

Concluding Thoughts

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Date: 18 March 2018

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- [0 : 0 0] Selected portions that we read together that present some of the most important facets of Christianity.
- ! Six questions. What are they in order? First of all. Second. Why did he come? Third. Why did he die?
- Fourth. Did he rise again? And then fifth and sixth have to do with what? Our response to this Jesus and what he's done.
- And it is what? Repentance and faith. And there you have the cardinal truths that we want to impress upon those in this study.
- So I've meant for this to be an evangelistic tool for you to use. And so my notes and the handouts are available to you.
- [0 : 5 9] I can easily email it to you or print it out myself. I hope to keep tweaking it and improving it. I'm not happy with it, especially I would like to add more good questions after each text.
- And meant to stimulate conversation, to draw people out so that you can know, are they understanding what these verses are saying about our Lord?
- Now, today I want to just conclude our study by thinking together how you and I might use this study with folks that we know in our lives.
- And again, the options are many. You could find one and just lead one on a one-to-one study through this material. You could find a couple and go through it as a group.
- Or you could gather some together and say, I don't know that I would feel comfortable teaching it, but maybe someone else could come. There are those of us who would be glad to come if you could gather a couple people to go through this with you and together to work our way through this material.
- [2 : 1 0] You know that the God who orders the precise position of the stars in heaven also orders the precise places where we live, the precise people that cross our paths in life.
- Stars in heaven are not just aimlessly roaming in the heavens, bumping into each other, and neither are people that you meet. No, they are preordained, and you meet them by a divine appointment, don't you?
- The one who moves in next door to you. The one who works beside you or works out where you do or shops where you do and on and on.
- God is working all things according to his plan. And part of that plan is the intersecting of your life with other people who are still in darkness and need to know Christ.
- Now, the Bible is full of such examples. We think of that sinful thief on the cross just happening to be executed on the same day and just feet away from the only Savior of sinners.
- [3 : 2 1] What a wonderful providence that God brought those two together that he might hear the gospel and be saved. Or that lost Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus.

He was there, wasn't he, when Stephen preached. And he heard his message about the Christ. And he saw how Stephen died. And even though he was not immediately converted, the seeds were planted.

And made it harder for him to kick against the goads of conscience and the spirits convicting. And later brought fruit in conversion.

Or that lost black Ethiopian man, that important government official, the treasurer to Candace, queen of Ethiopia, on his way home from Jerusalem in his chariot reading.

And it just so happened to be a copy of Isaiah's prophecy. Where did he get that? How did it come into his hands? We don't know. We're not told. And it just so happens he's reading chapter 53 about the suffering servant of the Lord, who was led like a sheep to the slaughter.

[4 : 33] And as a lamb before her shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice. And his life was taken from the earth.

And he's scratching his head. And he doesn't have a clue who the prophet's talking about. And it just so happens that at that moment, a Christian is having a jog right alongside of his chariot and draws near enough to hear him reading the scriptures aloud and asks, Do you understand what you're reading?

How can I, he says, unless someone explains it to me. And he invites Philip up into the chariot with him. And he began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

No, it was divinely ordained, wasn't it? And that's, there were special things involved in his situation. He heard the spirit's voice coming to him.

Go join yourself to that chariot. Go out into this desert road and so on. But it's no less true that God is, you won't hear a voice anymore.

[5 : 37] But you will be drawn closer to people and intersecting with them. And that is all part of God's work in bringing the gospel to people. And so it seems that just these three examples from scripture not only illustrate the point to us that God ordains these connections with lost people in our lives, but these three also represent different kinds of people who need and who would profit from a Bible study such as what we've gone through in the last couple months.

Think of the thief of the cross. He's a criminal. What kind of a person is he? He's a robber. That word defines his life. He spent his life breaking the law of the land.

He fought the law and the law won. And now he's got to pay the penalty. He's being executed for his crimes. Well, he probably wasn't the type that was found in synagogue every day, do you suppose?

