

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to part ten of Illusions. We're wrapping it up today.
- B. Illusions. Escaping the Matrix.
- C. There's a word in Christian vocabulary that describes what we've been talking about. It's the word *apologetics*. It sounds a lot like the word apology, but that's not what it means.
- D. Apologetics simply means giving a defense of what you believe. Christian apologetics is a big deal to me. I believe in it. I believe that there has never been a world view that offers so much as the Christian world view.
- E. There has never been a worldview more logical. There has never been a worldview more life affirming. There has never been a worldview as consistent, as true to experience, as health-giving to the human psyche, and as beautiful as the biblical Christian world view. There's nothing like it. There's nothing even close.
- F. I say, that the message of Jesus Christ, that the truths of the laws and teachings of Scripture, and the story of the Old Rugged Cross, really need no defending.
- G. It is not the proclaimers of Jesus Christ who should be making a defense of the faith — God's truth is self-authenticating.
- H. No, it is the proclaimers of the heartbreaking, logic-defying, soul-deadening, reality-denying illusions of our age — they're the ones who better defend their faith.
- I. Where is their apologetics? Where is their defense of their faith?
- J. And don't think it isn't faith. It is absolutely faith. In fact, I don't have enough faith to be an atheist.
 - 1. How does the atheist defend a beginning without a beginner?
 - 2. How can the evolutionist defend natural selection in the face of the irreducible complexity of molecular machines like the flagellum? Or the mousetrap?
 - 3. How can a so-called humanist ever defend the movement in Iceland to abort all Down Syndrome babies? A PhD director at Johns Hopkins just published an utterly appalling article arguing the completely indefensible position, and I quote, "Science proves kids are bad for earth. Morality suggests we should stop having them." He goes on to say that humans are bad for earth... and makes the moral case that we should have fewer humans.
 - 4. How many fewer? This is the foundation of depopulation.
 - 5. How can any thinking human being with a mind or a conscience defend this position? It is not humanism. It is in-humanism. It is cruel. It is the most deadly position you can take. It is eugenics. It is naziism. It is hatred of what God calls sacred. Where are your apologetics for that?
 - 6. And how can you defend today's heartbreaking ethic in sexuality when it divorces the sexual act from any lasting emotional bond, and turns our kids and our adults into animals?
 - 7. Can you defend that? Where are your apologetics books and conferences?
 - 8. You have none, because you cannot make your case. All you can do is shake your fist at ours.
- K. But that's okay, God is strong. And long after the critics have exhausted themselves, God's truth will endure.
 - 1. The Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.
- L. The only quality that defines these opponents to Biblical Christianity is that they are opposed to Biblical Christianity. Other than that, they have absolutely nothing constructive to offer. They are derivative. They are intellectually exhausted. They see no need to defend their unfaith, because they have taken the intellectually lazy course of assuming their case to be true.
- M. The Bible says...
 - 1. *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, (2 Thessalonians 2:11, NKJV)*
- N. Strong delusion. That is what we see today.
- O. Believing a lie.
- P. Illusions.
- Q. The Matrix.

II. Secularism

- A. Last week, I took part in a speaker's conference in San Jose, the heart of Silicon Valley. It was a great experience, but the pastor told me something pretty sad.
- B. Only two percent of people in Silicon Valley are part of a church. Ninety-eight percent who may be very smart, very educated, brilliant engineers of technology and science, but so lost that they do not know their spiritual right hand from their spiritual left.
- C. So, to wrap up the series, the illusion I would like to talk about today is called Secularism. What is it? What are some of its features? And what can we say to our friends who are caught up in it?

