

I. Introduction

- A. The poet Henry David Thoreau wrote a famous and really depressing line:
 - 1. **The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation**
- B. He went on to say that despair is basically the common lot of life, no matter where you're from or what you do.
- C. A website called BuzzFeed did a survey. They asked their readers why they stopped believing in God. There were some really heart-touching replies. Here are 12 of them:
 - 1. Watching a loved one die.
 - 2. Working in the medical field and seeing so much pain and death.
 - 3. Experiencing divorce.
 - 4. Being gay.
 - 5. Knowing believers who were not compassionate.
 - 6. Seeing a Christian family fall apart.
 - 7. Not having enough evidence.
 - 8. Feeling restricted.
 - 9. Seeing my parents stay in a bad marriage.
 - 10. Having unanswered prayers.
 - 11. Being connected with the Universe.
 - 12. Viewing God as a child's myth.
- D. There were more reasons for leaving God. But in almost all of them, there was an undercurrent of disappointment with God. God let them down. God let them get hurt. God didn't come through for them.
 - 1. That made me sad. Jesus is my brother and my friend. It's hard to hear people criticize your brother and your friend.
- E. The total list is twice as long. But I noticed something when I read through it. People who replied to the BuzzFeed survey did not leave their faith for logical reasons. It wasn't over logical or philosophical objections.
 - 1. They mainly left Christianity because of a painful experience.
 - 2. And specifically it was a painful experience that they couldn't reconcile with their idea of the Christian God.
 - 3. So they left God in the dust and turned away from Jesus.
- F. But I have to when they turned away from Jesus, what did they turn to? What system, what philosophy, what faith did they turn to?
- G. And to be really fair, we have to ask another question.
 - 1. **When a person rejects Jesus and the biblical message, do they hold their new system to the same standards?**
 - 2. Do they run the same evaluations?
 - a) Does their new system heal their pain?
 - b) Does their new system enhance their dignity and explain their purpose and give meaning to their suffering and to all their days?
 - c) Does their new system make better sense of life than Jesus? Than the gospel of grace?
- H. It's a fair question to ask. If you turn from Jesus to something else, does that something else give you a better answer to the problem of pain.
- I. And does that something else also provide satisfying and logical answers to the big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? What is my origin? What is my destiny?
 - 1. What if turning you back on Christ turns out to be a giant step in the wrong direction if you're seeing relief and answers to your pain and the problem of pain?
 - 2. What if turning to Jesus is the best possible antidote to a life of quiet desperation and despair?

II. Topic

- A. One of the Bible greatest philosophers and intellectual heavyweights gave warned us about this. His name was Paul:
 - 1. *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)*
 - 2. *Beware lest anyone cheat you [hijack you] through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men [secularism], according to the basic principles of the world [demonism], and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)*
- B. He says beware.
 - 1. The warning is so that no one can cheat you. Actually the Greek word here conveys the idea of being taken captive. Almost like being hijacked. Swept away. No longer your own person.
 - 2. He saying that there is a very real possibility in a Christian's life.
 - 3. That possibility is that you will be emotionally or mentally taken captive. That you will emotionally or mentally not really be your own person. You will be captivated, hypnotized, a victim of a kind of mind control.
 - a) You will not know true freedom.
 - b) You will not experience the power of self-determination.
 - c) You will not rise up to your God-given identity and power in Christ.
 - 4. What if the despair that so many people feel isn't a failure of God? What if it's a failure of your expectation, and your worldview, and your philosophy of life?
 - 5. What if this world's pain is caused more by believing the devil's lies than by following God's truths?
- C. Beware lest anyone hijack you through philosophy and empty deceit.
 - 1. So many people today, so much of our culture, and even some Christians have been held hostage for years – and some for a lifetime – by wrong philosophy, wrong teaching, and false doctrine.

2. This is not only confusing intellectually, it is extremely damaging emotionally.
3. It's positively painful.
- D. So I invite you to think with me today on the topic of...
 1. **Seven Toxic Philosophies That will Hijack Your Soul.**
 - a) **Postmodernism | collectivism | relativism | depersonalization | humanism | universalism | pluralism**
 - b) We already talked about the first four. Today I'd like to finish the list.
 2. My prayer is that you will make an epic discovery, your own epiphany.
 - a) There has never been a more life-giving, emotionally healing, logically consistent, factually verifiable, and comprehensive truth claim than biblical Christian worldview, and it's time to say so.

