CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS PART II:

WHY WE BELIEVE

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALS:

Remaining Schedule

5/25/21: What about other religions? / Is Christian experience valid?

6/1/21: How to defend our faith with non-believers.

1. Does Christianity Differ from Other Religions?
2. Is Christianity Unique?
3. Aren’t we all looking up?
4. We Live in a Pluralistic Society
5. Many in our culture and world today believe that there are no major differences between all religions and that the sincere Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, worship the same God as a Christian but just by another name.
6. When the Bible asserts that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and that apart from Him there is no salvation, this can lead to the impression that Christians are bigoted, close minded, or think they are better than everyone else.
7. Many in our culture wish that we would keep Jesus Christ “out of it”, but if we genuinely believe the tenets of the Christian faith, that option is simply not possible.
8. Christianity is both the most inclusive message on earth, and the most exclusive message on earth.
9. The cornerstone of the Christian message is Jesus Christ- God come to earth. (*John 1:18, John 14:6, Acts 4:12).*
10. The uniqueness of Christ is threefold: His incarnation-God come to earth, death-on the cross for the unjust and resurrection-which authenticates who He is and why He came.
11. Is Sincerity Enough?
12. Sincerely believing something does not make it true just as failing to believe truth does not make it untrue.
13. Facts are facts, regardless of someone’s opinions about them, even in today’s culture and this applies to religious matters.
14. The law of non-contradiction demands that two things cannot both be true. There is an either-or principal. Jesus Christ is God or is not God: true or not true? And if Jesus Christ is God, Brahma or any other of the 330 million gods cannot also be God.
15. The deity, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are central to the Christian message, yet Islam denies the deity, death, and resurrection of Jesus. On this very crucial point, one of these mutually non-contradictory views is untrue and wrong.
16. There may be similarities between religions, but the differences on crucial points far outweigh them.
17. Is the Golden Rule Enough?
18. One similarity between religious teachings is the Golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
19. In our culture, this is sometimes thought of as the central message of Christianity, and if all Jesus did was pass on the Golden rule, if anything the Christian message would have added to our frustrations. Why? Because none of us keep it.
20. Humanity’s problem is not so much about knowing the right thing to do, it is about lacking the power and ability to do what we know is helpful, good, moral, just, honest and kind.
21. Jesus Christ not only talked about the Golden rule, but He also lived it, and He gives us the power to do the same.
22. Jesus Christ gives us His own righteousness and gives us a new life to live.

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1. Three Seminal Characteristics of Basic Christianity
2. God is *loving*: Out of His love and compassion, He made us and desires to have a relationship with us. He continues to patiently extend His love to us, and while many people stop at this characteristic, we need to see the other two.
3. God is *Holy*: He is pure and is separate from anything that is impure.
4. God is *Just:* He is like a good judge who cannot wink at a broken law, justice must be met. God does not grade on the curve.
5. Break down *John 3:16* from Pages 188-189 in the book, *Know Why You Believe*.

“God became man to turn creatures into children, not simply to produce better of the old kind of people but to produce a new kind of person.”- Author Paul Little

