



*Welcome to the **Reaching The Postmodern Generation Seminar**. I am so honored to be with you. Words cannot adequately express how much you, your faith, and your family mean to me.*

This material was prepared with much prayer, study, and input from godly leaders, teachers, and writers. We trust it will be of great value in enriching your marriage and family. Solomon has said there is nothing new under the sun. So, you may see and hear some information you have heard before. It is wise to use this material to remind you of truths you learned and to teach you new principles to help you grow in your faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ while equipping you to explain the Gospel and Word of God with accuracy, clarity, urgency, compassion, and courage.

As you follow along in this workbook, you will accumulate much information. If you miss filling in a point here or there, just skip it and go on to the next. When a session ends, ask your spouse or a friend to help you complete what you missed. You are invited to request a completed workbook by contacting me at stanponz@makeitclear.org.

I want to make myself available to answer any of your questions and offer Biblical advice. Remember, God has brought us together to help each other have the best marriages and families possible. Let us keep one another in each other's prayers.

*For His glory alone,
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Reaching the Postmodern Generation

My Journey of Faith

- I grew up in a non-religious, mostly agnostic home.
- My parents were tolerant of religions if the religions were tolerant.
- They instilled a “healthy” fear of death and hell.
- After a couple of near-death experiences, I cried out to “God” for salvation truth.
- God graciously used much of what we will learn today as His road to bring me to faith in Christ.

My Journey of Ministry

- When I began ministry, I intended to help non-Christians come to faith in Christ alone and become fully obedient worshippers of God.
- I found that with kids and middle school-age kids, it was relatively easy to reach them.
- It was more difficult for high school-age youth.
- Then, with college-age graduates and young professionals, it was nearly impossible to reach them for Christ.
- I kept at it but felt like I was hitting a door and could not get past the threshold.

My Journey of Reaching a Postmodern Mindset

- In the late 1990s, I was exposed to some of the great Christian thinkers on philosophy and apologetics from BIOLA University and Talbot Seminary, who became my friends and mentors and helped me better understand secular and Christian Worldviews.
- In 2003, I used what I learned to conduct my first of many Bible studies and weekend retreats for college students, graduates, and young professionals, helping them better grasp Christianity.
- But something still seemed to be missing. I had the ***correct and clear message of salvation*** and a ***better understanding of the secular and Christian worldviews***. However, I did not have a ***framework for connecting with those with a postmodern mindset***.
- So, I went on a journey to discover how to reach the postmodernist. This journey took me through researching books, talking to those in “the battle,” listening to those not “yet” in God’s kingdom, and meeting with those who went on the journey and placed their faith alone in Jesus Christ. I am very grateful to Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, who wrote the book *I Once Was Lost*, published by InterVarsity Press, from which some of this material came. While I am

still listening, learning, making mistakes, and adjusting my approach, I have discovered the following tools for **Reaching the Postmodern Mindset**.

What Terms Need to Be Understood?

As we begin our journey to reach the postmodern generation, it is wise to define terms to better understand this subject.

1. Postmodernism

- It is a way of thinking about culture, philosophy, art, and many other ways. The term has been used in many ways, but some things are common. Postmodernism says that there is no absolute truth. It says that knowledge is always made or invented and not discovered.
- It is socially constructed and, therefore, dependent on the nature of the experiences of individuals constructing that reality. Since individuals have different experiences, we can have divergent yet valid views about reality and its conceptualizations. The postmodern way of thinking suggests that theories are socially constructed; therefore, what we already know is not universally true, and that there may be multiple truths that exist.

2. Worldview

- "It is a way one views the whole world. And since people have vastly different views of the world, depending on the perspective from which they view the world, it is clear that one's worldview makes a world of difference. A worldview is a way of viewing or interpreting all of reality. It is an interpretive framework through which or by which one makes sense out of the data of life and the world." – Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on Worldviews*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 11.
- Everyone has a worldview, an interpretive framework to view life and the world. A worldview is a perspective through which you understand and approach life and the world.
- Having a worldview is much like:
 - Wearing glasses or contact lenses. Have you ever tried wearing someone else's? A worldview is much like a pair of glasses. The issue is that you have a prescription that helps you see reality as it is.
 - Using a water filter. How many use a water filter on your faucet? The water often tastes poorly and may have impurities if not properly filtered. Having a biblical

Christian worldview filters out the impurities of falsehood and error.

3. Secular Worldview

- It emphasizes human reason and rationality, focusing on the natural world and human experience rather than divine revelation or religious authority. It rejects religious dogma and emphasizes the separation of church and state, advocating for a neutral society where all citizens are treated equally regardless of religious beliefs.
- Humankind is at the center, and "man is the measure" -- humanity is the ultimate norm by which truth and values are determined. According to Secular Humanism, all reality and life center upon human beings. We act as God. Our friends at Summit Ministries have helped explain the basics of a secular worldview across ten major categories.
- Its elements show a comprehensive view of the world from a materialistic, naturalistic standpoint. Therefore, the Secular Humanist sees no place for the supernatural or immaterial. "There is no place in the Humanist worldview for either immortality or God in the valid meanings of those terms. Humanism contends that instead of the gods creating the cosmos, the cosmos created the gods in the individualized form of human beings giving rein to their imagination."¹
- The following elements of the Secular Worldview naturally flow from this core foundation:
 - **Theology – Atheism**
Secular Humanists believe that there is no God and that science and the scientific process have made God obsolete. Humanists believe that only matter – things we can touch, feel, prove, or study – exists and has always existed. Man is only matter (no soul or spirit). No supernatural explanation is needed for the existence of this matter.
 - **Philosophy – Naturalism**
Naturalism says only matter exists – things you can touch, feel, and study. The humanists trust the scientific method as the only sure way of knowing anything, so if something cannot be observed, tested, and experimented on, it doesn't exist. Since you can't observe God, hell, the human mind, or the spirit or conduct experiments on them, they can't – and don't – exist.
 - **Ethics – Moral Relativism**
Since the Secular Worldview rejects the existence of God, human beings get to decide on standards and values.

Humanists believe that science, reason, and historical experience are sufficient guides for determining right or wrong in any situation. These standards will not always be the same, as each person has a different background and reasoning. Therefore, the standards and values – ethics – are relative. The Humanist Manifesto II states, “We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational and does not need theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest.”

- **Science – Neo-Darwinian Evolution**

The theory of Neo-Darwinism purports that natural selection acts on genetic variations within individuals in populations and that mutations (especially random copying errors in DNA) provide the primary source of these variations. Because favorable mutations seem rare, Neo-Darwinism contends that evolution will be a slow, gradual process. Without naturalistic evolution, there is no Secular Worldview. Anything else would demand a Creator, meaning that man is not the source of everything. Secular Humanists believe that science has proven the theory of evolution to the extent that it is no longer a theory but a scientific fact. According to this “fact,” man is the most highly evolved of all creatures and is now responsible for directing and aiding the evolutionary process.

- **Humanist Psychology – Monism (Self-Actualization)**

The Secular Worldview focuses on man’s inherent goodness and predicts that individuals can achieve mental health by fulfilling physical or material needs. It is the psychology of self-actualization. Monism means that man is only body – no soul, mind, or conscience exists. If man is only matter, then his actions are simply the result of mechanical impulses. This notion, called behaviorism, is inconsistent because it directly contradicts the Humanist’s atheistic theology and naturalistic philosophy, which claim that man is the master of his fate.

- **Humanist Sociology – Non-Traditional Family, Church, and State**

Humanists use sociology to explain the enormous gulf between their view that man is capable of perfection and the real world of evil. They say civilization and culture shape the individual. Thus, man is evil primarily because his cultural and social environments are evil, not through any fault of his own – society and culture have influenced

man's actions and have stifled this inherent goodness. One of the most stifling of human institutions is the family. Government-sponsored education provides the most desirable method for abolishing outdated social institutions and ensuring the development of a free society.

- **Law – Positive Law**

In secular humanism, the state is given sovereignty, which is entirely rational because no higher power is considered. Just as man is seen as the final word in ethics, the world state is seen as the only source of legal "truth." The Humanist believes that crime is more the fault of the social order than an inherent flaw in the criminal.

- **Politics – Liberalism, Progressivism, Secular World Government**

According to the Secular Worldview, Humanists believe that the world government is the next logical step on man's evolutionary road to utopia, as man is now conscious of his evolution and is responsible for directing it. Also, a goal of Humanism is world peace, and a global state can best achieve it. The state, appropriately directed, plays a central role in guiding man. As Julian Huxley said, "To have any success in fulfilling his destiny as the controller or agent of future evolution on earth, [man] must become one single inter-thinking group with one general framework of ideas..."

- **Economics – Interventionism**

Most Humanists believe in some type of interventionist economy because this is more consistent with their belief that man is an evolving creature who will become capable of planning the perfect economy. Man, who must "save himself," must be in absolute control of all aspects of his universe. Thus, the world's economic system must be strictly controlled through central planning – that is, the government must be granted authority over man's economic affairs.

- **History – Historical Evolution**

The Secular Worldview sees Earth's history from a strictly naturalistic vantage point, meaning there has been no supernatural influence. The history of man and the universe is the history of evolutionary activity. Propelled without design by "blind natural selection," history has moved from simplicity to complexity. Some Humanists view Artificial Intelligence – the computer – as the next step in historical evolution.

- **Secular Worldview – Conclusion**

The Secular Worldview is a comprehensive conception of the world from a naturalistic standpoint. "The ultimate failure of Secular Humanism is in its very nature it promises what it cannot fulfill. By encouraging people to put their trust in earthly happiness, it programs them for disillusionment. This is in large measure the reason why the history of the modern world has been characterized, intellectually, by philosophies of pessimism like Existentialism and by often-rancorous bitterness over various plans for worldly improvement. In the twentieth century, mass slaughter has been perpetrated not by religious believers in opposition to heresy but by secularists convinced that their plan for a worldly utopia is the only possible one."²

In essence, a **secular worldview** offers a framework for understanding the world and living life based on human reason, naturalism, and humanist values while advocating for a society free from religious coercion and discrimination.

¹ Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*, (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982) p. 145.

² James Hitchcock, *What is Secular Humanism? Why Humanism Became Secular and How It Is Changing Our World*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1982) p. 141.

4. Postmodern Christian Worldview

- It is often called postmodern theology, is a theological movement that interprets Christian theology through the lens of postmodern philosophy. It acknowledges the influence of postmodern thought on culture and seeks to understand and respond to it within the context of faith.
- Here's a more detailed explanation:
 - **Rejection of Grand Narratives**
Postmodernism generally rejects the idea of universal, objective truths or grand narratives that explain the world. Postmodern theology also questions the concept of a single, all-encompassing Christian narrative.
 - **Emphasis on Interpretation and Meaning**
Postmodernism underscores the importance of interpretation and meaning-making in comprehending the world. Postmodern theology seeks to understand how individuals and communities make sense of Christian faith in their own contexts.
 - **Critique of Modernism**
Postmodernism, as a philosophical movement, is a reaction against modernism, which often emphasizes reason, objectivity, and universal principles. Postmodern

theology critiques modern approaches to faith that may overemphasize reason or universal truths.

- **Relativity and Subjectivity**
Postmodernism acknowledges the relativity of truth and the subjectivity of experience. Postmodern theology recognizes that different individuals and communities may interpret the Christian faith differently.
- **Engagement with Post-Heideggerian Thought**
Postmodern theology often engages with post-Heideggerian thought, including poststructuralism, phenomenology, and deconstruction, to understand the nature of truth, language, and meaning.
- Examples of Postmodern Theological Approaches:
 - **Liberation Theology**
Liberation theology, with its focus on the experiences of marginalized communities, can be seen as a form of postmodern theology.
 - **Process Theology**
Process theology, which emphasizes God's relational and dynamic nature, can also be seen as a form of postmodern theology.
 - **Narrative Theology**
Narrative theology, which emphasizes the importance of stories and narratives in understanding faith, can also be seen as a form of postmodern theology.

In essence, a **Postmodern Christian Worldview** is a theological approach that seeks to engage with postmodern philosophy while remaining faithful to Christian traditions and beliefs.

5. Christian (Biblical) Worldview

- Christians use a comprehensive framework of beliefs and ideas based on accurate biblical interpretation to understand themselves, the world, and their relationship with God. It's a way of life shaped by biblical principles and teachings, influencing how Christians interpret reality, make decisions, and interact with others.
- Here's a more detailed look at the core beliefs of a Christian worldview:
 - **God's Existence and Sovereignty**
Christians believe in a single, all-powerful God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, with ultimate authority.
 - **Humanity's Fallen State**

They believe that humanity was created in God's image but fell into sin, resulting in a broken world and a separation from God.

- **Jesus Christ as Savior**
Christians believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to atone for humanity's sins, and rose again, offering salvation and reconciliation with God.
- **Eternal Salvation**
It is received by believing in Jesus Christ alone, Who is sufficient to assure eternal life.
- **The Bible as God's Word**
The Bible is regarded as the authoritative, inspired Word of God, sufficient, providing guidance and truth for living.
- **Purpose and Meaning**
Christians believe that God has a purpose for their lives and the world and that their faith provides meaning and direction and the glory of God as the object.
- **Impact and Application:**
 - **Ethical Thinking**
A Christian worldview provides a framework for ethical decision-making, guiding Christians in living and interacting with others.
 - **Understanding the World**
It offers a way to interpret history, culture, and other aspects of the world through a lens of God's creation and redemption.
 - **Personal Identity**
It shapes a Christian's understanding of their identity, relationship with God, and place in the world.
 - **Living Out Faith**
A Christian worldview encourages Christians to live out their faith daily, reflecting God's love and truth in all they do.

In essence, a Christian worldview is a way of thinking, believing, and living rooted in the Bible's teachings and shaped by the belief in God's love, grace, and ultimate purpose.

Two Questions Every Worldview Should Answer

- Who is God?
- What is man (human)

Why Is A Biblical Christian Worldview Important?

A Biblical Christian worldview is crucial because it provides a framework for understanding the world, guiding moral decisions, and shaping one's identity based on God's truth. It helps individuals resist negative influences, develop a deep faith, and live a life that reflects God's character. Ultimately, it offers a sense of purpose and meaning, helping Christians navigate challenges and find stability in a changing world.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

1. Foundation for Truth and Morality:

- A biblical worldview is rooted in the unchanging truth of God's Word, the Bible.
- It provides a framework for ethical thinking and decision-making, helping Christians distinguish between right and wrong.
- It helps individuals avoid being swayed by societal pressures and cultural trends contradicting God's principles.

2. Identity and Purpose:

- A Christian worldview helps individuals develop a strong sense of identity as children of God.
- It provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life, recognizing that everything God created has a purpose.
- It reminds Christians that they are part of God's story of redemption and have a unique role to play in His plan.

