

**American Baptist Churches of New York State  
Lay Study Program**

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

**A Brief Course Description**

This course is designed to give the student an understanding of Christian Ethics and how they are different from societal norms. The course shall contain some history of ethics and introduce great thinkers on the subject.

**Expected Outcomes**

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to: 1) Define Christian ethics and differentiate it from cultural norms. 2) Discuss the development of Christian ethics and how they are both steadfast and adaptive in society. 3) Evaluate contemporary, controversial issues from a Christian ethical perspective and develop his/her own evaluation of the issues. 3) Present, both in writing and orally, his/her Christian perspective on issues and why others may look at these issues through a different lens.

**Class Expectations**

The instructor should create an atmosphere in class in which all perspectives are encouraged and will be respected (even if not agreed on). Homework assignments should be given that contain both readings from the text and the production of papers for classroom discussions on controversial, ethical subjects.

The sessions should consist of discussion of both the readings and the papers. The instructor should encourage all to speak and ensure that no one is being shut out or disrespected in the conversation.

There are two parallel paths to be followed. The first is to develop the understanding of how Christian ethics developed and how it differs from societal norms. The second path is to discuss contemporary issues and how they are viewed through Christian ethics and what their impact might be on the church.

Subjects to be assigned/discussed include: human sexuality, just war, beginning and ending of life, economic issues such as consumerism, environmentalism, gambling and caring for the poor. Discussions of the writings of ethicists such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer will add to the scholarship of the course.

The last class shall be used by both the instructor and the students to evaluate the course and materials and to discuss lessons learned.

The expectation is there will be 20 hours of class time. The course is usually set up as ten classes which are two hours long. A short break may be included in the middle of the class time. Classes may be designed to include a variety of learning experiences, including but not limited to: interactive lectures, presentations, and group discussions. Modifications to this structure may be done at the discretion of the instructor.

## **Suggested Resources**

Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options by Norman L. Geisler. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Baker Publishing, 2009.

An Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues by Robin W. Lovin. Abingdon Press, 2010.

Christian Ethics in the Protestant Tradition by Waldo Beach. Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics by Stanley J. Grenz. InterVarsity Press, 1997.

What Does the Lord Require?: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching Biblical Ethics by Walter C. Kaiser Jr.. Baker Publishing Group, 2009.

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