3-31-2008

Teaching and Preaching Ethical Issues

Kevin Twain Lowery

Olivet Nazarene University, klowery@olivet.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://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

http://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/theo_facp/6
TEACHING AND PREACHING ETHICAL ISSUES

Kevin Twain Lowery, Ph.D.
Olivet Nazarene University
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.
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.
Where do you think that people get their morals?

What does it take to get people motivated about ethical issues?
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
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
How do you decide whether to address particular controversial issues?

What considerations should be made in order to address them effectively?