


3-31-2008

# Teaching and Preaching Ethical Issues

Kevin Twain Lowery

Olivet Nazarene University, [klowery@olivet.edu](mailto:klowery@olivet.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/theo\\_facp](https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/theo_facp)

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Lowery, Kevin Twain, "Teaching and Preaching Ethical Issues" (2008). *Faculty Scholarship – Theology*. 6.  
[https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/theo\\_facp/6](https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/theo_facp/6)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Theology at Digital Commons @ Olivet. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship – Theology by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Olivet. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@olivet.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@olivet.edu).

# TEACHING AND PREACHING ETHICAL ISSUES

Kevin Twain Lowery, Ph.D.  
Olivet Nazarene University

# 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?