

Evangelization Articles – Guides for Discipleship

Source of All Hope Mission



In a landmark encyclical, John Paul II commented on his own desire to evangelize saying, **“[W]hat moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of missionary evangelization is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvelous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself”** (*Redemptoris Missio* 2). The Church exists to evangelize, or to show people the good news about their own existence. And the purpose of these evangelization articles is to provide a blueprint for evangelization at Source of All Hope. As a missionary disciple, it is your task to lead people into deeper intimacy with Christ and His Church, and these evangelization articles are a tool for this purpose. These articles can be used with people on the streets, the ordinary working men and women of Baltimore, and also with the members of the Basilica parish. Everyone needs to be evangelized because everyone falls short of the ideal of Christian life, and these articles are helpful for people in every walk of life and every stage of faith.

1-on-1 Relationships

When it comes to evangelization there is no substitute for one-on-one relationships. Large-scale evangelization events like conferences, talks, and video-broadcasting have their place, but one-on-one relationships are the essential element without which people cannot sustain long-term conversion. We call these one-on-one relationships *discipleship*, something which Jesus modeled in his own public ministry. In the gospels, we see Christ spending a lot of time in deep interpersonal relationship with a few men. Jesus invested most primarily in three men (Peter, James, and John), and then to a lesser degree in twelve (the apostles). This small group constituted the core focus of Jesus’ ministry, and it was by virtue of these few men that the gospel spread throughout the world. During your time as a missionary we encourage you to imitate Christ by accompanying people in their walk of faith through one-on-one relationships. Whether with the poor, the people of Baltimore, or the parishioners at the Basilica, it is your mission to form relationships with the people in your midst to accompany them to greater sanctity.

The Gospel Spreads Because of Relationships and Conversations

The gospel is spread through relationships, and good conversations are essential to any good relationship. So too, the art of conversation is essential for discipleship. The articles are nothing more than a set of conversation guides. You might think of these articles as a sort of “mystagogy,” a greek word meaning “to lead through the mysteries.” Your job as an evangelist is to introduce and/or deepen the people’s appreciation for the doctrines or the central mysteries of the faith, and there is no better way to do so than one-on-one conversations.

Learn By Doing

Evangelization and discipleship are simple. The best way to learn is to do, so we encourage you to simply go out and begin sharing your faith! Nevertheless, as you begin, we encourage you to keep the following two considerations in mind. First, knowing Jesus involves a real relationship with Him. This relationship is personal. That said, knowledge of Christ should not be reduced to a subjective encounter. The subjective dimension is important, but there’s more to any relationship than subjectivity. Consider human relationships, say a friendship. Our friendships involve knowing certain facts about others (ex: physical qualities, place of residence, personal histories etc.). A person’s “facts” are closely intertwined with a person’s heart. Knowing the one helps for knowing the other, and this is also the case in our relationship with God. The Church’s doctrines are in a

sense the “facts” of God. That said, they’re not dry facts, but facts which breathe life into a personal relationship. Doctrines (or facts) enhance and provide the foundation for spirituality. The two grow together, each making the other more beautiful. If we forget the facts about God then we’re in danger of losing both our relationship with God and our unity as a group of believers. Spirituality without doctrine usually begins in frailty and ends in division. Thus, we must allow our spirituality to be fed by our doctrine. The evangelization articles cover not only the practices of the faith, but also certain central doctrines or “facts” about the faith. These facts are vitally important, and as a missionary it is your responsibility to help bring these facts to life! Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that facts don’t matter.

Organic vs. Formulaic

The second point to keep in mind as a missionary is what you might call the balance between the organic and the formulaic. What does this mean? Well, the best ministries are those that blend spontaneity *and* structure. Both elements are important, but as a missionary you will be tempted to tend towards isolating one from the other. On the one hand, you might find yourself frustrated by the programmatic elements here at Source of All Hope, and this frustration may push you to throw out things like the evangelization articles, the reading program, or the rule of life. On the other hand, you might find spontaneity difficult, and this difficulty might push you away from unscripted, interpersonal relationships. Don’t give in to either extreme! The best missionaries are those who blend the organic and the formulaic, the spontaneous and the structured.

You might conceive of the mission experience in terms of this analogy. Bring to mind your favorite bar. What are your favorite things about your favorite bar? Your answer to this question may have something to do with the music, the bartenders, the drinks, the people, or maybe even the decor. All these things contribute to the ambience of the bar, but none of these things could exist if the bar didn’t have some sort of structure, i.e. concrete, plywood, a foundation, four walls, and a roof. A bar’s physical structure protects and cultivates the experience within. In the same way, the scripted elements of the missionary experience protect and cultivate the unscripted, and there is a symbiotic relationship between the two! Bars with good foundations last for generations and become hallmarks of communities and culture. You might think, for example, of a centuries-old Irish pub, or, to use another example, of an ancient cathedral. Strong foundations allow such places to persist across generations. In this way, the structure supports the interior beauty. Nevertheless, without the interior beauty, nobody would be interested in entering the structure. What is true for a bar or a cathedral is also true at Source of All Hope! Good mission work involves a delicate mix of the concrete and the spontaneous. If you don’t have both of these things, then in the end you won’t have either of them.

These two considerations, the value of doctrine and the blend of the spontaneous and the formulaic, will be crucial in your work as a missionary. The evangelization articles to follow will help you bring the essential doctrines and practices of the faith to life in such a way that blends both components. The articles were originally developed by FOCUS (the Fellowship of Catholic University Students), and they work well for our purposes as well. In what follows you will find fifteen articles, all of which introduce some key aspect of the Christian faith. Here you will find a brief introduction to each article, giving pointers for applying the article here in Baltimore.

Encounter Articles: Cultivating an Initial Conversion

These first three articles are best used to cultivate initial conversion. They work well as conversation guides for people who have fallen away from the faith or who have never had a meaningful experience with the Church. That said, conversion is a life-long process, so the themes in these articles can and should animate all of your discipleship conversations.

