

“So much in the field of ethics today merely describes the issues and the alternatives. The very idea that there is a ‘right’ answer to anything is anathema. In such a stagnant climate, Wayne Grudem’s *Christian Ethics* is a breath of fresh air. It demonstrates how the Bible provides specific answers to particular questions. However, this is not merely a compendium of his personal views on issues. Where his views are at odds with other views even within evangelical Christianity, he explains those alternatives to his readers and invites comparison. Readers are challenged to think and given the material they need to do so in a God-honoring way. We are in Professor Grudem’s debt for this massive labor of love.”

**John Kilner**, Director of Bioethics Programs, Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois

“Insightful, encyclopedic, biblical, and distinctively evangelical, this new book from Wayne Grudem is a massive contribution to Christian ethics. It will stand as one of the most important and definitive works of this generation.”

**R. Albert Mohler Jr.**, President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Wayne Grudem has done it again. His *Systematic Theology* has equipped countless Christians, churches, and pastors in the truth of God’s Word in a clear, accessible, and faithful manner. Now his *Christian Ethics* promises to do the same in helping us apply God’s Word to our lives. In a time when “obedience” is often minimized in the name of grace, this book equips us to delight in God’s will for our lives in response to grace.”

**C. J. Mahaney**, Senior Pastor, Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville, Kentucky

“*Christian Ethics* has all the excellent features of [Grudem’s] *Systematic Theology*: biblical fidelity, comprehensiveness, clarity, practical application, and interaction with other writers. His exhortations drive the reader to worship the triune God.”

**John M. Frame**, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary

“Grudem unites a scholar’s mind with a disciple’s heart more committed to pleasing Christ than contemporaries, and more zealous for strengthening the church than impressing the world.”

**Daniel R. Heimbach**, Senior Professor of Christian Ethics, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Professor Grudem has a rare gift in making complex theological and ethical concepts accessible. . . . An invaluable resource to both scholars and practitioners.”

**Peter S. Heslam**, Director of Transforming Business, Cambridge, England

“Only occasionally does a book so profound make it to the market. My earnest desire is that every pastor in America would read this book. What seems so impossible on the surface is made amazingly simple by Grudem, and literally every chapter is crucially important.”

**Paige Patterson**, President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

“This nearly exhaustive treatment of Christian ethics is destined to become the standard evangelical text for many years to come. It is wide-ranging, thoughtful, and unafraid to engage with controversial issues and with those who take a different approach. . . . Highly recommended!”

**Sam Storms**, Senior Pastor, Bridgeway Church, Oklahoma City



# CHRISTIAN ETHICS

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL MORAL REASONING

*ANNOTATED TABLE OF CONTENTS*

WAYNE GRUDEM

# PART 1:

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter 1 Introduction to Christian Ethics

This book defines Christian ethics as: *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?”* Therefore this book’s approach to ethics will be God-centered and Bible-centered.

The purpose for studying ethics is to better know God’s will, in order to better obey him in daily life and to better “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him” (Col. 1:10). For this reason, each chapter ends with a set of “Questions for Personal Application.”

### Chapter 2 The Ultimate Basis for Ethics: The Moral Character of God

God delights in his own moral character, which is supremely good, unchanging, and eternal. His moral standards for human beings flow from his moral character, and therefore they apply to all people in all cultures for all of history (but the Bible also contains many temporary commands intended only for specific people at a specific time). God’s moral character and his moral commands provide the basis for a Christian answer to the question of how we can move from “is” statements to “ought” statements in ethics.

### Chapter 3 Our Source of Ethical Standards: The Bible

One of the purposes of the Bible is to teach us how to live a life that is pleasing to God (Col. 1:9–10; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:17). The *authority* of Scripture means that the entire Bible is God’s Word to us, and therefore to disbelieve or disobey any part of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God. Because it is the Word of God, the Bible is a higher authority in ethics than tradition, reason, experience, expected results, or subjective perceptions of guidance.

The *clarity* of Scripture means that God gave us a Bible that is able to be understood, but not all at once, not without effort, not without using ordinary means, not without a willingness to obey it, not without the help of the Holy Spirit, not without some misunderstanding, and never completely.

The *necessity* of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing God's declarations of moral right and wrong, although the study of natural law also has some value.

The *sufficiency* of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. This principle gives us substantial freedom regarding numerous ethical decisions, for it means that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture, either explicitly or by implication.

#### Chapter 4 The Goal of Ethics: Living for the Glory of God

The goal of ethics is to lead a life that glorifies God (1 Cor. 10:31), and such a life will have (1) a *character* that glorifies God (a Christ-like character), (2) *results* that glorify God (a life that bears abundant fruit for God's kingdom), and (3) *behavior* that glorifies God (a life of obedience to God, lived in personal relationship with God). The New Testament commends more than two dozen character traits or "virtues" that are part of a Christ-like character.

