
WE ARE ALL PHILOSOPHERS

*A Christian Introduction to Seven Fundamental Questions
(John Frame)*

Why should I care?

1. We are all philosophers
2. Our Christian duty to think rightly

*Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 9:10, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, John 15:15,
Romans 12:2, Colossians 2:8*

3. We receive messages from the world every day that promote all sorts of ideas:

Goals of the Discussion

1. **Understand that everyone has answers** to these questions whether or not they have ever explicitly thought about them.
2. **Begin to understand and articulate** the answers to these questions for yourself.
3. Consider some of the more **common cultural and historical answers** to these questions.
4. **Consider the Biblical answers** to these questions.
5. Begin to ask, **“Why,” and “How do you know?”**

Ask these questions of yourself.

Ask these questions of others.

The Seven Questions

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. What is everything made of? | <i>Metaphysics</i> |
| 2. Do I have free will? | <i>Anthropology</i> |
| 3. Can I know the world? | <i>Epistemology</i> |
| 4. Does God exist? | <i>Theology</i> |
| 5. How shall I live? | <i>Ethics</i> |
| 6. What are my rights? | <i>Ethics (cont.)</i> |
| 7. How can I be saved? | <i>Soteriology</i> |

1. What is everything made of?

A tough chapter...

The Whole vs. The Parts

Thales' Metaphysical Water

- World appears to be made of various elements (earth, air, fire, water)
- Which of these is most fundamental?
- Thales: Water. (Others argued for other elements)
- Fundamentally... Materialistic
- *Conclusion: Ultimate being is not differentiated ("FBI Special Agent")*

Aristotle's Being and Nothingness

- Aristotle's 'Prime Matter'
- Matter + Form (various options) = Being
- But... Prime Matter is without form, so is not being
- *Conclusion: We can't compare & contrast. ("FBI Special Agent")*

Atomism

- Divide into smaller & smaller components until you can't... Ultimate Reality
- Leibniz: Universe = Mind & Matter, but Mind is ultimate (“monads”)
- Today:
 - Everything that exists is ‘matter in motion’
 - Everything is made from ‘matter’ & ‘energy’ – but which is ultimate?

Holism

- “Nothing can be known in isolation from everything else”
- Therefore: You must know everything in order to know anything.
- *You can see how this is an impossibility.*

Pantheism

- Everything is god.
- Nothing is god.
- *Conclusion: There is no contrast to be made. God is a metaphor like Thales’ water.*

The Real God

- Triune, Personal, Creator
 - **Not part of** creation
 - **But has entered** creation at a real time in a real place
- Made the World for His Own Glory
 - The world reveals God
 - **If** we don’t know God, **then** we can never understand the world rightly
- Trinity is the eternal **one and many**
- World = many component **parts** that are relative to each other in the **whole**
- We can know some things about the world (Proverbs 25:2)
- And, there are things we will never know (Deuteronomy 29:29)

2. Do I have free will?

Freedom = ⁽¹⁾ Being able to do what you want to do
⁽²⁾ with no barrier that keeps you from doing it.

Libertarianism

- If there is **any** cause (including your own desires) determining my action, my action is not free.
- **Determinism** argues directly against freedom in choice.
- **Randomness** (per libertarianism) leaves us without any reason for those choices.

Evaluating Libertarian Free Will

- Causality does not have to be a barrier to freedom.
- The Bible understands that human choice can't be disconnected from human nature. (Matthew 15:19. Jeremiah 13:23)

The Problem of Evil (Theodicy)

- Many attempts to answer this over the millennia
 - Most fall short
 - Many severely limit God's sovereignty
 - Leading to various theologies that don't do justice to God's character

Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, Open Theology

- Biblically
 - God 'causes' evil (see also, Frame's letter on pp. 95-97)
 - And, Human (or angelic) perpetrators of evil are responsible for it
 - God has a purpose for evil
- See:
 - Romans 9:14-24 as quoted in the book.
 - Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 3 "Of God's Eternal Decree"
 - Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 5 "Of Providence"

3. Can I Know the World?

Historically... Knowledge = “justified, true belief” (3 necessary aspects)

Justification

- Is/Ought (factual/moral) problem.
 - Ought typically is in the realm of ethics.
 - If there is an authority about what the source of knowledge to which we submit, then ‘ought’ is also in the realm of knowledge.
- Obligation to believe ‘x’ depends upon the authority to which I appeal
- *Conclusion: Knowledge is a moral issue.*

4. Does God Exist?

- Greek philosophers had some passing notion of a god or gods. Even Aristotle’s ‘First Mover’.
- “Philosophy seeks a path to God” because philosophy seeks a God-like knowledge about the universe.
- Paul with philosophers @ Athens (Acts 17)
- ‘Natural revelation’ discourages idolatry (Romans 1)

“Philosophy, as practiced by the Greeks and many non-Christians over the centuries, is not the innocent wonder of a child trying to probe the wonderful mysteries of his world. Rather it is the guilt of Adam and Eve, trying to escape God’s gaze after they have determined to violate his commands.” (p. 51)

(See pp. 52-53 for a summary of chapters 1-3)

5. How Shall I Live?

Teleological Ethics

- “Behavior based upon **achieving a particular goal.**”
- But... It is simplistic.
 - It seemingly bypasses the is/ought distinction because the question simply becomes “How do I achieve my goal?”
- And... Problems Remain
 - What goal(s) ought I pursue?
 - When goals are in conflict, which is better?
 - How do you know what is good anyway?

