

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood. I'm so glad you are here today because you are in on the ground floor of a brand new series.
- B. I want to jump right into the Bible, and into my talk for today .
 - 1. *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27, NKJV).*
- C. I'm calling this series ILLUSIONS. An illusion is something that seems to be real but isn't. It seems to be true but it's false. The main idea is that our world runs on illusions. It is really, really, really, really hard to tell what is real from what is unreal. So much of what we think is true isn't true. It's unreality. It's an illusion.
- D. So the subtitle is Escaping the Matrix. Escaping the sneaky lies. Escaping the deceptions. Escaping the untruths and half truths that everybody just assumes but that, in reality, cause nothing but heartbreak and pain in the end. Because an illusion is something that contradicts reality.
- E. And contradicted reality always zaps you. It's crazy.
- F. What if we have been sucked into a matrix of lies? What if there is a systematic effort to brainwash whole societies and cultures, and to convince them of lies? And what if much of that brainwashing is sincere, and well-meaning, and well-intentioned? And what if a lie is still a lie even if the motives are good?

II. Illusions Main Ideas

- A. 1. *We believe that Christianity is one, huge, beautiful truth that begins in the heart of God.*
 - 1. It is consistent with science, because science began in the heart of God too.
 - 2. It is consistent with mathematics, because mathematics began in the heart of God too.
 - a) The Christian truth is consistent with history, and logic, and philosophy, and ethics, and art, and medicine.... every single subject of science and knowledge is in perfect harmony with the Christian message, because all truth came from the same source.
 - 3. All truth is God's truth...
 - 4. And when you build your life on God's truth, the house on the rock stands firm.
 - 5. BUT not all that claims to be true is true, and this is what makes this world so messed up. This is where pain comes from, heartbreak comes from, and violence comes from.
- B. 2. *The World System is a collection of fragmented, disconnected, contradictory illusions masquerading as truth.*
 - 1. Illusions.
 - 2. There is some truth. There is a lot of truth. There is a whole lot of truth. But it is partial. It is distorted. It is pieced together wrong.
 - 3. And there is a fatal infection because it makes a shaky foundation for a person's life.
 - 4. Before I state that shaky foundation, let me tell you a story. A long time ago, I was driving in my car, and listening to a late night radio show. The host had three guests. They were astrophysicists. Their topic was the origins of the universe. It was a fascinating conversation.
 - 5. At one point, the host—who was a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago—asked a question that brought the conversation to a screeching halt.
 - 6. He said, "I have noticed that many physicists and scientists like yourself do not believe in God. Why do you think that is?"
 - 7. As I said, it brought the conversation to a screeching halt. I'm driving the windswept streets of Chicago on a frosty night. Nobody is around. And I'm leaning into my radio because I really want to hear this answer.
 - 8. After an awkward silence, one of the scientist spoke up. He said, "To be really honest, I think the main reason most of us don't believe in God is because if there were a god, we would have to change the way we live, and most of us don't want to do that."
 - 9. Bam!
 - 10. Thank you for being honest. Thank you for not burying the true intent of your atheism. I respect that a lot.
 - 11. *This is the fatal infection: The world shifts its version of truth to justify whatever lifestyle it prefers.*
 - 12. And that is how you build your life on shifting sand. And that is how you set yourself up for collapse.
 - 13. The illusions of the world have been created by this very sly method. The method of the world-system is to bypass the mind in order to hypnotize the heart. And once it has the heart, it creates a logical structure, but it is built on crumbling substructures. It is built on lies. Or to use the words of Jesus, it doesn't matter how logical, or popular, or sensible, or beautiful a system is, the house built on sand will fall.
 - 14. These illusions come from being convinced that a lie is the truth, and acting it out. It comes from being sucked into the matrix of unreality. The brainwashing that comes at us every single day is committed to pulling us away from the eternal truths of God... and equally committed to making their lies look so good.
- C. 3. *We are not free to modify God's truth when it is unpopular or repellent to the world.*

