

WORLD RELIGIONS

Reaching People in False Religions for Christ pt. 1

What All Unbelievers Have In Common

Lesson #24

The previous lessons have been devoted to surveying Christian denominations and false religions. The purpose of the series, as stated from the beginning, is to familiarize people with the general beliefs of false religions. In doing this it will protect people from being led astray but also enable believers to better share the gospel with people deceived into believing false doctrine. Many Christians have the idea that different approaches should be used for each specific religion.

While it is true that understanding where someone is coming from may be helpful, the approach to leading anyone to Christ is really the same for all. The basic belief system of anyone who does not know God is the same. They are working out their own salvation, or lack of salvation, whatever the case may be, rather than trusting in Jesus Christ. It is tempting to try and refute what they believe in order to convince people that the Bible is true and the God of the Bible is the one true God. It is tempting to try and convince them of the foundational truths of Christianity, so that they will believe, but this is not the biblical approach. God has used many circumstances and approaches, but He prescribes and describes one approach in the pages of Scripture. It is that approach which God has chosen to use to lead the bulk of people to salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. For the next four lessons we will examine a biblical approach to leading people from their false religion to faith in Jesus Christ.

I. SOME TYPICAL SCENARIOS YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER

- A. **The Atheistic College Professor** who teaches at a local college. He has two degrees, is very well read, brilliant in debate, divorced, and has a never ending string of immoral relationships with the women in his classes. He has determined there is no God—that once you die, your life is over and there is no afterlife. Adam and Eve, the flood, Satan, heaven and hell are myths to him. Therefore, he believes one must stick to their own moral code and seek to make oneself happy believing that when this life is over, it is over.

- B. **The Non-Practicing Jewish Businessman** who grew up in a conservative Jewish family, knows the Jewish culture, and sometimes celebrates certain Jewish holidays when asked to by friends or family. He is smart and good at making money, though you would never know it as he doesn't flaunt his wealth. He knows that throughout history, those who

claim to be Christians have persecuted and killed Jews. He is suspicious of those who claim to be Christians and though he is civil with them, in the back of his mind he wants nothing to do with them. Though he understands the Judeo-Christian ethic, he believes that modern times require more flexibility in morals and religious beliefs. He wonders if God even exists, especially when he considers how abused the Jewish people have been throughout history and that the Messiah has never come.

- C. **The Die Hard Roman Catholics** who go to confession every week, mass at least twice a week and sometimes more, if they can fit it into their schedule. They go to a Roman Catholic Bible study and definitively believe they are Christians, though they are trusting in their works to save them. They agree that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. They believe salvation is by grace and that one must have faith too, but they also believe that one must do certain good works and keep the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Pope is the head of the church and that it is okay to pray to Mary, other dead saints, statues, and icons because of the reality that they represent.
- D. **The Socially Moral Mormon** woman next door has a beautiful yard, is kind, frequently brings over baked goods, which are to die for, and home-canned fruits and vegetables. She and her husband have well-behaved children and are kind and often speak of God and Jesus when they are around you for they know you are a Christian. You have had a couple conversations with them and they affirm they believe in God, in Jesus, that He died on the cross and rose from the dead. They affirm that we must have faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.
- E. **The Person Caught up in a Pseudo-Christian Cult** works in the cubical next to you. He says he believes the Bible and believes in Jesus too, but you know he doesn't believe all of the Bible and has a different Jesus that he believes in. He is very zealous at reaching people for his cult and is often talking to people in an attempt to "evangelize" them. You have gotten into a few discussions with him about what he believes at lunch and it seems he knows more of the Bible than you do. In fact, he quoted Scripture and raised some questions you don't have the answer to. You are kind of intimidated to talk to him because he seems so set and knowledgeable about what he believes and about the Bible, though he doesn't believe the same things you believe.

- F. **The Person Caught up in Some Weird Eastern Religion** is sitting next to you on a long plane flight. You have asked him if he is a Christian or if he goes to church, and then discovered he follows the teachings of a religion you have heard of but have no idea what they believe. Interestingly, he says he believes the Bible and that Jesus was a prophet. You ask a few more questions and discover his concept of God, sin, salvation, and the goal and purpose of life is so strange you don't really even know what he believes. You aren't quite sure how to lead him to Christ because his beliefs are so different from yours.
- G. **The Person Who Claims to Be a Christian but Doesn't Live Like it** is part of your extended family. The man is dating your cousin's daughter. Your cousin says the man is a Christian but he is living with your cousin's daughter and it seems obvious they are not believers. You get a chance to talk to the man at a family gathering and he is starting to get drunk. He tells you about how cool their church is and that they are going to be going on a short-term mission trip to Mexico to help build low-income housing. He says he likes to read Christian books, but every title and author he mentions is unfamiliar to you. You have talked to him about his immorality but he is quick to point out that the Bible says, "Judge not, lest you be judged" and that God is love, that we need to be accepting and tolerant of other people's beliefs.
- H. **The Person Involved in Witchcraft** works at a convenience store that is close to where you live. You often stop in there for coffee, drinks, and basic groceries. The woman has all sorts of tattoos which you have discovered, by doing some research, are occult symbols. Her makeup is dark, she has lots of body piercings, and what you would consider to be messed-up hair. You have talked with her about God, but she boldly claims she worships mother earth and Satan. When you asked her about the God of the Bible, she stiffened her lip, became terse, and didn't want to talk about it. She kind of scares you. When she talks to you she always looks straight into your eyes and it weards you out.
- I. **The Person in Pursuit of the American Dream** is how you would describe a man you regularly see in line at Starbucks. He works in the computer industry, appears to make really good money, and dresses like a poster boy for the cover of GQ. He is smart, disciplined, on task, and self controlled. He exercises regularly, eats sensibly, and seems to have many attractive women friends, but no one who he is serious about. You

