

## How To Think Like A Christian- Session Three

### 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
      - 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:
    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?

 Builds  
1-5

 Builds  
1-5

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, to put it most simply the way that we view the world. It is the filter through which we look to answer all of these questions.
- b. Now to this week's question. Why do I hurt? Bad things have happened to me. Can I overcome them and find joy?
  - i. There is a hard reality that we have to face: Everyone suffers
    1. Some may suffer more than others but in life, no one is immune to suffering.
  - ii. When we suffer, we are all interested in two things
    1. Causality
      - a. What made this happen? Is it God? Is it evil? Is the universe just random?
    2. Purpose
      - a. Why did this happen? Is there a reason? Is there some greater purpose to this pain that I am going through?
    3. We have seen this come to light this last week after the senseless shooting spree in Las Vegas
      - a. The one thing that everyone wants to know is: "Why did he do it?"
      - b. And the frustrating thing? There is still not an answer to that question.
  - iii. These questions of causality and purpose become especially important when we attempt to bring God into the picture. For those that believe in God, they are essentially God questions.
    1. When we hurt, we find ourselves asking, "Where is God in this?"
    2. I read about God's great deeds performed in the past, and I look forward to an eternal future with him. But where is he now, when I am being crushed? In the din of the secret battle of ideas, pain is a stealth attack calling into question everything we thought was true.<sup>i</sup>
  - iv. Where is God when we hurt? This is a deep question to which there are not any "easy" answers.
    1. Many have turned away from God because they cannot find an answer to this question.
    2. And sometimes, the church, in its' haste to provide a godly purpose to our suffering, has spoken more hurt into already unbearably painful situations

- a. There are times when we feel an overwhelming pressure to point to where God is in a situation, to find purpose or meaning in something that makes no sense.
  - b. There are many times, I think, when God would prefer we not speak on his behalf.
- v. We think that if we can figure out what caused our hurt, we can make it stop.
  - 1. Often, though, the search for answers takes us to a spiritually dark place where we see firsthand how evil has corroded what is good in this world.
  - 2. Pain is the signal that evil is at work. Many people have said “I could never believe in a God who would allow people to suffer.” It’s a fair point: the Christian worldview ought to account for the presence of evil. But it’s also fair to say that every worldview has the same problem.<sup>ii</sup>

## 2. Body

- a. What do the different worldviews say about suffering?
  -  i. The secular worldview says there is no spiritual realm, no ultimate good and evil. There is no higher cause or plan.
    - 1. As atheist Richard Dawkins has coldly stated, “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice.... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”
    - 2. Secularism suggests that we quit asking why and instead focus on managing the pain so we can regain control.<sup>iii</sup>
  -  ii. The Marxist worldview says that all of reality is defined by revolutionary class struggle.
    - 1. We experience pain because the rich have left us in misery by taking more than their fair share. The solution? Revolution. Overthrow everything that keeps us down: the economy, the government, the family, even the church.<sup>iv</sup>
  -  iii. To the postmodern worldview, there is no sure answer for why we endure pain and suffering.
    - 1. Worldviews that promise an earthly paradise always let us down, and any religion that promises a heavenly paradise will disappoint us even more. Suffering is absurd, the postmodern worldview says.
    - 2. postmodernism says, we should embrace the absurd and quit expecting answers to questions that make no sense to begin with.<sup>v</sup>
  -  iv. The Islamic worldview encourages people to stop asking questions about pain and suffering, but for a different reason.

1. To Islam, God is in complete control. He is responsible for the evil that occurs and owes us no explanation. To ask why evil exists is to ask the wrong question. We must simply obey.
  2. "Such a life of obedience brings in peace of the heart and establishes real peace in the society at large," the revered Islamic scholar Khurshid Ahmad has written.
  3. So, according to this worldview, what should we do about pain? Obey God and perhaps he will relent in his punishment.<sup>vi</sup>
- v. These four worldviews have a few things in common.
1. First, they place the blame for suffering "out there": as caused by nature, the rich, culture, or God.
  2. Second, they seek to eliminate pain and suffering by controlling its consequences: by managing its physical symptoms, overthrowing those thought to cause it, laughing at it, or acting according to strict rules to appease God.
  3. In the end, the proper response to evil is to blame others and numb ourselves to its effects.<sup>vii</sup>
-  b. The new spirituality worldview says that everything that exists is one thing. If we are out of step with it, then we will hurt.
-  i. As bestselling author Marilyn Ferguson explained, "Health and disease don't just happen to us. They are active processes issuing from inner harmony or disharmony, profoundly affected by our states of consciousness, our ability or inability to flow with experience."
- ii. Pain, disease, and listlessness all come from failing to attain this inner harmony. What can we do about the suffering we experience? New spirituality says that we should view it as an illusion and that the best response is to deny that it exists.<sup>viii</sup>
  - iii. Stop being attached to the physical world. Let it go. Find harmony with the spiritual oneness of the universe and suffering will cease to have any meaning for you.
  - iv. This view faces criticism on many levels from other worldviews. One criticism hits deeper than the others. If we are suffering, new spirituality tells us, it's our own fault for not living in harmony with the universe.
  - v. But people suffer accidents and all kinds of misery through no fault of their own. Think of a child affected by fetal alcohol syndrome, which causes developmental and physical disabilities, because her mom kept drinking during pregnancy. How can we say the child deserves this suffering?<sup>ix</sup>
- c. The idea that is quickly gaining the upper hand, as we have seen, is that pain is essentially meaningless and that the best response is to be numb to it.