III. Toxic Philosophies

A. HUMANISM | Humans are supreme

1. Humanism is a philosophy of life that puts humans at the pinnacle of existence.
2. There is an organization called the American Humanist Association. Their motto is "Good without a god."
3. Humanism almost always goes hand in hand with atheism.
4. If humans are at the top of existence, they are either higher than God, or there is no God. Under humanism, we humans—with our philosophies and values—occupy the top rung of the existential ladder.
 - a) You might hear the term, secular humanism, because secular means the opposite of sacred. It means a world without reference to God, or faith, or the supernatural.
5. Secular humanism stands against anything that rises above matter and energy and science and reason and the space-time continuum.
6. I am saying that Humanism is one of those toxic philosophies. It is a toxic philosophy because it cheats you, hijacks you, and hurts you.
 - a) Humanism is a life of quiet desperation waiting to happen.
 - b) Why?
7. The problem starts with humanism's definition of human.
 - a) If the humanist story is correct, a human is just organized matter and energy. We evolved. No one "chose" us into being. We are cosmic accidents of a chemical soup of an unknown origin.
 - b) If we had the technology, we could reproduce ME, in a lab. My ideas. My individuality. My thoughts. My memories. My loves. My relationships. Just chemicals and energy bouncing around in the test tube of my brain, if the humanist story is correct.
 - c) Probably, the worst part of it is our value. If humanism is correct, I am basically worth what you can get for the chemicals in my body, which is about \$4.50.
 - (1) No matter how good humanism sounds, it can't help being inhumane.
8. Humanism is a radical contraction of the biblical story.
 - a) As the Bible tells it, I was created by God and designed for fellowship with him.
 - b) As the Bible tells it, I am unimaginably more than a chemistry set. I am a body, soul, and spirit. I am a convergence of three essences, built by God, and held together by his hand.
 - c) According to the Bible, I am glorious. I will one day be a spectacle to dazzle the angels. Right now, my glory is hidden. But one day, it will be revealed.
 - (a) *When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4)*
 - (2) The basic disagreement I have with humanism is simple.
 - (3) As a human being, I am much closer to an angel than I am to an ape.**
 - d) Humanism is the devil's trap.
 - (1) Humanism imprisons your emotions in the confines of time. You are born. You live. You die. The end.
 - (2) Humanism compresses you to a one dimensional constricted reality — the natural realm. No spirit. No prayer. No heaven. No eternity. No angels. No miracles. No eternal rewards.
 - (a) Christians say God's eye is on the sparrow.
 - (b) Humanists say there is no divine eye and the sparrow is on its own.
 - (3) Humanism sucks away any meaning you try to give life. Your loves, your dreams, your hopes, your prayers are just a bag of chemical interactions.
 - (a) After all you've lived and loved and dreamed and worked, there's nothing in the end. You suffer. You die. That's it.
 - (b) People might hold you in their memory, but what is that to you? You don't care. You can't care. You've been snuffed out.
 - (4) Humanism turns out to be emotionally toxic. It is hopeless. It is the definition of quiet desperation. It is the definition of pain. It gives you nowhere to turn.
 - (a) *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)*
9. But Christians know that humans are not all there is. Humans do not occupy the top rung of the existential ladder. We know that death is not the end. There's another realm. Another cosmos. Another life after this life.
 - a) I am going to heaven. What confidence and hope this brings!
 - b) I am a human created in the image of God. Human life is sacred to God in a way unlike any other being.

