

# Exploring Ethical Principles in Biblical Poetry

Project Report

Submitted by  
Joann Grace Thomas  
Reg No: SB21CE014  
Under the guidance of Dr. E. Priscilla

*In partial fulfilment of requirements for award of the degree  
Of Bachelor of Arts  
St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam*



College With Potential for  
Excellence Accredited by NAAC with 'A++'  
Grade  
Affiliated to  
Mahatma Gandhi University  
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## Declaration

I do affirm that the project “**Exploring Ethical Principles in Biblical Poetry**” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Communication Studies has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Ernakulam

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

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B.A. English Literature and Communication Studies

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## **Certificate**

I hereby certify that this project entitled “**Exploring Ethical Principles in Biblical Poetry**” By Joann Grace Thomas is a record of bona fide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Ernakulam

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

Dr. E. Priscilla

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Joann Grace Thomas

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## Chapter: 1

### Introduction

Ethics is the study and application of a set of moral principles that rule over a person's conduct and behavior. Primarily, an application of ethics in our normal day-to-day lives is directly related to a moment of decision-making. Whether the decision that was made was 'moral' or 'immoral' relies on our answers to questions like: "What should I do?", "Where should I be", "In which way should I be doing this" and "Whom should I be like?". For any secular individual, the answers to these questions would be derived from beliefs he has ingrained from childhood, taken from the religion he follows, or just from stubborn will. But this can never be the case for a Christian, as the answers to all the above questions should ultimately be derived from what the Bible has clearly instructed: "What God has commanded me to do on this Earth", "Where God wants me to go", "In the way God has planned for me" and "I should be like God, displaying all His characteristics."

According to Garry Friesen, a Christian should constantly question, "What is God's will for me in this decision?" rather than, "What is best for me?" or "What will give me the greatest amount of happiness?" in his book, *Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View.*"

The Bible and the ethics inscribed in its framework are most often seen as having a 'divine authority' based on the truth that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit or a higher power that is 'God'. This is the very belief that supports its moral framework.

Neil Messer introduces the approach of 'virtue ethics' in his work, *Going by the Book: Exploring Ethics and the Bible* by introducing the 'who' question. We've seen the 'what' and the 'how' questions which mostly correlate to acts and decisions. But the 'who' question asks, "What sort of people or communities, ought we to be?" According to virtue ethics, it is the people with virtuous character that make wise and ethically sound decisions, and those very same decisions are bound to shape their characters for the better.

If anyone in the Christian faith questions the importance of leading a biblically ethical life, Jesus Christ himself stresses imperatively in the Book of John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." It is immediately noticeable that Jesus did not suggest here but framed His words as an ultimatum to all who belonged to the Christian faith. If you do not truly love Jesus, you will not attempt to keep His commandments, and thus you cannot be a true Christian, because loving Jesus and obeying His commandments is the bare minimum to be one.

After considering all this, one can refer to Biblical ethics as the principles derived from teachings, narratives, and commandments found within the pages of the Holy Bible that serve as a guide for moral decision-making for individuals and communities. While one may think that the Bible is such a guide only for those who belong to the Christian faith, there are quite a few ways in which Biblical values are used as the standard for secular situations too. It is detailed in later chapters.

An aspect of biblical ethics is to understand the presence of Laws and Commandments, more precisely, the sheer number of instructions and commands given in the Old Testament at



large, and in the New Testament, the 'second half' of the Holy Bible. The legal system during the time of Jesus Christ still followed the Laws of Moses which were made centuries over centuries before the New Testament times. The Christian education system tries to inculcate the explicit ethical guidance given in the Bible in the current generation even today, taking the example of the 'Ten Commandments' in the book of Exodus which describes a moral framework so clear cut and precise that any Christian should be able to understand and follow through. In the Old Testament, biblical ethics lay out the rules and guidelines for living a good and moral life according to God's teachings. These ethics serve as a roadmap for how people should behave towards each other and God.

Firstly, the Old Testament emphasizes the importance of obeying God's commandments. These commandments, such as the Ten Commandments given to Moses, outline basic rules for living a righteous life. They cover topics like honoring parents, not stealing, and not lying. It teaches about justice and fairness. It tells stories of how God expects people to treat each other with fairness and kindness. For example, it condemns cheating and oppression of the poor and vulnerable.

The Old Testament emphasizes the value of honesty and integrity. It encourages people to be truthful in their words and actions, avoiding deceit and dishonesty. Characters like Daniel and Joseph are praised for their honesty and loyalty to God. And it talks about the importance of compassion and care for others. It tells stories of characters like Ruth and Boaz who show kindness to strangers and care for the less fortunate. Lastly, the Old Testament emphasizes the importance of worshiping and honoring God above all else. It teaches that God should be at the

center of people's lives and that obeying His commandments and following His teachings is the key to living a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Love, compassion, justice, social responsibility, and covenant theology are some other centralized themes and aspects that come to the forefront when discussing biblical ethics. Ethical dilemmas too are widely present in the Bible, which scholars and theologian experts interpret even today to prove its relevance when placed across a modern moral issue.

It is also safe to mention that biblical ethics can be interpreted differently, depending on the denomination or religious group that takes it on. Certain principles like “Thou shalt not take the Lord’s name in vain” which is one of the ten commandments given by God to Moses is downplayed, while another in the same group, “Thou shalt not kill” is emphasized strongly even though both are given equal importance in the eyes of God who made them. Though this is true, the relevance of biblical ethics can never be downplayed in contemporary debates on human rights, social justice, and environmental rights to name a few.

In this project, I will be delving into biblical ethics and its relevance in areas like legal and justice systems, family, sexual ethics, and workplace morals, by the Books of Poetry in the Bible. The Bible contains several books of poetry that are esteemed for their lyrical beauty, profound insights, and spiritual wisdom. Among the most prominent are: The Books of Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Job. The ancient Hebrews identified poetical portions in their sacred texts, as shown by their entitling as “chants” or “psalms”. A brief description and an introduction to each of these poetical books are recorded.

The Book of Psalms is perhaps the most well-known collection of poetry in the Bible. It consists of 150 individual psalms, each attributed to various famed authors including King David, Chief Musician Asaph, and a few others. The Psalms cover a wide range of human experiences and emotions, like praise, lament, thanksgiving, and wisdom. The themes of the Psalms include the search for true meaning and the constant struggle of man with evil and injustice.

The Book of Proverbs, attributed primarily to King Solomon, Agur and Lemuel, is known for its practical wisdom and advice for daily living, and the sayings in it most often contrast wise conduct with foolish behavior, highlighting the consequences of a man's actions and the choices he makes in this world. Proverbs belong to the genre of 'wisdom literature', which seeks to provide insights into how to live a meaningful and righteous life.

The Book of Job believed to be authored by Moses, through a vision from God, the Book of Job is a poetic exploration of suffering, faith, and divine justice. The Book is structured as a narrative poem, recounting the story of a righteous man named Job who experiences extreme suffering and loss. Job's faith and integrity are tested through a series of calamities, including the loss of his family, wealth, and health.

The Book Song of Solomon, authored by King Solomon, this book is also known as the Song of Songs, a lyrical celebration of love and intimacy, often interpreted as a depiction of the relationship between God and His people, or between Christ and the Church. The Song of Songs is renowned for its vivid and sensual imagery, which celebrates the beauty and passion of

romantic love. The text of the Song of Songs is a dialogue between two lovers. Their exchanges capture the depth and complexity of human relationships.

## Chapter: 2

### **Biblical Morals and Ethics in the Legal & Governance System.**

A key moral in Christianity, and a main feature of Christian faith and salvation is repentance. Repenting for one's sins and penance for the bad deeds committed is an act of wiping the slate clean. The offender has then paid the price for his sins and can then be restored to society as a man who does not have to look back, but dwells on improving himself and strives to be a good addition to the world around him. While this is the ideal situation, it is ever so rare for true repentance to ever occur in any legal case, and it usually ends up in "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" situation, which is a stark contrast from the biblical ethic of "turning the other cheek". Andrew Scotnicki, a Christian social ethics professor in the Religious Studies Department of Manhattan College believes that 'a univocal focus on the Christian narrative cannot countenance a judgment willing harm upon those found guilty of legal infractions.'

This roughly translates to the fact that if the criminal justice system was based on Christian ethics, the law could not punish the offender by violence, coercion, or any such harm-inflicting measures. Yet again taking the worldly concept of "an eye for an eye", law-sanctioned methods of violence are necessarily returning 'evil for evil' which once more goes against what the Bible preaches. The focus should not be on inflicting punishment but on restoring the offender to society as a changed person and reconciling the offender and the accusing party peacefully with wisdom and grace. Looking at repentance, it must be a self-inflicted form of regret and not forced by any external parties. In legal terms, repentance is an admission of guilt,

a promise to not repeat the same mistake, and finding out ways to reverse the wrong deed or rectify the wrong action that occurred.

Looking at the Book of Job which explores God and the justice system, we see a Job who has lost everything that he holds dear to him, including but not limited to his family, wealth, and livestock. His friends visit him at his lowest and converse with him, trying to rationalize his suffering. What then occurs is a debate concerning divine justice v. human understanding of legal and ethical principles, highlighting the relationship between any individual and the divine authority in question. In Job 9:32, Job is shown to long for a mediator, an umpire or to be more precise, a judge to arbitrate between him and God, the divine authority he believes in.

The various moral codes in the United States of America's Legal System are influenced by the Bible's views on marriage, punishment, family issues, and morality to name a few. Discussions or legal battles over controversial issues like the rights of the LGBTQIA++ community, abortion, and divorce all take inspiration and knowledge from Biblical ethics and examples. Religious groups or sects have also been known to challenge or strive to improve the law imposed on them, and it can be based on teachings from these Holy books.

The Book of Proverbs is certainly one that provides a truly eternal insight into the ethical landscape and foundations of society, then and even now. Its teachings reflect the importance of upholding righteousness and principles of justice in the biggest and even the smallest most insignificant seeming aspects of life. The practical nature of Proverbs is the reason why it is so relevant, especially in the wise resolution of conflicts and dissolution of disputes. The Book is

firm in its stand of believing in the power of forgiveness and reconciliation. One may say that a man who truly imbibes the spirit of the Book of Proverbs is a man who is in pursuit of true inner peace. Proverbs 20:3 states, “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel.”

Good governance and wise leadership, along with counsel that has passed the test of fire can change the society it leads. Proverbs 11:1 highlights the necessity of honest leaders rooted in integrity, firm in the face of deception, wickedness, fraudulence, and cowardly manner. Leaders that justify the wicked and condemn the just are equally an abomination to God, as implied in Proverbs 17:15. What applied to the Israeli society in 1015 BC, applies to us now as we stand in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in the Year of Reimagination, Transformation, and Tech Adoption.

Ethical decision-making by many leaders even today is influenced by Biblical examples, as the Bible does give choices to them regarding morality issues. These leaders must have accountability for religious values and must be held to a considerably high moral standard. Public policy, and debates based on it usually always require a leader to introspect on religious values relating to public welfare, charity, and social responsibility to name a few aspects. The Bible is also a manual that upholds the human rights of every individual. It has always stressed on the importance of each person’s existence on earth. While the concept of Human Rights only came to exist after the Second World War, the Bible has always upheld principles that protected the individuality of a person.

Looking back into the Bible, it's clear to any Bible scholar that the Books that outline law, order, justice, and other legal matters are Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus to name a few. But when studying the Books of Poetry, I noted that while the previously mentioned Books of Law are of the most explicit, systematic, and stern nature, the poetries in the Psalms and Proverbs reflect the Israelites' understanding of law and justice. And it does not stop at reflection, because those very poems serve as a guide, and as inspiration for believers to build a moral code that is founded in God's Word and will, which will remain relevant for many years to come.

The psalmists, mainly King David and Asaph make it a point to often call upon God as the most righteous judge, and the one who will uphold the oppressed while serving due justice to the wicked (Psalm 7:6-9). While many of the psalms, like chapters 72 and 82 favor similar themes of legal justice, Psalm 119, or the longest psalm recorded is a fine example of the benefits of obeying the Lord's commandments. Psalm 40 pleads with God for deliverance from adversaries, thus relying on the legal wisdom that God provided through His commandments and law structure.

Even though I will be detailing sexual ethics as well as marriage and relationships as taken from the Books of Poetry in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, it is necessary to bring to attention the role of women in the poetic books, as they do put forth an egalitarian view where women, as well as their voices and opinions, are valued. The Song of Solomon, highly regarded as the Bible's own Book of Love, evoking sensuous imagery, and breathing in passionate poetry is one that details the legal and social status of women in the period of King Solomon, who was infamous for his harem of seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines all having a royal status and birth. The Song of Songs reflects on the broad themes of equality and justice within



the biblical narrative, at some points even destroying a few deeply ingrained patriarchal views, some of which are present even today, in the very society we are a part of.

Throughout this chapter, we have dived deep into the rich ethical teachings and wisdom found within the Bible, particularly within the Old Testament Books of Poetry. The Bible emphasizes the need for impartiality and accountability in dissolving disputes and administering governance. Moreover, the concept of mercy and compassion towards the marginalized is stressed upon and given its due importance. Biblical ethics inform us on the principles of leadership and governance, emphasizing the virtues of humility, wisdom, and servant leadership. Leaders are called to steward their authority with integrity and responsibility, recognizing their accountability before both human institutions and divine authority.

As societies grapple with complex ethical dilemmas and challenges, the insights from biblical ethics in these Books of Poetry offer valuable perspectives for shaping legal frameworks that prioritize public welfare and uphold the rights of every individual.

### **Chapter: 3**

#### **Biblical Morals and Ethics Related to Family**

Ethics related to family are crucial for fostering healthy relationships, maintaining trust, and promoting well-being within the family unit. The concept of ethics in the family context encompasses a range of principles, values, and behaviors that guide interactions, decision-making, and the overall dynamics among family members.

Trust and respect form the cornerstone of ethical behavior within the family, building strong bonds among all its members. Honesty, integrity, and transparency in communication are essential for nurturing that trust and ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected in various ways. Mutual support and care are fundamental as well, as family members should have a moral obligation to prioritize each other's well-being by offering emotional support and demonstrating empathy during both good times and bad, especially when challenges arise. Ethical conduct encourages selflessness and a willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the greater overall good of the family. Ethical principles guide resolving conflicts and addressing disagreements constructively within the family. Respect for diverse perspectives, active listening, and open unembarrassed conversation are essential components of ethical conflict resolution. By promoting understanding and forgiveness, ethical behavior encourages reconciliation and the restoration of harmonious relationships among family members. Responsibility and accountability to each other are integral to ethical behavior within the family unit. Individuals within the unit are obligated to fulfill their roles and contribute to the family's welfare, actively participating in shared responsibilities and decision-making processes. Ethical conduct involves

recognizing the impact of one's actions on the family system and taking ownership of the consequences.

Family serves as the primary socializing agent, where individuals learn values, attitudes, and behavioral norms through observation and interaction. Ethical behavior exhibited by parents and older siblings serves as a model for younger family members, shaping their moral development and character formation. Upholding principles of honesty, loyalty, and confidentiality protects the integrity and dignity of the family unit. Ethical behavior promotes a culture of respect, solidarity, and mutual support, strengthening the bonds and preserving its sanctity.

Biblical ethics related to family and its values are rooted in the teachings found in the Bible. In the Bible, family is considered a fundamental institution established by God. It emphasizes the importance of love, respect, and mutual support among family members. One of the central teachings in the Bible regarding family is the commandment to honor one's parents. This includes showing respect, obedience, and care for parents throughout their lives. It emphasizes the importance of strong, loving relationships, built on mutual respect, trust, and devotion to God's teachings. These values serve as a foundation for healthy families and contribute to the well-being and happiness of individuals and society.

From centuries ago, to the present, the Book of Job has played an important role in defining the modern man's relationship with God. What makes the Book of Job so influential in modern thought? The story of Job, a man who endured great loss and suffering but remained obedient to God is used in the Book of Job to examine family ethics. While the book primarily

focuses on Job's struggles and dialogue with his close friends, it also offers valuable insights into the dynamics of family relationships within the context of suffering. Job had seven sons and three daughters, and they were the most integral part of his daily life. The Book details on how he even focused on their spiritual upbringing, by teaching them how to worship God.

