

University Engagement

Engaging the University as a Disciple of Christ



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EDITOR'S NOTE

In my 25 years of ministry with high school and college students, I have noticed a significant shift in cultural temperament; the response to the Christian life on college campuses has become very polarized. Students are now more likely to demean and look down upon known Christians. However, students are also more likely to discuss with these known Christians the reasons that they don't believe in God or in Jesus Christ as His Son. In this environment of discussion, we have the opportunity to shy away and publicly discount the power of the Gospel, or we can stand firm in our belief and communicate the powerful truth of His Word with grace and love.

The past few years have brought several remarkable resources to help us share God's Truth with an unbelieving world. This guide is meant to prepare us to (a) engage our peers in a respectful and tactful way, (b) answer questions about why we personally live as we do, (c) give answers to common arguments against our faith, and (d) have a compact collection of resources ready for use.

I offer my grateful thanks to the writing team for the time they have given to collecting and summarizing much of the content of this guide. And Zach Tingle spent many days during his Christmas break performing multiple edits of the guide. It is meant to be a starting point, and it is only truly powerful when God, through His Spirit, moves and gives it life.

Unto Him be the glory!

—Tim Cornelson, April 2014
Houston, Texas

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

College has always been one of the most formative times in the life of an individual. The first colleges established in America not only reflected but helped to form the Puritan society from which they arose. The Yale Charter suggests that the institution was crafted to be a place “wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences [and] through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State.”¹ Students were to be educated in a number of disciplines but guarded by the overarching mother discipline of theology. That is to say, the power of the university to transform individuals was wrought not only through rigorous academic instruction, but also through rigorous spiritual sustenance. In such an atmosphere, it is no surprise that our universities produced such spiritual giants as Jonathan Edwards, who would go on to play an integral role in the First Great Awakening. He did amazing Kingdom work by inspiring countless citizens to join the awakening, thus transforming American culture.

Today, the situation is not so different in form: college is still very much a reflection of the society in which it exists, and is hugely a formative time for individuals. The Christian student cannot expect to be nourished or “naturally” grow in their faith through the “college experience.” While colleges generally have a core of strong Christians, it is not the predominant culture because the university has drifted from an environment that fosters spiritual growth. However, the Christian has an amazing opportunity to be a light to his or her campus in a way that is unique to our time. Indeed, considering the formative power that college has toward the individual and society at large, this is an unprecedented opportunity in many ways.

However, there are also two great changes in the university culture that have occurred since its foundation. First, due to an increasing plurality in the student population, the model of learning lifestyle choices through instruction has been replaced by learning through experimentation. Experimental learning has inevitably created a strong culture of sinful excesses in college, particularly in the areas of sexual promiscuity and substance abuse.

The second great change is the development of a strong anti-Christian bent in academia. This trend began in the 1920’s and is stronger than ever today. Professors are infamous for their tendency to critique the Christian faith.

¹ Yale University. "About > History." *About*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 July 2013.

So, while college has enormous potential to be a place of great victories for the Kingdom, it is also an uphill battle. The experimental lifestyle and the anti-Christian bent in the institutions place the believer in constant conflict with standard university culture. All too often the First Presbyterian Church of Houston (FPC) sees its high school students go off to college only to ship wreck their faith. They are unprepared for both the intensity of the sinful lifestyle and intellectual challenges posed by professors and peers alike. Still others, though strong enough in their faith to withstand this deluge, found themselves unequipped to take full advantage of living for the Gospel in college.

University Engagement (UE) is FPC's attempt to address this disparity. By creating a dialogue between youth leaders, incoming freshmen, and current college students, UE attempts to (1) introduce ways to change the culture (by learning techniques to engage fellow students) and (2) prepare our young men and women to defend the faith personally (through individualized responses to common lifestyle questions) and intellectually (through apologetics).

As Christians we are called to be different from the culture. The writer of Hebrews speaks of "having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth²." We are called to stand up and give an account for our faith. University Engagement is intended to be a guide and aid to that end.

² Hebrews 11:13, ESV.

Scope

UE is not an exhaustive guide to evangelism or a complete survey of apologetic thought, and it should not be considered either of these things. Instead, it aims to open doors and to address the personal and intellectual biases often found in college. The idea is to show other students (and professors) that following Christ is a legitimate position rather than a cultural superstition. This guide will not necessarily offer inductive proofs on why belief in Christ is the most reasonable option (though it may hint at them). Just remember that the real work of finding opportunities, forging relationships, and showing the love of Christ does not come from this guide. It is accomplished by students who are focused on Christ and following the Holy Spirit.

In terms of content and teaching method, UE will attempt to address what is needed and experienced in college life. By way of conversations, the curriculum will center on Gregory Koukl's *Tactics: a Game Plan for Discussing your Christian Convictions*. It will also present college-specific wisdom concerning the most fruitful ways to open conversations on campuses.

In the case of personal lifestyle questions, people are rarely engaged by textbook answers on why one doesn't sleep around or drink. While the manual will give the scriptural bases for these positions, it will encourage students to develop personal reasons undergirded with Scripture.

Regarding apologetics, this guide will examine most of the major questions in three ways: first, 5-10 minute responses; second, 1-minute responses; and third, further resources for in-depth studies.

Finally, the seeking-God lifestyle in *Appendix I* will give a Scriptural and historical look into the ways that believers ought to orient their lives toward growing in their relationship with Christ. This will be adapted to college life, based upon the ways in which college ministries and college campus churches address some of these spiritual disciplines.

I. OPENING DOORS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

Introduction

The purpose of this first section is to bolster your confidence in having Jesus-centered conversations, and to equip you to discuss your convictions with others. It is critical that we learn and practice methods by which we can effectively share our convictions both respectfully and lovingly with those around us. This is drawn from Gregory Koukl's *Tactics: A Gameplan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*³. In addition to giving useful tips and real life examples, Koukl speaks about the reason for our discussions and the manner in which we conduct them. These aspects are of utmost importance.

We often don't engage in conversations because we are afraid they will turn bad: we will not know what to say, we will say the wrong things, or that we will generally look ignorant. Koukl gives us tactics to become more confident in our conversations. These conversations will strengthen our convictions and work out kinks in our own thought processes. From a Christian perspective, this means that the result of rational discussion and debate will lead to a fuller understanding of God and His universe. If, on top of all of that, our conversations can also lead to sharing Truth with our lost friends, how then could we shy away?

His basic premise is that we as Christians have historically been far too defensive. We let opinionated debaters push us around with hard questions, and never ask any of our own. Indeed, Koukl's strategy is based entirely on taking the offensive in conversation and "shifting the burden of proof." He challenges us to ask for explanations from others. He points out that the people who live without a Christian worldview have an incomplete and incorrect worldview. As Christians we should have confidence simply because we have reality on our side. Of course we should strive to develop a comprehensive worldview, but we need not be scared that we will fail to answer every question. Those with whom we argue face the same problem of not having all the answers.

Often, the reason that others are so aggressive in conversation is that they know that they have no defense for their beliefs. In my experience most of the people with whom we debate have not given as much thought to ideas like ultimate reality, death, God, or purpose. This gives you an advantage.

Ultimately the purpose of these conversations is to politely and respectfully poke holes in arguments against the Faith. Our goal is to

³ Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), Print.

make them see that there is more to the world, to make them think, and to make them look for real answers. When they genuinely look for answers, they will likely find them in Christianity. Koukl calls this “putting a stone in their shoe.” He shows how to do this by demonstrating the different ways that an argument can fall apart. With practice, the tactics are quite easy and incredibly helpful.

Always remember, there is no need to fear; there is no reason to feel inadequate. Take heart in the truth that *reality is on your side*. If we are patient and diligent in study, we can find a refutation to every argument posed by those with whom we debate. Their opinions, if contrary to Scripture, are false. Furthermore, it is not our ability to argue that is most important, but the manner in which we do it. Most importantly, **be confident in the truth that you know, and share it with grace and respect.**

Key principles

- **No. 1 Rule:** If anyone in the conversation gets angry, you lose. An example comes in the statement: “So you think that everyone who does not believe as you do is going to hell?”
- The three principle components in great conversations are:
 - **Knowledge:** an accurately informed mind
 - **Wisdom:** and artful manner
 - **Character:** acting with grace, kindness, and patience

The Inquisitive Detective

Imagine yourself as an inquisitive detective asking questions that **provide a fuller understanding** of the person’s ideas, **exposing the reason** for their conclusions, and **leading them to discover the holes** in their own ideology. Here are three steps to consider.

Step 1: Take control of the conversation; get into the drivers seat. Ask questions to **gain further information:**

- “How so?”
- “What do you mean by that?”
- “In what ways?”

Step 2: Ask your friend to **really justify his claims** with evidence. This puts the burden of proof on him.

As Christians we too readily allow ourselves to be put on the defense. Others should be obligated—as we are—to justify their claims. It is not impolite to ask for evidence that supports their ideas. Such

evidence (or the lack thereof) often sheds light on the truth that their claims are unfounded.

- “Now, how did you come to that conclusion?”
- “Why do you say that?”
- “What are your reasons for holding that view?”
- Consider if their explanation is **possible, plausible, and probable**.

Don't let the burden of proof shift back to you unfairly, but be extremely polite and tactful in disadvantageous situations (e.g. class room settings). Remember that “the man with the microphone always wins.” And if you are outmatched on an informational level, ask their permission to think about it or learn more and continue the discussion later. Take ego out of the equation; the main object of asking these questions is to allow a more aggressive opponent to fully express and assess his views and to plant a stone in his shoe if possible.

Step 3: Find flaws in their arguments by asking leading questions.

Never respond in statements. Just keep asking questions which point out flaws in his argument in a humble, respectful way.

- “Have you considered...”
- “Can you help me understand...”
- Insure your response expresses respect for the person with whom you disagree

If your friend is unprepared to defend his point, he may divert. He might try to make points through questioning. Press him to rephrase the questions into what they really are, statements.

Types of Arguments

When discussing with others we will eventually find the flaws in their thinking if we ask enough questions that bring out their convictions. This section provides a systematic way to look for holes in different arguments.

Argument: Contradictions

Can the view exist under its own terms without contradiction? Here are some examples:

- “There is no truth.” This is a truth statement.
- “There are no absolutes.” This is an absolute statement.
- “No one can know any religious truths.” Then how would they know this?

Argument: Negated Purpose

There are views that are self-contradicting in that they negate their own purpose. Here are some examples:

- “It is wrong to condemn others.” This statement is condemning of those proposing this.
- “It is wrong to try to convert others to your religion.” You would have to adopt their religious views to abide by this.
- “You shouldn’t force your morality on other people.” You would have to adopt their version of morality to abide by this.

Argument: Unsustainable Implications

There are some views that are hard to live by if you play out their full implications. Here are some examples:

- Can the person really live with the full implications of the world they are asserting?
- “Regardless of a man’s system, he has to live in God’s world” –Francis Schaeffer
- “In a very real sense, every person who denies God is living on borrowed capital. He enjoys living as if the world is filled with morality, meaning, order, and beauty, yet he denies the God whose existence makes such things possible”⁴

For the previous types of conversations that seem to be non-destructive and coherent (yet hopeless), ask some clarifying questions to dig deeper:

1. Reduce the person’s view to a basic **claim**, principle, or rule. “In essence, you are saying _____. Is that correct?”

⁴ Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 146.

2. If the agreed principle were **applied consistently**, what would it mean for other issues?
3. If a problem is realized, invite other person to also consider this problematic conclusion – **Therefore...**

Here are some examples of this analysis:

1. Statement: “Homosexuality isn’t wrong because it is natural.”
 2. Claim: “Things that are natural are not wrong.”
 3. Applied consistently: “If a gay-hating gene were found, it would not be wrong to ridicule homosexuals.”
-
1. Statement: “I think abortion is wrong, but I would never force my views on others.”
 2. Claim: “Abortion equals killing, but moral opinions cannot be enforced on others.”
 3. Applied consistently: “A women who believes that killing her child isn’t murder ought to be able to do so.”

Argument: Controlling Person

Sometimes a person takes over control of the conversation and interrupts all explanations with more questions in an aggressive or excited fashion.

Step one: Stop them after repeated interruption by tactfully and politely slowing down the other’s accusations.

- “Is it okay if I take a few moments to answer your first question before you go on to ask another? You can respond when I’m done with the first.”
- “Let me respond to your first challenge. When I’m done, you can add another. Is that alright?”
- “Good question, it will take a few minutes to answer. Are you ok with that?”

Step two: If they continue, be more direct in your response.

- “Can I ask a favor? I’d love to respond, but you keep breaking in. Could I have a few moments without being cut off to develop my point? Then you can tell me what you think. Is that ok with you?” [Wait for response.]
- “Can I ask you a quick question? Do you really want a response from me? At first I thought you did, but when you continue to interrupt I get the impression all you want is an audience. If so, just let me know and I’ll listen. But if you want an answer, you’ll have to give me time to respond. Tell

me what you want. I need to know before I can continue.”
[Wait for response.]

Step three: Leave them; there’s no point at this time; look and pray for other opportunities. God is in control, not you.

- [Walk away]
- Announce that he may have the last word. It gives off an air of confidence and shows more character than always wanting to one up.

Argument: Scholar

Often you are confronted with articles or interviews that professors or professionals give. Here are some questions:

- Is the professor/professional commenting on an area for which they are qualified?
- Does the article or interview present an *opinion* or an *argument*? Does the article give sufficient grounding for its conclusion, or does it rest upon the source’s reputation? Is there evidence they can present?

Often the conclusion draws on presumptions and doesn’t let the evidence speak for itself. Or there may be materialistic naturalism biases. Examples:

- “The Gospel of Matthew must be written after 70 AD because Jesus predicts the temple’s destruction.” This would be true if we assume miracles are impossible.
- “Evolution proves that a creator cannot be involved in creation.” This only works if we assume that the universe is a product of random chance.
- Recognize the difference between science as an observation methodology and science as an excuse for a materialist philosophy.

Argument: Addressing the Facts

Sometimes the factual claims simply aren’t correct. We must examine the merits of the claim.

Step 1: What is the claim? This can often be difficult.

Step 2: Is the claim(s) factually accurate? Investigate where necessary. State with *precision*; the point becomes much more convincing. This may require some memorization. Here are some examples:

“The Founding Fathers are not Christians, but deists.”

1. Claim: Founding Fathers are deist, not Christian.
2. Accuracy: False.
3. Facts: 93% of Founding Fathers (those who framed the constitution, technically speaking) were what we would call evangelical, in that 51 of 55 were members of churches for whose membership required “sworn adherence to strict doctrinal creed.” Only three (Williamson, Wilson, and Franklin) were deists.

“Pro-lifers have no right to oppose abortion unless they are willing to care for the children born to mothers in crisis pregnancies.”

1. Claim: Pro-lifers cannot demand all babies be born if they cannot take responsibility for those babies. This has an implicit claim that pro-lifers aren’t doing anything about crisis pregnancies.
2. Accuracy: False.
3. Facts: It does not follow that if someone objects to abortion as the killing of infants they should be obliged to take care of all survivors. And there are roughly 4,000 national and international pro-life service providers dedicated to the well being of mothers in crisis pregnancies who choose life for their children. There are more crisis pregnancy centers (2500 in 2013)⁵ in the USA than abortion clinics (1800 in 2013).

⁵ Belluck, Pam, “Pregnancy Centers Gain Influence in Anti-Abortion Arena.” New York Times, 4 Jan. 2013. Web. 09 Dec 2014.

Final thoughts

8 tips for sharing your faith:

1. Be ready – constant vigilance for opportunities to share Christ
2. Keep it simple – avoid controversial issues, focus on the Gospel alone
3. Avoid Religious language:

Don't Use

- Saved
- Blessed
- The Word of God
- Receive Christ
- Believing Jesus as Lord and Savior
- Going to hell

Do Use

- Trust (rather than faith in)
 - Follower of Jesus (rather than Christian)
 - Quote “Jesus of Nazareth” (rather than “the Bible”)
4. Focus on the truth of Christianity, not merely its personal benefits
 5. Give reasons
 6. Stay calm
 7. Let them go if they want to leave
 8. Don't leave them empty handed. Give them a website, means of contacting you, a Gospel of John, etc.

