

How Ethics Build Health w/Rabbi Yonason Goldson



Yonason Goldson 0:00

It's not enough for me to not cause harm. I have responsibility to do good to benefit the people in the world. When I do that, when I have that mindset that I make the world I live in a better place. And then I benefit because I get to live in the better world that I created.

David Sandstrom 0:26

Welcome to the holistic health matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential in body, mind and spirit, so that you can pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor, and Biblical Health Coach. And this is episode number 21. Today, we're speaking with Rabbi Yonason Goldson. He calls himself a religious fundamentalist. He's a keynote speaker with 3000 years experience. He has an awesome TED Talk. He's an authority on ethics. He's an author, and his latest book is called "Grappling with the Gray". Yonason, welcome to the holistic health matters podcast.

Yonason Goldson 1:09

Great to be with you.

David Sandstrom 1:11

Thank you for being here. Yonason, you are an expert in ethics. So can we start out by giving the listeners a simple definition of what ethics actually is?

Yonason Goldson 1:25

There are a lot of angles you can use to come to ethics. But I like to start with this, that ethics is the discipline of recognizing and committing ourselves to what we ought to do. Now, we're constantly at battle with ourselves, between the battles between what we want to do and what we ought to do. And recognizing that every word we say every action we perform, has an impact on the people around us and the world around us. That means that we have responsibility, it's not enough for me to not cause harm. I have responsibility to do good to benefit the people in the world. When I do that, when I have that mindset that I make the world I live

in a better place. And then I benefit because I get to live in the better world that I created.

David Sandstrom 2:21

Yeah, for sure. That's absolutely true. Somebody might be saying to themselves right now. Well, what that's cool. But what does ethics have to do with health? Well, my position is this. When we're pursuing health in a holistic fashion, we do well to pursue peace. And when we're living our lives in an ethical fashion, we enjoy more peace. If I'm constantly telling lies, I have the ah the, the low level stress of wondering if I'm ever going to get caught if I'm ever going to get found out. So I can rid myself of that stress by just telling the truth all the time. Makes sense?

Yonason Goldson 2:59

Yeah, absolutely. Super, very well. And in fact, Mark Twain said, if you if you tell the truth, you can have a lousy memory. You know, liars have to remember every lie they told Yes, so that they don't have contradicting themselves. And so when you talk about peace is that peace of mind that that inner tranquility, and in Hebrew, the word for peace, Shalom, but the real translation of shalom is harmony. And harmony is when everything is in place, and everything is doing its job. Think about a symphony orchestra, you have dozens of different types of instruments, playing different notes. And yet it all comes together as a single piece of music, a single performance, that's harmony, and there is nothing that is better for us, or feels better than to be in harmony, with our community, with our world and with ourselves.

David Sandstrom 4:01

Absolutely. That's, that's really great stuff. One of the things I often say is we maximize our health potential, by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. And that's basically what you just said, when we live in harmony with God's order of things. It brings us health, it ultimately builds health in our systems from the inside out.

Yonason Goldson 4:24

Yeah, and you know, for for your audience, or for the most part, believers in a God who has to some degree made his will known to us. It really, it makes it so much easier. In other words, I don't have to figure as much out by myself, I have a I have a handbook that guides me in my day to day life, you know, the Orthodox Jewish community. It's a very, very rigid set of

do's and don'ts and yet, that just forms the the sort of structure Life, I still have to go through the day to day, I still have to think about how I'm speaking to my neighbors and my co workers and my wife and my kids, and, and how I'm how I'm treating people. And if I'm being honest, I mean, the the number of decisions that we have to make on a daily basis are uncountable. But if we have a certain structure that guides us, and that gives us boundaries, then it really makes the job much easier. And for those people who who don't subscribe, particularly to to structured religious rubric, if you will. It's not, you know, it's not a lost cause. But there has to be a certain sincerity, a certain integrity, I want to live a good life, I want to find out what that means to live a good life, I want to have structure in my life and rules that I follow. Because that's ultimately going to serve me in living as a responsible and a productive member of a civil society.