Deontological Ethics

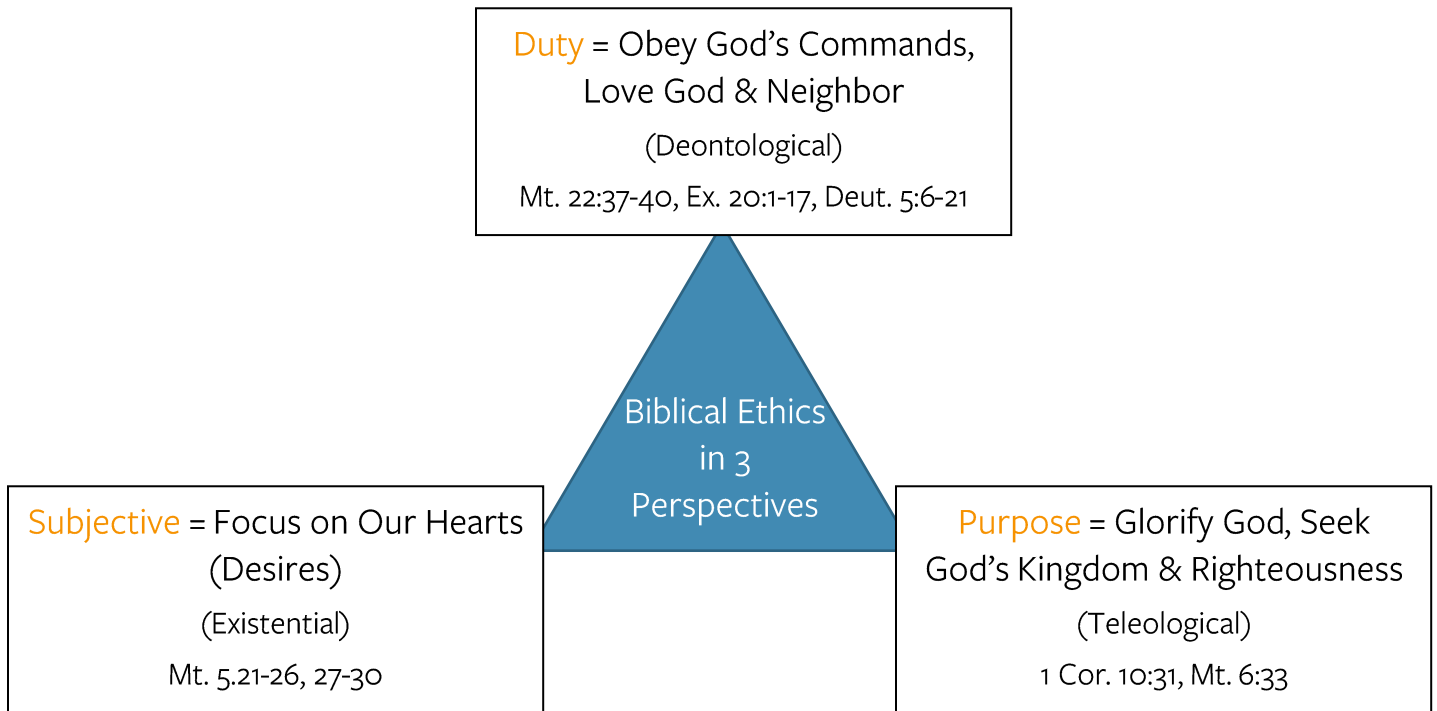
- “Behavior based upon **obligations or duties.**”
- But... How do we know what our obligations are?

Existential Ethics

- “Do **what you want** to do.”
 - Be authentic and honest, true to who you are.
- But... How do you know what being true to yourself is if your desires are in conflict?

Biblical Ethics

- All three of the principles can be found in Biblical ethics.
 - We are designed for a certain purpose (teleological).
 - We are obligated to follow particular principles (deontological).
 - We are aware of the subjective desires that we have (existential).



6. What Are My Rights?

- Rights = What is owed to us by others
 - Rights & Obligations are reciprocal.
- The UN's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*
- Do some rights imperil or infringe upon others?

A Biblical Doctrine of Rights

- The Bible mostly speaks of obligations, not rights.
 - Reciprocity allows us to examine rights.
- Scripture's call to forego our rights in service of others
- Consider: When to demand your rights & When to deny them

7. How Can I Be Saved?

- Salvation = A way of escaping or overcoming evil.
- Salvation in other philosophical systems
 - Buddhism: *“Nonbeing is the best form of being.”*
 - The nonsensical nature of a non-Christian system of thought

Biblical Salvation

- All people
 - Condemned as sinners deserving eternal punishment in hell.
 - No one is able to save himself through right actions (i.e. following of the law).
- Jesus
 - Kept the law perfectly, being perfectly righteous.
 - Also bore God’s wrath against sinners.
- The Believer
 - My sin is imputed (credited) to Jesus.
 - I have Jesus’s righteousness imputed to me.
 - God is, then, both just and the justifier. (Romans 3:26)