1. Religion is Spelled D.O.; Christianity is Spelled D.O.N.E.
2. Jesus described His coming to earth as “giving His life as a ransom for many”, to rescue us.
3. N.T. Miles explains that in other religions, people are left to do the best they can, follow the rules, and do good works. These are all to gain the desired goal (That goal is always some form of utopia or salvation).
4. Religion is spelled D.O. because it consists of the things people do to try to somehow gain God’s forgiveness and favor. Christianity is spelled D.O.N.E. because everything that was needed to be done for forgiveness has been done. Religion is about man trying to get to God, Christianity is about God coming to man.
5. For the Christian, doing good deeds is the result of gratitude for the Savior who became our life preserver. They are an expression of gratitude and commitment to follow Him.
6. Contrasting Three Major Religions with Biblical Christianity
7. Buddhism began with Gautama Siddhartha, born in 563 B.C. in northern India. He launched upon a pilgrimage of inquiry in search of answers to suffering and the way to peace. Finally, he felt he achieved the “great enlightenment”, and he would become known as the Buddha.
8. Nirvana is described as a state achieved by extinction of the individual’s existence through the absorption of the soul into the supreme spirit. Reaching Nirvana is described as blowing out a candle, total nothingness.
9. Buddhists believe the cause of suffering is desire, the cure for suffering is the elimination of desire and desire is eliminated by following the Eightfold Path to gain enlightenment. They also believe in Karma and in a form of reincarnation. Buddha’s intent was to help his followers escape the cycle of suffering and desire through birth and rebirth.
10. Hinduism also shares the goal of nirvana, but the term here has a different meaning. For Hindus, Nirvana is the ultimate reunion with Brahma, the all- pervading force of the universe that is the Hindu’s chief god over all 330 million gods.
11. The experience is likened to the return of a drop of water to the ocean, individuality is lost in the reunion with their god, but without the total self-annihilation of a person’s identity as taught in Buddhism.
12. For the devout Hindu, nirvana is achieved through a continuous cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. Whether one moves up or down the scale of life depends on the quality of moral life one has lived.
13. If one has lived a bad life, one moves down the scale into suffering and poverty. If one has been bad enough, that person is not reborn as a human at all but as an animal or insect.
14. In Islam, heaven is thought of as a paradise of pleasure and indulgence. It is achieved by living a life of strict disciplines, and good works. Muslims believe in one God, but Allah has no Son named Jesus. Jesus is hailed as a great prophet of Allah, but Muhammed, the Prophet of Allah, rejected Jesus as God incarnate.
15. Five duties are the pillars of Islam: Repeating a creed, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, giving alms to the poor, praying five times a day, and keeping the fast of Ramadan.
16. Christianity affirms the existence of one God, who is personal, and who sent His Son, Jesus. Christians believe that we are given one life, and after that comes judgment (*Hebrews 9:27*). We believe suffering is the result ultimately of sin and the fall, and that sinful desire needs to be denied but not all desire. Finally, Christians believe that salvation is not by works or deeds but by the redeeming sacrifice and grace of Jesus Christ.
17. The author points out that there is no assurance in these belief systems in contrast to Christianity which says we can ‘know’ we have eternal life (*1 John 5).*

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1. Differing Concepts of God
2. While most people would say they believe in ‘God’, and most religions use the term ‘God’, it is important to realize that the definitions and understanding for how that term is meant vary widely among different belief systems.
3. Buddha never claimed to be divine, and in fact he was agnostic about the question of God’s existence and in his view, even if God did exist, he was irrelevant to the person’s quest for gaining enlightenment.
4. Hindu teaching on God is pantheistic. Pan meaning “all”, and theistic refers to “God”. Hindus believe that God and the universe are identical. Brahma is the ultimate reality, the universal soul. Every person-indeed everything that exists, is Brahman since all is god.
5. Islam and Judaism present a monotheistic God that is closer to the biblical concept. Allah is personal, transcendent but far from the loving, personally revealing and accessible triune God of the Bible.
6. The Jewish concept of God is close to ours but is incomplete as they reject the New Covenant, and all that God has revealed about Himself.
7. Jesus Christ Alone Claims Deity
8. Whereas the followers of Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, etc. emphasize the teachings of these religious leaders, Christ made Himself the focal point of His teachings.
9. Jesus asks us the same question He asked his disciples, “*Who Do You Say I Am?” (Matthew 16: 15).*
10. On the question of who and what God is, the nature of salvation and how it is obtained, Christianity differs radically from other world religions.

“If we are to know the true and living God in personal experience, it will be through Jesus Christ.”-Author Paul Little

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1. Is Christian Experience Valid?
2. Thoughts on the validity of our personal experiences
3. Is belief in God the “opium of the masses”, an emotional crutch for people who cannot seem to make it in life? As we have established through these sessions, Christianity is a reasonable faith based on historical and objective reality.
4. While it is true that some preachers and teachers are guilty of manipulating people’s emotions, etc. Christian truth does not rest on emotional highs.
5. True conversion involves the will, both the heart and the mind
6. We can verify for ourselves in the laboratory of life the hypothesis that Jesus Christ is the living Son of God.
7. Importance of Our Personal Testimonies (*Acts 26*)
8. Mankind as we saw at the beginning of this book, has always had a longing for God and for peace.

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