

# CHURCH OF GOD PUBLICATIONS

## #DiscipleshipTuesday



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April 2019 free lesson  
**Ethical Issues, Part 2**

Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 19:33-34; Psalms 101:3-4; 116:15; 139:13-16;  
Proverbs 13:11; 23:29-35; 28:19-20; Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; Matthew 5:28;  
Luke 10:29-37; 1 Corinthians 6:12-14; 1 Timothy 6:10; 2 Peter 2:14

**Unit Theme:**  
Christian Ethics

**Central Truth:**  
Christians must base their ethical standards on God's Word.

**Focus:**  
Explore critical ethical issues and commit to biblical standards.

**Context:**  
Scriptural perspectives on the sanctity of life, ethnic discrimination, and addictive behaviors

**Golden Text:**  
"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

**Study Outline:**

- I. Sanctity of Life  
(Gen. 9:6; Ps. 139:13-16; Eccl. 3:1-2; Ps. 116:15)
- II. Ethnic Discrimination  
(Lev. 19:33-34; Luke 10:29-37)
- III. Addictive Behaviors  
(1 Tim. 6:10; Prov. 13:11; 28:19-20; Matt. 5:28; Ps. 101:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:12-14; 2 Peter 2:14; Prov. 23:29-35)

**INTRODUCTION**

This second lesson of exploring critical ethical issues and submitting to biblical standards provides another opportunity to deal with key issues of life. As stated in last week's lesson, we are faced with a major choice: Will we stubbornly cling to our personal views, which may be heavily influenced by secular culture, or will we commit to biblical standards? Before we can make biblical choices, we must be aware of what the Scriptures state.

The first section of this lesson deals with the *sanctity of life*. Here we face issues of abortion, stem-cell research, the right to die, euthanasia, and extreme life-saving measures. These issues have been debated in the political halls of legislatures and assemblies as well as being the subject of court cases.

The second topic is *ethnic discrimination*. This has been a major problem in the United States, as evidenced by the Civil War, when our nation split and brother fought against brother. Even church denominations divided over the issue of slavery. However, this did not stop discrimination, as seen in the Jim Crow laws separating black and white. Native Americans, Hispanics, and Japanese were discriminated against during World War II. No doubt there are other groups who have also received discrimination even from believers.

The third issue is *addictive behaviors*, which include gambling, pornography, and drugs of various types including alcohol. While these vices are not new, the development of the Internet allows pornography to come into the privacy of one's home. Also, betting on sports events can be accomplished with just a few clicks of a mouse.

It is amazing and alarming how many of these ethical issues have invaded believers' lives in a negative way. However, all isn't lost. Forgiveness and change can be a reality through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

I. SANCTITY OF LIFE (Gen. 9:6; Ps. 139:13-16; Eccl. 3:1-2; Ps. 116:15)

A. God's Special Creation (Gen. 9:6; Ps. 139:13-16)

**Genesis 9:6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.**

**Psalm 139:13. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.**

**14. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.**

**15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.**

**16. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.**

When does life begin? This question is not only an issue for politicians debating the establishment of laws, but also a point of importance for us as believers. How can we advise and encourage others unless we have a principle based on Scripture?

In Genesis 9:6 we see the institution of capital punishment as a part of the Noahic covenant. In itself this provides a strong statement of how God views the precious gift of life. Anyone who chooses to destroy the life of another may have his or her life taken. With this in mind, we turn our attention to the passage from Psalm 139, which emphasizes each one of us being God's special creation.

In ancient times the formation of the child in the mother's womb was one of the great mysteries. Today, with all the modern technology which enables the medical staff as well as parents to see the unborn child's development, it still stands as a marvelous act of God's creative act. Verse 13 projects God's participation in our lives from the beginning of conception—the very moment the sperm fertilizes the egg. The weaving of bones, muscles, veins, and the many other body parts as well as functions become a process which results in a fully developed human being. God knows the life span of this person even before the developmental process is completed (v. 16).

While reading these verses, we see the wondrous creativity of God as well as His omnipresence and omniscience. The reality is that this forming body is a living person. The inability to live outside of the womb for a period of months as development occurs does not eliminate this being a human being. Each of us is God's distinct special creation while still residing in our mother's womb. Notice there is no numerical point that is referenced as being suddenly a human being,

reins (Ps. 139:13)—  
"inmost being" (NIV)

curiously wrought  
(v. 15)—"woven  
together" (NIV)

#### **Talk About It:**

1. Explain the principle in Genesis 9:6.
2. How did the psalmist view himself (Ps. 139:14)?
3. What did God see "before one of them came to be" (v. 16 NIV)?

"Before the embryo had any such form that its future size, shape, or proportions could be marked by the eye of man, it was clearly and distinctly known by God."

