

## HTTLAC Session Seven- Is God relevant?

### 1. Introduction

- a. Today is the last day of our campaign, "How to think like a Christian"
  - i. The purpose of this campaign was to help us understand how God wants us to see the world and to make sure that our Christian worldview is not being influenced by other worldviews.
  - ii. To help us explore this idea we looked at five different worldviews that all have different approaches to how we should see the worldview
    1. Marxism, which says that the world's problems come from our social structures
    2. Secularism, which says that this world is all that there is and humanity is at the pinnacle of all that there is
    3. New Spirituality, which says that we need to plug into the energy of the universe and that by putting out positive we get positive back.
    4. Postmodernism, which says that there is not such thing as universal truth. We all decide what is true for us.
    5. And lastly Islam, which says that if you are not Muslim you are in open rebellion against a God who can do what he pleases and demands your absolute devotion
  - iii. Here is what I think we have discovered. Each of these different worldviews has some points that makes sense. You may not buy the whole thing, but there are elements of it that at the very least feel true.
    1. And here is the danger that we need to consider. We need to be careful that these elements that sound true don't actually influence us to live in a way that is different than the way that God wants us to live.
    2. We need to be able to tell the difference between what God says and what he has not said.
- b. So, as we come to the end of this particular study, we have one more big question to ask: Is God relevant?
  - i. This question is a huge question. It is a question of whether or not God matters, but more than that, it is a question of whether or not there is a valid reason for anyone to believe in God anymore
    1. If God is not relevant, it means that there is no reason for Him to exist anymore within our culture. There is no need that god fills, there is no purpose in following him.
    2. <sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God
  - ii. We want to speak into this gap- yes God is relevant. God matters now, he will always matter.

1. What we are not always prepared for is how to answer the next question. God is relevant? Yes. Why is he relevant?
  2. This is where we freeze up. What do I say, and how do I say it? What if I say the wrong thing?
- c. Something that we have seen throughout this campaign which will help us in this discussion is that everyone, no matter who they are, is looking for answers to specific questions.
- i. Am I loved?
  - ii. Why do I hurt?
  - iii. Does my life have meaning?
  - iv. Why can't we have peace?
  - v. Is there hope for the world.
    1. Here is the simple thing I want you to hear this morning. It is in the answer to these questions that we show just how relevant God is.

## 2. Body

- a. Here is what Christianity says to EVERYONE. Not just the chosen, not even to just those who are currently believers.
  - i. The answers that we have are for everyone, because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.
- b. You are loved
  - i. To put it simply, the love of God is fundamentally different from our kind of love, and God's love is the real deal.
    1. How is it different? The love of God is selfless and not selfish
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. When Paul later wrote about love, this is what he said
    1. **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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
  - iv. This is God's love for us. It is what real love is, and it can only be found in God. Nowhere else.

  
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- v. 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.
- c. You will overcome your hurt
  - i. This is the place where Christianity really distinguishes itself.
  - ii. 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.
    - 1. Jesus was talking to his disciples about all of the things that was going to happen when Jesus left them
      - a. 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.
    -  2. **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."
      - a. I love how Jesus does not sugar coat it here. In this world, you will have trouble.
        - i. Things are going to happen.
      - b. But we do not have to be down about this because while there is trouble in this world, Jesus has overcome the world.
    -  3. Overcome. The word in Koine Greek is nikao (nick-AY-oh). As in Nike, the Greek goddess of victory.
      -  a. Nikao doesn't just mean "winning"; it means "outlasting the enemy in a way that deprives it of its power to harm."
      - b. Hurt doesn't win; Jesus has overcome it. Hurt has been met on the battlefield and disarmed of its ability to rob us of what really matters.
      - c. It's not that things are perfect. Pain and death persist. Jesus overcame; now we are overcomers.<sup>i</sup>
  -  iii. God chooses to redeem
    - 1. Where we choose to sin against God, God chooses the alternate path when it comes to us. He chooses to love.
    - 2. And it is because of this that we know his love for us is genuine. God does not have to choose to redeem us. But he does choose redemption. He chooses it every time it is possible.
- d. Your life has meaning
  - i. In fact the meaning of your life, your purpose, is greater than you can even imagine.