have talked to him several times in line and are starting to build a friendship with him. Every six months or so he is driving a different sports car. When you have tried to bring up God with him he looks at you like you're a duped ignorant fool and is quick to let you know he doesn't want to talk about it. He tells you he grew up Roman Catholic, but likes to think of himself as non-religious. You ask him if he is an atheist and he says he is probably more of an agnostic. He has no interest in God or religion at all. He says religion is a crutch and he doesn't need it.

The examples above are indicative of the wide variety of people you may encounter in the world who need Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. But how are you going to reach them for Christ? Does each person require special study, a unique approach, so they are not offended and driven away from Christ further? Is there a different key to each of these people's hearts or will one key do the trick for all and if so, what key is it?

First, we must consider our presuppositions i.e., the things we are going to assume are true. Then, we will consider the commonalities that all share who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This will provide the foundation of our biblical evangelistic approach.

II. KNOW THAT GOD EXISTS AND THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD

Faith in the existence of the God of the Bible and that the Bible itself is God's infallible, inspired, inerrant Word, which unlike any other book is, "*living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart,*" (**Heb. 4:12**) is critically necessary. The reasons for this are a bit complex, but they will become clear as we progress through this series.

Philosopher Blaise Pascal came up with an argument known as "Pascal's wager." Pascal said there was no way of proving to someone that God existed, but that it was best to "wager" that God did exist. Pascal said the one who wagers ("has faith in" or "believes") that God exists has nothing to lose and everything to gain. By wagering that God exists he may give up a few vices in this life, but will live a good life, loving his fellow man and live by faith in the unseen God. If he dies and is wrong, he loses nothing. If he dies and is right, he gains eternal life. Pascal's argument is basically saying that we should presuppose God exists (have faith in God), though we can't prove God exists, and that in "wagering" that God exists, we will be led to the truth.

A. First Primary Presupposition You Must Have – God Exists

1. **Gen. 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2. **Psa. 14:1** The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good.
3. **Isa. 46:9** Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me.

The Bible says God exists and that He is the Creator of all that exists. The Bible says that only a fool says there is no God (no matter how educated that person may be). God is a reasonable explanation for how all things came into being. They had to get here somehow. There had to be a first cause. Some intelligent being designed how things work, created life, and governs the universe. Chance and time do not come even remotely close to explaining what exists. However, an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise God does provide a good explanation.

So do you believe in the God of the Bible? If so, you are half way to laying a foundation for sharing your faith with anyone, regardless of what they believe or deny.

B. Second Primary Presupposition You Must Have – the Bible is God's Word

1. **Psa. 119:160** The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.
2. **II Tim. 3:16** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
3. **II Pet. 1:20-21** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The second primary presupposition you must have is that the Bible is, in fact, God's perfect, inspired, Holy Spirit-energized Word. You must believe this by faith. The Bible is not just an ancient book, or one of many old religious books, or a mere history book, or philosophy, or code of

conduct. The Bible is the living Word of God, given by inspiration. Inspiration is the process whereby men, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote down exactly and without error what God wanted them to write. God has preserved His Word through the ages. Though minor typographical and copyist errors have crept in, no meaning or doctrine has been changed. The Bible is by far the most reliable ancient book in the world.

Do you believe the Bible is the very Word of God? Do you believe the Bible is unlike any other book? Do you believe that the Bible is true in all that it teaches? If you believe in God, and the Bible as the Word of God, you have everything you need to lead anyone to Christ.

C. **But Wait! Foul Play! You Used Circular Reasoning!**

Skeptics and critics of Christianity, the Bible, and the God of the Bible have often put forth the argument that Christians use “circular reasoning.” Circular reasoning is a logical fallacy. It is sometimes referred to as “begging the question.” In formal argumentation there are one or more “premises” that lead to a conclusion. In order for the conclusion to be true, the premises must first be proven to be true.