“A commitment to truth – as opposed to a commitment to an organization – means an openness to refining one’s own views. It means increasing the accuracy of one’s understanding and being open to correction in thinking. A challenger might turn out to be a blessing in disguise, an ally instead of an enemy.”⁶ Take the time to prepare. Study, rehearse with a friend, and then talk to friends that don’t know Jesus Christ; they need to know Him sooner than later.

⁶ Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 197.

The Ambassador's Creed⁷

An ambassador is...

- **Ready.** An ambassador is alert for chances to represent Christ and will not back away from a challenge or an opportunity.
- **Patient.** An ambassador won't quarrel, but will listen in order to understand, then with gentleness will seek to respectfully engage those who disagree.
- **Reasonable.** An ambassador has informed convictions (not just feelings), gives reasons, asks questions, aggressively seeks answers, and will not be stumped by the same challenge twice.
- **Tactical.** An ambassador adapts to each unique person and situation, maneuvering with wisdom to challenge bad thinking, presenting the truth in an understandable and compelling way.
- **Clear.** An ambassador is careful with language and will not rely on Christian lingo nor gain unfair advantage by resorting to empty rhetoric.
- **Fair.** An ambassador is sympathetic and understanding toward others and will acknowledge the merits of contrary views.
- **Honest.** An ambassador is careful with the facts and will not misrepresent another's view, overstate his own case, or understate the demands of the gospel.
- **Humble.** An ambassador is provisional in his claims, knowing that his understanding of truth is fallible. He will not press a point beyond what his evidence allows.
- **Attractive.** An ambassador will act with grace, kindness, and good manners. He will not dishonor Christ in his conduct.
- **Dependent.** An ambassador knows that effectiveness requires joining his best efforts with God's power.

⁷ Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 199-200.

II. COLLEGE LIFESTYLE & A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Introduction

Keeping in mind the principles outlined in Section I, we move on to the task of preparing personal and scripturally-founded responses to questions of lifestyle and morality. Often it is questions like the ones in this section that lead to fruitful conversation with roommates, teammates, classmates, and new acquaintances. Each of these questions are ones that you will likely face early in your college career.

The questions require careful introspection and preparation. Remember that the goal of this section is not only to think about your answers to these questions, but also that you would actually prepare yourself to give a bold, biblically-based, God-honoring response. Use the blank pages at the end of each section to formulate your written response. We also encourage you to practice answering the questions with a group before you go to school. Group discussions and mock conversations can serve as effective “dress rehearsals.” This practice is important because it prepares us to speak boldly (a task that is easier said than done in hostile environments). It is also a good idea to prepare both brief and more complete responses to each prompt so that you can respond appropriately according to the situation.

This section is driven by our desire to respond to Peter’s charge in “... honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15 ESV).

This section should do just that: prepare us to share. While working through this section try to think of answers that are true for *you*, rather than a spoon-fed response that sounds token and insincere. Keep in mind that when someone asks one of these questions, they have given you an opportunity to share your spiritual convictions—we would be foolish to waste this opportunity.

Alcohol & Drugs

Why don't you drink? Is it religious, or —?

Why don't you like weed?

Relevant Scriptures:

- “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” **1 Timothy 5:23**
- “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” **Ephesians 5:18**
- “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” **Romans 13:1-2**
- “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” **2 Corinthians 7:1**
- “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” **Galatians 5:19-21**
- **While there are not** any explicit passages dealing with drugs. passages related to alcohol often will set a clear precedent in the use of drugs

Introspection Questions:

- Does anyone in your family or friends drink or use drugs responsibly? Does anyone drink or use drugs destructively?
- What was the most impressionable experience you have ever had with alcohol or drugs?
- How would you characterize your friends when drunk or high? How would you characterize yourself (if applicable)?

Personal Response:

- a. Describe your personal attitude towards drinking and drugs.
- b. Include examples you've seen with friends and family.
- c. Consider both secular and spiritual reasons for refraining from these activities.
- d. Compile your thoughts in a concise response.

-Notes-

Sexuality and Relationships

Why don't you hookup with people? Why don't you sleep with your boyfriend/girlfriend? Why are you so picky about who you go for?

Relevant Scriptures:

- “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your Body” **1 Corinthians 6:18-20**
- “I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases...for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord” **Song of Solomon 8:6**
- “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” **Genesis 1:27**
- Note: The loving relationship of a man and a woman together reflects certain attributes of God. This is something that a non-Christian will not understand.

Introspection Questions:

- a. How would you characterize the state of romance in American/Western culture today? How do you think others would characterize it?
- b. What have been the emotional/spiritual/psychological effects of physically intimate relationships you have personally observed? Or have experienced (if applicable)?
- c. What do you see that is different about the Christian marriages you know, and what attracts you to them?
- d. How many homosexual couples have you known well? How have they struck you?

Personal Response:

- a. Explain what you see as the purpose of dating/sexual relationships and the drawbacks of premarital sex.
- b. Describe how you would like to conduct any romantic relationships you are in and why.
- c. As needed, relate how your feelings about homosexual relationships (see section *III_Homosexuality*).
- d. Develop a response that explains God's design for dating.

-Notes-

Moral Conduct (generally)

Why don't you cut corners in class? Why are you so nice?
Why do you care about green initiatives so much?

Scriptural Basis

- “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” **Matthew 5:16**
- “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” **1 Timothy 3:2, 7**

Introspection Questions:

- a. How did you see your ‘general acts of kindness/goodness’ change as you began to know Christ more?
- b. Would you draw a distinction between why you do nice things and why you *like* to do nice things? Explain.
- c. Do you ever find yourself competing in a subconscious niceness scale with non-Christians for credibility? How do you think this might affect your presentation of why you're “good?”

Personal Response:

- a. Think about what is your motivation for morality.
- b. Consider the benefits of your morality.
- c. How is your morality different from that driven by a secular worldview?
- d. Explain why you strive to do good, be nice, or otherwise upstanding in things.

-Notes-

Why are you a Christian?

When did you become a Christian? Have you always gone to church?
Were you raised Christian? How did you become so religious?

Scriptural Basis

- “In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscious.” **1 Peter 3:15-16**

Introspection Questions:

- List the most important factors involved in your giving your life to Christ.
- Consider the difference between the questions “Why did you become a Christian” and “Why are you a Christian.” In other words “Why have you continued being a Christian, and how have your reasons for trusting in God progressed and/or shifted since your initial conversion?
- List 3 specific overarching themes as to how being a Christian changes the way you live.

Personal Response:

- a. Explain why you became a Christian, why you remain a practicing Christian, and how being a Christian changes the way you live.
- b. Was there a moment or season when you had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ?
- c. Explain the internal process of giving up your life to Christ.
- d. Labor to create a concise testimony of God’s grace in your life that highlights God’s work in your heart and God’s transformation of your affections.
- e. Practice sharing a quick (1-2 minutes) testimony and a more complete (5-7 minutes) version.

-Notes-

Key Points in Sharing the Gospel

So what exactly do you believe?

Personal Response:

Write and practice sharing an explanation of what you believe concerning the following topics. Where you think necessary, include Biblical references:

- a. The backstory of who God is and who we are
 - Nature of God
 - Creation
 - Man
- b. What went wrong and its effects
 - Effects
 - Guilt
 - Inescapability
- c. God's intervention
 - Jesus
 - Effects
- d. What it means now
 - Where the world is going
 - What you base your life on, and to what extent

Included is an example of what one Gospel description might look like. It is only an example. Write for as long as you like, **but be sure to collapse it into a 5-minute response.**

Example:

Backstory: who God is, who we are.

- There is one unique God (Isaiah 43:10-11), who has existed eternally, independently, and perfectly joyful in community with Himself: simultaneously a single entity and a community in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:14). He is good, loving, beautiful, and perfect.
- This God created all that there is, including us, to glorify Himself.
- Uniquely made in the image of God, man has inherent dignity, moral agency, and responsibility to take care of the earth and its inhabitants. Our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- Initially, man and God were in loving and joyful community with each other, man fulfilling his purpose and God caring for and loving man.

What went wrong

- Man turned away from his purpose of enjoying and glorifying God. This decision set into action a pattern of corruption that would go on to poison himself, his descendants, and all the creation. Death, pain, sickness, hunger, hate, racism, injustice, meaninglessness, and all forms of wrongness are symptoms of this rebellion, called Sin. The curse of sin was so strong and pervasive that it inevitably condemned all humanity. Our condemnation is just because all of us individually do wrong and “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
- Man became so corrupted that the restoration of our proper relationship with God was impossible without the intervention of God himself. (Matthew 19:25-26)

God’s intervention

- God, unwilling to allow humanity to eternally suffer through its self-inflicted consequences, but also unwilling to compromise his absolute holiness, set a plan into action to reconcile humanity back to Himself.
- Through the Israelites, God sent down revelations authored by His Holy Spirit and written by men. This revelation was given to demonstrate (1) the depth to which humanity has fallen from the greatness of God and our inability to truly act rightly, and (2) that a perfect Savior must come to rescue humanity from the corruption we have created.
- For His own love and mercy, God Himself came down to be that Savior because He is the only being that could be perfect enough to turn the tide of evil to God’s Glory (John 3:16). Breaking the

community and joy that had been for eternity, one of the community of God came to earth as Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and lived a perfect life to die for all the sin we had, and would ever commit: taking the punishment we deserve.

- After three days of undeserved death, wrath, and separation from the Father and Spirit, Jesus rose from the dead as a conquering king and ascended to the Father. This action fulfilled the prophecies written in the Scriptures, and paved the way for the Holy Spirit to indwell humanity.

Where we are now

- Since Jesus took the punishment we deserve, the Spirit of God has been able to inhabit those who trust in Jesus without compromising His holiness. This is the beginning of the coming Kingdom of God, where we will enjoy everlasting life fully in community with God.
- As a citizen of the Kingdom of God, I seek to proclaim the Good News of God's victory over evil through Jesus Christ "to all creation" (Mark 16:15). This means joining in God's work of renewing creation by fighting against injustice, corruption, disease, the abuse of creation, and evil. Most of all I seek to show the rest of humanity the love of God and to help bring them into community with the King. As a proclamation to the very nature of reality, this Good News lays claim to every dimension of my life.
- However, just as the Kingdom of God is growing, so also is the kingdom of Sin still destroying. While the Spirit supernaturally brings about increasing expressions of life throughout the world, so also does the natural current of sin continue to bring about death and self-destruction in the world. Both of these kingdoms will continue their work with increasing intensity until that day when the kingdom of sin reaches its natural conclusion: absolute implosion, and the subsequent glorious age when the Kingdom of God reaches its consummation: joyous fellowship with God.
- Until that time, as I have been born naturally into the kingdom of sin and supernaturally into the Kingdom of God, I will (to some extent) continue to partake in both. In an attempt to become as much a citizen of God's Kingdom as possible, I will work to guide my life by the Spirit of God and His Words, the Bible, which has acted as the authoritative means of God's revelation to man for the last four thousand years.

-Notes (1)-

-Notes (2)-

Developing a Christian Worldview

What is it?: Though everyone has a different way of viewing the world, there are few people who really have a coherent worldview. Everyone has a way, or lens, by which he or she sees the world. It is constructed by a number of different things, and it varies a great deal for each person. This worldview guides how we see and experience the world.

As Christians, it is important that we develop and are able to explain a Christian worldview. This exercise pushes us to understand how our Faith fits into the world around us. The process also challenges us to concisely state profound truths about reality, and the repetition and development force us to reduce complex ideas into practical truths about life that we can fully understand and explain. Furthermore, it can be extremely peace-giving to cultivate a systematic understanding of Christianity that drives out uncertainty.

What does a worldview consist of?: Every worldview must address 4 topics: **Origin, Meaning, Morality, and Final Destiny**. In order to make sense, it must be *internally cogent* (each of these 4 points must sync up with and support the others) and *externally cohesive* (the whole must connect reasonably with reality). Effectively, a good worldview should be the foundation for belief and lens through which a person sees reality.

Personal Response:

Outline and practice explaining a complete Christian worldview. Use the **four points** as guidelines and be sure to fully explain each.

Further Resources:

For those seeking a more full sense of the Christian Worldview, perhaps the best resource is *The Westminster Confession of Faith with Proofs from Scripture*. One can buy it at the Banner of Truth Trust or online. It is a timeless classic concerning what Christians believe, and it is a great resource to have when explaining the faith because of its numerous, categorized scripture references.

An example of a Christian worldview delivered in a lecture to members of the Rice University Brown College by Jeremiah Morris is provided on the following page.

Christian Worldview

Origin—obviously our origin is in God; A creative, purposeful God who created everything. This is where we find our rootedness. We have a creative God who cares about such things as beauty. God created beauty to represent his character. This origin story also makes sense of human dignity and value.

We have an intentional, creative God and not blind chaos plus time. One of the biggest issues for an atheist is the naturalist worldview (see Appendix III: *Naturalism*; p. 83). A worldview without a belief in a creator is extremely problematic. When we peel all of the layers back, what was the first cause (as Aristotle would call it the “unmoved mover”)? We get all the way back until we say that matter had to come from not matter, consciousness had to come from non consciousness, meaning had to emerge from non-meaning. The creator God is the essential keystone of the Christian worldview.

Meaning—which I have already started to comment on. We find meaning in the fact that God has created us for relationship with Himself. The Christian would say that we have an incredible meaning through being created in the image of God and invited into relationship with God through the redeeming work of Jesus such that we explore and live into our meaning to the degree that we are participating in the redemption of Gods creation through the work of Jesus in this world.

Morality emerges from the fact that we have been created in the image of God, that he has revealed himself through his written word, and has told us what we’re called to. We can speak meaningfully about morality since there are universal truths that we can talk about and point to. The struggle when we extract a Christian God from the system, is that morality becomes very difficult to talk about. Morality ends up subjective. That is to say that you end up just determining what you think is moral. It becomes very difficult for you to speak into the morality of the person sitting to your right and to your left.

Finally destiny—The Christian worldview provides a view of destiny that is logically in step with everything else. It coheres to reality as we engage it. If evolution is all that there is, why have we still not come to terms with death? Why does humanity long for something more? I believe that those found in Christ will spend eternity with God in heaven and experience in my life has shown me that there must be more to life than just this earth.

-Notes-

III. APOLOGETICS: COMMON QUESTIONS

A General Word on Apologetics: Key Points

Here we move on to the topic of engaging the community intellectually. At certain schools with more “academic” reputations these tools will likely prove more useful. However, remember that it is wise for any Christian to examine apologetic arguments, whether it is for intellectual refinement or encouragement. We will discuss the purpose of apologetics as well as specific questions that often call for further thought and attention. When discussing apologetic arguments for the Faith, we must always keep in mind the principles outlined in section I because these discussions often inspire more heated debate.

- “Ground-clearing, not cultivating” –The practice of apologetics is really no more than a ground-clearing process. Apologetics clear the ground of cultural barriers, assumptions, and “defeater beliefs.”⁸ They clear so that the seed of the Gospel has room to be planted and eventually grown to fruition. They are not the Gospel itself, and they certainly don’t cultivate the Gospel. Never fall into the trap of thinking that you can argue someone into genuine faith. Instead, you are partnering with the Spirit to remove hindrances so that the process of garnering genuine faith can begin, or, as Koukl puts it, you are “putting a rock in the shoe” to promote further thinking.
- The primacy of a genuine spirit – No one wants to discuss with a peer who has all the ‘answers’ and merely needs to enlighten you through carefully calculated conversations.
- Timothy Keller notes that we must state the objection against the faith as strongly as possible. Despite the fact that many Christian circles underemphasize them, these objections are very difficult and legitimate. I would even say that we ought to study the objection as much as its response. Stating the problem as powerfully as possible helps your friend realize that you really do care about and relate with the problem: gaining their trust and respect. It also helps you to address all of the objection’s facets and gravity better. The goal here is to reach a point of stating the problem such that the questioner thinks to themselves, “I couldn’t have said it better myself.” Don’t be afraid to really chronicle how you worked through this question yourself in a very legitimate

⁸ Keller, Timothy. DECONSTRUCTING DEFEATER BELIEFS: Leading the Secular to Christ. New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2004. PDF.

way: most of us have grappled with some of these questions on some level at some point.