Although we are justified by faith in Christ alone and not by works, extensive New Testament teachings about living the Christian life show that our day-by-day obedience as justified Christians is an important part of the Christian life. Understanding obedience correctly requires that we avoid the opposite errors of legalism and antinomianism.

#### Chapter 5 The Joys and Blessings of Obedience to God and the Harmful Consequences of Sin

The New Testament teaches at least seventeen specific kinds of blessings that come to us in connection with living in obedience to God's commands in Scripture, and at least six harmful consequences of willful sin in the Christian's life.

Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. It is possible to speak of greater and lesser sins in the sense that some sins bring more harmful results, some sins break greater commandments, and some are committed by people to whom God has entrusted greater responsibility. We should pray daily for forgiveness, not to gain justification again and again, but to restore our personal fellowship with God that has been hindered by sin. The Holy Spirit works within us to give us the moral and

spiritual ability to obey God in increasing measure throughout our lives.

## Chapter 6 How to Know God's Will: Factors to Consider in Making Ethical Decisions

In some cases, a decision about how to act must be made instantly. But in other cases there is more time to consider the decision at some length. We should consider four dimensions to every action: (1) the *action* itself, (2) the person's *attitudes* about the action, (3) the person's *motives* for doing the action, and (4) the *results* of the action.

We should also consider nine possible sources of information and guidance: (1) the Bible, (2) knowledge of the facts of the situation, (3) knowledge about ourselves, (4) advice from others, (5) changed circumstances, (6) our consciences, (7) our hearts, (8) our human spirits, and (9) guidance from the Holy Spirit. We need wisdom from God in order to evaluate these factors rightly in making a decision.

An extended analysis of the book *Decision Making and the Will of God* by Garry Friesen shows that it makes many valuable contributions to the topic of knowing God's will, but his "Bible and wisdom only" approach incorrectly minimizes the importance of personal guidance from God to the individual believer that is found in the teachings of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

## Chapter 7 Christians Will Never Have to Choose the "Lesser Sin"

Although several evangelical ethics books claim that, from time to time, we face situations of "impossible moral conflict" where all our choices are sinful and we must simply choose to commit the "lesser sin," this idea is not taught in Scripture. It is contradicted both by the life of Christ, "who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15), and by the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13, which says that God will always provide a "way of escape."

An analysis of the arguments by Norman Geisler and by John and Paul Feinberg on this topic concludes that their arguments and their alternative interpretations of key Scripture passages are not persuasive. The "impossible moral conflict" view easily becomes a slippery slope that encourages Christians to sin more and more.

## Chapter 8 How Should Christians Use the Old Testament for Ethical Guidance?

The Mosaic covenant, which began at Exodus 20, was terminated when Christ died. Christians are no longer directly subject to the laws of the Mosaic covenant but now live instead under the provisions of the new covenant. However, the Old Testament is still a valuable source of ethical wisdom when understood in accordance with the ways in which the New Testament authors use the Old Testament for ethical teaching, and in light of the changes brought about by the new covenant. The New Testament authors explicitly reaffirm all of the moral standards found in the Ten Commandments, but they do not reaffirm observance of the Sabbath as a requirement for new covenant Christians.

The system of “theonomy” as taught by Greg Bahnsen and others fails to give sufficient recognition of the termination of the entire Mosaic covenant at the time of the death of Christ, and fails to recognize that God’s wise laws for the civil government of Israel as a nation *then* are not necessarily God’s wise laws for the civil governments of secular nations *now*. Advocates of theonomy do not take sufficient account of the uniqueness of the redemptive-historical context in which the Mosaic laws were given.

The Ten Commandments provide a useful organizing principle for treating specific ethical topics.

## PART 2: PROTECTING GOD’S HONOR

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”

“Remember the Sabbath day.”

“You shall not bear false witness.”

## Chapter 9 No Other Gods

We are always and everywhere in the presence of God, and he will tolerate no other small “gods” at any place or any time in our lives. When societies ignore this first commandment, much evil follows. Modern Christians need to be especially cautious of things that we can be tempted to love and serve and trust more than God, such as

money, material things, food and physical pleasure, the approval of other people, power, or self.

#### Chapter 10 No Carved Images

The second commandment prohibits making carved images to worship, but it does not prohibit all visual arts. It prohibits all images of the true God, as well as images of false gods. Specifically with regard to the Trinity, the commandment prohibits images and pictures of God the Father, but it does not prohibit pictures of Jesus Christ, because he did live on earth as a man.

#### Chapter 11 Purity of Speech

The third commandment prohibits foolish or worthless use of God's name, as well as any false or irreverent speech about God. In a broader sense this commandment warns us against not only (1) taking God's name in vain, but also against (2) cursing others who are made in the image of God. Yet another category of speech includes (3) obscene or unclean language, in which it is important to recognize the effect that using certain offensive words will have on our reputations as Christians.

It is morally acceptable for a Christian to portray a non-Christian in a movie or a theater production, but even in that situation it would not be right to take God's name in vain. Oaths and vows are acceptable for Christians in many situations. The Bible views humor positively, but it also must be used cautiously.

#### Chapter 12 Lying and Telling the Truth

The ninth commandment (against bearing false witness) is considered here out of the normal sequence because the topic is closely connected to purity of speech (the previous chapter), and because the issues involved in considering lying and truth telling are relevant for many other topics that follow in the book.

The following definition of lying is used: *Lying is affirming in speech or writing something you believe to be false.* Augustine, Calvin, and others have defined lying in a similar way. This specific definition means that "lying" (as discussed in this chapter) does not include silence, nonverbal actions, ironic statements, hyperbole, or unintentional falsehoods, and these are all topics which require separate discussions.



Numerous biblical statements condemn lying in the sense of verbally affirming a falsehood. Imitating the character of God is the basis for not lying. Jesus never told a lie. The narrative examples of lying in Scripture (such as Rahab in Jericho) do not overturn this conclusion. Lying accompanies most other sins. It is morally acceptable for Christians to engage in spying and undercover police work, with certain limitations. In most cases, it is right to respond quickly and truthfully to slander rather than remaining silent. Plagiarism is another form of lying. Punctuality is a virtue.

#### Chapter 13 The Sabbath Commandment

The Sabbath commandment is not morally binding on people today, because it has been terminated along with the rest of the Mosaic covenant, and, unlike the other nine commandments, it is never reaffirmed for Christians in the new covenant. The New Testament explicitly says that Christians no longer must observe Sabbath days.

Nevertheless, it is wise for Christians to observe regular times of worship and prayer with other believers, and it is also wise to have regular days of rest from our ordinary work, and to take longer vacations from time to time. It is also a wise pattern for many businesses to remain closed on Sunday, but governmental laws should allow considerable freedom in this area for individuals and businesses to decide as they think best.

As an alternative to the viewpoint of this chapter, there is a long and highly respected tradition within the Christian church that sees Sunday as the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament Sabbath day, and holds that Christians should treat Sunday much like the Old Testament believers treated the Sabbath.

## PART 3 PROTECTING HUMAN AUTHORITY

“Honor your father and your mother.”

#### Chapter 14 Authority of Parents

The command to honor one’s father and mother means to treat them with respect, deference, and care, and also means that children should obey their parents, except when commanded to sin. Adult children are no longer required to obey their parents, but must still

honor them and care for them as necessary and as they are able. The New Testament promises children God's blessing on their lives in response to their obedience to their parents (Eph. 6:1–3).

Parents should love their children, discipline them, be patient with them, and teach them. Discipline of children can take many forms, including the wise use of spanking in certain circumstances, but spanking should never result in actual physical harm to the child or in physical abuse. Secular opposition to spanking opposes the explicit teaching of Scripture. Such opposition is not supported by reliable studies. Actual physical abuse is already prohibited by law, and such laws are good and necessary.

This chapter summarizes arguments given in favor of Christian parents sending their children to (1) public schools, (2) Christian schools, and (3) homeschools. Each solution may be appropriate in different situations with different children.

#### Chapter 15 Equality and Leadership in Marriage

Men and women are equal in value and dignity before God, but men and women also have different roles in marriage as part of the way God created us from the beginning. Male leadership or headship in marriage did not come about as a result of sin, but existed in the relationship between Adam and Eve that was established by God before sin entered the world. This is evident from ten different factors in the biblical text. A husband's headship in marriage is also the explicit teaching of the New Testament. In actual practice, it is possible for both husband and wife to slip into errors of passivity or errors of aggressiveness, but the biblical ideal is loving, humble headship on the part of the husband, and joyful, intelligent submission to a husband's leadership on the part of the wife.

In the biblical pattern for marriage, the husband also has the primary responsibility to provide for and protect his wife and family, and the wife also has the primary responsibility to care for the home and to nurture children. The equality and differences between men and women reflect the equality and differences in the Trinity. The equality and differences between men and women are created by God and we should see them as very good.