1. ***Incarnational Evangelization***

How does one evangelize? As mentioned in the above introduction, when it comes to evangelization, there is no substitute for one-on-one relationships, or discipleship. This is how Christ evangelized and we ought to do the same. One way to think about discipleship is in terms of the incarnation, one of the central dogmas of our faith, which is the teaching that Christ, the Son of God and second person of the Trinity, became flesh. God became man, and He brought all the divine mysteries into our temporal bodily experience. He took something seemingly distant and abstract (God Himself) and brought it very up close and personal. This is the incarnation. **Incarnational evangelization is the process of evangelization by which the mysteries of the faith are made known through a personal relationship with a person and/or community of people.** Just like Christ revealed God through becoming a person, so too can we help people realize the mysteries of the faith by means of relationships and community! Keep in mind this article is less of a conversation starter than the other articles. It has been included in the curriculum to provide vision for evangelization.

2. ***Something More***

As with all evangelization articles, one should not view the contents of this article as a rigid guide. This is meant to be a sample of the sort of conversation you might have with someone to begin a conversation about the faith. As noted in the introduction, good evangelization involves an unscripted, natural element, so you are encouraged to take the written content of this article and give it life with your own conversational style and experiences. Also, as is the case with any article, you are encouraged you to take this article to prayer. **Authentic ministry is an overflow of one's own interior life**, so it is important that you personally pray with this article before speaking with anyone else. Take some time before the blessed sacrament and ask yourself questions like: What is it that prompted my own initial conversion? What was I looking for when I became interested in the faith? In what ways is Jesus calling me to deeper conversion now? The Church is the fulness of truth, and God is the fulfillment of all desire. All of our deepest questions and ultimate longings find their resolution in Christ. There is perhaps no better way to prompt conversion than help someone wonder where they might find the answer to the heart's desire.

3. ***Repent and Believe***

This article begins with the story of Saint Augustine, a story with which you may want to familiarize yourself, and the point of this article is to help you begin conversations with people about repentance. Repentance, or the process of seeking forgiveness and renewal from one's sins, is crucial for any Christian life, and it never stops. Repentance is just as important for someone who has been practicing for many years as it is for someone who has only been practicing for a few days. As an evangelist, you must learn to bring up the topic of repentance. Here two things are important. **First, it is important that you meet people where they are at.** Do not judge

and realize that no matter where a person is at in their own faith, they are a beloved child of God and a child of whom you ought to be in awe. **The second thing is to always tell the truth.** It is tempting to sugarcoat the teachings of the Church when talking to someone who does not want to believe them, especially if that person is sinning against certain Church teachings. The best evangelists are those who preach the truth in love. One final point is in order, as with all the articles, this is just a sample as to how a conversation about repentance might take place, but you should not feel obligated to hold to this specific formatting. This is the skeleton, and it is your job to bring it to life!

4. *Sharing the Gospel—The Most Important Article of the Series*

This is perhaps the most important article of the entire series. You are encouraged to take it to prayer. This article provides a simple way to present the gospel. As explained in the article, this short guide draws from an image originally given by Catherine of Sienna, and you are encouraged to spend time with her original exposition in *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Sienna*. Remember that it is ordinarily most beneficial to present the gospel within the context of a relationship. Thus, it might not make sense to have this conversation with someone on your first meeting, but there are no strict rules in evangelization, just general guidelines.

5. *Prayer*

As a Christian, it is your responsibility to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. At the heart of the Good News is that human beings can have a relationship with God. But, you might ask, in what does this relationship consist? Well, prayer is perhaps the most fundamental building block of one's relationship with God. Like it says in the article, relationships require communication, as, for example, when two friends spend time together. Relationships thrive in regular communication, and the same is true of our relationship with God! This article runs through a number of points all of which are essential for your prayer life. The first of these points is *consistency*. Relationships suffer when they're inconsistent, so we ought to take time on a regular basis, preferably every day, to devote ourselves to prayer. The second point is the importance of *quiet* when at prayer. While it is possible to pray constantly, one must give a certain priority and primacy to quiet, silent prayer. These periods of silence are the foundation upon which the rest of the interior life is built. The third point is *simplicity*. Prayer is an easy-to-understand, natural thing, but we often make prayer complicated. Keep things simple and just have a conversation with God! The final point "*Getting Started*" gives a few tips as to how someone can begin their prayer life.

6. *Breaking of the Bread*

The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, and it is the corner stone of all missionary activity at the Basilica. You are encouraged to learn everything that you can about this sacred mystery. You will be successful sharing the mystery of the Eucharist to the extent that you yourself are in love with it. Love the Eucharist, receive it daily, and tell everyone about it. Here in Baltimore, the Eucharist presents a particularly effective opportunity for evangelization. Historically speaking, Baltimore is a very Catholic city, and a very large portion of the population has some familiarity with the Catholic Mass. This article presents a sample conversation as to how you might have a conversation with someone about the Mass and the mystery of the Eucharist. That said, you should not limit yourself to this article. Given the central importance of the Eucharist to Christianity, you are encouraged to cast your nets wide and learn everything possible about this beautiful sacrament!

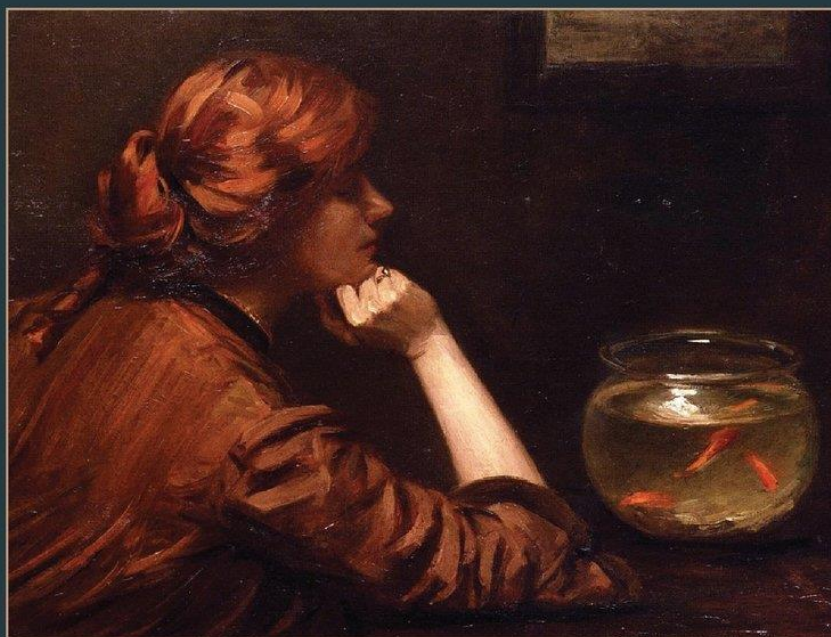
7. The Teachings of the Apostles: Winning, Building and Sending

