

Our Training today starts with a passage from Isaiah, the first chapter where he lays out a new path that the God is seeking for due to the failures of Israel, and he prophesies about a new day and a new forgiveness that is coming and God tells the people of Israel, “Come, let us reason together” This is indicative of the role that worldview, moral reasoning, and moral orientation have for ethical practice...

In the Bible, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment comes from Deuteronomy 6:4. Love Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul and all your strength -- added with Leviticus -- you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Later in a Greek world the Septuagint translated this verse, you shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.

Thus, our God given capacity to reason is included in obedience to His will.

And so... What we are going to talk about today is how moral reasoning works in moral orientation and mission command.

More importantly, what I hope you take away from today’s discussion is that these systems for moral reasoning are active in Scripture, and I'll show you where these places are and how they work.

Last month we discussed the role that worldviews have in shaping our ethics. And today’s training is a continuation of this...

What’s really important for us to understand is how these systems of moral reasoning are at work in what we do and how we act and what this means for us as Christians serving in the military today.

This introductory slide demonstrates how moral reasoning has been a part of world culture from the most ancient of times. And it doesn't just come from the West and from the North of our globe it is alive in every culture throughout time

The top line shows some of the most influential people that our cultures talk about, people like Confucius, people like the Greek philosophers, and later Roman philosophers and the Stoics and Epicureans.

Moral reasoning is filtered down through religion, because ancient peoples were not compartmentalized like our societies are today. They were drawing meaning from their religious culture, they were drawing from their religious culture, and their ideas kept spreading, and are filtered down through the ages. Within Christianity these ideas were filtered through Catholic theologians, like the center ones, St. Augustine and St. Thomas who applied them to warfare, and Protestant Reformation theologians took their – eastern thinkers were considering similar

ideas. These ideas came into modernity where we get people like Gandhi, Kant, Bentham, Mills, next to bottom line, then they seeped into the political culture and modern military culture.

What's really important to understand is the bottom line == that regardless of where we are in the world today these thinkers are very influential in how we put discern ethical practices.

There are people like Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, who formed this modern idea that it's all about us -- We make our own destiny, and then we decide what that destiny is, then we decide what that destiny means.

Then there's Martin von Crevald who formalized these thoughts in modern military systems of realism in mission command these systems are utilitarian, and we'll talk about that in a little bit.

Then there are those like John Rawls and Michael Walzer in the middles who argue that there are rules that form the boundaries for our reasoning, that influences the work of people like James Turner Johnson who applies these ideas to just war doctrine how the principles apply to today and what this means for shaping tomorrow. This includes the role that God and spiritual orientations have in forming our ethics

And then you get this final philosopher Michael Foucault, who applies these ideas to post-colonial reasoning and systems where God doesn't matter, but the disciplines from ancient rules still influence us in ways that help and hurt...

Of course, we believe that God does matter and has been very active in this dialogue from the very beginning.

But how do these ideas apply and influence the modern systems where we work.

Let's start basic assumptions, we discussed last month...

First worldviews, (our beliefs) shape our moral orientations (faith).

Moral orientations are different from worldview. The two go together. They're two sides of the same coin. But nevertheless... The beliefs, the things we think about, shape how we process the data we perceive and how we process it into actions == And this is where the role of moral orientation directs ethical practices by putting our reasoning into action. As it is written in James -- Faith without works is dead ... So, in a sense worldview and orientation are two sides of the same coin and the edge of the coin as it rolls along and meets the road that we're traveling is ethics...

Okay, on to slide number one. I want you to read this for a second.

I'm not trying to be funny, but a lot of people argue ethical systems and moral reasoning like we're blank slates from birth ... and rational by nature...

But this is simply not true from day one.

However, experience, history, and research shows us that we enter the world and then we fill our ourselves with data/perceptions that define our environment.

(Advance Slide)

And so, what we're going to talk about is how we start to develop this and how these processes for our moral orientation come about and what God says about that.