#### Chapter 16 Civil Government

God established civil government as a blessing to human beings, to protect us against the great evil of anarchy. Governments should

punish evil and encourage good, executing justice on wrongdoers and defending the weak and defenseless. God is sovereign over all nations even today. Citizens should obey the laws of the government except in certain circumstances.

It is important for governments to safeguard human liberty, which is essential to human flourishing on the earth. However, government cannot save people or fundamentally change human hearts. Regarding the relationship between church and state, the church should not govern “the things that are Caesar’s” and the civil government should not govern “the things that are God’s.” Civil governments should never try to compel religion but should protect freedom of religion. Governments should however support and encourage bona fide religious groups in general. It is wise for governments to establish a strong and clear separation of powers, and even rulers must be subject to the rule of law. Governments should be chosen by the consent of the people. Nations should value patriotism. Christians should seek to influence governments for good. Christians have influenced civil governments positively throughout history.

## Chapter 17 Other Authorities

In the workplace, employees should be subject to the authority of their supervisors. They should not steal but should work diligently as serving Christ. Employers should treat their employees fairly, knowing that God will repay their good and evil deeds.

With respect to the church, church members should be subject to the authority of the elders, and elders should exercise their authority willingly, eagerly, and as examples to others.

With respect to schools, Scripture does not contain explicit teachings about the authority of teachers with respect to their students, but in a school situation parents may rightfully entrust some of their parental authority to teachers. Students should be submissive to the authority of their teachers, should honor them, and should work hard on their academic work, as serving the Lord.

## **PART 4:**

# **PROTECTING HUMAN LIFE**

“You shall not murder.”

### **Chapter 18 Capital Punishment**

God’s words to Noah after the flood in Genesis 9:5–6 established the basis for human governments to carry out capital punishment, at least for the crime of murder. That principle is reaffirmed in Romans 13:1–4. Objections based on alternative interpretations of Genesis 9, the teachings of Jesus, a “whole-life ethic,” or questions of results and fairness are not persuasive.

### **Chapter 19 War**

The commandment against murder (Ex. 20:13) does not prohibit all participation in war because the Hebrew verb used in this commandment is never used to speak of killing in war. Governments have a responsibility to defend their nations against attacks by other nations with military forces if necessary. There are eight commonly used criteria for deciding if a war should be considered a “just war,” and four commonly recognized moral restrictions on how a just war should be fought.

A Christian soldier who participates in fighting a just war is not doing something morally wrong or morally neutral, but something that is morally good in God’s sight. But it is morally wrong to serve in a war that is clearly unjust. The pacifist arguments promoted by Jim Wallis, Greg Boyd, and others are not persuasive. Now that nuclear weapons exist in the world, it is necessary for some peace-loving nations to have them in order to defend against potential aggressors. In addition, antimissile defense systems should continue to be developed and strengthened. Nations should not send women into combat situations.

### **Chapter 20 Self-Defense**

Jesus’s teaching about turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:38–39) tells us not to hit back when someone slaps us as an insult, but does not prohibit us from escaping or defending ourselves against a violent attack that would do us bodily harm or even kill us. Other passages in Scripture encourage escaping from danger or even using force in

self-defense if necessary, and other passages encourage us to defend other people against wrongful attacks. Jesus's disciples carried swords, which were used for self-defense.

However, Christians should not retaliate when persecuted specifically for their Christian faith. Children should be taught to be "peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9), but if a bully continues to escalate his attacks, and if no parent or teacher will intervene, children should be taught to fight back and defend themselves with courage and determination, and also to pray for and forgive those who attack them.

If using physical force in self-defense is morally right, then use of a legally permitted weapon in self-defense is also morally right, since a weapon can overcome great inequalities in size or strength. Individual Christians will come to different conclusions about whether it is wise to own a gun for self-defense.

## Chapter 21 Abortion

Several passages in the Bible indicate that an unborn child should be thought of and protected as a person from the moment of conception. There is increasing scientific evidence supporting the distinct identity of the unborn child. Objections to this viewpoint are not persuasive. Therefore abortion is the wrongful taking of an innocent human life. However, abortion to save the life of the mother is morally justified because it involves making a choice between one person dying and two persons dying.

Governments should give legal protections to the lives of people within their countries, including unborn children. Objections to this position are considered and found to be unpersuasive.

## Chapter 22 Euthanasia

The commandment "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13) prohibits intentionally taking the life of another human being, even a very elderly or terminally ill person, or a person in great pain. However, there is a clear distinction between killing someone and letting someone die. We can enumerate some circumstances in which it is right to allow a person to die.

The experience of other countries shows that there can be a slippery slope from allowing euthanasia to promoting an "obligation" to die, and then even to practicing involuntary euthanasia on elderly people.