You might think of the process of evangelization in terms of winning, building, and sending. What does that mean? Well, first someone must be won over to the gospel before they can live their lives in accordance with the Lord's teachings. After the initial win, the person must be built up in the life of faith by means of virtue and other formation. Finally, once a person has been formed in the faith, they can be sent as a missionary disciple. The process of evangelization is process of winning, building, and sending. The first three articles touch upon the "win" portion of the discipleship process, but this article touches on "build." The article stresses the importance of study. The late Cardinal George of Chicago once said to his seminarians at Mundelein seminary that they need to take their studies very seriously. Pick up your cross he said, "And the wood of your cross right now is the wood of the desk as which you study." Cardinal George knew that his priests would be ineffective preachers if they did not study, and the same is true for the lay missionary.

8. Faith in Jesus, His Church, and Moral Authority

The United States of America currently contains tens of thousands of Protestant Christian denominations. These churches disagree on everything from sexual morality to worship styles to the central doctrines of the faith including the incarnation of Christ himself. Some believe the bible is the inspired word of God while others think that it is nothing more than a shoddy piece of historical literature. Some think abortion is acceptable while others think it is murder. The lack of unity in the Protestant church is one of the greatest tragedies in Christian history, and this article provides a sample conversation by which you might be able to explain the beauty of the universal (Catholic) Church. As always, take some time to pray with this article. The more the article seeps into your soul, the better you will be able to explain it to others. These two articles on (1) Christ and His Church and (2) Moral Authority ought to be taken together as the later builds on the former.

STEVEN J. JENSEN



living the good life

A BEGINNER'S
THOMISTIC ETHICS

Introduction

1. Why does the culture have a negative view of absolute truth? How does Jensen counter this view?

The popular culture associates absolute truth with tyranny. Whenever someone asserts something as true, and other things as false, he is seen not as a liberator but as a tyrant, forcing his view upon others. However, according to Jensen, this view is mistaken. Totalitarian regimes such as Hitler's Nazi party actually opposed ethical absolutes. "Indeed, Auschwitz arose not through any staunch defense of absolute truth but through discarding some fundamental truth, such as the dignity of human life" (2). In fact, Friederich Nietzsche, the intellectual front-runner of contemporary relativism, stood as the semi-official philosopher of the Nazi party. Contrary to what our culture might say, absolute truth is needed to protect us from tyranny. Without absolute truth, our culture will have no defense against those who seek to destroy human dignity. How, for example, might one argue against racist, misogynistic, or other prejudicial claims without saying that such claims are false and others are true? The culture's attack on absolute truth is a self-refuting argument.

2. Who was Thomas Aquinas and what importance does he have for today?

Saint Thomas Aquinas is perhaps the greatest intellectual in the history of the Catholic Church. For this study, his thought is valuable for two reasons. First, Thomas' unique insights had enormous value in countering the heresies of his day, and many of these heresies are present in our own times. Dualism, for example, is alive and well, and Saint Thomas' teachings offer us an effective solution even today. The second reason for Thomas' value is the way in which he synthesized other theological resources into a single, systematic treatment of the faith. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae* is a gold-mine. It brings the whole weight of the Church's theological tradition to bear on a whole range of issues. It incorporates religious and non-religious thinkers like Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Boethius and others into a singularly brilliant treatment of nearly all major doctrines in Catholic theology.

3. Jensen mentions a mystical experience taking place near the end of Thomas' life. After this experience, Thomas did not write any more theology. What might we personally draw from Thomas' experience?

Near the end of his life, Thomas had a mystical experience in which he was granted a particularly clear insight into God's mysterious nature. Filled with wonder, Thomas stopped writing theology and devoted the remainder of his life to prayer. While this experience should not dissuade us from studying Thomistic theology (after all, the Church explicitly encourages the faithful to do so), it calls us to approach theology with a spirit of awe and wonder. Thomistic theology is not a closed system. Rather, Thomas' thought is open to the transcendent. It is the sort of theology which encourages a continual conversation with the Lord. For this reason, Thomas encourages his reader both to study and to pray.

Living the Good Life – Chapter 2

1. What is Thrasymachus' argument regarding perfect injustice? How does Plato respond?

Thrasymachus believed the only reason not to avoid injustice was to avoid punishment. Plato's famous story, the "Ring of Gyges," exemplifies Thrasymachus' position. In the story, a shepherd is given an invisibility ring which in turn allows the shepherd to commit all sorts of crimes without being caught. Thrasymachus says the shepherd is happy, but Plato disagrees. According to Plato, justice is only true justice if it contributes to the genuine happiness of the person. The problem with Thrasymachus's argument is that he does not realize that the principles of justice, including those that involve punishment, are ordered towards happiness.

2. Below I have listed two statements. How does the culture view these two statements, and how does Jensen disagree with the culture?

i. "Which actions are just and which actions are unjust?"

ii. "Which actions are humanly fulfilling and which are not fulfilling?"

Most people are apt to respond that the first question is the concern of ethics, while the second question is the concern of some field like psychology, and that there is no overlap between the two. Jensen disagrees. For Jensen, ethics is the science of human fulfillment. The fundamental question of ethics is not "What is my duty?" or "How do I avoid punishment?" The fundamental question of ethics is "How do I be happy?" The culture drives a wedge between happiness and ethics, and this renders it unable to understand the ethics of the Church. The ultimate goal and purpose of the entirety of the Church's ethical tradition is to bring about human fulfillment and happiness.

3. What role does human nature play in ethics?

Thomistic ethics is the ethics of human flourishing. What does this mean? Well, let's first begin by noting what it means to flourish. When we say that something is flourishing we mean that it has realized its full potential. But different things flourish in different ways. For example, a tree flourishes in a very different manner than a rhino, because the *nature* of a rhino is very different than the *nature* of a tree. If one were to treat a rhino like a tree, planting it in the ground and dousing it with water, the rhino would die. The same is true for us. If we are to flourish as human beings, then we must understand human nature. We must understand what it means to be human, and we must act in such a way that will bring about our full potential as rational, free persons.

4. What is the relationship between (1) ethics, and (2) law and religion?

Let's begin with the relationship between ethics and law. Some people think that everything legal is ethical, but this is a mistake. The underlying error is that such a people view law and ethics as identical. Once again, Jensen disagrees. Consider, for example, if the government were to legalize murder. Would this make murder ethical? Of course not. There is a difference between ethics and law. Good laws ought to be built on good ethics, but there is a difference between the two. This is also the case for religion. Religion is not identical with ethics. Religion, or at least the Christian religion, is built upon revelation. Ethics may take revelation into consideration, but ethics is fundamentally concerned with human nature. Therefore, it is entirely possible for Jensen to discuss ethics "apart from human law and religious belief" (15).

Living the Good Life – Chapter 3

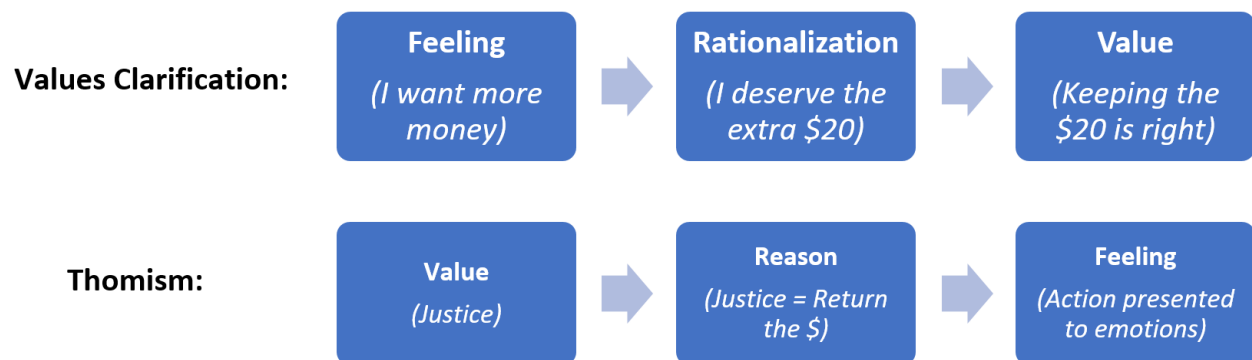
1. What does Jensen mean by “Values Clarification” and why does he disagree with it?

“If it feels good, do it!” Everyone has heard this phrase, and most people know that it is not a very good guide for life. After all, sometimes our feelings lead us astray, taking us to places we do not really want to go. In fact, sometimes we desire opposing things, as in, for example, when we desire to vacation in two different places. Values Clarification (VC), is an ethical theory which encourages its followers to *clarify* feelings. In any decision, say the choice to travel to France or Italy, VC encourages it’s followers to reach deep into their feelings, find the deepest feeling, and do it. Thus, Values Clarification is just a sophisticated way of saying, “If it feels good, do it!”

Jensen has a very straightforward objection to Values Clarification: Some of our feelings, even some of our very deep feelings, are misguided. Consider a meth addict, locked in her desire for the next high. This person’s feelings are disordered. Her drug use has rendered her unable to feel the right things. Now, the meth addict is an extreme example, but the fact is most of us experience desires which will keep us from happiness. Sometimes these feelings are very strong, perhaps stronger than any of our other feelings, but that does not make them right, and the process of clarifying our emotions will not necessarily lead us to happiness.

2. What is the difference between Values Clarification and St. Thomas’ view of ethics?

Values Clarification begins inside, with our feelings, and moves outside. It begins with some want, and moves us to say that the thing wanted is ethically right. Aquinas’ ethics proceeds in the opposite order. It begins with the thing outside (the world/value), judges it to be either good or evil, and then moves inside (to the emotions). The difference between the two systems can be illustrated as follows:



As you can see in the chart, VC begins with feelings and moves to values. Is something feels true then it is true. Feelings make values. Jensen says this is backwards. Following Aquinas, he says that our feelings should follow the world of values, not vice versa. “Our desires do not make our values. Rather, true values ought to shape our desires” (21). In fact, Jensen goes so far as to say that VC does not employ reason at all. After all, there is a difference between rationality and rationalization.

3. Saint Thomas says that our ethical lives ought to be guided by reason, but where does that leave our emotions? Does Catholicism imply stoicism?

Stoicism is the philosophical view that people should try to empty themselves of all emotions. Saint Thomas was a staunch opponent of this view. Thomas does not ask us to do away with emotions, he merely asks that we not be led by our emotions. Christ came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10), and this includes not only our rational life, but also the life of our emotions! The beauty of Thomistic ethics is that it enables us to build healthy emotions, or emotions in line with reason.

What are reasonable emotions? Consider the following example. Let's say that you own a shiny new sports car, but one of your tires is out of alignment. Instead of pointing straight ahead, your front-left tire is pointed side-ways. This would be a major problem! Every time you try to start your car, you'll just end up spinning in circles. In the end, you probably won't go anywhere, and your engines will probably implode. The faster you drive your car the quicker your car will fall apart. Alright, so what does the car have to do with emotions? Well, the side-ways tire is kind of like a disordered emotion. Saint Thomas does not want to dismantle the car, he just wants us to align our tires! If we don't align our emotions in accord with reason, they will tear us apart. Think, for example, about man with a voracious, unreasonable desire for food. The more that he listens to this desire, the more he will destroy his health. That said, it would be a mistake to stop eating all-together, because this would cause his death. In this way, shaping our desires in accord with reason actually enables us to desire more! Just like a properly maintained automobile drives with speed and facility, so too does a properly emotional person experience the fullness of the emotional life!

Living the Good Life – Chapter 4

1. **Jensen's discussion about conscience and the various degrees of ignorance is focused on drawing a connection between two things: (1) knowledge and (2) culpability. What is the connection between these two things, and why does it matter?**

To be culpable is to be guilty of doing something wrong. The key to this chapter is that there is a connection between knowledge and culpability. Someone is culpable for their actions if they had knowledge, but they are not culpable if their actions were done in ignorance. This seems straightforward enough, but for Jensen being ignorant of something is not as simple as it might seem. Jensen describes several different types of culpability all of which have an influence on the extent to which someone is culpable for their actions. Jensen describes three types of ignorance and their relation to culpability are as follows:

- i. ***Concomitant Ignorance***: This sort of ignorance accompanies actions which are done without prior knowledge, but which would have been done anyway had the agent indeed known the full extent of their actions (Pat killing his worst enemy, 35).
- ii. ***Consequent Ignorance***: This sort of ignorance is a consequence of the will. That is, it involves a choice. Agents displaying voluntary ignorance actually *want* to be ignorant.
- iii. ***Antecedent Ignorance***: This sort of ignorance is prior to (*antecedent*) any act of the will. It is ignorance full stop. Agents acting with this sort of ignorance do not understand the full extent of their actions and there is no reasonable way that they could have known.

According to Thomas there is only one sort of ignorance that erases all culpability: antecedent ignorance. The other two types of ignorance do not remove blame, though they might mitigate it.

2. **Read at the two statements listed below. Why does Jensen say that the second statement is superior to the first?**

- i. **Theft is wrong for Sarah but not for Bill, because Bill did not know that stealing is wrong.**
- ii. **Sarah is culpable for theft but Bill is not, because Bill did not know that theft is wrong.**

This is a very important distinction. The first statement is imprecise, because theft is wrong in and of itself, or, as Jensen would say, theft is wrong “in the nature of things.” For this reason, theft is wrong for both Sarah and Bill. The only difference is that Bill is not culpable for this theft.

3. **What is the difference between voluntary and involuntary ignorance, and why does Thomas say that we have a responsibility to inform our consciences?**

It is very possible for be culpable for one's ignorance. Consider a student, Sally, who was told repeatedly to study for her final exam. Sally's professor gives her plenty of time, all the appropriate resources, and excellent instruction, but Sally never puts in the work. Finally, exam day arrives and Sally fails the test. Do you feel sorry for Sally? Well, probably not. Why? Because Sally had a responsibility to learn the material, but she chose to remain ignorant. In this sense, Sally is *voluntarily* ignorant. Voluntary ignorance does not just pertain to school. Many of us choose to remain ignorant about a number of things which we might reasonably be expected to know.

4. **Why would someone want to inform their conscience?**

Perhaps you have seen the 1990s movie series *The Matrix*. In brief, the series involves a set of characters locked in a virtual reality, the Matrix, which is sort of like a video game. The matrix is comfortable, safe, and pleasurable, but unfortunately fake. Some of these characters want to live in the real world, so they launch a rebellion against the engineers of the matrix. These rebels are kind of like people who will not settle for ignorance. They know that they are living in a false world, and they refuse to remain in it. The problem with living in ignorance is similar to the problem of playing video games all the time. Video games give us the illusion of power, pleasure, and success, but they often mask our real lives. After all, a 600lb couch potato playing video games may have the illusion of fitness when in reality he is wasting away.

Living the Good Life – Chapter 5

1. What is deterministic behaviorism? If determinism is true, what does this say for ethics?

Deterministic behaviorism says that all our behaviors are predetermined by natural events. Human beings are just like other animals (or plants for that matter) in that they never make any truly free decisions. The problem for this view is that it keeps one from making any ethical statements whatsoever. Ethics requires freedom, because, after all, we could never blame someone for an action that they had no choice in committing. We do not, for example, blame a rock for rolling down a hill or tree for sprouting roots. Rocks and trees are determined beings, and deterministic behaviorism reduces us all to their level. Thus, deterministic behaviorism has the effect of making life very, very dull. Nothing matters, because there is no choice in anything.

2. What is the difference between the will and the emotions? Does the will desire anything?

The will is the faculty of the human person that desires the good in and of itself. Ultimately, the human will desires human flourishing, but it can be corrupted. People are often confused into thinking that their flourishing consists in something bad, but it is indeed the will, not the emotions, which choose the sort of lives we live.

There is a difference the will and the emotions. Human emotions desire many things including affection, food, sex, power etc., and they are far more subject to the impulses of the moment. Many of our emotions, sexual arousal for example, are largely involuntary, and we must rely on our will to resist certain emotions. Some people say that people are determined by their emotions, but this is false. Humans are certainly *influenced* by their emotions, but the will has the final say.

3. In a virtuous person, what is the relationship between reason, intellect, and will?

Thomas recognizes that the faculties influence one another. The reason is intimately tied to the will; the will is intimately tied to the emotions; and the emotions can influence both the reason and the will. Nevertheless, in a virtuous person, the will is guided by reason. The reason presents an accurate view of the good life to the will which is then chosen by the will and celebrated by the emotions. A virtuous college student, for example, knows that their good does not consist in drunkenness, so they use their will to choose a life of sobriety. Further, if the student is truly virtuous, their emotions will celebrate their decision to remain sober. In this fashion, a virtuous person experiences a harmony of the intellect, will, and emotions, with the intellect guiding the will and the will directing the emotions.

Living the Good Life – Chapter 6

1. What is the importance of the will in the ethical thought of Immanuel Kant, and how does Thomas Aquinas differ from Kant?