He probably was very dismissive of the whole side of religion. And he was only out there robbing and getting what he could for himself. Probably very little knowledge of the Bible or interest in spiritual things.

Do you have people like that crossing your paths? They would profit from an evangelistic study like this, wouldn't they? Well, Jesus came to save people just like that.

[7 : 07] Sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, the worst, the dregs of the earth. So the issue is, how do you get them to commit to doing six weeks of study with you about Christianity?

Christianity. That's the first group of people. People that have probably little interest like the thief on the cross. Then we see those who are like Saul of Tarsus.

He's the opposite of the thief. He's very religious. He's found in synagogue every week. He's scoured the Bible. He's given himself to the life of the study of scriptures.

He's studied under the leading teacher, Gamaliel, in Jerusalem. He's got large sections of the Bible memorized. He's all about the Bible. And yet, he's ignorant of the most important things of the Bible, isn't he?

He's absolutely ignorant of the gospel. Of the one that was promised in his Bible to come and to bring salvation. And how he would bring that salvation. He doesn't have a clue of the one way to get to God and to get to heaven.

[8 : 20] Oh, yes. People like that. We know people who are very religious and been in church every Sunday and know a lot. A lot of facts about the Bible.

And yet, they too would profit from an exploring study of Christianity. Christianity. I do believe that even in our so-called Christian nation, what was a Christian nation in the sense that many of her principles of this nation were founded on biblical truth.

That even here, and especially now, that we have people who dismiss Christianity without ever really understanding its central message.

They might think they know what Christianity is. They have bits and pieces of it. Or even gobs of scripture. Like Saul. And yet, when they put it all together, what they come up with is not the true and saving gospel of Jesus.

But some counterfeit. Some distortion of the gospel that will not save them. And is as far from the truth as darkness is from light.

[9 : 32] Are you familiar with the phrase, he knows enough to be dangerous? Maybe a surgeon in training? A young mechanic?

Someone in the kitchen? He thinks he knows it all. He's got a lot of facts in his head. So he attempts things that he has no business attempting yet.

He knows enough to be dangerous. And that is true in spiritual things as well. Well, the apostle Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, knew enough about the Bible to be dangerous.

And so we meet people. And we have people like that in our lives, don't we? They know a lot about faith. And they know a lot about works. But they have no idea on the proper relationship between faith and works.

They've got it all mixed up. They know Jesus died on the cross. But they don't have a clue about what was happening on that cross between God and Jesus Christ.

[10 : 38] They know about justification, perhaps. They know about sanctification. But again, they don't know the proper relationship of the two. They get them all twisted up. And they come out with a gospel that will not save.

They know they need to be holy. They know they need righteousness if they're ever to get into heaven. But how to get that holiness? How to get that righteousness? They do not know. So they would profit from a study of Christianity.

How do we get people like religious Saul of Tarsus to sit down with us for six weeks? And then there is this Ethiopian eunuch, isn't there?

And we have people like him. Perhaps they're the fewest. But they have an interest in spiritual things. Their interest has been brought up to the surface of their life.

Maybe a death in the family. Maybe hardships that they're going through. Maybe somebody else shared something with them of the scriptures. And they're thinking. And they're wondering. They don't understand.

[11 : 42] And like the eunuch, they need someone to come alongside to explain the Bible to them. To read it with them and explain it. Well, they too would profit from this sort of study.

And maybe that's the easiest kind of person to engage in conversation and move toward a Bible study. How do we get them to commit to six weeks of study?

Well, that's what I want us to think together about. I want you to tell me. How with these varying types of people do we move them to the place where we might sit down and work through something like this?

What do you think? Yes, Steve? First, just being a friend. Learning about them and their life. And feeling a concern with it.

Why is that needed? Why is that helpful? Obviously, Philip was not the friend of the Ethiopian. He was interested.

