

Religious Humanism & Situation Ethics

Sunday PM 04/24/22

Introduction:

In earlier lessons we defined humanism, and looked at situation ethics. Religious humanist is a term used to describe those that want to take some of the ideas of humanism and incorporate them in to their belief of God. Situation ethics as discussed in an earlier lesson takes the idea that morality is always changing depending on the person and the situation. This would seem to contradict the Bible where God's law plainly states that there are things we must and must not do.

See: **1 Corinthians 6:9** *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,*

Hebrews 5:9 NKJV **9** *And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*

I) The Situation Ethics of Believers in God

A) A new morality -- not rigid like the Bible but one focused on man and his needs

1. Joseph Fletcher wrote "Situation Ethics: The New Morality" absolutes such as "never" or "always" or "no" and "only" are to be avoided at all cost.
2. The only absolute is love. Each situation must be evaluated on the basis of love.
 - a. only one 'thing' is intrinsically good; namely, love: nothing else at all
 - b. the ruling norm of Christian decisions is love: nothing else
 - c. love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else

- d. love wills the neighbor's good whether we like him or not
 - e. only the end justifies the means, nothing else
 - f. love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively
3. The 10 Commandments could be broken if love deemed it necessary.
- a. If love is best served then lying, stealing, murder, etc. then laws prohibiting those things must be set aside.
 - b. Paul asked, ***"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"Romans 6.1.*** Joseph Fletcher would say yes.
 - c. The ends, love, justifies the means, disobedience to God's law.

B) Example of situation ethics

1. In World War 2, a German soldier was captured at the Battle of the Bulge. He was sent to a prison camp. A little later his wife while foraging for food was picked up by a Russian patrol and sent to a Russian prison camp. A few months later the man was released and sent home. His wife remained in the Russian camp. He found his three young children and found out his wife was in a prison camp.

They got word to her and their need for her to be with them. The Russians would release a woman from a prison camp if she was a) mentally ill, or b) pregnant. She committed adultery with a guard, got pregnant and was sent home. The family accepted her back home and the new baby.

2. What if the woman on the way home needed food. Could she use her body to get food? What if she needed clothes, or transportation, could she do the same?

3. Could she sell her body once at home in order to provide for her family?
4. The re-writing of the 10 Commandments
 - i) Thou shall have no other gods before me unless the situation demands occasional idolatry
 - ii) Thou shall not make graven images ordinarily but time and place may well demand deviation from this law
 - iii) Thou shall not take God's name in vain unless the situation seemingly demands profanity
 - iv) Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy unless certain unforeseen situations occasionally demands a temporary deviation of this holy practice
 - v) Honor your parents ordinarily but situations may call for occasional rebellion as generation gaps widen
 - vi) Thou shall not kill unless the situation calls for murder
 - vii) Thou shall not commit adultery usually but certain situations may make premarital and extramarital affairs quite beautiful and desirable
 - viii) Thou shall not steal usually but no hard and fast rules demanding total and continuous honesty will work all the time
 - ix) Thou shall not bear false witness unless a lie will better serve the situation than will the truth
 - x) Thou shall not covet unless the object is so beautiful to behold and desirable to have that further resistance toward this prohibition of the mind is both foolish and futile

II) **Problems With Religious Situational Ethics**

A) **Misunderstanding of who we are to love and how we are to love**

1. We are here to first love God,

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

a. Thus we are to obey His word,

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

b. What about our love for God? How can we claim to love God while disobeying Him?

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

2) Misunderstanding of love,

Matthew 22:39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

a. Love is to seek the best for the other person, whereas Joseph Fletcher's love is self serving.

b. What about the soldier that fathered the child? What about the child itself?

c. What about the soldier's wife and his family?

d. Love must be defined according to God's standard and not our own.

B) Love is not contrary or in conflict with the Law of God (Love is good; the law is bad)

1. The Law of God tells us how to love our fellowman,

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

a. By not stealing, by not lying to, by not killing, etc.

- b. By thinking of others first
- 2. Situation ethics says to judge for yourselves when you should cast aside God's word,

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

C) Misapplying certain passages

- 1. ***John 8.1-11*** the woman caught in adultery; Jesus simply discounted her sin under those circumstances
 - a. They failed to realize that Jesus applied the law of Moses, ***Deut. 19.15*** where there were to be two or three witnesses
 - b. Jesus told the woman to go and sin no more which meant He realized she had sinned.
- 2. ***2 Corinthians 3:6*** ***who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. "for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life"***
 - a. They said it is sometimes ok to violate the letter of the law as long as we are keeping the spirit of the law.
 - b. Jesus says to worship in spirit and truth -- don't worry about instrumental music, sprinkling for baptism, leavened bread and fruit of the vine, etc.

- c. The passage is making a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant

Old Covenant	New Covenant
	Ministers of the new covenant, v. 6
Of the letter, v. 6	Of the Spirit, v. 6
The letter kills, v. 6	The Spirit gives life, v. 6
Ministry of death, v 7	Ministry of Spirit, v 8
Written/Engraved on stones, v 7	
Ministry of condemnation, v. 9	Ministry of righteousness, v 9
Glorious, v 7, 9, 11	Much more glorious, v 8-9, 11
Passing away, v 7	Remains, v 11

- d. One can keep the letter of the law and violate the spirit of the law. Scribes and Pharisees,

Matthew 23:23 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

- e. One cannot keep the spirit of the law and violate the very law itself.
 - i. One cannot keep the spirit of love and at the same time violate the principle of loving God for loving God is keeping His commandments, **John 14.15**
 - ii. One cannot love God and not love his fellowman,

1 John 4:20 *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*

- iii. Therefore to rob my fellowman is unloving to God and fellowman. **Genesis 39.9**

IV) Application To Us

A) God centered teaching vs. man centered teaching

1. Our relationship with God comes before our relationship with our fellowman.
2. There is a difference in teaching the Bible to stress God and teaching it to stress other things.

B) Teaching the Bible vs. other things

1. Noah and the flood in **Genesis 6**.
 - a. Salvation comes from God, His grace,

Genesis 6:8 *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

- b. We must do what God commands, obedience

Genesis 6:22 *Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.*

- c. Faith demands we do what God says, faith and works,

Hebrews 11:7 *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.*

- d. Punishment of God on those that do evil, **Genesis 6.5-7**
 - e. What do humanists want us to teach? How we should take care of our animals, the eco-system in which we live.
2. Jesus feeding the 5,000 in **John 6.1-14**
 - a. Showing the deity of Jesus and His compassion for the people.
 - b. Not about sharing with others. (Story of two brothers wanting waffles. Mother says, Jesus would let the other brother have the waffle. One brother says, OK, I will let you be Jesus. They missed the point.)
3. Why should we not steal, lie, worship idols, etc, because God

said not to, **1 Corinthians 6.9**

4. We are to worship in spirit and truth (**John 4.24**), confess Jesus, repent of our sins, be baptized for the remission of sins, remember the Lord's death each Sunday, etc. Why? Because God said so.
 - a. Not because we like it or it makes us feel better.
 - b. Because God says so and after I do what God says I should feel better but my feelings are not the primary reason.
5. Humanism says we can keep certain religious traditions because they happen to agree with those traditions, not because God says so. How the humanist looks at religion:
 - a. God is dead (does not exist)
 - b. But the masses of the people are not ready to give up on religion
 - c. So, let them have their religion, but take God out of the picture
 - d. Turn all emphasis to life on this earth, because that is all there is (A Generation That Knows Not God, page 21)

Conclusion:

Religious humanism just like secular humanism ignores the principle of absolute truth. To them it is all relative.