

Syllabus – TH 308

“Biblical Christian Ethics”

Grace Bible College Extension Course [GBX]

June 19-26, 2011

Bethesda Church, Minneapolis, MN

Course Information:

Course Number: TH 308 [2 credit hours]

Course Instructor: Matthew H. Loverin

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Course Description:

This course provides an in-depth study of the ethics of the Bible, along with principles for the application of the Bible's ethics to personal ethical decision-making as well as to contemporary ethical issues. Significant attention will be given to dispensational concerns inherent in the application of Old Testament and Gospels texts for Christians living in the dispensation of the Grace of God.

Required Texts:

Any translation of *The Bible* (Preferably KJV, NKJV, NAS, or ESV).

Stassen, Glen H. & Gushee, David P., *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (InterVarsity, 2003).

Wright, Christopher J.H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (InterVarsity, 2004).

**Supplementary Reading Packet (will be provided at the first class session).

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the major ethical passages and themes of the Old and New Testaments.
2. Evaluate principles governing the interpretation and application of Scripture to contemporary problems of personal and social ethics.
3. Describe the relationship of Old Testament ethics to New Testament ethics, as understood in the teachings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul.
4. Discuss the significance of dispensational theology for the interpretation of major ethical passages of Scripture, specifically the Mosaic Law, the Old Testament Prophets, and the teachings of Jesus.
5. Articulate a personal ethical outlook based on the whole Bible and consistent with a Pauline vision of the dispensation of the Grace of God.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation – Attendance and active involvement in all class sessions & completion of all assigned course readings. **[20%]**
2. 2 Background Papers – These short papers (3-4 pp.) will help you identify the most important themes that are at work in the background of our study of Old Testament Ethics and the Kingdom Ethics of Jesus. These papers will be due at the beginning of the first class meeting, Sunday, June 19th. **[20%; 10% each paper]**
3. Participation in in-class activities, which will include daily reading quizzes, discussions, various projects and short written assignments. **[20%]**
4. Team Project & Presentation – During the course of the week you will work with one or two others in the class to develop a presentation that you can share with the group on Saturday, June 26th. Your presentation should be multi-media (PowerPoint, video clips, &c.), include a handout with discussion questions, and a short (3-4 pp.) paper discussing the issue. **[20%]**
5. Final Paper – This 5-6 pp. paper will be due one week after the conclusion of the course; in it you will detail the passages of Scripture that you understand as most important for your own biblical ethical outlook. This paper should also include some statement of your understanding of how dispensational thought impacts our interpretation of the ethical teaching of the Old Testament and of Jesus. **[20%]**

Course Grading Summary:

- 20% - Participation & Completion of Required Course Readings
- 20% - 2 Background Papers (OT Ethics & Kingdom Ethics, 3-4 pp. each)
- 20% - In-Class Activities (quizzes, discussion, brief written assignments, & projects)
- 20% - Group Project & Presentation (presentation, handout, 3-4 pp. paper)
- 20% - Personal Biblical Ethics Paper (5-6 pp.)

Withdrawal: If you are taking this course for credit and wish to drop it, you must withdraw officially from the course – just as you officially enrolled in the course in the first place. To do this, you need to complete the necessary form and return to the designated church representative. This will be recorded as a *W* on your official transcript if it is dropped by the end of Monday's session. After that date, it will be recorded as a *WF* (withdraw failing). Consult the registration form for any refund policy.

This description of the procedures and schedule of this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

First Assignment: 2 Background Papers on Old Testament Ethics and Kingdom Ethics: Due Sunday, June 19th.

Before the first class meeting, you are expected to read Chapters 1-3 of Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*, and Chapters 1-3 of Stassen & Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*. Once you have read the chapters, choose one chapter from each text to respond to.

1. Write a 3-4 pp. paper in response to Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. You may focus on the theological angle, the social angle, or the economic angle of ethics in the OT. Summarize Wright's chapter, and include your own critical thoughts, conclusions, and questions.
2. Write a 3-4 page paper in response to Stassen & Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*. In your essay, answer the question: What is the Kingdom of God according to Stassen and Gushee? Incorporate your own questions and perspectives in your response (you may agree or disagree with the authors).

Tentative Schedule for TH 308

Session 1 – Sunday Afternoon & Evening, 3 PM – 8 PM

Christian Worldview & Ethical Thought
Outlines of Biblical Ethics
Dispensational Concerns for Biblical Ethics

Session 2 – Monday Night, 6:30-9:30 PM

Interpreting the Old and New Testaments
Historical Approaches to the Old Testament
The Structure of Old Testament Ethics

Session 3 – Tuesday Night, 6:30-9:30 PM

Ethics in Light of Creation & Fall
Ethics in the Law
Ethics in the Prophets

Session 4 – Wednesday Night, 6:30-9:30 PM

Ethics in Jesus & the Sermon on the Mount

Session 5 – Thursday Night, 6:30-9:30 PM

Ethics in Paul's Letters

Session 6 – Friday Night, 6:30-9:30 PM

Image of God & an Ethic of Life
Biblical Ecology
Marriage & Family in the Bible

Session 7 – Saturday, 10:00 AM – 4 PM

Poverty, Wealth & Justice
Pacifism, Nonviolence, & Just War Theory
Conclusion: Christ & Culture