3. Resilience and Stability:

- In a world that can be challenging and uncertain, a Christian worldview offers stability and a sense of anchor.
- It helps individuals navigate life's difficulties by reminding them of God's faithfulness and promises.
- It fosters a strong faith that can withstand hardship and adversity.

4. Influence on Decisions and Actions:

- A biblical worldview shapes people's beliefs and how they respond to various situations.
- It encourages individuals to make choices that align with God's will and principles.
- It influences how people view different issues, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and media choices.

5. Deepening Faith and Spiritual Growth:

- A biblical worldview encourages ongoing learning and application of God's Word, leading to a deeper understanding of faith.

- It fosters a desire to grow spiritually and become more like Christ.
- It helps individuals develop a comprehensive faith that stands firm against contrary ideologies.

It is not difficult to conclude that Christians are in a battle between having a secular worldview and a biblical Christian worldview. In this battle, there are two kinds of Christians: captors and captives. Which of the two are you?

Scripture states three principles about this battle:

1. We are warned not to be taken captive (Colossians 2:8).
2. We are commanded to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). What is a stronghold? Some say it is territorial spirits or a bad habit you can't break. But Scripture says arguments and pretensions set up against the knowledge of God are the strongholds. It would be the philosophy of this world system.
3. We are to set the captives free (2 Timothy 2:22-25).

The Lord wants us to be captors, not captives.

Every Christian must develop and live by a biblical worldview. By doing so, you will:

1. Become a faithful disciple of Christ.
2. Know what you believe and why.
3. Think more consistently.
4. Be able to engage our culture without compromise.
5. Be faithful ambassadors of Christ.

Two Foundational Truths of how a person becomes a Christian in a postmodern world.

1. **It is a Mystery** - *"Jesus also said, 'Here is another illustration of what the Kingdom of God is like: A farmer planted seeds in a field, and then he went on with his other activities. As the days went by, the seeds sprouted and grew without the farmer's help'" (Mark 4:26,27)*
 - Salvation is of God, not programs and procedures.
 - Salvation is a sovereign work of God using His Spirit, His Word, and His people to communicate the Good News correctly, clearly, courageously, compassionately, and compellingly.
2. **It is Organic** - *"because the earth produces crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle."* (Mark 4:28,29)

- Just like there are similar seasons of growth, there are similar stages of development. First, the seed, then the leaf, then the head, then the grain, and then it is ripe and ready for harvest!

It is both a **mystery** and **organic!**

Five Thresholds of The Postmodern Path to Faith In Christ

1. Move from distrusting to trusting a Christian.

- Establish authenticity

2. Move from complacency to curiosity about Christ.

- Curious about a Christian's faith
- Curious about who Christ is

3. Move from being closed to change to being open to change in their thinking.

- Willing to examine their beliefs and what Christians believe about Christ
- Willing to make a change
- Willing to investigate the "cost" of change

4. Move from meandering to seeking after Christ.

- Needing to seek final answers
- Needing to seek a resolution to the objections
- Needing to seek, with the purpose of finding

5. Move to cross the threshold by placing faith alone in Jesus Christ and becoming a Christ follower.

- Needing to make a faith decision

What to Keep in Mind About These Five Thresholds

1. They are liberating to learn. Freed from boxes, assertive evangelism, one-style gospel presentations, to be patient, prayerful, and empowered to get involved in the specific unfolding mysteries.
2. We can ask ourselves, where are they on this path? What's the next threshold?
3. Lostness looks different to each person.
 - Some are lost and get caught up in the scenery of life and go further in their lostness.
 - Some are lost and feel confident they can find their way back after the next turn.
 - Some know they are lost and ask for directions.

4. It is essential to listen to the person so we can guide them on their journey.
5. Not everyone will cross all five thresholds. *"The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts."* See Mark 4:14,15.
6. Those who cross all five thresholds and trust Christ as Savior for eternal life may not show the same fruit. *"The sower sows the word...These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."*
See Mark 4:14,16-20.

THRESHOLD #1: Trusting a Christian

- Trust can be earned
- Trust can be built
- Trust is sweet and valuable and *FRAGILE*
- Trust is necessary for the journey of faith

The Age of Distrust

- There is an assault on God, religion, the Church, and Christianity
- Negative thoughts fill the minds of non-Christians when they find out we are Christians
- The apostle Paul experienced distrust from non-Christians. *"Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?'"* See Acts 17:18. They called him a "babbling."
- Jesus pitched His tent in a world of distrustful people. See (Philippians 2:6, John 1:14)
- We are to build and earn trust

Reactions When We Are Distrusted

- We defend ourselves and Christianity
- We get bruised egos. We feel indignant, persecuted, and offended.

- We avoid the person. We distance ourselves from the opposition and spend more time with people like us!
- We judge others. *They* are the ones with the problems, sins, habits, hang-ups, hurts, and *hell!*
- We argue with them. We unleash our potent logic of apologetics.

Five Ways to Build or Rebuild Trust

Building trust can take a day or years. Trust needs to be established for effective evangelism. We must be unfazed by distrust but also work on earning trust. Building trust isn't just to overcome distrust but is a way of life for all Christians. Jesus said, "Come and see." Jesus always built trust by spending time with non-Christians.

1. PRAY...1) When we want to defend ourselves; 2) for them, their families, and issues in their lives.
2. LEARN...1) When we are bruised or want to bruise others; 2) what is the world the person is in that made him so distrustful; 3) when to spend more time with them as Jesus did in letting the bleeding woman tell her story (Mark 5).
3. BOND...1) When we want to avoid; 2) when we should move into their lives.
4. AFFIRM...1) When we want to judge them; 2) when we should authentically agree with them as Paul did to the Athenians (Acts 17). *Our aloofness can come across as judgment!*
5. WELCOME...1) When we want to argue; 2) when we should become open and vulnerable. Jesus said, "Come and see" (John 1). The early church did this when they were hospitable (Acts 2).

Trust Quotient

How much trust does a family member or a friend have in me? Ask yourself these simple questions about relationships:

1. Have they called me when they had a problem?
2. Have I ever called them for help with anything?
3. Have they ever been honest with me when they were angry or sad?
4. Do I hide my honest emotions or moods from them?
5. Have they ever asked for advice?
6. Do we ever just have fun together?
7. When do I feel most connected with them, and what are we doing then?

Three Pitfalls to Avoid

1. Avoid relativism. As you seek to build trust, beware of compromising on the uniqueness of Christ. No one likes a bait and switch or to be manipulated.
2. Be with them, but don't sin. Be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.
3. Don't walk unwisely into temptation. Know your limits and struggles. What you do should not become a sin and hinder you spiritually.

THRESHOLD #2: Becoming Curious

Just because someone trusts you does not mean they become curious about Jesus. However, our minds are built by God to be inquisitive. Ask questions and get answers.

The postmodernist may seem apathetic about Christ but not so much about you. Becoming curious takes time. Sometimes, it can look like this: *apathetic (contentment with their life, "all is good") > passively curious > actively curious (hangs around Christians and Christian "things") > engagement in Christian "things" > exchanging ideas.*

CAUTION: Curiosity does not mean 1) an actual change of mind or 2) they are open or even seeking Jesus.

How to Provoke Curiosity

1. Encourage questions. Jesus asked questions even though He knew all the answers. It is stated Jesus was asked 183 questions in the Gospels. He only answered three of them. And He asked 307 questions back. So, ask questions and encourage questions. You may want to start with these questions:
 - Have you ever had a spiritual experience? Would you like to have one?
 - What is your take on this whole "God thing"? What do you think God is like?
 - Why do so many people hide behind religion?
 - What do you think is wrong with Christianity today?
 - What do you think life is about? Do you think you have a destiny?
 - Do you think people are more spiritually interested today than five years ago?
 - What is the most significant thing that has happened to you in the last month?

2. Use parables or stories. Jesus did because it drew people to Him (Mark 4). He used common everyday things, events, and people to arouse curiosity.
3. Live curiously. Jesus stirred people's curiosity by refusing to accept their assumptions about Him. Do things that make people curious. They may even ask, "Why did you do _____." And you may answer, "Because _____."

The Focus Is on Jesus Christ and His Kingdom

It is not at this threshold to expound on theology or need to answer every question. That's for when the person becomes a seeker. Becoming more curious takes time. Don't douse curiosity by overloading them with answers to questions they aren't even asking. Moving someone from being complacent to being curious is huge!

THRESHOLD #3: *Becoming Open to Change*

Before actively seeking God and becoming a Christian, the postmodernist had to be open to change – change in their thinking that may also lead to change in their behavior. Using a farming analogy: The ground is tilled (building trust), the seed has been planted and watered (becoming curious), and now the turning point has been reached: In these ripe conditions, will the seed break through its case and germinate? Will the process of growth take a significant turn? While some go from curious to change, many do not. This threshold seems to be the most difficult. See the rich young ruler in Mark 10. He seems to have trusted Christ (Threshold #1) and came to Christ with questions (Threshold #2). But when Jesus took it deeper, the young man did not change his thinking.

It can be a healing or horrific threshold. So, 1) be patient as the person "tries on" God; 2) be prayerful – intensely so; 3) be probing – when they are on "the edge," you might ask, "Don't you want to be open to new thinking and new things?" Here is what Jesus did:

- Jesus touched the pain of the broken and dishonest. See John 4
- Jesus mobilized the self-pitying and fearful. See John 5, where He healed the paralytic.
- Jesus agitated the complacent and glib. See John 3 with Nicodemus.
- Jesus connected the dots for the confused. See John 5:19 – 47.

Soul-Awakening Events

These events are pre-evangelism, not targeted at seekers (although anyone may attend), but are more for skeptics or cynics.

1. Choose relevant topics. Select topics they are already considering, like movies, pop music, or current events.
2. Find unique angles. Surprise them in how you come up with them. Put yourself in their shoes and approach the topic from their perspective. Ask questions.
3. Use the arts like drama, music, comedy, and art.
4. Create a safe place. They need a place of anonymity to explore spiritual things at arm's length until they "warm up" to God.
5. Lead, don't "drive" or pressure. Avoid two mistakes: 1) we can mistake them for seekers and offer too many "altar calls"; 2) we can offer no leadership, and they meander in no direction, missing the opportunity to move to the next threshold.

REVIEW: We should be *prayerful* and *probing*.

THRESHOLD #4: Becoming a Christ Seeker

This threshold may not be easy to "see," but you can often hear it in their questions. They are not meandering but *purposefully* seeking. Phantom seekers do much of what seekers do but without the urgency. Genuine seekers are on a quest.

1. Seekers see Jesus, not just God. They want to know Christ, not just "connect to the divine."
2. Seekers count the cost. They have been around the Word healthy Christian communities and know there are expectations after becoming a Christian.
3. Seekers spend time with Christians. By this "threshold," they have gone beyond just trusting Christians and being curious and open to change...they are seeking Christ!

Sometimes, from moving someone from being open to change to becoming a genuine seeker, it is helpful to challenge them to be a seeker.

It is essential to live out the Christian life in front of them. How?

1. Show them how to become a Christian.
2. Show them how to live the Christian life.
3. Show them how you do your personal Bible study and prayer habits.
4. Show them satisfying answers to their questions from Scripture and how they work in your life. The following are helpful:

A Five-Step Framework for Doing Apologetics – A.T.T.I.C.

A – *ffirm*. Be wildly enthusiastic about the seeker asking questions.

T – ranslate. Take their questions and answer them biblically using your life and Scripture.

T – ransparent. Be confessional. Don't just leave the impression you did everything right.

I – nsert. Personalize their questions into your life, like questions and struggles, etc.

C – hallenge. After answering their questions, ask, "What about you"?

5. Model seeking. Don't pretend to be a non-Christian but let them know you continually seek after Jesus as a growing Christian.

Create a Safe Place for People to "Seek"

1. Is this event designed with genuine seekers in mind?
2. Are the expectations clear?
GIG = Groups Investigating God...Expectations:
 - You must grow
 - You must be curious and ask questions
 - You must be honest about what is going on "inside."
 - You must take risks. And try new things.
 - You must listen to others in the group.
3. Is Scripture central to what is being planned?
4. Are we guiding seekers or guarding them? Do we come alongside them like a guide in a museum, pointing them to the rooms? Or guard them from exploring?

THRESHOLD #5: Becoming a Christian

It is the threshold where they need to decide to place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Zacchaeus moved from having lunch with Jesus as a seeker to going all out, believing in Him, and showing it! See Luke 19.

Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest [clear], as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. (Colossians 4:2-6 NKJV)

Opening A Gospel Conversation

You may start with being appropriately urgent. It would be wise to follow the conversational flow:

1. Start with a simple conversation about non-threatening issues (to get them talking).
2. Continue with a spiritual conversation on non-threatening religious topics (to get them comfortable talking about spiritual matters).
3. Finish with a salvation conversation on the Gospel.

At least seven words in the Book of Acts refer to communicating the Gospel verbally.

This threshold resembles traditional evangelism methods. Remember to be:

- ✓ Be **correct** in what you say. The most accurate presentation of the Gospel includes the following:

Establish these facts:

- (1) All people are sinners (Romans 3:23)
- (2) The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23)
- (3) Perfection is necessary (Revelation 21:27)
- (4) Any good works will never make us perfect (Eph. 2:8,9)
- (5) Christ died and rose again for us (2 Cor. 5:21)
- (6) Only belief in Christ is necessary (John 3:16)
- (7) Eternal life is assured (1 John 5:13)

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13)

A believer can be CERTAIN of salvation NOW and can NEVER be lost 1 John 5:13; Psalms 94:14; John 6:37, 39; 10:28.

- Explain the eternal security and assurance of a believer considering his chastening and rewards.
- Jesus Christ is identified as the Savior – Luke 2:10, 11.
- God will never cast anyone out of His family – John 6:37.
- God will never lose anyone – John 6:39.
- Nothing can take you out of God's hand because His power keeps you – John 10:28; 1 Peter 1:4,5.
- The new birth explained in John 3 indicates once you are born again, you don't get born again and again. No more than once, you are born physically; you don't get born physically again and again.

- The Lord will discipline his children, and some even severely. Note: Heb. 12:6; Prov. 10:27; Gen. 38:7; 1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:28 – 31.

There is no set of steps in leading a person to Christ. This plan has proven successful in actual practice. The emphasis may be shifted from one point to point, depending upon the individual's needs and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Remember to emphasize the Person and Work of Christ, not just a "plan" of salvation.

Repentance is not omitted from the above steps but is included with different wording. One of the counterfeits Satan is using today is the misuse of the word "repent." You will have fulfilled biblical repentance by placing your faith in Christ alone as your Savior.

