

# Thinking Ethically and Biblically

By Evan Lenow

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 5:13-16 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What good works do your family and friends see from you? How do they point others to God?

### Assignment Two

Turn to the comments relating to John 14:15 & 21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What are some of the commandments we find in Scripture? What current situations can we apply these commandments to?

### Assignment Three

Read the comments related to John 14:15 & 21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What has Christ done for you that gives you a reason to love Him through obedience?

### Scripture to Memorize

*"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* Matthew 5:16

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will understand how to think biblically about ethical issues.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

At the store, you pay for an item with cash and put the change you receive from the cashier in your pocket without looking at it. When you get to work, you pull the money out of your pocket and realize that the cashier gave you a \$100 bill instead of a \$10. Some of your friends are huddled around a table at lunch and you tell them what happened. You tell them you think you should take it back. They respond, "Are you going to follow the Bible or be able to get the things you really need in life?" How should you respond? Why is it important to think about life situations biblically?

### What Is Ethics?

Ethics is the study and practice of moral behavior. It encompasses what we do and how we make choices in life related to right and wrong. For the Christian, it also involves how we apply the truth of God's Word to the questions of good and bad, right and wrong, moral and immoral.

Since we are not left to our own in order to make these choices, it is important to understand how to think biblically about ethical dilemmas and situations. Therefore, we want to focus on two main ideas about thinking ethically.

First, it is important to think and act ethically because other people are watching. We do not live out our Christian lives in secret. The world is watching and our actions will often determine if people will listen to our words. Second, Jesus has said our obedience is an expression of love. If we love Him, we will obey Him.

### Let Your Light Shine

**Read** Matthew 5:14-16 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verses 14–15. light of the world.** Light penetrates the darkness and helps us see what is really there. Jesus described His followers as the light of the world. He also told us that no one lights a lamp and places it under a basket. Lights are meant to shine and reveal what the darkness has hidden. Jesus also described us as a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. When the city rises above everything else in the area, it is virtually impossible not to see it. In the same way, light illuminates everything around it and makes it clear.

### Discussion Question

Have you ever tried finding the clothes you want to wear with the lights off? You could probably find some clothes, but did you find the exact clothes you were looking for? When the lights are on, how often can you find what you are looking for? Do you know someone who is making bad decisions because he or she is in the dark biblically?

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 16. good works.** Jesus gave His disciples an application of His teaching on light. Their good works were to be light to those around them. Everyone would see what they were doing. These good works were not a way to earn salvation. Instead, they were evidence of a life changed by Jesus Christ. **give glory to your Father.** The purpose of letting others see your good works is to glorify God. Good works are not done to bring attention to ourselves. Our good works should point others to God. They also help us earn the credibility to tell other people about how Jesus has changed our lives.

### **Assignment One Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on how their good works can point others to God.

### **Discussion Questions**

What are some specific ways you are providing light in a dark world? Do your actions reveal the truth of the gospel or do you tend to hide your faith from others?

## **If You Love Me**

**Read** John 14:15 & 21 out loud.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 15. commandments.** There is no single place to find all the commands God gives His people. Certainly, a good place to start is the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3-17. We can also look at one of Jesus' most famous teaching moments in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. These are not the only commandments we find in Scripture, but they give us a good starting point for finding what God thinks about some of the situations we face.

### **Assignment Two Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on some of the commandments found in Scripture.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 15. love.** Jesus gives His disciples the motivation for following His commandments: love. Although many people try to follow rules or commandments out of fear of punishment, Jesus tells us to follow His commands primarily because we love Him.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on what Christ has done to motivate obedience to His commands.

### **Discussion Question**

Why is obedience out of love better than obedience out of obligation? Which is a stronger motivation for you?

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, write two situations where you were confronted with a choice to obey or disobey God. List a passage of Scripture that addresses that particular situation and then write down what you did.

**Difficult Situation**

**Biblical Passage/Command**

**My Choice**

### **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

### **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

### **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

### **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

### **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

Our lives are living testimonies, allowing others to see what it means to be a Christian. Even when we think no one is watching, someone is taking notice of what we do and the decisions we make. Before we encounter a difficult decision or moral dilemma, we need to be as prepared as possible by knowing Scripture and how to apply it to our lives.

In this lesson we studied Matthew 5:13-16. We saw that we are to be salt and light. Our lives provide seasoning and preservation to the world. We make a difference in the world by how we live. In addition, we are to be the light of the world. When people look at our lives, they should be prompted to glorify our Heavenly Father. If our lives are pointing others to Christ, then we are effectively living as salt and light.

The other passage we studied was John 14:15 & 21. Jesus tells us that the one who loves Him will also obey His commands. We cannot separate love and obedience; they are two sides of the same coin. Some obey authority figures out of fear or obligation, but this is not the type of obedience Jesus asks of us. He wants us to obey Him out of love and in response to His sacrifice for us.

If we put these two passages into action, we will constantly be searching Scripture to know how to respond to every situation we face. Then may it be said of us what Paul wrote to Titus: "Show yourself in all things to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us" (Titus 2:7-8).

### **Follow-Up Question**

*Why should we think and act biblically when faced with difficult life decisions?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.