

Confronting Christianity

Week Four: Doesn't Religion Hinder Morality?

Pre-Group Reading Material: Chapter 4 (Pages 59-74)

Questions:

- Before beginning this chapter think about how the term “religion” is often used in our culture. What connotations does it have? How does the Bible describe religion? (Read James 1:26-27 and discuss) Why is there such a gap between how the Bible describes religion and how our culture understands religion?
- Near the beginning of this chapter the author quotes physicist Steven Weinberg who says; *“Religion is an insult to human dignity. With or without it you would have good people doing good things and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”* Why would a smart person say something like this?
- Rebecca shares the story of how her PHD classmate Sarah became a Christian (65-67). What stands out to you about Sarah’s story? Was role did logic *and* experience play in Sarah’s life? What do you think about Peter Singer? Is there anything positive you would say about his approach to morality and ethics?
- In this chapter, McLaughlin responds to those who believe that Christianity influences people toward negative behavior. Then she shifts to argue that those who critique religion have no solid basis for making any binding moral claims. According to the author, why does atheism fail to provide a suitable foundation for ethics?
- How does the author define Evolutionary Altruism (71-73)? According to McLaughlin, why can’t this serve as a suitable foundation for ethics?
- The evidence suggests that religious belief, and Christianity in particular, has had a net positive effect on the world. For instance, the author quotes Offit who calls Christianity *“the single greatest breakthrough against child abuse”*. But many individuals have been abused by Christian parents and even pastors. How should we appropriately respond to those who have been harmed by people of faith? What is the wrong way to respond in these cases?
- McLaughlin concludes by saying that “Christians can make no claim of innate moral superiority.” (73) Why do Christians believe this? Read and discuss the following verses:
 - Romans 3:23
 - Romans 7:18

How should verses like this shape the way Christians interact with non-Christians in conversations about ethics and morality?