



Ethics and Morals: The Important Distinction

Table of Contents

I.	Ethics	3
II.	Morals	5
III.	Biblical Ethics	5
IV.	Importance	8
V.	What Has Happened	9
VI.	What's Next	10

Ethics and Morals: The Important Distinction

I. Ethics

A. Defined

1. Standard of **behavior or conduct**
2. What people **ought** to do

B. Examples

1. **Ethical Relativism**
 - a) Focus on individual or cultural **self-interests**
 - b) Action is right if
 - (1) Serves one's **self-interests**
 - (2) Does not **conflict** with cultural norms

2. Utilitarianism

- a) Focus on consequences of actions
- b) Action is right if it produces greatest good for greatest amount of people

3. Universalism

Assumes that all people are inherently good

- a) Treating all people with respect
- b) Authority is determined by intention of the action to treat everyone equally

4. Rights

- a) Focus on individual entitlements
- b) Fundamental rights of individuals must be respected

5. Justice

- a) Focus on fairness and equity
- b) Equal sharing of benefits and burdens

II. **Morals**

A. **Defined**

- 1. Actual behavior or conduct of people
- 2. What people actually do

III. **Biblical Ethics**

A. **Defined**

- 1. Standard of behavior or conduct identified in the Bible
 - a) Descriptive of God's nature, purpose, and ways

b) Designed to be consistent with God's **image**

c) Psalm 1:1-3

B. Importance

1. 2 Timothy 3:16

a) All Scripture is breathed out by God

b) Profitable for

(1) Teaching

(2) Reproof

(3) Correction

(4) Training in righteousness

C. General

1. **Explicit** Biblical standards

a) Examples

(1) **Ten Commandments**

(2) **Great Commandment**

(3) **Golden Rule**

2. Biblical **principles** that are applied in identifying right decisions

a) Examples

(1) Principles on **government taxation**

(2) Who is responsible for **healthcare**

(3) **Criminal justice**

3. Key

a) **Grace** and **truth**

b) John 1:14

IV. Importance

A. Role of ethical standard

1. Statement of what people **ought** to do

2. Flaws of secular ethical system

a) Ethical relativism

b) Utilitarianism

c) Universalism

- d) Rights
 - e) Justice
3. Contrast with Biblical standard
- a) Reflecting image of God
- (1) Nature, purpose, ways

V. What Has Happened

A. Ethical/moral line has been blurred

- 1. Ethics are virtually **synonymous** with morals
- a) Words used **interchangeably**
 - b) Significance
- (1) I become my own ethical **standard**

(2) Judges 21:25

VI. What's Next

A. Looking at issues through lens of **Scripture**

1. What is the Biblical **ethic** regarding _____