The person who uses circular reasoning assumes or presupposes that an unproven premise is true, and then uses that unproven premise to “prove” that the conclusion is true. This is a logical fallacy and begs the question. Thus, it is argued that Christians believe in God in order to prove the Bible is the Word of God and they believe in the Bible in order to prove there is a God. At least that is how it seems from their perspective. They reason that Christians assume God exists and refer to the Bible because they assume it is the Word of God. Yet these two assumptions are never proven. Thus, they create a logical fallacy by employing circular reasoning.

However, their perceptions and accusations are false. Christians do believe in God and that the Bible is the Word of God. We do study and read the Bible to learn more about God. But did you notice a missing word in the previous two sentences? It is the word “prove.” Christians don’t “prove” God exists with the Bible, nor do they “prove” the Bible is God’s Word. Christians believe, have faith in these things, faith being, “*the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen*” (**Heb. 11:1**). The Christian lives by faith in God and the Word of God. It is true that Christians assume God exists and the Bible is God’s Word, but they don’t prove one with the other. They believe both by faith. Biblical, saving faith is not the result of logic, reason, or evidence, but is a gift from God.

How do you suppose the sceptics respond to the believers “having faith” in God and the Bible? As you can imagine, they cry foul, circular reasoning and logical fallacy, for they don’t live by faith, or so they claim, but by reason, evidence, facts, and science.

1. Faith is not scientific!
2. Faith is irrational!
3. Faith is a blind jump into non-reason!
4. Faith proves nothing!
 - a. Who says that the scientific method must be applied in order to know God exists and the Bible is God’s Word?
 - b. Who can say that everything one believes is absent of faith? One can’t. One merely has faith in different things. Who’s to say one man’s faith isn’t more irrational than the Christian’s faith?
 - c. Who is really making a jump into non-reason? The Christian who believes in an all-powerful, all-knowing, eternally-existing God who created the heavens and earth? Can science measure or repeat the origins of the universe? No. It can neither be measured nor repeated, therefore, it lies outside the realm of science. What is more nonsensical, that everything came from nothing or that God made everything?
 - d. Someone who has never placed his faith in God and the Bible can’t speak from knowledge or experience, but only from “assuming” as one outside the community of faith that he knows what it is like to live within the community of faith. He thus makes unproven assumptions that he knows what it is like to be a Christian, when he does not.

Thus, the Christian must not feel intimidated at the accusations and arguments of men who do not believe in the God of the Bible. Yes, it is tempting to show them why they too have their own assumptions and they too have their own faith, but this is a diversion. Satan would love for you to argue about these things with unbelievers until you drop dead, for human arguments and reason have no power to convert the soul. No one has ever come to Christ by human argument – ever!

Scientists “believe” that their scientific method will lead men to the truth. The atheist “believes” he is god and that his personal “belief” that God does not exist makes it true. The evolutionist denies that life can arise from non-living matter, but “believes” life did arise from non-living matter. Is that logical? Scientific? No, it is faith. *Every* field of knowledge begins with faith. The idea that Christians have faith and others use facts, reason, or evidences apart from faith is false. Everyone has faith. The question is not “who has faith and who does not” but “what do people place their faith in.” Anselm (11th century) had it right when he said, “For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.”

III. **WHAT YOU CAN KNOW ABOUT EVERYONE ONCE YOU ACCEPT THAT GOD EXISTS AND THE BIBLE IS HIS WORD**

A. **A Person Must First Believe in Order to Know or Understand God and His Word.** Saint Augustine (3rd & 4th century) is credited with being the first of the early church fathers to teach that you must first, “*Believe in order that you may understand.*” The technical word for this idea is “fideism.” Fideism teaches that there are certain truths that lie outside the reach of those who do not have faith and that faith in God is superior to reason in getting to know God. Therefore, a person must have faith in God in order to know Him. This is what the Bible teaches. You must place your faith in Christ, be born again, and receive the Holy Spirit, in order to know the things of God. We will prove this in greater detail in another lesson but for now consider the texts below and what they teach us about how Christians are able to know God and the truth of the Bible.

1. **Mt. 11:25-27** At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. 26 “Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. 27 “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.
2. **Mt. 13:10-11** And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” 11 Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.

3. **I Cor. 2:10-16** For to us [believers] God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

4. **I Jn. 2:20, 27** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. . . 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

IV. **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- A. What two primary presuppositions does every Christian need and why are these presuppositions necessary?
- B. What belief systems, apart from Christianity have presuppositions?
- C. Approximately what percentage of unbelievers exercise faith?
- D. Biblically speaking, how is the truth that God exists and the Bible is God's Word arrived at?
- E. Biblically speaking, what must come first, understanding or faith? Why?
- F. Who gives Christians understanding and faith?
- G. What have you learned about all unbelievers from this lesson?