- In my own experience, I also like to share with others why apologetics are important to me: almost a personal response as to why I should be well versed in apologetics. I think this makes the conversation more genuine on all sides because others are more in tune with your motives. I always break out 1 Corinthians 15:17&19 (“*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins...If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied*”) to point out that the factual realities of the Gospel are of the utmost importance to faith. Even the Bible states that if our faith is not true, our actions are futile and pitiful. I also talk about the role of apologetics in my clearly seeing Christ. Usually, I finish by saying that I like apologetics for myself because they help me to find out more about Christ and His plan. My favorite questions are those that stump me, because it forces me to discover more about God; despite how initially defeating it may seem, answering them always turns out to be a great edifying process.

A bibliographical note: Almost all this section and the majority of short responses are come from Tim Keller’s 2004 article “DECONSTRUCTING DEFEATER BELIEFS: Leading the Secular to Christ.”⁹ With the exception of the Homosexuality section, the sections have largely been paraphrases of Keller’s responses in the articles, with some minor tweaks. A simple Google search can provide several of these sources.

Further Resources: While this is a start, all of these topics are expansive, and still debated. For these and any other questions of the faith, there are some general resources that ought to be known. The first resource is Tim Keller’s *The Reason for God*. The next key name to know is Ravi Zacharias, who runs an extensive apologetics ministry. Most major questions have responses on his podcasts *Let my People Think* and *Just thinking*. You can also find him on YouTube. More resources can be found on his website, www.rzim.org. Finally, other classic books on apologetics are by Lee Strobel: *The Case for Christ* and *The Case for Faith*. Strobel was a professional journalist before his conversion, and for this reason, these two books are very well researched and written. Between these three resources (written, audio,

⁹ Keller, Tim. DECONSTRUCTING DEFEATER BELIEFS: Leading the Secular to Christ. New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2004. PDF.

and video formats) you will find solid answers to almost anything that comes up.

Exclusivity

*How could your truth claim be greater than another?
Surely all religions are merely different paths to the same destination.*

Among the most common reasons for asserting that there cannot be one true religion are the following: (1) All religions are equally valuable and generally preach the same values, (2) Each religion sees part of Spiritual Truth, but no one can see the truth completely, (3) All religious belief is a product of our culture, and therefore none really teach Truth, (4) It is arrogant to assert that your religion is right and others are wrong. Each of these arguments warrants a distinct response, but all are easily refuted.

Before we deal with each of these arguments, it is important to state clearly that the notion that all religions teach the same things cannot be true. For instance, although the three largest religions in the world (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have incredibly vast areas of agreement including the sinful nature of man, the creation story, God's system of sacrificial atonement, and the validity of much of the Old Testament narrative, they differ irreconcilably on essential doctrines about worship, salvation, and eternal life. The most critical points of disagreement are their sense of the life, person, and mission of Jesus Christ. Christianity alone asserts that Jesus is fully divine. This doctrine is essential to the Christian system of atonement and a full understanding of God's provision for human salvation. Judaism and Islam do not worship a God that sent his Son as a sacrifice. This is an incredibly significant point of disagreement.

The assertion that all religions teach the same values and are therefore equally valuable is similarly misguided. Usually people who argue this point do not contend that each religion agrees on everything. Rather, they note that their points of difference are negligible because they preach basically the same values. It is true that most religions generally promote generosity, honesty, and love, but to say that all religions are the same based solely on their promotion of the same virtues is shortsighted. People who make this argument fail to see that the promotion of virtues is a result of doctrine. Agreement on virtues, if the virtues are encouraged with different driving motivations and for different ends, is only nominal agreement. In fact, the REASON for virtue is more important than the PRACTICE of virtue. (We know this intuitively: a virtuous act committed for malicious reasons is never praised. Only when virtuous acts are inspired by virtuous affections do we consider them praiseworthy. Similarly, a gift given out of compulsion is not as well received as one out of love.) Religions that agree only on the idea that people should be virtuous cannot accurately be called similar.

All that to say, it is not true that all religions are similar. Now, let us turn to the discussion of the particular points concerning the search for Truth. For each of the justifications that there cannot be just one true religion, there is a similar answer. We must look closely at the real idea behind what each of them says, and it will then be easy to point out that *all of these claims self-destruct*.

The first claim (all religions are the same because of the virtues that they preach) essentially boils down to be a declaration that doctrinal differences are insignificant. This statement is self-defeating. To say that doctrine does not matter is itself a statement of doctrine. People who make this claim do not assert that no doctrine matters, rather they contend that their doctrine is the only important one.

Similarly, the arguments (2) and (3) both are self-defeating when we properly examine the underlying idea and we ask the right questions. In case (2) (those that say that each religion sees a part of truth but no one can have complete understanding), it is important to see that the promoter of this idea is exempting himself from his own rule. In order to assert this broad doctrinal statement about the nature of Truth, the speaker would have to have complete understanding of said nature in order to know of the inability of all religions to understand Truth. He is implicitly claiming a complete understanding of Truth. Clearly this idea contradicts itself.

Case 3 (all truth is a product of culture; we cannot know which religion is True because our knowledge of religious truth comes as result of the society in which we develop our beliefs) works exactly the same way. To this person we must ask, "how do you know?" The speaker of this statement once again is promoting an absolute while saying that humans cannot be sure of any absolute truths because of cultural conditioning. Implicit in this argument is the speaker's ability to step outside of the cultural conditioning they contend is inescapable. The argument self-destructs.

It is important that Christians not let people who make these claims call us arrogant for asserting that we have found the Truth (4). Often, those with whom we debate will declare that by asserting that our belief system is correct we are being exclusive and hateful to other people. This accusation is hypocritical. In reality, to say that it is wrong for believers to promote their religious beliefs is itself a statement of doctrine. The speaker of this statement is doing the very thing that he condemns. While on one hand he says that it is arrogant to say that other doctrines are wrong, on the other hand he is telling Christians that the practice of evangelism (essential to the Christian faith) is wrong. His logic condemns itself.

For most of these arguments, it is easy to see that the speakers have made fatal errors in logic; we must simply look at the ideas that govern their assertions and ask the right questions with kindness and sincerity.

Relevant Scriptures:

- “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jesus speaking) **John 14:6**
- The Bible claims universality to the message of the gospel (as opposed to being a partial or culturally relevant revelation)
- “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Jesus speaking) **Luke 24:46-47**
- “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal to him” (Jesus speaking) **Matthew 11:27**

Short Answer:

Inclusivism/relativism is really a form of exclusivity in disguise. To claim that all religious systems are equally valid is only plausible in two situations: (1) God is a broad, impersonal force whose specifics don't matter or (2) God does not exist, and therefore all religions are equally misguided (though that would admittedly favor atheism). The claim, then, already assumes God's attributes in a way that excludes many religious traditions. Why should such a claim be privileged above other traditions?

Further Resources:

- For studying the uniqueness of Jesus, see *Jesus among other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias

Suffering

How could a 'good' God be compatible with so much suffering?

One of the most common questions posed by debaters is “*How could a 'good' God be compatible with so much suffering and evil?*” The problem here is that in this statement the speaker sets up a false dichotomy. The situation is presented in such a way that it implies that EITHER God is all-powerful, but not good enough to stop suffering, OR God is all good, but not powerful enough to stop suffering. Phrased this way, the question is impossible to answer without abandoning Christian doctrine. The truth that the Bible tells us is that God is BOTH all-powerful AND perfectly good.

Before we begin to discuss God’s allowing suffering and evil in the world, it is important to determine a proper definition of evil. Evil can be defined as any violation of the moral order that naturally exists in our world. However, to have a natural moral law, there must be a moral law-giver; there must be a measuring stick for morality. This law-giver cannot be society, because societies have a changing sense of right and wrong, and in our practical application of morality we know that morality transcends society (we use our sense of morality to judge the actions of people in other nations). In fact, in order for a moral law to exist naturally on earth, there would have to be a law-giver that exists outside of nature. Natural moral law, by definition, could not have been a product of nature itself. Furthermore, the ‘source’ of this moral law would have to have a perfect measuring stick with which to found morality. Therefore, because this ‘being’ necessarily existed before any natural standard for morality, it follows that there must be a ‘being’ that is itself the perfect measuring stick for morality and that exists outside of nature. This, no doubt, is evidence of a supernatural, wholly good God. Interestingly, we see that the existence of evil and suffering can be the most powerful apologetic tool to show that there must be a God.

Still, we must also give a specifically Christian response to the question. It is one that non-believers as well as Christians must grapple with, and it does not have a simple answer. The fact is that in the midst of suffering it is hard to see that any benefit could come from our heartache. But, the Bible clearly shows us that God often uses suffering for good. In the book of Genesis, the story of Joseph gives us hope that even in suffering God has a sovereign plan. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers and unjustly imprisoned, yet God’s sovereign plan worked toward saving a nation from famine, reconciliation with his family, and the start of God’s nation of Israel. From the very start of His word, God teaches us that even in the worst of circumstances He is in control.

Even so, it can be hard to see God's plan when our perception is clouded by pain. The truth is we live in a fallen world, and things will happen to us in our world that we cannot understand. But, we know this: if God is great and transcendent enough that we can be upset with Him for allowing suffering, then he must also be great and transcendent enough that He could work through suffering in a way that surpasses our ability to understand. At times it can be hard to see why God refrains from allowing us to see the whole picture and understand the good that comes from suffering, but Christianity is the only system that teaches us how to effectively *deal* with suffering. The Gospel is exactly that; a system with which we can overcome the woes of this world through the knowledge that Christ has overcome the world.

In fact, *all that we need to know about suffering can be learned from honest study of the life of Christ*. When we ask ourselves why God would allow us to suffer, we should first look to Christ. Jesus' descent to earth, life as a human, and death on the cross show us that God uses suffering as a means to accomplish His ends. In order to see why God would let us go through suffering, we must first grasp that God allowed His Son to suffer more than any human being: *the culminating act of all of history was also the greatest act of suffering in history*. This gives us assurance that God is sovereign and working in the midst of suffering and pain.

Furthermore, because God Himself, in the form of Jesus Christ, suffered, it follows that suffering cannot be in vain. God would not have sent His son to experience the anguish of the cross without purpose. In fact, we know that Jesus' death on the cross was absolutely necessary for the salvation of God's people. Our salvation was bought with the most profound act of humiliation, injustice, anguish, and suffering of all time. His death, destruction, humiliation, and emotional and spiritual pain, all for our rescue was the greatest good formed from the greatest tragedy.

Finally, the life of Jesus allows us to be encouraged by the knowledge that God understands our suffering. First, the fact that Christ existed as a man means that he dealt with common struggles that we endure daily (hunger, thirst, fatigue). But, we also know that there were times when Jesus experienced great emotional anguish (the death of Lazarus, the cleansing of the Temple, the Garden of Gethsemane). This is unique to Christianity. The Christian God is the only one that suffers for the suffering of His people. By this we know that God loves us, and that He desires to relieve us of our suffering: that he would endure the cross in order to deliver us from eternal suffering. When we become discouraged by the pains of this world we can rely on the reality that Jesus' suffering has saved us from the far greater suffering, and that the anguish of this world will pass.

Looking to Jesus' work on earth we can be encouraged of these four truths: God is sovereign in our suffering, God often accomplishes His goals through our suffering, God understands our suffering, God loves us and desires to relieve us of our suffering.

Relevant Scriptures:

- “For I consider that the suffering of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” –**Romans 8:18-22**

Short Answer:

If God suffers too, our suffering can't ultimately be senseless. Suppose you have a God great and transcendent enough to be angry with for allowing suffering. Then, he must *also* be great and transcendent enough to allow suffering for a reason that you cannot understand. **On the cross, the Christian God demonstrates that suffering has some greater purpose, and that He understands and desires to relive us of our suffering.** If these weren't the case, he wouldn't choose to suffer with us. Christ is the only God who suffers for our suffering.

Further Resources:

- A denser book, *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis is a classic on the issue. Lewis himself was an atheist because of the issue of suffering and became a Christian for the philosophical problems with holding such as position against God.

The Church & Injustice

*The Church has been the cause of much injustice in history.
How could this be reconcilable with Christianity?*

There are actually two main issues contained in this discussion. People who use this argument can be turned off from the church for a number of reasons: (1) Individual Christians in the church have made some significant moral mistakes, and it is often the case that non-believers live to a higher moral standard; (2) Christianity, among other religions, has routinely been the justification for violence.

Taken point by point, this argument is less daunting. The notion (1) that Christianity is devalued by adherents who exhibit moral shortcomings is misguided. To judge all Christians based on the actions of a few is the definition of stereotyping. This reason for disbelief in Christianity is thinly veiled bigotry. Furthermore, the Bible never promises that those who adhere to its teachings will be morally upright or sinless. In fact it assures us of just the opposite. The church therefore “should not be viewed as a museum of saints, but a hospital for sinners” (Timothy Keller). Christians, more than any others, should readily admit their sinful nature.

To round out this point, it’s important to note that Jesus’ main opponents were the pompous, religious hypocrites of the day—the Pharisees and scribes. It only makes sense that in following Christ we should grow to share his distaste with hypocrites. We therefore should agree with those who say that there are too many hypocrites in the church.

Also, It is true that the followers of Christianity have committed some injustices, but acts of immorality are not limited to Christianity. Therefore, a person cannot rightly discard Christianity on this basis. Sin is not a result of religion, but rather a reality that pervades all of human existence. So, the blame for sin does not fall on Christianity, but rather on human nature.

Still, it is true that, over the centuries, many people have misinterpreted words of scripture or warped the Bible’s message to fit their own agenda. But, no religion or religious text is excused from this very problem. This is not a Christian issue, nor can one fault the Bible or the Christian faith for the failings of its followers.

Similarly, the point that (2) the Church is not trustworthy due to its violent past is also too general. It is true that the needs of the Church and the Bible have been used to justify war, but the notion that religion has been the source of violence in any political regime independent of power struggles and political problems is a myth. The fact is, in the 20th century alone non-religious, anti-religious, secular, or atheist regimes (including those of Hitler, Pol-Pot, and Stalin) have killed more people

than all religious governments in all previous centuries combined. Because both religious and non-religious nations are prone to violence, we can “only conclude that there is some violent impulse so deeply rooted in the human heart that it expresses itself whether socialist or capitalist, whether religious or irreligious, whether individualistic or hierarchical” (Tim Keller). Nations have always been at war. To blame any one cause for all violence is narrow-minded.

While both of these points are often raised in opposition to Christianity, it would be wise for us to turn the question to “what good has Christianity done?” While society is quick to point the finger at the moral failures of the religious, we are often too slow to celebrate the moral victories of the Faith. It was Christians in America that put an end to slavery; it is Christians today still leading organizations like IJM to set captives free all over the world. In the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s, it was Christians like Martin Luther King, Jr. that led movements against hate and racism. When faced with opposition from other Christians who were misinterpreting the Bible, MLK knew that the antidote to racism was not less Christianity, but deeper Christianity. He called those who had misinterpreted the text to turn toward their true Christian convictions, not away from them. Ultimately it was the rightly interpreted message of Christianity that put an end to overt racism and hate. Though some say that religion causes isolation and condemnation, MLK showed us that true Christianity can be a light to a dark world.

Relevant Scriptures:

- “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate” **1 John 1:8-2:1**

Short Answer:

The solution to injustice in the Church is not less, but deeper Christianity. There is no doubt that the church has caused great injustice. Such is the destination of any large ideology. However, Christianity provides more of a basis for self critique than perhaps any other religion or ideology. The group Jesus was most critical of were the religious authorities of his day; the doctrine of original sin suggests that we as humans will tend towards injustice without God’s intervention, even after we become Christians. When such injustice was the case in many white churches, Martin Luther King, Jr. did not call on the Christians to loosen their Christian convictions, but argued *from the Bible* to adopt a deeper, truer Christianity.

