

Sharing Truth in a Post-Christian America

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You guys know that pretty much every time we get together as a body, we go through the Scripture chapter by chapter, and verse by verse. And that's, of course, one of the main reasons we want you to have your Bibles with you and even offer to get you a Bible if you don't happen to have one.

But I'm going to do something a little different today, and this is really odd for us. I'm going to— every passage of Scripture that we are going to look at today, we're going to look at on the screen. And that's not because I'm not trying to, encourage you to dig into your Bible. You should know better by now. But we're going to go through these in somewhat kind of a rapid fashion. And, you can certainly jot these down and use your Bible to check them out yourself. And I would encourage you to do that.

But what we're going to do today is I'm going to be asking essentially 8 questions. They involve, I suppose, basic Christianity, or maybe even a Theology 101 basic course. And then at the very end of answering these questions, I'm going to explain to you why we presented them in the first place. All right? But I'm going to save the explanation until we're done.

So let's put the 8 questions, first of all, up on the screen so that we can look at them. They are:

- Who is God and what is He like?
- Who is Jesus?
- What is the origin of mankind?
- What is sin?
- How does sin affect mankind?
- What did God do about making mankind's sin?
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?
- What must we do to be saved?

Who is God and what is He like? Who is Jesus? What is the origin of mankind? What is sin? How does sin affect mankind? What did God do about mankind's sin? Why was it necessary for Jesus to die? And then finally, what must we do to be saved?

So let's get started. We're going to look at the very first question, which is,

Who is God and what is He like?

Who is God, and what is He like?

A. W. Tozer, as you probably know by now, one of my favorite authors, has a great quote about this question. And he says,

Without a doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

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That's a pretty profound quote, but I believe it to be true. Here's what's interesting. The Bible never sets out to prove God's existence. You can't point to a passage in the Bible, a chapter or verse that somehow proves God's existence. The Bible assumes His existence from the very beginning.

In fact throughout the course of the Word of God, He tells us that all He created actually speaks of His existence. This evidence of His existence in creation, in fact, is so profound, and so wide ranging, that He refers to anyone who refuses to believe in His existence, as a fool.

So when we think about God, and we think about who is God, we have to be very careful not to think of Him as like us. In other words, God is not just like you and me, only bigger and stronger.

In fact, there's a passage in the Psalms where the Lord speaks of this whole idea. And it's in Psalm 50, verse 21, where He says,

Psalm 50:21 (NIV)

...you thought I was altogether like you.

...you thought I was altogether like you.

The fact of the matter is, God is not altogether like us. He is, in His essential essence, other than you and I.

So let's deal with the question, who is God? Well, again, it's, it, you need to take a whole Bible approach to answering that question. And when we compile the information that's scattered throughout the Scriptures, we come up with essentially a statement, if you will, that is, that reflects the Word of God related to that question, who is God? And it goes something like this.

God is the Supreme Being. The Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all that is. He is self-existent, which means He has always existed and needs nothing or no one to maintain His existence. He is complete and perfect in all of His ways.

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And furthermore, God says of Himself in Isaiah chapter 43,

Isaiah 43:10b (NIV)

Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

That's our first question.

Next, we get into,

Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? And the best answer that we can give based on what we know from God's Word is,

Jesus is God incarnate*

**Incarnate means: embodied in flesh; in human form.*

Jesus is God incarnate. And the word, incarnate means: embodied in flesh or literally in human form.

So Jesus is God in human form. Prophetically, He is named Emmanuel, which means God with us. All right. But one thing we have to remember about Jesus is that He wasn't always the Son of God.

Jesus became the Son of God when He was born of a virgin. But that doesn't mean that's when He began to exist. From all eternity, the Son of God existed beside the Father as, the living Word of God. Let me show you this from John chapter 1, and it says,

John 1:1-2, 14, 10 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; He was in the world, and...yet the world did not know him.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And the Word became flesh (that's the whole definition of incarnate) and dwelt among us; He was in the world, and...yet the world did not know him.

There are two other things that we learn through the Scripture that are true of Jesus. One is that He is the creator of all things. And secondly, we learn that He is the only way that you and I can reach heaven. Concerning Him being the creator, John says this,

John 1:3 (ESV)

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that has been made.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that has been made.