The word "repent" comes from a Greek word meaning "to change your mind, to change your thinking." You change your mind about Who Christ is – He is God; who we are – sinners who can't save ourselves; what we thought we had to do to go to heaven (good works, etc.) – to only faith in Christ.

A person must repent to be saved, but repentance without placing faith in Christ will not save. Scripture says in Acts 20:21, *"Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance [change of mind] toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*

✓ Be **clear** in what you say.

Satan steals the Word of God from a person's heart if he doesn't understand it (Matthew 13:19,23; 1 Corinthians 14:7-9).

A gospel presentation can fall into three different categories:

- A false Gospel – a message that requires good works for salvation. It says man is saved by a) doing good works OR b) faith in Christ plus doing good works.
- An unclear Gospel a) falls short of adding good works AND b) falls short of telling the complete story of salvation.
- A clear Gospel – is a message that tells the complete story of salvation.
 - Who Christ is – The living Son of God, Who is God.
 - Who we are – Sinners who fall short of God's glory.
 - What Christ did – He died and rose again to make the complete payment for all my sins.
 - What we don't have to do – we cannot do any good work (social or religious) to go to heaven.
 - What we do – is trust in Christ alone.

- What Christ promised – He promised that if we trust in Christ alone, we have eternal life.

Saving faith includes three elements:

- **Knowledge** (Hear the Truth about Salvation) – Christ’s humanity, Deity, resurrection, and purpose for His death and resurrection.
- **Mental assent** (Believe the Truth about Salvation to Be True) – accept this knowledge as truth.
- **Trust** (Place Your Faith in Christ Alone for Your Salvation) – a complete reliance on Jesus Christ alone as the Lord Who died and rose again for the forgiveness of sin.

“Good works for salvation is Satan’s counterfeit of God’s grace for salvation. This issue of ‘Grace versus Works’ will almost always be the main thing you must deal with.”

The late Dr. M. R. DeHaan, the founder of Radio Bible Class, realized the importance of keeping the issues of salvation and service separate and said so well:

“There is a vast difference between coming to Jesus for salvation and coming after Jesus for service. Coming to Christ makes one a believer, while coming after Christ makes one a disciple. All believers are not disciples. To become a believer, one accepts the invitation of the Gospel. To be a disciple, one obeys the challenge of a life of dedicated service and separation. Salvation comes through the sacrifice of Christ, but discipleship comes only by the sacrifice of self and surrendering to His call for devoted service. Salvation is free. Salvation cannot be lost because it depends upon God’s faithfulness, but discipleship can be lost because it depends upon our faithfulness.”

Closing a Conversation

When you sense they are ready to make a decision, you can be helpful to them by doing a few things, such as:

1. Ask them, explicitly and simply, to trust Christ as their Savior.
2. If they say no, ask them why they are saying no. And find out what their questions or objections are.
3. Help them resolve or set aside the objections keeping them from trusting Christ.

4. Help them focus on Christ and the central issues, setting aside non-essential doctrinal issues (resurrection is key, but the “crusaders” are not).
5. Help them to study passages in the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of John, that clearly explain salvation.
6. Encourage new believers to share their journey of faith.

Some might say this sounds “pushy”. It can be if not done with love and prayers. Remember, Jesus does not want us to “admire” the Pearl of Great Price but to go after it at all costs! See Mark 4:29.

There is a spiritual battle going on. Satan wants to steal the seed of the gospel that is being planted. Remember, this has been a long process, and now it is time to “pull the trigger.”

While the *five thresholds* are highly effective and time-tested with many postmodern mindsets, they are only a framework. No program is a slam dunk. Stay sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Always remember that the path to faith alone in Jesus Christ is mysterious and organic!

What’s Next?

LIVING IN GOD’S FAMILY

The first year of *living in God’s family* can be challenging. Some of the feelings of highs and lows a new believer in Christ can have may be like this:

1. Excitement when knowing your sins are forgiven.
2. Guilt from receiving so much love from those who are happy you became a Christian, and then you remember how you treated them before you trusted Christ.
3. Realizing that there was still a “monster” in you.
4. Experience of distancing by former friends.
5. Getting used to Christians and the Christian “culture.”
6. You will have more questions as you read the Bible. Jesus said growth was not automatic and must not be taken for granted. See Mark 4:1-20.

How should you help your friend move beyond the ***five thresholds*** and live victoriously in God’s family? See Acts 9.

1. Commit yourself to them. Consider the investment of your time, willpower, and energy. You may have doubts about your ability,

- questions that are very difficult to answer, a lack of strength to confront, a need for patience to endure ups and downs, and possibly your hypocrisies revealed.
2. Prepare them for baptism by explaining the mandate, motives, and mode of baptism.
 3. Provide them with good reading material for a new believer, such as:
 - *Now That You Believe*, Stan Ponz
 - *31 Days to Living As A New Believer*, L. Moyer
 - *Purpose Driven Life*, R. Warren
 - *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*, G. T. Smith
 4. Put together a six-to-eight-week mentoring time with them.
 5. Take them through three beginning phases of spiritual growth:
 - Phase 1 – Help your friend understand their salvation is secured in Christ.
 - Phase 2 – Help them develop key spiritual habits.
 - Phase 3 – Help them transition into a small group and healthy church for long-term sustainable care.
 6. Find nurturing ways to equip them to do five spiritual habits. They are often called the *five talks*.
 - (1) We talk to *God*; that's called *prayer*. Pray with them. Look together at what Jesus taught about prayer. Include what it means to worship the Lord.
 - (2) God talks to *us*; that's called *Bible study*. Look at Scripture together. Teach them the basic Bible study methods.
 - (3) We talk to other *Christians*; that's called *fellowship*. Gather them around other godly Christians. Teach them about forgiveness, the importance of the "one another" principles, and the commitment to a body of believers.
 - (4) We talk to *non-Christians*; that's called *evangelism*. Get them to tell their salvation journey to salvation. Have them share how the Lord worked in their life through their journey and how they came to faith in Christ.
 - (5) We talk to *needy people*; that's called *service*. Get them serving in some way. The life of a Christian is a life of serving others. We serve the Lord best when we serve others.

The Biggest Keys in Reaching The Postmodern Mindset

The biggest keys to helping people through the *five thresholds* are:

- 1. Prayer.** It is essential to pray because there is a battle for the minds and souls of people. Pray for the person to understand the true love of God. Pray for yourself to 1) have an open door to speak to them and 2) be compassionate, correct, clear, and courageous when you speak the truth of Jesus Christ.
- 2. Servanthood.** Serving is equally essential because you serve the Lord and His interests in the person. Help them discover the Lord as they go through each threshold.

APPENDIX

When Worldviews Collide

It is not difficult to conclude that Christians are in a battle between having a secular worldview and a Biblical Christian worldview.

God expects His people to seek the truth earnestly. As the Apostle Paul faced the humanists of his day, the faithful and aware Christian must face the humanists of our day if he truly follows Christ.

As an emerging leader, you will be unprepared to defend your beliefs if you have no concept of worldviews (and this is the case with the vast majority). You must study and understand the different worldviews being taught.

Philosophy simply means a thought-out way of looking at our experience in the world—a seemingly logical explanation for “the way things are.” How we live, our sense of experiences, and how we teach our children depend significantly on our worldview.

Will It Be A Secular Worldview or A Christian Worldview?

There are two prominent worldviews—a *secular worldview* and a *Christian worldview* (it can be divided into more categories, but for now, we look at the main two). American public schools teach from a secular, humanistic worldview. Christians must evaluate the subjects in a given curriculum radically differently from secular humanists.

Four Questions That Reveal Your Worldview

What we trust in shapes our worldview. We can identify our basic faith commitments by answering four questions:

- (1) **Who am I?**
- (2) **Where am I?**
- (3) **What’s wrong?**
- (4) **What will make things better?**

Secular World View (Taught by Public School)

- (1) **Who am I?**
I am a human being, an accident. My species evolved from monkeys.
- (2) **Where am I?**
I am on Earth, a planet that resulted from an accident called “the Big Bang.”

(3) What is wrong?

There is a lack of education and money; therefore, people are frustrated, disappointed, and defeated. Religion, especially Christianity, is intellectually wrong and, thus, is dangerous culturally, intellectually, socially, and politically.

(4) How can it be fixed?

By getting more money, getting more education, etc. By marginalizing religion, especially Christianity.

Christian Worldview

(1) Who am I?

I am a human created by an awesome, wonderful, loving God. He put me here for a specific reason.

(2) Where am I?

I am on the Earth created by God. This Earth is so marvelously created that if it were hung differently in the universe, one inch more or less, it would not be able to sustain life.

(3) What is wrong?

Sin—disobedience to God. When sin entered the world, it broke our relationship with God, our Creator. We need our relationship with God restored.

(4) How can it be fixed?

Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, came into the world in human form and gave His life as a sacrifice for our sins. We must accept His sacrifice and place our faith alone in Jesus Christ, then make Him Lord of our life and seek God's will and instruction in His Word.

Dualism

Dualism is a problem when we try to separate our spiritual and academic lives. Dualism is an attempt to live by two different worldviews, with part of life subject to one master and the rest of life subject to another.

How can we teach students from a Christian worldview concerning spiritual things and teach from a secular worldview for academics? God intends human life to be a whole—not split between mutually contradictory motivations and purposes:

1 Corinthians 10:31, *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*

Colossians 3:17, *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*

Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Joshua 24:14, "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Edwin H. Rain stated, "Christianity is a world and life view and not simply a series of unrelated doctrines. Christianity includes all of life. Every realm of knowledge, every aspect of life, and every factor of the universe find their places and their answers within Christianity. It is a system of truth enveloping the entire world in its grasp." Today, we are faced with a society that has rejected the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The secular world rejects the existence of moral absolutes and the idea of a Supreme Being who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. This worldview is taught today through the media, the school system, and the government.

Humanistic teaching has led to permissiveness, pornography, the breakdown of the family, and abortion, to name just a few. This shift from a Christian worldview gradually changed how people think and view life.

* Parts of this material are adapted from Heart of Wisdom: Homeschool Helps.

Christian Vs. Secular World Views

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2

It's a challenge for Christians to live in the world yet stand apart as Jesus instructs believers to do in the Bible. See John 17:15-18. Unfortunately, many Christians succumb to worldly trappings and fall into a mixed worldview, professing a belief in Jesus but living secular lifestyles, "Secular" means "denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis." *Oxford American Dictionaries.*

CHRISTIAN VIEW	SECULAR VIEW
Reduce your sense of self, <i>Luke 9:24-26</i>	Improve your sense of self
True knowledge is from God, <i>1 Cor. 3:18</i>	Knowledge is from human ought
Getting ahead is losing self, <i>Matt. 6:19-21</i>	Getting ahead is money and power.
Narrow is the way to Heaven, <i>Matt. 7:13-14</i>	Wide is the way of tolerance
Serve others first, <i>Matt. 21:16</i>	Serve self first
Jesus makes you good, <i>1 John 1:9</i>	Good deeds make you good

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- ✓ Does scripture support this action/attitude?
- ✓ Will this help me trust God's love and promises more faithfully?
- ✓ Will this action/attitude help me reduce or eliminate blocks to my relationship with Jesus?
- ✓ Am I following God's will/plan for me?
- ✓ Will this action/action help me to focus more on others and less on myself?
- ✓ If Jesus stood next to me, would I say or do this?

SENSE OF SELF

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for you own personal interests, but also for interests of others."
Phil. 2:3,4

Christian

For Christians, the goal is to decrease our sense of self-importance and measure ourselves against Jesus and not against worldly standards of personal importance, fame, and wealth. The Christian worldview is based on the Biblical principle that we are to deem others more important than ourselves and to be vessels through which the Holy Spirit can do the work of Jesus.

Secular

The secular worldview is based on the premise that we are in a position to judge whether or not we are adequate. Also, it is based on the idea that we become worthy if we make some change. The goal is to increase our sense of self-worth and, consequently, our standing in the world.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, 'He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness' and again, The LORD knows the reasoning of the wise, that they are useless." 1 Corinthians 3:18-20

Christian

The Christian view is based on the Biblical principle that while people can share knowledge, experience, and hope with each other, we are limited in our ability to understand as humans. Only God sees the big picture and has a plan for us. True wisdom comes from God and only God and is written in His Word, the Bible.

Secular

The secular worldview purports that there is a person or persons who has the answer to particular life questions. Their approach is the best, and the author is the defining authority on the subject. It lends itself to the guru effect; one person or human approach becoming idolized as the way to solve a problem.

GETTING AHEAD

"Do not love this world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boasted pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:15-17

Christian

The Christian worldview is based on the belief that true success is believing Jesus Christ gives us eternal life. The goal is to find humility and grace as a foundation for all earthly accomplishments. The more worldly success we achieve, the more difficult it is to accept our need for God. We tend to see ourselves as the source of our achievements vs. God, who gave us all resources for success.

Secular

The secular worldview is based on the premise that the more earthly success we achieve, the more we gain value as individuals. The world defines these successes as fame, riches, and power.

GETTING TO HEAVEN

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who

find it.” Matthew 7:13, 14

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.’” John 14:6

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” John 3:16

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Eph. 2:8-10

Christian

The Christian worldview is that faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior is the only way to Heaven. Jesus as Savior means knowing that He died for our sins, which opened the door to Heaven for all who believe in Him.

Secular

The secular worldview is based on the belief that it is within each person’s power to get him or herself to Heaven through good behavior. It breeds a tolerance of a wide range of behaviors the individual may deem acceptable. This tolerance grows as individuals are reluctant to judge others’ behaviors since they don’t want to be judged.

SERVICE

“But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:43-45

Christian

The Christian worldview is that true success or power is in serving others as Jesus served. His example of humility gives us the standard for putting others first, including leadership.

Secular

The secular worldview is that having others serve you is a measure or privilege of power, wealth, and success.

WHAT MAKES US GOOD

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

Christian

The Christian worldview of our perception of self is based on the Biblical

principle that God made us exactly as He intended, but inherent in our humanness is a sinful nature. Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross so that our sins would be forgiven. If we trust Christ as our Savior, we become a renewed being. Christ then lives His life out through us as we yield to Him.

Secular

The secular worldview is based on the premise that we are in a position to judge whether or not we are good. And if we deem ourselves good enough, we will go to Heaven.

[Jesus said] "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

John 17:15-18

Can We Really Trust Our Bible?

It happened on one of my flights to conduct a seminar on spiritual giftedness. Not long into a conversation with a fellow passenger, I began to turn our "talk" from a secular topic to a spiritual one and then into a discussion about salvation. As we started to discuss issues about the simple plan of salvation found in Jesus Christ by faith alone in Christ, I sensed he had serious doubts about the credibility of the Bible.