## Chapter 23 Suicide

The commandment, “You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13) also applies to suicide: you shall not murder yourself. Scripture never views suicide positively. It is consistent with Satan’s goal to destroy human beings made in the image of God. People who commit suicide injure other people very deeply, though they can be forgiven if they were believers in Christ.

## Chapter 24 Aging and Death

Human death was not a part of God’s original creation, but because of the sin of Adam, all human beings grow old and eventually die. Still, the Bible reveals several blessings that accompany the process of aging, including gratitude for the dignity that belongs to the physical signs of aging.

However, the use of dental braces, hair dye, and cosmetic surgery can be morally good choices in some circumstances. Considerations of love for one’s family and wise stewardship indicate that it is important for people to prepare a will and end-of-life medical directives.

Christian should not fear death, but it is right for us to experience both grief and joy when believing loved ones die. Cremation is not necessarily wrong and can result in significant savings, but traditional burial of one’s body in a casket has the advantage of giving more visible expression to our hope of the resurrection of the body when Christ returns.

## Chapter 25 Racial Discrimination

Because all human beings are made in the image of God and all have descended from Adam, the Bible provides no basis for the favoring of or discrimination against any groups of people on the basis of their racial backgrounds. All human beings are worthy of honor and respect.

There are several examples of interracial marriage viewed positively in Scripture. Noah’s curse on Canaan in Genesis 9:25 has nothing to do with people of African descent but was fulfilled when the people of Israel conquered the Canaanites and took possession of the land of Palestine. Multiethnic churches today manifest God’s glory because they show the wisdom of God in uniting people who, apart from Christ, would be alienated from each other.

## Chapter 26 Health

We should take reasonable care of our physical bodies because they are good gifts from God and “temples” of the Holy Spirit. Good health habits include a healthy diet, physical exercise, sleep, and vaccinations. Christians can have legitimate differences of opinion regarding organic foods. The Old Testament prohibition against tattoos (Lev. 19:28) is not binding on people today, but several factors should be considered in deciding whether getting a tattoo is a wise decision. Circumcision is no longer commanded by God in the New Testament, but brings several health benefits.

There is an interrelationship between bodily health and spiritual health. God often works through us in spite of physical weakness or illness. Wisdom is required in deciding between caring for one’s physical health and partially sacrificing it for ministry purposes.

## Chapter 27 Alcohol and Drugs

The Bible clearly forbids drunkenness and contains frequent warnings against the dangers of alcohol, but other passages view the moderate use of alcohol more positively. Individual Christians will reach different conclusions about whether they should practice moderate use of alcohol or total abstinence. Churches should not require total abstinence as a condition of membership because such a requirement cannot be demonstrated from Scripture.

Several strands of biblical teaching affirm that Christians should not use illicit recreational drugs. Christians should not support the legalization of recreational marijuana, for several reasons, but Christians should have no objection to a genuinely medical use of marijuana if it can be effectively regulated by law in the same way as all other prescription medicines, and if widespread abuse can be prevented.

## PART 5: PROTECTING MARRIAGE

“You shall not commit adultery.”

### Chapter 28 Marriage

Marriage according to Scripture is the legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife. It is not merely a human agreement but is also a covenant made before God. Some kind of public awareness is necessary for a marriage to occur, and sexual intercourse alone does not constitute a marriage. Marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the church. Christians should only marry other Christians.

Sexual intimacy within marriage was created by God and is fundamentally good. Not surprisingly, recent studies indicate that faithful married couples have the highest levels of sexual fulfillment.

God’s definition of marriage was intended to apply to all people in all societies for all time. Adultery is repeatedly prohibited by Scripture, and frequently destroys a person’s entire life. Other sexual sins prohibited by Scripture include incest, homosexuality, and cohabitation before marriage. The New Testament highly values singleness as well as marriage. Civil governments should define marriage for all citizens.

### Chapter 29 Birth Control

Scripture views children not as a burden but as a great blessing. The world is far from being overpopulated. Birth control for a limited time is morally permissible, but some forms of birth control are morally unacceptable because they cause the death of a newly-conceived child. The arguments made by some evangelicals against all “artificial” methods of birth control are unpersuasive.

### Chapter 30 Infertility, Reproductive Technology, and Adoption

Infertility has been a source of deep sorrow, for all of human history, as is evident from several narratives in Scripture where God’s people are encouraged to trust him in the midst of such sadness. Modern medicine in general is morally good, and it is right to use medical solutions to infertility, but within the constraints of other moral



principles in Scripture, including the protection of human life and the protection of marriage.