At this point somebody might be a little confused and say, wait a minute, just a minute ago you said that God is the creator of all things, and now you're telling me Jesus is the creator.

Well, that's right, because Jesus is God. And we know how God created, because it tells us in Genesis. It tells us, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And as we read through that chapter, we see over and

over again that He spoke things into existence. When you speak, what comes out of your mouth? Words. Remember this, again, from John chapter 1,

John 1:1-2 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, AND THE WORD WAS GOD.

Remember that also Jesus said about His relationship to the Father, in John chapter 10,

John 10:30 (ESV)

“I and the Father are one.”

“I and the Father are one.”

And then, concerning this idea of Jesus being the only way to reach heaven, this we discover by His own words. In John chapter 14, verse 6,

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Jesus said... “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (and) No one comes to the Father except through me.”

That's who Jesus is.

The next question is,

What is the origin of mankind?

What is the origin of mankind? Well, in the Book of Genesis, the Bible reveals that God created mankind in the beginning with a single man and a single woman.

The Bible does not say that they evolved. It says they were created as adults, and they were our representatives, as much as being our first parents. We'll talk

more about their representation of us in just a moment. We go to the Book of Genesis to read about the origin of mankind.

The next question that we're going to ask is,

What is sin?

What is sin? Well, the literal definition of sin means to miss the mark. If I were an archer and I was shooting my arrow at the target and I missed it altogether, that is a good picture of sin. It's missing the target.

And here's the deal, though, when you and I talk about sin, we usually refer to, or we think that it's referring to, a specific act. And sometimes it does, like lying or cheating or stealing or something like that.

But the Bible also speaks of sin as a condition. And what the Bible tells us is, sin has been inherited through our first parents. In other words, when Adam and Eve committed sin in the garden, they became sinners, and they then passed down that condition through all the successive generations that came after them. We have inherited a condition known as sin and so we are called sinners because of that inherited condition. And we go on to prove that title correct by committing sin in violation of God's righteous laws.

Next question.

What affect did sin have on mankind?

How does sin affect mankind? Well, it'd probably be easier to talk about how it hasn't affected mankind because there's a lot fewer ways. But sin has affected pretty much every part of our lives. Every broken relationship. Every ache and pain that we feel, and the inevitability of death, those are all because of sin.

And as it relates to how it affected our relationship to God, one word can answer that question thoroughly. I'll put it up on the screen, it is the word, separation.

SEPARATION

Adam and Eve were created, the Bible tells us to have close intimate fellowship with God. But sin changed all that, and we read about this in the third chapter of Genesis. Up on the screen, it says,

Genesis 3:8 (ESV)

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

And they (meaning Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

And that is the result of sin, it caused man to run. And he's been running ever since. And then the Lord speaks through Isaiah about this separation, and He says in Isaiah chapter 59,

Isaiah 59:2 (ESV)

...but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you...

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Obviously, this separation that we're talking about between God and man has very far reaching consequences, and we don't have time here this morning to go into them. But undoubtedly, the most important consequence is that we all stand guilty before a holy God. And what that means is, we were literally born into guilt, or, if you will, born under condemnation. A child doesn't have to sin their first sin to be guilty and under God's condemnation. They are born that way because they're born with the condition of sin.

We were born with a death sentence literally hanging over us. And why a death sentence? Well, because in Romans chapter 6, verse 23 it says,

Romans 6:23 (ESV)

...the wages of sin is death...

...the wages of sin is death...

By the way, that's what's commonly referred to as, the bad news. But the nice thing about that is it brings us to the good news, which is our next question.

What did God do about mankind's sin?

What did God do about mankind's sin? Well, one of the best answers to that question is, interestingly enough, found in the Book of Galatians, chapter 4. Up on the screen it says,

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV)

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law...

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And then in Romans chapter 8, we read,

Romans 8:3 (NIV)

...what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

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In other words, God condemned our sin by sending His Son and condemning His Son in our place. I want to show you a quote that I also found as I was studying through this. Sums it up nicely. Says,

Because of God's grace, mercy and loving-kindness, He sent His Son to die on the cross and take the penalty of our sin, reconciling us to God and making eternal life with Him possible. What was lost at the Fall is reclaimed at the cross.