[12 : 51] But for those who, yeah, aren't just dying to have some, what must I do to be saved? And not asking the question. Why is it so important for us to show our interest and to get to know them?

Okay. People will listen to a friend much more than they'll listen to a stranger or feel like trying to push something on them.

If they know you're genuinely concerned for them and want their best, then they're more willing to listen. Did you hear that back there?

Okay. Yeah, that's true. There are few that you can just walk up to and say, would you like to do a Bible study for six weeks?

Come on over to my house. That's probably not going to happen that way. So getting to know them. And they get to know you. And they realize, this guy really cares about me. And you show your greatest concern for him that you're thinking about his afterlife.

[13 : 54] And you can say, yeah, I'm concerned about what happens to you when you die. And then it's not just hanging out there without a foundation. They've seen something, experienced something of your love and your kindness, your respect.

Good. What else? How do we move them? Wherever they are, how do we move them toward a Bible study? Rex?

A lot of times are everyday actions. If you're joyously and sincere with everything that you do, don't they want to be more likely? Okay.

So there's an attractiveness of the Christian's life. We are to be adorning the doctrines of God our Savior in the way that we live. And if we're doing that before them, as we walk before them, that becomes a red rollout carpet to know more about this Savior that has changed our lives and given us such joy and peace.

Okay? What else? How do we move them? They're a long way from sitting down to study. How do we get them? What would you say to them? How would you move them this direction, as Pastor Aaron shared with us?

[15 : 09] Trying to move people to the right. In many of our conversations, we might just move them a quarter of an inch to the right until finally. It might take a long time before they could feel comfortable in sitting down with us and studying the Scriptures.

But how do we move people closer? Jim? You find out about their lives, what they believe. What they believe, excuse me. Just conversational.

So you get to know them as a person. I work with an Indian. Not an American Indian.

I work with an Asian Indian or whatever you call them. And just to find out, you know, where are you from? How's it like at home? What do you like about being here?

He asked me to help him with his English. Excellent. This guy's going to help him with his English. I'm all right. But, you know, he...

[16 : 17] And then we talked about religion. Yeah. And he says, well, I'm a Hindu. Can you tell... Ask me... This just happened Thursday or Friday and Thursday.

He says, can you tell me, in a sentence, what you believe about your God? Wow. Oh. There's a... A lob. Yeah. Excellent.

All right. But it probably wasn't the first question he asked you. Oh, no. So, again, Jim is showing that there's give and take. And there's feeling comfortable talking to Jim to where he would say, I'm a Hindu.

I don't know much about Christianity. What can you tell us? And, well, that's a perfect opportunity to begin to work in these key questions. Well, it's all about Jesus.

Christianity is about Christ. And I'd love to tell you just a little bit of who he is and why he came and why he died and why he rose.

[17 : 18] And you're soon into these things. And that's a good thing to ask for any of these who might have a little knowledge of the Bible even. Well, okay. So, you know something.

What do you understand about who Jesus is? And why did he come and move into these crucial issues of the gospel? And that might lead into that point then where you would say, well, would you like to know more?

And we could spend six sessions together with our Bibles in our laps. Excellent. What other ideas? Roger, you had something? Praying is the one who actually does the movie.

Did you say praying? Yes. Yes. Okay. Who is it that opened Lydia's heart so that she was receptive to the message? It was the Lord. So that's got to bathe everything that we attempt, isn't it?

Because that's the one who opens the heart. What else? Jeff? I think we need to remember that this needs to be a reciprocal relationship.

[18 : 23] We're asking them to, from others, their comfort zone into something that isn't them. I think we need to be able to enter into the things that they find attractive.

For example, if the Indian guy asked Jim to come over to the house for some genuine Indians, I might not be able to sit in my wheelhouse, but it might be something that I'm taught to do.

Good. And reciprocate the feeling of the room we have. Good. So again, you're moving toward them, and that will mean you're getting over onto his turf.

