

# Thinking Ethically and Biblically

By Evan Lenow

**Scripture to Memorize** *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify 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.

## It's in the Book

Some of your coworkers are huddled around a table at lunch, and you walk over to see what they are doing. When you get there, you realize they are talking about how they stay clocked in when they leave for lunch and show up late because your boss never checks the time stamps. They ask if you do too. When you say no, they respond, “Are you going to be a goody two shoes or get paid more?” How would 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, vv. 14–16 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 are 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, v. 16 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. **glorify 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.

**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, v. 15 Verse 15. commandments.** There is no single place to go 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’s 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 where to find what God thinks about some of the situations we face.

**Studying the Passage, v. 15 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.

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

### **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. In this passage 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. In these verses 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, then 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: “[I]n all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7–8).