David Sandstrom 6:05

I totally agree, I couldn't agree more. And those rules are established what's right and wrong, is established by an omnipotent creator, and omniscient creator that knows, he knows it all, he knows the future. And he's kind of like our guide on a jungle Safari. This seasoned guide knows the way, he knows the hazards. He knows where the animals are hiding out. And we cannot benefit from his guidance without actually listening to him doing what he says. So in the same way, we go to the Scriptures, and we see what God has to say about how we live our lives. And when we do it brings a supernatural peace, which is absolutely health billing.

Yonason Goldson 6:44

Sure, it's one of the things that I do in my speaking in my my coaching and training business, is I want to try to distill the wisdom of God's teachings and put it into a language that's accessible to people, regardless of their spiritual or orientation. Yeah, you know, you don't have to be a traditionally religious person to recognize the wisdom and the value of religious teachings if they're presented in a way that appeals to sort of universal perspective.

David Sandstrom 7:22

Yeah, I agree with that. Which brings up the idea of we're kind of going through this in our society, we're seeing a lot of this these days. And that is, I get to define my own truth. Who's to say who's to say what's really what's right and wrong? I'm going to make up my own mind on what

what's right and wrong. My position? Well, let's, let's see what your position is on that is, is there any such thing as situational ethics?

Yonason Goldson 7:46

That's a complicated question. And it's one that certainly have to deal with. And so what I've done, and this is really my formulation, when you go back into the the Greek and the Latin origins of words, ethics, and more, ethics and morals come from the same source in in in entomology. But in the more common usage, we tend to talk about morals and moralizing, which means I'm projecting my values outward. And so from that starting point, what I'd like to propose is that we can think of morality in terms of values that are handed down from a higher authority. And what we were just talking about, that's great if I believe in a higher authority. And if you and I believe this in the same higher authority, but since we have to live in a world that's a lot more complicated than that lots of different people have different values. So then what I'd like to suggest is that ethics is what guides us through those sort of stormy, stormy waters. And we have to look for universal truths. And we have to recognize that we're not always going to agree, because it's it's not so much a question of what's right and what's wrong. But right versus right and wrong versus wrong. What are our priorities, in terms of which values come first, which values have to make way for the so when you talk about situational ethics? It's it's hard to really say yes or no on that. Certainly, you have to have clarity. For instance, if you ask people, the 10 commandments, many will quote you Thou shalt not kill.

David Sandstrom 9:37

Yeah.

Yonason Goldson 9:37

But that is a mistranslation. It's Thou shalt not murder. And the distinction between killing and murder is profound.

David Sandstrom 9:46

Yes.

Yonason Goldson 9:47

Sometimes it's actually necessary and proper and virtuous to take a life not often, but sometimes,

David Sandstrom 9:55

Yes.

Yonason Goldson 9:56

So yeah, we have to get our definitions clear. Before we can actually start grappling with the with the messy work of figuring out ethics and ethical priorities.

David Sandstrom 10:08

Yeah. Well, it's it gets deep, really fast, right? I mean, we have a, we have a society that says, Well, I have my autonomy. And I believe God gives each of you each and every human being a free will. But even though he gives us the ability to make up our own minds and make choices, he doesn't exempt us from the consequences of those choices. And that gets into what we were just saying a moment ago about, well, what's really right, what's really true and what isn't.

Yonason Goldson 10:34

Yeah, you know, think about an issue that's very relevant today. There, there are quite a few people that are resistant to the idea of wearing masks. Yes. Well, what are the benefits? What are the what's the downside? You know, part of the problem is that we've lost trust in our authorities. Some doctors say one thing, some doctors are saying something else. Some politicians are saying one thing, some politicians are saying something else. And so we naturally divide along partisan lines, and what should be an issue of public health and personal responsibility ends up becoming another political battle. But if my wearing a mask has any chance at all, of protecting you, and helping and helping ensure that you have a greater possibility greater likelihood of remaining healthy, then there should be some really compelling reason for me not to wear a mask. Before I start saying, Well, I have the right not to true, I have the right not to. But it's not all about my rights. It's about my responsibilities to the society I live in.

David Sandstrom 11:47

Yeah. You know, we could probably go a long time on this very topic. But I want to move on, because there's a lot, there's a lot I want to ask you. Here's another question, are there benefits to an ethical mindset that extend beyond the workplace, because most people when they think about ethics, they think about work environment, I've got an MBA, I had a

class on business ethics. So when I think of ethics, I think of the work environment, but other benefits to our personal lives beyond that.