- c) I am destined for a realm so magnificent that words can't do it justice. It can only be described in terms of streets of gold and gates of jewels and flowing rivers and robes of light. In that place, every single moment of heartbreak and trial I dealt with on earth will be given eternal value. This world is not my home, I'm just passing through.
- 10. I'm suggesting that anyone who turns away from Jesus has to measure their new religion — or no religion — by the same standards they used against Christianity.
- 11. So if that is you, every humanist needs to grapple with this:
 - a) **Christianity offers a God who felt the fullest measure of human suffering, a Savior who comforts us in our suffering, a global mission to alleviate suffering, final justice for those who cause suffering, and a coming world that abolishes suffering... What does your system offer?**
 - (1) I would rather go through loss, and death, and brokenness, and family troubles, and regrets and pain while staring into the face of a Savior who loved me to the point of death, than staring into the meaningless void offered by secular humanism.

B. UNIVERSALISM | All roads lead to God.

- 1. Universalists teach that all will be saved through sincere devotion to the religion of their culture, choice, or upbringing.
 - a) Under this view, Christ is not the only way to God. All roads lead to heaven, like a bunch of hiking trails converging on the same mountaintop.
 - b) Universalists claim scriptural support in verses that say God desires "all" people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4) and that God reconciled "the world" to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19).
 - c) For them, the character of God begins and ends with love.
- 2. They say things like, "Love wins."
- 3. Which is an awesome thought, until you think about it and realize that stopping at love wins makes it okay for holiness to lose.
- 4. The simple and unpopular fact of Christianity is that some people go to heaven and some people go to hell.
 - a) *He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* (John 3:18).
 - b) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness*, (Romans 1:18, NKJV).
- 5. I am a pastor. What do you want me to do with these kinds of statements in God's Word? Should I ignore them? Should I conform them to popular opinion? Explain them away? Dismiss them as relics of a harder, crueler time? What do you want me to do?
 - a) God has spoken. We conform our minds to his truths, not the other way around.
- 6. What I think the best thing to do is always to center every hard teaching of Scripture on the Cross of Christ.
 - a) Enter Jesus who solved both sides of evil's equation.
 - (1) He took the hit for evil's perpetrators that he might liberate evil's victims.
 - (2) He endured, in three dark hours on the Cross, the infinity of God's wrath against evil.
 - (3) He absorbed the hell we deserved, legitimizing the heaven we don't deserve.
 - (4) He entered the cage match against evil, and won by a knockout.
 - (5) He made it legit for a sinless God to welcome sinful people into his company. God can express his love without erasing his justice.
- 7. If all roads led to God, why would Jesus die on the cross? If any religion would work, why his suffering? Why his agony? Why did God judge him? Why did he endure such pain?
 - a) If all roads lead to God, the death of Jesus on the cross is just an epic waste of a beautiful life.
 - b) The simple fact is that Jesus died on the cross BECAUSE not all roads lead to God. The only road that does lead to God goes through Christ crucified and risen again.
- 8. Consider the alternative to hell: do you really want to live in a universe where evil goes unpunished?
 - a) **Imagine a universe where the Supreme Being accepts evil or tolerates it. Imagine a universe where God is indifferent to evil, cruelty, or abuse. Do you really want that kind of God or that kind of universe?**
- 9. If you were constructing a universe, and really thinking about it, you would construct a universe in which God was holy, and the evil-doers of the cosmos got punished. Any other universe would be intolerable.
- 10. In Scripture, hell exists because God takes it personally when people hurt you. God hates the things that breaks your heart. God is a God of holy vengeance, but only because he is a God of love.
 - a) Universalism is a prison. It traps your soul in a place of victimhood, and offers no way out.
 - b) **The only way to turn your back on the pain of hell is by also turning your back on the pain in your soul from the people who traumatized you.**
 - c) There is no justice.
- 11. Hell means that evil has a far-away parking place, and God is fair forever. The bad guys get away with nothing. The force that hurt you, the person who exploited you, and the powers that consumed you, get their due. Hell proves that God takes it personally when people hurt people (sin); he doesn't just yawn and turn the other way.
- 12. Hell also proves that God takes human freedom with infinite seriousness. God will not cram salvation down anybody's throat. You are free to believe, and free not to believe, in Jesus. John Hannah said, "No one who is ever in hell will be able to say to God, 'You put me here,' and no one who is in heaven will ever be able to say, 'I put myself here.'"

C. PLURALISM | Truth is fluid and flexible

1. Every year, the famous Oxford English Dictionary announces its famous word of the year. In 2014, the word of the year was “post-truth.”
2. They said we live in a post-truth era when everything was up for grabs. When truth is relative. Truth doesn’t stay true. Truth can contradict itself. What is true in one place might not be true in another place. What is true for one person might not be true for another person.
 - a) Pluralism means that there is doubt pre-embedded in every truth claim.
 - b) Pluralism means that anyone who claims to have the truth is just spouting propaganda.
 - c) Pluralism means that truth is subjective — it’s more about internal feelings than external facts.
 - d) Pluralism means that truth is relative—it flexes from place to place and from time to time.
 - e) And pluralism means that truth is self-contradictory—truths lived in their own compartments and didn’t have any affect on truths in another compartment.
3. There’s a story of an atheist scientist, committed to pluralism, who became an expert in harvesting mushrooms. If you eat the wrong mushroom, you die. So he trained under the best mushroom experts he could find (mycologists), and became a mushroom expert himself.
 - a) One day, he realized that pluralism and mycology could never go together.
 - b) Leaving room for doubt wouldn’t work, because if there were any doubt in a mushroom being edible, it’s deadly.
 - c) Calling everything his teachers told him Propaganda, would also be deadly. In the realm of picking mushrooms, there are facts, and there is no room for interpretation.
 - d) A subjective approach to truth wouldn’t work either. He couldn’t unearth a truffle and look inside to see how he felt about it. He had to know, based on external evidence, if it was edible, or deadly.
 - e) Same thing for truth being relative. If this mushroom is deadly, it is deadly for this time and every time, for this place and every place, and for this culture and every culture.
 - f) And the whole idea of truth being self-contradictory was out the window too. A mushroom can’t be edible and not edible at the same time. It’s one or the other, not both.
4. This atheist became a Christian. Because God can use fungi to glorify the name of Jesus.
5. As Christians, we believe in truth, because we believe in God. Truth is simply all the reality that flows out from God.
 - a) Truth is reality as God experiences it.
 - b) Truth is reality as God creates it.
 - c) Truth is reality as God reveals it.
 - (1) *I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.* (Psalms 138:2, NKJV).
 - d) And because God is one, and because God is not absurd, and because God cannot lie, and because God cannot contradict himself, therefore truth is one, and none absurd and non contradictory.
 - (1) **We believe in a truth that stays true because we believe in a God who stays God.**
6. It might be a fun debate in a university classroom, but Pluralism is a philosophy that never works in the real world.
7. The human spirit cannot thrive in a world where truth won’t stay true. There’s a reason for this. And it’s not what you might guess.
 - a) **We believe in truth because we believe in love.**
 - b) **You can’t have love without trust.**
 - c) **And you can’t have trust without truth.**
8. To live in a post-truth society is to make love uncertain, unsure, and uncommitted.
 - a) This irrational commitment to pluralism is one of the most powerful forces behind today’s heartbreak.
 - b) Why the epidemic of loneliness and sadness and depression and dysfunction and despair?
 - (1) I blame the devil’s lies.
 - (2) I blame pluralism.
 - c) When truth is broken, trust is broken.
 - d) When trust is broken, love is broken.
 - (1) That’s our society and that’s our world. It’s not a failure on God’s part. It’s a failure on our part to walk with him.

IV. Conclusion

- A. So many people turn from God because of pain, and they blame God for it.
 1. But what if that pain isn’t from God?
 2. What if that pain is the unavoidable consequence of disrespecting God? Of violating his truth.
 3. What if that pain is your soul being taken hostage by the lies you believe.
 4. *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.* (Colossians 2:8, NKJV)
- B. If you’re going to turn to another philosophy because of pain, hold that new philosophy to the same standards.
 1. No matter how smart it sounds, no matter how good it makes you feel, no matter how popular it is, a lie is still a lie.
 2. All around us, the devil’s lies are gaining steam. We see pain and sorrow and anger and despair every single day. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine.
- C. But Christ gave you an abundant life. Christ gave you freedom. And a very big part of that is freedom from delusional thinking.
- D. There is a generation of people looking to you to help them define their beliefs. I pray that you will show them by your life an active belief that in Jesus Christ and his Word you find all the truth you need.