We don't enter the world as blank slates – so, suppose the little smiley face is us.

We enter the world into some kind of a system, but we're hard-wired to react to our surroundings. Think about the youngest infant, They enter the world with a a me system of moral reasoning.

This is the most widely used system for moral reasoning, but it's not an accurate description of how we actually do moral orientation. Nevertheless, it's used. And biblically there has always been disastrous results of using this system.

Here's a couple of scriptures for that.

In ancient days, there was no king and the book of Judges tells us that everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Centuries later, Jesus, when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. These people are just wandering out there. And we don't think of me as a system for moral orientation ... the biggest example in our world today is President Donald Trump, and I'm not going to talk politics -- but the most recent interview with him done by the New York Times asked him what his moral system was, and he tells them, I am my moral system.

Think about this. There's no other outside authority for how I act -- It's me, and we'll get more into why there is a problem with this thinking and as we grow older, we come into contact with two other moral systems

First, there is this idea of authoritarian ethics. We follow the leader. Babies learn by following whatever mom or dad says, or grandparents, say – it becomes the law – rules to live by... We decide what's rights by asking what does authority want...?

And as we grow older, we discover social ethics. Which asks – which way is the crowd going? And we decide our morality and ethics by what our social group is thinking, saying, and doing.

Both of these systems are very active.

First let's talk about authoritarian ethics.

Here, the sovereign, the leader, is the one who decides on the exception. Nietzsche and Carl Schmitt formalized this -- reasoning system for ethics where one source has the power to influence the actions of others. In this moral reasoning system—authority dictates the means and ends for ethical actions.

In religious reasoning, we have this idea of divine command theory, which basically does ethics by discerning what God says. It works this way – “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.

This actually pretty good advice, isn't it? We follow the Word of God.

You see this moral reasoning systems in scripture. For example, Jesus says things in a debate with Pharisees or Sadducees, “you have heard it said, of old, but I say to you.

And so, they questioned Jesus's authority. Who are you to say these things? Who are you to do these things? This is the issue that placed Jesus on the way to the cross. A world rejects Jesus having the authority to say these things, but it tries to replace that authority with something or someone else from this world ==

So, we have authoritarian ethics today. We have it in the military. It's just part of the system. We ask, what does the command say? What do our orders say? You get the idea.

The second moral reasoning system is a social system. From day one, when I was in a church youth group, we always talked about peer pressure. The idea that following the crowd was a bad thing... But the more we go away from Western culture, we find that that social moral reasoning is a good thing. In a social moral reasoning system, consensus decides the means and ends for ethical actions.

My wife is Korean and being a part of a group or the society is all about our relationships within a social group. The group or tribe sets the rules, and sets the direction. There is no me.

There is a moral reasoning system called Ethics of Care where we consider relationships, uses of power, and consequences to a larger group in making moral decisions. So, ethics is decided by what the group says.

We can see this in Scripture, where Jesus is talking with the disciples in Matthew 18, and telling them, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Note that the you in this passage is plural, not singular.

And again, I say to you, if two or three agree on anything, it will be done for them in heaven, and where three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

It's like consensus, is group power, and the group is the one who determines moral orientation, that makes ethical actions possible.

This system for moral reasoning is reinforced when Jesus tells the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Here, it is not just individuals that our Lord is talking about. He's talking about whole groups of people (whether they're believers or not) and how their ethical actions of noticing what God is doing in the world, makes all the difference, in how they are judged.

This is moral reasoning within an ethics of care social system.

However, both authoritarian and social moral reasoning are problematic because... ethics are not just about an individual in power and they are not just about the consensus of the group because authority and groups are all using different reasoning processes to discern information they take in, how they make use of that information to shape how they act in the world today.

And this is where we look at other systems for moral reasoning.

These moral reasoning systems are alive and well and flourishing within Mission Command.