—Robert A. Barnes

**Talk About It:**

1. How have you witnessed the truth of Ecclesiastes 3:1-2?
2. How does God view the death of His children (Ps. 116:15)?

“Death always waits. The door of the hearse is never closed.”  
—Joseph Bayly

such as end of the second trimester or at birth. Even while being in the process of development, God knows us.

**B. God’s Determined Time (Eccl. 3:1-2; Ps. 116:15)**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1. To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:**

**2. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.**

**Psalm 116:15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.**

The third chapter of Ecclesiastes points us to the reality of God’s having a plan for the world which governs its happenings. Some events He wills specifically while others are willed in terms of His allowing humans to make choices which may have either positive or negative consequences. Throughout the chapter we can see the insignificance of humans and our actions in comparison with the greatness of God. But in the process there are some specific applications that deserve consideration.

The issue of time as presented here has two distinctives. First, there is the beginning, a point of time when an event happens. Second, there is the continuation of time until there is an ending. Verse 2 places time in terms of lifespan. Since God plans for our lives, does anyone have the right to shorten it without facing the consequences of Genesis 9:6? How can anyone take it upon himself or herself to end a life which God sanctions?

These verses immediately apply to abortion and euthanasia. Sanctity of life must always supersede the issues of desirability of a child and/or quality of life. God gives life, and He alone determines when that life should end. This is where Psalm 116:15 fits in. God watches over the lives of “his saints”—those who serve Him. Their death does not take place outside of His providence. The Lord determines the life span of the saints.

This section of our lesson might spawn questions such as these: What is the duty of believers in taking proper care of our bodies through diet and exercise? How far should we go in pursuing medical procedures that delay death rather than prolong life?

**II. ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION (Lev. 19:33-34; Luke 10:29-37)**

**A. The Principle (Lev. 19:33-34)**

**33. And if a stranger sojourn with thee in the land, ye shall not vex him.**

**34. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.**

Leviticus 19 can be labeled as the holiness chapter. After directing the Israelites to follow holiness (v. 2), the Lord provides a number of specific principles and statements which are to be fulfilled as they strive for holiness. One of those is their attitude toward non-Israelites who might eventually settle in Canaan. This does not refer to the resident Canaanites who were to be destroyed because of their sinfulness.

God declares there is to be no discrimination against individuals who are of another race or people group. Instead of looking down on them or mistreating any of them, the Israelites are to accept these people as those of their own blood. However, the attitude isn't to stop at simple acceptance. They are to be loved as their own!

The Israelites are asked to never forget their previous status as aliens in a foreign land. The four hundred years in Egypt first saw them confined to the land of Goshen. Shepherds were not looked on favorably. Then, in the latter 300 years, they served as slaves, enduring the mistreatment of their masters.

All of us are on an equal status as part of God's creation, the human race! It's so sad to see Christians who claim to be Spirit-filled harbor discrimination prejudices based only on a person's skin color or ethnicity.

#### B. The Problem (Luke 10:29-32)

**29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?**

**30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.**

**31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.**

**32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.**

When an expert in the Law tests Jesus and then attempts to justify himself, Jesus responds with a parable. In this story Jesus presents a problem intended to answer the question, "Who is my neighbor?"

While on the treacherous road from Jerusalem to Jericho, a man is accosted by robbers who beat him, steal his clothes, and leave him half dead. Before too long, two other men traveling on the same road see his plight. Both of these men are religious and should have automatically offered help, even from a humanitarian viewpoint. However, each conveniently moves to the other side of the road, making it easier to avoid this man.

Since the nationality of the wounded person isn't stated, we can only speculate. However, if ethnicity isn't a part of the

#### Talk About It:

1. How should God's people treat immigrants (vv. 33-34)?
2. What did the Lord tell His people to remember (v. 34)?

"Christ wanted men to see, to see far and to see truly. To get that kind of vision requires avoidance of hypocrisies and group prejudices which distort the vision and make men imagine they see what is not really there."

—John Dulles

#### Talk About It:

1. What motivated the lawyer to pose his question (v. 29)?
2. Describe the two religious professionals' response to the dying man (vv. 31-32).

"John Wesley said that our godliness is the devil's

religion. It does not owe its inception to truly spiritual people.”  
—Edward Peet

**Talk About It:**

1. What motivated the Samaritan (v. 33)?
2. Describe his specific actions (vv. 34-35).
3. Why did Jesus pose the question in verse 36?

“If you have an unpleasant neighbor, the odds are that he does too.”  
—Frank A. Clark

**vanity (Prov. 13:11)**—  
“dishonesty” (NKJV)  
**vain persons (28:19)**—“empty pursuits” (NASB)

story, the victim’s physical condition definitely is a factor. In either case, the priest and the Levite do not reflect an attitude of concern and care.

