

Ethics – Part 1 of 2 – The Basis for Ethics. Romans 1:18-32; Psalm 81:8-16

“Design and Purpose, Mutual Love”

As our world changes faster than ever, the choice of right and wrong is becoming much more difficult.

III – For example, is _____ right or wrong?

Abortion, homosexuality, stem cell research, divorce, euthanasia, stealing.

Let me begin with two definitions:

PPT - “Morals” are our own set of rules of what is right and wrong. These rules come from our society, our parents, our teachers, and through our life experiences.

“Ethics”, on the other hand, is the foundation on which we make moral choices. Sometimes we go through life making moral decisions without understanding *why* we make those choices. Sometimes we go through life without an *ethic*.

What we need as Christians is to understand what the Bible says about **how** to make moral choices.

PPT - So I want to start with two important words – “Design” and “Purpose”. If we can understand how God **designed** us and for what **purpose** he designed us, this will help us to understand how to make godly moral choices.

PPT - III –

e.g. What is this? What is it designed to do? What is the purpose of this CD?

- A. Educational purposes
- B. A Frisbee
- C. A weapon
- D. A coaster

This CD can do all of these things, but it was “designed” for a purpose. You can use it to throw or injure people, but it was designed as an educational tool. I bought this CD several years ago. It was great for a while, but then it became out-dated when a newer version came out. Now I might well use it as a Frisbee.

We’re often in the danger of thinking that the way God designed the universe is out-dated. And so we start using his creation for purposes which he did not design it for. We begin to use God’s creation a bit like a coaster or a Frisbee.

Sin is the result of people ignoring God’s design and purpose of **His** universe and using whatever WE feel is best instead.

So what IS the design and purpose of humanity?

Let’s go back to Genesis chapter 1.

READ Gen 1:26

“Then God said ‘Let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ ”

Humanity was created in God’s image to be in a **relationship** with God and his creation. God placed us UNDER Him as rulers OVER His Creation.

PPT - This is our **Vertical Relationship** – God and his creation, relating to each other. We were designed for the purpose of this relationship with God.

In Genesis 2:18 and 22 we read:

“The Lord God said ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable helper for him.’... Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

Woman is created equal to man. She is called a “Helper” or a “Counterpart”. She is by no means a lesser being. In fact, mankind is not complete without womankind.

And in Gen 1:28 – *“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ ”*

PPT - Man and woman are co-rulers over the creation. Here we have the HORIZONTAL relationship – man and woman are designed with the purpose of functioning together. They are interdependent.

And these relationships are based on LOVE. Mutual love. We were designed with the purpose of being in a relationship of Love with God and with one another. This is our Biblical basis for ethics – **“Mutual love with God and with one another.”**

Let’s stop for a moment to put this ethic into practice and look at the example of homosexuality.

We are designed as sexual beings. Genesis gives us a very clear picture of the way we were designed to display that sexual nature. It was designed for a man and a woman. It was designed with a purpose that the man and woman would leave their parents and cleave to their spouse and the two would become one. This is not only seen in the way our genitalia is designed for sex, but also in the way it can result in children.

The Gay liberation Movement started developing in the late 1960’s out of a desire to see homosexuality adopted by society as an acceptable form of sexuality. The whole idea for this movement is based on **freedom of choice** for the individual to choose their own sexual nature and purposes. This goes for a lot of things in today’s society.

III – When you go on a camp, there are usually a lot of these sort of things – individual packets of stuff for everything – tea, coffee, salt, pepper, vegemite, jam. I think this says a lot about the way our society is going. More and more we push for the freedom of the individual to make choices. More and more we push for individual **rights**. Freedom to choose death in abortion or Euthanasia, or freedom to choose our own sexuality.

This is where we must depart from the world’s way of thinking. As Christians, we do not follow individual freedom.. We follow God’s design and purpose for us. And we do not look for answers to the design and purpose of creation by asking the creation itself. That’s where mankind went wrong in Romans 1:25

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.”

We need to look to what God says in his Word about the way we were designed and what HIS purposes for us are. For homosexuality, for example:

In Leviticus 18:22, the men of Israel are told: “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”

(And again in Lev 20:13)

Some people will argue that these ideas are out-dated, like my CD. And so these verses become like Frisbees.

But we know, from God’s design and purpose, that God has designed our sexuality so that we may be sexually united to a person of the opposite sex. He has designed us like that for sexual fulfilment and for

the purpose of children. And he has created male and female, whether single or married, as rulers of his world under him.

But because of sin, our relationships are no longer perfect. Even male-female relationships can go wrong. Some married people might not find fulfilment in sex; others may not have children from their marriage relationship. This is a result of the broken world we live in. These things remind us of the glorious future we will share in heaven with God, in a perfect state. But just because we live in a world that is broken by sin, it doesn't give us the **right** to use God's word as a Frisbee. God still calls us to be faithful to HIS design and purpose for his Creation, regardless of the way sin has affected the world.

We will always struggle to make ethical decisions in this world. **For example**, when we realise that someone has turned to a homosexual lifestyle because they were sexually abused as a child, or that a woman had an abortion because she became pregnant as the victim of a rape. The decisions we make are often difficult because we are dealing with real people's lives. And on the issue of homosexuality, Christians have often acted in a very unloving way. We often exclude and shun the homosexual community because of our own fear. But to treat people, any people, in a harsh and unloving way like this, is simply ungodly. The Bible teaches us the difference between right and wrong decisions, but we must also let it teach us **how to act** towards people as we deal with sin. Unfortunately, the sin is often more important to us than salvation.

What we talked about earlier is a **Vertical** and **Horizontal** relationship – between God and between one another. We are designed with the purpose of loving God and loving one another. Condemning a person because of their is **not** what we are called to do. We are called to love, as God does. This means we love people no matter **how** they are sinning. Although we hate the sins they are committing, remember that **we also are guilty** of sinning against God every day. EVERY person needs to know, FIRST OF ALL, that God designed us with the purpose, **above all**, to be in a relationship with him.

We should still take opportunities to speak against issues like changes in legislation by our governments that jeopardizes the institution of marriage and the family, or the value of human life, like some of you have with the recent legislation for stem cell research on living human embryos. We do this not out of fear and contempt, but out of our LOVE for humanity.

This world wants individuals to **choose** their own design and purpose. This world doesn't want to hear that God, their creator, has a design and purpose for them.

Our Ethic, as Christians, looks to the Bible to see what **God** says about **His design and purpose** for us. Our Ethic of **Mutual Love** – for God and for one another – means that we need to tell people what that design and purpose is. We tell them, **not out of judgement and condemnation**, but out of love.

Next week we will look at some other difficult issues such as abortion and stem cell research. We will talk about how we use this ethic of design and purpose, and our Ethic of Love, to answer the questions: "Is it morally right or wrong?" and "What do we do about it?"

The idea of this is not to give answers for individual moral decisions in our lives, but to understand what our **Basis of Ethics** is, so we can apply these principles to **all** circumstances.

People often just want to know "**Is it** right or wrong?"

What we need to know is "**Why** is it right or wrong?"

The Bible gives us the answer when we point ourselves back to two things:

- **God's design and purpose** for his creation – not our design and purpose AND
- **Mutual Love** – Love for God and Love for one another.

Let's pray. Questions? Please use response slips. Answers available next week.