Firstly, the book of Job highlights the need for familial support and solidarity during times of hardship. Despite facing devastating losses, Job's wife and children stand by him initially, offering their comfort and consolation. Their presence highlights the significance of familial bonds and the role of family in providing emotional support and encouragement during difficult times. However, as the story unfolds, Job's relationship with his family becomes strained. They question his integrity and suggest that his suffering is a result of his own wrongdoing, causing further distress and rifts between them. During his anguish, Job suffers alone with feelings of abandonment and betrayal, feeling the lack of compassion and understanding from those closest to him. Despite the challenges within his family, Job remains steadfast in his faith and integrity. He refuses to forsake his beliefs or compromise his principles, even in the face of adversity. Job's unwavering commitment to righteousness serves as a powerful example of ethical resilience and moral courage during familial discord and turmoil. It can be noted that while the Book of Job underscores the importance of familial solidarity, it also acknowledges the challenges and tensions that can arise within family relationships during times of crisis. Through Job's story, we are reminded of the importance of finding strength in not just bonds of family, but also in faith.

In the Book of Proverbs, family ethics are richly portrayed through practical wisdom for everyday living. Proverbs offers valuable insights into the dynamics of family relationships and emphasizes the importance of virtue, respect, and love within the family unit. One of the central themes in Proverbs is the importance of parental guidance. Parents are encouraged to teach their children moral values from a young age. Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This verse shows the significance of parental influence in shaping the character and behavior of children, highlighting the responsibility parents have in disciplining them and nurturing their moral development.

Furthermore, Proverbs upholds the virtues of love, respect, and loyalty within the family. Proverbs 15:17 states, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fattened calf with hatred." This verse emphasizes that genuine love and harmony within the family are more valuable than material wealth or abundance. It underscores the importance of cultivating healthy relationships built on mutual affection and care. Proverbs also offers practical advice on communication and conflict resolution within the family. Proverbs 17:14 advises, "The beginning of strife is like releasing water, therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts." This proverb encourages family members to exercise patience, and self-control in resolving conflicts and preventing unnecessary fights and petty quarrels. It can easily be concluded that through its teachings, Proverbs provides a blueprint for building strong, resilient, and virtuous families grounded in wisdom and righteousness.

In the Book of Psalms, biblical ethics shine brightly through poetic expressions of praise, sadness, and heartfelt prayers. While Psalms primarily focus on the individual's relationship with

God, they also provide insights into ethical living and the values that guide a person's conduct within the family. Firstly, Psalms frequently reference the importance of a family unit and relationships within the context of faith. Many of the Psalms were written by individuals who faced trials, tribulations, and moments of joy within their households. These experiences are reflected in the Psalms' expressions of gratitude for familial support, cries for help during times of need, and petitions for God's blessings upon the entire family.

Psalms praise the virtues of love, loyalty, and compassion within familial relationships. Psalm 133, for example, celebrates the beauty and significance of unity among family members, likening it to the precious anointing oil that flows down Aaron's beard, symbolizing blessings, and harmony. Furthermore, Psalms frequently call upon individuals to honor and care for their parents as an expression of respect for God's commandments. Psalm 127:3-5 acknowledges children as a heritage and a gift from the Lord, highlighting the responsibility of parents to nurture, protect, and guide their children with wisdom and love.

Additionally, the Book of Psalms underscores the ethical imperative of forgiveness, reconciliation, and grace within familial relationships. Psalm 103:13-14 portrays God's compassion and tenderness toward His children, likening His love to that of a compassionate father who understands our weaknesses and forgives our transgressions. This imagery serves as a model for human relationships, encouraging family members to extend grace, forgiveness, and understanding to one another in times of conflict or misunderstanding. Psalms remind us of the transformative power of faith, prayer, and ethical living in shaping our character and guiding our conduct according to God's will.

In the book of Song of Solomon in the Bible, we find a beautiful portrayal of romantic love and the relationship between a husband and wife. While it doesn't explicitly discuss family dynamics like parenting or sibling relationships, it offers valuable insights into the importance of love, commitment, and intimacy within marriage. Overall, the book teaches us valuable lessons about love, commitment, and intimacy within the family. It reminds us of the importance of nurturing and cherishing our relationships, and of honoring the covenant of marriage as a sacred bond ordained by God. The next chapter will delve deeper into this book, as it relates more to sexual ethics as well as marriage about Biblical morals and standards. To conclude Ethics related to family are indispensable for nurturing healthy relationships, fostering trust and respect, resolving conflicts, promoting mutual support, and instilling positive values and attitudes among family members.

## **Chapter: 4**

### **Sexual Ethics**

Sexual ethics refers to the moral principles and standards that guide human behavior and relationships in matters related to sexuality. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including consent, fidelity, respect, and responsibility in sexual interactions and relationships. Sexual ethics emphasize the necessity of obtaining explicit consent from all parties involved, ensuring that all sexual interactions are based on mutual desire and respect. Furthermore, sexual ethics emphasize the value of fidelity and commitment within intimate relationships. Fidelity entails being faithful and loyal to one's partner, both emotionally and sexually. It involves trust, honesty, and mutual respect between partners, as well as a commitment to maintaining the integrity of the relationship.

Song of Solomon celebrates the beauty of love between a man and a woman. It describes the deep affection, admiration, and desire they have for each other. The language used in the book is poetic and passionate, expressing the intense emotions and longing between the lovers. Throughout the book, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of fidelity and exclusivity within marriage. The lovers in Song of Solomon express unwavering devotion and commitment to each other, highlighting the biblical principle of marital faithfulness and the sanctity of the marital bond.

Moreover, the Song of Solomon portrays marriage as a partnership of equals, where both the husband and wife play active roles in nurturing their relationship. In addition to celebrating romantic love, the Song of Solomon also acknowledges the physical aspect of marital intimacy.



It affirms the God-given gift of sexuality within the context of marriage, emphasizing its purity and beauty. The book encourages husbands and wives to delight in each other physically while honoring God's design for intimacy within marriage.

While the Book of Job does not directly address sexual ethics in the way that other parts of the Bible might, it indirectly touches upon themes related to morality, integrity, and relationships. In the book, his integrity and faithfulness to God is obvious. Job is portrayed as a righteous man who remains faithful in his commitment to God even in the face of suffering and temptation. This emphasis on integrity can be seen as a broader ethical principle encompassing various aspects of human behavior, including sexual ethics. Furthermore, the Book of Job touches upon themes of temptation and moral testing. his response to adversity reflects principles of moral strength and resilience that apply to all aspects of human behavior, including sexuality.

Similarly, the Book of Psalms also does not specifically address sexual ethics. However, it does offer insights and principles that can sustain ethical behavior, including matters related to sexuality. One main theme in the Psalms is the importance of integrity and righteousness in all aspects of life, including relationships. While the Psalms do not provide explicit guidelines on sexual conduct, they emphasize living a life of moral uprightness and fidelity to God's commandments. Psalm 85: 10-11 states "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." This verse highlights the intertwining of love and faithfulness, righteousness, and peace. It emphasizes the importance of fidelity and righteousness as foundational elements of a harmonious and peaceful life.

Moreover, the Psalms frequently speak of the blessings that come to those who walk in the ways of the Lord and live according to His statutes. In the context of sexual ethics, this can be interpreted as a call to honor God's design for sexuality, which includes fidelity within the bounds of marriage and respect for oneself and others. Additionally, the Psalms emphasize the value of purity of heart and mind. Psalm 51, for example, is a prayer of repentance in which the psalmist seeks forgiveness for sins he has committed, including those of the heart and mind. While sexual ethics may not be the primary focus of this Psalm, it reflects the importance of maintaining purity in one's thoughts, desires, and intentions, which can significantly influence one's behavior and relationships, including sexual ones.

In the Book of Proverbs, which is filled with practical wisdom for daily living, we find principles and insights that guide ethical behavior in various aspects of life, including sexuality. One of the key themes in Proverbs is the importance of integrity and faithfulness in relationships, including those of a sexual nature. Proverbs often contrast the faithful and virtuous person with the one who engages in deceit and immorality. Additionally, Proverbs offers warnings against the dangers of sexual temptation and immorality. It cautions against the seductive allure of lustful desires and urges individuals to exercise self-control and wisdom in their interactions and relationships. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of making wise choices and resisting immoral behavior. Moreover, Proverbs celebrates the blessings of marital intimacy and the joy of companionship within the bounds of marriage. By highlighting the beauty of marital intimacy, Proverbs underscores the value of honoring and cherishing the marital bond.

Furthermore, Proverbs encourages individuals to seek wisdom and understanding in all areas of life, including matters related to sexuality. It teaches that wisdom comes from God and is available to those who seek it diligently. In summary, while the Book of Proverbs may not offer explicit teachings on sexual ethics, its principles of fidelity, self-control, respect, and wisdom provide valuable guidance for navigating relationships and making ethical choices in the realm of sexuality. Proverbs underscore the importance of integrity, wisdom, and reverence for God's principles in all aspects of life, including matters related to sexuality.

In conclusion, the examination of sexual ethics in the books of poetry of the Bible reveals timeless principles and insights that resonate with human experiences and relationships today. While the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Song of Solomon may not explicitly delineate specific guidelines for sexual conduct, they offer valuable wisdom and perspectives on love, fidelity, respect, and integrity within the context of human sexuality. Through poetry, prayers, and reflections, these biblical texts emphasize the importance of upholding moral values, honoring commitments, and seeking wisdom in matters related to sexuality.

## Chapter 5

### Workplace Ethics

Workplace ethics are the principles and standards that guide behavior and interactions in a professional environment. In simple terms, workplace ethics outline how people should behave and treat each other at work, promoting fairness, integrity, and mutual respect. At the heart of workplace ethics is the idea of doing what is right and just in all aspects of work. This includes being honest, trustworthy, and accountable for one's actions and decisions. When individuals uphold ethical standards in the workplace, they build trust and credibility among their colleagues, clients, and stakeholders, fostering a conducive environment for collaboration and success.

Workplace ethics also emphasize the importance of treating others with dignity and respect. Additionally, workplace ethics encourage professionalism and excellence in performance. This involves striving for excellence in one's work, meeting deadlines, and fulfilling responsibilities with diligence and dedication. Embracing workplace ethics not only benefits individuals and organizations but also contributes to building a culture of integrity and excellence in the broader community.

In the Book of Job, while the primary focus is on Job's suffering and his conversations with his friends, there are underlying principles that touch upon workplace ethics, especially regarding integrity and fairness. Firstly, Job shows great integrity in his dealings with his work and his colleagues. His integrity is evident in his diligence and dedication to his work, as well as

in his refusal to compromise his principles, even in the face of adversity. Through Job's story, the book prompts reflection on the importance of fairness and equity in the workplace, highlighting the need for just treatment and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their circumstances.

Additionally, Job's conversations with his friends and his responses to their accusations demonstrate the importance of accountability and responsibility in the workplace. Job takes ownership of his actions and decisions, refusing to shift blame or make excuses for his circumstances. His willingness to confront challenges head-on and to accept accountability for his choices serves as a model for ethical behavior in the workplace. Furthermore, the Book of Job emphasizes the importance of compassion and empathy in professional relationships. Despite their misguided attempts to explain Job's suffering, his friends initially show compassion by mourning with him and offering silent support. However, their lack of empathy and understanding ultimately leads to judgment and condemnation. Job's story underscores the need for empathy, understanding, and support in the workplace, highlighting the importance of fostering a culture of compassion and solidarity among colleagues.

An overarching theme in the next book, the Song of Solomon is the importance of mutual respect and admiration between lovers. This principle of mutual respect can be applied to the workplace, where colleagues should treat each other with respect and recognize each other's contributions and abilities.

Moreover, the Song of Solomon celebrates the beauty of love and companionship within the context of marriage. While the focus is on romantic love, the underlying principle of

commitment and loyalty can be applied to professional relationships as well. Colleagues should demonstrate loyalty to their coworkers and employers, honoring their commitments and working together towards common goals. The lovers in the poem openly express their feelings and desires, fostering a strong sense of intimacy and trust. In the workplace, effective communication and honesty are essential for building trust and fostering positive relationships among coworkers and superiors.