Further Resources:

- In terms of violence (esp. state) William Cavanaugh seems to make a compelling argument in *The Myth of Religious Violence* that even the religious-political dichotomy in societies is modern, Western invention, and to pin down 'religion' as the source of violence independent of power balances in any political regime is incoherent. This would help to explain why secular regimes have inflicted so much violence on religious individuals and societies at large in the 20th century. Considering the anti-religious regimes of Stalin, Hitler, Pol-Pot, etc., secular or atheist regimes have killed more people in the 20th century than religious regimes have in all previous centuries, largely based on their 'non-religious' ideologies.
- Consider looking into the stories of Martin Luther King, Jr., William Wilberforce, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer for examples of how deeper Christianity has been one of the greatest historical forces for justice. Also look at biographies done by Eric Metaxas.

Hell

*How could a loving God send people to hell?
What about those who haven't heard?*

Some people are turned off by the Christian doctrine of Hell saying, “*How could a loving God send people to hell? What about those who haven't heard?*” First of all, this objection to the Faith is telling about modernity and our society. In ancient times, there was a common understanding that there was a natural moral order in the world. In our current culture we have tried to reverse this in an attempt to alter reality to fit our desires. But, should it surprise us that an overarching truth of God would contradict a cultural shift such as this? And if the rule of God were to contradict our culture's chosen view of reality, wouldn't divine judgment be a likely point of contention?

This seems like a hard question to answer because they pose the question in a way that dichotomizes God's character. They propose that God is EITHER a God of judgment, OR a God of love. This is a false dichotomy; The Bible tells us that we have a God of BOTH love AND judgment.

On the other hand, society tells us that God's love and justice are contradictory, but this cannot be true. God's judgment is necessary for us to live a life full of love and forgiveness. If we were unable to count on God to be just, we would take matters in to our own hands. On top of that, the doctrine of God's final judgment is necessary to undergird Christian practices of love and peacemaking. Without a God who makes right the wrongs of this world, what hope is there? If ultimately there is no supreme judge to bring justice, then the injustice of this world will run rampant without penalty.

As Christians, before we let non-believers say that our God is un-loving for sending people to hell, we must ask how they would have it differently. In reality, we find that human beings are often glad to accept the idea that there would be a place of final judgment for those who have wronged us. On some levels, it is humans, not God, who want persons to go to hell. We want justice for Hitler and Osama Bin Laden, and we feel that a world without judgment for deeds like THAT would be a cruel and senseless one.

Contrastingly, God has no pleasure in sending people to hell. We know with certainty that the God of the Bible must be a loving God. The God we worship is a God of infinite love who is grieved by the fact that His people continually rebel against Him. The Bible tells us that He desires that we would follow Him wholeheartedly and be eternally adopted into His loving family. He offers graceful forgiveness for all those that turn to Him. In fact, the Christian God would literally die to keep us from hell. Indeed he already has. While other religions share

the idea of hell, Christianity is the only one that tells the story of God's self sacrifice. This is the ultimate act of love in order to save His people from eternity in hell.

Actually, the very idea of a purely loving God originated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. There is no evidence for a God of pure love in the natural order, historical, or religious textual support outside of Christianity. You can't find it in the major religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, or Judaism. Only the Bible says that God created the world out of love and delight rather than struggles and violent battles of opposing gods and supernatural forces.

By these few points we see that God is necessarily both perfectly loving and perfectly just. Finally, *the best image of a God of love and justice is the Cross of Christ*. We see in the Cross God's divine judgment, exacting full punishment for our sins, as well as his prevailing love.

Furthermore, the Bible shows that those in hell arrive there as a product of their own desires. Hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory for infinity. On earth we see people living in constant rebellion of God, unwilling and unable out of habit to turn from their sin and be adopted into God's family.

Timothy Keller says, "If there is no justice, what hope is there for the world? If there is justice, what hope is there for us?" He sheds light on these two ideas: first, that we should praise God for His gift of justice; and second, that we should praise God for the gift of His Son, without which we are completely hopeless.

Finally, though we understand some people will land in hell, we should be spurred by this doctrine to go on mission. The conviction that hell is real should inspire in us a sense of urgency in regard to evangelism. Grieved by the reality of this final suffering for those not found in Christ, we should be roused to go and share His Gospel. (Matt 28:18-20)

Relevant Scriptures:

- "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'...and these will go away into eternal punishment" **Matthew 25:41,46**
- "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...God gave them up dishonorable passions" **Romans 1:18,26**

Short Answer:

On some levels, it is us who want people to go to hell, not God. We want justice for the likes of Hitler, Pol Pot, and Stalin. For such transgressions to go unpunished would mean a very cruel, senseless world. Secondly, Christians see the path to hell is always a product of our own desires: some people want it. If eternal life is simply to know God and be in relationship with God, that's something that many people don't want. It is also this God who so loves all humanity (including the Stalin's) that He suffered and died so that we could know Him. Clearly, then, God's love, heaven, and hell are all very different from what we intuitively think. The question is do we seek to understand these complexities to such a point that we can understand how the Scriptures say God is love.

Further Resources:

- For those who struggle with the concept of Hell and a punishing God, C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* is enlightening, spiritually edifying and pleasurable to read. This short novel considers what would happen if a bus of people from hell took a trip to heaven.

Science

Science/Evolution have both disproved and supplanted the need for a Christian faith. The two are incompatible.

Some will argue that *science is incompatible with Religion*. The assumption here is that science and Christianity are opposing forces. People who make this argument not only think that science and Christianity disagree, but also that science is correct and religion incorrect. They are saying that *science has supplanted the need for a Christian faith*.

First off, it's important to note that as Christians we believe that God is rational and created the world in a sensible, understandable way according to His nature. If science is the method by which we come to honestly understand our world, then it follows that science and faith should overlap. There will be detailed issues which science examines and Christianity never speaks to, but science and Christianity should agree on common issues. However, at times they appear to contradict each other. As Christians, because we believe in the infallibility of the Bible, we must assume that either the science was examined in error, or the two do not in reality contradict.

We do not have to look far to find plenty of examples of experiments that yielded a false result. Historically, there have been many experiments that were corrupted by scientists who set out to prove a biased opinion, or made broad conclusions from rather incoherent data. When settling divergent conclusions between science and religion, we must recognize the difference between science as an *observation methodology* and science as a *vehicle for a materialist philosophy*. Quite often the mistake lies in the motivation for the science that leads to misguided leaps of faith.

Also, it is often the case that while science is pitted against religion, the two do not actually disagree. Evolution is a classic example of this scenario. There are people who argue that *Evolution has disproved Christianity*, but in actuality there is an argument to be made against the validity of Evolution, and even if Evolution is accepted, the two can be reconciled (see *Further Resources* and *Appendix III: Biologos*; p. 89).

Generally, people who claim science over religion are not interested in hearing about the ways that science can go wrong, invalid assumptions being made, or looking for ways that apparent differences can be reconciled. There are many people for whom the problem is faith in general. They are reluctant to trust in anything that science has not proven. This is called Scientism, and it actually requires quite a bit of faith (details in *Appendix III: Scientism*; p. 82).

As Christians we must assert that Scripture is true and authoritative and therefore should agree with truths that we discover in the physical world. Science is not by definition at odds with Christianity. In fact, Science has been intertwined with religion since its founding. The founders of hundreds of fields of modern science were believers (See *Appendix III: Fields of Science; p. 87*). Christianity mandates a rational look at our world and a desire to understand it.

Relevant Scriptures:

- “And I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.” **Ecclesiastes 1:13-14**
- “God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” **Genesis 2:19**
- “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” **Romans 1:20**
- “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” **Psalms 19:1**

Short Answer:

Christianity is not at odds with, but mandates science. One of God’s first activities with man is to begin engaging him with taxonomy in Genesis. Ecclesiastes calls science the “business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.” Indeed the modern practice of science has evolved out of the Christian tradition. However, naturalism, the view that all things come from natural cause and effect and assumes the supernatural as impossible, is a philosophical, not scientific, position that is at odds with Christianity.

Thus, Christianity and evolution are not at odds with one another; only Christianity and naturalism. Due to the poetic and rhythmic nature of Genesis 1, many Christians throughout history (pre and post Darwin) have concluded a figurative reading of the chapter to convey God as the all power creator of everything, *not* a comment on the effective method by which he brought life about. Thus, the idea that you cannot believe in Christ and in evolution is simply false. The debate within Christian circles concerning evolution is certainly open, though both a literalist and figurative reading of Genesis are likely for those who take the Bible to be authoritative.

Further Resources:

- There exists a huge body of work on how Christianity and science relate. Indeed, perhaps too much. Furthermore, the apologetics go in a number of directions. I will attempt to categorize them as best I can. It also ought to be noted that it would be great to go into the many facets of these arguments, but there is simply too much.
- Specific to this argument, would be notable cases of Scientists who were also Christian, from early science up until today. Also turn to the appendix for a staggering list of all fields of science that were fathered by Christian scientists who sought to discover truths about God's universe. (See *Appendix III: Scientists*; p. 86)
- **That Christianity and Science are not opposed:** This is the argument presented here, and the line that Timothy Keller most often takes. The best and clearest description and dissemination of all the views and tensions one can have with evolution and also naturalism as distinct from naturalism can be accessed here: <http://biologos.org/blog/creation-evolution-and-christian-laypeople-part-1>.
- **That Naturalism is a self-destructive view:** this is a strong offensive argument put forth by Alfred Plantinga. The argument is technically known as Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism (EAAN) (See *Appendix III: Naturalism*; p. 84).
- One of the most popular arguments these days is an argument from physics which describes the unbelievably precise physical constants that would be necessary for life. There is a good chapter in it in Lee Strobel's *The Case for Faith*. It ought be added that this is less a compelling case to many as it rests on many conjectures and does not seem to have a succinct answer to the multiverse challenge to it.
- **The clearest arguments against evolution** are perhaps found in Lee Strobel's *The Case for Faith*. Koukl's website, Stand to Reason (str.org), also has a wealth of articles on the subject.
- Head of the Human Genome project Frances Collins wrote the definitive work on this in *The Language of God*, where he give **arguments both for evolution and the Bible's compatibility with it**. More resources can be found on <http://biologos.org/>.

The Bible

The Bible is dated, corrupted, and full of legends to start with anyways. Furthermore, much of it is offensive. Why would we trust it?

The prevailing scholarly view of the Bible is that it is, “*Dated, corrupted, and full of legends... much of it is offensive. Why should we trust it?*” People question the **historical** and **cultural** trustworthiness of the Bible. It is important that we as Christians defend the authority and validity of the Bible.

Modern scholars and historians concern themselves with the task of discovering the “Historical Jesus”. Common arguments against the **historical** validity of the Bible include: (1) the Gospels were oral traditions that are not trustworthy because whatever truth they contained was lost in the “telephone” process, (2) the Gospels were written to push the agenda of leaders of Christian communities after Jesus’ death, (3) the Council of Nicaea chose the books of the Bible in order to promote the doctrine that Jesus had been divine.

First, to address the first (1) point, we need only point to Susan Nidich, the world authority on oral tradition in the early centuries A.D. A professor at Amherst College, she dismisses the notion that important information was lost during a sort of “telephone game”. In reality, the carriers of the oral tradition took their job a bit more seriously (see *Appendix II: Has the Bible Changed Over Time; p. 71*). The men in charge of learning and passing on the oral tradition devoted their lives to the study of these stories and texts, and would not have embellished them with their own person touches. Nidich asserts that *we can be confident that our Bibles are essentially the same as the first manuscripts*.

Also, with careful examination it is clear that the argument (2) that teachings of Jesus were altered by leaders to manipulate citizens is unfounded. For the most part this argument falls apart because the stories in the New Testament were written while there still would have been living witnesses to the events described. Luke the Apostle and Disciple even wrote his book with eyewitness accounts as one of his main sources. Had the stories been fabricated, eyewitnesses would have been outspoken opponents of the early Christian documents. Authors of the New Testament chose to include references to real people who could validate their accounts. The New Testament is peppered with names of otherwise insignificant characters that are mentioned as sources for certification of the Gospel accounts. These eyewitnesses were willing to testify to the works and teachings that they had seen from Jesus.

Another clear reason why the Gospels could not have been altered to fit a political agenda is that the Gospel stories would have been

counter-productive. For example, had a political leader wanted to use Jesus as a lever to push his own message, he could have simply added a quote from Jesus that spoke to his particular issue. However, there are many issues that we know were controversial in the early church that Jesus never spoke clearly about (circumcision). The Gospels would not have been a useful political tool.

On top of that, there are many aspects of the Christian stories that would actually slow down the spread of the Gospels by making them *less* appealing. For instance, some of the main characters in the stories, the disciples, who became leaders of the Church after Jesus' death, are shown to be foolish, faithless, and ignorant. If the Apostles had not been telling the truth when they recorded the life of Jesus, they would not have included details that made them look bad. In the same vein, when relaying the truth about the resurrection of Jesus', the Gospels tell us that it was women that first saw that he had risen. In Jewish culture women were not allowed to testify in court; their testimonies were considered useless and unreliable. Were these stories fabricated, their authors would likely have said that the first people to see the empty tomb were men. Certainly, when we consider these facts it seems implausible that the stories of the New Testament were made-up.

Finally, the last argument that the biblical account of Jesus' life is historically accurate is the fact that in the early centuries A.D., there was no such thing as realistic fiction. The Gospels are written in a way that is completely different from contemporary fiction. While contemporary stories were vague and exaggerated, the Gospels include specific details about Jesus' life. (Jesus on a cushion Mark 4, Jesus doodling John 8, 153 fish John 21). See *Appendix II* for more details.

There are those who maintain that the Bible is no longer **culturally** relevant. They say that statements in the Bible are dated and offensive in the context of modern culture. First, to stay away from Christianity because the Bible has views that offend you is to say that if there is a God he doesn't disagree with you on any matters of importance. As culture shifts, the texts of the Bible have stayed the same, and as a result, there are some parts that are harder for us to understand than it would have been for someone 200 years ago. In the same way, things that seem "regressive" to us now might make more sense in 200 years. Furthermore, we must understand that an authoritative Bible is not a stumbling block to a relationship with God, rather, it allows us to see the true character of God, unfiltered by inconsistent society.

Relevant Scriptures:

- “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy has ever been produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” **1 Peter 1:19-21**
- “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” **Luke 1:1-4**

Short Answer:

The timing and ‘embarrassing’ content of the Gospels means they cannot be legends. First, all the gospels were written 30-60 years after the events that they describe, not nearly long enough to become full-blown legends as first hand witnesses of the events still lived. Second, the scriptures include too much counter-productive material to be legends. The use of women to be the first witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection would threaten the resurrection’s credibility in that culture, just as Peter’s denials of Jesus would undermine his authority. These things would not be included if the books were contrived.

The offensiveness of the Bible is culturally relative and time specific. Texts in the Bible offensive to the West are common sense elsewhere, and vice versa. Furthermore, just as you find some of your grandparent’s views offensive, so also will some of your cultural beliefs seem ridiculous in the future. To reject scripture because it is offensive is to assume our specific time within our Western culture is the end all, **an extremely narrow-minded position.**

Further Resources:

- Chapters 2-3 of Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* gives a great overview of Biblical claims concerning inerrancy and canonization, including refutations to Catholic thinking on the canon of scripture.
- Norman Geisler’s *Inerrancy* is considered the definitive work on the topic and includes essays from several scholars on different aspects of Biblical inerrancy.
- *Appendix II* contains resources wholly devoted to this topic.

Homosexuality

So you think Homosexuality is wrong? You don't think my uncles should be allowed to get married?

The conversation about the morality and legality of homosexuality has pervaded all aspects of our modern society. There is nowhere that this issue is not a sensitive one, especially when we intend to defend the Scriptures. In fact, within our FPC community there have been stories of students for whom this issue has caused significant friction on college campuses, in some cases even upheaval. For this reason, as Christians we must be extremely careful to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Fortunately, Scripture is clear on the issue, so we in turn can be confident that our understanding of the text is not misguided. Verses explaining the Biblical stance on homosexuality have been provided. Still, though Scripture is clear on the issue, the church has been insensitive and un-Christ-like in their treatment of members of the homosexual community. In general, the church has been condemning of homosexuality as though it were, in some way, *more* of a sin than others. Clearly, this is not doctrinally sound. There is no place in Scripture that singles-out homosexuality as a sin that is worse in God's eyes; homosexuality is usually included in a list among other sins. Moreover, Scripture clearly indicates, “there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22-23).

Therefore, homosexuality should rightly be placed on par with all other sins in the eyes of God. And, if God views and treats our sins equally, we must, as Christians, do the same. Problems with false judgment and condemnation arise when Christians in vocal churches speak out against homosexuality. The statements made by the handful of outspoken churches in the media have given all of Christianity a bad name, and they have given us even more reason to be tactful in our speaking about this issue. We must be certain to rebuke and distance ourselves from those churches that have proliferated hate for the homosexual community and be quick to admit our own sinful nature. Inclusive phrases such as “sinners just like me” and “all of us” can be helpful in this regard.

In fact, the topic of homosexuality can be a prime opportunity for us to share real Gospel with people in our community. When asked about the issue, we can easily transition into discussions of Original sin, and Unconditional grace. We cannot shy away from these conversations, or pretend not to know what Scripture says about the issue, but we must also share our convictions with love and with the invitation of God's free and necessary grace.

The question of the legality of homosexual marriages or unions is difficult because we get into the relation of church and government and the ways that each defines marriage. It is sufficiently addressed in [Concerning Legality/Marriage].

Relevant Scriptures:

- “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that were contrary to nature; and then men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.” **Romans 1:26-7**
- “If a man lies with male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.” **Leviticus 20:13**
- “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” **Romans 3:22-3**

Short Answer:

[Concerning sinfulness:]

According to the Scriptures, both homosexuality and the way the church has treated the issue are sinful. The fact that gay right’s activist groups have published a Queen James Bible to edit out those parts that condemn homosexual practice indicates that the scriptures are clear on the issue. However, the alienation of homosexuals for being more sinful than others is also sinful. This counter-Biblical hostility within the church in speech and action has caused the marginalization of homosexuals inside and outside the church for too many decades, and for this, we repent. However, in the book of Romans, Paul clearly cites homosexual actions as an example of man turning from God; he calls it a corruption of the capacity for men and women together to be a beautiful reflection of the loving image of God.

The doctrine of sin also affirms that the question of nature v. nurture is irrelevant. According to the Scriptures, the effect of sin was all-pervasive: effecting the very biology of how the world works, such that sin is hardwired into our being. Thus, whether the persuasion is a choice or occurs from birth (or somewhere in between) the posture is a result of and a part of sin. The question is not nature v. nurture, but whether a divine law maker can make demands on our morality that run counter to our tendencies (no matter their origins).

[Concerning Legality/Marriage:]

Marriage is a spiritual union, and not a matter of government.

Supposing we are to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,” it follows that the regulation of marriage as a covenant before God ought to be left to churches, and civil union to the government, who must be rendered the ability to organize its citizens in units broad enough to encompass the plurality of civil unions it contains, be they Christian, Hindu, Humanist, or homosexual. Furthermore, while we would love to see those who engage in homosexuality live righteously, we believe this is ultimately impossible without the sanctification that comes from knowing Christ and being convicted by the Spirit. Therefore, we would like those who engage in homosexuality to cease only in good conscious under the prompting of the Spirit within them, completely independent of the imposition of government.

Romans tells us that government is meant to promote the good.

Therefore, to create a more Godly society, it is necessary, right and good to fight for a Biblical view of marriage in government. Though it may not stop homosexual lifestyles, God blesses the society that follows his word.

Further Resources:

- Ironically, the *Queen James Bible* is one of the best resources in combatting attacks on the sinfulness of Homosexuality. Though the editors attempt to give an exegesis of all the verses they took out which would discount them as condemning homosexuality, the fact remains that they still felt the need to remove them from the Bible.

APPENDIX I: A SEEKING GOD LIFESTYLE¹⁰

Introduction

College is the first time that a person truly has to organize their time, energy, and resources however he or she sees fit. As such, it is during this time that a tempo will be set that will largely define the rest of your life. The question is, will you organize this time towards the glory of God, or let that relationship stagnate and atrophy?

While accepting Christ is a huge step, it is only the first step; it is only through the consistent and disciplined pursuit of God *after that point* by which we can hope to grow into the likeness of Him, and experience the power, beauty, and grace of His presence. Up your departure for college, FPC may largely have orchestrated how and to what extent you seek the face of God, but from college onwards it will largely be up to you. What's more, often the busy schedules and parental influence of adolescence have all but extinguished the fires that could have been sustained and grown during high school. What college offers is a huge opportunity – an opportunity to start with a clean slate and devote the very posture of your life such that the Lord is pouring His life into you on a daily basis.

To facilitate this, we have isolated 6 principles of the seeking God lifestyle: Prayer, Scripture Meditation & Memory, Repentance, Obedience, Community, and Fasting. It is likely that whatever community you do get plugged into will cover several and possibly even all of these principles; it is also possible that it will only provide avenue for the final component, or by emphasis exclude many other principles which historically have been indispensable parts of the Christian lifestyle and experiencing God. This section seeks to explain the reasons for, and practicalities of, these disciplines in college.

¹⁰ The first four parts of this section has drawn extensively on Christian Union's "A Five-Lesson Study on a Seeking God Lifestyle," and Yale Christian Union ministry fellow Chris Matthew's notes of the above manual. Effectively, the manual has been synopsized, outlined, reorganized and added to slightly in content, as well as in quotes, some of which have been taken from the manual and notes, some of which have been researched independently. Bennett, Matt, and The Christian Union. *A Five-Lesson Study on a Seeking God Lifestyle*. N.p.: n.p., 2011. Print.

Prayer

“Devote yourselves to prayer” –Colossians 4:2

What prayer is: **communing** and **communicating** with God

Key components: Pray then like this (Lord’s prayer as a model):

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

- Matthew 6:9-13, ESV

- Praise
- Thankfulness
- *Petition* (spiritual and physical needs)
- Confession
- *Intercession* (as a corporate prayer, Jesus prayed for his disciples)
- *Meditation* (not in the Lord’s Prayer, but elsewhere. After bringing forth our joys, fears, sins, and exaltations before the Lord, we ought to give him ample time to speak back, reflecting on our petitions and His Word.)

Frequency: It may be surprising that the early Christian and most Eastern churches have a culture of, and recognize a Biblical mandate to, spend time in prayer to a far greater extent than we do today in American Christianity.

- Jews during the time of Jesus, as well as first-century Christians would customarily pray 2-3 set blocks of time a day (9a.m., noon, and 3 p.m.) to pray for extended periods of time for a total of 1.5-3 hours of prayer/day. Hebrews 13:15 draws an Hebraic parallel with Numbers 28, implying that twice daily set times of prayer ought to take the place of offering twice daily burnt offerings to God.
- Verses like 1 Thessalonians 5:17 exhort Christians to “pray continually” add a sense that prayer ought to occur throughout the day in different forms. Both through both structured daily times and consistent spontaneous prayers throughout the day.

“Prayer is the easiest and hardest of all things; the simplest and the sublimest; the weakest and the most powerful; its results lie outside the range of human possibilities – they are limited only by the omnipotence of God.” – E. M. Bounds

Scripture Meditation & Memory

“How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

-Psalm 119:103

What is/frequency: Reading and memorizing scripture is pretty self explanatory in nature. In terms of frequency, it ought to be said that scripture intake goes hand in hand with prayer, and consider all that was said in the last section about frequency of prayer to apply also to scripture: the two disciplines are generally best practiced together.

Memorizing Scripture: Psalm 119: 9-16 carries with it a strong mandate for the memorization of scripture for its delight and status as a precious treasure. Many Christians throughout the ages have memorized large portions of scripture to great effect. For example, around the time of the Second Great Awakening, the president of Princeton mandated that every student must memorize 5 chapters of Scripture per week to address the ungodliness he saw on campus. Shortly thereafter, revival broke out on campus.

Useful Memorization Methods:

- Verse by Verse—Memorize the verses that speak to you specifically. It will be easier and more fruitful to memorize a verse that is important to you or encourages you. This method is also useful for fighting a particular sin or insecurity.
- Book by Book—This method allows for later meditation on a complete thought in Scripture. It helps us to gain a complete understanding of a story or letter, and allows for deeper understanding through meditation
- First Letter—When first trying to gain a hold on the verses, write down the first letter of each word on a notecard. This provides a sort of middle ground between simply reading the verses ad nausea and struggling to guess what the next word.
- “And Back it on Up”—Once you have a general grasp on a section of verses, work on memorizing them in reverse order. This method takes away the crutch of being able to string together verses by memorizing the transitions.

QUOTES:

- How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.
- (Psalm 119:9-16, ESV)

- “Because I can have Romans memorized but choose not to meditate on it, and it’s like having a pantry full of food but never opening the door for a snack, I’ll be starving just the same. But when I choose to open the door, it is a delight. Basically I get to hear from God all day long, and that is a joy like no other. So when I meditate on His word it is life-giving as the Spirit illuminates it. But when I don’t, I’m just making it about memorizing words, which can be helpful later but not immediately.” –Ryan Cleary
- “It has recently pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost...The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished...I saw that the most important thing I had to do was give myself to reading of the word of God, and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, by means of the word of God, whilst meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord.” –George Mueller, May 7 1841. George Mueller cared for more than 10,000 orphans in his lifetime and established 117 schools.

Repentance & Obedience

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images. And they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, he broke down the altars and beat the Asherim and the images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 34:1-7, ESV)

What is it/frequency: Like prayer and scripture intake, repentance and Obedience go hand in hand. Here, unlike the disciplines of prayer and scripture intake, the American church has tended to be better (though by no means perfect). We generally understand that the attitude of the heart is key in following Christ. As such, repentance, the act of changing your erroneous thoughts and idols for the word and God himself in all things is not so foreign to us. More difficult is obedience, which follows true repentance,¹¹ and is the realignment of your life to the will of God.

One might ask now, why is this in the UE manual, and not just a generally good thing to do. There are two reasons for this: (1) repentance and obedience are critical to maintain a God-seeking lifestyle. It is hard to describe just how disorienting unrepentant sin becomes to closeness and experience with God. As the sin continues to fester, our ability to love and serve God in all areas will suffer. Conversely, this principle of the interconnectedness of sin also means an interconnectedness of righteousness—as we repent and obey the Lord our love, joy, peace, and service to him will generally increase on all fronts. (2) In college particularly, then, you can see how very

¹¹ Some sins are so deep seated that one can truly repent and fall quickly back into them for a variety of reasons. Also, this ought not to be taken to mean that once one repents one will never struggle with the same sin again. You will be repenting of sins for your entire life, even those which you have truly repented of.

important repentance and forgiveness are. All too often new college students are unwittingly sucked into patterns of sin and disobedience simply by virtue of being exposed to sin in new ways. Inevitably we will stumble, but if we allow such stumbling to continue as a part of our daily lives at college, the effect multiplies and we begin to lose sight of God. For this reason, in college particularly, constant introspection for obvious and hidden sin is of paramount importance, particularly in the early months.

QUOTES:

- “I know all about the despair of overcoming chronic temptations. It is not serious provided self-offended petulance, annoyance at breaking records, impatience etc. doesn’t get the upper hand. No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep on picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean clothes are airing in the cupboard. The only fatal thing is to lose one’s temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present to us: it is the very sign of His presence.” –C.S. Lewis
- “Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? God is holy and sinless, He is a just judge of evil and the enemy of all disobedience. But a brother is as sinful as we are. He knows from his own experience the dark night of secret sin. Why should we not find it easier to go to a brother than the holy God? But if we do, we must ask ourselves whether we have not been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution. And is not the reason perhaps for our countless relapses and the feebleness of our Christian obedience to be found precisely in the fact that we are living on self-forgiveness and not a real forgiveness? Self-forgiveness can never lead to a breach with sin; this can be accomplished only by the judging and pardoning Word of God itself.” –Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Community

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.’ Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zechariah 8:20-23, ESV)

What it is, why it is important: Community has always been a key aspect of seeking God. It is one thing to seek God, but something entirely different to seek God together. The encouragement, accountability, and love of God shared between brothers and sisters in Christ is one of the most beautiful and powerful experiences a believer can have. Key components of seeking God in Community are as follows:

- Prayer
- Hearing the Word preached
- Worshiping
- Repentance
- Fellowship
- Encouragement
- Retreats

Frequency: Early Christians, as said before, would have three set times a day in which they would pray and read scripture. However, it ought to be mentioned that these were corporate activities; Christians would *meet* to do these things. As for prayer, worship, and hearing the word, we ought to seek fellowship as much as we can. Likewise, from the OT Feast of the Tabernacles and the Feast of Weeks, we see a Biblical Precedent for retreating in a community extended period of time to be rejuvenated. Many of us have seen the positive fruit of Mission and Adventure trips in our own spiritual lives. Biblically speaking, it is clear that these events are integral to a healthy spiritual life. Finally, in regard to repentance, many of us also know the value of accountability groups. Without such meetings, keeping on top of our sins and intercession for one another would be a much more difficult affair. It is of critical importance that we find Christian community on our college campuses. The body and presence of Christ cannot be made from a single unit; God intended us to live in community.

QUOTES:

- “He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final break-through to fellowship does not occur, because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we *are* sinners! But, it is the grace of the Gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that it confronts us with the truth and says: you are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you. He wants you as you are...God has come to you to save the sinner. Be glad! This message is liberation through truth. You can hide nothing from God. The mask that you wear before men will do you no good before Him. He wants to see you as you are. He wants to be gracious to you. You do not have to go on lying to yourself and your brothers, as if you were without sin; you can dare to be a sinner. Thank God for that.” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*
- “There is a kind of listening with half an ear that presumes already to know what the other person has to say. It is an impatient, inattentive listening, that despises the brother and is only waiting for a chance to speak and thus get rid of the other person. This is no fulfillment of our obligation... It is little wonder that we are no longer capable of the greatest service of listening that God has committed to us, that of hearing our brother's confession, if we refuse to give ear to our brother on lesser subjects. Secular education today is aware that often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him seriously, and upon this insight it has constructed its own soul therapy, which has attracted great numbers of people, including Christians. But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Fasting

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. –Acts 14:23

What it is¹²: Fasting is a discipline that is not widely understood in the church, and the reason is because it is never really explained in the Bible. We read often about fasts taking place throughout the scriptures, but there is no one text that actually describes what is going on or why. The reason that this is the case is something I call the “breathing phenomenon.” Children do not have to be taught how to breathe or why it is important -- its just part of life. It has always been the case that breathing is what we do and it is a necessity because it sustains life. Likewise, for the original audience to which the Scriptures were written, fasting was just part of a person’s spiritual life. It did not need to be explained or justified, it just was. It had always been the case, and it was widely accepted to be a necessary part of sustaining spiritual connection with God. It is because of this “breathing phenomenon” that when Jesus did teach about fasting he said, “And when you fast,” not if. It was an accepted reality that those who were interested in Jesus’ teachings would be fasting.

For whatever reason, the “breathing phenomenon” does not hold true in the church today. People do not understand why fasting is important, and for most, it is not a part of their regular spiritual life. For that reason, I will take a quick look through the scriptures at fasting as a discipline then discuss how it will be incorporated into the life of the discipleship house.

At its most basic level fasting is a tool that allows the one praying to hunger for food in a physical sense in order that they might recognize their deep and abiding hunger for God in a spiritual sense. The hunger pains serve to unearth the often dismissed soul pains of a person crying out for a God who listens. This discipline was used for five broad reasons throughout the Bible.

Fasting always accompanies prayer in the Scriptures and takes place during times of intense repentance , mourning , worship , preparation , and during times in which an answer to a specific prayer is being sought .

Fasting is not a way to twist God’s arm, but rather is a way to delve deeper into connection with him. It supersedes our rational processing, and for that reason is a beautiful companion to the educational component of the discipleship process.

¹² Morris, Jeremiah The Discipline of Fasting.

Fasting frequency: It is a good practice to make a regular habit of fasting in your schedule, according to what you see helping you in your prayer life. However, more important than frequency or duration of the fast is that we make a deliberate effort to be *filled* during the fast. It is easy when fasting to miss meals without making any concerted effort to meet with God or be nourished by His Word. The purpose must be that we would manipulate our physical bodies in way that prompts spiritual growth.

