

## Maneuver Over White Water

[White water Rafting] --- It could be fun on vacation, but it is not fun to face it every day at work. Many Christian men are trying to stay afloat ethically on the white water of workplace.

### What is “ethics”?

- “System of moral principles, rules of conduct”.<sup>1</sup>
- “Moral” and “ethical” mean . . . the two words are used as synonyms. They refer to either notions of right and wrong accepted by society or codes of conduct that have been established by an academic, governmental, or industrial entity”.<sup>2</sup>

### Today’s Secular Ethics

- [skill carpenter is supplied with nail instead of screw]
- [adultery: got to be prepared (practice safe sex), legal (between two consent adults), and smart (not to be found out)]
- “The New Business Ethics: Cheating, Lying, Stealing—Technology makes it easy. Get used to it”.<sup>3</sup>
- Pluralistic Society—“There are so many different expressions of religion, race, ethnicity, and politics in our society that the individual may validly choose which moral/ ethical standards and does nothing to reconcile any to another.”<sup>4</sup> [When India was occupied by Britain: British officer threatened to hang an Indian who wanted to bury a living widow with her husband ]
- Nihilism—“is deification of each individual human as the only significant reality. In a nihilistic society, moral/ethical choices are often governed by slogans, like ‘Each person must create his/her own happiness,’ ‘Do your own thing’, ‘Immediate gratification is our true heritage’, ‘There are no absolutes’, ‘You only go around once in life’ . . .”.<sup>5</sup>
- Postmodernism—“an age in which truth, reality and morals are at best only relatives; they are no more or less than a person perceives them to be. Absolute standards in morals and ethics are rejected by postmodernism. No reconciliation of conflicting standards is needed! Each individual’s choice must be considered as valid as the next

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<sup>1</sup> Hornby, A.A editor. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English. Third Edition. 1974

<sup>2</sup> Hilgert, Raymond L. Lochhassa, Philip H. Truesdell, James L. Christian Ethics in the Workplace. Concordia Publishing House. 2001. P. 18

<sup>3</sup> Galvin, John. The New Business Ethics: Cheating, Lying, Stealing—Technology makes it easy. Get used to it. *Smart Business for the New Economy* (June 2000): 86-97

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 18

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 20

person's . . . something that was formerly considered morally or ethically 'wrong' can become 'right' simply by redefining it".<sup>6</sup>

- Secular Humanism—"is based on the belief that 'man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement . . . they are based on the assumption that a man-made denial of God's existence is suddenly going to be a productive social standard of behavior . . . the goal of secular humanism is nothing less than the deification of humankind.'" <sup>7</sup>

### Challenging Time

Christians both struggle to live true to our faith and are given opportunities to shine in the dark world.

### Definition

"Christian ethics is the application of Christian values to the decision making process. . . The foundation of Christian ethics in business is not rules but the changeless characters of God."<sup>8</sup>

### The Three Principles<sup>9</sup> (Rom 7:12; Mat 22:37-40)

Holiness, Justice and Love

#### 1] Holiness (Mat 6:24; 10:34-39; 22:37-38)

It emphasizes being acceptable by the Lord. It is dealing with God. It focuses on purity. Holiness is separation from ordinary life for otherworldly contemplation with single devotion to God and absolute ethical purity.<sup>10</sup>

- 1) Zeal for God --- making the Lord to be the most important priority in life. Watch out for anything that is luring us away from our total devotion to God. Holiness is a priority issue. Do not idolize business success.
- 2) Purity --- separate any practice that is unclean in God's sight and compromise God's perfect character. Moral integrity as one of the top three qualities sought in managers (along with competence and leadership).<sup>11</sup>
  - Purity in communication, in sexuality, in purpose
- 3) Accountability --- "Holiness holds us accountable by rewarding moral purity and punishing impurity."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p22

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 23-25

<sup>8</sup> Hill, Alexander. Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace. 12-13

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 14

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 22

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence, William. Beyond the Bottom Line: Where Faith and Business Meet. 15

- 4) Humility --- “Humility is the natural outcome of seeking to imitate God’s holiness. If we honestly measure ourselves by divine standards, we are forced to recognize how far short of the ideal we fall”.<sup>13</sup>

\*\* Watch out for legalism, judgmentalism, self righteous as Pharisees and withdrawal from society

### II] Justice (Deut 16:20)

It emphasizes fairness. It is dealing with issue. It focuses on rights. “At its core, justice provides order to human relationships by laying our reciprocal sets of rights and duties for those living in the context of community... By virtue of being God’s image-bearer we have been endowed with two fundamental rights: the right to be treated with dignity and the right to exercise free will.”<sup>14</sup>

- 1) Procedure rights
  - a) Due Process
    - i) Impartial: Have no conflict of interest
    - ii) Fair and adequate evidence
    - iii) Opportunity to tell their side of the story before a decision is reached
  - b) Equal protection --- prohibit discrimination by the decision makers.
- 2) Substantive rights --- universal basic rights such as, bodily safety, right to their property, being told the truth, being compensated fairly and properly and timely, etc.
- 3) Merit --- links the concept of cause and effect. It justifies unequal distribution deal to education, experience, effectiveness, effort involves, etc.
- 4) Contractual justice --- Christian ethics does not rest its entire weight on contractual justice

\*\* Watch out for inflexibility, coldness, lack of compassion, lack of possibility of second chance and harsh treatment.

### III] Love (Mat 22:37-39; Ps 25:6-10)

It emphasizes on relationship. It is dealing with people. It focuses on bonds between people.

- 1) Empathy --- feel for others, show kindness, be sensitive to others, be flexible when dealing with people. At the end, it will build mutual advantage. For example, justice will fire someone who cannot meet the quota. Love will look into why someone cannot meet the quota and see if anything can be done about it.

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<sup>12</sup> Hill, Alexander. Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace. 26

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 27

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 34

- 2) Mercy --- When empathy comes from the heart, mercy is the hands that deliver the heart-felt emotion to the recipients such as, seeking reconciliation and granting forgiveness.
- 3) Self-sacrifice --- willingly give up the right that justice grant.

\*\* Watch out for covering sins that cannot be accepted under the light of holiness and justice, creating ambiguous precedent and inviting abuse. Balance Love with holiness and justice.

### Case Study

Use the Three Principles we have learned, discuss the following scenarios and try to come up with decisions/ solutions that reflect sound Christian ethics:

#1 Jonah works as an auditor for a big-six accounting firm. After two years he is finally given the opportunity to lead an audit team. Unfortunately, the client operates a chain of pornographic movie theaters. Jonah strongly believes that such films degrade women, tempt men and dishonor God. However, when he expresses his reservations about the assignment, his fellow team members tell him to “get off his high horse”.<sup>15</sup>

#2 Plasma Inc. has identified a very inexpensive source of clean blood in a Third World nation. In light of transmittable diseases such as AIDS and Hepatitis B, untainted blood is in relatively short supply. Plasma Inc. charges top dollars—more than 100times what it pays for the blood—selling mostly to private hospitals. The poor, both in North America and overseas, are unable to afford its prices.<sup>16</sup>

#3 Dora manages the pharmacy department of a large retail store. Over the past months, small quantities of a very expensive prescription heart medication have been disappearing on a regular basis. After setting up a hidden camera, she catches her technical assistant pilfering. As she is about to call the police, she asks him why he has turned to crime. He explained that his niece will die without the drug and that her parents cannot afford medical insurance. His request for understanding leaves Dora pondering what her next step should be.<sup>17</sup>

### Conclusion

Always apply these three principles **together** in **balance** when you maneuver on the white water of your workplace.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 38,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 56