1. It's one big truth-package, don't mess with it. Christianity is not about moving people from one illusion to another illusion. It's about escaping the matrix. Casting aside the illusion, and building your life on the solid rock that is Jesus Christ.
2. People say they don't like Christianity. So be it. Let's not be jerks. And let's not be sure we're getting in the way because we're, well, idiots. Let's be real. I've been around Christians a whole lot. And some are weird. They're all in other churches this weekend.
3. But the message of the Bible isn't up for a vote. Even if people don't like it.
4. It is not our mission to soften the offense of the gospel — which begins with, Hi my name is Bill, and you're a sinner, and you need a Savior. That offense is never going away.
5. Nor is the answer simply to bury the gospel under an avalanche of good deeds done in Jesus' name. Fixing the world, healing diseases, helping mankind—these are good and we do them, and we should to them—but they are only part of our mission to the degree that they open up doors to helping people actually find God so they can follow him.
6. I can give you ten thousand cups of cold water, but if I never tell you about Jesus, you will still be spiritually thirsty. As a friend and missionary who has built hospitals in the world's poorest lands has said... what good is it if we heal the body but the soul spends eternity far from God?
7. The stuff about Christianity that's hard isn't negotiable. It's part of a beautiful truth package that flows from the heart of God, and the only reason any one would want to change it is because we don't know what beauty is. That is because our hearts have been infected. We've been brainwashed. Down is up, and evil is good, and wrong is right, and ugly is art.
8. If any part of glorious interlocking truth and reality package that is called the Gospel of Grace, and the Truth of Christianity — if any part of that looks anything but beautiful the only reason is because there is something wrong in the eye of the beholder. This truth flows from the heart of God. It is glorious, and wondrous, and beautiful, and good. it is real. It defines reality. So if you don't like it, pause. Don't jump to conclusions. Ask what's wrong, and don't assume you're in the right. Don't modify God's truth—modify yourself. Shed the illusion. Escape the matrix.

III. The Series

- A. Each week in this series, I want to bring one specific illusion into focus. Today, a package called Humanism.
- B. Humanism is different from humanitarianism. Humanitarianism means caring for people, and we are fans of that.
- C. Humanism is something different. So let me offer three questions and suggest some answers.
 1. What is humanism? What are some main beliefs of humanism? What can we say to a humanist?

IV. Questions about Humanism

- A. *What is humanism?*
 1. *Humanism is a philosophy of life that puts humans at the top of existence.*
 2. There is an organization called the American Humanist Association. Their motto is “Good without a god.” Humanists say that Reason and Science are all that we need to create a just and good society. In fact, they say, it is religion that gets in the way. This is because religion always leads to superstition, and superstition always brings us backwards. That means that humanism always goes hand in hand with atheism.
 3. If humans are at the top of existence, they are either higher than God, or there is no God. Humans and human values are at the top. Sometimes it is called secular humanism, because secular means the opposite of sacred. It means a world without reference to God, or faith, or the supernatural. Secular humanism stands against anything that rises above matter and energy and science and reason and the space-time continuum. It is atheism organizing itself into an “unreligion” and working to evangelize the world.
 4. Since 1933 there has been a humanist manifesto. You can find it online. It's now in its third edition. Here is what humanists say about themselves:
 - a) Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.
 5. Here are some famous humanists. If you dig science fiction, you'll know the names Isaac Asimov, Kurt Vonnegut, and Gene Roddenberry (created Star Trek). For astronomy, there's Carl Sagan, author of The Cosmos. For political activists, there is Jack Kevorkian (aka Dr. Death), Gloria Steinem, Karl Marx, and Barney Frank. In the media, Oliver Stone... it's a long list of accomplished people.
- B. *What are some main beliefs of humanism?*
 1. *EVOLUTION. Humans are the products of evolution.*
 - a) As we continue to evolve, the world and society will keep getting better and better.
 - (1) The main problem with this is that it simply isn't happening. Violence isn't going away. Corruption isn't going away. Man's inhumanity to man isn't going away.
 - (2) To make evolution the core driving principle of your system, is to create a whole society based on survival of the fittest.
 - (3) How is survival of the fittest as the core philosophy going to make the world a more compassionate place? Isn't compassion for the vulnerable and weak the opposite of survival of the fittest? Shouldn't we just take out the weak, and help evolution along?