In the Book of Proverbs, which is a collection of wise sayings and teachings, we find several principles that can guide workplace ethics in simple and practical ways. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity in all aspects of work. Proverbs 11:3 says, "The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them." Moreover, Proverbs encourages diligence and hard work as essential qualities for success in one's profession. Proverbs 10:4 states, "He who has a slack hand becomes poor but the hand of the diligent makes rich." Additionally, Proverbs promotes the value of humility and teachability in the workplace. Proverbs 15:33 advises, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility." This verse reminds us that humility is the foundation of wisdom and honor, encouraging us to approach our work with a willingness to learn from others and grow in understanding.

Furthermore, Proverbs emphasizes the importance of respectful communication and conflict resolution in the workplace. Proverbs 15:1 states, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." This verse highlights the power of gentle and respectful communication in resolving conflicts and fostering positive relationships with colleagues.

Proverbs remind us of that ethical behavior in the workplace is not just about following rules but about embodying values that honor God and benefit others.

In the Book of Psalms, the themes and values expressed can be applied to our conduct in the workplace. The Psalms emphasize the importance of integrity and honesty in all aspects of life, including our work. Psalm 15, for example, speaks of the characteristics of those who may dwell in God's presence, mentioning traits such as speaking truthfully, doing what is right, and keeping promises. These qualities are foundational to workplace ethics, where honesty and integrity are essential for building trust and credibility among colleagues and clients. The lyrics often encourage individuals to seek wisdom and guidance from God in all their endeavors. Psalm 119:105 states, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." This verse reminds us of the importance of seeking divine guidance and wisdom in our professional lives, making ethical decisions, and navigating challenges with discernment.

Additionally, the Psalms highlight the significance of treating others with respect and fairness, regardless of their position or status. Psalm 133:1 declares, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Furthermore, the Psalms often reflect on the consequences of wrongdoing and the rewards of righteous living. Psalm 37:27-29 encourages doing good and turning away from evil, assuring that those who uphold righteousness will inherit the land and dwell in it forever. This principle of reaping what we sow applies to the workplace, where ethical behavior and integrity are rewarded with trust, respect, and long-term success.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, delving into the rich tapestry of biblical ethics as portrayed within the poetic masterpieces of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon offers a profound journey into the depths of human existence and the intricate fabric of relationships. These timeless texts serve as a wellspring of wisdom, illuminating the complexities of ethical conduct and providing invaluable guidance for navigating life's myriad challenges.

Within the pages of Job, we are confronted with the unwavering integrity of a man tested by suffering. His steadfast commitment to righteousness in the face of adversity serves as a beacon of inspiration, challenging us to hold fast to our principles even in the darkest of times. Through Job's narrative, we are reminded of the importance of resilience, perseverance, and unwavering faith during life's trials.

Turning to the Psalms, we encounter a symphony of emotions expressed with raw honesty and vulnerability. From cries of anguish to songs of praise, these poetic expressions mirror the full spectrum of human experience. Embedded within the Psalms are profound reflections on honesty, trust, and integrity, urging us to cultivate authenticity in our relationships and to place our trust in the steadfast love of the Divine.

In the book of Proverbs, we find a treasury of practical wisdom distilled into succinct aphorisms. These timeless teachings offer guidance on virtuous living, emphasizing the importance of humility, diligence, and discernment in all aspects of life. Through the wisdom



imparted in Proverbs, we are encouraged to pursue paths of righteousness and to cultivate a spirit of lifelong learning and growth.

Lastly, in the Song of Solomon, we are invited into the sacred realm of love and intimacy. Through its lyrical poetry, this ancient text celebrates the beauty and sanctity of human relationships, portraying love as a divine gift to be cherished and nurtured. Within the pages of Song of Solomon, we find echoes of the Creator's design for love and companionship, inspiring us to cultivate relationships characterized by mutual respect, tenderness, and devotion.

In essence, the examination of biblical ethics within the books of poetry in the Bible offers a profound exploration of what it means to live a life of integrity, wisdom, and compassion. These timeless teachings transcend cultural and temporal boundaries, speaking to the universal human experience and offering timeless truths that continue to resonate with readers across generations. As we reflect on the insights gleaned from Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon, may we be inspired to embrace lives characterized by righteousness, love, and grace, seeking to honor the Divine and contribute to the flourishing of humanity.

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