In other words, my fellow traveler did *not* believe the Bible was trustworthy. It is not an uncommon view held by many unchurched people today. However, I also find that many Christians believe the Bible to be inspired by God and valid but do not know *why* it is. Thus, they are not "...*always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*" 1 Pet. 3:15.

I asked my friend if he would be interested in hearing why I believe my Bible to be trustworthy. His response was classic when he said, "I'd be willing to hear if you could use facts rather than opinions or emotions to explain your reasoning."

Too many times, Christians share their 'opinions' or the opinions of others to make a point instead of using facts or evidence. Some even get so "emotionally charged" in their defense of Scripture that they lose touch with using logic and facts to be convincing with truth.

Because the flight was long and he was interested, I had the time to discuss all five main reasons the Bible can be trusted as God's mind on paper. You

can use fewer or more of these reasons, depending on how much data you want to provide for each point and how much time you have to share them.

I used the following: **OBJECTIVE REASONING** - SCIENCE, HISTORY, PROPHECY, and LITERATURE. **SUBJECTIVE REASONING** – HOW IT WORKS IN MY LIFE.

There is no particular right or best order to present this information. Just be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and the needs of the person you share it with.

THE BIBLE IS SCIENTIFICALLY ACCURATE

Personally, I like to start with scientific statements found in Scripture because, often, people do not know how “scientific” the Bible can be. While it is not a science book, it makes scientifically accurate statements. For example:

The Earth Hangs on Nothing. Almost 3500 years ago, Job stated in chapter 26, verse 7, that the earth hangs upon nothing. However, various civilizations recorded that either the world was situated on the back of Atlas (in Greek mythology) or that it was on the back of an elephant, which was standing on the back of a turtle, which was supposed to be swimming in some cosmic sea (in the culture of India), or that the earth was flat being held up by pillars (in the Egyptian culture). However, as *science* progressed, it is now proven that the Earth does hang upon nothing. Which means nothing physically holds it up.

The Earth Is Round. In chapter 40, verse 22, the prophet Isaiah wrote about the “circle of the earth”. I am told that the word “circle” does not refer to being circular like a coin but spheroid like a ball. Of course, we know the Earth is not a flat circle today.

The Earth Has Four Corners. Isaiah the prophet also wrote chapter 11, verse 12, about the “four corners of the earth.” Some Bible scholars say this refers to the four directions – north, east, south, and west. Others who are more scientific state that it relates to the earth's shape – that there are four ‘bulges’ to the globe. The geological ‘bulges’ are in Ireland, Peru, Australia, and South Africa. (I am told Johns Hopkins Laboratory reported this in 1964, and it was recorded in a 1966 edition of *Science Digest*). As a young person, I also heard that the Earth was shaped more like a pear than an apple!

The Center of the Earth Is Hot. Job wrote about this in chapter 28, verse 5. Obviously, we can see this when volcanoes erupt, as Job saw in his day. But volcanologists make it clear that the center of the Earth is fiery hot, in fact, over 2000 degrees!

The Stars Cannot Be Numbered.

The prophet Jeremiah, referring to the stars in chapter 33, verse 22, wrote that they could not be numbered. Yet it has only been in the last few centuries that astronomers agree it is impossible to know how many stars there are. With all its scientific technology, the Hubble telescope is even causing many scientists to think that the galaxies cannot be numbered either!

All Flesh Isn't The Same. The apostle Paul stated almost 200 years ago in 1 Corinthians 15:39, "*All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fish, and another of birds.*" Unbelievers for many years have attacked that verse as being unscientific. Since they were under the impression that all flesh is made up of protoplasm, they criticized the Bible as being wrong in 1 Corinthians 15. They believed there was no distinction between different kinds of flesh. However, today, scientists know the cytoplasm and the nuclei of cells by which the four kinds of flesh can be distinguished.

There are many more scientific statements in Scripture than I have space to write about. I suggest you obtain a copy of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* by Norman Geisler, published by Baker Book House. It is loaded with helpful and accurate information and has a tremendous bibliography.

Here is another reason why we can trust our Bible.

THE BIBLE IS HISTORICALLY ACCURATE

This response revolved much around archaeology when it was thought archaeology would disprove the Bible. However, archeology has proven to be no friend of Bible critics. There is now an overwhelming amount of evidence that supports the Bible.

Archaeology has proven helpful for two very good reasons. First, it confirms that Biblical statements are true and accurate. Second, it sheds new light on Bible texts to help explain their meaning.

Listen to these well-known archaeologists:

- Dr. W.F. Albright has admitted that there could be very little doubt that archeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition. [*Archeology and the Religion of Israel*, W.F. Albright, 1956, John Hopkins Press].
- Nelson Glueck has stated that no archaeological discovery has ever contradicted or voided a Biblical reference. [*A River in the Desert*, Nelson Glueck, 1959, the Jewish Publication Society of America, p. 31].

- Millar Burrows writes that archeology has “unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record...” and that “...in many cases has refuted the views of modern critics.” [*What Mean These Stones?*, Millar Burrows, 1941, American Schools of Royal Research, pp. 291 – 292].

After starting with scientific statements found in Scripture, I like to use some examples of how archaeology has refuted criticisms of the Bible. For instance:

Proofs of King Solomon’s Wealth and Grandeur. Critics have long doubted what Scripture stated about Solomon’s greatness. He had a navy (1 Kings 9:26) and a vast array of horses and chariots (1 Kings 10:26). He was a builder and used metal (1 Kings 7,8). Excavations by Dr. Henry Breasted at Megiddo between 1925 and 1934 proved it was one of Solomon’s “chariot cities.” Found were stables capable of holding over 400 horses, stalls in double rows, stone mangers, massive hitching posts, and barracks for his chariot battalions. All of which were used to guard the main commercial route between Egypt and Syria.

The Existence of the Hittites. While their existence was mentioned at least 40 times in Scripture (Joshua 1:4), they were not mentioned in pagan literature. Therefore, the critics concluded that the Hittites never existed. But in 1906, Hugh Winkler excavated the Hittite capital of Boghazkoy and recovered thousands of Hittite texts that included the Hittite code. [“The Bible’s Critics Use a Double Standard,” Edwin M. Yamauchi, Christianity Today, 11/19/65, p. 4].

The Pool of Bethesda. It is where Jesus healed a lame man (John 5:2-15). Archaeologists discovered it in the northern corner of the old city of Jerusalem. [*The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* F.F. Bruce, Eerdmans, 1943, p. 94. Dr. Bruce also writes, “...few sites in Jerusalem, mentioned in the Gospels, can be identified so confidently.”].

Ancient Caesarea. Italian archaeologists excavated ancient Caesarea in June of 1961 and found new evidence that Pontius Pilate was the highest commissioner of Judea between A.D. 26 and A.D. 36.

Ancient Jericho. John Garstang, the noted archaeologist, not only proved the existence of Jericho but also found the very walls of the ancient city. Three leading archaeologists (Garstang, Vincent, and Fisher) signed a statement in part, “The outer wall suffered most, its remains falling down the slope. Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones...and ashes.” Garstang summarizes the evidence concerning the falling of the walls as follows: “As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the

attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city.”
[*Joshua Judges*, London: Constable, 1931, pp. 145 – 146].

The Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the most significant discoveries and probably the most well-known is the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were found between 1947 and 1956 in caves in the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea. Sectarian Jews known as Essenes in the Qumran area wrote the scrolls between 200 B.C. and 50 A.D. What makes them so significant is that they are the oldest known manuscript copies of parts or fragments of every Old Testament book except Esther. There is one complete copy of Isaiah.

These are only a few of the many historical evidence substantiating the credibility of Scripture. I suggest you obtain a copy of *Archeology and Bible History* by Joseph P. Free, published by Scripture Press (it may be out of print, but it is worth the search). Or visit www.christiananswers.net/archeology.

History, especially archaeology, doesn't disprove the Bible's accuracy but proves it in stunning ways!

Here is a third reason why we can trust our Bible.

Bible Prophecy About Jesus Christ Fulfilled

Statistical Probability of Jesus Fulfilling Messianic Prophecies of His First Advent. Advent is a period of preparation and purification to celebrate the Lord's first coming, Jesus the Messiah.

The following is the probability of Christ fulfilling prophecies from the book *Science Speaks* by Peter Stoner. The focus of this topic is to look at the probability of Christ fulfilling the prophecies in the Old Testament. So, we can begin to understand the authority and veracity of the Bible. So, what is probability? Probability, also known as "odds," is a branch of mathematics that measures the likelihood that a given event will occur. To begin, let's look at some interesting "odds":

- Being struck by lightning in a year = 7×10^5 or 1 in 700,000
- Being killed by lightning in a year = 2×10^6 or 1 in 2,000,000
- Becoming president = 1×10^7 or 1 in 10,000,000
- A meteorite landing on your house = 1.8×10^{14} or 1 in 180,000,000,000,000
- You will eventually die = 1 in 1

As you can see, the probability of being struck or killed by lightning, becoming president, or having a meteorite land on your house progressively increases, given the event; however, someone somewhere will be that 1 in 10x, and that someone could be you.

Now, let's look at one of the most amazing probability studies. Dr. Peter Stoner, author of *Science Speaks*, applied the principle of probability, which states that if the chance of one thing happening is "1 in M" and the chance of another independent thing happening is "1 in N", then the chance that they shall both happen is "1 in M x N", as it pertains to fulfillment of Biblical prophecies.

The Bible is full of prophecies, either events that have happened or events that will occur in the future. In *Science Speaks*, Dr. Stoner looks at the probability that one man, Jesus Christ, could have fulfilled even 8 of the 300 prophecies that pertain to Him in the Bible. Let's look at these eight prophecies from the Old Testament about Christ, their fulfillment by Christ in the New Testament, the probability of one man fulfilling each prophecy, and the sum of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies. Remember that the period between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the New Testament fulfillment is hundreds, even thousands of years.

Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment	Probability
Christ to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	And Herod asked where Christ had been born ... they answered Bethlehem (Matt 2:4-6)	2.8×10^5 or 1 in 280,000
Forerunner of Christ (Malachi 3:1)	John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ (Mark 1:2-8)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9)	Christ enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matt 21:4-11)	1×10^2 or 1 in 100
Christ to be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9)	Judas betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:21)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ to be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12)	Judas sold out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matt 26:15)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
30 pieces of silver casted down and used to buy a potter's field (Zech 11:13)	30 pieces of silver used to buy a potter's field (Matt 27:3-10)	1×10^5 or 1 in 100,000
Although innocent, Christ kept silent when on trial (Isaiah 53:7)	Jesus kept silent when questioned (Mark 14:60-61)	1×10^3 or 1 in 1,000
Christ crucified (Psalm 22:16)	Jesus was crucified (John 19:17, 18)	1×10^4 or 1 in 10,000

The principle of probability is applied to answer the question of the likelihood of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies. Therefore, multiplying all eight probabilities together (1 times $2.8 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^2 \times 10^3 \times 10^3 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^4$) gives us 2.8×10^{28} , or for simplicity's sake, 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

Given this and the period between the writings of the Old Testament and the fulfillment by Christ in the New Testament, the prophecies were either given to the prophets by God, or the prophets just wrote them down as they thought they should be. With Christ fulfilling all eight prophecies, what are the odds that the prophets were guessing?

Let us try to visualize this chance. If you mark one of ten tickets, place them in a hat, thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten.

Suppose we take 10¹⁷ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the entire state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say this is right. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, provided they wrote using their own wisdom.

Suppose we add eight more prophecies to our list and assume that their chance of fulfillment is the same as the eight just considered. The chance that one man would fulfill all sixteen is $1 \times 10^{28} \times 10^{17}$ or 1 in 10⁴⁵. Let us try to visualize this as we did before. Take this number of silver dollars. If you make these into a solid ball, you will have a great sphere with a center at the Earth, extending in all directions more than 30 times as far as from Earth to the sun. (If a train had started from the Earth when the Declaration of Independence was signed and had traveled steadily toward the sun at sixty miles per hour, day and night, it would be about reaching its destination today. But remember that our ball of silver dollars extends thirty times that far in all directions.) Suppose you can imagine the marking of one silver dollar and then thoroughly stirring it into this grand ball, blindfolding a man, and telling him to pick out one dollar and expect it to be the marked one. In that case, you have somewhat of a picture of how the fulfillment of sixteen prophecies referring to Jesus Christ proves that He is the Son of God and that our Bible is inspired. Indeed, God directed the writing of His Word.

To extend this consideration beyond all bounds of human comprehension, let us consider forty-eight prophecies, similar in their human chance of fulfillment to the eight we initially considered, using a much more conservative number: 1 in 10²¹.

Applying the same principle of probability used so far, we find the chance that any man fulfilled all forty-eight prophecies to be 1 in 10157. It is a large number, and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar we have been using is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object. The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5×10^{15} of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in this line, one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons. If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and tried to count them, it would take us 1.2×10^{38} years (2×10^{28} times the 6 billion years back to the solar system's creation).

With this introduction, let us return to our chance of 1 in 10157. Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance does he have of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume. The distance from our system of stars, or galaxies, to the next nearest one, is nearly 1,500,000 light-years; that is the distance that light will travel in 1,500,000 years, going 186,000 miles every second. This distance is so great that if every man, woman, and child in the United States 200,000,000 had a library of 65,000 volumes. You collected every book in all of these libraries. They started on this journey of 1,500,000 light-years and decided to place one letter from one of the books on each mile (e.g., if "the" was the first word in the first book, you would put "t" on the first mile, "h" on the second mile, and "e" on the third mile; then leave a mile blank without a letter and start the next word in the same manner, etc.), before you complete your journey you will use up every letter in every book of every one of the libraries and have to call for more.

By some authorities, space is supposed to extend in all directions to 1,500,000 light-years. But more than 4,000 times that far, or 6,000,000,000 light-years. Let us make a solid ball of electrons extending in all directions from the Earth to a distance of six billion light-years. Have we used up our 10157 electrons? No, we have made such a small hole in the mass that we cannot see it. We can make this solid ball of electrons extending in all directions to the distance of six billion light-years, 6×10^{28} times.

Just to grasp the magnanimous scale of the prophecies of the coming Messiah, consider these facts. The size of the number 1 in 10157: there are not that many electrons in the known universe! And that number is just for 48 of the 300 known Messianic prophecies that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled. No man could write that Book we call the Bible. Our Bible was written by Kings, Generals, shepherds, and priests over 1600 years, in three

languages, on three continents, and consists of 66 books. It was written primarily by authors who had never met, who wrote about controversial subjects, and yet all 66 books agree. You can stake your life on its authenticity, authority, and trustworthiness. You can and should also stake your eternal destiny in it. Below are 48 prophecies of the coming of the Messiah.

48 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah			
	Prophecies of Jesus	Old Testament Scripture	New Testament Fulfillment
1	Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20 Galatians 4:4
2	Messiah would be born in <u>Bethlehem</u> .	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1 Luke 2:4-6
3	Messiah would be <u>born of a virgin</u> .	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23 Luke 1:26-31
4	Messiah would come from the line of <u>Abraham</u> .	Genesis 12:3 Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1 Romans 9:5
5	Messiah would be a descendant of <u>Isaac</u> .	Genesis 17:19 Genesis 21:12	Luke 3:34
6	Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
7	Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 Hebrews 7:14
8	Messiah would be heir to <u>King David's throne</u> .	2 Samuel 7:12-13 Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33 Romans 1:3
9	Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal.	Psalms 45:6-7 Daniel 2:44	Luke 1:33 Hebrews 1:8-12
10	Messiah would be called <u>Immanuel</u> .	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23

48 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah			
11	Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
12	A massacre of children would happen at Messiah's birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18
13	A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah.	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
14	Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner.	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 11:10
15	Messiah would be rejected by his own people.	Psalms 69:8 Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11 John 7:5
16	Messiah would be a prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
17	Messiah would be preceded by <u>Elijah</u> .	Malachi 4:5-6	Matthew 11:13-14
18	Messiah would be declared the <u>Son of God</u> .	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17
19	Messiah would be called a Nazarene.	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
20	Messiah would bring light to <u>Galilee</u> .	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
21	Messiah would speak in <u>parables</u> .	Psalms 78:2-4 Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
22	Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted.	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
23	Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek.	Psalms 110:4	Hebrews 5:5-6
24	Messiah would be called King.	Psalms 2:6 Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 27:37 Mark 11:7-11
25	Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey.	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 21:4-5
26	Messiah would be praised by little children.	Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:16
27	Messiah would be betrayed.	Psalms 41:9 Zechariah 11:12-13	Luke 22:47-48 Matthew 26:14-16
28	Messiah's price money would be used to buy a potter's field.	Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 27:9-10
29	Messiah would be falsely accused.	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:57-58
30	Messiah would be silent before his accusers.	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5

48 Old Testament Verses About Jesus as Messiah		
31	Messiah would be spat upon and struck.	Isaiah 50:6 Matthew 26:67
32	Messiah would be hated without cause.	Psalms 35:19 Psalm 69:4 John 15:24-25
33	Messiah would be <u>crucified</u> with criminals.	Isaiah 53:12 Matthew 27:38 Mark 15:27-28
34	Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.	Psalms 69:21 Matthew 27:34 John 19:28-30
35	Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.	Psalms 22:16 Zechariah 12:10 John 20:25-27
36	Messiah would be mocked and ridiculed.	Psalms 22:7-8 Luke 23:35
37	Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments.	Psalms 22:18 Luke 23:34 Matthew 27:35-36
38	Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.	Zechariah 11:12 Matthew 26:15
39	Messiah's bones would not be broken.	Exodus 12:46 Psalm 34:20 John 19:33-36
40	Messiah would be forsaken by God.	Psalms 22:1 Matthew 27:46
41	Messiah would pray for his enemies.	Psalms 109:4 Luke 23:34
42	Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side.	Zechariah 12:10 John 19:34
43	Messiah would be buried with the rich.	Isaiah 53:9 Matthew 27:57-60
44	Messiah would <u>resurrect from the dead</u> .	Psalms 16:10 Psalm 49:15 Matthew 28:2-7 Acts 2:22-32
45	Messiah would <u>ascend to heaven</u> .	Psalms 24:7-10 Mark 16:19 Luke 24:51
46	Messiah would be seated at God's right hand.	Psalms 68:18 Psalm 110:1 Mark 16:19 Matthew 22:44
47	Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.	Isaiah 53:5-12 Romans 5:6-8
48	Messiah would return a second time.	Daniel 7:13-14 Revelation 19

*Compiled and edited by James George, a Baptist University of the Americas faculty member in San Antonio, TX.

These fulfilled prophecies of Christ's first coming are statistically astounding! The fourth reason we know the Bible can be trusted is that it is literarily superior to other books.

LITERARILY SUPERIOR

While we do not have any original manuscripts of the original writers' writings, we do have a substantial number of copies of the original manuscripts. How was the accuracy preserved?

- When the ancient scribes copied the original manuscripts, they were above reproach in their character. The scribes were very meticulous when making copies. Only certain ink could be used. The writing tool (like a pen) was wiped clean before any words referring to God's proper Name could be spelled. Each scribe had to do a personal cleansing before writing the word *YAHWEH*.
- There are thousands of manuscript copies of both the Old and New Testaments.
- There is excellent agreement.
- There are many more manuscript copies of the Bible than existing manuscripts of ancient secular writers such as Homer and Sophocles.

Document Name	Number of Manuscripts	Earliest Date
Caesar's Gaelic Wars	10	AD 900
Livy's History of Rome	20	AD 400
Thucydides' History	8	AD 900
Herodotus' History	8	AD 900
The New Testament	14,000	AD 125

Can I Trust the Bible? Radio Bible Class, MI Copyright 1986, p. 16.

The longevity and sales ability of the Bible reveals its constant worth. The Bible, as a book, is extremely saleable. It's the best-selling book of all time, with around 80 million new copies printed annually, and sales are currently surging. Even used Bibles are considered saleable. The Bible is widely considered the best-selling book of all time, with an estimated 5 to 7 billion copies printed. It's also the most translated book, with complete translations into over 700 languages. While it consistently ranks as the best-selling book, it's not typically found on best-seller lists because it's often sold through religious channels and donations.

The final reason we can trust the Bible as God's word on paper is that it works in people's lives.

THE WORD OF GOD [THE BIBLE] WORKS IN OUR LIVES

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16,17

The scriptures are helpful for correction. They can also correct us once they have convicted us of our wrongs. They tell us how we can have forgiveness for our sins and how we can be reconciled to God and one another. The scriptures are helpful for training in righteousness. They show us how to live righteous lives that are pleasing to God.

The Bible is a very practical book, teaching us what is right, what is not right, how to get right when we go wrong, and how to stay right. The Bible can do this because it is the word of God. God is teaching us through His word. Paul says, "that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Studying and applying God's word to our lives will make us mature and equip us for service. God's word provides us with everything that we need to live a life that is pleasing to God.

Many books might be helpful to us, but we can always get by without them. In contrast, the Bible is God's inspired word; it is unique and, as such, it is entirely adequate to meet our every need. However, knowledge of the Bible will not be helpful to us if we do not apply its message to our lives. The Bible requires a response from us, and when we respond in obedience to God's word, our lives will be transformed. The Bible is not an antiquated message; it is not dull but an accurate and relevant message to every generation. The word of God is powerful and robust enough to change and transform us into the people God wants us to be.

In the Old Testament, Psalm 19:7-11 says it also works in our lives by:

- Converting the soul (restoring, making eternally alive) the soul – v. 7a.
- Making wise the simple – v. 7b.
- Giving joy to the heart – v. 8a.
- Giving light (understanding to perceive) to the eyes – v. 8b.
- Giving warning to Christians (His servants) – v. 11a.

"In keeping [obeying] them [the Word of God] there is GREAT [emphasis added] reward." – v. 11b.

Seven Ways to Live Out The Gospel In A Post-modern, Post-Truth, and Post-Fact Culture

Regardless of where your politics lean, many would sense that American culture is quickly becoming both post-truth and post-fact.

It's happening right before our eyes.

Don't like the outcome of what's happening? Claim it never happened. Are you bothered by what the data says? Offer your own data, even if you must make it up.

The rise (and influence of) fake news and the rapid polarization of opinion across every platform are staggering.

If you're alarmed by the shift, you're not alone.

The stakes are high for several reasons (several are listed below). Probably higher than most of us think, personally and for the church.

The depth of the change is hard to see, but I think it's deep and dangerous.

Whenever you're in the middle of a passage from one phase of history to the next, you never see it clearly.

Fortunately, the church has a unique role to play in it. Play it well, and everyone (including the culture) wins. Misplay it, and it could end poorly for everyone—us, our kids, the church, our countries, the world.

So, how did we get here? What's changing? And most importantly, how should you respond?

While we don't claim to see it perfectly, these ideas are meant to be hopeful.

TRUTH IS NOT PERSONAL

Since the 1960s, you've seen many challenges and rejections of the objective nature of the Gospel (one God revealed in Jesus Christ who extends an invitation to all) to embrace a far more subjective spirituality:

What's true for you isn't true for me.

God is whoever you define him/her/it.

My spirituality can be customized to suit me, just like my meal at a restaurant.

Maybe the subjectivism of spirituality caught on because it's harder to prove that something we can't see, or touch is anchored in objective truth (even if it is).

Spirituality was one of the first widespread casualties of post-modern thought's attempt to de-couple ideas from objective truth.

But that same logic has now infected so much more.

In the emerging culture, truth is not just subjective or objective but personal.

Don't like something?

Great. Tell everyone it never happened. Explain that it doesn't exist. Just spin your version of the story long enough until you've constructed your universe of what's real and what's not.

Why face reality when you can deny it instead?

It explains the rise of fake news and the shift in reporting what's happening as we speak. What's true on Fox News no longer appears to be true on CNN or NBC.

Don't like what any of them are saying? Just make your own version of the story. Start your own site or take to social media, use the ALL CAPS key, and spin it any way you want.

It seems the combination of a deeply divided culture, the proliferation of new media, and social media available to billions means everyone is attempting to twist the truth until it confirms their own bias.

Worse, so much is done simply to get more eyeballs on a platform.

All of this should make us shudder.

After all, the most dangerous form of deception is self-deception. A brief history study will show you that self-deception easily becomes mass deception.

THE DEPARTURE OF CIVILITY MATTERS

There should be deep mourning and concern over the death of objective truth because the erosion of civility comes with it.

Objectivity pulls us beyond ourselves. The things beyond us are the things that save us from ourselves.

When a culture, for example, decides that murder will not be tolerated, that assault is punishable, or that theft is a crime, it puts the brakes on our selfish and impulsive emotions.

Human nature, after all, has a dark side. We have all probably both felt like punching someone or taking things that didn't belong to us. Occasionally, we might even wish that someone we don't like had a shortened life span.

What keeps us from acting on our impulses other than self-control (which is often weak)?

Objective truth. The idea is that somehow murder, theft, and violence are wrong.

Also saving us from ourselves is the knowledge that if we do something offensive to a widely embraced standard, we will suffer for it. A fine. Jail time. Social shunning.

It is good, not just for us, but for our country.

But the logical extension of a post-fact, post-truth world is this: who says I'm right and you're wrong? Who even said it happened? I didn't. That's just you saying I did. And you're wrong.

Humans have tried to keep ourselves from ourselves for thousands of years.

Surprisingly, the Gospel has fueled much of that. Because when you trust *Christ alone* for your salvation and then die to yourself, something greater rises.

The rise of self as the ultimate arbiter of truth is antithetical to the Gospel and the very basis of civilization.

Civilized people think beyond themselves. They care, and they give. They put themselves second or third.

It sounds hyperbolic to say civilization is being threatened. But maybe it's not hyperbole.

Why love your neighbor when you can attack him? Maybe the attack never happened anyway.

CONFESSION IS ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT DISCIPLINES

Who knows what people pray about these days? You and I aren't privy to what God hears.

But my guess is that He's hearing fewer confessional prayers than He used to. In a culture where truth has died, we don't have to be sorry for much.

After all, if you create your own truth, there's no need to confess anything. The most extreme iteration of this is that you're not wrong. God is. If you think that's far-fetched, just scan the headlines.

It's truth that helps us see falsehood. It's the right that helps us see the wrong. And when what's right is whatever we define it to be, we're always right.

Even when things don't go great for us, it was never our fault anyway. We were victims.

We're just misunderstood; one day, everyone will see how right we are.

At the heart of confession is this idea that you and I are not the ultimate arbiters of right and wrong. Confession acknowledges that we are flawed, that we make mistakes, and that we're accountable.

We are not the authors of what is right. Instead, we are subject to it.

Jesus never asked us to confess the sins of our enemies. He told us to confess ours.

Listen to the public dialogue. Watch social media. The death of confession has led to the rise of the opposite of confession: blame and accusation.

WE ARE ALL ACCOUNTABLE TO SOMEONE OTHER THAN OURSELVES

Also, entering the endangered species list is—accountability.

If you listen to the current public dialogue, few people seem willing to be accountable to anyone other than themselves.

I'm right. Everyone else is wrong.

So there.

Rethink that.

If I become the arbiter of truth, then I'm not accountable to anyone. Not to you, not to others. Not even to God.

If something doesn't go my way, I don't need to take responsibility; I can just blame someone else or hold *others* accountable.

I just don't need to *be* accountable.

Do you see where this takes us?

Think about what that does to those of us in leadership. Leadership is a trust; it's a stewardship. We hold our positions on behalf of those who don't. We're accountable to others. Even more than that, we are accountable to God.

It's easy enough these days to create your own tribe. Surround yourself with people who say what you want them to say. Who gives you only what you want to hear.

But think about this.

The leaders who take accountability seriously rarely have anything to account for.

Those who don't do. Notice the paradox.

WHAT CHRISTIANS CAN DO

The Gospel is perhaps the best antidote to the current cultural turbulence.

In many ways, as American culture slips further and further away from its Christian underpinnings, the Gospel is poised to play its somewhat familiar role in culture as a prophet.

The role of a prophet is to help the culture clearly see what truth, God, and life are really all about. The Gospel is also the home to all real hope.

Historically, the role of the prophet has been a bit of a miserable role. The prophet is rarely understood, seldom embraced, and often rejected by their own generation. And many are tortured and killed!

Jeremiah was exiled. John the Baptist was beheaded. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed just two weeks before the Second World War ended.

The Gospel:

- It is anchored in the idea that truth (and even love) is objective and available to all.
- It values all people.

A life lived because of and for the Gospel:

- It calls us to put something bigger than ourselves above ourselves.
- It calls us to die to ourselves so that others may live.

If the church starts to mimic culture in this seismic shift, we will tear ourselves away from the very thing that will save us.

So, what can you do as a Christian or a Christian leader? Here are a few closing thoughts and suggestions.

1. ANCHOR YOURSELF TO WHAT'S TRUE

Truth is objective, and love doesn't just reside in us; it's greater than us. Resist the temptation to define your own reality.

2. RESIST THE SPIN

Don't get caught up in the vortex of your personal opinions or anyone else's.

Be dead honest; Tell the truth.

3. CONFESS YOUR ROLE IN IT

Reality is not what you want it to be. You aren't what you want to be. Confess it. Address it.

You may not be the whole problem, but you are part of it. So am I.

You'll never address what you won't confess. So, confess your sin.

4. EMBRACE LOVE

Remember that forgiveness is on the other side of confession.

Christians believe that truth and love are fused together. And in that, there is hope.

If your truth doesn't look like love, it's not truth.

If your love isn't anchored to truth, it's not love.

Truth and love are never separated when Christ is truly present and working in your life.

The Gospel is the antidote to a post-modern, post-truth, post-fact culture.

The objectivity of the Gospel functions less like a sledgehammer (I'm right and everyone else wrong) and more like an anchor (in this storm of uncertainty, let's tether ourselves to what's true).

5. KEEP SOME DISTANCE FROM YOUR POLITICAL POSITIONS

God is not a Republican, a Democrat, a conservative, a liberal, or a socialist. He transcends all our political categories, however important they might be to us.

Politics matters, but it will never change the world the way the Gospel can (or has).

So, how much distance should there be between you and your politics?

Just know this: if God has all the same opinions your political party does, you're probably not worshipping God.

6. LOVE PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE YOU

The tribalism that's emerging (I only hang out with people who look like me, sound like me, and agree with me) directly threatens our ability to value people different than ourselves.

Jesus said our faith would not be characterized by how deeply we love our friends. It would be described by how deeply we love our enemies.

Have you hung out with any enemies lately? Not to argue, but to listen? To love?

If your version of the Gospel doesn't include loving your opponents, it's not the Gospel.

7. HOPE!

Of all people, Christians should be the most hopeful.

Our hope comes from outside any system or person because it comes from Christ.

Cling to Him, and share the hope He brings.

Hope is the ultimate antidote to cynicism. In a world growing more cynical by the minute, hope is one of the most radical things you can do.

And remember, a better – no, perfect Kingdom with a perfect King is coming!

Adapted from articles written by Carey Nieuwhof, Rex M. Rogers, and others

How to Develop and Maintain a Biblical Christian Worldview

Part of learning, explaining, and eventually defending the truths of the Bible is listening to accurate and informed Bible teachers, reading good literature about the Bible, personally studying Scriptures and material on apologetics, and knowing and living the Word of God.

Listed are eleven practical suggestions to get you started on developing and maintaining a biblical worldview.

- 1. I must ask questions.** If I don't understand or believe something, I should not act as though I know or believe it. I should ask my questions kindly. Unbelief is sin, but doubt and questions are not sin.
- 2. I must study, not just read my Bible.** Instead of asking and answering, "What does this passage mean to me?" I should ask and answer the questions, "What does this passage mean?" and "Why does it mean that?"
- 3. I must take my studies seriously.** My studies are far more important than just trying to get a good grade. They are matters of life and death.
- 4. I must learn to think logically (maybe take a course or get some training).**
- 5. I must be prepared for speakers, teachers, religious leaders, and college professors who are committed to undermining my faith in Jesus Christ.**
- 6. I must not be afraid to kindly challenge speakers, teachers, religious leaders, and college professors by asking them hard questions.** Questions are low risk. If the other person becomes angry or defensive, I can stop asking questions or change the subject. Asking questions helps me understand the other person's train of thought. Jesus asked those in the temple questions when he was only 12 years old, and they were amazed at His understanding.

Good Questions to Ask*

- 1) What do you mean by _____?***
- 2) How did you come to that conclusion?***
- 3) How do you know that to be true?***
- 4) Why do you believe that you are right?***
- 5) Where do you get your information?***
- 6) What happens if you are wrong?***

7) Please provide two sources that disagree with you and explain why.

8) Why is this significant?

9) How do I know you are telling me the truth? Or why should I believe you? (Care must be used here when asking these questions so arrogance is not shown.)

10) Can you give me an alternate explanation for this "phenomenon"?

* Adapted from questions by Bill, Jack, and Jeff Myers with Summit Ministries

7. I must find Christian resources relevant to my major of study. See Appendix 1 & 2 in *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, by J.P. Moreland, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, pp 201–233.

8. I must:

- 1) Know Christ as my personal Savior by placing my faith alone in Christ alone
- 2) Make Him Lord of my entire life
- 3) Live a holy life by the power of the Holy Spirit in love for the glory of God!

9. I must stretch my intellectual boundaries. It can be done by coming together in small groups specifically designed to:

- 1) Discuss Scripture, not self-help books
- 2) Pick a hot-button issue about which to dialog
- 3) Ask questions on the Biblical Christian worldview.
- 4) You can also stretch your intellectual boundaries by reading secular topics written by authors with a Christian worldview. See point #7.

10. I must decide on a personal purpose statement that encompasses my Biblical Christian worldview and then live the rest of my life by it, no matter the cost. It should include a commitment to:

- 1) Exalt the Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) Encourage participation in God's family
- 3) Edify others to maturity in Christ
- 4) Equip (myself and others) for ministry leadership
- 5) Evangelize the world

11. I must develop a friendship with a fellow believer of the same gender who is spiritually minded and committed to becoming a fully obedient worshipper of Jesus Christ.

Suggested Memory Verses

Ephesians 6:10 – 14, *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to **stand***

***firm** against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**. **Stand firm** therefore..."*

James 4:7, "Submit therefore to God. **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you."

1 Peter 3:14-14, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.' But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

1 Peter 5:8 – 11, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. **But resist him, firm in your faith**, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Colossians 2:5 – 12, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and **the stability of your faith in Christ**. Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made

without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

1 Corinthians 16:13, 14, *"Be on the alert, **stand firm in the faith**, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love."*

1 Corinthians 11:2, *"Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and **hold firmly to the traditions**, just as I delivered them to you."*

1 Corinthians 15:1, 2, *"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also **you stand**, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."*

Galatians 5:1, *"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore **keep standing firm** and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."*

Philippians 1:27 – 29, *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you **are standing firm** in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents - which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,"*

Philippians 4:1, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this **way stand firm in the Lord**, my beloved."*

1 Thessalonians 3:6 – 8, *"But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; for now we really live, if you **stand firm in the Lord**. For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,"*

2 Thessalonians 2:13 – 17, *"But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, **stand firm and hold to the traditions** which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father,*

who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word."

Jude 3, 4, *"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."*

2 Timothy 1:13, 14, *"**Retain the standard of sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. **Guard,** through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, **the treasure** which has been entrusted to you."*

2 Timothy 2:1, 2, *"You therefore my son, **be strong in the grace** that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from men the presence of many witnesses, **entrust these to faithful men** who will be able to teach others also."*

2 Timothy 3:14, *"You, however, **continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of,** knowing from whom you have learned them."*

Six Ways Christian Parents Can Prepare Their Students for College

One of the primary concerns I've had as a student pastor in my early years of ministry is preparedness. Are the students who graduate prepared for college? As much as it concerned me, I've learned I have a minimal role in the answer to this question. I am grateful for the help from articles by many others, especially Manny Fernandez (Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, and current D.Min. student), who has served in global missions and as Student Pastor at Central Bible Church and now is the President of World Link Ministries and Michael Ruamthong (Master of Divinity in Christian Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and has completed counseling certificates through CCEF) who serves as the college ministry director at Redeeming Grace Church in Fairfax, VA. It is my hope and prayer that what you now read will be a guide for parents and future graduates.

The transition from home to college is more than a logistical challenge—it's a defining moment in your child's spiritual life. As someone who served in youth and college ministry for several years, I had the privilege of walking alongside students and witnessing the profound impact of this season on their faith. I also know the deep yearning of parents who want their children to find a church home and stay rooted in Christ during this new chapter.

College is often the first time they make independent decisions about church involvement, friendships, and time and money management. It's a season where faith can either deepen or drift. As parents, our deepest longing is not merely that our children keep up with church attendance and their walk with Christ as a habit but that they remain captivated by the beauty of the gospel and grounded in the primary community God has chosen for their growth: the local church.

At the heart of this is the life-giving message of the gospel: "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1:15). The gospel isn't simply the starting point of the Christian life; it's the power that transforms every season of life, including the college years. It shapes not only what we do but who we are, grounding every choice in the redemptive love of Christ. This means that our children's relationship with the church during college should flow not from guilt, fear, or mere routine but from hearts transformed by grace and drawn toward joyful communion with God and His people.

The gospel reminds us that salvation is not about behavior modification but our eternal salvation and a present transformed heart and life in Christ. Church attendance alone cannot save or sustain faith—but the local church is

the God-ordained community where your student will grow in grace and participate in God's mission while in college and beyond. By God's grace, parents have the privilege of modeling a profound appreciation for the local church that flows from a heart captivated by Christ. Preparing your child for college means more than emphasizing church attendance—it means helping them take personal ownership of their faith, teaching them the value of the local church as Christ's body, and encouraging them to participate in its mission with joy. Here are six values to read to prepare your child to live out the gospel in college through active involvement in the local church while in college and beyond.

1. Ask and Answer the Following Four Questions

As a dad, ministry leader, and educator, a primary concern of mine is that our adversary, Satan, continues his relentless assault on the family. One of his battlegrounds is higher education, and surely, he would like nothing more than to disrupt the counsel of Proverbs 22:6, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

The Hebrew word translated as "train up" is also used in the Old Testament to mean consecrate and dedicate. "The overall context of Proverbs suggests the act of dedicating is focused more on an intentional, sustained, God-dependent shepherding of our children's hearts and minds as they grow into adulthood – one which the children themselves are aware of the parents' trajectory-setting intentions," explains Jason DeRouche, professor at Midwestern Baptist Seminary.

College students raised in Christian homes will undoubtedly hear that their parents were dead wrong when it comes to evolution, sexuality, the Bible, and the Christian worldview in general. My heart and prayers go out to parents whose children reject biblical Christianity and embrace falsehoods perpetrated in the classroom, dorm rooms, and beyond.

I strongly urge parents to consider whether their son or daughter is prepared for what they will inevitably face on campuses. Of course, college readiness depends on several factors: expense, curricula, living conditions at School, socialization, location, and, of course, the state of your child's faith.

In addition, here are some questions that every believing parent, for the sake of their conscience, needs to answer before their son or daughter goes off to a state college or university.

(1) Is my child's faith strong enough to withstand the onslaught of lies, misinformation, and maltreatment for their faith they will face in these institutions? To that end, can they articulate their core beliefs compellingly to others? Do they seek their spiritual

development, show no interest in the Church, and faithfully do their spiritual habits? Have you exposed them to contrary worldviews (and their underlying assumptions) so they aren't surprised?

(2) Will the school my child attends reinforce or seek to dismantle the spiritual beliefs and values I've taught them and they believe before going off to school? A well-known study published about 10 years ago in the *Sociology of Religion* revealed that 18% of all undergraduate U.S. professors considered themselves "born-again Christians," compared to about 30% of the general population. Only 6% of professors said that the Bible was the "actual word of God," and 48% answered that the Bible was an "ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts."

It also found that roughly 20% of professors had atheistic or agnostic beliefs about God, a rate more than double that of the general population. Almost half the professors of psychology and mechanical engineering were atheists. Among biologists, 33% were agnostics, and 27.5% were atheists.

(3) Am I willing to risk alienating my child by refusing to subject them to unbiblical indoctrination? It is natural to fear losing a child when they accept the beliefs and values they once denounced. Communicate in love, show your concern, and let them know you cannot go along with or condone any teaching that will likely erode their confidence in God, the Bible, or a biblical Christian worldview.

(4) Have I proven to my child that I truly believe what I say I believe? Your child's risk of being influenced by falsehood increases if they're not convinced that your own faith is genuine and that you practice what you "preach."

Take the time to think through the answers to these questions and lovingly discuss these issues. Then, proceed to the following points to prepare your student for college.

2. Cultivate a Relationship with Your Teen Outside of the Normal

It might seem counterintuitive to seek a deeper relationship with your child as they prepare to leave the nest. The fact is that after graduation, they will be more independent, for better or worse. It used to be common for parents to toss their kids into the deep end of the pool after graduation and watch them learn how to swim. Those days are fading, if not gone altogether. The age of adolescence is creeping higher than it has ever been. On average, teens are not fully developed mentally, emotionally, and socially at 18 or 19. Now, when teens are tossed into

the “deep end,” many of them are drowning emotionally, mentally, or socially.

For this reason, it is vital that parents not “check out” when their kids “check in” to college.

The fact is that graduates still need their parents, arguably more than ever.

The fact is that graduates still need their parents, arguably more than ever. I would suggest intentionally investing deeply into the relationship with your graduate in their last two years of high school, preparing them to be on their own but still connected to home.

Go camping, travel somewhere special, have a standing weekly/monthly dinner out, go fishing, or hold a monthly game night. Find something you want to do together and spend time doing it, deepening your relationship with them. Hint: If you pick something they like, it will go better than choosing something you want them to do.

3. Begin with the Gospel: Teach Your Child Their Identity in Christ

Your child’s relationship with the Lord must flow from their understanding of who they are in Christ. In a culture emphasizing achievement, identity, and personal success, your child must know their worth rests in Christ’s finished work, not academic performance or relationships. This understanding frees them to live for God’s glory rather than striving for worldly success.

- **Teach the truth of justification by faith alone:** Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that salvation is by grace through faith alone, not by works. Reinforce that their involvement in church is not about earning favor with God but living out the new identity they have been given in Christ.
- **Help them embrace their union with Christ:** Explain that all believers are united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:5-11). Because they belong to Him, they are also members of His body, the Church.
- **Frame church participation as a response to grace:** We don’t attend church to prove ourselves to God—Jesus has already secured our acceptance. Instead, we go because we belong to Him and to His people, living out our faith as part of His family.

When your child understands their identity in Christ, they are free to engage with the church out of joy, not duty.

4. Invest Time and Resources in Apologetics for Teens

Sometimes, we think of apologetics as two PhDs on opposite sides of the line debating about the existence of God on a university stage. While this

may be one way we can see apologetics training played out, it is not necessarily what I'm advocating. Apologetics is the science and understanding of how to defend your faith. There are a myriad of books that speak to this topic. Many books are very general in their defense, discussing God's existence, the universe's origin, the veracity of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. But many books are more specific, detailing how to defend your faith against a Muslim, Mormon, or a follower of any other religion or cult.

These books are not all academic and difficult to understand. Some are exceptionally scholarly and difficult to understand, but many are written for the non-academic. Written in an easy-to-understand format, they are designed to help the reader understand the significance of our arguments to defend the faith. I have found that these are specifically helpful for teenagers:

- *"The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus"*
- *"Ten Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity"*
- *True for You, But Not for Me: Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith*
- *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospel*
- *Tactics, 10th Anniversary Edition: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*

5. Empower Them to Take Ownership of Their Faith

The gospel calls every believer to personal responsibility in their walk with Christ. While parents play an essential role in nurturing faith, there comes a time when every child must take ownership of their relationship with Jesus. As your child enters college, encourage them to rely on Christ personally, not simply on your faith or family routines.

- **Teach them to cultivate spiritual disciplines:** Philippians 2:12-13 reminds us to "*work out [not for] your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you.*" Encourage your child to develop personal Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship habits to sustain their faith. These are ways they respond to the gospel and grow in grace.
- **Help them see their place in God's mission:** Involvement in the local church allows your child to serve others and participate in God's redemptive work in the world. Encourage them to see church membership as part of their calling in Christ, not just a personal benefit. The local church becomes a place where they live out their

faith in community, love others sacrificially, and use their gifts to serve the body of Christ.

6. Visit Churches on Your College Visits

Visiting colleges is typical, but little thought is given to where your son or daughter will go to church. In my experience, graduates will take the path of least resistance concerning the church. No one wants to be the person in the room that no one knows. College is already hard enough; why add to it the anxiety of going to a church that's not your home church?

Statistically, 60% of students who graduate from high school and attend church during their high school years stop attending church altogether. These stats are also pre-COVID. I can guarantee you the number is much higher now. The term is the deconstruction of their faith.

Therefore, let me encourage you to start planning with your teens where they could go to church. Visit the church when you visit the college. Talk to the college pastor. Fill out a visitor form. See if it's a good fit. It will go a long way.

The Bible teaches us that our faith is nurtured within the community of believers. The local church is where the Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments are administered, and believers grow together in love and accountability. Rather than viewing the church as an optional part of the Christian life, help your child understand that it is essential to their spiritual growth.

- **Teach the beauty of a gospel-centered community:** God designed His people to grow together in a covenantal community where we encourage one another, bear burdens, and spur each other toward love and good works (Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 10:24).
- **Equip them to discern gospel-centered churches:** Not all churches faithfully proclaim the gospel accurately, clearly, urgently, or consistently, so it's crucial to equip your child to find a biblically sound church that prioritizes Christ-centered preaching, sound doctrine, and intentional discipleship.
- **Teach them what to look for:** A healthy church faithfully preaches the gospel accurately, clearly, urgently, and consistently, administers the sacraments, and emphasizes discipleship. Help your child identify these markers.
- **Warn against consumer-driven churches:** Explain that the purpose of the church is not to entertain or cater to personal preferences but to exalt Christ and build up believers in the faith.
- **Encourage thoughtful and prayerful commitment:** Finding a church in college calls for both eagerness to commit and intelligent discernment. Encourage your child to seek a gospel-centered

church that exalts Christ, prayerfully and faithfully teaches the Word, and prioritizes discipleship. Caution them against letting peer pressure or convenience drive their choice, urging them to prioritize sound doctrine and spiritual growth instead. While committing early can help establish healthy rhythms, remind them that taking time to find a church rooted in the gospel is worth the wait. Trust God to guide them to a community where they can grow in Christlikeness, be nourished by His means of grace, and serve faithfully as part of his kingdom work.

- **Explain that the church is to help nurture spiritual growth:** The Bible teaches us that our faith is nurtured within the community of believers. The local church is where the Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments are administered, and believers grow together in love and accountability. Rather than viewing the church as an optional part of the Christian life, help your child understand that it is essential to their spiritual growth.
- **Explain that God uses ordinary means to produce spiritual growth:** Through Christ-centered preaching, intergenerational discipleship, the administration of the sacraments, and corporate prayer, the church equips believers to live out their faith. It is not about checking religious boxes but receiving the spiritual nourishment God provides through the local church.
- **Clarify the difference between the local church and parachurch ministries:** While campus ministries can be helpful, emphasize that they are not a replacement for the local church. Teach your child to prioritize the local church as the central Bible preaching and teaching place where they will be shepherded by pastors, receive their help, and grow in community with one another and in the community.

The value of biblically sound Christian parachurch ministries with proper accountability is found when they serve alongside the local church (not replacing the local church), offering services that supplement or extend the ministry of local churches. Their value lies in providing specialized expertise, resources, and access to ministry opportunities that might not be readily available to individual churches, allowing them to focus on their core functions

- **Establish accountability with and for them:** There is nothing wrong with holding your child accountable. You've most likely done it all through their childhood. However, the notion that they somehow don't need accountability is common, albeit unfounded. The truth of the matter is that we all need accountability. As their parent, you may not be the best person to offer that to your child now. However, you can certainly ask that they be accountable to

someone with godly character and relational skills other than their peers.

I encourage you to talk with your daughter or son and encourage them to find an accountability partner, perhaps more than one. I also encourage you to be vulnerable and transparent with them to a certain degree. Help them understand our need for accountability at all stages of life. College is such a crucial time; trying to do it alone is silly. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 15:22).

The gospel reminds us that salvation is God's work from start to finish (Phil. 1:6). As parents, our role is to plant gospel seeds faithfully, but it is God who causes them to grow (1 Cor. 3:7). This truth offers great comfort—your child's spiritual journey is ultimately in God's hands.

Pray for their union with Christ and faithfulness to His Church. Make it a priority to pray earnestly for your child's spiritual well-being, asking God that they remain rooted in Christ, abide in His Word, and be nourished through the means of grace in the local church. Trust in the promise that God hears the prayers of his people (Jas. 5:16) and delights in drawing His children closer to Himself.

Rest in God's wise and loving sovereignty. Trust that even during challenges or unexpected detours in their college years, God is working all things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

Remember that while your desire to guide, protect, and influence your child's choices is strong, the Lord is a far greater Father—perfect in wisdom, love, and care. He knows exactly what they need to grow in grace and faith, and He is faithful to complete the good work He began in them (Phil. 1:6). Let this truth bring you comfort and peace as you release your child into His hands.

Six Ways Christian *Students* Can Prepare for College

Soon, it will be that time of year. Many high school seniors have heard where they have been accepted to college. Others are still waiting. But all should begin to think about the next stage of their life post-high school.

For Christian students, this time of anticipation can be particularly acute. It is natural for them to wonder, How am I going to survive at a big university as a Christian? Am I ready to handle the challenges coming my way? What if I don't have all the answers?

Of course, this sort of angst is not just felt by the students. It is also felt (and maybe felt more) by the *parents*. After all, Christian parents have spent the last 18 years teaching these students the gospel, taking them to church, and trying to show them how to follow Christ. It's natural to wonder whether all this will be undone after just a few months in college.

So, what can be done to prepare? To help answer that question, I adapted some of the material from what Michael J. Kruger* shared with the Regents School of Austin, TX, students who read his book *Surviving Religion 101* and many others. Here are six pieces of practical advice.

#1 Take This Transition Seriously

And here's the first way he told them to prepare for college: *Take This Transition Seriously*.

As he talked to students about heading to college, he warned of two extremes. One extreme is what he called the "martyr complex." That's when a Christian student heads off to college with a high degree of suspicion and paranoia. They are ready to see anti-Christian monsters around every corner. Every professor is Darth Vader. Every student is part of the Inquisition that wants to hunt down evangelicals.

Unfortunately, such students often become combative, withdrawn, and rather unpleasant to be around. When you think everyone is out to get you, you tend to act like a cornered animal, always ready to fight.

However, students must remember that Christians can have wonderful spiritual experiences at prominent universities. Even though it is a secular environment, most college faculties still have Christian professors. And college is often when Christians grow the most, especially if they can find a solid campus fellowship and a good church.

At the same time, we must also guard against the opposite mistake. If unbridled suspicion is a problem on the one side, then naïve overconfidence may be a problem on the other. Some young Christians enter college absolutely convinced that nothing can shake their faith—they are mature, wise, and theologically astute enough to handle whatever comes their way (so they think).

There's nothing to worry about, they tell themselves. Falling away is always something that happens to *other* people.

Instead of either extreme, students just take this transition seriously. Yes, you can be hopeful. But you can also be soberly aware of the dangers. Both can be done at the same time.

Do you recall Frodo in *The Fellowship of the Ring*? As a young hobbit, Frodo was always eager to go on adventures with his uncle Bilbo. But, while adventures can be exhilarating, Bilbo also knew they could be dangerous. So, he gave Frodo some wise advice:

"It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. . . You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."

So, what does all this mean? It means as you head off to college as a believer, you need to realize it can be a *dangerous business*. Don't take your spiritual health lightly while you're there. You need to be serious about your potential challenges while not living in fear and worry.

Simply put, "*Be on your guard*" (1 Cor 16:13, NIV).

#2 You Won't Have All the Answers

As students jump into the intellectual fray at their university, it will quickly become clear that there are many questions they don't know how to answer. Maybe it will be questions about God (if God is good, then why is there so much evil in the world?), or questions about the Bible (how can you believe in inspiration if there are contradictions in the Gospel accounts?), or even questions about science (hasn't genetics proven that the human race did not originate with just two people?).

Whatever the question, it can be very uncomfortable not having an answer. The intellectual give-and-take of a big university environment can be intimidating. If you get caught on the losing end of an exchange with your professor or classmates (whatever that may mean), you might feel silly or embarrassed. It might make you withdraw from future conversations or even lead you to doubt what you believe.

But should a lack of answers lead to this sort of reaction? Not at all. First, **give yourself a break**. Most eighteen-year-old Christians are not fully equipped to answer the barrage of complex (and aggressive) questions coming their way. In fact, most forty-year-old Christians are not equipped to answer aggressive questions about their faith.

Not being equipped doesn't make Christianity untrue.

Second, **not having an answer does not affect the truth of what a person believes**. Your beliefs can be correct, even if you cannot explain or defend them.

Consider other beliefs you might hold. If asked whether you believe humans landed on the moon in 1969, I assume you would say you do. But, if you happened to have a conversation with a moon landing denier (these folks are more common than you think) who shared all his well-crafted objections and pressed you to defend your beliefs, you would probably have very few answers.

But surely you wouldn't abandon that belief just because you were stumped! Your belief would still be correct.

The fact is that most things we believe are like this. We haven't had time to investigate every belief we hold personally—instead, we rely on other authorities. A person might believe that $E=mc^2$, that Constantine won the battle of Milvian bridge, and that their grandfather was born in Boerne, TX. However, few could defend these beliefs on the spot if pressed by a determined critic eager to question everything.

Third, **don't confuse not having an answer with there not being an answer**. The two are not the same. Even if *you* don't have answers to difficult questions, that does not mean there are none. Indeed, you should know that most of the objections you will hear are old news (even though they are often presented as no one had ever thought of them before).

I have learned that lesson myself in many ways over the years. Whenever I think I've encountered an original objection, I typically discover it was raised long ago in the early church and *answered* long ago in the early church.

If you are a rising college student, here's the big point: you won't be able to answer every objection to Christianity you hear. And that's OK. You just need to be ready for that. It's not a reason to doubt your faith.

Instead, **it should be a reason to study your faith**—a reason to dig deeper into what you believe and why you believe it. When that happens, you will find that the challenges you faced didn't make you weaker but made you stronger.

#3 What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger

We now come to a third consideration for rising Christian college students: "What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger."

No, this is not a quote from Kelly Clarkson. It was actually first said (as far as I know) by Friedrich Nietzsche. But it captures a Christian principle: opposition can be a blessing.

Indeed, this is true in other areas of life. For a weightlifter or professional athlete, the pain of resistance can create more strength and endurance. Some of you may recall your sports playing days and remember the dreaded end of practice when we would run "lappers" around the field or court (a grueling endurance routine that still makes me feel nauseated today). As the players wilted in the heat, straining to take the next step, an outside observer might think the coach was out to destroy us. One might even think we were being punished for some misdeed.

But, as a player, you knew better. You knew your coach was just preparing you for the state tournament at the end of the season when every drop of endurance would be needed.

Similarly, as strange as it sounds, the opposition in the university environment can be a tremendous benefit. It can shape a student into a better, more fit believer who can serve God in unique and exceptional ways—ways that would be impossible in an opposition-free life.

For one, *opposition will force students to figure out what they really believe*. It's one thing to believe something because you grew up with it or because your parents, pastor, or youth leader believed it. It's entirely another to be able to express why you believe something when someone else thinks it's ridiculous (or even morally offensive).

A secular university can lead a student to find the answers to the tough questions.

It can push them to be a better theologian. Truth be told, most Christians are never really required to do this. We live most of our lives in a Christian "bubble," surrounded by Christian friends in our Christian sub-culture.

It's very peaceful and comfortable. But that doesn't always produce the best thinkers.

So, my advice to future college students is simple. Let all these questions drive you to pursue the answers. Be a reader. Be a studier. Be someone who dives deeply into the deep issues of your faith. And here's the payoff: not only will that bless your soul, but it will also bless many other people as you

help them work through challenging intellectual issues. You can become a resource for others. Just think how more confident you will be when you find answers!

The Christians in the earliest generations of the church also learned this lesson. In the second century, in particular, Christians faced an unprecedented barrage of attacks. Some of those attacks came from the intellectual elites of the Greco-Roman world, heaping scorn and ridicule on the burgeoning Christian movement. In their eyes, Christianity was intellectually lacking and philosophically deficient, attracting only the uneducated and gullible (especially, they argued, women and children).

But attacks also came from within. Numerous heretical groups arose, questioning the foundational doctrines of Christianity and amassing an impressive number of followers. In particular, Gnosticism was a serious threat. The Gnostics argued that the physical world was the creation of a false god and that Jesus, therefore, could not have come in the flesh. Moreover, they argued that “salvation” came not through the work of Christ on the cross but through a special knowledge given to only certain enlightened ones.

Such challenges—from both inside and outside—created a bit of a crisis in the early Christian movement. How would they respond? Would the infant church even survive? Here, we see again that God uses challenges and opposition for good ends. Not only did the early church survive, it thrived. How? It dug deep and pursued these tough theological and intellectual questions. The earliest Christian leaders learned how to express their faith in better ways, clearer ways—ways that would distinguish it from (and would refute) the various heretical groups around them.

In short, opposition made early Christians better theologians, better defenders of the faith, and better evangelists. Such theological reflection and nuance culminated in the Nicene Creed of AD 325, where the church expressed its commitment to Christ as God and man united in one person, against opposing views.

These same principles are evident in other parts of life. In 2017, Jack Gilbert—who teaches microbial science at the University of Chicago—published a fascinating book, *Dirt is Good: The Advantage of Germs for Your Child’s Developing Immune System*. As the title suggests, Gilbert challenges a core assumption of every nervous parent, namely that we must take every step humanly possible to protect our child from all forms of contamination. It seems that our kids can never use enough hand sanitizer, take enough baths, or use enough Clorox wipes.

As paradoxical as it seems, argues Gilbert, some exposure to germs can be good. It can help children develop their immune systems, which, in turn, will protect them when they are older. Indeed, he argues, many health problems (including the rising rate of severe allergies) can be linked to a *lack* of exposure to certain bacteria.

