



THE
Bridge
COURSE

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INTR

RODUCTION

WELCOME

- Thanks for joining us. I think you're really going to enjoy the Bridge Course. We've designed the Bridge to be a relaxed, fun way to explore the Christian faith. Over the next 10 weeks we're going to explore questions that many people wrestle with: How can God allow suffering? How good are you? Why doesn't God just forgive everyone? What will really satisfy? Can we really trust the Bible? One of the things that makes the Bridge so engaging is the open discussion, where no question is too simple or too hostile. It's a great place to explore spiritual issues in a non-threatening environment.

Maybe you're coming to the Bridge and you really don't feel like you need help or change—you're happy with where you are in life. Maybe things are falling apart and you're desperate for help and some answers. Maybe you just came out to appease a friend. Whatever the reason, I'd encourage you to approach the course with an open heart and an open mind. I always tell people up front, just test drive the course for the first 3 weeks. If you don't like it after that, then don't come anymore. We'll never pressure you. You'll never be cornered or called on. Our goal is to create a safe and friendly environment where you can explore the bigger questions of life at your own pace. So grab some dinner, get a cup of coffee, relax, and enjoy your journey on the Bridge.

—Jim Donohue

INFORMATIO

ON

• Schedule

- 6:45** – Free Dinner and Childcare
- 7:20** – Welcome and Announcements
- 7:40** – Talk
- 8:15** – Coffee Break
- 8:30** – Group Discussion
- 9:00** – Close

• Talks

- Week 1:** How Good Are You?
- Week 2:** Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?
- Week 3:** How Can God Allow Suffering?
- Week 4:** How Could God Send People to Hell?
- Week 5:** Can We Really Trust the Bible?
- Week 6:** Is Jesus Really the Only Way?
- Week 7:** Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

- Retreat 1:** What Will Really Satisfy?
- Retreat 2:** Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?
- Retreat 3:** What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
- Retreat 4:** Is Hearing Enough?

- Week 8:** How Do We Know Jesus Rose From the Dead?
- Week 9:** Is Christianity Really Worth It?
- Week 10:** Where Do We Go From Here?

- Celebration Dinner:** Who Really Needs God?

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THE COURSE

WEEK 1

• How Good Are You?

Romans 3:19–25

1. How do we know what “good” is?

2. How good do you have to be?

A. Not by Works (Romans 3:19–20)

- You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make for yourself any idol.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.

“But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.” (Matthew 12:36)

- Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
- Honor your father and mother.
- You shall not murder.

“Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.” (1 John 3:15)

- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not lie.
- You shall not covet.

“For whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

- When we compare ourselves to God and His law, we can easily affirm what verses 10 and 23 say: “No one is good – not even one... For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (Romans 3:10, 23, New Living Translation)

B. But by Grace (Romans 3:21–25)

- Good people don’t go to heaven. Forgiven people do.

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

Discussion Starters

- What did you think of the talk?
- How surprising was it to learn that the Bible teaches that it's impossible to get to God by being a good person?
- How do you feel about not being able to earn your way to God?
- What do you think of the word 'holy' as a way to describe God?
- How did you feel when we went through the Ten Commandments?
- How do you think you would feel if you encountered God?
- What do you think about the idea of Jesus dying to pay the penalty for your sins?

Book Recommendation

- *How Good Is Good Enough?*, Andy Stanley

WEEK 2

- Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

Genesis 3:1–13

Where does sin and evil come from?

1. Ignoring God's Word

- Genesis 3:1–3

“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” (Revelation 12:9)

2. Ignoring God's Goodness

- Genesis 3:4–5

3. Ignoring God's Consequences

- Shame (Genesis 3:6–7)
- Separation (Genesis 3:8–13)
- Sentence (Genesis 3:14–19)

“For the life of a creature is in the blood.” (Leviticus 17:11)

“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22)

Why doesn't God just forgive everyone?

- It would be unjust for Him not to punish our sin.

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

Discussion Starters

- How did you feel about the talk?
- What do you think about there being consequences to sin?
- Are there things that have made you question God's goodness?
- What do you think about the idea that sin is not just breaking God's commands but also preferring things over God?
- How do you feel about the idea that God doesn't run away from us when we sin?
- What do you think about Jesus's dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins?
- Do you ever feel like you're hiding or running from God?

Book Recommendation

- *The Prodigal God*, Timothy Keller

WEEK 3

• How Can God Allow Suffering?

1 Peter 2:18–25

1. Is God judging me when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:19–25)

A. We suffer because we live in a sinful world.

B. We suffer because others sin against us.

C. We suffer because of our own sin.

D. We reap what we sow. (Galatians 6:7)

“A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.”
(Proverbs 19:3)

2. Is God able to redeem my suffering?

A. Suffering can bring us to God.

B. Suffering can bring maturity.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2–4)

C. Suffering can bring a longing for a better place.

3. Is God there when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:21–24)

A. God suffers with us.

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

B. God suffers for us.

- How did He suffer?
- How did He respond?
- Why did He suffer?

Discussion Starters

- How do you feel about this message?
- Have you ever experienced suffering because of the sin of others?
- What do you think about the idea that we sometimes suffer because of our own sin? Does anyone have an example from their own life?
- How has this talk changed or challenged your view of suffering?
- Can anyone see how God could use your suffering for good?
- Jim said, "God's goal for us in our short time on earth is not just temporary happiness and bliss—it's to prepare us for eternity." What do you think about that?

Book Recommendation

- *Is God Really In Control?*, Jerry Bridges
- *Where is God When Things Go Wrong?*, John Blanchard

WEEK 4

- How Could God Send People to Hell?

Revelation 20:11–15

Some Common Objections to Hell:

1. I haven't really done anything that bad.

"Most of the time, our running away from God has not taken an 'active' form – like being Adolph Hitler, or murder, or being the school bully. Rather, it mostly takes a 'passive' form: gossip, greed, hypocrisy, racism, anger, deceit, lust, insensitivity, stubbornness, being uncooperative, manipulation, lies, pride, envy, and so on. The list is endless. Our sin might be sophisticated and respectable, but it makes us guilty just the same. Our lives are riddled with idolatry as we pursue the created things rather than the Creator himself, and this is an offence in the sight of God that is punishable by death and hell."¹

–Kim Hawtrey

2. The punishment is too great.

"I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize (share their faith). I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make society awkward. How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that."²

–Penn Jillette

3. Jesus is about love, not hell.

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

Some Common Myths About Heaven: (Randy Alcorn)

1. We'll be so different in heaven.

2. Heaven is just a state of mind.

"To our minds this present existence is solid and real, whereas our coming existence seems shadowy and insubstantial. Paul teaches us that the reverse is true. The life which is to come is strong, permanent and real; the present life is lived among the shadows."³

–Randy Alcorn

"Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before."⁴

–D.L. Moody

3. Heaven is boring.

"You can't exhaust heaven- you can only go in deeper to discover more and more and delight more and more in what you discover. On earth, when we find what we've been looking for our delight often diminishes. In heaven it's the opposite. Delight keeps increasing- no wonder, since unlike anything on earth, what's in heaven is what we were actually looking for all along."⁵

–Randy Alcorn

Discussion Starters

- What are your thoughts or reactions to this talk?
- How do you feel about a book (The Book of Deeds) filled with everything you have ever done, thought, or said?
- What did you think of the story called 'the Room'?
- Do you think the punishment of hell is too extreme? Why or why not?
- Jim mentioned that God's wrath flows from his justice and fits with our God given sense of justice. What are your thoughts about that?
- What did you think about the Bible's teaching on heaven?
- Do you think you can know for certain that your name is in the Book of Life? Why or why not?

Book Recommendation

- *In Light of Eternity*, Randy Alcorn

WEEK 5

- Can We Really Trust the Bible?

2 Peter 1:16–21

Seven Reasons We Can Trust the Bible

1. The God Reason

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

“Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20–21)

2. The Testimony Reason

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16)

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life [Jesus] – the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it.” (1 John 1:1–2)

3. The History Reason

“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”⁶

–Archeologist Nelson Glueck

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

4. The Manuscript Reason

“In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings.”⁷
–F.J.A. Hort

5. The Science Reason

6. The Prophecy Reason

7. The Personal Reason

“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

A few tips to help you make it personal

- Read the passage.
- Ask yourself questions: What does the passage say? What does it mean? How does it apply?
- Put into practice what you hear from God.
- “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24)

Discussion Starters

- What did you think about this message?
- Which of the reasons listed did you find most helpful? Why?
- Have you read much of the Bible? What has been your experience?
- Do you think science and the Bible are friends or enemies?
- D.L. Moody said, “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge. It was given to change lives.” Do you think it can change your life? In what ways?
- What do you think about the idea that the Bible is the ‘Word of God’?

Book Recommendation

- *ESV Study Bible*
- *The Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel
- *Can we really Trust What the Gospels Say?* Andrew Errington
- *New Testament Documents: Are they reliable?* F.F. Bruce

WEEK 6

• Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

John 14:1–11

1. Jesus alone can bring us to the Father. (John 14:1–7)

“Most people in our culture believe that, if there is a God, we can relate to him and go to heaven through leading a good life. Let’s call this the “moral improvement” view. Christianity teaches the very opposite. In the Christian understanding, Jesus does not tell us how to live so we can merit salvation. Rather, he comes to forgive and save us through his life and death in our place. God’s grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and who acknowledge their need for a Savior.”⁸

–Tim Keller

2. Jesus alone is fully God and fully man. (John 14:8–11)

“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13)

“I and the Father are one. ‘The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’ The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.’” (John 10:30–33)

How can we test Jesus’ claim that He is God? There are three possibilities:

- He was not God and He knew it. (Liar)
- He was not God and He didn’t know it. (Lunatic)
- He is God. (Lord)

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse... but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”⁹

–C.S. Lewis

A. The teaching of Jesus:

- “Love your enemy, do good to those who hate you.” (Luke 6:27)
- “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” (Matthew 7:12)

B. The works of Jesus:

- “Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.” (John 14:11)

C. The love of Jesus:

“When you’ve eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”¹⁰

–Sherlock Holmes

“We are faced then with a frightening alternative. The man we are talking about was (and is) just what he said or else a lunatic or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend; and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem. I have to accept the view that he was and is God. God has landed on this enemy occupied world in human form.”¹¹

–C.S. Lewis

Discussion Starters

- How did you feel about the talk?
- Did anyone try reading the Bible in the last week? How did it go?
- What do you think about Jesus being the only way to get to God?
- Do you think it is arrogant to claim to be the only way, or loving and humble to come and make a way?
- What do you think about the statement, “all religions are basically the same”?
- How does the “Liar, Lunatic, or Lord” argument affect what you think of Jesus?
- What do you think about Jesus being fully God and fully man?

Book Recommendation

- *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis

WEEK 7

• Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Mark 15:16–39

1. To Fulfill Scripture. (Psalm 22)

- “He was numbered with the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:12)
- “Wine mixed with myrrh (Psalm 31) and wine mixed with vinegar.” (Psalm 69:21)
- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?” (Psalm 22:1)
- “All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads ‘He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!’” (Psalm 22:7–8)
- “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet - I can count all my bones - they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (Psalm 22: 16–18)

2. To Ransom Us. (Mark 15:33–34)

- “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

“God forsaking God, who can understand that?”¹²

– Martin Luther

- “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11)
- “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.” (Matthew 12:18)
- “For the Father loves the Son.” (John 5:20)
- “And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” (John 8:29)
- “... you loved me before the foundation of the world... I made known to them

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:24–26)

- “But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.” (John 14:31)

“Thirty-three years earlier there had been brightness and music at midnight when Jesus was born. Now there is darkness and silence at noontide as he dies.”¹³

–R. Kent Hughes

- “God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

“Once he had done that, God the Father had to forsake all that sin. When Jesus was wearing our sin on the cross, God the Father could not bear to look at the sin or at his Son. He had to avert his gaze. He had to shield his eyes. He had to turn his back. He had to condemn and reject and curse and damn that sin.”¹⁴

–Phillip Ryken

3. To Bring Us Near. (Mark 15:37–38)

Discussion Starters

- What are your thoughts about this talk?
- Why do you think that the death of Jesus was different than other deaths?
- How does the death of Jesus by crucifixion make you feel?
- What do you think about Jesus being forsaken by God in our place?
- How do you feel about the concept of people needing to be redeemed?
- Jim said that Jesus died to bring us near God. Do you feel that you are near to God, or far away? Has that changed since the start of the Bridge Course?

Book Recommendations

- *50 Reasons Jesus Came to Die*, John Piper

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- ## Schedule

Friday Night

8:00 – Talk 1

9:00 – Free Time

Saturday

8:00 – Breakfast

9:00 – Talk 2

10:00 – Discussion

10:30 – Break

10:45 – Talk 3

11:30 – Worship and Prayer

12:00 – Lunch

1:00 – Free Time

3:00 – Talk 4

3:45 – Discussion

4:15 – Worship and Testimonies

4:45 – Group Pictures and Depart

- ## Talks

Session 1: What Will Really Satisfy?

Session 2: Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?

Session 3: What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

Session 4: Is Hearing Enough?

RETREAT 1

• What Will Really Satisfy?

Jeremiah 2:12–13

1. The Lord is the fountain of satisfaction. (Jeremiah 2:13a)

“Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.”¹⁵

–C.S. Lewis

2. People prefer broken cisterns. (Jeremiah 2:13b)

“...it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”¹⁶

–C.S. Lewis

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” (John 4:10)

“Everyone who drinks this water [water from a well] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13–14)

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

Discussion Starters

- What was most striking about this message?
- What are some of the broken cisterns in your life?
- Do you see Jesus as a spring of Living Water? Why or why not?

RETREAT 2

- Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?
1 Corinthians 2

The Holy Spirit reveals:

1. The Centrality of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:1–5)

- “The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history.”¹⁷

–Jerry Bridges

- “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.”¹⁸

–Stephen Covey

2. The Wisdom of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:6–8)

- “Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

3. The Wonder of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:9–12)

- There are two kinds of people: natural and spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:14–16)
- You need the Holy Spirit to see Christ and to understand the Gospel. (2 Kings 6:13–17)

Discussion Starters

- What did you think about the message last night?
- Did anyone respond last night by praying at the end of the message?
- Do you have any questions about the Holy Spirit?
- Do you have any fears about the Holy Spirit?

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

RETREAT 3

- What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

1 Corinthians 12:1–20

1. The Holy Spirit is the giver of all gifts.
2. The Holy Spirit is the giver of different gifts.
3. The Holy Spirit gives every Christian gifts for the good of others.
 - Some specific gifts the Holy Spirit gives: healing, prophecy, tongues.
4. How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18)
 - Believe
 - Thirst
 - Pray
 - Receive

Discussion Starters

- How did you feel about the talk?
- What gifts do you think you may have?
- Why do you think the Bible reminds us that the gifts we have come from God?
- Why do you think that God gives people different gifts?
- How have you observed or experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

RETREAT 4

• Is Hearing Enough?

Luke 8:4–15

The Story of the Four Soils

1. Some respond to the gospel with a hard heart. (Luke 8:12)

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.” (Romans 1:18)

2. Some respond to the gospel with a shallow heart. (Luke 8:13)

3. Some respond to the gospel with a crowded heart. (Luke 8:14)

“If you don’t feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”¹⁹

–John Piper

There are three things in this passage that are designed to stuff us with the world so that we have no appetite for Christ.

- Cares
- Riches
- Pleasures

4. Some respond to the gospel with a good heart. (Luke 8:15)

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

Discussion Starters

- How did God touch you during the ministry time?
- What did you think about the talk?
- Which heart do you feel most closely represents your own?
- What are some of the things that can choke or crowd our hearts?
- What would you have to leave behind in order for your life to produce fruit?

WEEK 8

• How Do We Know Jesus Rose from the Dead?

Matthew 27:57–28:15

1. How do we really know Jesus rose from the dead? There are four possibilities:

- The disciples stole the body.
- Jesus did not die on the cross.
- The religious leaders stole the body.
- He rose from the dead.

2. Why does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead?

“Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:12–19)

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

3. How should we respond to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead?

- You can ignore Him and neglect Him.
- You can believe that He has been raised from the dead.

Discussion Starters

- Where do you think Elvis is?
- What did you think about this talk?
- Which of the four possibilities do you think best explains the empty tomb: The disciples stole him, Jesus didn't die, religious leaders stole him, he rose from the dead?
- Are there things in your life that cause you to not want Jesus to be the risen Son of God?
- Do you think that Christianity falls apart if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? Why or why not?
- How do you think the resurrection should affect your life?

Book Recommendation

- *The Case for Christ*, Lee Strobel

WEEK 9

- Is Christianity Really Worth It?

Matthew 13:44–46

Three Idols that Bury the Treasure of Christ and Hide the Value of Christianity:

1. The idol of money

“And behold, a man came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘All these I have kept. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” (Matthew 19:16–22)

2. The idol of sex

3. The idol of success

“I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy.... I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I’m mediocre and uninteresting... Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that’s always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I’ve become Somebody, I still have to prove that I’m Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will.”²⁰

–Madonna

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

“In the most radical way, God has adjusted to us – in his incarnation and atonement. In Jesus Christ he became a limited human being, vulnerable to suffering and death. On the cross, he submitted to our condition – as sinners – and died in our place to forgive us. In the most profound way, God has said to us, in Christ, ‘I will adjust to you. I will change for you. I’ll serve you though it means a sacrifice for me.’ If he has done this for us, we can and should say the same to God and others.”²¹

–Tim Keller (*Reason for God*)

How do we uncover this treasure?

- Recognize His worth
- Respond with joy

Discussion Starters

- How do you feel about this message?
- What are some reasons you see people resist Christianity?
- What do you think about the idea that the Kingdom of Heaven is a priceless treasure or pearl?
- Right now, does anything seem more valuable to you than Christ?
- What idols have you seen in your life?
- Which car do you think you are in? Which do you want to be in?
- What do you think you have to do to get into the white car?
- Is there anything that you think God wants you to joyfully give up for Him?

Book Recommendation

- *Counterfeit Gods*, Timothy Keller

WEEK 10

- Where Do We Go From Here?

Acts 2:37–47

1. Repent. (Acts 2:38)
2. Be baptized. (Acts 2:38, 41)
3. Join a local church. (Acts 2:42–47)

“The freelance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms.”²²

–C.E.B. Cranfield

Why do we need the church?

A. It's central to God's purposes.

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18).

“If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the center?”²³

–John Stott

B. It's central to our growth.

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

● Questions for Group Discussion Time:

C. It's central to our experience of God.

“God will manifest his presence to you in congregational worship in ways you can never know, even in the most glorious secret worship. That’s because you are not only a temple of God as an individual, but the Bible says, and far more often, that Christians collectively are God’s temple. God manifests his presence in different ways to the living stones of the temple, when they are gathered, than he does to them when they are apart.”²⁴

–Donald Whitney

D. Sin will oppose you.

4. Devote yourself to spiritual disciplines. (Acts 2:42–46)

- Read the Bible. (Acts 2:42a)
- Listen to teaching. (Acts 2:42a)
- Fellowship with other Christians. (Acts 2:42b)
- Pray. (Acts 2:42c)

Discussion Starters

- What are your thoughts or reactions to the talk?
- Jim read the list of “Excuses to Neglect Church.” Which of the excuses do you identify with?
- What do you think about being baptized?
- Where do you think you stand with God as a result of the Bridge Course?
- What do you think God wants you to do next?
- How do you feel about joining a church?

Book Recommendation

- *Stop Dating the Church*, Josh Harris

CELEBRATION

• Who Really Needs God?

Luke 15:11–32

The Story of the Prodigal Son

1. Reckless

“And he said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.” (Luke 15:11–13)

2. Regret

“And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.” (Luke 15:14–16)

3. Repentance

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father.” (Luke 15:17–20)

- Come to your senses
- Get up (arise)
- Go to your Father

DINNER

4. Reception

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:20–24)

“Jesus was underlining the fact that – despite assumptions to the contrary – the reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn upon us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible to us that the Father could love us... [The problem is,] the guilt-ridden son was calculating on the basis of his sin, rather than on the basis of his father’s character.”²⁵

–Sinclair Ferguson

5. Refusal

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’” (Luke 15:25–32)

“What is the problem? Pride in his good deeds, rather than remorse over his bad deeds, was keeping the older son out of the feast of salvation. The elder brother’s problem is his self-righteousness, the way he uses his moral record to put God and others in his debt to control them and get them to do what he wants.”²⁶

–Tim Keller

NOTES

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Covenant Fellowship Church
One Fellowship Drive
Glen Mills, PA 19342
610.361.0606

www.covfel.org

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