Course Information

I. Course Description
A study of the structure and content of Christian ethics: goal, motive, and norm of Christian life; with an analysis of ethical issues of authority, life, sexuality, property, and truthfulness. The lectures were recorded in Fall 1999.

II. Objectives
The goal of the class is to understand the overall structure and essential content of Christian ethics; to grow in grace and in knowledge of what God is calling us to be and to do; and to develop skills in the resolution of moral issues. In particular, when students have completed this class they will be able to:
* Articulate the goal, motive, and standard of Christian practice and to understand how it relates to ethics in general.
* Have a working knowledge of key biblical passages dealing with Christian character and practice.
* Have an appreciation for the Reformed tradition in ethics as expressed in the Westminster Standards.
* Develop a method for resolving moral conflicts and compare it with other approaches.
* Develop a perspective on perennial and contemporary ethical issues following the principles of the Ten Commandments.

III. Themes
The biblical foundation and motive for righteous living; the role of believers in the home, the church, and culture at large.

IV. Texts
These books can be purchased from most Christian booksellers, or you can order them online from the Covenant Seminary bookstore by visiting www.covenantseminary.edu or by calling the bookstore at 314-434-0110 (toll-free 877-213-3353).

* The Westminster Standards (any standard edition.)
* PCA Position Papers on Ethical Issues (available from CTS Bookstore).
* A standard English translation of the Bible (NIV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NEB, etc.).

V. Additional Reading
Exodus 19-20 (the giving of the Law); Leviticus 19 (the exposition of the Law); Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount); Romans 12-14 (the Christian life); 1 Corinthians 13 (exposition of love); Mt 22:36-39; Rom 2:14-15; Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 16 (Of Good Works), Ch. 19 (Of the Law of God), Ch. 20 (Of Christian Liberty), Ch. 23 (Of the Civil Magistrate), Ch. 24 (Of Marriage & Divorce), Shorter Catechism Q. 39-87, Larger Catechism Q. 91-153.

VI. Class Calendar
Introduction: Course Information

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Lecture 1—The Subject Matter of Ethics (Reading: Jones, ch. 1)
Lecture 2—The Goal of Human Life (I), (Jones, ch. 2)
Lecture 3—The Goal of Human Life (II); The Motivation of the Christian Life (I), (Jones, ch. 3; Sanderson, chs. 1-4, 14-17)
Lecture 4—The Motivation of the Christian Life (II), (Jones, ch. 4; Douma, Appendix, 355-90)
Lecture 5—The Motivation of the Christian Life (III)
Lecture 6—The Standards of the Christian Life (I)
Lecture 7—The Standards of the Christian Life (II)
Lecture 8—The Primary Forms of Love (Jones, ch. 5)
Lecture 9—The Universal Norms of Love (I), (Jones, ch. 6; Lewis, chs. 1-3)
Lecture 10—The Universal Norms of Love (II)
Lecture 11—The Universal Norms of Love (III)
Lecture 12—The Universal Norms of Love (IV)
Lecture 13—The Resolution of Moral Conflicts (I), (Jones, ch. 7; Douma, 313-335)
Lecture 14—The Resolution of Moral Conflicts (II)
Lecture 15—Excursus: Cultural Relativism & The Moral Law
Lecture 16—First Principles (Douma, 1-160)
Lecture 17—Marriage & The Family (Jones, chs. 8-9; Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF], ch. 24)
Lecture 18—Divorce & Remarriage
Lecture 19—The State in God’s Design (Douma, 161-206; WCF, ch. 23)
Lecture 20—The Death Penalty & The Just War (PCA, Nuclear Weapons, Digest, 439-54)
Lecture 21—Respect for Human Life—Beginning (I), (Douma, 243-283; PCA, Abortion, Digest, 140-45)
Lecture 22—Respect for Human Life—Beginning (II) & Respect for Human Life—End (I), (PCA, Heroic Measures, Digest, 378-89; Douma, 243-83)
Lecture 23—Respect for Human Life—End (II), (Issues in Human Homosexuality, syllabus)
Lecture 24—Homosexuality (PCA, AIDS, Digest, 37-50)

VII. Recommended Devotional Readings
Psalm 119
“It is an acrostic psalm, an alphabet of prayers and reflections on the Word of God, giving each Hebrew letter its turn to introduce eight successive verses on the subject.…Like a ring of eight bells, eight synonyms for Scripture dominate the psalm [Law, Testimonies, Precepts, Statutes, Commandments, Ordinances, Word, Promise], and the twenty-two stanzas will ring the changes on them. … This untiring emphasis has led some to accuse the psalmist of worshiping the Word rather than the Lord; but it has been well remarked that every reference here to Scripture, without exception, relates it explicitly to its Author; indeed every verse from 4 to the end is a prayer or affirmation addressed to Him. This is true piety: a love of God not desiccated by study but refreshed, informed and nourished by it.” Derek Kidner, Psalms 73-150 (London: InterVarsity, 1975), 417-19.

Matthew 5:3-10 (The Beatitudes), James 3:17 (wisdom from above), Colossians 3:12-15 (qualities of life in Christ), Galatians 5:22-23 (the fruit of the Spirit), 2 Peter 1:5-7, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 1 Timothy 3:2-3 & Titus 1:7-8 (character requirements for church office)

VIII. Select Bibliography
Recommended texts for term papers

**Reference Works**

**Histories**

**Christian Classics**

**Introductions**

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Apologetics


Systematic Treatises


Biblical Studies


Virtue Ethics


IX. About the Professor

David C. Jones, Professor of Theology and Ethics. B.A., William Jennings Bryan College; B.D. and Th.M., Westminster Theological Seminary; Th.D. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. After serving for two years as a missionary-pastor on Grand Cayman Island in the West Indies, Professor Jones joined the Seminary faculty in 1967. His special interest, Christian ethics, is reflected in his publications and service on national church committees dealing with subjects such as nuclear war, medical ethics, divorce, and abortion. Dr. Jones’ sensitivity to these issues and others that directly affect the church gives a special mixture of practical and theoretical material to his classes. He is the author of Biblical Christian Ethics.

X. Letter from the Professor

Dear Students:

The goal of this course is to grasp what God is calling us to be and to do in union with Christ. Admittedly this is an ambitious project. Beyond ambitious—it’s awesome. To attain the goal, Christ Himself must be our Teacher. As the Shorter Catechism reminds us, Christ, in His mediatorial role of prophet, reveals to us by His Word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation. In the process He uses helpers, “attendants of the word,” in Luke’s provocative phrase (Lk 1:2). Think of me as an attendant, a subordinate helper of the word of Christ. I seek to be faithful to the task, but bear in mind that I am finite, fallible, and (worse yet) fallen. As we proceed, follow Paul’s counsel: “Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Sincerely,

David C. Jones

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