Yonason Goldson 12:15

But sure, you know, what we're just talking about? How, how do I approach my relationships, if I want to be trusted, if I want to have close relationships, if I want to know that I can trust others? This is all coming from an ethical mindset. Am I thinking about what's in my best interest, or I'm, am I thinking about how I can serve others. I like to have an acronym for ethics. And, and the S at the end, I really came up with two meanings to the SS self discipline, which means that I am diligent, and I'm responsible, but there's also service, the idea that I recognize that I'm not just here for me, I'm here to serve a higher purpose. And that higher purpose, whether it's God, whether it's community, whether it's simply contributing to elevating the standards of the site in which I live, that puts a burden of responsibility on me. And that's really a function of an ethical mindset.

David Sandstrom 13:32

Yeah, yeah, very good. I go back to what I was saying a moment ago, that when we live our lives, according to an ethical standard, we enjoy more peace and peace builds health, I would just want to bring up you mentioned the 10 commandments, if we if the entire world simply followed one commandment, and that was do not steal. If no one in the world had ever heard of stealing, and no one ever thought of stealing anything. What a different world we would live in, wouldn't we? I mean, you could leave your car keys on your seat and walk into the store and come back out. I mean, what what a different world we live in, of course, I know from the Hebrew Scriptures have, well, correct me if I'm wrong, but over 600 laws that God gives us correct?

Yonason Goldson 14:14

Yeah, we have 613. But, but I like that you picked picked up on stealing, because in Jewish law, there's a prohibition against stealing time. If you and I have a date at an appointment at 2:30, and I show up at 2:45. Yeah, I've stolen 15 minutes of your time. How valuable is that there's a commandment there's a prohibition against stealing sleep. There's a famous story of a fella who was offered a tremendously profitable deal. This is steel. He was in business with his father, his father was asleep in the next room. And the keys were under his father's pillow. And so he

turned down the business deal because he couldn't get into the vault to get the rest. To sell to customers, because he didn't he didn't want to that was also honoring father, which is another one. But he didn't want to wake him up didn't want to steal this. There's the idea of, of stealing. It translates literally stealing one's mind. It means deception.

David Sandstrom 15:13
Yeah,

David Sandstrom 15:14
Even if it's a, what we would think of as a harmless deception. But to to mislead someone. That is a type of theft, as well. Yeah. And so just just looking at again, this goes back to the principles of ethics means look beyond the letter of the law, and focus on the spirit of the law. Because ultimately, that's what keeps us society healthy.

David Sandstrom 15:40
Yeah, absolutely. You know, just to bring up a verse from the New Testament, Jesus was asked, What's the greatest commandment, and he reached back into the book of Deuteronomy. And he said, greatest commandment is to love God. And the second is like it to love your neighbor, as you love yourself. So I think that speaks to what you're talking about right now is, you know, yeah, we have a letter of law. But there's more to it than that. We want to act as if we want to treat other people the way we want to be treated. We call that the golden rule in Christianity. And when we live our lives that way, man, it makes for a better place to live. The world's a better place, and we are better because of it.

David Sandstrom 16:20
Sure, and the whole idea of loving God extends into loving your neighbor as yourself. Because why do you love your neighbor as yourself, because you recognize the godliness, you recognize the divinity, you recognize the nobility, in another human being? Yes. And so you are drawn to that person, because of the godly nature, and the spiritual essence of that person. And once you have that, you know, talking about the golden rule, famous story, in Jewish tradition of the sage Hillel, the elder that he was approached by a prasiolite. Who said, teach me the whole Torah, teach me the whole law standing on one foot? And he said, What is hateful in your eyes? Don't do to your neighbor. The rest is commentary. Go learn it. And it's a fascinating idea. Yeah. But it means that all the technical laws and

things about dietary laws, and then the and the, and the festivals, and the temple service, every detail of of law, ultimately relates back to how I treat other people. Yeah, and how sensitive I am to those around me. And if I'm just going through the mechanics of the law, without having that as the driving force behind my, my observance of the law, that I'm missing the whole point.

David Sandstrom 17:44

Yeah, absolutely.