QUOTES

- “If there is no element of asceticism in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh (taking care of course to keep within the limits of what seems permissible to the world), we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ. When the flesh is satisfied it is hard to pray with cheerfulness or to devote oneself to a life of service which calls for much self-renunciation.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*
- “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:2-3, ESV)

Tips & Resources:

Devotionals and prayer books – a great way to begin quiet times and keep you on track and accountable:

- *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* by Arthur Bennett
- *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. A true classic of devotionals

On prayer and fasting

- *With Christ in the School of Prayer* by Andrew Murray
- *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds*
- <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/first-things-first-making-the-most-of-your-morning>

Practically speaking:

Be on the lookout from day 1 for good places to pray. Some schools maintain a 24 hour open chapel to pray in. Many find it most edifying to pray first thing in the morning. Do try to find a place nearby (or in) your room where you can make this a reality.

APPENDIX II: BIBLICAL ACCURACY

Has the Bible Changed Over Time?

Manuscripts

We don't have the original copies of what the writers of scripture wrote, but what we have is totally reliable. One reason is because of the manuscripts that we do have.

The Number of Manuscripts We Have is Stunning

- For Caesar's History of the Gallic Wars we have only ten copies, the most ancient being 1,000 years after the event
- Homer's the Iliad, a story of ancient Greece, has at least 643 copies—the earliest is 500 years after the original
- **But the New Testament**—which covers a span of history from 40-100 A.D. has 5,300 Greek portions, 10,000 Latin portions and 9,300 other translations—bringing the total up to **24,000 copies of parts of the text, the oldest only 25 years from the original**
- The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any 10 pieces of classical literature *combined*
- With regard to the New Testament books, John Warwick Montgomery stated, "...to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament"

The Amount of Variance Among the Manuscripts is More Stunning

Through the proper application of textual criticism, comparing all the available manuscripts with one another (24,000), we are able to confidently reconstruct the original reading. Let's briefly compare numbers on variant readings. The New Testament contains approximately 20,000 lines, of which 40 lines are in question (equal to half one percent)

The Iliad contains approximately 15,600 words of which 764 lines are in question. This equal 5 percent. That's ten times more variants than New Testament in a document that is only three-quarters its length. The sheer number of extant NT manuscripts we possess narrows tremendously the margin of doubt on the correct reading of the original documents.

Of the .5% of the New Testament variant readings only one eighth of those amount to anything more than a stylistic difference or misspelling

$$\frac{1}{8} \times .5\% = .0625\% \text{ of the New Testament}$$

An example of a fairly typical variant reading:

MMS. 1	Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole worl
MMS. 2	Christ Jesus is the Savior of the whole world
MMS. 3	Jesus Christ s the Savior of the whold world
MMS. 4	Jesus Christ is th Savior of the whle world
MMS. 5	Jesus Christ is the Savior of the whole wrld.

Many of these variants involve nothing more than a missing letter in a word, a misspelling, or a reversal of the order of two words (as seen above in #2). Some may involve the absence of a word; but of all the variants in the NT, it should be noted that only about 50 have any real significance, and not one essential point of Christian doctrine rests upon a disputed reading. For more than 99% of them, we have been able to reconstruct the biblical text with tremendous certainty.

Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1946, a shepherd in search of a lost goat, was throwing rocks into a cave to scare it out, when he heard pottery break. Inside were containers that had in them, ancient portions of the Bible. Over time, archeological would discover several caves, **with over 15,000 fragments, and 600 copies of different portions of the Bible. They were in those caves for 1900 years, dating back to somewhere between 100 B.C. and A.D 100.** Those scrolls were the library of an ancient community, by the Dead Sea, that separated themselves into a religious community. Many think John the Baptist was one of them.

In cave 1 **we found a copy of the entire book of Isaiah, 66 chapters long.** We compared it to 1940's copies of Isaiah. It was 95% identical. The 5% that was not identical consisted of obvious slips of the pen, misspellings, many of which are no more significant than the difference between using the "over" instead of "above"

Nothing found in the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls does anything but affirm that **the Bible we hold today is totally reliable** and that the telephone game has not had an effect on Scripture

The Canon

A frequently asked question in regard to the Bible is whether we know that the text that we have today is that which is God's inspired Word. Are we sure that each book of the Bible is completely factual and should be included in the inerrant whole? Why are the books of the Apocrypha excluded from the Canon? It's important that as Christians we are able to completely trust our Bibles as factually accurate and worthy of study and meditation.

History¹³

By the end of the 2nd century, the Canon was already taking shape. Though there had not been any officially issued statements as far as delineating an actual Canon, 23 of the 27 current books of the New Testament were already rather unanimously considered part of the authoritative collection. The collection of books came to be despite a disjointed church situation with limited methods of testing the validity of documents. Miraculously, by the end of the 4th century, numerous disorganized councils had ratified the same 27-book New Testament, and the canon was universally agreed upon.

Criteria¹⁴

Canonical books had to be:

1. Written by prophet, apostle, or someone closely linked to one
 - All books of the Old and New Testament are written by a prophet, apostle, or someone, like Luke who traveled and knew an apostle
 - No books were written by ignorant authors
2. True (Deut 18:20-22)
 - Everything in each text was checked for consistency and non-contradiction
3. Faithful to the rest of Canonized Scripture
 - Everything included upheld generally accepted doctrine
 - No text contradicted any other
4. Verified by Christ, another Apostle or Prophet in another text
5. Church usage and recognition
 - Each book was widely taught and accepted before the Canon was compiled

¹³ Voorwinde, Stephen The Formation of the New Testament Canon

¹⁴ Ware, Bruce, Dr. "What Criteria Were Used to Determine the Canon of Scripture?" Web log post. Biblical Training. N.p., 10 July 2012. Web.

Biblical Prophecies

The following section contains explanations of prophecies from the Bible. The Bible contains roughly 2500 prophecies, of which about 200 have come to fruition. We have the benefit of looking back on thousands of years of history to gain a unique perspective of God's work. These prophecies can be useful tools for encouraging Christians and defending the validity and inspiration of Scripture. The first two, Daniel's 70 Weeks, and The Fate of Tyre, are longer explanations that require a more complete development of the facts in order to make sense, but the later group contains prophecies that are simple and easy to grasp. These shorter explanations would likely be useful for conversations defending Scripture.

Daniel's 70 Weeks

“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’

-Daniel 9:25

Because the Jews used a 360 day calendar with a “leap month” every few years in order to keep accurately aligned with the solar calendar, it is helpful to first convert this prophecy into days, so that we can understand it in terms of our familiar solar calendar.

1. Add 7 + 62 weeks of years = 69 weeks of years in this prophecy
2. Multiply 69 (weeks) x 7 (to get the total number of years in this prophecy) = 483 years (Jewish calendar)
3. Multiply 483 years x 360 (to get the total number of days in this prophecy) = **173,880 days**

So, the prophet Daniel, who lived 500 years before Jesus, wrote that from the day of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls, until the coming Messiah would be 173,880 days (476 years and about 21 days in our Julian calendar, accounting for leap years)

The prophesied decree can be found in Nehemiah 2; it was issued by Emperor Artaxerxes whose reign is extensively documented in secular history. Artaxerxes Longimanus ascended to the throne of the Medo-Persian empire in July 465 B.C. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990 ed.). The twentieth year of his reign would have begun in July 446 B.C. The decree occurred approximately nine months later in the month of Nisan (March/April on our calendar). By Hebrew tradition when the day of the month is not specifically stated (as in Artaxerxes decree), it is given to be the first day of that month. Consequently, **the very day of Artaxerxes' decree was the first day of the Hebrew month Nisan**

in 445 B.C. The first day of Nisan in 445 B.C. corresponds to the 14th day of March 445 B.C. These dates were confirmed through astronomical calculations at the British Royal Observatory and reported by Sir Robert Anderson (Robert Anderson, "The Coming Prince", Kregel. Reprinted in 1984.).

Now take the 476 years in this prophecy and simply start counting from March 14, 445 B.C. and you end on the exact year (even the very day) Jesus rode 'triumphantly' into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), being praised as King and Messiah by thousands upon thousands of the Jewish people who had gathered from all over for the Passover Holidays. Honored, yet lowly, riding on a donkey - exactly as another prophet, the prophet Zechariah, said He would ...

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion (Israel)!
Behold, your King (Messiah) is coming to you;
He is just and having salvation,
yet He is lowly and riding on a donkey."
(Zechariah 9:9 ... written around 500 B.C.)

It was the only day that He ever allowed Himself to be honored as Messiah or King (Mark 11:1-12) as the people of Israel cried out and sang "Hosanna to the Son of David (this is a Psalm of the Messiah), blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"

There is in fact, another way to check the accuracy of this date. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter three, it states that in the 15th year of the reign of Caesar Tiberius, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and began his ministry. It is well established that the reign of Caesar Tiberius (The Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990. Micropedia) began with his coronation on August 19th in the year A.D. 14. Most scholars believe Jesus was baptized in the fall season. It follows that the ministry of Jesus started with his baptism in the Fall of A.D. 28, the 15th year of reign of Caesar Tiberius (The day that a Roman ruler ascends the throne begins his first year.). The ministry of Jesus spanned four Passovers or about three and one half years.

The first Passover of Jesus' ministry would have been in the Spring of A.D. 29. The fourth Passover of His ministry was the day of his crucifixion and would have fallen in the year A.D. 32. The Passover in that year fell on April 10th (The Passover holiday always occurs on the 14th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. Remarkably, according to Robert Anderson and the British Royal Observatory, the Sunday before that Passover was April 6th-The very day that Jesus presents himself as King and exactly 173,880 days after the decree of Artaxerxes!!

Some will argue that the prophecy must have been written after Jesus' entry. This is absurd because Daniel was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) nearly **three centuries** before Jesus was even born.

Certainly, without divine inspiration, Daniel could not have known, 500 years before the birth of Jesus, that He would ride into Jerusalem, the "holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place." (Daniel 9:24)

This prophecy is incredibly useful to know when speaking with interlocutors who claim to "think too logically to have faith". It is a mathematical equation. God simply told us what he would do and followed through to the letter. It is also helpful to note that it is not as though this prophecy is the only important part of the book of Daniel. It is one prophecy among many others in a book that tells a well-known and highly regarded Biblical narrative. Daniel is not only trustworthy because of this prophecy, but rather this prophecy is given extra weight by the fact that the entire book of Daniel is considered historically accurate.

In order to relate this whole argument, we must have a forum in which we can be sure that we will have time to expound upon our thoughts and be heard-out by those listening. Furthermore, it contains many complicated dates and calculations that give the argument real weight and efficacy. These details would be difficult to memorize, so notes are helpful. For these reasons, it is often better suited for encouraging groups of already-Christians in Bible study atmospheres. It is a powerful for our understanding God's sovereignty and existence outside of the scope of time, as well as the validity of Scripture.

The Fate of Tyre¹⁵

In the 26th chapter of Ezekiel, we find one of the most striking prophecies in the Bible. The prophet foretold the destruction of Tyre, despite the fact that Tyre was one of the world's greatest naval powers, and their ships had dominated the seas for centuries. The prophesy would have been laughable in the day it was written, yet with the perspective of time we see that our God is a God of His word.

The prophet prophesied in the following (verses):

That Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would conquer Tyre (7-11)

That the city would be made desolate (2).

That it would be thrown into the sea (12).

That it would become a place to spread nets upon (14).

That its maritime supremacy would cease forever (17).

Every detail of this prophecy had complete fulfillment.

Early in the sixth century B.C., Nebuchadnezzar determined that he would destroy the power of Tyre, and accordingly he marched against the city and besieged it. After a protracted siege that continued for some years, he breached the walls, and the city fell. When the Tyrians saw that resistance was futile, they transferred the bulk of their treasure to an island in their possession, half a mile from the shore. The old city was deserted and from her new water-enclosed fortress Tyre continued to defy her enemies.

Though the original city had been "made desolate" by Nebuchadnezzar as predicted by Ezekiel, the balance of the prophecy had not been fulfilled. Ezekiel (Ch. 26) had declared:

"They shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise; and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses; and they shall lay thy stones, thy timber, and thy dust in the midst of the water ... I (God) will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more ... I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee" (vv. 12, 14,19).

None of this was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar, though he destroyed the original city. The prophecy spoke of an unnamed power, as "they shall do it." History reveals that this was Alexander the Great and his Grecian warriors.

¹⁵ Morgan, Richard. "Prophecy Proves the Bible True." Web. 06 Aug. 2013.

Meanwhile, for almost 250 years, the partly-ruined city of ancient Tyre remained on the mainland, whilst from the island fortress Tyrian power rose once more. Contrary to the requirements of the prophecy the stones, timber and dust of the ancient city had not been "thrown into the sea" as predicted, its site had not been made "bare like the top of a rock", nor had Tyrian power been irreparably broken. Tyre rose to be a naval and economical power once again.

The prophecy was finally fulfilled by the army of Alexander the Great. He set out to destroy the new island of Tyre. First, he needed a way to reach the island and the stones, the walls, the pleasant houses of the ruins of the mainland city (the one Ezekiel said would be utterly destroyed and never rebuilt) provided him with a means to do this. He ordered that they be thrown "into the sea" (as Ezekiel had predicted) in order to create a pathway across the half-mile of sea that reached the island of Tyre. A clean sweep was made of the site, and not a remnant of the city remained. Nor was it ever rebuilt. God had decreed that this would be its fate, and His words were fulfilled to the very letter, though for 250 years every indication seemed to point to the contrary.

Today, the blue waters of the Mediterranean wash over the ruins of Tyre, which has literally become "a place to spread nets upon." Go to the site of ancient Tyre today, and it is possible to see Arab fishermen doing that which Ezekiel predicted they would do 2,500 years ago.

Alexander's attack was successful, and Tyrian sea power was destroyed. No longer did her fleets dominate the seas, no longer were her praises sung in the marts of the ancient world. As a nation she disappeared, never to rise again.

The causeway built by Alexander still connects Tyre's one-time island-fortress with the mainland. The mighty city of ancient Tyre was completely erased.

The amazing thing is the detail in which the Bible predicted all this, and the wonderful way in which each point was finally fulfilled. Fallible man cannot predict the future with such certainty and detail, but the Bible does.

More Prophecies Fulfilled¹⁶

(1) Some **400 years before crucifixion was invented**, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. Further, they said that the body would be pierced and that none of the bones would be broken, contrary to customary procedure in cases of crucifixion (Psalm 22 and 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). Historians and New Testament writers confirm the fulfillment of prophecy.

(2) The prophet Moses foretold (with additions by Jeremiah and Jesus) that the ancient Jewish nation would be conquered twice and that the people would be carried off as slaves each time, first by the Babylonians (for a period of 70 years), and then by a fourth world kingdom (Rome). The second conqueror, Moses said, would take the Jews captive to Egypt, selling them or giving them away as slaves to all parts of the world. Both of these predictions were fulfilled to the letter, the in 607 B.C. and 70 A.D. God's spokesmen said, further, that the Jews would remain scattered throughout the entire world for many generations, but without becoming assimilated by the peoples or of other nations, and that the Jews would one day return to the land of Palestine to re-establish for a second time their nation (Deuteronomy 29; Isaiah 11:11-13; Jeremiah 25:11; Hosea 3:4-5 and Luke 21:23-24). This prophetic statement **sweeps across 3500 years of history to its complete fulfillment in our lifetime.**

(3) Jeremiah predicted that despite its fertility and abundant water supply, the land of Edom (today a part of Jordan) would become a barren, uninhabited wasteland (Jeremiah 49:15-20; Ezekiel 25:12-14). Miraculously, his prediction is true today.

(4) In the 5 B.C. Zechariah declared that the Messiah would be betrayed for the price of a slave—thirty pieces of silver, according to Jewish law—and also that the money would be used to buy a burial ground for Jerusalem's poor foreigners (Zechariah 11:12-13). Bible writers and secular historians both record thirty pieces of silver as the sum paid to Judas Iscariot for betraying Jesus, and that the money went to purchase a "potter's field," used—just as predicted—for the burial of poor aliens (Matthew 27:3-10)

¹⁶ Ross, Hugh, Dr. "Reasons To Believe: Fulfilled Prophecy: Evidence for the Reliability of the Bible." Reasons To Believe, 22 Aug. 2003. Web. 06 Aug. 2013.

(5) The prophet Isaiah foretold that a conqueror named Cyrus would destroy seemingly impregnable Babylon and subdue Egypt along with most of the rest of the known world. This same man, said Isaiah, would decide to let the Jewish exiles in his territory go free without any payment of ransom (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; and 45:13). Isaiah made this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born, 180 years before Cyrus performed any of these feats and 80 years before the Jews were taken into exile. Cyrus performed every part of the prophecy.

Prophecies Concerning Jesus¹⁷

Concerning his birth

	Prophesied	Fulfilled
1. Born of the seed of woman	Gen 3:15	Gal 4:4
2. Born of a virgin	Isa 7:14	Mt 1:18-25
3. Seed of Abraham	Gen 22:18	Mt 1:1
4. Seed of Isaac	Gen 21:12	Lk 3:23, 34
5. Seed of Jacob	Num 24:17	Lk 3:34
6. Seed of David	Jer 23:5	Lk 3:31
7. Tribe of Judah	Gen 49:10	Rev 5:5
8. Family line of Jesse	Isa 11:1	Lk 3:32
9. Born in Bethlehem	Mic 5:2	Mt 2:1-6
10. Herod kills the children	Jer 31:15	Mt 2:16-18

Concerning his nature

	Prophesied	Fulfilled
11. He pre-existed creation	Mic 5:2	1 Pet 1:20
12. He shall be called Lord	Ps 110:1	Acts 2:36
13. Called Immanuel (God with us)	Isa 7:14	Mt 1:22-23
14. Prophet	Deut 18:18-19	Acts 3:18-25
15. Priest	Ps 110:4	Heb 5:5-6
16. Judge	Isa 33:22	Jn 5:22-23
17. King	Ps 2:6	Jn 18:33-37
18. Anointed by the Spirit	Isa 11:2	Mt 3:16-17
19. His zeal for God	Ps 69:9	Jn 2:15-17

Concerning his ministry

	Prophesied	Fulfilled
20. Predicted by a messenger	Isa 40:3	Mt 3:1-3
21. To begin in Galilee	Isa 9:1-2	Mt 4:12-17
22. Ministry of Miracles	Isa 35:5-6	Mt 9:35, 11:4
23. Teacher of parables	Ps 78:1-4	Mt 13:34-35
24. He was to enter the temple	Mal 3:1	Mt 21:10-12
25. Enter Jerusalem on donkey	Zech 9:9	Mt 21:1-7
26. Stone of stumbling to Jews	Isa 28:16	1 Pet 2:6-8

¹⁷ "Genuine Divine Bible Prophecy." Genuine Divine Bible Prophecy. Web. 06 Aug. 2013.

The day Jesus was crucified	Prophesied	Fulfilled
27. Betrayed by a friend	Ps 41:9	Jn 13:18-27
28. Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zech 11:12	Mt 26:14-15
29. 30 pieces thrown in Temple	Zech 11:13	Mt 27:3-5
30. 30 pieces buys potters field	Zech 11:13	Mt 27:6-10
31. Forsaken by His disciples	Zech 13:7	Mk14:27, 50
32. Accused by false witnesses	Ps 35:11+20-21	Mt 26:59-61
33. Silent before accusers	Isa 53:7	Mt 27:12-14
34. Wounded and bruised	Isa 53:4-6	1 Pet 2:21-25
35. Beaten and spit upon	Isa 50:6	Mt 26:67-68
36. Mocked	Ps 22:6-8	Mt 27:27-31
37. Fell under the cross	Ps 109:24-25	Lk 23:26
38. Hands and feet pierced	Ps 22:16	Jn 20:24-28
39. Crucified with thieves	Isa 53:12	Mt 27:38
40. Prayed for enemies	Isa 53:12	Lk 23:34
41. Rejected by His own people	Isa 53:3	Jn 19:14-15
42. Hated without cause	Ps 69:4	Jn 15:25
43. Friends stood aloof	Ps 38:11	Lk 22:54, 23:49
44. People wag their heads	Ps 22:7, 109:25	Mt 27:39
45. People stared at Him	Ps 22:17	Lk 23:35
46. Cloths divided and gambled for	Ps 22:18	Jn 19:23-24
47. Became very thirsty	Ps 22:15	Jn 19:28
48. Gall and vinegar offered Him	Ps 69:21	Mt 27:34
49. His forsaken cry	Ps 22:1	Mt 27:46
50. Committed Himself to God	Ps 31:5	Lk 23:46
51. Bones not broken	Ps 34:20	Jn 19:32-36
52. Heart broken	Ps 69:20, 22:14	Jn 19:34
53. His side pierced	Zech 12:10	Jn 19:34, 37
54. Darkness over the land	Amos 8:9	Lk 23:44-45
55. Buried in rich man's tomb	Isa 53:9	Mt 27:57-60
His Resurrection & Ascension	Prophesied	Fulfilled
56. Raised from the dead	Ps 16:8-11	Acts 2:24-31
57. Begotten as Son of God	Ps 2:7	Acts 13:32-35
58. Ascended to God	Ps 68:18	Eph 2:8-10
59. Seated beside God	Ps 110:1	Heb 1:3, 13

APPENDIX III: SCIENCE

Scientism

Scientism is the belief that nothing can be known to be true apart from that which has been proven by the scientific method. This worldview is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, Scientism does not allow for any supernatural activity whatsoever (naturalism). Naturalism itself is a self-defeating view (see *Naturalism*; p.84).

Believers in Scientism leave no room for faith. They claim to believe only that which that can come to believe without any leaps, and rely only on things that can be measured and analyzed by the Scientific Method. People who maintain this worldview often have a general disdain for “blind faith,” and they tend to think that their system is rationally sound. However, with careful examination we see that it Scientism fails logically.

Subscribers to this system of thought believe that things can only be called “truth” after they have been proven by science. In order to understand the failure of this system, imagine a “truth box”. The only things that are allowed inside the truth box are things that have been proven by science. According to believers in Scientism, nothing that cannot be proven should be allowed in this box. The problem arises when we try to put something in the box. See, the system fails because in order to put something in the box we must rely on things that cannot be proven by the scientific method (the trustworthiness of our senses, basic mathematics, and *the scientific method itself*). Nothing can go in the box unless we first trust an unverifiable system. We must have faith in something in order to prove anything.

The notion of Scientism is self-defeating because it uses methods that its own system precludes. Scientism itself demands faith. This is a textbook example of what we have referred to as *Infanticide* (see Section I: *Types of Arguments*; p.14).

Naturalism

This section provides a brief explanation of the premise of Naturalism. It is a system of belief that is growing in popularity, especially in “intellectual” academic institutions. Often, promoters of this ideology have a sense that they are simply thinking logically, and that by eliminating all of the supernatural elements of the world they have arrived at an understanding that “makes the most sense”. However, usually, these people have not given real thought to the implications of their beliefs, and would not likely enjoying living in the universe that they have proposed. Below is one way to rationally defeat Naturalism by its own methods. This argumentation can be extremely helpful when explained correctly, but may require some study to understand fully.

Naturalism¹⁸ is the belief that, in all of history, there has never been an act of supernatural power. Naturalists maintain that all events are the product of, and can be explained using, the laws of nature. According to this belief, there is of course no God, and no other supernatural beings of any kind.

This belief has dire consequences. It brings to light questions like: if there is no God or guide for the evolutionary process, is it likely that all of our cognitive faculties are reliable? Can we trust our ability to comprehend reality and wholeheartedly believe our convictions if our minds evolved from lower species? Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind? We start to emphasize with Darwin who said, “with me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind... are of any value or at all trustworthy.”¹⁹

The issue is that Evolution is driven by survival of the fittest, and therefore, concerned with *adaptive behavior* and not with *true belief*. At its core, fitness is only determined by physical actions; survivors are the ones that are able to position and maneuver themselves in a physically advantageous way.

Evolution is directly interested only in behavior, not belief, and it is only indirectly, if at all, interested in belief, by virtue of the relation between behavior and belief. All of our ability to trust our cognitive capacities hinges on this relationship between belief and behavior: if behavior is not governed by belief then beliefs would have been

¹⁸ Plantinga, Alvin, “An Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism” Lecture. Web. 02 Aug, 2013.

¹⁹ Letter to William Graham, Don, July 3rd, 1881. In *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin Including an Autobiographical Chapter*, ed. Francis Darwin (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1887), Volume 1, pp. 315-316.

“invisible” to Evolution—in which case we would have no reason to believe that trustworthy capabilities would have been a product of Evolution. Our having evolved and survived makes it likely that our cognitive faculties are reliable *only if* it would be impossible or unlikely that creatures without trustworthy minds could have behaved in fitness-enhancing ways. All hinges on the relationship between belief and behavior during the process of Evolution.

So, how do these relate? There are four mutually exclusive possibilities: (1) *behavior is not caused by belief*. In this system, during Evolution the actions of the beings would have been driven by something other than belief (maybe neural impulses²⁰), which would have been caused by other organic conditions. Belief would not have had a place in the causal chain leading to behavior, and therefore would be invisible to Evolution. If this were true, the fact that the creatures developed an ability to think would have been random and in no way shaped by evolution. *In this case there would be an extremely low probability that the beliefs would be reliable or true.*

The second way that belief and evolution could have related during the Evolution process is that (2) beliefs effect behavior, but not because of their content. This system states that actions are motivated by all of the properties of the beliefs besides the semantic ones. Here the idea is that actions would be driven by the beliefs that are powerful within the brain due to their electrochemical and neurological properties,²¹ (the number of neurons involved, the rate and strength at which they fire) but not by properties of the belief that relate to *content*. Properties like consistency with other beliefs, logical construction, and the property of being “true” or “false” would be invisible to Evolution in this system. Clearly, *if this is the relationship between behavior and belief, we can assume that the evolved beings would be unable to trust their capacities to think.*

Also, it could be that (3) beliefs affect behavior because of their electrochemical properties AND because of their content, yet there are maladaptive—that is beliefs directly affect behavior, but are disadvantageous for survival. *In this case creatures with rational minds would die faster, so Evolution would have produced a creature that could not trust its cognitive abilities.*

Finally, it could be that (4) beliefs are connected to behavior and are also advantageous for fitness. Even in this scenario the trustworthiness of the evolved mind would not be as high as one

²⁰ This notion is widely regarded as truth in orthodox biologist circles. They believe that behavior is governed by biochemistry and all belief and emotion are shadows of these same chemical reactions.

²¹ While system (1) is popular in biologist circles, system (2) is widespread in the field of philosophy.

initially thinks. In fact, there is still no way to say definitively that this would result in reliable convictions. The problem is that if behavior is affected by belief, it is also affected by desire (and other factors—suspicion, doubt, approval, fear...) For any given action there could be hundreds of belief-desire combinations that could produce that action; very many of the belief-desire combinations that effect a movement do not rely on true belief. So, a belief-desire combination can make someone do something that is advantageous for survival even though the belief involved is not true. For example, when a person sees a tiger and they run away, this is not explicit evidence that the movement was motivated by a rational understanding. The person could have run away for any number of reasons. (he thought that the tiger's roar was the starting gun for a race, he thought that he was playing tag with the tiger, he would actually really like to be eaten, but thinks that the tiger is not going to eat him and goes to look for a better prospect) Clearly, *just because belief and desire can be beneficial for survival does not necessarily mean that the belief is true and trustworthy.*

These 4 options are the only ways in which belief and behavior could have related during the Evolution process, from a materialistic point of view. We see that no matter which one happened, it is extremely unlikely that any of them would have produced a population that could trust their cognitive abilities. So, *whichever scenario the Naturalist picks, he has to admit that it would be very unlikely that it would produce humans whose beliefs cannot be trusted.*

Here is the great fall of Naturalism. According to Naturalism, it is extremely unlikely that humans can trust their abilities to reason. So, a Naturalist could not trust his own cognition. He therefore could not trust whatever logic he has used to arrive at the conclusion that Naturalism is true. Naturalism is self-defeating because if you really believe it, you also believe that your own rationale for believing is a product of a mind that cannot be trusted.

Scientists²²

A list of Christian scientists who shaped the way that we view and study the universe. Each is among the greatest scientists of all time; all were men of great faith, driven by a desire to understand God's creation

Leonardo Di Vinci

- Father of Modern Science
- Studied dynamics, anatomy, physics, optics, biology, hydraulics...

Johannes Kepler

- Father of Physical Astronomy
- Discovered the laws of planetary motion
- "Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to nature, it befits us just to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God."

Robert Boyle

- Father of Modern Chemistry
- Developed the Gas Laws
- Led the "Boyle Lectures" (A forum for Christian apologetics)
- Gave money for the translation of the Bible into new languages

Isaac Newton

- Discovered the laws of universal gravitation
- Invented Calculus
- Published more works on faith than on math and science combined
- "I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than any profane history whatsoever."

Michael Faraday

- Widely considered the greatest physicist of all time
- Discovered electromagnetic induction
- "The Bible, and it alone, with nothing added to it or taken away from it by man, is the sole and sufficient guide for each individual, at all times and in all circumstances"

Louis Pasteur

- Developed the first vaccine
- Established Germ Theory
- Widely considered the greatest biologist of all time
- Greatest contribution to saving human lives of any man of all time
- Ridiculed by the world of biology for his belief in Creationism

²² Morris Henry M., *Men of Science Men of God* (El Cajon, CA: Creation Life Publishers, 1988), Entire.

Fields of Science

A list of some scientific fields that were fathered by Christian scientists

- Modern Science Leonardo Di Vinci (1452 - 1519)
- Physical Astronomy Johannes Kepler (1571 - 1630)
- Scientific method Francis Bacon (1561 - 1626)
- Hydrostatics Blaise Pascal (1623 - 1662)
- Hydrodynamics Blaise Pascal
- Mathematics of probability Blaise Pascal
- Chemistry Robert Boyle (1627 - 1691)
- Stratigraphy Nicolaus Stero (1631 - 1686)
- Geology Thomas Burnet (1635 - 1715)
- Statistics Sir William Petty (1623 - 1687)
- Economics Sir William Petty
- Taxonomy Carolus Linneaus (1707 - 1778)
- Ecology William Derham (1657 - 1735)
- Mineralogy Richard Kirwan (1733 - 1812)
- Electromagnetism Michael Faraday (1791 - 1867)
- Comparative anatomy Georges Curver (1769 - 1832)
- Optical mineralogy David Brewster (1781 - 1868)
- Modern atomic theory John Dalton (1766 - 1844)
- Food Chemistry William Prout (1785 - 1850)
- Computer Science Charles Brewster (1781 - 1868)
- Hydrography Matthew Maury (1806 - 1873)
- Oceanography Matthew Maury
- Anesthesiology James Simpson (1811 - 1870)
- Thermodynamics James Joule (1818 - 1889)
- Glaciology Louis Agassiz (1807 - 1873)
- Fluid mechanics George Stokes (1819 - 1903)
- Pathology Rudolph Virchow (1821 - 1902)
- Genetics Gregory Mendel (1822 - 1884)
- Insect Entomology Henri Fabre (1823 - 1915)
- Energetics William Thompson (1824 - 1907)
- Electrodynamics Joseph Clerk Maxwell (1831 - 1879)
- Riemann Geometry Bernhard Riemann (1826 - 1866)
- Vector Analysis P. G. Tait (1831 - 1901)
- Modern Electronics John Flemming (1849 - 1945)
- Isotopic Chemistry William Ramsay (1852 - 1916)

Creation Statistics

Storms

At any given time on average there are 1,800 storms of 1,300,000,000 horsepower.

A giant earth-moving machine has 3,500 horsepower and requires 1,800 gallons of fuel per day.

Just one storm can produce a rain of 4-inches of a 100 X 100 sq mile area. This would need the burning of 640,000,000 tons of coal to evaporate enough water into vapor, collected into clouds, and then 800,000,000 horsepower of refrigeration working night-and-day for 100 days.

We have a sun 93,000,000,000 miles away, lakes and oceans, and wind to do all of this.

Earth

The earth is 25,000 miles in circumference, weights 6 septillion, 588 sextillion tons, and hangs in unsupported space.

It spins at 1,000 miles per hour with absolute precision and careens through space at 1,000 miles per minutes in an orbit 580 million miles long.

Heart

An adult heart weighs < one pound. In twelve hours it does the equivalent work to lift 65 tons one inch off the ground.

