Is discrimination ethical?

BY MARTINA MANZONE

With only a third of it behind us, 2015 has been the year of equality and major cultural shifting. It just feels different, while we all push to co-exist with all our cultural and religious freedoms, not only here in the United States, but around the world. Everyday another story of perseverance often coupled with violence. Yes, that is how history goes, the cycle of change, first the tension, then the explosions, resulting in the shifting and settling down. Until the next time.

I started to think about religious freedom, social norms, the idea of a right and a wrong and how that all falls into the concept of “Ethics.”

Being in the business surrounds us with terms and an understanding of lingo that only we “compliance types” sometimes get. I wanted to get a main stream definition. I googled “Ethics Definition”, and it reminded me boldly of why I found this question compelling. This is what popped up first.

**noun: ethics**

1. moral principles that govern a person’s or group’s behavior.
   “Judeo-Christian ethics”
   synonyms: moral code, morals, morality, values, rights and wrongs, principles, ideals, standards (of behavior), value system, virtues, dictates of conscience
   “your so-called newspaper is clearly not burdened by a sense of ethics”
   the moral correctness of specified conduct.
   “the ethics of euthanasia”

2. the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles.
The Dictionary.com version was similar.

noun
1. Ethics is defined as a moral philosophy or code of morals practiced by a person or group of people.

There it is. This may shed some light on why to some people “discriminate” based upon what a person’s moral principles (ethics) are.
For me, it didn’t end there. I wondered how the definition of “discrimination” compares. I googled, and this popped up.

noun: discrimination; plural noun: discriminations
1. the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.
“victims of racial discrimination”
synonyms: prejudice, bias, bigotry, intolerance, narrow-mindedness, unfairness, inequity, favoritism, one-sidedness, partisanship; sexism, chauvinism, misogyny, racism, racialism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, ageism, classism, casteism; historical apartheid
“racial discrimination”
antonyms: impartiality
2. recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another.
“discrimination between right and wrong”

Of course many language definitions have been around for a very long time. Times change, social and cultural norms change, and we learn and grow.
Maybe it isn’t really all that complicated.
Maybe simply combining the two definitions?
“Ethics: a moral philosophy or code of morals practiced by a person or group of people, without treating other persons or groups of people as inferior based on their race, sex, national origin, age or other characteristics.”

Now that I have written it out, it clearly is complicated. It’s those other characteristics that could be considered wrong according to the moral code practiced by a person or group of people.
Some religious and/or cultural moral principles may discriminate between what is believed to be right and wrong, and those don’t always fit into a particular society’s current social/cultural norm. And even though in the United States we often refer back to separation of Church and State, it ends up mixing into legislation to protect one group or another. And we all want to be protected.
Ethics by the definition of moral principles truly affects all aspects of how we operate and live in both Church and State.

No wonder it is going to take a bit longer to sort it all out.

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