And some of these things. Mark? I think one thing that's attractive is being open to their troubles, what is happening in their lives, and asking, how can I pray for you?

Demonstrating that there is a practical side to our beliefs that can possibly help meet their needs.

[19 : 27] Okay. Just as they are. Good. Chuck? Being unashamed of Jesus, if your conversation and your focus is Jesus, and it's peppered in your everyday talk, people will go to you because that's what you know.

And the same way, like, if I have somebody that talks about everything all the time, if I want to talk about everything, it's not going to do to them. Good illustration. Good. Good. So as we're talking about our Lord and giving thanks to him in our daily conversation.

and you see him Monday morning. How was your weekend? Oh, it was great. Jesus and I, I heard Jesus through his word that he brought to me Sunday and I saw more about him.

You praise him. He's helped me with this problem. He's helped me with that problem. And as Chuck says, he's a part of your daily conversation. Now, they expect. If they have a question, they'll know.

This guy is about Jesus. Good. What else? There comes a point.

[20 : 43] So yes, hopefully you can steer the direction of your conversation as you get to know them better to some of these very questions that we studied. And as you're talking about each other's religion or knowledge of Christianity with those who claim to be Christians and so on, you can ask them, what do you think about Jesus?

What do you believe about Jesus? And there, I think, C.S. Lewis's little paragraph that we handed out might be helpful. If you find someone, which is not at all a rare find today, who thinks Jesus was just a good man and a good teacher, but not the Son of God, not God himself, well, then you can bring that.

You know, somebody wrote something about that. And just read this paragraph and tell me what you think. You see, he can't just be a good man because he claimed to be God.

So he's either a liar or a lunatic or the Lord of all. But he can't just be a good man or a good teacher. Challenge them, you see.

And again, not everybody will be ready for that. But that's one way. You can challenge them. You can show them that you're, you know, you're out for their best interests.

[22 : 05] You're appealing to their own welfare. That if the claims of Christ are not true, then you have nothing to lose in not studying about him and just dismissing him for the one that's dismissive and has no interest at all in religious things.

You know, if these claims of Jesus are not true, you lose nothing. But if they are true, you lose everything, not just in time, but eternity. And would you dismiss something before you've really studied it?

It'd be sad for you to dismiss a mere caricature of something and never having seen what it really is before you decide what you're going to do with it. Wouldn't you like to study the original document and hear from Jesus himself and what he said?

And you can show in that way your concern for their eternal soul and challenge them not to dismiss what they may not really know and understand.

Ask them that question. That the Indian man asked, Jim, ask him, how much of the Bible have you read? Have you ever read through the Bible? Have you read through the Gospels?

[23 : 23] If you could just put into a few words what Christianity is about, what would you say? Excellent word that the Hindus using to evangelize Jim. Turn it back, you see.

And we ask that same question of them. What's Christianity all about in your understanding? Christianity. And then we go into these points, who is Jesus and why he came.

If your life depended upon what you know about Christianity, would you be ready to stake your life upon what you know? Or would you like a little bit more information before you make that decision, you see?

Or the Bible claims, Jesus claims, that he's going to judge all men and to assign to every man their eternal destiny, either in heaven or hell.

That's what the Bible claims. I'm just sharing with you what Christianity is about. That's one of the claims that he made. And do you know there's a book about the judge? And we have it.

[24 : 24] And wouldn't it be nice that before you meet the judge to have read his book, he tells us what it's going to go like in that day of judgment. And you've got bait on the hook.

You're trying to catch their consciences to say, yeah, I could profit from learning a little more about this. They're not ready to sign on the dotted line yet.

But remember, it was just curiosity that got Zacchaeus up into a tree where he met Jesus. And maybe you can somehow plant thoughts of curiosity about things and plant thoughts about, yeah, how would it go with you and with the judge in the last day?

So we need to be inventive, be creative, in how we can put a hook there that will bring them to see the value of sitting down and reading for themselves what Christianity is about.