C. The Participant (vv. 33-37)

(Luke 10:34-35 is not included in the printed text.)

**33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.**

**36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?**

**37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.**

In this parable Jesus points to an individual being a true neighbor by disregarding the circumstances to extend the necessary care. His Jewish audience looked down on Samaritans due to their mixed ancestry. It permeated their thinking to the point of being willing to travel an extended distance to avoid going through Samaria. Yet, it is a Samaritan who offers the help the religious Jews refused to provide.

Notice the extent which the Samaritan participates in the injured man’s dilemma. First, he offers immediate aid. Second, he takes the injured man to the nearest inn for recuperation. Third, he pays for an estimated time of care. Fourth, he indicates if the cost is greater, it will be paid when he passes through again.

It is so easy to assume we have no ethnic prejudice in our thinking. However, the truth comes out when put to the test. Just because we have no discriminatory thoughts toward one group doesn’t mean we are innocent. It must apply to all groups, regardless of language, culture, or geographic location!

III. ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS (1 Tim. 6:10; Prov. 13:11; 28:19-20; Matt. 5:28; Ps. 101:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:12-14; 2 Peter 2:14; Prov. 23:29-35)

A. Addiction to Wealth (1 Tim. 6:10; Prov. 13:11; 28:19-20)

**1 Timothy 6:10. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

**Proverbs 13:11. Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.**

**28:19. He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.**

**20. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.**

To be wealthy is not sinful or against any biblical principle. In the Old Testament we see how God blessed Abraham, Isaac,

Jacob, and Job to become men of considerable wealth. In the New Testament there were individuals of extra means who supported Jesus' ministry and those who gave generously to the ministry of the early church through selling property and donating it to the common treasury.

The issue isn't one of working hard and then reaping the benefit. Those who put forth sufficient effort will see material blessings under normal circumstances. Problems occur when a passion for the accumulation of material goods and its resulting power becomes a dominant drive. Paul labels it "the love of money" (1 Tim. 6:10). This addiction, like other addictions, easily leads to a person's pushing aside biblical principles and personal integrity. It is "a root of all kinds of evil" (NIV). Not only can this addiction result in leaving the Christian faith, it may lead to grief and despair ("many sorrows") due to neglecting family and/or bending legal requirements.

Proverbs 13:11 and 28:20 give insight as to what occurs in trying to get rich quickly. The latter verse indicates how this can easily lead to dishonest methods. Proverbs 13:11 describes how this type of wealth will fade or dwindle away. It is in marked contrast to what takes place when a person works industriously ("works his land," 28:19 NIV) and honestly ("gathers money little by little," 13:11 NIV) and wealth results.

It's amazing how individuals can become so absorbed in and dominated by the desire for wealth that it takes over their lives.

B. Sexual Addiction (Matt. 5:28; Ps. 101:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:12-14; 2 Peter 2:14)

**Matthew 5:28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.**

**Psalms 101:3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.**

**4. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.**

**1 Corinthians 6:12. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**

**2 Corinthians 6:13. Now for recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.**

**14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**

**2 Peter 2:14. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.**

**Talk About It:**

1. Why is "the love of money . . . the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10)?
2. Contrast two ways to make money, and the different results (Prov. 13:11).
3. Contrast two types of people in Proverbs 28:20.

"That money talks I'll not deny, I heard it once: I said, 'Goodbye.'"  
—Richard Armour

froward (Ps. 101:4)—  
"perverse" (NKJV)



### Talk About It:

1. What does it mean to “look at a woman lustfully” (Matt. 5:28 NIV)?
2. What did the psalmist pledge (Ps. 101:3)?
3. How should we view the human body (1 Cor. 6:13)?
4. Describe the person whose eyes are filled with adultery (2 Peter 2:14).

Human sexuality comes from God’s creation plan when He made humans of two genders. From the very beginning He intended for male and female to experience the joy of sexual union within the bonds of marriage. It not only provides a means for procreation and continuance of the human race, but provides a pleasurable, deeply satisfying bond between husband and wife.

What God intended for blessing humankind’s fallen nature, coupled with Satan’s temptation, can corrupt and become a destructive addiction. Since men are sexually stimulated by what they see, Matthew 5:28 is especially directed to males. Continued looking at a woman’s figure may easily move from appreciation to lust. When this occurs and one’s imagination begins to run rampant, Jesus said it is the same as having committed the actual physical actions. Sins of the heart are equal with the sins of the body.

The verses from Psalm 101 remind us of our responsibility concerning what we view. There are some things we can’t help seeing because they flash before us. However, we can control how long we look and our thought life afterward. This is true with the magazines we read, as well as the television programs and movies we watch. As did David, we should declare, “I will set before my eyes no vile thing” (v. 3 NIV), for a “perverse heart” (v. 4 NIV) will push us away from God.

In Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthian church, he deals with sexual immorality. These people were part of a culture in which a great deal of sexual license was normal. As believers, this could no longer be their practice. Although believers experience a tremendous amount of Christian liberty, it does not extend to areas that are in opposition to God’s laws. Some of the Corinthians apparently were arguing that since eating did not have an impact on spiritual life, neither should the physical act of sex. Paul corrected this misconception by declaring, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord” (6:13).

Horribly, 2 Peter 2:14 paints a picture of so many people in our time: “With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable” (NIV). Addiction to sex in our time includes having sex with a variety of people for entertainment, utilizing the sex industry (prostitution, child sex rings), and indulging in pornography. The Internet makes it possible for pornographic material to enter the privacy of one’s home and become a secretive, destructive addiction.

C. Alcohol Addiction (Prov. 23:29-35)  
(Proverbs 23:29-30, 33-35 is not included in the printed text.)

**31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.**

**32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.**

“Love is not blind.  
Lust is blind.”  
—Gordon Palmer



This passage shows the danger of intoxicating drinks. It also raises the argument between drinking with moderation and total abstinence. Those pressing for moderation always point to Jesus turning the water into wine at the marriage in Cana. It further raises the question of its being fermented or unfermented. These are sidetracking issues which may hide the gigantic problem that arises from an addiction to alcoholic beverages.

No one intends to become addicted. Many men and women boast of their ability to “hold their liquor” and deny they are indeed an alcoholic. It appears to be harmless or handled while hiding the poisonous possibilities. Overindulgence causes the eyes and mind to imagine sights that arise from the imagination and create confusion (v. 33).

The reference to “mixed wine” (v. 30) is a reminder of how the ancients mixed wine with water or spices. Roman writers of the first century refer to a 1-1 ratio of water and wine as “strong drink.” Only a fool was seen as drinking wine that had not been mixed with water. The normal ratio was 3 parts water to 1 part wine.

Today it is repeatedly stated how drinking alcoholic beverages often is the precursor to using other drugs which also may become addictive. Even if it doesn’t lead to additional drug use, alcoholism perpetuates itself. Verse 35 captures it so clearly. Once a person awakes from a drunken stupor, he or she desires another drink to overcome the hangover. Alcohol addiction also results in harm to one’s body, pain and suffering of one’s family, and the wasting of one’s personal resources.

### CONCLUSION

Three principles stand out from this lesson. First, human life is a gift of God and not to be taken except within the confines of biblical principles. Second, all humans are God’s creation and none of them should be the object of discrimination. Third, any addictive behavior which brings harm or breaks God’s laws is sin.

### GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

“THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN, TEACHING US THAT, DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS PRESENT WORLD” (Titus 2:11-12).

Theologians define the *grace of God* as “His unmerited favor toward men, expressing itself in active love in procuring our redemption in Christ Jesus.” It has also been called “the fountainhead of our salvation.” The Bible says, “By grace are ye saved” (Eph. 2:8). Because God is gracious, therefore

### Talk About It:

1. How does verse 29 describe the drunkard?
2. What do alcoholic beverages do “at the last” (v. 32)?
3. What does verse 35 reveal about the mind-set of the alcoholic?

### Alcoholism

- Classical alcoholism takes about 15 years to develop, but it can happen much quicker in adolescents and young adults.
- There are approximately 14 million people in the United States addicted to alcohol and millions more who display symptoms of alcohol abuse, including binge drinking.
- More than three-fourths of female victims of nonfatal domestic violence reported their assailant had been drinking or using drugs.

—[alcoholinformation.com](http://alcoholinformation.com)

**Daily Devotions:**

- M. Humans Created  
in God's Image  
Genesis 1:26-31
- T. God Extends Life  
2 Kings 20:1-11
- W. Drunken Behavior  
Condemned  
Habakkuk 2:15-17
- T. Unified in Christ  
Galatians 3:26-29
- F. To Live Is Christ  
Philippians 1:19-26
- S. Reject Ungodly  
Influences  
2 Timothy 3:1-5

sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but it's because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God.

Through the grace of God, a believer can lead the pure life described in Titus 2:12. Purity is not a single virtue, or a separate trait. It runs through the whole character, as blood does through the body. The root of it is faith in God. Place the pure person where you will, try him as you please, and he is the same man. Purity is not a thing of more or less, of seasons or opportunities, of rich or poor, of self-interest or respectability, of ornament or convenience. Principles never are, and purity is a principle. It is not to be measured or weighed, nor is it bought or sold at any price. You cannot dilute or half it or cut it into fractions. It is, or it is not.

By God's grace, Christians can lead lives that "say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions"; lives that are "self-controlled, upright and godly" (NIV).