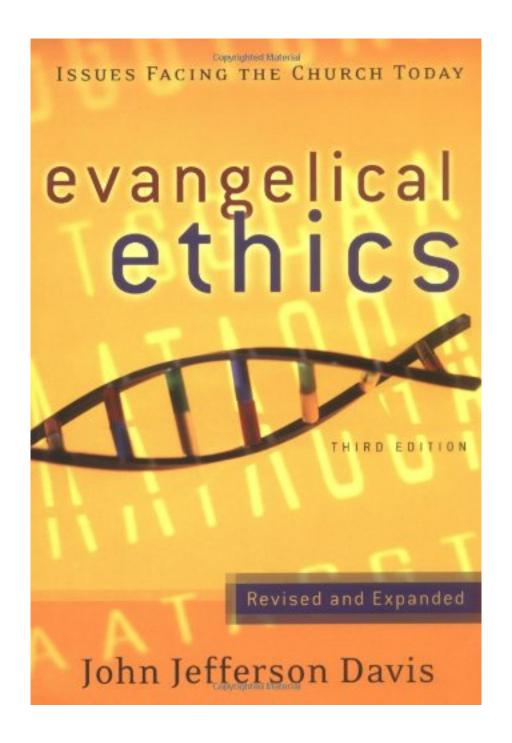


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About the Author

Dr. John Jefferson Davis, an ordained Presbyterian minister, is professor of systematic theology and Christian ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. A former president of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, Dr. Davis earned his PhD degree in systematic theology at Duke University and is the author of several books, including Theology Primer, Foundations of Evangelical Theology, Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today, Frontiers of Science and Faith, and numerous articles in scholarly journals.

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Most helpful customer reviews

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

A thorough, faithful, insightful masterpiece

By Corum Seth Smith

Davis is an author who I am proud to call a fellow "Evangelical" Christian. He does a good job of debunking the myth that faithfulness to the Bible's doctrine is equivalent to intellectual decay.

Actually, Davis is engaged with considerable empirical research. He shows a side of scientific development and insight that is often deleted from media outlets because it seems to confirm the truth of Scripture.

Davis weighs in on issues that are extremely difficult. However, his formula for discerning the best ethical choice is straightforward and effective. The Scriptures take their rightful place as the central ethical standard for Evangelical Ethics. An investigation into scientific development, Biblical scholarship, and changing societal mores together yields a thorough investigation of some of the toughest issues of our day, including poverty, sexuality, and abortion.

Davis is a great inheritor of the legacy of Machen and other Evangelicals that saw the doctrines of Christianity as timeless truths that could be repeatedly proven in the practical matters of everyday life. This is a great book.

29 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

A great resource

By Bill Muehlenberg

For two decades this book has well served the evangelical community as a basic textbook in ethics. First published in 1985, a much needed second edition appeared in 1993. But with further ethical reflection called for, especially in the rapidly developing area of bio-technology, a third edition was in need, and here is the result.

This new edition features a new chapter on genetic engineering, which looks at the history, technology and morality of such issues as cloning and stem cell research. There is also a new chapter on environmental ethics. In addition to addressing some contemporary environmental concerns such as global warming and biodiversity, it offers a biblical foundation for thinking about the earth and our stewardship of it.

And the existing ten chapters have been revised as well, bringing statistical and bibliographic information up to date.

The opening chapter lays out some general principles of ethical thinking from a biblical viewpoint, including the problem of conflicting obligations, and the place of Christian morality in a pluralistic culture.

The other nine chapters focus on major ethical and social hot potatoes of the day. Thus there are meaty chapters on such issues as contraception, reproductive technologies, homosexuality, abortion, war and peace, and capital punishment.

All the issues are approached from a decidedly biblical and socially conservative standpoint. Thus in the chapters on abortion and euthanasia, a strong pro-life stance is argued for as the one most closely reflecting the biblical data.

On the issue of war and defence, Davis argues that the Christian case for pacifism rests on a weak hermeneutical basis, and that the just war tradition, including nuclear deterrence, is morally justifiable.

On the related issue of capital punishment, the author takes the view that it is still a binding principle, not limited to Old Testament times. It reflects both the justice of God as well as his wrath against the wrongdoer.

On the thorny issue of divorce and remarriage, Davis argues that while God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), there are cases, such as sexual infidelity and desertion, where divorce is morally permissible, though not obligatory. Reconciliation should be the main emphasis, with divorce seen as a painful last resort.

Homosexuality is not overlooked. The social, medical and theological components of this discussion are all well covered. Davis argues that homosexuality is contrary to the divine will for human sexuality, and real hope is available for the homosexual who seeks to renounce his lifestyle.

In sum, this book offers a clearly biblical approach to many of the controversial social and ethical debates of the day. A lot of ground is covered in the book's 350 pages. One can argue that more could have been included. For example, a full discussion of cloning and stem cell research could have been featured in a separate chapter. The very topical issue of same-sex marriage is not even mentioned in the chapter on homosexuality. Other omissions come to mind.

But one can only cover so much material in a single volume. And Davis has elsewhere developed some of these topics further, as in his 1984 book on abortion. All in all this is one of the best books on contemporary social and ethical debate from a biblical perspective.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

A Helpful Resource for Understanding Major Ethical Issues

By Amy Brown

It has been easy for me to slip into the mentality that engagement in ethical issues is not the priority of the Christian individually or the Church as a whole. To be honest, as I consider the past eight years of my Christian life, I can say that most of the time I have spent in seriously pondering the truth of Christianity and its application, I have narrowed in primarily on issues that relate directly to me. To my shame, I admit that I have engaged in little significant ethical reflection in regards to how I am called, as a Christian, to think and interact Biblically on moral issues in society.

Evangelical Ethics, by John Jefferson Davis, is a much-needed corrective in my own life and, I would trust, for Christ's Church as well. In just my first reading, I have been profoundly encouraged to not only engage the significant ethical issues facing the Church, but to not rest content until I understand those issues in light of Scripture. This is not easy work, but it is an essential work. Jesus calls us to be salt and light.

After opening the book with a chapter on decision making, Davis examines eleven major ethical issues facing Christians and the Church today: contraception, reproductive technologies, divorce and remarriage, homosexuality, abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, capital punishment, civil disobedience, war and peace, environmental issues, and genetic enhancement and manipulation. In each section, Davis presents the historical and legal background of the particular issue, providing thick documentation from the relevant sources. He then examines each issue in light of Scripture, bringing the reader to what he considers a clear Biblical position, or, at least, a place where the reader can use the given information to begin to think more clearly about that specific issue.

Davis' work is also highly accessible. The book itself, not including the end notes, is only 288 pages. It is not an exhaustive treatment of each subject; rather, it is a helpful introduction to the major ethical issues presently facing the church. Though thoroughly researched and documented, Davis' work is straightforward, clear, and will benefit pastors, scholars and laypeople alike.

Evangelical Ethics has been tested in over two decades of readership and is now in its third edition. Since it was first published in 1985, Davis' treatment of contemporary ethical problems has been a standard in churches and Christian classrooms. Having read and profited from Davis' book, I now understand why this is the case. It is well-researched and well-written, and it provides a sure foundation from which to start thinking about these important issues. I highly recommend it.

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