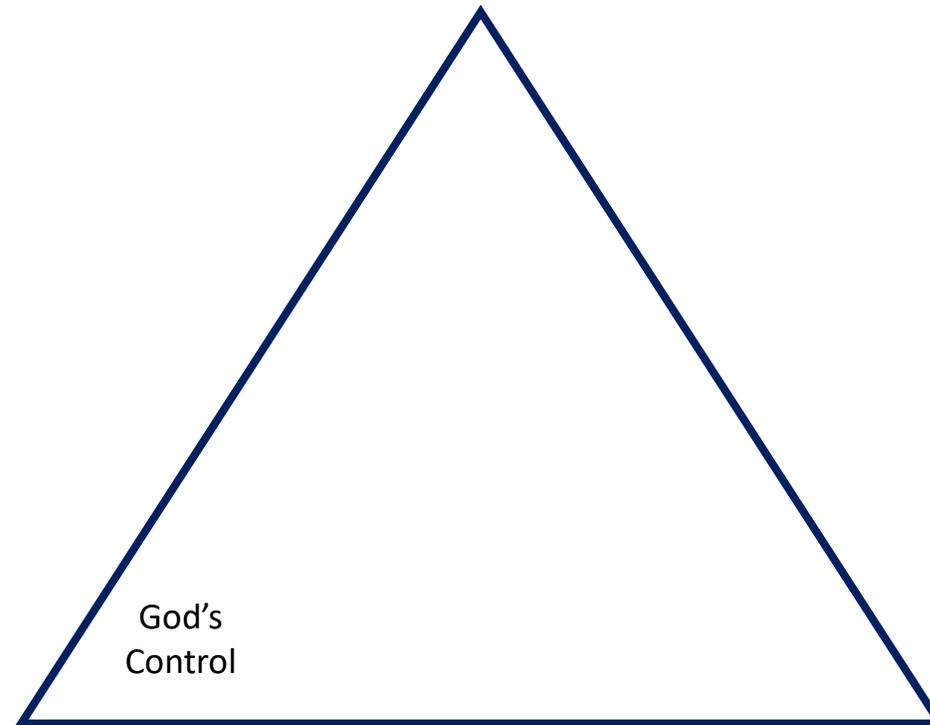
What Does the Whole Bible Say About Forgiveness?

- “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Mt. 6:12,14).
- “And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (Lk. 17:4).
- “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32).
- “Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you” (Col. 3:13).

The Situational Perspective

- Knowing God involves knowing His world – studying it.
- What are the facts of the situation?
- What are the qualities of the object? What are the God-honoring uses for the object?
- What do I learn by studying God's world (natural revelation), including His mighty acts of creation, providence, and redemption?
- God wants His people to apply His Word to their own situations.

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

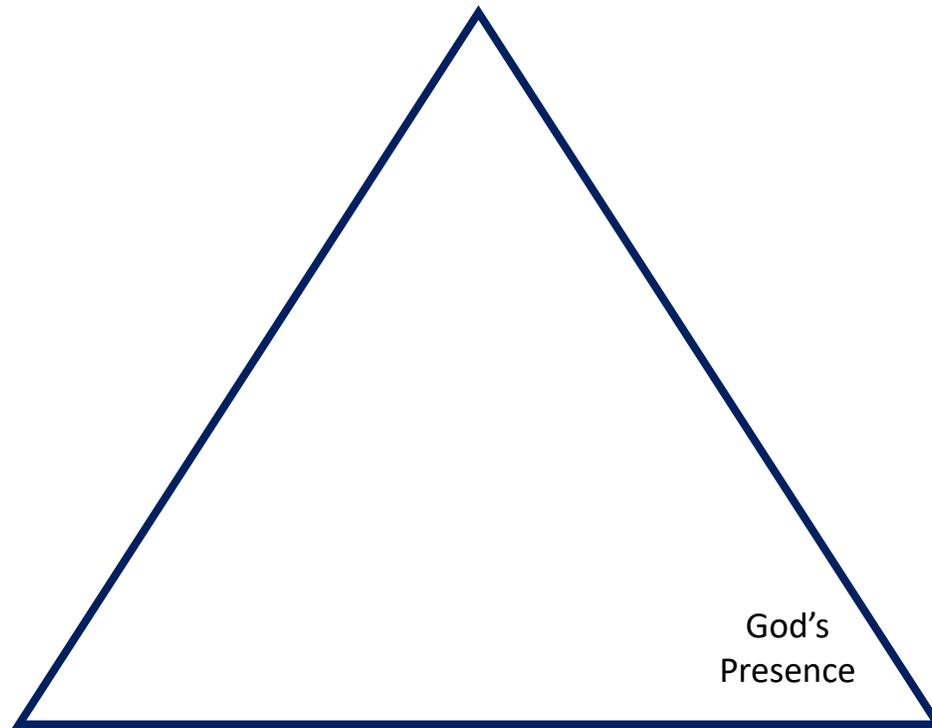
EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

What Are Some Facts I Need to Consider?

1. What does real forgiveness look like?
2. What happened? Was it an annoyance, a mistake, a disappointment, a betrayal, a brutality? How were you hurt?
3. Did you contribute to the offense?
4. How long ago did the injury happen?
5. What is your relationship like now with the person who offended you?
6. What would true healing look like for you?
7. Could forgiveness include reconciliation?

The Existential Perspective

DEONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



SITUATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

- “I cannot know myself rightly until I see myself as God’s image” (Frame).
- How am I a part of the problem and a part of the solution?
- What am I thinking, feeling, believing?
- What are my motives?
- Will I choose to obey?
- Have I prayed?

What Am I Thinking, Feeling, Believing?

1. How has *not* forgiving someone impacted your life?
2. Have you remained bitter or resentful toward this person?
3. Do I hate the person who hurt me?
4. How am I a part of the problem and a part of the solution?
5. The person has never asked me for forgiveness.
6. “I’ve tried to forgive him/her, but I just can’t get over what they did to me. I am still angry and confused. I don’t think I can ever let them off the hook.”
7. How can I be merciful to them, when they were not to me?

Suggested Reading on Forgiveness

1. Kendall, R.T. *How to Forgive Ourselves – Totally*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007.
2. Kendall, R.T. *Total Forgiveness: When Everything in You Wants to Hold a Grudge, Point a Finger and Remember the Pain, God Wants you to Lay It All Aside*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002.
3. Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 1991.
4. Smedes, Lewis B. *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1984.
5. Swindoll, Charles R. *Joseph: A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.