- (4) And that is exactly where humanists go in their thinking. The elderly. The infirm. Those with certain handicaps. Infants. The unborn. They are pulling down the species and they have to go.
- (5) That's in-humanism.
- (6) Evolution is making the world a better place, they say. But it isn't. So how do humanists answer that?
- b) Well, they do have an answer and that answer is to point to you.
- c) The only thing holding society back is... religious people, god, and superstition.
 - (1) Religious people are anti-evolution, and so we want to bring the world backwards into things like faith in God and the Bible.
2. *PROGRESS. Faith in human nature and in human progress.*
 - a) We can create a just and beautiful world without God.
 - b) Humanists are very optimistic about what humans can achieve. We can create utopia. We just need to come together. Onward and upward is the humanist slogan.
 - (1) By the way, we just need to come together is a code for we just need to eradicate the opposing view.
 - c) There is a humanist hymn, which is really a massively long poem by Charles Swinburne, from the late 1800s.
 - (1) *Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten; Thy death is upon thee, O Lord. And the love-song of earth as thou diest Resounds through the wind of her wings—Glory to Man in the highest! For Man is the master of things.*
 - d) They hate it when we say this, but humanism is a religion.
3. *TEMPORARINESS. We have only one life, and after this life is over, there is nothing.*
 - a) No heaven, no hell, no prayer, no special meaning, nothing at all. It's over.
 - b) No hope, no love, no peace. Just biological imperatives.
 - c) For humanists, for us to teach salvation is to give people a false hope. It messes with their minds. Much better to just tell the truth, and to say that there is no heaven, and there is no hell.
 - d) Which is another way of saying that all the bad guys get away with it, and evil wins in the end, but that's for another talk. Humanists call Christianity harmful and dangerous for speaking of an afterlife.
4. *MORAL CONVENIENCE. Humans decide what is morally right and morally wrong for themselves.*
 - a) Right and wrong are based on consensus. We all agree something is right and wrong, and that's it.
 - (1) *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6, NKJV).*
 - b) However humanists also say that people should think for themselves, because humans rule.
 - c) And that makes humanists very open and permissive when it comes to morality. Pretty much anything is okay between consenting people. Humans are very tolerant, except for the free expression of religion, and except for situations when people have a moral opinion against their own. Then, they sue people.
 - d) But I don't know how to put those two things together. Right and wrong are based on what humans agree is right or wrong. But what if humans agree that killing Jews is right, or that slavery is right, or that racism is right? What if human consensus is wrong? Under humanism, there is no higher court of appeal because humans are the highest court of all. So the consensus always becomes tyranny. It always becomes the violent overthrow of human institutions, and brother against brother, and person against person.
 - e) There is no God above, and no law of God, and nobody to answer to in the end.
 - f) It isn't reason. It isn't rational. There is no rational basis for compassion. There is no rational basis for morality, for right and wrong, other than survival of the fittest, and might makes right, under humanism.
5. *SCIENCE. Science and reason will solve the world's problems.*
 - a) Humanists say that the world will keep getting better because knowledge keeps on increasing.
 - (1) Humanist Manifesto 2: "Using technology wisely we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our life-span, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life."
 - b) No need for faith, hope, or love. No need for God. No need for prayer. No need for anything but test tubes and scientists in lab coats and programmers.
6. This is humanism. It is what your kids hear when they go to college and high school. It is what you see on TV. It is the underlying premise to music, arts, entertainment, movies, you name it.
7. But if Jesus is right, to build your life on humanist ideals is to build a life on sinking sand.
- C. *What can Christians say to humanist friends?*
 1. *We agree that human life should be HONORED, but you don't honor human life enough.*
 - a) Humanists say that humans are to be honored because of our development. We are the apex predator, the most highly evolved species, so far at least. So there is our honor. It is because of our development.
 - b) But Christians say we possess our honor for a higher and more glorious reason.
 - c) Christians say that humans possess honor and dignity and value and worth, not because of our developmental stage, but because of our *identity*. And that identity is amazing.