Here's the point: germ-conscious parents may think they are raising healthy children when they may be raising *vulnerable* children—a vulnerability that will not become apparent until many years later.

As nervous Christian parents, sometimes we think our number one job is to make sure our kids are never exposed to any non-Christian thinking. We may be tempted to place our children inside a sanitized theological bubble, safe from all forms of intellectual contamination. But, just like germ-conscious parents, this may not be accomplishing what we think.

So, here's the big point: don't view opposition at a secular university only in negative terms. View it as an *opportunity* to build up your theological immune system. It may be uncomfortable in the short term. However, it can produce tremendous spiritual health and vitality in the long term.

#4 People Don't Believe Things Simply Because of the Facts

We now come to a fourth thing that rising Christian college students need to know: "People don't believe things simply because of the facts."

What are probably the most challenging questions Christian college students are pondering: If Christianity is true, then why don't more people believe it? And why does it seem like the most intelligent people are precisely the ones who don't believe? If Christianity was true and made the most sense worldwide, wouldn't most people accept it?

These questions will be particularly acute when it comes to professors. There they are, trained in some of the finest research universities in the world. They appear to be and often are brilliant, filled with knowledge, and experienced debaters. And then there is the Christian student—a nineteen-year-old with no advanced degrees, no letters after their name, no credentials.

What are the chances that Christian students are right and these professors—nearly all of them—are wrong? It might seem that the chances of that are pretty low.

Indeed, if this issue is left unaddressed, it will begin to gnaw away at you, like a sliver in your mind, creating doubts about what you believe. So, it's

vital to have an answer. It's critical to understand why the intellectual landscape is what it is.

Just the Facts, Ma'am

The solution to this problem is understanding how people believe something is true. We tend to think that we discover truth by simply gathering facts together. Once we've collected enough facts, we can learn about the world. It includes knowledge about minor things, such as who invented the cotton gin and how planes fly, as well as big things, such as the origins of the universe and the existence of God.

It's all very "scientific," we think. To discover the truth, you just have to put on the white lab coat and collect information.

But there happens to be a little problem here (and by little, I mean big!). Science simply doesn't work this way. In 1962, the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn wrote a groundbreaking book titled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In that book, he argued that science doesn't work in this linear "just the facts, ma'am" sort of way. Instead, facts are collected, sifted, and interpreted in light of a person's preexisting worldview—what Kuhn calls a "paradigm."

Worldviews involve our most foundational commitments: where the world came from, our place in it, the purpose of life, the meaning of "right" and "wrong," the existence of God (or gods), what happens when we die, and so on. Although everyone has a worldview, most people have not thought much about their own. It's just there in the background, conditioning and controlling their search for knowledge.

Having a worldview is kind of like wearing colored glasses. It affects everything you see, and you don't even realize it. What counts as green, red, and orange is distorted by the lenses through which you are looking. So, a worldview is not so much something you look at as something you look *through*.

Seeing What We Want to See

So, what does this mean for Christian students at college? It means that their professors (and fellow students) are not neutral. They accept or reject beliefs because of earlier and more foundational beliefs they already hold. And if those more foundational beliefs are fundamentally hostile to Christianity, we should not be surprised that they reject the claims of Christianity when presented with them.

Sometimes, we see what we want to see.

C.S. Lewis captured this reality well in his book *The Magician's Nephew*. While Narnia is a land filled with magic—where animals can talk and even sing—not all people can hear them. Indeed, Uncle Andrew cannot. When the animals speak to him, Uncle Andrew hears only animal sounds. Just noise, not words. Why? He is closed to the idea of a magical world. He assumes (in his worldview) that animals are nothing but dumb creatures.

Thus, when Aslan sings, Uncle Andrew can rationalize it away: “Of course, it can't really have been singing,’ he thought, ‘I must have imagined it. I've been letting my nerves get out of order. Who ever heard of a lion singing?’”

Then Lewis (as the narrator) offers the most profound insight: “What you see and hear depends greatly on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are.”

Here's the big point: the widespread rejection of Christianity by intellectual elites has nothing to do with whether Christianity is true. People cannot believe without the help of the Holy Spirit.

So, for those Christian students heading to college, take a deep breath. There's no need to panic about being so much in the minority. To some extent, that's to be expected. Be patient and humble, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit to help people see the truth.

And that patient humility flows naturally from remembering that we, too, were once blind and in the dark. But God showed us His grace and opened our eyes to understand. We are Christians not because we are more intelligent or wiser than others but because God was gracious to us.

As Augustine said: “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”

#5 Doubting Your Faith Does Not Make You a Bad Christian

We now come to a fifth thing that rising Christian college students need to know: “Doubting your faith does not make you a bad Christian.”

The great nineteenth-century Baptist preacher, C.H. Spurgeon, once confessed: “On a sudden, the thought crossed my mind—which I abhorred but could not conquer—that there was no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell, and that all my prayers were but a farce, and that I might as well have whistled to the winds or spoken to the howling waves.”

The above quote reminds us that nearly all Christians, even those who seem strong and confident, face periods of doubt about what they believe. Indeed, sometimes those doubts can swell up into a crisis of sorts. Even Spurgeon admitted his doubts were difficult to conquer.

So, how do we handle these doubts when they come? Or, how do we help others who admit they are struggling with what they believe? Here are several things to consider.

1. *Doubting is normal.* First things first: doubting is a normal part of the Christian life. Not only are the scriptures filled with instances where people struggle to believe, but we see this same reality played out in church history. Despite our tendency to make celebrities out of famous figures in the history of the church, they often struggled deeply behind the scenes (just read about Martin Luther).

Thus, to doubt is not to reject Christianity. To doubt does not make one an enemy of the church. Rather, Os Guinness reminds us that doubt is a form of wavering; it is to be of “two minds” about something (see *God in the Dark*). It’s like the worried father in Mark 9:24: “*I believe; help my unbelief!*”

Unfortunately, the church has not always recognized this reality. We are sometimes told that good Christians never struggle with what they believe. Those with questions are shamed into thinking they are second-class Christians and sometimes even treated with suspicion. Such a posture has done immense spiritual damage, and we need to do better.

2. *Christ was compassionate to doubters.* Being caught between belief and unbelief is a tough place to be. But rather than scorning and shaming such folks, be encouraged to know that Christ had compassion on them. He was patient with them. He doesn’t humiliate Thomas but invites him to see the truth more clearly: “*Put your finger here*” (John 20:27). We need to remember God’s gracious character, “*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench*” (Matt 12:20/Is 42:3).

The church has a lot to learn here. In all the cultural conversations swirling about “deconstruction,” there has been one thing profoundly missing: *compassion*. Oftentimes, these are hurting people who need a gracious reply, not a harsh rebuke.

3. *Doubt is not a virtue to be pursued.* While the church needs more compassion on those who doubt, there’s also an opposite danger. Some voices in the church today almost present doubt as if it were an admirable quality that Christians should embrace. The problem, we are told, is that Christians are far too assured about what they believe. Certainty is the real problem.

Now, there’s an element of truth here. We must remember that not all doctrines are equally clear in Scripture. Even so, regarding core beliefs about Christianity, doubt can become a real danger if left unchecked. We are

clearly told by Jesus, "Have faith and do not doubt" (Matt 21:21). And James reminds us: "Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind" (Jas 1:6).

In short, doubt can hinder our faith if left unchecked. We need to fight against it.

4. Doubt has many different causes. Unfortunately, many Christians assume that doubters must have some sort of *intellectual deficiency*. Maybe they just don't have enough facts. Perhaps they just haven't heard the complete argument. Or maybe they just aren't knowledgeable. These sorts of sentiments are deeply problematic. Sure, some doubters may not know the answers to their questions. But many doubters have done their intellectual homework and still struggle to believe. Let's not be so condescending to think such things are always solved by giving people one more book to read.

Moreover, some people doubt Christianity for *moral reasons*. For example, the last decade has revealed that the church still has a lot of work to do in the areas of sexual abuse and spiritual abuse. Some folks doubt because they have witnessed the ugly reality of abuse in the church and the all-too-common lackluster response to such abuse. It is understandable why such people might wonder if God is real, if the church is a good institution, or if the entire Christian system is worthy of their trust.

Rather than heaping scorn on those who doubt for these reasons, perhaps the church would do better to take a posture of humility and compassion. We should understand what these people have suffered and learn ways the church might need to grow and change.

5. Doubt has many different solutions. If we are to battle our doubts, there are many ways to do so. Some serious study and research may be needed if the doubts are intellectual. However, there are other necessary steps to take to deal with doubt. Tim Keller has helpfully suggested that we should learn to "doubt our doubts." It means that we don't just question the truth of our Christian beliefs, but we learn to question the truth of what is trying to *replace* our Christian beliefs. If we doubt Christianity because of evolution, we should take the time to question the truth of evolution and whether it really is all it's cracked up to be.

One final thought on dealing with doubt. And this could be called "horror movie advice" (many people enjoy scary movies). In horror movies, the protagonist always makes the same mistake—they wander off alone in the dark or down to the basement. Meanwhile, the audience screams, "Don't do it, don't go there!" They know the worst place is to be alone and in the dark.

So, it is with spiritual matters. Don't go off alone and in the dark when dealing with doubt. Instead, stay in the group and stay in the light. Face those challenges within a solid Christian community that can give you support and encouragement.

After all, that is what the body of Christ is for: "*Two are better than one . . . for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!*" (Eccles. 4:9-10).

#6 Stick Together Like a Band of Brothers (or Sisters)

We now come to the final point, arguably the series' most important: "Stick together like a band of brothers (or sisters)."

I remember first seeing the World War II film *Saving Private Ryan*. The opening scene of the D-Day invasion was so profoundly gut-wrenching that I almost had to leave the theater. It's the first time I think I ever really got a taste (just a taste, mind you) of the horrors of war.

I could barely watch as those brave US soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy, knowing it was almost sure they would die. And, at Omaha Beach, most of them did. The Nazis were dug into elevated positions, forcing the Americans to charge forward, unprotected on the open beach, into a barrage of bullets and explosions.

When faced with such incredible heroism, an obvious question comes up. What allowed these soldiers to be so brave? What could explain a person's willingness to give their life so courageously?

I suppose there are many answers to those questions. But as the movie wore on, one answer became quite clear. Following the Normandy invasion, the film tracks a small band of soldiers who take a harrowing journey through war-torn France to find a solitary soldier, Private Ryan, and bring him home. Ryan had lost his three brothers, and the State Department didn't want his mother to have to lose her fourth and last son.

After Private Ryan is finally found, it turns out he doesn't want to leave. He wants to stay and fight. And here's why: "You can tell [my mother] that when you found me, I was with the only brothers I had left. And that there was no way I was deserting them. I think she'd understand that."

So, here's the answer (or at least one of them) for how soldiers could exhibit such unimaginable bravery: *they didn't do it alone*.

For Private Ryan, the comradery, the brotherhood, the friendship—centered around a common goal—made him so willing to give his life. And the same could be said of the countless soldiers who died on Omaha Beach. They

could do things together that they could never (and would never) do apart. They were a band of brothers.

The same is true of the Christian life. Christian college students are not headed to the beaches of Normandy; that's true. But the Christian life is a battle, and the university environment can be a hot war zone with lots of enemy fire. So, how do you survive it? By not going it alone. Students' priority is finding a band of brothers and sisters in Christ to walk with them.

First and foremost, that involves finding a good local church; students need a church home where they can be members, get involved, and sit under the preaching/teaching of the word of God. There are lots of church options, but make sure to find one that believes in the gospel message—we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—and that affirms the inspiration and authority of Scripture while recognizing the Deity of Christ.

Similarly, students need to find a good campus ministry to plug into. It won't replace the local church but will be vital to on-campus life and fellowship. Here's where students can meet fellow believers who can walk with them through the ups and downs of college life. Their encouragement is often the key to keeping you going, especially when life is complicated and challenging.

In my experience, the number one determining factor for why some Christian students stay strong and others fall away is the degree to which they plugged into solid Christian fellowship. As the book of Hebrews says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"* (Heb. 10:24-25).

And such fellowship is about more than just surviving college. Many Christian friends are made in college—a student's band of brothers and sisters—who will be dear friends for the rest of their lives. Some of the strongest bonds are formed in the field of battle. They are not just a blessing for four years, but maybe forty years or more.

Christian friends are essential, but long-term Christian friends are even more critical. As a famous song once said, "You can't make old friends." So, plan to make them in college, and they will bless you for the rest of your life.

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Make It Clear Ministries offers many resources to help in friendly evangelism, such as gospel tracts, follow-up booklets, and books at www.MakeItClear.org in their Marketplace link.

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Top Ten Apologetics Books for Beginners

I am frequently asked for my top suggestions for those new to apologetics. The good news is that there are far more books than I can list. However, I can suggest ten great books for people who want to defend their faith or investigate whether they can trust the Bible to be God's mind, heart, and voice on paper!

1. [**Mere Christianity**](#), by C.S. Lewis – In this modern classic, Lewis makes a comprehensive case for Christianity, beginning with the moral argument.
2. [**More Than a Carpenter**](#), by Sean and Josh McDowell – Told through the lens of Josh's powerful story, MTAC makes a brief case for the resurrection, the deity of Jesus, and the reliability of the New Testament.
3. [**The Reason for God**](#), by Tim Keller – With a pastoral heart, Keller makes a case for the Christian faith and addresses some of the top objections, such as evil, hell, and the exclusivity of Christianity.

4. [***The Case for Christ***](#), by Lee Strobel – As a former atheist and journalist, Strobel interviews leading Christian thinkers on the historical evidence for Jesus. He has other worthy titles like, *The Case for Creation* and others.
5. [***Cold Case Christianity***](#), by J. Warner Wallace – As a former atheist and cold-case detective, Wallace looks at the historical Jesus through the lens of forensic science.
6. [***Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions***](#), by Greg Koukl – This book is not primarily about *what* Christians believe, but a game plan for thoughtfully engaging others in dialogue.
7. [***Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality***](#), by Nancy Pearcey - She discusses transgenderism, abortion, euthanasia and other pressing moral issues and traces them to a dehumanizing view of the body.
8. [***On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision***](#), by William Lane Craig – Dr. Craig presents key arguments for the existence of God, such as the cosmological, teleological, and moral, as well as evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.
9. [***Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion***](#), by Rebecca McLaughlin – Slavery. Homophobia. Science. These are just a few pressing, timely issues McLaughlin tackles in her book.
10. [***Evidence that Demands a Verdict***](#), by Sean and Josh McDowell – This is a BIG book but offers an understandable and in-depth defense of the deity of Jesus, the reliability of the Bible, and the resurrection of Jesus.

Websites

ClarityChristianCollege.com and MakeItClear.org
Evantell.org
FaithAlone.org
Summit.org

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