Morally acceptable types of reproductive technology include, in appropriate circumstances, artificial insemination by husband, *in vitro* fertilization without the destruction of embryos, embryo adoption, and prefertilization genetic screening for genetic diseases. Morally unacceptable types of reproductive technology include *in vitro* fertilization with selective reduction, artificial insemination by donor, surrogate motherhood, and cloning. Scripture views adoption as a wonderful blessing both for parents and for the children who are adopted.

#### Chapter 31 Pornography

God's moral standards in Scripture require us to avoid longing for sexual intercourse with someone apart from being married to that person. Therefore it is morally wrong, according to Scripture, to create, acquire, and view photographs whose primary purpose is to arouse in people sexual desires that are contrary to God's moral standards, and that is the primary purpose of pornography. Pornography brings harmful results to people's spiritual lives, their marriages and other relationships, and their communities. It is appropriate for governments to make and enforce reasonable laws restricting the production and sale of pornography.

#### Chapter 32 Divorce and Remarriage

God's original plan is for lifelong, monogamous marriage. The rate of divorce among Christians who attend church regularly is far smaller than that of the general population. Divorce commonly brings many harmful consequences. In some situations, God tolerated and regulated divorce in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus allowed for both divorce and remarriage on account of adultery. Paul added irreconcilable desertion as a second legitimate reason for divorce.

In cases of physical abuse, both the church and often the civil authority must act to see that the abuse is immediately stopped. Immediate physical separation is often necessary. Some evangelicals argue that physical abuse should be a third legitimate reason for divorce, but the scriptural support for that position is not sufficient. The arguments by David Instone-Brewer, that divorce should be

allowed because of material or emotional neglect, are not persuasive. Divorce because of incompatibility is not justified by Scripture.

People who have been divorced for unbiblical reasons and then have married someone else should now stay married to their present spouses. Such marriages began with adultery but they are now legitimate marriages and should not be considered adulterous. The phrase “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2) should not be used to prevent divorced people from holding office in the church. The arguments in favor of the “no divorce and no remarriage” view and the “divorce but no remarriage” view are not persuasive.

### Chapter 33 Homosexuality and Transgenderism

God’s original design is for human sexual conduct to occur only within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. Homosexual conduct is one of several kinds of sexual relations outside of marriage that are prohibited in Scripture. The arguments of Matthew Vines and others, claiming that the Bible does not speak about persons with an unchangeable homosexual orientation, are not persuasive. The Bible’s solution to homosexuality is trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, the imputation of righteousness, and the power to change.

Recent arguments that some people are “born gay,” that scientific evidence shows that some people have a homosexual genetic makeup, and that many homosexual relationships today are beneficial, are not persuasive. Attending a same-sex wedding ceremony, or using one’s artistic skills to contribute to such a ceremony, gives a public signal of approval for something that Scripture considers morally wrong.

Regarding claims of transgender identity, God created only two sexes, male and female, and the differences between male and female are inextricably tied to the differing reproductive anatomy of male and female bodies. God intends that a person’s gender identity should be determined by that person’s biological sex.

## PART 6: PROTECTING PROPERTY

“You shall not steal.”

### Chapter 34 Property: The Goodness and Necessity of Private Ownership of Property

The commandment “You shall not steal” implies private ownership of property, because it implies that there are some things that belong to certain people and not to others. The moral goodness of the idea of private property is reaffirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. Communism seeks to abolish private property, and is therefore horribly dehumanizing. Ownership of property is a stewardship responsibility given by God, and God entrusts different people with greater or lesser stewardships. Property provides many opportunities for glorifying God but also many temptations to sin, and it should prompt our hearts to joy and thanksgiving to God.

Stewardship of all types provides the basis for human achievement and human flourishing on the earth. The opposite errors of materialism and asceticism must both be avoided. The modern “health and wealth gospel” is inconsistent with the teachings of the New Testament, especially in its teaching that if you are a faithful Christian God will make you rich, for often he will not. But the movement is not monolithic and a balanced assessment is needed.

### Chapter 35 Work, Rest, Vacations, and Retirement

The Bible views productive work itself as a good thing and part of God’s original purpose for human beings before there was any sin in the world. Work can take various forms, including several kinds of unpaid work that do good for others. Work provides opportunities for the joy that comes from “earned success,” gives us the privilege of creating something of value for other people, and enables us to support ourselves and express our individual identities. Work became more difficult and included painful toil after the fall, yet we can still find joy in work. Christians can work to please the Lord in almost any occupation. Work also provides many temptations to sin.

It is pleasing to God when we take regular times of rest from work and occasional longer vacations. The common assumption that people should “retire” around age sixty-five and then do no productive work for the rest of their lives finds no support

in Scripture. However, most people will find themselves able to work less with advancing age, and people who no longer need to earn a regular income may decide to retire from full-time paid employment and find much fulfillment in volunteer work in helping others.

#### Chapter 36 Increasing Prosperity: Is More Prosperity a Good Thing?

Over the last 250 years, the population of the entire world, on average, has come to experience a level of material prosperity approximately sixty times greater per person than what was experienced at the time of Christ. Such increasing prosperity is part of what God originally intended for the human race to accomplish, but material prosperity is still a matter of secondary importance, and it carries significant dangers. God created human beings with an innate desire to create more and better economic goods. We must take the biblical warnings about the temptations of materialism seriously, but they should not cause us to abandon the blessings of increased prosperity.

Poverty can only be solved by increased prosperity in nations, not by attempting to compel equality. The influence of the Bible's moral teachings has historically brought increasing material prosperity to nations.

#### Chapter 37 Poverty and Wealth

In a world where people have different abilities and interests and receive appropriate payment for their work, some inequality of possessions will necessarily result. Inequality in itself is not necessarily wrong, because there will be inequality of stewardships even in heaven. However, Scripture encourages us to help those who are poor and to seek to overcome poverty. The phrase "social justice" does not occur in Scripture and can be used with many different meanings today, with the result that it tends to confuse rather than clarify discussions of solutions to poverty.

Christians should seek to alleviate poverty both through helping individual people and through bringing about biblically-oriented changes in the laws, governmental policies, and cultural values in a society. Immediate short-term efforts to alleviate poverty through work by individuals, Christian organizations, and government welfare programs are all important and must be continued, but short-term help is not enough.

For individuals, the permanent solution to poverty is providing opportunities and skills for productive jobs, and these primarily come through private businesses. For entire nations, the only permanent solution to poverty is increasing the nation's gross domestic product, and this must be brought about through changes in multiple factors in a nation's economic system, governmental laws, and cultural beliefs and values.

Scripture contains numerous warnings about the dangers of wealth but does not contain an outright condemnation of having much wealth. Governments must punish those who have gained wealth by illegal and immoral activities, but must also allow freedom for anyone to become wealthy by legal means. An analysis of the influential book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ron Sider shows that it contains several helpful emphases, but he incorrectly identifies the main problem as "affluence" rather than poverty, and incorrectly identifies the primary solution as "generosity" and increased government control rather than increased economic productivity and increased economic freedom.

## Chapter 38 Personal Financial Stewardship

Stewardship of our personal property in accordance with biblical teachings will include (1) wise giving, (2) wise saving, and (3) wise spending. Both the Old and New Testaments teach that God's people should give away some of what they earn. The Old Testament standard was to give a tithe (ten percent) plus other offerings and sacrifices. The New Testament does not specify a percentage but encourages generous giving, motivated by trust in God, and promises several blessings for those who give. Giving an inheritance to one's children is appropriate, but requires wisdom.

It is right to save for a time when we cannot support ourselves, for unforeseen emergencies, and for other purposes, but saving money also carries temptations. It is possible to save too much, or to save too little. There are advantages and disadvantages in different types of saving and investing.

We must spend something to provide ourselves with food, clothing, shelter, and other things. Spending turns money into goods and services that we should use and enjoy with thanksgiving to God. It is possible to spend too much, and it is possible to spend too little. Scripture does not contain any explicit prohibition against

gambling, but it is usually an unwise use of a person's money. Gambling businesses bring several harmful consequences to society.

#### Chapter 39 Borrowing, Lending, and the Question of Debt

Various kinds of borrowing and lending are remarkably beneficial human activities, and they are sometimes viewed positively in Scripture. Borrowing and lending multiply the usefulness of the wealth in a society. They are uniquely human activities that give opportunities to imitate God in ways the rest of creation cannot do.

Old Testament prohibitions against charging interest were limited to certain kinds of situations, particularly taking advantage of the poor in their poverty, but the New Testament does not prohibit the charging of interest (*usury*), and throughout many centuries of church history, Christian leaders increasingly came to see the moral legitimacy of charging interest in many situations. There are both wise and foolish reasons for borrowing, and both borrowing and lending carry with them temptations and dangers.

#### Chapter 40 Business Ethics

Six core ethical convictions from Scripture establish boundaries for making business decisions: (1) truthfulness, (2) not stealing, (3) honoring marriage, (4) loving your neighbor as yourself, (5) confidence that there is always a right decision available, and (6) trust in God.

Buying and selling are in themselves not morally evil or merely morally neutral, but morally good activities which ordinarily bring benefit to both parties. Other morally good components of business activity include earning a profit, competition, advertising, and limited liability corporations, though all of these also carry temptations to sin. There are good reasons for corporations to make charitable contributions to the communities in which they function.

When multinational corporations establish some operations in poor countries, the results are generally beneficial for the poor countries, but sometimes corrupt government officials in poor countries accept bribes and make harmful agreements with large corporations. Both sides share in the blame for such harmful agreements, and such practices are rightfully prohibited by United States law and by the laws of other nations.

## Chapter 41 Stewardship of the Environment

The natural world, as God originally created it on earth, was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Because Adam and Eve sinned, God placed a curse on the entire natural world. As a result, the earth now contains “thorns and thistles” (Genesis 3:18) and many other dangerous and harmful things. Therefore what we now think of as “natural” is not always good. God intends us to learn how to improve on fallen nature, making natural products better. God also wants human beings to develop the earth’s resources and to use them wisely and joyfully.

God created an Earth that has abundant natural resources. An evaluation of data on long-term, worldwide trends shows that, with the wise use of natural resources, human beings can reasonably expect to be able to live on the earth for the indefinite future, enjoying ever-increasing prosperity and never exhausting its resources.

Predictions of catastrophic global warming caused by increasing production of carbon dioxide have been based on computer models whose results depend on the formulas entered into them. But these predictions have repeatedly been falsified by actual temperature measurements in succeeding years, especially because of faulty estimates of “climate feedbacks.” Climate science has been highly politicized, and multiple instances of data tampering have been exposed. Scientific opinion is in fact strongly divided about the dangers of global warming.

Biblical teachings indicate that God designed a resilient earth, not a fragile one, and he did not design it so that we would destroy it by obeying his commands to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. Carbon fuels (especially coal, oil, and natural gas) are portable, efficient, and abundant sources of energy, and we should consider them to be good gifts from God and use them wisely and safely.

## **PART 7:**

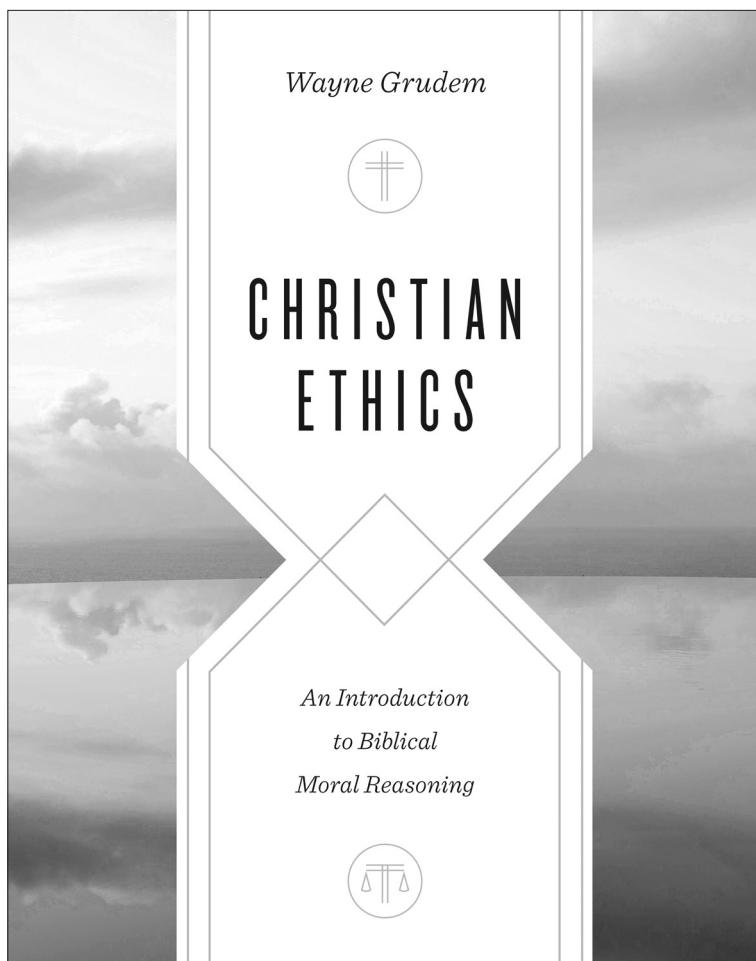
# **PROTECTING PURITY OF HEART**

“You shall not covet.”

### Chapter 42 Purity of Heart

The commandment “You shall not covet” (Exodus 20:17) shows that God requires not only right actions but also purity of heart. It warns us not to long for something that is not rightfully ours and that we cannot rightfully obtain. The New Testament repeatedly warns against coveting, and instead encourages contentment. Coveting implies that we do not trust God, that we dislike his provisions for our lives, and that we want something more than him. On a human level, coveting is horribly destructive.





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