

How to think like a Christian Session Two

1. Introduction

- a. Welcome to week two of our campaign- “How to think like a Christian”
 - i. Last week we covered a lot of ground, so if you were not here with us, I recommend that you go to our website and either listen to the sermon or read the notes that are there.
 - ii. We started our conversation with a few key points.
 - 1. As Christians we work to live the kind of lives that God would have us live.
 - 2. While we listen to the voice of God for guidance, we are also influenced by all kinds of different ideas from the world around us. Some of those ideas and some of those ideas are bad.
 - 3. Ideas are like viruses. They can catch on and spread before we even realize that it is happening.
 - a. And bad ideas in particular can latch themselves onto good ideas. They look like the truth and sound like the truth but really they are bad ideas masquerading as good ones.

4. We are influenced by five basic worldviews

 Builds
1-5

- a. Secularism, which claims that we can use human intelligence to control life and make it turn out the way we want.
 - b. Marxism, which declares that life is about capital, and the true path to peace and equality is through violent overthrow of all existing social structures (government, economic systems, family, and religion).
 - c. Postmodernism, which insists that objective (capital-T) truth doesn't exist, only the subjective (lowercase-t) truths we create for ourselves.
 - d. New spirituality, which asserts that a higher consciousness or god force is at the core of reality.
 - e. Islam, which teaches that everyone is born Muslim (in submission to Allah) and must conform to Islamic truth or be conquered through jihad (the struggle against anything opposed to Allah and Islam).
- iii. There are important questions that we all ask at some time in our lives and we all have ideas about each of them. Questions like:
 -  Builds
1-5
 - 1. Am I loved? If I were to disappear, would anyone miss me?
 - 2. Why do I hurt? Bad things have happened to me. Can I overcome them and find joy?
 - 3. Does my life have meaning? Is it possible for me to find direction in life?

4. Why can't we just get along? What will it take for us to stop fighting and find harmony?
5. Is there any hope for the world? So many things seem to be going wrong. Are we doomed?
- iv. The set of ideas that we form in answer to these questions is called a worldview.
 1. A worldview monitors the ideas we are exposed to and isolates the ones that appear to be destructive.
 2. But it's possible to have a worldview that is porous, letting through some of the most damaging ideas.
 3. Or a worldview might be skewed in some way, welcoming ideas bent on doing us harm.ⁱ
 4. For example, if you answer
- b. To the first question- Everyone in the world is searching for an answer to the question: "Am I loved?"
 - i. I think we can all agree that this is a pretty accurate statement. It is something that is deeply engrained in us, this desire to be loved.
 - ii. A study of Romanian orphans found that lack of love early in life led to decreased brain activity. Without affection, a person's language center, emotions, and ability to take in information get short-circuited, leading to lifelong problems.ⁱⁱ
 - iii. What does that tell us? That at the basic root of who we are is a need to experience love.
- c. We all need to experience love and have love in our lives, but a question that we do not consider is this: what kind of love are we talking about? And who gets to define what that love is.
 - i. If we are allowing the world around us to define love, we find one thing to be true: Love is always contingent upon something else
 1. Someone else's approval or acceptance
 2. Our own happiness or sense of fulfillment
 3. Our own sense of worth- is this love validating me enough or in the way that I want to be validated.
 - ii. Have you ever considered how tortuous an adventure dating is
 1. We have things now like Tinder- an app that helps people date
 - a. But the basic premise is that you put your picture up and some information about yourself and others view that picture and swipe right or left based on whether they approve of you or not.
 2. You are trying to get someone to approve of you one piece at a time so that they finally might accept you and promise to not stop accepting you
 3. It's absolutely awful, and totally scary.
 - iii. As much as it is supposed to be a guiding principle in the world around us, we see the failure of love in a million different ways.
 1. Husband and wives fall out of love all the time.

2. Children and parents are estranged from each other, all the time.
 3. Family members stop speaking to each other.
 4. Some of our deepest relationships, that are supposed to be characterized by love end up being the greatest sources of pain and disappointment in our lives.
 - iv. So as much as we may acknowledge everyone's need for love, we also know that love is not a sure thing.
 - v. We are told that love is all we need and love is the answer but what if "love" has failed you over and over again?
 1. What if you haven't been able to find or experience what you have been looking for?
 - d. So, what does that tell us? Love may be the answer, but love is not so simple.
2. Body
- a. Let's take a look at what the different worldviews have to say about love.
 -  i. Marxism argues that we can't find love because capitalists rig the system to cause us to always want more than we have.
 1. We are programmed to believe we are lacking in wealth or possessions, and when this happens, we become easy to . According to Marx's editor and collaborator, Frederick Engels, this causes us to think we are fulfilled in love only when we "own" our relationships as if they were possessions. ⁱⁱⁱ
 -  ii. Postmodernism says we speak of love to mask what we're really after, which is sex.
 1. Those in power control us through guilt, making us feel ashamed for having sexual thoughts and feelings. The solution? Explore sexuality until the guilt feelings cease. ^{iv}
 -  iii. New spirituality says the universe is love.
 1. We are part of the universe. Therefore, we are love.
 2. If we don't feel loved, it's because we're not familiar enough with our own universal power. Said new-spiritualist writer Marianne Williamson, "Every problem, inside and out, is due ¹to separation from love on someone's part." When we reunite with universal love, we become attractive. ^v
 -  iv. Islam doesn't talk a lot about love or sex, at least in Islamic sacred writings.
 1. Love is mentioned a scant sixty-nine times in the Quran, and many of the references pertain to the dangers of loving that which Allah hates.
 2. One impression comes through clearly: Allah's love must be earned by submission. Allah will love you if you trust him,
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exercise patience, and fight on his behalf. The idea that Allah is love is not a part of Islamic thinking.^{vi}

- b. Secularism may have the most influential voice when it comes to love.
 -  i. Secularists say we don't feel loved because we haven't yet freed ourselves from society's constraints about sexuality.^{vii}
 1. Nothing outside the material world exists, secularism says. The Enlightenment gave birth to this viewpoint, bitterly blaming eternity-focused religions for society's ills.
 2. The Enlightenment also gave birth to Darwinism, which made it intellectually respectable to believe that humans are nothing more than complex animals, which means that restraining our impulses is unnatural.^{viii}
 - ii. If exposure to sex could fulfill our craving for love, humanity should be feeling very loved by now. In the United States, 46 percent of high school students have had sex. That figure rises to over 70 percent by the time students are in college.^{ix}
- c. The Washington Post ran an article this week about a new trend
 - i. Kevin, a 24-year-old recent college graduate from Denver, wants to get married someday and is "almost 100% positive" that he will. But not soon, he says, "because I am not done being stupid yet. I still want to go out and have sex with a million girls." He believes that he's figured out how to do that:
 - ii. "Girls are easier to mislead than guys just by lying or just not really caring. If you know what girls want, then you know you should not give that to them until the proper time. If you do that strategically, then you can really have anything you want...whether it's a relationship, sex, or whatever. You have the control."
 - iii. Kevin (not his real name) was one of 100 men and women, from a cross-section of American communities, that was interviewed five years ago as the writers sought to understand how adults in their 20s and early 30s think about their relationships. He sounds like a jerk. But it's hard to convince him that his strategy won't work—because it has, for him and countless other men.
 - iv. Marriage in the U.S. is in open retreat. As recently as 2000, married 25- to 34-year-olds outnumbered their never-married peers by a margin of 55% to 34%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. By 2015, the most recent year for which data are available, those estimates had almost reversed, with never-marrieds outnumbering marrieds by 53% to 40%. Young Americans have quickly become wary of marriage.
 - v. This was the conclusion that the writer came to: For American men, sex has become rather cheap. As compared to the past, many women today expect little in return for sex, in terms of time, attention, commitment or fidelity. Men, in turn, do not feel compelled to supply these goods as they once did. It is the new sexual norm for Americans, men and women alike, of every age.^x

- vi. What does this tell me?
 1. As much as we might profess that love is our highest state of being, we do not live in that place.
 2. Furthermore, I think that we have a hard time defining what love actually is.
 - a. Think about this. What once used to be one of the highest expressions of love, commitment and intimacy between two people, has now become something that is commonly disassociated from love.
- d. Here is my question. Do we live in a time when our society accurately understands what love is or, what it should be?
 - i. And then what does it mean when we say that God is love?
- e. There are a lot of bad ideas we have to fight when it comes to the idea of love. Here are some of them that we have to face.
 -  i. God doesn't love you unless you do exactly what he says.
 - Builds** ii. doesn't even exist.
 - 1-5** iii. Forget love; have sex.
 - iv. Think loving thoughts and you'll find love.
 - v. Stop this frivolous nonsense about love and join the revolution.^{xi}
- f. Let's keep this as simple as possible. What is the main difference between the love that the word experiences and the love that we have to offer? I think that we can boil it down to one main thing. Generally speaking, the love that we see in the world is selfish.
 - i. We talked about this a few weeks ago. The love that we practice as humans is inherently conditional.
 1. We love people up to a certain point, and depending on who it is and our relationship to them, that point will vary.
 2. We claim four main area of love: our families, our friends, our church family, and everyone else.
 - a. If we were to compare our love for these different groups of people, we would move from less conditional, to more conditional. But there are conditions to all of these relationships.
 3. **Hard Truth:** Even in our closest relationships, we have conditions that must be met in order for us to love those people.
 4. I know how we work. You are already thinking about how those conditions are justified and you are not necessarily wrong.
 5. But here is the thing we have to realize. Virtually all of these approaches ask one question, if not first than certainly second: I will love, but what is in it for me?
 - ii. We long for a love that is big, but we have been infected by idea viruses that tell us that getting rather than giving is the source of true love.

1. Lots of smart people believe this. Billionaire investor Warren Buffett told a college audience that the only thing that matters in life is being loved by the people you want to have love you. 9 It sounds good on the surface, but think who the object of this love is. It's the self. It says, "I want to be loved by the people I want to have love me."^{xii}
- g. To put it simply, the love of God is fundamentally different from our kind of love, and God's love is the real deal.
 - i. How is it different? The love of God is selfless and not selfish
 - ii. We see this so clearly when we look at the life of Jesus. People experienced all kinds of failure when it came to love. But when they met Jesus they encountered the real thing.
 - iii. Want examples?
 1. When Jesus meets the woman at the well in John 4, her life had been a wreck of failed relationships
 - a. She had been married five times. Five! That is a lot by today's standards, can you imagine what it must have looked like then?
 - b. And the man that she was with when Jesus met her was not her husband. She was at the well in the middle of the day, the worst time to draw water and carry it back, so that she would not have to see anyone
 - c. And when she met Jesus he accepted her, asked nothing from her, and told her that her life could be fulfilled through the God that still loved her.
 - d. What did she do, she ran back to the town to tell all of the people that did not like her about Jesus
 2. What about when Jesus met the woman caught in adultery in John 8
 - a. We don't why she committed adultery but something in her life had failed. Wherever she had tried to find love, it did not work out.
 - b. And when she was dragged naked and ashamed before Jesus to be beaten to death, she had no reason to believe in Love
 - c. And yet Jesus forgave her, sent her accusers away and challenged her to live a better life
 - i. Something I have never thought about before is this- he honestly believed that she could. He saw through what she had done and believed that she could be someone different.
 3. Or how about Paul in acts 9
 - a. Paul was someone who loved God, but did not understand the love of God.

- b. So, he persecuted and killed Christians who dared to believe in Jesus, in defense of his God.
 - c. And when he met Jesus? Jesus gave this murderer the opportunity to follow him
 - i. He had to spend some difficult days alone in the dark before he got there
 - ii. But when the lights were finally turned on, Paul was able to walk away from being a murderer of Christians and became a follower of Jesus
 - d. What must it have felt like to realize that you had been persecuting God, and then to have that God give you the opportunity to turn your life completely around?
4. All of these people were looking for love, acceptance, purpose. But they did not find it until they met Jesus Christ
- iv. I have to tell you that this world desperately wants to be loved in this way. But if anyone is looking for love outside of God they will not find what they are looking for.
 - 1. Jesus said in **John 15:12-13** ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.
 - 2. **1 John 3:16** ¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.
- h. When Paul later wrote about love, this is what he said

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i. **1 Corinthians 13** If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- ii. This is God’s love for us. It is what real love is, and it can only be found in God. Nowhere else.
- iii. God’s love is an unconditional love. It is a love that only exists in him and through him.
 - 1. His love doesn’t require us to perform or look a certain way to earn acceptance. There is no perfect standard to measure up to. God’s love for us is unconditional, based not on our performance but on Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

3. Conclusion

- a. Here is one thing that needs to be going through your head right now. It is shocking that people in this world do not know how selfless God is
 - i. They view God as self-serving, selfish and cruel.
 - ii. If we must change this. Deep down, everyone wants to know this loving God.
- b. Few people express this as well as Douglas Coupland, the novelist who popularized the term Generation X and a self-proclaimed cynical, angry, narcissistic, sexually broken person:
 - i. Now— here is my secret: I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.^{xiii}
 - ii. If the question is, “Am I loved” the answer is yes. And not by someone, somewhere, whom you may or may not find. But by God, here, now and always.

ⁱ Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 238-248). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition

ⁱⁱ Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 534-536). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 549-554). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 565-568). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^v Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 556-558). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 572-576). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{vii} Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 581-582). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{viii} Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 620-623). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{ix} Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 585-588). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^x <https://apple.news/AP6sptesmTJ-Qm7wp7raC2Q>

^{xi} Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 656-659). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition

^{xii} Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 771-776). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{xiii} Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 661-666). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.