Eye

Light reflected from an object enters the cornea, pupil, lens, and lands on the retina.

The retina contains two light detecting cells: rods and cones.

The cones are color sensors, and the rods make night vision possible.

The retina is paper thin, but contains 130 million light receptors (6 million cones / 8 million different colors) and 124 million rods (b/w).

Once the eye adjusts to darkness, the rods become 75,000 times more sensitive to see dimly.

These facts are not exhaustive, but are representative of the fact that our universe is incredibly massive, and inexplicably complex. This immeasurable matter and irreducible order did not happen by chance. An understanding of the awesomeness of creation will lead us to the conclusion that there had to be a creator

BioLogos Foundation²³ Statements of Belief

1. We believe the Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God. By the Holy Spirit it is the “living and active” means through which God speaks to the church today, bearing witness to God’s Son, Jesus, as the divine Logos, or Word of God.
2. We believe that God also reveals himself in and through the natural world he created, which displays his glory, eternal power, and divine nature. Properly interpreted, Scripture and nature are complementary and faithful witnesses to their common Author.
3. We believe that all people have sinned against God and are in need of salvation.
4. We believe in the historical incarnation of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man. We believe in the historical death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, by which we are saved and reconciled to God.
5. We believe that God is directly involved in the lives of people today through acts of redemption, personal transformation, and answers to prayer.
6. We believe that God typically sustains the world using faithful, consistent processes that humans describe as "natural laws." Yet we also affirm that God works outside of natural law in supernatural events, including the miracles described in Scripture. In both natural and supernatural ways, God continues to be directly involved in creation and in human history.
7. We believe that the methods of science are an important and reliable means to investigate and describe the world God has

²³ BioLogos Foundation is an organization that strives to connect the Truth of Scripture with modern scientific discoveries. They believe that God created the Earth using the process of evolution. Of course this is not the only way to reconcile the views of science and Scripture, but it is an example of thoughtful Christians honestly seeking truth. It is notable that they do not believe that evolution itself lies in contrast with the teachings of the Bible.

made. In this, we stand with a long tradition of Christians for whom Christian faith and science are mutually hospitable. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Materialism and Scientism (*p.* 82) that claim science is the sole source of knowledge and truth, that science has debunked God and religion, or that the physical world constitutes the whole of reality.

8. We believe that God created the universe, the earth, and all life over billions of years. God continues to sustain the existence and functioning of the natural world, and the cosmos continues to declare the glory of God. Therefore, we reject ideologies such as Deism that claim the universe is self-sustaining, that God is no longer active in the natural world, or that God is not active in human history.

9. We believe that the diversity and interrelation of all life on earth are best explained by the God-ordained process of evolution with common descent. Thus, evolution is not in opposition to God, but a means by which God providentially achieves his purposes. Therefore, we reject ideologies that claim that evolution is a purposeless process or that evolution replaces God.

10. We believe that God created humans in biological continuity with all life on earth, but also as spiritual beings. God established a unique relationship with humanity by endowing us with his image and calling us to an elevated position within the created order.

11. We believe that conversations among Christians about controversial issues of science and faith can and must be conducted with humility, grace, honesty, and compassion as a visible sign of the Spirit's presence in Christ's body, the Church.

APPENDIX IV: WORLD RELIGIONS

Introduction

This section is intended to give a brief look at other major world religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. We will examine each religion's view of God, man, the universe, salvation and the afterlife, morality, and worship.

Though the attempt was to present the information in an unbiased way, these summaries are imperfect explanations of the religions discussed. There may be information in this section that needs further explanation or a different perspective for better understanding.

Furthermore, there is considerable difficulty when attempting to boil down an entire system of belief and practice to a mere page summary. As a result, the summaries are not exhaustive. In some cases, important points were necessarily yet regretfully omitted.

On a similar note, many of these religions are widely practiced and interpreted. So, though the information in the section is truthful and presented in an honest attempt give an accurate picture of the different beliefs, some practitioners of these religions might find some of the statements disagreeable to their particular convictions—this a problem with any general statement about religions.

Therefore, this section is not to be used to debate practitioners of these religions. Of course, when engaging in conversation with a practitioner of any of these religions, it would be helpful to devote more time to the study of a person's particular sect rather than to rely on a brief summary of the religion such as this one. Nevertheless, he section is useful for giving brief background information in order to allow us to speak intelligently about religions that are foreign to us. We should always strive to better understand the convictions of those who disagree with us in order that we can relate to their established thoughts.

Islam

Islam was founded by Mohammad in the 7th century A.D. It is based on the notion that Mohammed was the “seal of the prophets”. He is considered a prophet like those of the Old Testament of the Bible, and he taught that Jesus was also a prophet. The Koran is revered as the final revelation from God.

Islam promotes a radical monotheism, referring to **God** as Allah. Any division of God, such as Trinitarianism or the divinity of Christ is rejected. Allah is mostly regarded as a Just God. His justice is perfect, and his majesty and might is often portrayed in the Koran. His mercy and compassion, though also praised, is usually seen in Allah’s provision of prophets to deliver a message of repentance and compliance with Allah’s laws.

Muslims see **man and the universe** as the product of a deliberate creation by an omnipotent, personal God. Muslims have high regard for creation and the order of the world; they believe that the universe was created for the benefit of man. The presence of God in the world is not seen through miracles or supernatural signs, but through the order of the universe and through knowledge of the one true miracle, the Koran. Each human is endowed with taqwa, a divine spark that allows people to perceive truth. For this reason, conscience is considered the greatest value in Islamic tradition.

Islam teaches that **salvation** depends on a person’s actions and attitudes, and that while the work of God is sometimes effective in bringing about salvation, God usually merely invites people to accept his guidance. On the Day of Judgment, Allah’s justice will be powerful. Those who live according to the truth as best they could will receive mercy. However, for those who fail to accept Allah’s guidance there will be violent justice. The Koran has very vivid descriptions of Heaven and Hell; heaven is described in terms of worldly delights, and the horrors of hell are depicted with extreme detail.

Islamic **morality** is a mix of genuine acts of love and legalistic acts of obligation. Muhammad is pictured in the Koran as a loving person, helping the poor and slow to take revenge. Although the Koran worked to elevate the status of women in the contemporary Arab society, women are still regarded more as temptations to sin for men than as human beings with their own responsibilities before God.

Mohammed is not **worshipped** in Islam; only Allah is. Because salvation relies on the deeds of humans, even Allah cannot ultimately be leaned on for salvation. His guidance is given through words: the Koran. For this reason the Koran is probably the most highly regarded text in the whole world.

Judaism

The small nation of Israel was repeatedly defeated and finally dispersed throughout the world. Thus, even though Judaism is closely tied to one cultural group, it has had major effects on many other religions. Their authoritative texts include the Old Testament along with a large number of writings from Jewish authors.

The core belief that there is an all powerful, loving **God** who is just is essential to Jewish thought. God is not merely a supreme force, but a person with emotions. He is a God with whom Jews can have a relationship. The Jews pray that God would draw near to them, and the tension between a relational God that is close to men and a God that is completely different from humans and above creation is a theme in Jewish literature. God is seen as continually active in creation.

Jews consider the world to be created by God and “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God made creation as an act of His love, benevolence, and desire for relationship with man. Yet, because of the existence of sin in the world, there is suffering and injustice. Still, **man and the universe** have a natural dependence on God, and a pressing need to live in harmony with God and other men.

Salvation and eternal existence for Jews comes as a direct result of man’s moral behavior and attitudes. There is no Christian notion of saving Grace for Jews, but they believe that God offers repentance to even the most wicked of men. Jews still look for the coming of the Messiah who will hand out eternal judgment and reward. There is not much detail about the afterlife in the Old Testament.

Ultimately, **morality** of man is considered the most proper concern while here on earth. The Hebrew Torah or “Law” refers in Judaism into a total patten of behavior, applicable to all aspects of life. The Jews have developed extensive coding and laws of their own, based on the teachings of the Torah. Legalism has been a perennial problem for Judaism. Morality has always been essential to Jewish life; the prophets were probably the first proponents of social justice in the ancient world. There is a burden for elders of the faith to share the precepts and customs of Judaism with younger children.

Ritual and ceremony are very important to Jewish culture today. The purpose of this type of **worship** is to hallow all one’s life to share one’s life with God. Jews have a full calendar of daily, weekly, and yearly celebrations and festivals. A major part of the culture is remembrance of the history of God’s deliverance of His nation, Israel.

Hinduism

Hinduism was formed as a confluence of the Greek pantheon of Gods and indigenous Indian traditions of meditation to form a loose combination of beliefs and practices. “Orthodox” Hindus can be either pious worshippers of a god or atheists, self-negating ascetics or men of the world.

Many **Gods** and incarnations of Gods are worshipped in the Hindu tradition, foremost of which is Brahman. Each God has its own identity and characteristics, and is regarded differently by different sects and even individuals. The Gods are often amoral, and the fact that they are unbound by normal human constraints is celebrated. They are also often depicted in sexual imagery.

In Hinduism, the creation of **man and the universe** was not the creation of a personal God, but rather a sort of unconscious emanation from the divine. As a result it is: (1) beginningless, and some would say endless, and (2) unreal, an illusion. They believe that the universe is constantly being created and destroyed in periods of about 4 billion years, or “pulsating”. The universe is a huge series of repeated cycles, each cycle being nearly a copy of the last. Each soul is also continuous, and humans experience reincarnation. The underlying reality of the universe is suffering and pain, because life is full of distress only thinly veiled by temporary pleasures, beneath the unreality and misery, the human soul is identical with the supreme God who has no part in this sorry universe.

There are four ways that a soul can reach **salvation** from the endless cycle of rebirths and misery: the way of knowledge, the way of devotion or love, and the way of action. Salvation is understood by some Hindus to be achieving eternal rest in the arms of a loving God, and by some to be a dissolving of all personality into the abyss of Brahman.

Hindu **morality** is driven by their understanding of Karma. They believe that the universe perfectly pays back every action; good people will have good lives as they gain better karma.

Hindu **worship** is personal and varies greatly among different groups. Generally, figurines are used to represent Gods within the family home and within the town. Animals such as cows, monkeys, and snakes are revered. Certain rivers like the Ganges in particular are thought holy, and bathing in them is thought to improve karma. Hindus often memorize scriptures act out sacred stories in plays and songs. Holy men are also revered, and Hindus hope that through serving them some of their holiness might rub off and aid them in salvation.

Buddhism

Buddhism arose from atheistic strands of Hinduism in the 6th century B.C. It is largely based on the teachings of the Buddha. However, there are now different schools of thought within Christianity, and various interpretations of his idea of the “middle way” that abstains from both extravagance and asceticism. There is no absolute **God** in Buddhism, and Buddha believed that those seeking spiritual enlightenment need to focus on their own spiritual paths rather than depend on a divine figure for help. Buddha did not call himself a divine figure, and did not claim to have received divine inspiration. He considered himself an example to other monks and spiritual seekers.

The origins of **man and the universe** are left unexplained in Buddhism. However, Buddhism does begin with a critique of the world of appearances and of man. Buddhism, like Hinduism, teaches that the system of reincarnation is painful because life is characterized by impermanence. Buddhism also teaches that there is no self. Humans are not self-determined beings with souls, but rather only a series of occurrences that appear to be individual persons and things. Once the individual is broken down into parts, it is seen that nothing is really holding them together. (One common issue with Buddhism is the notion of reincarnation and striving for salvation without a self. What exactly is reincarnated?)

Buddhism sees ignorance, rather than sin, as the main roadblock to **salvation and the afterlife**. They believe that the illusion that the “self” and the universe really exist is what prevents us from achieving peace. Only when we deconstruct our images of self and the universe can we end the mad course of the world. Buddhist doctrine can be summed up by the four Noble Truths: (1) Life is suffering, (2) The origin of suffering is cravings, (3) the cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving, (4) Buddhism leads to the cessation of craving. Only then can one be transferred to a new mental state called Nirvana, which literally means, “blowing out,” like a candle. Nothing can be said about Nirvana except that it is a permanent, transcendent state.

Buddhists follow the Five Precepts as their general system of **morality**: No killing, stealing, fornication, wrong speech, or drugs and alcohol. Some Buddhists sects promote generosity and charity, but most are concerned with that which strictly leads to nirvana.

Buddhists do not **worship** anything, but pay respect to those who have become enlightened by reverence and memory of them often using statues.

APPENDIX V: JONATHAN EDWARDS’ RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolved that I will do all I think or say to the glory of God and not to take into consideration my own comfort, profit or pleasure.
2. Resolved if ever I shall fall and grow dull so as to neglect to keep any of these resolutions, I shall repent when I come to my senses again.
3. Resolved never to lose one moment of time but use it to the most profitable way I can.
4. Resolved to live with all my might.
5. Resolved never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were my last hour of my life or before the last trumpet blew.
6. Resolved to act in word and deed as if nobody had been so vile as I to live as if I had committed the same sins or had the same infirmities or failings as others to confess my own sins and miser to God when I am prone to look on shame at others.
7. Resolved to think much on the brevity and how short ones life is. Psalm 90:17 :) Teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart to wisdom.
8. Resolved when I feel pain or the least of discomfort to think of the pains of martyrdom - the torments of Hell.
9. Resolved if I see a problem to try to solve it or if someone need help to help them.
10. Resolved if I do help to never become proud or puffed up or seek the credit (glory).
11. Resolved never to do anything out of anger or revenge.
12. Resolved never to speak evil of anyone - to dishonor them unless for some real good reason.
13. Resolved to love all of mankind - walk in humility and look to my own faults and failings.
14. Resolved that I will live as to have no regrets or wish I had done something before I die.
15. Resolved to live each and every day at all times with the things of Eternity always on my mind and heart. Live for Eternal Purposes - may I not find joy in temporary things but in heavenly things.
16. Resolved to be self controlled in all areas of my life.
17. Resolved to get to the bottom of an evil thought or deed. I commit and repent and do it no more.
18. Resolved to examine carefully and constantly in me - what is the thing that causes me in the least to doubt the love of God and the assurance of His love to cast it away.
19. Resolved to study the scripture so diligently, constantly and frequently - as that I may find growth for me and others to observe.

20. Resolved to strive every week to have grown in Grace and closer to God.
21. Resolved never to doubt that God hears every prayer I pray to Him -never to doubt His forgiveness - every sin I confess.
22. Resolved to live peacefully with all men as much as I can.
23. Resolved only to speak the truth or what is truthful, never vain, frivolous or empty talking.
24. Resolved to inquire every night as I am going to bed, where have I been negligent; what sin have I committed and where have I denied myself.
25. Resolved to inquire every night, every week, month, year - what would I have done better!
26. Resolved to frequently review my dedication to God to keep my love and heart solely His and to keep the love burning bright - to repent of a lukewarm heart.
27. Resolved to never forget I am not my own but Gods and never to live for myself but God.
28. Resolved that nothing but God, Gods word and Gods will shall influence how I live to shun anything that is not of Christ-like character.
29. Resolved never to allow any pleasure, grief, joy or sorrow, nor an affection at all, or circumstance to hinder my devotion to God.
30. Resolved to live in utmost respect and honor to all family members especially my own mother and father.
31. Resolved to look often at the state of my soul.
32. Resolved never to say if only I could live my life over again I would have done such and such (no regrets)
33. Resolved to always be mindful of my Lord Jesus Christ to trust and confide and consecrate myself wholly to Him.
34. Resolved to live as if I had already seen the Joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell!
35. Resolved never to slacken my devotion and resolve to God.
36. Resolved when I fear misfortunes and adversities - to examine if I have been faithful to do my part and trust; repent of any sin and trust God for the outcome.
37. Resolved to act loving, respectfully, Godly towards all and when I am feeling ungodly to quickly repent.
38. Resolved in all situations to act Christ-like in His nature and character. Did I speak lovingly?
39. Resolved to pray and groan and intercede with all my heart.
40. Resolved to live a life of complete openness and honesty before God and others. No secret sins or hidden ways but to confess often and openly to God. (All sins, temptations, difficulties, sorrows, fears, hopes, desires)

“Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God’s help, I do humbly entreat Him by His grace to enable me to keep these resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to his will, for Christ’s sake.”

King Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become as I am, except for these chains.”

Acts 26:28-29