The first system I'd like to talk about is virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is based on a system of values that we use to define our place in the world. These values form our moral map, and determine our character. Virtue ethics seeks to answer the question, "What is most appropriate?" Because, individual virtue defines ethical practice – thus, virtues and values that compose character justify the means and ends for ethical actions.

Think about land navigation, and how Maps become a very important tool, because It's hard to get anywhere if we don't have some kind of map that makes sense of different reference points and terrain that we operate in. This is what virtue ethics does.

Virtue ethics is one of the most ancient moral reasoning systems, and we can see that through the work of Greek philosophers and particularly Stoic philosophers in the West, and we can also see it in Eastern religion through the influences of Confucius.

Virtue ethics is all about imitating a pattern of behavior, not just for the individual, but for the group as well.

And usually, this pattern of behavior is based upon virtues, values, and exemplars. In the west this system was based upon a set of four primary (or cardinal) virtues, Prudence, which is this idea of discernment, justice, doing the right/fair thing, courage or fortitude, and temperance, moderation.

These virtues change within applications to context and they are determined by boundaries of an excess and scarcity. For example, we talk about the virtue of courage. There is an excess of courage which can be a rashness – like someone who jumps in starts hammering away --they're not brave but showing a bravado. There is an old infantry saying – don't share a fighting position with someone who is braver than you... it's the idea that excess may be inappropriate and false – the same with scarcity seen as cowardice doing too much.

And so, virtue philosophers would talk about ethics idea of acting within the golden mean between excesses and scarcity – and this mean would change as the boundaries extended or contracted within contexts for action. So, appropriate virtue was never a static point between these two poles.

This is why virtue ethics always ask the question, what is most acceptable for character? Its gauging ethics based upon value acted upon any given moment of time. In addition, these virtues are learned by conforming to examples set by virtuous people...

So, in the military we judge ethical actions based upon the example of heroes, and conformity to a system of values. These virtues and values form the character of individuals and this is really important to understand about virtue ethics,

Virtue ethics are very alive in Scriptures like John 13, where Jesus tells the disciples, I'm giving you a new commandment, that you shall love one another as I have loved you. This command follows the example of him washing the feet of his disciples. So, as Christian we love by following the example of Jesus and becoming the gauge for answering what is most appropriate.

Virtue ethics asks the question what would Jesus do? And imitating what is most appropriate. In Ephesians 6 Paul is setting up an example for believers to follow by attaching values to various pieces of armor that soldiers use. Paul is giving early disciples a tangible example to follow, and thus we debate about what's most appropriate uses for the armor of God in our lives or what is appropriate uses in context.

We can also see this in Galatians, where Paul is basically talking about the Holy Spirit's presence in developing a list of values that he defines as the fruits of the Spirit developed in each one of us. Values such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Values, or fruits, become the marks of a disciple instead of imitation of the four cardinal virtues of Aristotle or Plato, and we judge our actions or ethics by the values or virtues that God is asking us to be in this world.

You see this in the prophet Micah's answer to what does God require of us but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly?

These are scriptural examples of virtue based moral reasoning – and we model these things in our lives and teach others to do the same. You see this in 2 Timothy where Paul tells Timothy to share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ. The whole letter is about how to suffer and adapt our behavior by following the model of a good soldier. To do this, is to be acceptable to God.

And Paul ties this idea to the idea of conscience in his first letter to Timothy So, Christian moral reasoning is not just being an exemplar of these values - It's for each and every one of us to figure out what's most appropriate and of conscientiously acting on these values. Our ethics is a matter of our virtue and character

So, you have scripture and ancient philosophy in the East and West doing moral reasoning to form a moral map for us to make sense of the world and our operational environment to determine how we ought to live in the world.

There is another moral reasoning system based upon principles. This ethical system is called deontology. The study of what is necessary or essential, or required for ethical action.

Principle based ethics ask the question, what is required? And moral reasoning functions like a compass in land navigation ethics.