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Next question.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to die? Why couldn't God just say, I forgive you? And the simple answer to that question is, because God is just. And that means as a God of justice, His very nature demands that a penalty be paid. Look at these passages from Deuteronomy, verse 32, or chapter 32 rather. It says,

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NIV)

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

And then it is echoed again in the Psalms where it says,

Psalms 9:7-8 (ESV)

But LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

But LORD sits enthroned forever; he has established his throne for justice, and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.

What that all means is that God can't let sin go unpunished. You and I can do that. We can let wrongdoing go unpunished. A judge sitting on a court can actually let wrongdoing go unpunished. It's possible, but God can't do that. It's not possible for Him to allow sin to go unpunished. The price of sin must be paid, and that's what God sent His Son to do. Pay your price and to pay my price.

And then finally, our last question is,

What must we do to be saved?

What must we do to be saved? What better time than to refer to that wonderful passage in John 3:16 and 17.

John 3:16-17 (ESV)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Now, you guys know this is a wonderful passage, but there's a problem with this passage. It's pretty general. It's not super specific. All it really says that we need to do is believe; *“whoever believes in him.”* Well, that word means something different today than it did back when these words were actually spoken and written down.

For us today, living in our modern society, to believe in something simply means to acknowledge it, or to acknowledge its existence. I believe in whatever. And we believe in a lot of things. And it is possible for you and I to take such a simplistic view of what is necessary for us to be saved from our sin.

We simply need to believe in Jesus. To a lot of people, all that means is, well, I just need to believe that this guy named Jesus really existed. Well, that's not a problem. No problem. I'll believe that. I believe that. No sweat. Well, but it means more than that. And we have to look at some other passages to help us to understand.

Earlier in John, we read this from John chapter 1.

John 1:12 (NIV)

...to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God —

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Now what's interesting about this passage is that John now uses a word that, in his understanding, is synonymous with believe. So what is synonymous with believe? To receive. It says, *“to those who believed in his name,”* to those who received Him. That means to believe everything He ever said was true about Himself and to receive and to believe all that He did on the cross personally for you. And so what is the promise that's attached to that verse?

John 1:12 (NIV)

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To those who believe to that level, right? To receive Him and all that He did, all that He is, He gave the right to become children of God. That's the biblical definition of the word, believe. And there you have it. Theology 101.

Now you're probably wondering, why are you saying all these things? Well, I want to tell you now why I wanted to share all this with you. I did it because the time in which we live, the day and the age of where you and I have been placed. God could have placed you, I suppose, at any point in history, but He placed you here. And where is here? Well, I'll tell you where here is not.

We're not living in Mayberry anymore. It's been a lot of years since we've lived in that sort of a situation because, back in that day. Back in the 1950s, 1960s, even. If you were to begin a conversation with someone about God, you could be reasonably certain that their understanding of God was the same as yours.

What's interesting about the 1950s, the 1960s and that sort of thing is that the Christian influence on society was so pervasive that even unbelievers, knew and understood who God was. They understood what the Bible had to say. They understood who Jesus was and what He did on the cross. Whether they accepted it or not, who knows. But they understood it.

Today, that's not the case. You start a conversation with somebody today about God and they're basically going to wonder what you're talking about. And they might even stop you and say, well now, which God are you referring to? Because I've been learning about a lot of gods, and frankly, yours is just one in a pantheon of God. So you need to be more specific than that.

And you know what? We do need to be more specific. The last few generations who have been raised up in this world, have been raised on such a secular worldview, that they lack any foundation of understanding for which you and I to be able to have a connection with them talking about God, the Bible, sin, the origin of man, what God came to do about sin, and so forth, to have any kind of a reasonable connection. They just don't understand the things that we're referring to.

You're explaining to them that what Jesus did on the cross, but they don't have an understanding of man's origin, man's fall into sin, and so they don't even know why they need a Savior. We keep talking about the Savior. Have you

accepted the Savior? And they're like, I didn't know I needed one. Why in the world would I need a Savior? We assume.

It's interesting when Billy Graham used to preach his wonderful messages, his evangelistic messages, he didn't go into a great deal of detail back in the day. He didn't have to. The society, the culture understood the basic understanding of the Bible, sin, and so forth. And so he would get up and he would just tell people, you are separated from God and you need to accept Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross. His messages were very simple. I love watching some of the old Billy Graham evangelistic crusades because it's just so beautifully simple.