David Sandstrom 17:50

So you've decided to make some improvements to your health and well being, you're listening to shows like this, where you can get information that can help take your health to the next level. The trouble is, getting educated and implementing effective strategies is time consuming and can be expensive, not to mention overwhelming. That's why I wrote my book, the Christians Guide to Holistic Health. In my book, I've taken 20 years of research and experience as a natural and holistic health coach, and distilled it down to what you need to know, to maximize your health potential in body, mind and spirit. It's my contention that we maximize our health potential. by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. My book, the Christians guide to holistic health will put you on the fast track to the vibrant health and vitality have been looking for. By the way, many of my recommendations won't cost you a nickel, they're free. Because a lot of my message is simply aligning our lives more fully with the Word of God, that doesn't cost you a thing. So if you'd like to avoid, overwhelm and get some biblically based holistic health information you can implement right away, go to my website, davidsandstrom.com forward slash book, you can learn more and pick up a copy today. If that doesn't work, you can go directly to Amazon. It's available there in paperback, Kindle, and Audible. And let's get back to the show. You know, one of the things I talk about in my book, the Christians Guide to Holistic Health, is what spiritual health actually is, because I think a lot of people in this New Age movement will have some strange ideas of what spirituality is all about. But for me, spirituality spiritual, the spiritual approach to health is, is all about relationships, our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and our relationship with ourselves. And when we get that right, most of life tends to fall into place afterwards, Jesus taught, seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you.

David Sandstrom 19:52

For sure, I mean relationships are the bedrock of all our successes, whether it's business or family or community. And relationship means that I have to get out of myself and be able to see circumstances and situations from point of view of the other person I, I have a new book out called "Grappling with the Gray", an ethical handbook to personal success and business prosperity. And the grappling of the gray means the gray areas of life, which is most of life and the gray matter of our minds, which is where we do our thinking. And it's a it's a book, it's a collection of vignettes of short, ethical scenarios and dilemmas with a guided discussion of how to look at those situations from two sides. Because it's only when I can look from two sides that I can start to see the whole picture. And it's only when I can see the whole picture that I can start to get to some sort of an equitable resolution.

David Sandstrom 20:50

Excellent. That sounds like sounds like a really good read. How long have you had your book out?

Yonason Goldson 20:55

It just out just this month.

David Sandstrom 20:57

Oh, wow. Congratulations. Thank you quite an accomplishment.

Yonason Goldson 21:00

Thank you. Yeah. So interested readers can go look at my website and click on the icon and find the way there

David Sandstrom 21:06

Very good. Now that you mentioned it, how can my listeners get ahold of you?

Yonason Goldson 21:11

This way is on my website, which is my name. YonasonGoldson.com Y-O-N-A-S-O-N O, N G-O-L-D-S-O-N And we're very active on LinkedIn, a little bit less so on the other social media, but always interested to continue the conversation.

David Sandstrom 21:26

Yeah, very good. Here's another question I'd like to ask before you go on. Do you believe that we're facing an ethical crisis in our society today?

Yonason Goldson 21:36

I don't think there's any doubt about it. This is we're in scary times. And this is this is really coming from a place of ideology a place of selfishness. I have my priorities. I have my desires, I have my beliefs. You know, one of the one of the remarkable things about the United States is that it's the first institution in the history of the world that was founded on differences. Not not what we have in common, but the recognition that we are all different. And and the the unifying factor, right, E Pluribus Unum, out of many comes one. That's that's sort of a commitment to creating a society where our differences become a source of strength. Where there's constructive disagreement, were looking from different angles and different perspectives, gives us a clear picture of truth. And the structure of government is, is removing itself from that, and that's extremely dangerous. My hope is that as people become increasingly frustrated with the behavior of our leaders, that people will start, more and more people will start abandoning the extremes, and trying to gather towards a rational center. And and that doesn't mean that I will have to believe the same thing. It doesn't mean we have to be politically moderate, it means that we have to moderate our behavior, we have to moderate our speech, you have to recognize that not everybody who disagrees with us is evil. And that compromise is not a dirty word. That we live in a society of different types of people with different priorities, there has to be given take. And that's just the nature of human society. And so while I think the ethics are in, in trouble, I think that there's hope that we can we can, we can get the pendulum to swing back in the other direction.