Now, what about, and again, I think a meal sometimes helps. I know the Vons in France have a meal before their study.

[25 : 36] And again, that does what you all have been talking about. It allows you to get to know one another and to show your love and hospitality toward them and feel more comfortable with these matters.

But I just want to go to the issue. So what if they don't believe in God? And they don't believe that the Bible is the word of God.

Should you feel like, well, spoiler, I can't have this study with this guy because he doesn't even believe there is a God. Or I can't have a study with this guy because he doesn't believe the Bible is true.

It's just the word of man. So do I have to prove the existence of God before I can have a study with that person? Do I have to prove that the Bible is the word of God before I can have this study with that person?

You didn't have to buy into evolution before you studied Charles Darwin, origin of a species, did you? Or you didn't have to become a communist before you studied Karl Marx's views on communism.

[26 : 48] And you can just meet the person on their turf and say, okay, I understand. You don't believe there's a God. But again, I'm just wanting you to really understand what Christianity is about.

We have this relationship and this is very precious to me. And I just want to share with you in six lessons what it's about.

So even though you don't believe there's a God, I just want you to know what Jesus claimed about God. And here it is.

Now, you may want to enter into some pre-evangelism work. I say you may. I don't think you should feel like you have to.

And we'll get to that. You may. If there's a stone in the way that you can pick out of the way that's keeping them from Christ, pick it up and set it aside.

[27 : 49] We have many tools, don't we, on evolution, to plant some doubts about evolution in this no-God business. Give them a DVD and say, well, here's something for you to look at.

But I find it interesting that when the Apostle Paul went into pagan places where idolatry and Roman gods and Greek gods were the things being worshipped.

And they had no clue about the true and living God and that the Bible is the Word of God. Paul didn't feel like, you know, I can't preach here. He didn't do that, did he?

He goes into Athens. He sees all these altars and he preaches Jesus in the resurrection. Well, they don't believe in Jesus. It doesn't matter.

He preaches Jesus in the resurrection. He says to them, I saw when I was walking around town an altar to an unknown God. Well, him who is unknown to you, I'm going to proclaim to you. Let me tell you about this God.

[28 : 56] The God who created the heavens and the earth and all things. He's not like man. And off he goes, you see. He just posits it. There is a God. He made you. He made everything.

And one day, he's not done until he comes around to, one day he's going to judge you. He raised his son from the dead. And that's proof to all men that he's serious about judgment.

So you shouldn't feel. That's the same in Lystra in Acts chapter 14. When you see the preaching of Paul, yes, when he goes into the synagogue, he's able to direct them to Old Testament scriptures that they too said they believed.

But when he's out with a true pagan, he doesn't feel constrained to have to prove the existence of God. And neither should you. And I trust if you have felt bound up in your witness because people don't believe in our God.

They don't believe in God perhaps at all. We're finding that to be the case of more and more in our country. And they surely don't believe that this book is his. So don't be strapped with that.

[30 : 03] This book is powerful. It's the power of God unto salvation. And so you just preach it. You tell them about Jesus. Even the Jesus they don't believe in.

That's what Paul did. He didn't wait till they believe that there is a God before he preached to them Jesus as God. So remember the method of the New Testament.

Remember that we're not called to be apologists. In that sense of the word. We're called to be witnesses. Tell what you know about Jesus.

And if along the way you can remove some stones, do it. But don't get sidetracked. And turn a Bible study or your whole conversation with a person about trying to prove the existence of God.

There's a place to have those discussions. But I say be bold and just share about the share the gospel with people. Now if you want to show them that you know there are non-Christians historians who wrote about Jesus of Nazareth.

[31 : 15] It's not just this book that talks about Jesus. You can quote Flavius Josephus a Jewish historian who talked about Jesus. You can quote Cornelius Tacitus the ancient Roman historian.

And he too talked about Jesus and his crucifixion and his name as the Christ and his followers and his claim to have risen from the dead.