The will (man's power to choose) is important for both Kant and Aquinas, but there is a difference between the two. For Kant, ethics focuses exclusively on the will, whereas for Aquinas ethics focuses on the entire person including the will, reason, and emotions. Kant goes so far as to say that the only ethically good thing is a good will, and emotions have no relevance for the ethical life. For Aquinas, this is an incomplete picture. After all, someone can choose the right thing (using their will), and still desire to do the wrong thing. Such a person has not reached virtue—which involves not only doing the right thing but desiring the right thing as well.

2. According to Jensen, what is the relationship between Kantian ethics and mediocrity?

Kant's exclusive focus on the will tends to produce a state of mediocrity in which people treat their emotions as unchangeable facts. "Emotions are emotions, and they are never going to change," says the Kantian, "And, after all, they don't really matter anyway!" If emotions do not matter for the ethical life, then people have less motivation to change them. This stands in stark contrast to virtue ethics which insists that emotions can change over time.

3. What is the difference between self-control and repression? Which one is better?

"Self-control is distinct from what we now call repression, which is not control at all but a kind of denial" (68). Thomas Aquinas never asks us to repress emotions. Instead, he asks us to *control* or *channel* our emotions! Remember, Thomistic ethics is ordered towards the flourishing of *whole* human person, both in the will and the desires. Human flourishing is the fulness of life, including the life of emotions and desire. Thus, instead of repressing our desires, we need to learn to channel them towards the right things.

4. Is it possible to change our emotions? Why does Jensen focus our attention on the "long run"?

Whether as small as chewing with your mouth open or as big as doing drugs, most of us know what it's like to break a habit. When we first break the habit, it might be very difficult to change our ways, but as time continues, the new behavior becomes easier and easier. The alcoholic who has been sober for a day is in a different place than someone several years into their recovery. The fact is emotions and desires can change for the better, and we have a responsibility to bring about this change.

This point is especially important for missionaries. Consider the number of our men involved in habitual sins of the flesh. Whether it's pornography, drunkenness, or something else, many of our men have very bad habits, so bad that they cannot imagine things differently. As missionaries, it is our responsibility to help all those we encounter believe that real change is possible! And in fact, it is possible to change both our actions and our desires!

Living the Good Life – Chapter 7

1. What is the difference between sin and imperfection? What importance might this difference have in our work as missionary disciples?

One of the central themes of Aquinas' ethics is that our desires are an important part of the ethical life. That said, there is a difference between sin and bad desire. Acting on a bad desire is a sin, but the mere possession of a bad desire is not a sin, it's just an imperfection. This is a crucially important distinction. Without it, people tend to fall into one of two misconceptions. On the one hand, when people identify bad desires as sins, they tend to live in a constant state of self-condemnation. On the other hand, when people possess an apathetic attitude towards their own bad desires, they tend to make no progress in virtue. The key to holiness is avoiding both extremes. Missionaries should exhibit an attitude of accompaniment in which they simultaneously (1) discourage others from self-condemnation and (2) encourage all people towards the conversion of their disordered desires.

2. What is vice? How is it similar to virtue?

A virtuous person does the right thing and desires to do the right thing. A vicious person is the mirror opposite; they do the wrong thing and feel no guilt in doing so. That is, they do the wrong thing and completely desire it. It is easier to understand virtue and vice when we understand two other terms: continence and incontinence. The continent person does the right thing, but he or she is conflicted in doing so. For example, the recovering alcoholic who has great interior struggles saying no to a drink is not virtuous, she is merely continent, because some of her desires are out of alignment with her actions. The incontinent person does the wrong thing but feels conflicted in doing so. For example, if the same alcoholic were to drink to excess and feel horrible the next morning, she is not vicious, she is merely incontinent, because at least some of her desires are out of alignment with her actions. Both continent and incontinent people feel internal conflict, whereas virtuous and vicious people feel interior alignment. Here we can see the real danger of vice. Vicious people do not only do the wrong thing, they are completely blind to their own error; they do the wrong thing and feel no remorse. The four places in the spectrum of the ethical life can be illustrated as follows with the top section (virtue) being most desirable, followed by continence, incontinence, and vice.

Virtuous Person	Does the right thing and all desires are united in choosing the right action
Continent Person	Does the right thing, but is interiorly conflicted in doing so
Incontinent Person	Does the wrong thing, but is interiorly conflicted in doing so
Vicious Person	Does the wrong thing and all desires are united in choosing the wrong action

3. Jensen lists several virtues related to the emotions (moderation/temperance, courage, generosity, patience, meekness, and humility). Which of these virtues did you find most interesting and why?

Using the chart on page 90 for reference, take some time to discuss the virtues listed on pages 85-91. Note that each of these virtues concerns an object (bodily pleasure, danger, wealth, etc.) and an emotion (sorrow, anger, sexual desire, etc.). The goal is to help the missionaries see that all of these objects are good things, and we have a responsibility to channel our desires towards them in accord with reason.

4. What is the relationship between virtue and perception?

When our emotions are out of alignment with our reason, the two tear each other down, and we eventually become less reasonable and less emotional. But the opposite is also true. When emotions and reason come into alignment, they build each other up! In the virtuous person, there is a synergy between reason and emotion. Good emotion enhances our reasoning capacities, and reason makes our emotions more vibrant. For this reason, virtuous people are very perceptive. A virtuous person is like a person with really good eyesight. Their emotions enable them to better sense the right thing to do. This, once again, is why St. Thomas' ethical system places an enormous emphasis not only on acting well but also on desiring well!

Living the Good Life – Chapter 8

1. What is utilitarianism, and why does Jensen take issue with it?

Utilitarianism, first advanced by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, is the ethical system which says that “whenever we are faced with a decision we consider the effects of all our options, and then choose that action that produces the most pleasurable effects” (97-98). Utilitarianism has many derivatives, including the manifold versions of consequentialism, an ethical position which states that we must choose that action which produces the greatest overall pleasure for everyone involved (98).