- i. But the thing is that pain is as much a philosophical issue as a medical one.
  - 1. We experience physical suffering sure, but some of the most damaging suffering that we face is mental or emotional.
- ii. If this is true, then is ignoring the spiritual aspect of suffering a good idea?
  - 1. If we're hurting because we feel afraid or unloved or purposeless, then numbing the pain cannot, in itself, make us feel better.
  - 2. Please understand, it is completely reasonable to try to alleviate physical pain. But if pain has a spiritual source, trying to alleviate it with physical remedies alone can cause more problems than it solves.
  - 3. One in every ten Americans over age twelve is addicted to illicit drugs and/ or alcohol. Another one in ten misuses prescription drugs. Others overeat or look at pornography or devote too much time to technology and entertainment as a way of numbing their pain.
    - a. Many times these measures are used to numb one from spiritual, mental, or emotional pain, not just physical pain.
  - 4. Just look at the painful issue of suicide. As a group, people in their forties and eighties— men in particular— are most likely to end their own lives.
    - a. This tells us that if we don't deal with our hurt in the right way, it becomes more unbearable through time.<sup>x</sup>
- d. Here is the ground floor of our spiritual discussion about suffering. God has never promised that our lives will be without sorrow, trouble, heartache, persecution, or suffering.
  - i. Jesus was talking to his disciples about all of the things that was going to happen when Jesus left them
    - 1. Can you imagine how terrifying a prospect this must have been for the disciples. Things were not exactly easy with Jesus around. They were not going to be better when he left.
  -  ii. **John 16:33** <sup>33</sup> "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
    - 1. I love how Jesus does not sugar coat it here. In this world, you will have trouble.
      - a. Things are going to happen.
    - 2. But we do not have to be down about this because while there is trouble in this world, Jesus has overcome the world.
  -  iii. Overcome. The word in Koine Greek is nikao (nick-AY-oh). As in Nike, the Greek goddess of victory.



1. Why must the discussion come back to the cross?
  2. Yes there is suffering. No God does not stop it. Yes, our suffering is the result of humanity turning away from God. Short of ending everything now, God will not stop that train from rolling. We still get to choose, we still have to live with the consequences.
  3. "That is so unfair!" We shout to the heavens, and we go off on all of the reasons why God cannot be good or loving or...
  4. But we must pause and realize something. God has suffered
    - a. God has had to go through the pain of seeing his creation reject him, again, and again, and again.
    - b. But in spite of that rejection, God made a radical choice.
    - c. He chose to suffer more. HE chose to suffer to the very limit of human capacity. He chose to take on not just our betrayal, but every physical sensation of pain we could throw at him.
-  ii. Theologian John Stott: "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross.... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?... In imagination I have turned ... to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in Godforsaken darkness. That is the God for me!<sup>xiii</sup>
1. And why did he do this? HE did this so that our suffering would not be the end of our story. There is more to be written.
- iii. Jesus's cross was not one of defeat; it was one of victory. The apostle Paul wrote, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15: 55).
  - iv. The word victory here, as you might have guessed, is derived from nikao.
  - v. Death has been overcome. It is because of this truth that we can each declare freedom from the idea viruses that unrelentingly prolong our anguish: My suffering will be overcome. Hurt will not win. Indeed, it already has lost.<sup>xiv</sup>
3. Conclusion
- a. We live in a world where there is suffering. Whether one believes in God or not, there is still suffering.
  - b. You can subscribe to the idea that God is not real because we suffer. And then you can live a life where all the bad that happens to you is random, or meaningless. And you can be left with that emptiness.
  - c. Or you can believe in a God that does not want us to suffer, a God that has suffered himself, and a God that through his suffering offers us victory over all that would take the meaning out of our lives.

### Psalm 13

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

<sup>2</sup> How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

<sup>3</sup> Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

<sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

<sup>5</sup> But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

<sup>6</sup> I will sing the LORD's praise,  
for he has been good to me.

---

<sup>i</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 861-863). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 895-899). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 904-908). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iv</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 909-912). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>v</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 917-923). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vi</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 924-929). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 931-934). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>viii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 935-940). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ix</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 952-957). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>x</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 966-984). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>xi</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 1029-1033). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>xii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 1037-1038). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

---

<sup>xiii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 1074-1078). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>xiv</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 1138-1144). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition