

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

— WITH —

**HOW CAN WE KNOW
WHAT IS TRUE?**

16 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. 17 For when he received honor and glory from the Father, and the voice was heard from the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we were together with him in glory.

Two FOUNDATION ASSERTIONS

Christianity is a well-known religion in our day and age. If we want to understand biblical Christianity, however, we need to begin with two foundational assertions.

OBJECTIVE AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH EXISTS ¹

We live in a time and place that are characterized by what has been called “relativism.” Relativism is the belief that what is true and right for one person may not necessarily be true and right for another person. This belief manifests itself in the area of religious convictions by an attitude that says, in effect: “It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe it sincerely.”

While this attitude sounds very reasonable and enlightened, it is directly contrary to what the Bible—and common sense—teaches. A person may believe with great sincerity that a chair will support their weight. If the chair is broken, however, their belief, no matter how sincere, will not change the condition of the chair. And if they sit on the chair, their sincerity will not

¹ The questions “what is true?” and “how can we know it is true?” relate to complicated philosophical issues that have important practical implications. As will become apparent throughout this booklet, the answer of Biblical Christianity to these questions is very much in conflict with modern beliefs and practices. If the reader comes to the end of this booklet, and still asks, “but how can I really know what is true?” he or she is directed to the Appendix for a more in-depth examination of this question.

keep them from falling down!

A religious belief, opinion, or conviction, no matter how sincerely it is held, is only valid if it is *true*. The all-important question when it comes to religious beliefs is not whether they seem to “work” in a subjective sense, but whether they are *true*. Jesus said:

“A religious belief, opinion, or conviction, no matter how sincerely it is held, is only valid if it is *true*.”

“..you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” -John 8:32²

Real freedom is not merely being able to do what we *want* to do, but being able to do what we *ought* to do. This kind of freedom comes only when we know and practice the truth.

OBJECTIVE AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH CAN ONLY BE KNOWN BY DIVINE REVELATION

If objective and absolute truth existed, but could not be known, it would be of little value. God teaches, however, not only that objective and absolute truth exists, but also that this truth can be known because He has revealed it to us in the Bible.

Most people have their own opinion about what is true and false in the area of religious beliefs and practices. The Bible teaches, however, that we do not have to (and indeed must not) rely on our own opinions to know spiritual truth. As Jesus was preparing to leave this world, He asked His Father to sanctify (set apart or make morally pure) His disciples. Listen to His

² All Bible quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible. The reader is encouraged to look up and carefully study all of the Bible quotations referred to in this booklet.

words in John 17:17:

“Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

God has revealed His objective and absolute truth to us in His Word, the Bible. We may choose to reject what God has revealed, but we must realize that our disbelief does not make the Bible false. The Bible is true, whether we believe it or not, and there are good, sound, objective evidences to support this claim. ³

The reason why there are so many beliefs in the area of religious convictions is that people base their beliefs on their opinions, feelings, preferences, sense of justice, or any number of other invalid criteria. God clearly teaches that we must base our spiritual beliefs only on His objective and absolute truth as revealed to us in the Bible.

With these two important truths as guidelines, let's consider biblical Christianity in the remainder of this booklet. What is biblical Christianity? This question can best be answered by looking at five basic biblical teachings.

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³See “For Further Reading” at the end of this booklet if you wish to explore some of these evidences.

Biblical Christianity Involves A **TEACHING ABOUT GOD**

If you desire to have a real understanding of biblical Christianity, it is important that you understand biblically just who God is. In Acts 17:24-25 we read:

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

These verses reveal several things about the God of the Bible. First, they tell us that He “made the world”—He is the Creator. The world is not here by accident, but by design. Modern science tells us that the world in general, and man in particular, are nothing more than the product of matter plus time plus chance. Such a belief totally eliminates the basis of morality or any sense of purpose in life.⁴ The objective, revealed truth of the Bible is that God is the Creator of “the world and everything in it.”

But notice also that these verses teach that God is the “Lord (ruler) of heaven and earth.” God is in complete control of everything He has created. This world and the events of history are proceeding according to a wise and gracious plan.

Thirdly, these verses teach that God “does not live in temples

⁴ See the Appendix for further development of this idea.

made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything.” This means not only that God cannot be limited to a particular location, but also that ultimately, God does not need us. We need Him.

The people to whom Paul was speaking in this passage had their own idea of what God was like. The Bible makes it clear, however, that we are not free to think of God, or serve God, or worship God in whatever way we desire (Matthew 15:8-9). Instead, we must be faithful to what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible. In other words, we cannot “pour God into our own mold” or “make” Him in our own image. His existence and character do *not* depend on what we believe about Him. He *is*, whether we believe it or not.

It is extremely important to notice that the Bible reveals a God who is *really there*, and who has given specific, detailed instructions as to what is true and how we should live. When we say, “it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe it sincerely,” or as long as it “works for you,” we are really saying one of three things. We are either saying that God is not objectively “there,” or that God has not told us what is true and how to live, or that God does not care if we obey what He has told us. According to the Bible, all three of these conclusions are wrong.

If Christianity is nothing more than a subjective experience, then Karl Marx was right when he called it “the opiate of the people.” If Christianity is based only on feelings and not on objective facts, then it *is* nothing more than a psychological crutch for emotionally weak people. If we build our beliefs on anything other than the Bible, including our subjective

feelings, we may have a religion, which I would define as man's unsuccessful attempt to reach God, but we do not have Christianity, which the Bible "defines" as God's successful reaching of man.

A final thought in these verses is that God holds our very life in His hands: "...he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." You exist and are reading this booklet only because of the grace and mercy of the God who sustains not only the world in general, but you in particular. You are literally only a heartbeat away from eternity, and every breath you take is a gift from this merciful God.

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Have you ever been personally gripped by these biblical teachings? Have you ever not only believed with your mind, although this is necessary, but also fully trusted and rested in the fact that the God who *is*, is on a throne and has everything in this universe under control? Have you ever really believed that God's existence is an objective reality and not just a crutch for emotionally weak people? When you understand the biblical teaching about God, then you are prepared to consider the next foundational building block of biblical Christianity.

Biblical Christianity Involves A **TEACHING ABOUT MAN**

In Genesis 1:27 we read:

“So God created man in his own image...”

This short verse contains two profound truths that are central to biblical Christianity. First, we read that “God created man...” God is man’s Creator. God is *your* Creator. Because God is the Creator and you are the created, God has every right to be involved in and rule over your life.

But notice secondly that this verse says that God created man “in his own image...” What this means in part is that man, unlike any animal, is created with a need to know God. Augustine, an early Christian theologian, said: “You made us for yourself, O God, and the heart of man is restless until it finds rest in you.” All people, simply by virtue of being human beings, ask questions about eternity, life after death, and the purpose and meaning of life. As people begin to search for meaning, they try to find fulfillment and satisfaction in many things such as work, possessions, pleasure or sports. Some people simply keep themselves so busy that they do not have time to think about eternal issues. Although some of these things may seem to satisfy for a short time, they always fail to bring real, lasting, inner peace.

Many people live their lives for the weekends. They work, eat,

watch television and sleep all week so they can go out and “enjoy” themselves on the weekend. This kind of life has no real purpose or meaning and is far removed from what God desires for His people.

Have you ever been gripped by the fact that God stands over you as your Creator and, therefore, has every right to be involved in your life? Have you ever come to the realization that your heart is indeed “restless,” although you may not know why? If you have ever thought that there must be more to life than you have experienced thus far, read on! God has the answer.

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Biblical Christianity Involves A **TEACHING ABOUT SIN**

So far, we have seen that God is the sovereign Creator who is in complete control of all He has made. We have also seen that God created people with a need to know Him, and yet people do not know Him. Instead of knowing God, people try to fill the void in their lives with other things—things that do not ultimately satisfy. Why is this? The biblical answer is that there is a problem in our relationship with God, and this problem is what the Bible calls sin.

In order to understand what the Bible teaches about sin, we need to ask and answer three distinct questions.

WHAT IS SIN?

The biblical answer to this question is found in 1 John 3:4:

“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”

Sin, according to this verse, is breaking God’s law or standard. It is an act of rebellion against the God who holds your very life in His hands.

Many people look at the external demands of God’s law and sincerely believe they have kept the commandments. But such thinking misses the point altogether. Jesus took the Old Testament commands of God and applied them to the heart condition of men. In Matthew 5:21-22, for example, we read:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment....”

In this passage Christ takes God’s law that forbids murder and applies it to the heart attitude from which murder springs, namely anger. In Matthew 5:27-28, Christ does the same thing with reference to the Old Testament prohibition against adultery:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

This pattern of taking the Old Testament commands and applying them to the heart condition of men is repeated throughout the New Testament.

The point is this: God does not view sin as a mere external act. Neither should we. God views sin as a heart attitude that is, in its essence, rebellion against Him. The Bible even teaches that we can be guilty of sinning by “merely” failing to do what we ought to do (James 4:17). Until you come to grips with the fact that the Bible does not view sin as “the inevitable slip of mortal creatures,” but as rebellion against the true and the living God who holds your very life in His hands, you will not

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understand biblical Christianity.

Sinful acts spring from a sinful and wicked heart. Listen to Christ's evaluation of the human heart in Mark 7:21-23:

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

Our problem, fundamentally, is not our environment or our genes. Our problem is not one that can be patched up by merely changing our external behavior or “turning over a new leaf.” Our acts of sin (our behavior) are only symptoms of the root problem. Our behavior can only really be changed if our heart is changed. Our problem is our heart.

WHO “HAS” SIN?

The biblical answer to this question is very easy to state but very difficult for most people to accept. Listen to God's answer:

“...there is no one who does not sin...”; “...no one living is righteous before you.”; “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins...”; “...None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one”; “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- 1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20;
Romans 3:10-12, 23

Sin, according to the Bible, is not just someone else's problem. Sin is our problem.

Many people have the idea that God "grades on a curve." They believe that when they stand before God He will weigh the "good" things they have done against the "bad," and if the good outweighs the bad they will go to heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Because God is infinitely and perfectly holy (morally pure), His standard is absolute moral perfection. Contrast Isaiah's attitude when he had a vision of the God of the Bible, with the all-too-common picture of a deity who "grades on a curve." Isaiah saw an infinitely Holy God before whom he trembled in terror. Listen to his testimony in Isaiah 6:1-5:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!' And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!'"

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Although God is merciful, and His judgment is often delayed, there is not a single verse in the entire Bible that indicates that God will tolerate sin in His presence. The Bible says:

*“You [God] are of purer eyes than to behold evil,
[a]nd cannot look on wickedness.”*

- Habakkuk 1:13a, New King James Version

God does not tolerate sin in His presence. He punishes it.

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF SIN?

The biblical answer to this question is two-fold. First, the Bible tells us that our sin separates us from God by putting both a chasm and a barrier between Him and us. Isaiah 59:2 reads:

*“...your iniquities have made a separation between
you and your God, and your sins have hidden his
face from you so that he does not hear.”*

This is why man can sense an emptiness in his life apart from God, yet he cannot seem to find the answer to his deepest needs and longings. Although he does not realize it, his sin has put an insurmountable barrier in his relationship to God, and he will never have a sense of peace or meaning in life until his sins are dealt with, the barrier has been removed, and the chasm has been bridged.

Secondly, the Bible tells us that our sin causes spiritual death.

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of
God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

- Romans 6:23

The easiest way to explain this verse is to look at each of the key terms individually and then “put it back together” to bring out the full meaning.

When you go to work all week you are paid a wage for your efforts. A wage is something you earn and deserve. A gift, on the other hand, is not something you earn but is something that is freely given.

The word “death” in Romans 6:23 describes both a present and a future reality for the non-Christian. The Bible describes the person who is not personally related to Christ as being spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-5). He cannot understand or appreciate spiritual truth. He looks at those who belong to Christ as being rather naïve. He considers the truths of the Bible to be “foolishness.” He views the Christian life as a joyless set of rules. There is a reason for all of this. He cannot understand or appreciate spiritual truth because he is spiritually dead. 1 Corinthians 2:14 (New International Version) puts it this way:

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

But spiritual death involves more than a rejection of God in this life. According to the Bible, it involves an eternal separation from God in hell. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 tells us that God will:

“in flaming fire, [inflict] vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day...”

The Bible clearly and explicitly teaches that only those who

believe in Christ will be delivered from eternal condemnation.

“Whoever believes in him [Christ] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” - John 3:18

If you refuse to believe in Christ, and instead base your eternal destiny on the false hope that God will “grade on a curve,” you will remain in the realm of spiritual death, and you will be eternally condemned.

The words “eternal life” in Romans 6:23 also have a two-fold meaning. They refer, first of all, to a meaningful life in the present. Jesus said:

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” - John 10:10b

Eternal life is living according to God’s plan, in proper relationship to God as our Father. But it is much more. It also refers to an eternal abiding in the very presence of God in heaven.

Romans 6:23 then, paraphrased and “put back together,” says:

“What we deserve and have earned for our rebellion against God is not only a present separation from God in this life, but an eternal

“If you refuse to believe in Christ and instead base your eternal destiny on the false hope that God will ‘grade on a curve,’ you will remain in the realm of spiritual death and you will be eternally condemned.”

separation from God in the life to come. But what God gives us, which we do not deserve and have not earned, is not only a present life of purpose and meaning, but also an eternity in the very presence of God Himself, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Have you ever been gripped by your own personal sinfulness in the presence of a holy God? Have you ever really seen your sin as God sees it—as rebellion against Him? As you look at God’s standard of absolute moral perfection do you see yourself as falling hopelessly short? Has the sinfulness of your own heart ever become a real concern for you? If these things have become real, pressing concerns to you deep down, you are ready to examine God’s solution to your problem.

Biblical Christianity Involves A **TEACHING ABOUT CHRIST**

How can people who are unwilling and unable to be restored to God, be made right with Him? The answer to this question is bound up in the person and work of Christ.

In Hebrews 4:15 we read:

“For we do not have a high priest [Christ] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

This verse reveals two things about Christ’s person. First, it clearly teaches that Christ was and is true man. He knows what it is to be hungry and thirsty; to be tired, tempted, and disappointed; to shed tears. He knows what you go through in life because He has been there Himself. Because Christ was and is true man, He was able to pay the penalty for sin, which is death. He had to be a man to die on the cross.

Secondly, this verse indirectly, and many other verses directly (John 1:1, 14, 8:58; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16), reveal that Christ was and is true God. For it says that Christ was “without sin” and the Bible is very clear that all people, without exception, are sinners (1 Kings 8:46, Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-12, 23). God alone is sinless. Christ had to be God in order to be a perfect, sinless and acceptable sacrifice.

Christ is the only person who ever lived who was and is both man, and therefore able to die, and God, and therefore able to be a perfect, sinless, and acceptable sacrifice. Therefore, Christ alone is able to deal with man's sin problem. That is why the Bible can say:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” - Acts 4:12

“Christ is the only person who ever lived who was and is both man and therefore able to die, and God, and therefore able to be a perfect, sinless and acceptable sacrifice.”

The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one way to heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Just as we cannot go to heaven without a proper understanding of the person of Christ, so we cannot go to heaven without a proper understanding of the work of Christ. The Bible reveals that Christ came to the earth to die on a cross. He was literally born to die. According to the Bible, Christ died on the cross in the place of ungodly sinners. He died as their substitute. Isaiah 53:5 puts it this way:

“...he [Christ] was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace...”

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 (New King James Version) the apostle Paul makes the same point when he says:

“For He [God] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the

righteousness of God [be declared right with God] in Him.”

The Bible teaches that by dying on the cross Jesus removed the guilt and condemnation from all who believe in Him.

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” - John 3:18

Have you ever acknowledged the fact that in Jesus Christ there is a perfect provision for your sins? Have you ever really believed that forgiveness may be found in Jesus alone, since He is the only person who ever lived who was and is both man, and therefore able to die, and God, and therefore “able” to be a perfect, sinless sacrifice for our sins? Have you ever come to grips with the fact that the guilt and condemnation of your sin is only removed when you believe—that you have a responsibility to believe in Christ? If these issues are real concerns to you, then God has good news about how you can personalize the biblical provision made in Christ and acknowledge Him not only as a Savior and Lord in theory, but as your Savior and Lord in reality.

Biblical Christianity Involves A **TEACHING ABOUT SALVATION**

To be saved is to be made right with God by being delivered from enslavement to our sin while we are alive (Romans 6:6), and judgement and condemnation for our sin after we die (John 5:24). According to the Bible there are two steps you must take to be made right with God.

YOU MUST RECOGNIZE AND BELIEVE THAT SALVATION IS WHOLLY THE GIFT OF GOD

Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

If you are ever to be made right with God it must be as the result of God’s grace (wholly undeserved favor) and not your works. This verse and literally dozens of others in the Bible make it clear that, with respect to salvation, grace and works are mutually exclusive.

The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that you cannot be saved by what you do for God. You can only be saved by what God has done for you. You can never earn acceptance with God.

Another verse puts this truth in a slightly different way:

*“he saved us, not because of works done by us in
righteousness, but according to his own mercy.”*

- Titus 3:5a

The truth of salvation by the free and undeserved grace and mercy of God alone is central to the biblical gospel. It is also a truth that flies in the face of people who, because of their proud, sinful and rebellious hearts, believe they can “do something” to make themselves acceptable to God.

Most people believe that they can earn favor with God. They think that because they may be relatively “good,” give to a church, live moral lives, or have been baptized, they will be able to get into heaven. They do not believe this because the Bible teaches it. The Bible does not teach this false belief. *They believe it because they want to believe it.* But our standard of what is true and false must not be what we want to believe but what God has said in His word, the Bible.

“Most people believe that they can do something to earn favor with God...They do not believe this because the Bible teaches it...They believe it because they want to believe it.”

As you begin to understand what the Bible says about God’s holiness, and your sinfulness, you will begin to understand that, if you are ever to get to heaven, it must be by the undeserved mercy and favor of God alone. The problem in your relationship with God is your sin, which comes out of an unclean heart. That sin causes a chasm between you and God that is so large that no work can even begin to bridge it. It is as if ten people lined up on the edge of the Grand Canyon and tried to jump the chasm to the other side. Although some

would appear to get relatively farther across the chasm than others, it would make no difference whatsoever. Everyone, without exception, would fall far short. That is exactly what happens when people try to “earn” their way to heaven. In the words of Romans 3:23, because “*all have sinned,*” all will “*fall short of the glory of God...*”

The Bible teaches that what you could not do because of your sin, Christ did because He was sinless. Through His death on the cross He bridged the chasm caused by your sin. If you rely on your good works to get you to heaven you are saying, in effect, “God, I do not need your provision. I can bridge the chasm caused by my sin, myself.” If you try to do this you will fall short. We are saved (brought into a right relationship with God) only by the mercy and undeserved favor of God. No one ever has or ever will either deserve or earn God’s salvation.

YOU MUST SPECIFICALLY RECEIVE GOD’S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION

The Bible teaches that in order to be saved, you must not only recognize that salvation is God’s gift, but you must also specifically receive the gift of salvation found in Christ. No one is ever “born” a Christian, and no one has “always been” a Christian. The Bible teaches that to become a Christian you must, by the grace of God, specifically receive God’s gift of salvation. John 1:12 says:

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”

To become a real, biblical Christian, you must receive Christ. Here’s how.

1. PLACE YOUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD.

Romans 10:9 promises:

“...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

You place your faith in Christ by trusting Him to deliver you from the penalty and power of your sin. You must not merely believe with your mind, although this is necessary, but also fully trust and rest in the fact that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Son of God. You must believe that He did live a perfect, sinless life and then die on the cross as a perfect, sinless sacrifice so that sinners could be made right with God. You must believe that He was literally and bodily raised from the dead and that even now He sits enthroned in heaven as Lord (ruler). You must believe that He died for the ungodly, and seeing yourself as ungodly, you must believe and rest in the fact that He died so that the chasm caused by your sins may be bridged by His sacrifice.

2. ACCEPT GOD’S EVALUATION OF YOUR HEART AND WITH HIS HELP, TURN FROM YOUR SINS.

The Bible nowhere teaches that Christ came and gave His life on the cross simply to make it possible for people to have “hell insurance.” He did not come to save people in their sins; He came to save people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

If you are ever to be truly saved you must believe that God’s evaluation of your heart is true, and you must, by God’s grace and power, turn from your sins. This is what the Bible calls repentance. The Bible makes it clear that repentance is not an

optional afterthought to the gospel. No! Repentance is at the very core of the gospel. That is why the apostle Paul can say unequivocally in Acts 17:30 that:

“...[God] commands all people everywhere to repent...”

The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that real salvation results in a changed life. 2 Corinthians 5:15 says:

“and he [Christ] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

When we become Christians, God begins a life-long process of character transformation. As we trust God, and rely on His resources, we begin to live less and less for our own self-interest and more and more for the God who saved us. This change is not instantaneous or perfect, but it is real and substantial.

God does not expect us to change our lives before salvation. That is impossible. Rather, God’s Word says that in real salvation, God changes our heart. And when God changes our heart, our life and character begin to be transformed by the grace of God as well. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Salvation is **not** the result of a changed life. But a changed life **is** the result of real salvation.

When non-Christians look at God’s demand of repentance, they say, “I could never do that.” And they are right. But the good

news of the gospel is that God is in the business of enabling people to do the impossible. From “this side” of salvation the Christian life looks impossible. But when God changes your heart from the inside out, you will not only be able to live the Christian life, but it will be the greatest desire of your heart to live for the God who saved you.

One man put it this way: “Before I became a Christian I was very proud intellectually, and I frankly pitied Christians as weak people who were not able to cope with life without a psychological crutch. I hated going to church, and I thought that most Christians were hypocrites. I literally laughed at people who believed the Bible, and I could not understand how anyone, in a scientifically enlightened age, could place any credence in Scripture. My lifestyle and thinking were like any other 21-year-old man. *But then God did something.* He enabled me to believe the gospel and act upon it. He saved me and He changed me. Although I will never be perfect in this life (1 John 1:8), and I still fail God often, I can say by the grace of God that He has changed me from the inside out.”

The God who saves our souls is also the God who changes our hearts. He places a basic desire to obey Him in all of His true children. That is why the Bible can say:

“Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” -1 John 2:4

Christians struggle. Christians fail God. Christians sin. But true Christians do not take sin lightly. The

Christians struggle. Christians fail God. Christians sin. But true Christians do not take sin lightly. The basic desire of their life is to obey the God who saved them.

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A.W. Pink, in a tract entitled, “Is Christ Your Lord?” has some soul-searching words. Carefully consider them:

“Conversion, true conversion, saving conversion, is a turning from sin to God in Christ. It is a throwing down of the weapons of my warfare against Him, a ceasing to despise or ignore His authority.... There are many people who would like to be saved from Hell, but who do not want to be saved from self-will, from having their own way.... But God will not save on their terms.... To be saved, we must submit to HIS terms.... O my reader, make no mistake upon this point: a conversion which the Holy Spirit produces is a very radical thing. It is a miracle of grace. It is the enthroning of Christ in the life.”⁵

Have you come to the place in your life where you have acknowledged to God that the only way you will ever be made right with Him is by His grace and mercy? Are you trying to “earn” acceptance with God by what you do for Him rather than relying on what He has done for you? Have you ever agreed with God’s evaluation of your heart and, by His grace, confessed and turned from your sins? If you say that you have, does your life evidence the change in character—the “enthroning of Christ in your life”—that the Bible says is the mark of true salvation?

⁵ Accessed at NewDemonstration.com on 10/15/14.

Coming To FAITH IN CHRIST

In the Bible, we read about God's love for the lost. Love is one of those words that we have cheapened in our society because we think of it as little more than a changeable emotion. The Bible teaches that God's love for His people was not a mere changeable emotion. God's love was such that He acted. He demonstrated His love not merely by what He said, but by what He did. Listen to the Apostle Paul's testimony about God's great love in Romans 5:6-8 (New International Version):

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous [person], though for a good [person] someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God did not just talk about His love for lost and powerless sinners. He demonstrated His love by sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross.

Nearly 2,000 years ago this same Jesus asked an important question. Listen to His words in John 11:25-26:

"...I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,

and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

This is still the all-important question today, and it is the question you must ask yourself. Do you believe the gospel (good news)? If not, that is your choice. But before you answer "no," ask yourself two important questions. First, ask yourself if you have ever *honestly* considered the claims of Christ. Second, ask yourself if you are willing to live with the eternal consequences of rejecting the God who is "there" and who has spoken.

If you do believe the gospel, you must act. Christ Himself said:

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." - Matthew 11:28

Christ has promised to receive all who come to Him in faith and repentance. He has gone on record by saying:

*"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."
- John 6:37*

That means you. If you come to Christ His way you *will* be received.

Nearly the last verse of the Bible is both an open invitation and a direct command to receive Christ.

"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price." - Revelation 22:17

Are you thirsty today? Come to Christ and you will never thirst again.

Growing In **YOUR FAITH**

If you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord, it is important that you continue to grow in Him. Do not deceive yourself into thinking you can “coast” in your Christian life. You can’t. Although we are saved by grace, and grow by grace, that does not discount the need for discipline in our daily lives. Develop early the disciplines of Bible study, prayer, faithful attendance at a local church that believes and teaches the Bible, and sharing your faith with others. Find someone who believes that the Bible is the Word of God and who is willing to work with you personally to help you grow in your faith. Learn to walk by faith and not by sight. The apostle Paul said,

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” - Philippians 3:10-12, NIV

Make “knowing Christ” and “pressing on” the all-consuming goals in your life and God will richly bless you.

APPENDIX

HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT IS TRUE?

POSTMODERNISM AND TRUTH

Postmodernism is the philosophical underpinning of modern society in the West. To understand how our culture has arrived at its current postmodern perspective we would need to trace historical, scientific, philosophical, religious, and cultural developments beginning with post-Enlightenment Europe and ending with modern American pop-culture. It is obviously well beyond the scope of this appendix to carry out such a comprehensive examination.⁶ Suffice it to say that postmodernism does not believe that truth exists in any objective sense, but instead is ultimately relative.

Postmodern thinking is at the root of virtually all modern beliefs and practices in the West. Everything from the modern understanding of tolerance, to the rampant “selfism” of pop psychology, to the assumption that truth and morality are relative, ultimately flows from a largely unexamined commitment to postmodernism.

⁶For an excellent summary see, Francis Schaeffer in: “The God Who Is There” (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1968). Although Schaeffer at times paints with a broad brush, and his work is somewhat difficult and dated, it remains foundational to understanding this subject. My thoughts on the unworkability of a world and life view founded on postmodernism are largely an expansion of Schaeffer’s thoughts in “The God Who Is There” and “Escape from Reason,” both of which are listed in the “For Further Reading” section at the end of this booklet.

As few as thirty years ago it was possible to have a discussion about the truth of a particular belief system. This is no longer the case. D.A. Carson is correct when he points out that:

“Older opponents might deny the truths of Christianity; newer opponents accuse Christianity of being ridiculous when it claims to declare the truth.”⁷

Alistair Begg has correctly observed that the modern commitment to tolerance in the West has come at the expense of truth:

“In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, ‘Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it’ (Matthew 7:13-14). In affirming this, we must immediately recognize that the exclusive nature of these claims flies in the face of our pluralistic society. We are not simply a society in which we recognize the existence of, and differences between, a variety of religious beliefs, but one in which we declare all such beliefs to be equally valid. From that perspective there is only one kind of heresy, namely, to claim one view is ultimately right where others are wrong. In granting plausibility to everything, we may grant certainty to nothing. Toleration has been embraced at the expense of truth.”⁸

⁷D.A. Carson, “The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 492.

⁸Alistair Begg, “Made for His Pleasure” (Chicago, Moody Press, 1996), 110-111.

To postmodern people, absolute truth is nonexistent and therefore irrelevant. The things that matter are tolerance, political correctness, and not offending anyone. It is precisely here that biblical Christianity is in direct conflict with postmodern thinking.

Postmodern thinking in the Western world is most clearly illustrated by the popular teaching on tolerance. Webster's Dictionary defines tolerance as, "*A fair and objective attitude toward those whose opinions, practices, race, religion, nationality, etc. differ from one's own.*"

Biblical Christianity not only wholeheartedly embraces, but indeed rejoices in this traditional concept of tolerance, as well as in its political cousin, pluralism. The problem is this: philosophical tolerance, as it is defined by postmodern people, is much more oppressive than the traditional concept of tolerance reflected in the typical dictionary definition.

Philosophical tolerance requires that all world views, concepts of truth, and lifestyles be embraced as equally valid and *true*.

- "Tolerance...is [the belief] that all opinions are equal. Each one has its point, and all should be respected or praised. That is to say, there is no rational way to discern between them".⁹
- "The definition of...tolerance is that every individual's beliefs, values, lifestyle, and perception of truth claims are equal...There is no hierarchy of truth. Your beliefs

⁹ Fernando Savatar, "El Mito Nacionalista" (Madrid: Alinaza Editorial, 1996), 16-19, as cited in Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, "The New Tolerance" (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), 19.

and my beliefs are equal, and all truth is relative.”¹⁰

- “[A]ll faiths are equally valid as religions.”¹¹

By definition, biblical Christians may not consider all faiths, beliefs, and truth claims to be equal. As a result, they are in direct conflict with the thinking, beliefs, and commitments of the postmodern world.

John Woodbridge, in addressing the idea that Jesus is the only way to God, says:

“Jesus’ claim that he is the way, the truth, and the life makes politically correct moderns gag. It is the ultimate heresy.”¹²

Exactly. But the problem does not stop with the exclusive claims of Christ. In areas touching on the existence and content of objective truth, moral beliefs and practices, and many other specific issues addressed in the Scriptures, a biblical Christian is forced to choose between postmodernism and Jesus Christ. A biblical Christian will choose Christ every time, and in so choosing will be labeled as a naïve, uneducated, judgmental, fanatic. It is in this environment that non-agreement is considered phobia, non-conformity is considered hate, and conviction is labeled fanaticism.

¹⁰Thomas A. Helmbock, “Insights on Tolerance,” *Cross and Crescent* (the publication of Lambda Chi Alpha International Fraternity), summer 1996, 2, as cited in Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, “The New Tolerance” (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), 19.

¹¹Stephen Bates, “Religious Diversity and the Schools” (*The American Enterprise* 4, no. 5 September/October 1993): 18, quoting judge Danny Boggs of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, as cited in Josh McDowell and Bob Hostetler, “The New Tolerance” (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), 19.

¹²John D. Woodbridge, “Culture War Casualties,” *Christianity Today* (6 March 1995): 25.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

So how do biblical Christians respond to the postmodern thinking that is so popular in the Western world? They respond by recognizing three things.

First, biblical Christians recognize that in spite of the popularity of postmodern thinking, they have every reason to be confident about what they believe. As one who has spent many years in both the “postmodern” and the “Christian” worlds educationally, professionally, and practically, the author has been continually impressed with how many leading proponents of biblical Christianity deal with opposing views with intellectual depth and integrity, while most leading proponents of postmodernism do not.

Hugh Hewitt’s comments are helpful and to the point:

“[T]hose who mock—and they are legion—generally turn out to be less-than-impressive intellects....Intellectually, only a fool dismisses the possibility of God, and it is simply hard to feel embarrassment at the hands of a fool....I am fond of pointing out to nonbelievers that all their certainty is no match for Aquinas or Augustine. Some realize the trap and abandon the argument about the intellectual merits of faith. Others fall into the snare: ‘What do you expect from guys living hundreds of years ago?’ The unstated premise of this reply is that the nonbeliever is on the side of Galileo and the believer is on the side of the Inquisition and the triumph of science has driven theology from the field. This is a ludicrous

claim advanced consciously or unconsciously by individuals of limited intellectual experience.... People who think that Christian belief depends on a limited grasp of natural science betray a huge learning gap as well as an intellectual sloth that ought to embarrass them.”¹³

Also, biblical Christians recognize that a world and life view founded on postmodernism does not and cannot “work” in practice. Ultimately, it is a bankrupt philosophy.

In the postmodern view, things such as faith, the non-rational and subjective experience belong in one realm, while things such as science, rationality and objective fact, belong in another realm. What this means in practice is that postmodern people are left with two unbiblical alternatives. They can either believe in a subjective but meaningful experience that is irrational and has no basis in fact, or they can believe in an objective set of “facts” that are rational, but ultimately meaningless.

So the typical unbeliever in our culture, without realizing it, embraces an unbiblical dichotomy:

**FAITH IS A SUBJECTIVE BUT
MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE WITHOUT RATIONALITY
SCIENCE IS AN OBJECTIVE BUT
MEANINGLESS FACT WITH RATIONALITY**

This unbiblical dichotomy leads to an unworkable choice. People can either believe in a meaningful but subjective

¹³ Hugh Hewitt, “The Embarrassed Believer” (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 33-34.

experience which they call faith (this amounts to faith in faith) or they can live a meaningless but objective existence based on what they call fact (this amounts to faith in science¹⁴). Since both choices are incomplete and unbiblical, whichever way they choose, they lose.

The differences between postmodern assumptions, and the biblical view of people and the world, cause profound tensions as unbelievers seek to both deny the foundational truths of the way God has made them and the world, and live with themselves the way they really are, in the world the way it really is. Postmodern assumptions, if believed consistently, and taken to their logical conclusions, would require that postmodern people believe that their existence is utterly without purpose or meaning. Or alternatively, that there is no such thing as ultimate meaning and they are left to continually search for the next experience.

If postmodern people lived out what they claim to believe they would have to believe that nothing they have done or ever will do ultimately matters. They would have to deny the way they feel about their children, the prospect of death, and the “wrongness” of injustice.

The point is this. *People cannot live this way in practice because God has not made people to live this way.* Therefore, postmodern people are continually forced to be inconsistent. They are “caught” in the tension between their presuppositions, and their unwillingness to embrace the implications of those

¹⁴ Phillip E. Johnson. “Darwin on Trial” (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993). Chapters 9-12 are irrefutable, in my opinion, in their contention that much of modern science flows more out of a philosophical commitment to naturalism than an objective examination of the facts.

presuppositions in practice.

A parent holding their new baby cannot believe that their child is a mere biological entity with no real significance—whether they subscribe to postmodern naturalism or not. A person cannot hear the witness of history as seen in the smoke of the Nazi crematoriums and believe morality is relative—whether they believe in a postmodern view of morality or not. Stated bluntly, postmodernism thinking does not, and cannot, work in the real world, as God has made it, or with people as God has made them.

Finally, biblical Christians recognize that most postmodern people have never really learned to think independently or deeply. Their views are often based on the naïve acceptance of authority as presented to them in their family, their educational experiences, and the culture at large. Because there is a clear consensus in the West within educational institutions, modern media, and pop-culture, postmodern people tend to believe that “everyone” believes the way they do.

The reality is that there are people all around them who do *not* believe the way they do. Several years ago the author did an informal survey in his small church. This is what he found:

- Highly educated people (psychiatrists, physicists, medical doctors, and engineers) who believe the Bible is true.
- A doctoral level physicist in a large secular university who teaches physics to undergraduate college students, but does *not* believe in evolution as it is typically presented in our day.
- Pro-life individuals who have *not* led naïve and

sheltered lives and who are not judgmental hypocrites, but who have had abortions themselves and take pregnant young girls into their homes to show them the love of Christ.

To postmodern people who have never learned to think independently or deeply, none of these things “compute.” They have spent their entire lives in the “bubble of consensus” created by the way they were raised, the things they were taught in school, and the values and beliefs they hear and see in music, television, the internet, and the culture at large. To them, what they believe is what everyone believes—it is, quite simply, what “is.”

The stereotypical representation of Christians in modern media further clouds the way the typical postmodern person understands what it means to be a biblical Christian. Too often they view people who openly profess faith in Christ as Savior and Lord as rather strange “holy rollers” at best, and as dangerous “kooks” at worst. Sometimes, only a prolonged exposure to *real, biblical* Christians, will disavow them of these deeply held, but foundationally wrong assumptions about the Christians all around them.

A PROPOSAL

So we live in a world in the West that is committed to, and immersed in, the postmodern idea that truth and morality are relative. Biblical Christians respond by saying that truth and morality are eternal absolutes, which are revealed to us in the Bible. How can you know which of these two diametrically opposed worldviews are correct? I would like to suggest three things that will lead you to the truth.

First, ask yourself if you are honestly willing not only to know, but to *live* the truth. In the final analysis salvation depends not so much on the persuasion of the mind (although it is important to give real answers to honest questions), but on the submission of the will. Despite some people's claims to the contrary, the real issue is never people's inability to believe because of an unconvinced mind, but rather their unwillingness to believe because of an independent will. People do not *want* to believe because believing means that they may no longer be lord (ruler) over their own lives. To believe is to bow before Christ, surrender their love of and commitment to self, transfer that allegiance to Christ and bow to Him as Lord. If God is not working to change your heart, you will not be willing to do this. So ask yourself, before you read any farther,

“Am I honestly willing not only to know, but to bow before and live out the truth in my everyday life?”

If you *really want* to know *and live* the truth, Jesus Himself has a promise for you. Listen to His words in John 7:17:

“If anyone's will is to DO God's will, he will KNOW whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.”
(Emphasis added)

Thousands of people throughout the ages have taken Jesus up on this promise, and not been disappointed. This is foundational to everything that follows.

Next, *honestly* check out the claims of Christianity for yourself. *Every objection* you personally have, or have heard about

Christianity, has been raised, squarely faced, and answered *many times* in the past.

Do you believe the Bible is full of errors? Do you think that to not believe in evolution, as it is typically taught in our day, is akin to being a member of the flat earth society? Do you read the Bible and ask, “How can anyone worship a God who did some of the things that are recorded in the Old Testament?” Do you think that modern science has disproven the Bible? Do you believe that studies on the “historical Jesus” have disproven the gospel accounts? Do you look at the suffering and pain in the world and wonder how that squares with belief in a loving God?

Every objection you personally have, or have heard about Christianity, was once held by hundreds of people who honestly examined the objection with a willingness to not only know but to *live* the truth and, as a result, ended up becoming a Christian. Don't fool yourself into thinking that your objection is unique and proves that Christianity is not true. It doesn't. It has been dealt with over and over again by hundreds of people for hundreds of years throughout history. Have the courage to check it out for yourself. The “For Further Reading” section at the end of this booklet is a good place to start.

The point is this. There are real answers to honest questions. But to find them, you must start from the right place. Do not ask yourself, “Do I really want to know the truth?” Instead, ask yourself, “Am I really willing to *submit and live* according to the truth when I find it?” *That* is the real, all important question.

Finally, start reading the Bible. The book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament and the gospel of John in the New Testament

are good places to start. Get a reliable modern translation and begin reading. But don't read as a scholar. Instead, turn John 7:17 into a prayer. Say something like this:

“Lord, I don't know what is really true. But I want to know the truth. And I want to live out the truth in my daily life. As I read, please show me if this is true.”

Seek the truth, *with a willingness to bow to and live according to it*, and you will find it. Not as a philosophical concept. For truth, ultimately, is not a mere philosophical concept. Truth is a person. In John 14: 6 Jesus said:

“I AM the way, and THE TRUTH and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
(Emphasis added)

If you honestly seek the truth, *with the intent of living it out in your daily life*, you will find Jesus, and you will discover that ultimately, He was seeking you all along. And when you find Jesus, and surrender your life to Him, you will find not only truth, but life eternal.

FOR DISCUSSION

As you have read this booklet you have probably come across some things you have never heard before. If you would like to discuss them further please think about the following questions and sit down with the person who gave you this booklet. They would be happy to discuss them with you.

1. What points in this booklet do you agree with the most?

2. What points in this booklet do you disagree with the most?

3. What parts of this booklet did you find hard to understand?

4. What questions or concerns do you have that were not covered in this booklet?

5. What do you plan to do about what you have read in this booklet?

FOR FURTHER READING*

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*Inclusion in this list does not necessarily indicate complete agreement with everything found in these resources.

**Especially recommended.

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