- ii. we are called by Jesus to live a meaningful life, and it is this call that removes the possibility of our lives being pointless
  - 1. We are called to live our lives for him, like him
    - a. Which means that we are not just living to fulfill some deep seeded need for ourselves. We are living to make a difference for God in this world.
    - b. There is always more to be done for God
  - 2. As we pour ourselves into changing the lives of others, we find a purpose that is wholly different than any other purpose we could receive, and here is why it is different.
    - a. God created us to reflect his goodness to the world.
-  iii. **Romans 8:28** We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
  -  1. The word *call* is based on the Greek word *kaleo* which means “to be summoned.” Sometimes *kaleo* is translated “vocation.” Though we often think of a vocation as a job; it’s so much more than that. A calling or vocation gives meaning to our lives.
    - a. A vocation means we are doing what we are meant to do. It is an extension of who we are.
  - 2. Calling secures our identity. A calling from God harmonizes who we are with what we ought to do. It completes our identities: the gifts and convictions that make up who we are.
  - 3. Calling helps us fight off bad ideas.
    - a. Knowing who we are and what we are about means that we are less likely to venture off into something that takes us away from the abundant life that God intends.
  - 4. Calling makes every area of our lives meaningful. Calling infuses everyday life with great purpose. God is with us in our cubicles, in our laundry rooms, and in line at the grocery store.<sup>ii</sup>
- iv. The truth is that there is nothing else we can experience that will give us the same meaning and purpose that God gives us. Nothing.
- e. You can have peace
  - i. God desires for us to have peace and to not given to our tendency to escalate conflict
  - ii. The Christian worldview approaches conflict through shalom, which describes what life together looks like in a world God has redeemed.
  - iii. Instead of placing the blame for conflict on others, shalom restores peace, tranquility, and well-being

1. Shalom acknowledges the conflict inside us as well as among us: Evil “in here” and “out there” must be opposed, but shalom promotes unity rather division because it recognizes that every person bears God’s image and an eternal soul.
  - a. When we find ourselves in conflict we are responsible for that conflict in some way and to some degree.
  - b. We cannot forget that the person we find ourselves in conflict with is a child of God and deserves to be treated with love.
    - i. This is a rule. Period.

2. Shalom focuses on giving rather than taking: Shalom can be received only as we extend it to others.

-  a. **Romans 12:9-14** <sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. <sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
- b. Ok that is challenging. But here is the real challenge. Christians make all things about the well-being of other people and not about their own well-being.
  - c. This is the way of one who follows Christ. While others curse and persecute you will bless.

3. Shalom focuses on love, not hate

-  a. **Matthew 5:43-48** <sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? <sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- b. Again, the accepted rule was to love those who love you and hate those who hate you.
  - c. But Jesus says that we are to love who? Everyone
    - i. Why? Because someone who has never met God before can love those who love them.

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f. There is always hope

-  ii. **Romans 5:1-11** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup> And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. <sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation
- iii. Hope helps us live fearlessly, resiliently and confidently. It is for this reason. God has already handled the worst of it.
1. Shocking, terrible things happen every day, but hope enables us to withstand the threats we face.
  2. With hope, we become resilient, growing through instability and thriving in disorder.
  3. This is a really interesting point that we need to think about.
    - a. <sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.
    - b. Chew on this for a second. It is the struggle that actually produces hope.
  4. Hope doesn't mean much to us when everything is going right. On the other hand, it could not mean more to us than when everything is going wrong. That is when we are most in need of hope.
  5. And here is the amazing thing. When we are in the midst of trouble, our hope gives us the greatest gift of all
    - a. Hope tells us that in the midst of struggle the struggle does not define us.
    - b. Our God is bigger than the struggle.

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6. We are given the opportunity by God to learn from our mistakes. To fall, get up and try again. The difficulties that we face actually make us better followers of Jesus.
7. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!
8. We can have confidence because the one that we hope in allows us to rise above all of this.

### 3. Conclusion

- a. Here is where I think we Christians have made a mistake
  - i. We have heard these different points so many times that I think we have forgotten what they really mean
  - ii. We have lost touch with our own need for these things
  - iii. And when we have forgotten our need, we have to recognize how much everyone else needs what God has to offer.
- b. But here is something we need to grasp with both hands. There is nothing else that offers these kinds of answers
  - i. People will still choose to reject God for all of the reasons we have discussed. But we cannot forget that though they reject him they still need him.
  - ii. And we who know the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ have an obligation to not only speak to the relevance of God but to also live our lives like we believe God still matters.
  - iii. I have to believe that if we live the truth of God's answers to all of life's biggest questions, the lives of others will be changed
    1. Through us they can know they are loved, they can overcome their hurt, they can find meaning, know peace and have hope.
    2. We can give all of that because we have found it in Jesus Christ.
- c. 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.<sup>iii</sup>

**1 Corinthians 1:18-31** <sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?<sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup> Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup> God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no one may boast before him. <sup>30</sup> It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

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<sup>i</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>ii</sup> Myers, Jeff. *The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews* (Kindle Locations 1387-1392). 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 661-666). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.