But today, we can't say the same things Billy Graham did and expect that the people who are listening are going to necessarily connect with the understanding of our words because, again, the whole definition has changed for them related to these things.

Most people you talk to today can't even define what a sin is. I think there's probably a fair number of Christians who would struggle to define what sin is. To say nothing of understanding why someone needs to be saved from it. We get into conversations with people about all kinds of interesting things. And I'm talking about unbelievers. And we start talking to them about things like, abortion, and our position on abortion. And they just scratch their heads like, what are you talking about?

Have you ever noticed that in the abortion debate we're not even talking about the same subject? You know what it is for us? It's all about babies. It's all about saving babies. But what are they talking about? They're talking about a woman's rights. So here we are clashing heads and we're not even talking about the same problem. There's a completely different mindset because there's an entirely different worldview. We assume that they have the same understanding of the sanctity of life. They don't! And frankly, we shouldn't expect them to because they don't have a biblical worldview, which is what gives us our understanding of the sanctity of life. Apart from Christ, it's like what's the big deal?

We've got to understand that this generation and the last few have been taught since childhood that they are the result of random and meaningless events because that's what evolution teaches. There's no divine mind behind any of this. It's random. It's meaningless.

Well, you preach that to generations of kids and guess what they come away with? That's their foundation of understanding life. It's random and meaningless. So the fact that I would sweep my baby away, who cares? That

child's life was random and meaningless, just like mine. Of course my life matters more, because I'm the one who's already living it, as far as they're concerned, so who cares? See, that's the understanding. That's what we need to start dealing with.

You're going to talk to people today and they're going to come right out and look in your face and say, I don't believe in God or the Bible because science has disproven them. Science has disproved the Bible. Science has disproved the existence of God.

Well, fact of the matter is, evolution is not science. It's atheism. It is very simply the origin of man according to atheists. Ours is the origin of man according to the Bible. And so what you have is the Word of God versus the word of man. It really comes down to such a simple thing as that. But the tenant of atheism that there is no God and that life is random and meaningless has been accepted and embraced by the last few generations hook, line and sinker.

And so when we begin to talk to these individuals, we need to understand they've embraced these ideas, and it's no wonder that they have the views that they do about marriage, and family, and life, and death, and all the things that go on in between.

We think we can get them to think our way just by presenting a good argument and it's not going to happen. It's not going to happen. And the reason it's not going to happen is because their foundation is all wrong. I want you to check out a passage with me on the screen from 1 Corinthians chapter 1. It says this,

1 Corinthians 1:22-23 (NIV)

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

That's an interesting statement at that last statement of that verse, isn't it? The message of Christ crucified is foolishness to Gentiles. Why is it foolishness to Gentiles? Because they have no concept of a creator God, right? They have no concept. And so they have no basis to understand the whole idea of the cross because they don't understand that man fell into sin. They don't understand his need of a savior.

It's interesting, in the New Testament, we find that Paul did different kinds of evangelism based on whether he was talking to Jews or Gentiles. Just read in the Book of Acts, and it'll say that when he got to a new city, if he found a synagogue there, he would first of all go into the synagogue, and he would argue with the Jews from the Scriptures. Why? He had a basis of understanding with the Jews. When he said to the Jews, God, he, they knew exactly who he was referring to. The Creator God. The God who gave the law of Moses. The, the God whom they had worshipped all their lives as a nation and individually. There was this basis of understanding.

However, when Paul went and spoke to the Greeks, or Gentiles if you will, it was a different message. Because these people didn't have the understanding, they didn't. When he said God, they could think of any number of things.

You remember when Paul went to Athens? The Bible says that he was distressed as he walked around the city because of all the idols and idolatry that was going on there. And he began to talk to people in the marketplace and so they said, well, you need to come and speak to us as a group. And so he did that. Gathered together with these individuals at the Areopagus and he began to speak to them. And he started by saying, men, I've been walking around your city and I've noticed that you seem all very religious. You have monuments to many different gods, and he said, and I noticed that there was one monument with the inscription to the unknown God. So please let me explain to you about this unknown God.

And he began at the beginning to talk about God as Creator, who does not live in a temple made by the hands of men. The God who does not need anyone or anything to be sustained. And then he began to talk about sin, and our need for salvation, and so forth. And he finally got to the resurrection and of course they sneered at him for the most part. But the point is he presented a completely different approach to the Gospel. Ultimately It's the same Gospel, okay, but the approach is different based on whether or not I have a basis of understanding with these individuals. And the way Paul spoke to the Gentiles is the way you and I need to speak to this generation and the last few generations as far as that goes.

And that means for you and I, slowing down, asking questions, asking why they believe the way they do when somebody comes up to you and just says, I believe in homosexuality. I think it's good. I think it's right. I think it's natural. Our response can't just be, well, I think it's wrong. Well, based on what?

Best thing to do is to begin to ask questions. Why do you feel the way that you do? Explain to me why you believe the way that you do. And then after they've had an opportunity to explain, ask them if they're willing to listen to why you believe the way that you do.

And so you come back and you say, well, the Bible teaches that in the beginning God created man and woman and you'd go from there. But you see, that brings the establishment, or at least the beginning, of establishing a basis and a foundation from which you can build to understand, ultimately, or to declare ultimately, the Gospel with understanding. It's all part of conveying a biblical worldview, which, answers so many questions about life, like the existence of evil.

One of the most pressing questions that people are going to ask you is, I don't know how you can believe in this loving God when we're living in a world that is full of such pain and such difficulty and such tragedy.

And I get their lack of understanding when it comes to that. I don't have any trouble understanding their, lack of being able to get it because their secular worldview doesn't answer those questions. It can't answer those questions. All they can do is come up with natural explanations.

Well, it must be just conditioning and education. So what we got to do is we got to condition and education, educate people differently. And so when people get into trouble or do something stupid, they go to court and they have to go through a series of classes because obviously you just don't know.

The Bible says you need a new heart. The Bible says that when man fell into sin, his heart became wicked, and evil, and it is beyond cure. And that answers questions that we might otherwise ask, why is there evil in the world? Because of sin, because of rebellion against God and against His Word. We can answer those questions from a biblical worldview. They have no answers. And the only thing they can think of is natural explanations for those things.

The bottom line of what I'm saying to you here today is that we got to rethink how we're going to reach these people who are living in a post Christian United States of America, and wherever else the Lord might take you.

Because for you and I, that means knowing our Bible, knowing what the Bible says. Knowing how to be able to say to someone, here's why I believe the way that I do. This is why. This is what the Bible says. You and I have to be willing

to say that. We have to be willing to understand we live in a different world than just, a few generations ago.

Good grief, when I was a kid, I remember my third grade teacher had a Bible sitting on her desk every single day. Okay. Right on her desk in full view of everyone to see. And I remember my grade school teachers who would sit with us in the cafeteria to eat with the young kids. I remember watching them bowing and praying before a meal.

Man, when I was a kid, we had Christmas programs in school. We sang Christmas hymns in public school. I usually got touched to play Joseph. Every Christmas, it was a non-speaking part, but you just stand there in a bathrobe next to this crib thingy, with a doll in it. But the point is, we were telling a story in public school about Jesus Christ, His birth, and the ultimate purpose of His coming.

And it was assumed that this was okay. When I was a kid, it was assumed in the public school we could talk about Jesus anytime we wanted. My teacher could have that Bible sitting right up there, on her desk. When I would walk up to ask her a question about a problem or something like that, I saw that Bible sitting there.

That's unheard of today. It's a different world we're living in today. People have not been raised with an understanding of the Word of God. And their basis, their worldview is secular and atheist.

And we got to be able to share why we believe what we believe. It can't just be, I believe this just because I believe it. They're used to that. The people of this world are accustomed to hearing people say, well, I believe, yeah, but I believe, and I believe, yeah, but I believe, and they take it all in stride. Cool. You believe that he believes that, whatever you believe is true for you. They're accustomed to that.

No, we got to come back and say, here's why I believe what I believe because in God's Word it says, and then we explain. And it has to begin at the beginning.

I hope that's been an encouragement to you to understand the world that we live in and how we're going to reach these people for the Lord in these last days.