If we're going to do land navigation; we need to use a compass. We often hear this idea of ethics that we need to operate off a moral compass, because compasses give us direction.

And this is correct, but think about how many times do we do land navigation and only use a compass? A compass makes no sense if we don't use it with some kind of moral map, and it doesn't determine our destination. Think about it.

Principle based moral reasoning determines directions based upon rules. It asks the question, "What is required?" For principle-based moral reasoning the means justify the ends.

This is the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and John Rawls and we find this within rule of law.

Principles and laws act just like a compass. The needle on a compass always points to magnetic north. Correct? We can debate whether its pointing towards magnetic or true north? And we know that the two are not the same, but ultimately, we know that the compass is reliable because it's always going to point towards some unchanging direction.

And that's the point of moral reasoning according to what Immanuel Kant says. He says that moral reasoning is based upon the north pointing needle on a moral compass – and he calls this a categorical imperative – a principle that doesn't change regardless of circumstances.

This imperative principle sets the course for duty, it sets the course or directions we should follow, and it sets the boundaries for our ethical actions. This principle is different from conditional rules that change with circumstances.

Kant defines his categorical imperative, his north pointing arrow this way -- act only according to what you reason should become a universal law applicable to everyone. This sounds good because he's a Western philosopher in the West, but Confucius said something similar centuries before him while living on a different continent.

And we can debate about how universal any law or any order or any principle should be. Then Kant adds a second principle, and he called it a kingdom of ends – this is where we treat others or humanity as an end result never as a means to an end. In other words, we don't act in ways that uses others for our own purposes. People aren't just the means to get to a greater good, but they are the greater good in and of themselves.

We can see this kind of thinking in rule of law. We also find this conversation in just war theory with the idea that we ought to act in accordance with rules and principles that don't change. These principles point us in a set direction, and they apply and help us make sense of the moral map in which we operate.

Principle based, deontological moral reasoning is very much a part of scripture. We see this in Exodus 20, in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Why do we have the books of the prophets who keep going back to applications or failures of applications of these laws.

And then we have Jesus, who is just not coming and saying, well, here's something new, let's disregard the rules. Instead, he tells us, "Whatever you wish that others would do, do to them, for this is the law and the prophets."

In Matthew 5 and 8, where Jesus tells the disciples – "heaven and earth will not pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Thus, principles are important. They don't just go away. A compass needle always points north, and we orient our moral map to this direction.

So, we've talked about authoritarian, social, virtue, principle based moral reasoning

And all of these things are coming together. We have a map. We have a compass. But there's more.

Think about anything you've ever done in life. Don't we always have some kind of end result or destination in mind? And don't we determine progress by proximity to this end?

This is what utilitarian ethics is all about. It's the destination and the waypoints we use in land navigation. In utilitarian moral reasoning, the ends justify the means. Thus, utilitarians seek to answer questions like "what is beneficial?"

We can debate about uses of virtues or principles, but don't they help us make sense of why we are traveling and where we are going? This is the purpose of utilitarian ethics. Sometimes,

utilitarian ethics have a bad reputation in Christianity, and it should for a couple of different reasons, but it also has its place.

Two philosophers for utilitarian ethics are Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Both of them talked about consequences, they talked about realism, and they talked about the idea that ethics is based upon end states and end results.

For Bentham, ethics was personal. He thought ethical actions should be judged by what produced pursuits of happiness and welfare. In the ancient world, these were the Epicurean philosophers who basically said if it feels good, do it. If it has personal benefit to you, that is the right direction for you.

John Stuart Mill said something. For him, the utility of ethical actions was determined by the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.

Today we talk about utilitarian moral reasoning in terms of cost benefit analysis for courses of action. Thus, moral reasoning determines the greatest good for the greatest number of possible.

Do our actions help us achieve an end state defined by the greater good? What are the consequences or costs for our actions? Thus, we make decisions based upon what the end state is going to be.

Walzer and van Crevald apply utilitarian ethics to the Law of Armed Conflict, and Just War Theory. Thus, military action is not about principles, laws, character, virtues, or values it's about end states and cost.

We see this in scripture as well. I've heard so many pastors, and so many professors say that utilitarian ethics isn't a part of scripture, but they are wrong.

Every time Jesus talks about the kingdom of God, He's talking about an end state and utility in bringing about a consequence. We can see this in John 4 with the woman at the well, or John 8, and the woman about to get stoned for adultery.

By the law or principles, the woman at the well was an outcast... the crowd had every right to kill this woman caught in adultery. Neither were virtuous

Yet Jesus forgives and restores both because he's reclaiming both for the kingdom of God. We can try to examine these scriptures by trying to, like a lawyer would do, quibble over proper applications of the law,

But this is not how Jesus is making decisions. It's not settled by the law and the prophets. It's settled on purpose of God's kingdom. It's the result or transformed lives. We see him do the same thing in Matthew 22 when he's arguing with the Pharisees about scripture and marriage.

Here a widow who has had seven different husbands dies. So, religious lawyers want to know who she will belong to in the kingdom of God? Jesus cuts right through the issue -- In Matthew 18, the parable of the unforgiven... or Luke 16, the parable of the unfaithful servant. What's driving the moral reasoning is applications of forgiveness grace to bring about God's kingdom.

Thus, this type of utilitarian moral reasoning is very active in Christian theology and it's active within moral reasoning as its used within mission command. We'll get to this use in a minute.

The next moral reasoning system is situation based. Think of it this way-- In land navigation terrain influences route selection, whether or not we have a map, or a compass, or a destination. Thus, the function of terrain analysis is similar to the way situation based moral reasoning determines ethical actions.

Think about any terrain we walk. It's different walking across the parking lot than walking across a mountain side or through a swamp. Thus, terrain dictates where we're going, and how we travel.

This is what situation-based moral reasoning does. It was formalized by theologian Joseph Fletcher, but others have used this over the years—to apply virtues, principles or utility to changing situations. Situation based moral reasoning asks the question, “What's appropriate to the context we find ourselves in? In this moral reasoning system the situation justifies the ends and the means used for ethical actions.

We can see this in John 8, where Jesus is applying love and forgiveness, and kingdom to determine ethical action.

Paul uses situation based moral reasoning in his letters where he uses words like “whatever” as the criteria used to determine ethical action. Whatever, is good, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is commendable, whatever is pure. Do these things.

In Colossians 3, he writes, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

We use situational moral reasoning as officers when we practice situational awareness to resolve moral problems.

The last system I want to discuss is the only ethical system that is modern and evidence based. However, it has its roots in the Moral Sense Theory in classical philosophy. This system is called Moral Foundations Theory and it bases moral reasoning upon our reactions to our moral senses. It determines ethical action from experience and instinct to answers the question, “What is tolerable?” Thus, intuitions, emotions, and experiences justify both the ends and means used for ethical actions.

Moral Foundations Theory comes from a researcher named Jonathan Haidt. He says that we socially develop our values from internal moral senses like we develop taste from our taste buds.

I began talking about moral orientation by stating that we're not blank slates when we're born. Babies have senses and react to what they like or dislike, what's pleasing, what's pleasurable, and what causes them concern.

Haidt has conducted research with different cultures, different age groups, and different genders and found that the ways we determine ethical actions is from combinations of common moral senses == care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, and sanctity.

We may have different definitions for these senses, depending on who we are and how we were raised, but we always seem to gauge what's right or wrong based upon these common senses.

Thus, Haidt says that we socially develop our sense of right/wrong or good/bad the same way we develop our taste buds and refine our moral senses through social interactions and experiences

Thus, we tend to feel our values before we think our values, because we first have moral reactions from our moral senses, and later we develop reasons for having these reactions.

Therefore, our moral reasoning and ethical actions are intuitive.

Moral Foundations moral reasoning can be found in scriptures like John 14 or Galatians 5, where Jesus describes the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He tells followers that the Spirit will come, will remind us of what we ought to do. Thus, our feelings and instincts are gifts from God to determine our ethical actions.

Thus, we have seven different moral reasoning systems working to determine our ethical practices, and they're all a part of scripture.

And, moral orientation becomes similar to the solution for a land navigation problem – and we should ask the question, “how do we align these moral systems to figure out what's acceptable, required, beneficial, appropriate, and tolerable.

Each moral reasoning system points out different aspects that allow moral orientation to happen to how we morally orientate our worldviews and our actions and our faith becomes alive in the world today.

And the last thing I'd like to show you is this. We live in a GPS world where we need to think of all of these moral reasoning systems as satellites used in determining positioning and routes of travel. What's more accurate is a six-point or a 12-point satellite fix on where you're at? Or is it better just to have one satellite tell you where you're at and moving? In a GPS navigation

system—the more satellites – the more accurate your position. The same is true when considering moral reasoning systems – they can act independently, and most of the time people use them this way and teach them this way – but they can also act as parts of one, linked system.

I want us to see that our God, the creator, uses them this way and scripture presents them to us in a variety of ways.

When I was teaching at the Sergeant's Major Academy, the student came up with this analogy. When they needed to respond to the reasons for their ethical actions they could say,

Well, I did so-and-so because that's what the law or my orders said.

But then, somebody could say that's wrong because you didn't accomplish your mission, or you made a bigger mess, or violated Army values OR the worse yet – they felt condemned by their conscience.

The same thing could happen if they used any one moral reasoning system...

But what would happen if they could say I made my choice of action based upon

It was required by the rules because...

And it was acceptable for our character and values because...

And it was appropriate for the situation because...

And it worked to achieve the mission because...

And it was tolerable according my moral senses because...

The sergeant majors concluded that they would be standing on pretty solid ground, that they could morally defend, even if somebody disagreed with them

Moral orientation is about aligning moral reasoning systems to make ethical actions!

It is also true when we consider as Christians what is the right course of action or what is God requiring of us in this particular situation. It is important to know that this is appropriate when searching scripture for answers about what God requires from us as disciples of Jesus.

And the last thing I'll show you is this. And this is where these systems from moral reasoning are grounded within the processes we use from Mission Command and staff planning...

If you look on the far right, mission command is based upon orders, but it's also based upon this idea of commander end states (or commander intentions), and situational awareness, as well as

estimates of troop morale, character training, and the Law of Armed Conflict as well as the spiritual orientations that inform morality inside and outside of our commands.

Emanuel Williams did a great presentation about dealing with a ethical dilemma he had as a young officer serving in Vietnam when he was told to let loose some indigenous highlander fighters that they were using with his special forces command because they were had differences of opinion with the senior commander over a mission.

Emmanuel Williams was told to take away their weapons and let the fighters walk back home.

But Emanuel said, you can't do this in the middle of a jungle in territory. We would be sending these fighters to their death.

So, he morally reasoned with his commander – I understand your orders, and your intent is to correct these fighters, but the situation doesn't justify this course of action and how does this our troops? What are they thinking? What are they feeling? What's the cost to these folks?

So, they found a suitable solution to their problem, without committing unethical actions that would affect the command on a unit and personal levels.

Hopefully you can see how this is an example of how each one of these moral reasoning systems operates within mission command, and how they can be aligned in making ethical decisions.

The last thing I'll say is that often this alignment comes into focus when asking questions about following an illegal or a immoral order.

Well, think about this from another perspective -- as we get older and we become senior officers. Do we ever find ourselves in a position where we might give an unlawful or immoral order? If so, moral reasoning is not simply about what orders we follow, it's also about how we lead and how do we align the reasoning we use for moral orientations for those we command, and how our beliefs inform our faith and direct our ethical practices.

With that, I'll turn the presentation over for questions and discussion.

Thank you.