Putting it mildly, Jensen is opposed to utilitarianism. The fundamental problem with utilitarianism is that it ignores inherent human dignity and values people solely in terms of their utility. Utilitarianism, for example, will allow for the unjust treatment of a person or group of people, so long as said injustice brings about the greatest overall accumulation of pleasure. On this account, Nazi doctors are justified for experimentation on Jews, because, after all, cures from their experiments alleviated a lot of suffering. In this way utilitarianism is an ethics which is willing to ignore the individual for the sake of the net gain.

2. What is the difference between commutative justice, distributive justice, and legal justice?

The difference between commutative and distributive justice depends on two different kinds of equality: arithmetic equality and proportional equality. “Arithmetic equality, exemplified by a simple equation such as $2 + 3 = 5$, is illustrated in a simple exchange of goods. If I exchange my car for a new one, then I must also pay an additional sum to make up the difference, for my old car does not match the value of the new one. If the exchange is to be arithmetically equal, then I must supply something besides my used car, namely, cash” (102). Commutative concerns the relations, contracts, and agreements between individuals, and it presupposes arithmetic equality. Proportional equality, exemplified by a simple equation such as $2/3 = 4/6$, undergirds Thomas’ notion of distributive justice. Distributive justice says that individuals should be rewarded in accord with their merit, as when a company compensates an individual in accord with their overall contributions (ex: employees making larger contributions should receive larger salaries).

Political justice concerns the ordering of communities, and it makes use of both commutative and distributive justice its rudimentary parts. It is by virtue of political justice that societies designate certain individuals to perform certain duties within the economy. The American economy, for example, requires a certain number of accountants, doctors, lawyers, teachers etc., and political justice concerns the channeling of these professions into an organized whole. Here, it is important to note that utilitarianism has a very reductive view of political justice on which the good of the community is nothing more than the aggregation of pleasure. Thus, on utilitarianism, the only condition necessary to designate one political society as superior to another is that the former produces more pleasure than the other. This differs from Thomas, who viewed the common good of society as an ordered harmony, similar to the common good of a marriage or family. Good families do not allow for the unjust suffering of any individual, even if it means a loss of pleasure for the group.

3. What is the relationship between justice and love?

One cannot have love without justice. The virtue of justice is the virtue of community. Aristotle says that man is by nature a social animal. That is, he needs relationships to thrive. A lack of justice, or even a false view of justice, will keep man from union with others. If, for example, one’s view of justice entails that other people are merely a means to pleasure, then she will not be able to bring herself into union with others, or at least not transparent union. Justice, in both its exterior action and interior disposition, is necessary to bring about the union which is a prerequisite for love. This is true at the micro-level, as when two people lack the exterior and/or interior dispositions needed for commutative justice and therefore remain divided. But it is also true at the macro-level, as when governments view their citizens as mere means to an end and thereby set themselves up for failure.

Living the Good Life – Chapter 9

Leader Note: This chapter contains several sections on specific sins like murder, theft, suicide, slander, and euthanasia. For the sake of brevity, those sections are not treated here, and we focus on the larger themes. Nevertheless, we encourage discussion regarding these specific cases.

1. How does Jensen define injustice?

“Injustice treats others as tools, mere instruments for the sake of some further good” (112). Jensen cites (though he does not wholly agree with) Immanuel Kant saying, “We should always treat others as an end and never merely as a means” (112). Harkening back to his discussion of Utilitarianism, Jensen once again affirms that people should never be used as tools or mere means to our own gain-seeking. People are ends in themselves. Neither the city, the state, nor any individual should treat any person as a means to an end.

2. What is the difference between injustice of distribution vs. injustice of exchange?

In the previous chapter we explained the difference between distributive and commutative justice, and the answer to this question relies on the same distinction. In short, just like there are fundamentally two kinds of justice (distributive and commutative), there are also two types of injustice, one opposed to just distribution, and the other opposed to justice between individuals (114). The basic problem with unjust distribution is partiality; that is, “favoritism,” or when something is given for the wrong reason, not based on genuine merit but rather on some accidental quality. The basic problem with injustice of exchange is a violation of arithmetic equality, or when there is a lack of equality in relations between individuals.

3. Why does Jensen call our attention to justice as a habit?

Actions are rarely islands. On the contrary, unjust actions are usually the fruit of unjust habits. More often than not, sins like theft, deceit, and gossip are habitual. Theft begets more theft, deceit brings greater deceit, and gossip generates more and more gossip. Like Jensen says, “Each unjust action we perform is a step down into the valley. While each step is small and simple in itself, we will find with time that turning around becomes an overwhelming burden” (122). Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that the more we build unjust habits, the less we are able to perceive our own sin. Injustice renders us blind, and “we no longer perceive that our own arrogance and selfishness are distasteful” (122).

Living the Good Life – Chapter 10

1. Why doesn't utilitarianism allow for intrinsically evil actions?

In utilitarianism, morality concerns nothing more than the consequences of our actions, not the actions themselves. Thus, a utilitarian does not have the philosophical background to say that an action is wrong in and of itself, simply because of the type of action that it is. Thus, for example, it would be perfectly consistent for a utilitarian to say, "Sarah should not murder Bill, because the negative effects of murdering Bill outweighs the positive effects." But it would be inconsistent for the utilitarian to say, "Sarah should not murder Bill because murder is wrong."

2. What is the difference between a "human act" and an "act of man"?

Aquinas tells us that the only fully human actions are actions that involve intentionality. Thus, for example, when a person unintentionally knocks over a glass of water or breaths while sleeping, these are not fully human acts, but merely "acts of man." For Aquinas, acts of man do not possess the same moral significance as human actions.