- (1) Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26, NKJV).
- d) We are not just the top of a natural food chain.
- e) We are created with a supernatural origin. We are sacred. We are special to God in a way that no other species is special to God. We reflect his personhood. We reflect his intelligence. We reflect his free will.
- f) Personhood is something granted by God at the moment life begins. It is not something granted by the collective, or given by the government, or bestowed by the elites, or justified by our usefulness to the group. Humanism makes the poor, the unfortunate, the disabled into something less than persons. It calls them a drain on society. And the Christian cries NO!
 - (1) God gave us our personhood, and no one at any time has any right to take it away.
 - (a) Human Life is sacred and belongs to God. Don't mess with it.
- g) Humans are far more important and glorious than humanism gives them credit for.
2. *We agree that human life should be FREE, but we don't think you recognize our freedom enough.*
 - a) Humanists say that we should be free to make our own choices. Especially our own moral choices. Christians agree.
 - b) But, from the Christian perspective, humanists don't recognize how vast and enormous human freedom really is.
 - c) For the humanist, the little machine inside that drives all our choices is some kind of biological imperative. The humanist philosophy makes us slaves of our DNA, slaves of our hormones, slaves of our addiction, and slaves of our environment.
 - d) When we act in ways that are contrary to the beautiful truth of God, that isn't freedom. That is bondage. That is slavery. Addiction isn't freedom, it is bondage.
 - (1) Unrestrained sexuality isn't freedom, it is bondage, and heartbreak, and a frustrating quest for a sense of self.
 - (a) But that sense of self will never be found outside of a relationship with the Creator of Self, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - e) There is no freedom in following the dictates of a biological machine of the human being.
 - f) True freedom is stepping into the vast playground called God's salvation, and realizing that the chains are off, and you are free to do everything that brings the human heart real joy.
 - (1) *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36 NKJV).*
3. *We agree that humans possess GLORY, but you don't recognize that glory enough.*
 - a) If the humanist story is correct, I am organized matter and energy. 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.
 - b) If the biblical story is correct, I am a body, soul, and spirit. I am a conduction of three essences, built by God, and held together by him.
 - c) According to the Bible, I am glorious. I will be a spectacle to dazzle the angels. Right now, my glory is hidden. But one day, it will be revealed.
 - (1) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:4, NKJV).
 - (2) *What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. (Psalms 8:4, 5, NKJV).*
 - d) The basic disagreement I have with humanism is simple.
 - e) As a human being, I am much closer to an angel than I am to an ape.
 - f) And that definition makes all the difference in the world.
4. *We agree that human life should be PROLONGED by science and other means, but we don't think you make it long enough.*
 - a) Humanists imprison every individual life within the bonds of time. You are born. You live. You die.
 - b) The natural result of humanism is despair. Always. Depression. Hopelessness. Giving up. After all you've lived and done and dreamed and served, there's nothing in the end. You suffer. You die. And that's it.
 - c) It's so depressing because for the humanist, your life means nothing.
 - d) Or, if you think it means something, it's only because you've made it up.
 - e) But Christians say that's not it. There's another realm. Another cosmos. Another life after this life. And it is a continuation, but not a continuation. It is beautiful and perfect and good for those who are ready. And it is sadness and brokenness and pain for those who are not.
 - f) I am going to heaven. That fact shapes the purpose of everyday I live. And gives meaning to every thought I think.
 - g) I am a human created in the image of God. I have a destiny. And that destiny is not dust.
 - h) It is 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. And in that place, I will meet, face to face, the ultimate human, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he will embrace me. And every single moment of heartbreak and trial I dealt with on earth will be given eternal significance and meaning in heaven. This world is not my home, I'm just passing through. And that knowledge is me, escaping the matrix.