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TEACHING AND PREACHING ETHICAL ISSUES

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FINDING A PLATFORM

- ◉ We no longer live in a society where we can merely talk about ethics on the basis of some accepted authority.
- ◉ People ultimately follow the dictates of personal conscience.
- ◉ This is the “Protestant principle” carried out to its fullest extent.
- ◉ Sources traditionally regarded as authoritative (e.g. Scripture, Nazarene *Manual*) are thus considered to be open to broad interpretation.

CONNECTING WITH THE AUDIENCE

- Our value systems are shaped by the experiences we've had.
 - This is true even for the moral skeptic (e.g. postmodernist).
 - The audience must thus be able to relate what we are saying to their personal experiences.
- However, some people think more concretely, and some think more abstractly.
 - The use of example and narrative is vitally important!
- We need to help the audience identify with the experiences of others.
 - People must see what is for the common good.
 - Our task is to help people sympathize with others.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Where do you think that people get their morals?
- What does it take to get people motivated about ethical issues?

SCRIPTURAL HERMENEUTICS

- ◉ Literal interpretation - passage should always be interpreted literally; universal ethical principle
- ◉ Contextual interpretation - passage followed literally in the context in which it was written, followed more generally in other contexts; broader ethical principles
- ◉ Allegorical interpretation - passage should never be taken literally

DISCUSSION POINT

- What determines the way that we use Scripture in addressing particular moral issues?

WE MUST BE AWARE OF THE
DIFFERENT WAYS THAT
MORALITY CAN BE
CONCEPTUALIZED.

- Rules
- Goals
- Virtues
- Nature

PERTINENT THEOLOGICAL/PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

- ◉ Free will - How much control do people have over their behavior?
- ◉ Akrasia - To what extent can sin ultimately be attributed to ignorance?
- ◉ Proportionality - Is all sin equal?
- ◉ Responsibility - How obligated am I to do something about problems that I did not create?

BROACHING THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE

- Emotional tone
- Certainty vs. ambivalence
- Knowledgeability
- Condemnation vs. sympathy

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How do you decide whether to address particular controversial issues?
- What considerations should be made in order to address them effectively?