3. What is the difference between object, intention, and circumstance?

This is the threefold classification by which Thomas discussed the morality of human actions. For Thomas, an action is not ethical unless it has a good object, intention, and circumstance. Any one of the three can render an action unethical, and all three are required for an action to be ethically good. Just like Jensen says, "A good action must have everything in order – the act itself, the motive, and all the circumstances – but an action is evil if only one of these is defective. Similarly, a car is good only if all of its essential features are in order, but it is bad if only one feature is lacking" (132). Thus, it is important that we understand the differences between the three. The object, or the action in itself, refers to the action considered in isolation, for example the mere act of two people having intercourse regardless of their intention, relation, and circumstance. The idea of circumstance is pretty straightforward. It refers to the sum total of conditions surrounding the actions which affect its morality. One kind of circumstance that is especially important is one's intention, and of course intention require knowledge. Jensen summarizes the effect these three things can have on an action saying, "Action, circumstance, and motive, then, determine the morality of an action. The act itself may be good, evil, or indifferent. The circumstances affect the degree of good or evil, or they may transform a previously good action to evil or take an indifferent action and make it either good or evil. They may not, however, take an evil action and make it good. The end or motive plays a similar role" (133).

Living the Good Life – Chapter 11

1. What is an intellectual virtue, and why does Aquinas think they are important for ethics?

Aquinas, following Aristotle, takes note of humanity's distinctive capacity to reason, a capacity which set him apart from the animals. Just like any other human capacity, our reason is in need of virtue as well, and the intellectual virtues are the virtues that do so. Thus, intellectual virtues are virtues which perfect the brain. Jensen describes the distinction between intellectual and other (moral) virtues saying, "Intellectual virtues help us to think well. Moral virtues help us to desire well" (139).

2. What is a speculative virtue? How does it differ from a practical virtue?

Aquinas divides intellectual virtues into two general sorts: speculative and practical virtues. "Our reason, he says, has the capacity to understand the truth, but that truth may itself be used in the service of directing our activities. Speculative virtues strengthen our understanding of the truth as truth; practical virtues strengthen our application of the truth to an activity" (139). You might think of a speculative virtue as a virtue which helps us study something which is valuable for its own sake: philosophy, beauty, etc., whereas the practical virtues live up to their name by helping us to do practical things.

Thomas lists three speculative virtues: understanding, science, and wisdom. For Thomas, understanding refers to the ability to grasp basic starting points like the fundamental principles of philosophy, or the fundamental principles of a field of study, say the laws of physics. Science is different from understanding, and it refers to the ability to make deductions from the basic starting points as when one deduces certain conclusions from the laws of physics. Wisdom incorporates both science and wisdom, taking all human knowledge into a unified whole. It is the virtue of the "grand perspective," by which humans bring all the various types of knowledge together.

3. What is a practical virtue? What is the difference between art and prudence?

In contrast to the speculative intellectual virtues, the practical intellectual virtues are those virtues which perfect our practical activities, including things like finances, business, or production-oriented things. Thomas splits the practical virtues into two types: art and prudence. "Art" is used in a technical sense different than our ordinary use of the term. Its meaning is similar to the art of practicing a profession, as in the culinary arts, for example. Here Saint Thomas says that there is a specific virtue attached to different types of productivity. Prudence is more general than art, and it concerns the ability to do any practical human action well, whether that action be professional, productive or otherwise.

4. What does it mean to say that the intellectual virtues are independent of being good?

Here Jensen makes two points. First, one can possess the intellectual virtues (wisdom, science, prudence etc.) in an immoral way. For example, the world is full of people who use knowledge for bad purposes, so the mere possession of an intellectual virtue does not make someone good. Second, leading a good life does not require that one possess the intellectual virtues, but it does require that one love truth and mental excellence. Here Jensen is noting that unlike the moral virtues (justice, temperance, fortitude etc.), which are required for moral character, the intellectual virtues are not so essential. Some people have neither the ability nor the opportunity to develop in the intellectual virtues, and their lack of possession is not a flaw in character. That said, it is essential for a morally good person to hold the intellectual virtues in high regard. One cannot, for example, disregard the value of reason and still be a morally good person.

Living the Good Life – Chapter 12

1. What does St. Thomas mean by prudence of practical wisdom?

The virtue of prudence or practical wisdom is the virtue which perfects our ability to choose the correct action, or “right reason about things to be done” (151). Aquinas said that prudence involves three movements: counsel, judgment, and command. In counsel Thomas refers to the process of taking in all the information about a given situation. Judgment refers to act of choosing the right thing from the options on the table, and command is the act of executing the judgment. All three movements are important for prudence; one must be aware of the factors at play (counsel), make a decision (judgment), and actually follow through on the decision.

2. What is the value of experience and principles for prudence?

Both experience and principles are valuable for prudence, and they are valuable in an interconnected way. Principles are the guidelines by which one uses for making a good decision. These guidelines are essential, but they will likely be misapplied without experience. Principles are too imprecise to guide all of our actions, so we need experience to help us apply them.

3. What is the relationship between prudence and right desire?

Prudence is the virtue which one attains a certain end. So, for example, if one wants to attain the end of health, prudence will choose the means (running, weight-lifting, dieting etc.) to attain this end. Jensen makes the point that the choice of a means is not an entirely stoic thing. Rather, choice of a means is influenced by emotion. If someone does not possess enough fortitude to get up and go to the gym or possesses an intemperate desire for sweets, that person’s emotions will inhibit their choice of the right means to attain health. Thus, it is important to train the desires to want the right things to the right degree in the right place and time. Properly trained desires will present the right factors to the mind for it to make a prudent decision, but disordered desires will do the opposite.

4. What does Jensen mean by the “Circle of Growth”?

If prudence requires right desire (question #3) but desires must be guided by prudence how can one ever grow in virtue? Isn’t this a vicious circle (pun intended), that would never allow one to make any progress?! Thomas Aquinas acknowledges this point, but he does not see it as a problem, merely an illustration of the reality of the ethical life. Growth in virtue is difficult, often involving fits and starts, two steps forward followed by one step back, and a winding journey along the path to human flourishing. Further, the interconnected nature of prudence and moral virtue demonstrates that the two must grow together. “If we have a modicum of practical wisdom, then we can have a modicum of moderation. By increasing our moderation, we also increase our practical wisdom, which will in turn help to increase moderation and the other virtues” (161). The virtues are interconnected and progress in one will affect progress in the others.