David Sandstrom 23:59

I couldn't agree more. You know, there is an awful lot of division going on in our nation today. And I've thought a lot about this myself. And I don't know if there's a solution to this division, without the acknowledging of God or a supreme being. Because I believe that there is truth in it. It exists outside of my personal opinions. And there are things that are right for all people, in all places at all times. That's truth. And that truth comes from the nature and character of God. It's wrong to commit adultery because God is faithful. It's wrong to lie because God is truth. And if something is contrary to the nature and character of God, then that makes it wrong. And

with that as our plumbob with that as our benchmark, then we can have a discussion about how we live our lives. But until we have that, you know, if the atheist is right, if there is no God, then we do get to make up minds moral relativism is the correct way to live our lives. But I would completely disagree with that I think we do have an omniscient creator, he knows it all. And he has created the universe and the world the way it is. And there are truths, just like there are physical laws, there are moral laws that are based on the nature and character of God. And when we align our lives more fully with that design, it is health promoting.

Yonason Goldson 25:28

I agree with you, of course. And the challenge for us as believers is to live up to the ideals that are handed down to us. That's our own personal challenge. The next level of challenge is to be models to the broader community. So when they look at us, when secular people look at religious people, religious believers, they don't see us as fanatics. They don't see us as extremists. They see us as articulate, balanced, thoughtful, kind, generous, inclusive, members of a society that believes that we have a higher purpose, you know, and then the, in the 12, step, step recovery programs, you know, it always starts with first admit, you have no control, which means that I can't control the outcome of what I can do, I can only control the process and the choices I make. And the second step is recognize this something greater than yourself. And, of course, we believe that is the creator. But even for people coming from, from a secular perspective, we can impress upon the importance of having a sense of, of higher purpose in life of vision and mission and commitment to something more than just my own outlooks, my own ideas or my own personal gratification. And if we can articulate those values in the language that's accessible to the secular world, then we can really have a tremendous impact beyond our own personal conduct.

David Sandstrom 27:07

Totally agree. I wanted to just mention one more thing before I let you go unison. on your website, you've got a page with some really cool quotes. And I read a few of them. I was very inspired. And I just want to ask you about one of them. It's this one, "Become a player in the symphony of creation". What does that mean?

Yonason Goldson 27:25

Well, we actually touched on that earlier. You know, if I'm, if I'm a violinist, in I'm not, but if I were a violinist in a, in a symphony, I can't play whatever I want. And I can't play the notes in front of me. Anyway, I want. If you think about it, this this fascinates me. You know, in Psalms, King David introduces many of his songs with a phrase for the conductor. He's referring to God, right? Why is God the conductor, right? Who's the most important person in the orchestra, the one person who's not making any sound, the one person who's not holding an instrument, he's the most important person there. Why? Because he's keeping everybody else together. And he's doing it in a very subtle way. And the players have to know how to read the conductor's movements, and facial expressions, and, and all the nuances of the way he waves that stick and holds his hands. You know, non musicians like me, you look at a conductor, and you don't really know what he's doing. But he's keeping everyone playing together. So to be a player in the symphony of creation means to find one's place to develop one's skill, to pay attention to the conductor. And to make sure that I'm playing, I'm acting, I'm conducting myself in a way that is in concert with all the other players. That's how we live lives of harmony. And that's how we bring harmony and peace to the world.

David Sandstrom 29:06

Excellent. Well said, that's probably a good place to end the conversation. Yonason, I really enjoyed speaking with you. It's been a pleasure.

Yonason Goldson 29:13

Thanks for having me, David.

David Sandstrom 29:15

Okay, we've covered a lot of ground there. So let me summarize. ethics is about getting outside ourselves, and understanding that God gives us free will. We get to make our own choices, but God doesn't exempt us from the consequences of our choices. With that in mind, we should be pursuing wise choices. Rabbi Yonason suggests that we should be living in harmony with God's symphony of creation. When we do, we not only make the world a better place, but we have a more positive impact on the people we come in contact with. And as a side benefit, we get to enjoy the health benefits of a greater inner peace which is very consistent With my message, my message is we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's designed for spirit, mind and body. That's what Holistic Health looks like. In that sense Yonason's message and mine are

one in the same. I hope you enjoyed this conversation with Rabbi Yonason. If you did, please share it with your friends, I would appreciate you spreading the word. And don't forget to go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com I always post a full transcript there with timestamps. You can read it online, or you can download it, put it on your device and take it with you and read it later. Once again, thanks for giving me some of your valuable time this week. I enjoyed serving you. I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed.