Interacting with God’s Story and Vision

A. Moral standards for contemporary Christians

Jesus calls us to intense moral standards, which include our thoughts, motivations, attitudes, as well as our actions.

» Do you think it is more difficult nowadays to take the moral and ethical high road? Explain your answer.
» What prevents us from applying Jesus’ high standards?
» How can we strengthen our own moral compass and practice self-discipline in these areas?
» Review Darling’s comments and respond to his questions (ABS, pp. 42-43).

B. “Yes, but”

Jesus utters strong words about our emotions and actions. Which of these teachings raise questions for you? If Jesus were here, I wonder what I would want to say to him. Perhaps you have a few “yes, but” comments. Some examples to begin the discussion:

» Are there times when anger is justified?
» Are there times it may be necessary to go to court?
» What is wrong with pornography?
» Is sexual immorality the only grounds for divorce?
» What other issues does this text raise for you?

C. Congregational response

Remember that the overall theme is about our heartfelt covenant with God. This relationship is based on love, not judgment. So how does the church respond when Jesus’ moral laws are broken? How is the church a shining light reflecting God’s love in how we respond to moral failure? This is shown in how we treat our adversaries, how we accommodate those whose moral standards are called into question, how we welcome and integrate people who are divorced.

» What is your level of tolerance?
» When it comes to rules, which comes first—the spirit of the law or the letter of the law—when dealing with moral issues?
» Are you satisfied with how your congregation responds to these issues? Explain.

D. Write a prayer or a litany of confession

Spend a few moments considering your personal response to Jesus’ teachings about anger and lust. Then write a prayer of confession, using the worship resources. Individuals need not share what they write. If a group creates a litany, consider sharing it with the whole group.