

Ethics – II – Moral Issues in society today – Abortion.

READINGS: Psalm 139, Genesis 9:1-7

Prayer – “a difficult issue...”

Last week we had a look at what the Bible says about morality and ethics.

We started with two things:

PPT – Morals – The system of principles which we use to determine right and wrong AND

PPT – Ethics – The basis behind that set of rules which help us to know *why* something is right or wrong.

There were two ideas we looked at which the Bible puts forward as its ethic:

PPT – 1. Design and Purpose. How did God design us and for what purpose?

For example, a CD can be used as a Frisbee, but it was designed for a computer or CD player.

PPT – 2. Mutual Love – we are designed to love God (Vertical) and love one another (Horizontal).

These two ideas from the Bible can help us with our ethics in making moral decisions. Last week we looked at the example of a practising homosexual relationship. God’s purpose and design for us in Genesis 1-2 tells us that we are not created for the practice of homosexuality. In fact, we’re only created with the purpose of sex inside the marriage relationship. In other words, homosexuality, adultery and fornication are all in the same basket when it comes to inappropriate sexual behaviour. But we also talked about how these sins are no different from the many we all commit every day. Most of all, people have a need to recognise their need for a relationship with God! This is mankind’s ultimate purpose in life – to relate to God and each other in love. The issue is not about judging sin, it’s about preaching salvation.

So today, we’re going to use this same basis of ethics to look at other difficult issues – like abortion and stem cell research. The aim is to get us to think more about how to apply the Bible’s ethic to everyday situations. Many of us have made a moral decision on whether these issues are right or wrong. But do we understand *why* we think it’s right or wrong? And are our moral decisions consistent with what the Bible says?

First, let’s look at design and purpose.

Sex is designed for two purposes in a marriage relationship. First, enjoying the relationship. Second, children.

Gen 1:28 says:

PPT - “God blessed them (Adam and Eve) and God said to them ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...”

There are times when people are often not willing or able to commit to loving and caring for a child. Some use contraception to avoid that possibility of a child; others use abortion as a way of destroying the existing but unborn child.

Today’s issues about abortion and embryonic stem cell research often hinge on determining *when* the “thing” inside the woman actually becomes a human life. As a zygote? As an embryo? As a foetus? Some will say that before it is a foetus, it’s O.K. to abort or to use it for research. Others will say that as soon as the zygote is formed, it is wrong to terminate that life form. Some even say it’s wrong to use contraception.

III – For example, most of us would agree it’s wrong to shoot someone with a gun just because you feel like doing it. Some would argue that it’s wrong to even load a gun with a bullet, because that means you have the intention of using it. Some would even argue it’s wrong to go out and buy a gun. The difference is in the question “When does it become wrong?”

I think these are the wrong questions to ask first. This is where we get into heated debates depending on our views or understanding of science. And our ethics don't need to hinge on our understanding of science, although it's helpful not to be completely ignorant. To hinge our moral decisions on the particular time when a person becomes a person, can actually confuse the issue.

That's why I want to go back to the Bible's teaching on design and purpose.

Many in favour of abortion will argue that the mother must have free choice. In other words, the moral decision comes down to **the rights of the mother to choose**. This is the same argument for some in the Gay Liberation movement which we talked about last week – that people have the right to choose their own sexuality.

We cannot choose the purpose for a life – God has designed each life for HIS purpose.

Psalm 139:13 says:

PPT - *"For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb."*
And verse 16: *"your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

Some in the *anti-abortion* movement will often turn to the argument of the *rights* of the unborn child. Again, I don't think this is a helpful way of looking at the ethical side of abortion or embryonic stem cell research. What the Bible teaches us is that people don't have *rights* to choose their design or their purpose. The Bible teaches us to look to **God's** purpose and design for every living thing. Proverbs 19:21 says:

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

A focus on *rights* – whether the rights of a mother or father, or the rights of a child, actually encourages us to be selfish and self-centred in our moral decisions. The whole basis of sin is looking towards what *we* want as human beings rather than looking towards what *God* wants for us in our lives.

I want to suggest a big idea to you:

PPT – **If we lived in a community of *real mutual love*, we would never need to *claim rights*.**
(Repeat)

Imagine you lived in a community where you never needed to ask for anything. People around you were so focussed on loving each other that they made sure your needs were always met. And you trusted that God and his people would completely meet all your needs, no matter what happens in your life. That's the community we were designed to be a part of. We won't see that community perfectly until we reach heaven. But we can have a glimpse of it now, by actually living in mutually loving relationships with each other.

So, instead of focussing on when a sperm and ovum become a human life form, let's focus on God's design and purpose for us. God's purpose for every person is to become part of a mutually loving relationship – with each other and with God himself. God has given that purpose to all of us, even, as Psalm 139 says, before we were born. Verse 16:

"...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

We must always return to what the **Bible** says about God and *His* purposes for *His* creation. And many times we may need to help each other as we do that, to ensure that we make *godly* decisions.

PPT – In a community of mutual loving relationships, under the rule of God, we would never need to ask the question “*What about what I want, what about what I need?*” The questions would always be “*What does God want?*” and “*What do others need?*”

When we consider ethical questions like homosexuality or abortion or stem cell research or euthanasia, we must do much more than make a moral decision. We need to think about WHY we are making that decision.

An ethic of love for God and for one another is not a back up plan for when things go wrong. It’s not just a set of rules to go by when we have to make difficult decisions. **Ethics is active.** It changes the way we view our community, it changes the way we preach the gospel, it changes the way we talk to one another and live with one another. It changes the way we relate to God.

If someone in our community has an abortion, or is in an active homosexual relationship, or has made an ethical choice that we don’t agree with, the first thing we are to do is **NOT** to pass judgement. We don’t have to *agree* with their decision. We can certainly talk with them about their decision. But without judgement.

What we *are* called to do is to love. When we show the sort of unconditional love that Jesus did, then we can make a real impact on people’s lives. Regardless of the sin, regardless of the lifestyle. Regardless of the moral choices. Mutual love. Remember, we’re ALL sinners. We’ve all made decisions against God’s purposes for our lives. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, you, me – we’re all equally sinners before God. Imagine how disgusted Jesus was by our sin. Yet he died for us. He didn’t just accept us and love us. He died for us. John 3:17 says:

PPT – “*For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*”

Even when we try to keep God’s word and follow his will, we will still see some matters differently to each other. But we must always let God’s word speak to us as our authority. We must seek **God’s** purpose and design, and show the love that he has shown us through Jesus, not only in our decision making, but also when we conflict with one another.

We are called to be a community that desires for people to know *God’s* purpose in their life – to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Knowing right from wrong is a constant battle for all of us as sinful people. That’s why we need to turn to God’s word, and ensure that love is our motivation behind every decision we make.

Are we a community who look to God’s Word? And are we a community who love like Jesus loved? **Let’s pray.**