And so there are these other historical documents that speak about Jesus. It's not just the Bible. You can also share with them something about the number of copies that we have.

We don't have the original documents of the 27 books of the New Testament. But we have number of copies that were made of the original document.

24,000 to be approximate. And some of them date back as far as 125 A.D.

[32 : 17] close just a matter of 40 to 90 years after the original documents were written. We have these thousands of documents that are supporting what the New Testament the original documents were.

And we have all this these 24,000 documents. There's very slight variations in a word here or there but nothing changes any of its teaching and that maybe doesn't sound impressive to you but set it alongside of some of the other things that our world has nodded the head and has no doubt that these things are historical facts.

Homer's Iliad people really believe that Homer wrote the Iliad and the earliest copies of his work were written 500 years after he wrote so we don't have his original writing but we have copies of it and the earliest one is 500 years later it's like 10 times the length of time after than what the gospels are and we only have 643 copies of the Iliad that have been found and Plato's writings everybody believes the Republic was written by Plato and other of his works the earliest copies of his works were 1200 years later found to be written 1200 years later only 7 copies and yet no scholar doubts its historical truthfulness and Caesar's writings written thousands copies written thousands of years after he wrote and only 10 of those copies and now we have our New

Testament and we have some of its earliest copies 40 to 90 years after they were written so people are still alive and you could ask them did this really happen or didn't it and so we begin to see the reliable witnesses to the scriptures and so on so there may need to be some of that shared just to try to pick a stone out of the path that's in the way to Christ but I want you to realize that all sinners are truth suppressors according to Romans 1 18 through 32 all of us by nature have the knowledge of God in the creation we know that there's a God from the creation that's that's what that's what Romans 1 says it doesn't say there's sufficient knowledge out there in the creation to come up with the knowledge of God it says we know men know there's a

God they may not admit it they may deny it till they're blue in the face but Romans 1 says they know and they also know it because of conscience that God has put in their hearts and they show that because they know right from wrong in many different ways God has written that in their conscience and it accuses or excuses so they may not have the revelation of God in the Bible yet that's what you're wanting to bring to them you're wanting to make it harder for them to suppress the truth so the guy's in the swimming pool and he's got these plastic balls he's just got two of them he's pushing them down under the water and he's doing fine he's suppressing the truth truth is found in creation truth found in conscience well you're wanting to give him six more balls in the pool who Jesus is why he came why he died why he rose his obligation to repent and it's hard to keep eight balls under the water they keep popping up he's a truth suppressor it's light and he doesn't like the light so he's going to push it down we're wanting to give the

[36 : 18] Holy Spirit more and more of those balls of truth to bring up to his consciousness for him to come to the place where he realizes he's not alone in this universe he shares the universe with its maker and one day that maker is going to call him to account and you've got a conscience on the inside of everyone you witness to that's saying she's right what she's telling you is the truth and she might be stuffing it but the conscience is bearing witness creation is echoing there is a God there is a God so take courage go on the offensive that's what Paul was doing wasn't it right out in idolatry and heathendom let me tell you about the God that made you and me and all things and how we can be right with him forever and ever well any questions comments before we close this morning well we're blessed to know him brothers and sisters let's pray and thank him oh our father we were these truth suppressors and we didn't come to you the first time we heard about you and you were so patient with us give us that same patience with sinners we wonder sometimes why they can't see what we see and yet we too are blind and deaf and would not see and would not hear and so we pray you would arm us with the gospel that coming through this class we would now know what are the important things that

I need to be talking to people about and you would help us to be bold in our savior savior and to move conversation to these truths about our savior and oh bless lord open the heart move people to the right make them to to doubt their own presuppositions and their their thoughts about god and about how to be right with god and bring them to the place where they they meet the living lord jesus as he's presented in the scriptures and repent and believe do that work today here in this place do it around the world and get the glory for it we pray in jesus name amen