III. Three Questions About Secularism

- A. *What is Secularism?*
 - 1. *Secularism is what happens when nice people live decent lives without meaningful reference to God.*
 - 2. Secularism does not mean a person is anti-God. It doesn't mean a person is an atheist. And it does not mean a person is evil or bad. It simply means that God is left out of the picture in any meaningful way.
 - 3. The word secular comes from the Latin word for the opposite of church. It means unchurch.
 - 4. Secular is the opposite of sacred.
 - 5. Secular people would describe themselves as spiritual. They would say they are good people, and they are. They would care about a few important causes. And they would be loving people and really good friends.
 - 6. Just Jesus-less and Bible-less in their everyday lives.
 - 7. By this definition, a whole lot of Americans would fit the profile of secularism. A whole lot of Christians would too. Nice people, decent lives, minimal reference to God.
- B. *What are some Features of Secularism?*

1. *DRIFTED NOT DECIDED: Secular people drift into a god-free existence without much thinking about it.*
 - a) If this is you, you probably just drifted into your philosophy of life. You didn't study much. You didn't really weigh the options. You might have even avoided the topic of religion on purpose. Thinking it's too divisive.
 - b) If you're being brutally honest, too intrusive. Who wants a God running their life, right?
 - c) Plus you're busy with all the stuff of life.
 - d) Jesus told a parable about it:
 - (1) *Jesus replied with this illustration: "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When all was ready, he sent his servant around to notify the guests that it was time for them to come. But they all began making excuses. One said he had just bought a field and wanted to inspect it, so he asked to be excused. Another said he had just bought five pair of oxen and wanted to try them out. Another had just been married, so he said he couldn't come. (Luke 14:16-20, NLT).*
 - e) Their answers were right away. Here comes this invitation. A lavish feast. The great master. Riches. Treasures. Blessings. Gifts.
 - f) None of that even makes a dent. They don't spend a second thinking about it.
 - g) This is pure secularism. They aren't bad people. They're just not interested in joining God's feast. It's probably a very nice feast, but there's other stuff to do. It isn't evil. It isn't bad. It isn't hurting anybody else.
 - h) But it is more important than the Master, so his invitation gets declined.
 - i) Unthinking secularism. They just drifted into it. And don't think it can't happen to you.
 - j) Can't you list a few people right now who used to be so on fire for God, but now they don't have God in their lives at all? They drifted into it. They didn't reject God intentionally. It wasn't the plan.
 - k) But now, every day God invites them to a feast of blessings, but I've got to take my kids to soccer, and I have a party to go to, and I have to fix my car, and I've got a new boat and the lake is calling.
 - l) Good people. No longer God people.
 - m) Secularism.
 - n) Practical atheism.
2. *DISCONTENT: Secularism, as a way of life, leaves your soul wanting more.*
 - a) There's always pain beneath the surface.
 - b) A while back, when I was a youth and children's pastor, we had our big kids summer event. A packed house, and a bunch of kids on the stage.
 - c) One of the kids was really concerned about a man named Chuck. Chuck was dating this little boy's mom, and Chuck didn't know Jesus. He was in the auditorium for our closing kids' program, and the little boy asked if we could sing a song for Chuck, and dedicate it to him.
 - d) So we did. We got all the kids on stage, and before we sang this song, I said that there was somebody here named Chuck, and though this song was for everybody, it was especially for Chuck.
 - e) This is what the kids sang that day:
 - (1) The world will try to satisfy that deep longing in your soul,
 You can search the whole world over, but you'll be just as before.
 You'll never find true satisfaction, until you've found the Lord,
 For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.
 Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.
 Only he can change your life, and make you whole.
 He'll give you peace you never knew,
 Love and joy, and gladness too.
 For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.
 [by Lanny Wolfe]
 - f) I should mention that Chuck was a member of a violent motorcycle gang.
 - g) I should also mention that Chuck put his personal faith in Jesus that day, and was made new by the grace of God.
 - h) No life is satisfying without God at the core. There is always sadness beneath the surface. Always fear. Always anxiety.
 - (1) Secularism constricts you to a temporary existence — your soul was designed for an infinity of time and timelessness.
 - (2) Secularism locks you into an earthly existence — your soul was made to soar in the heavenly realms.
 - (3) Secularism reduces you to matter and energy — your whole being was made matter and energy, breathed into by the breath of God and created in his image.
 - (4) Secularism glorifies the superficial toys of pleasure and prestige — when your whole being was crafted by God for eternal glories that words can't describe.
 - (a) Money doesn't matter. Power doesn't matter. Popularity doesn't matter. Earthly prestige doesn't matter. None of these things can ultimately satisfy your soul.
 - (b) And it is dysfunctional to keep on seeking that way.
 - (c) C.S. Lewis describes it perfectly:
 - i) *"It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."* [Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*.]

- i) Because when you marginalize God, you shrink your life. You squeeze in the borders of your existence. And where God meant you to fly, you limp. So that a secular life is a discontented life. Which leads to the third feature:
- 3. *FRANTIC: Secularism drives a soul into a frantic search for happiness.*
 - a) Scripture:
 - (1) *With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. (Ephesians 4:17-19, NLT).*
 - b) This is a downward spiral.
 - c) A secular person can't escape it.
 - (1) *Rejection of Truth.*
 - (2) *Spiritual Blackout.*
 - (3) *Alienation from the life of God.*
 - (4) *Moral Breakdown.*
 - (5) *Calloused hearts (desensitized).*
 - (6) *Sexual Brokenness (broken sense of self, attachment disorder, divorcing sex from attachment)*
 - (7) *Greed = Frantic Search for Happiness*
 - d) I don't know what you think of when you hear the word Greed, but it's a really deep concept in the Bible.
 - e) Greed is a frantic search for happiness. It happens when what used to make you happy doesn't make you happy any more. So you need more if it. You kick the search for happiness into high gear, because the old stuff doesn't work any more. There is a Law of Diminishing Returns. The first time you try something, it's exciting. But after a while, the excitement wears off. So you have to double the dose. And for a while, the double dose is awesome. But you get used to that, and now you have to double the dose again. It's the law of diminishing returns. Each time you try a thing, you need more of the thing to make you happy. It applies to pretty much everything. Sex. Money. Security. Relationships.
 - f) This is the birth of addiction. This is all the secular person has. It is never enough.
 - g) And since it is never enough, you're always grasping for more... more mud pies instead of the eternally satisfying feast of everyday life with God.
 - h) This is the spirit of the age. This is the default position of the typical person we hang out with every single day. They are satisfied on the surface, but deep down desperate inside.
 - i) The conference I was at in San Jose met at a church. The pastor told me that so many people in these high tech companies look good on the outside. But two things are true about them: a) they are shallow, he said. And, b) they are afraid. He said there's a reason they work 80 hours a week. They're always only one inch away from a life-changing job loss, and the pressure is relentless.
 - j) You might feel it too. We live in an age of Anxiety. It's crazy. It's irrational, it's absurd. It is a colorless way to live, like watching black and white TV.
 - k) And it is today's normal.
- C. *What do we say to Secularized friends?*
 - a) *Try Jesus.*
 - b) Scripture: *But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. (Ephesians 4:20, NLT).*
 - c) Four reasons:
 - d) *Because EXCUSES < FORGIVENESS.*
 - (1) The world offers an illusion of forgiveness. It is a forgiveness that is an excuse, but not forgiveness. Your offense has not been forgiven; it has just been redefined as not an offense.
 - (2) But your deepest heart still knows guilt and shame.
 - (3) Only Jesus meets you there, in that place. With his true payment for your true guilt by his sacrificial death and shed blood on Calvary's Cross. And as a consequence of that, the debt is payed, the penalty is complete, and the forgiveness is the most reality-based, un-illusory, solid, lasting forgiveness a soul can claim.
 - (4) Try Jesus.
 - e) *Because BROKEN LOVE < UNBROKEN LOVE.*
 - (1) The world offers an illusion of love. It's a two dimensional love that touches the body and the soul, but not the spirit. Jesus Christ came to give you a three dimensional, full-orbed love. Not only that he adds a supernatural dimension to every loving relationship that invites him in — but it's more than that.
 - (2) The truths Jesus taught can repair the broken places in your heart that get in the way of love.
 - (3) Let that settle in.
 - (a) The wounds that used to dominate you can be healed and lose their power.
 - (b) The memories that haunt you can be purified.
 - (c) The scars that mar your body and your soul can be overcome by the grace of Jesus.
 - (d) The lies that confused you can be corrected.
 - (e) The bitterness that infects every relationship.
 - (f) The displaced anger from a lifetime of hurt...
 - i) There is truth in Jesus Christ, and in his Word, to heal, to correct, to empower, and to set you free to the kind of bonds of affection that last, and satisfy, and fill your heart with joy.
 - f) *Because COPING < COMFORT*

- (1) Try Jesus, because under a secular worldview, the only answer to suffering is to cope.
 - (2) But Jesus offers comfort not only now, but forever.
 - (3) The Bible treats suffering as an alien invader. It was not part of God's original creation. Pain entered later, when sin and evil entered. No death, no sorrow, no suffering, and no pain existed in God's good creation. The biblical authors never blame God for the problem of pain. God didn't create evil or the suffering it birthed.
 - (4) When sin galloped into the world, suffering and death rode in on its back. That was the free will choice of the human race. But, Scripture reveals that God did not stand aloof from the problem of pain; he became human without ceasing to be God, and submerged himself in the depths of pain like no other human before or since.
 - (5) When he died on the Cross, Jesus absorbed into himself, all the punishment, all the sorrows, all the pains, all the condemnation, all the darkness and evil the world ever called down upon itself. It all landed in the heart of Jesus Christ. He felt its weight. He felt its darkness. Its lostness. Its hopelessness and despair. He felt it all. Which means...
 - (6) God understands the problem of pain through direct experience. *"Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted"* (Hebrews 2:18, NLT). No matter how much you hurt, you are never alone. God comes alongside you and is ready to embrace you with an empathy that knows no bounds.
 - (7) No other worldview even comes close. No other God became man - suffered and died as our sin-bearer. No other god satisfied the demands of cosmic justice relative to evil, while providing the final solution to the problem of pain.
 - (8) Christianity offers the world 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...
 - (9) Try Jesus, because he is the only comfort that lasts in a world gone crazy.
- g) *Because SENSELESS CONTRADICTIONS < TRUTHS THAT FIT*
- (1) Some of you are going to be old enough in Christian circles to amen what I'm about to say:
 - (a) Everything Francis Schaeffer warned about is coming true.
 - (2) Western philosophy has evolved backward. It has devolved. We have entered a stage where true can mean false and evil can mean good. It is irrational. It is contradictory.
 - (3) How should Christians live in this craziness?
 - (4) We have to grow to a point where we can say there is something called truth and it is knowable. It is knowable because truth stays true, no matter where you go, and no matter what the situation may be. And no matter who is looking at it.
 - (5) We have only two choices. Either we can say that what we are experiencing is real, OR we can say that everything is just a dream of a dream in the mind of a god... the fantasy of the matrix, a computer running its code.
 - (6) If you want a life grounded in reality, you have to start with these three basic ideas.
 - (a) One. God is.
 - (b) Two. God has spoken.
 - (c) Three. God's speech is not nonsense.
 - (7) That is the only way to escape irrationality. The philosophy of the world is utterly contradictory. It is unreality. It is absurd. It is logically inconsistent.
 - (8) Remember the slide in a children's playground?
 - (a) Irrationality is how you clime to the top. Absurdity is where you sit down. Despair is in the middle. And self-destruction is where you land.
 - (9) The great writer of the World War 2 era, Dorothy Sayers, wrote:
 - (a) *"Theologically this country is at present is in a state of utter chaos established in the name of religious toleration and rapidly degenerating into flight from reason and the death of hope."* (in *Creed or Chaos*)
 - (10) That phrase, "flight from reason" perfectly describes the last quarter century in America.
 - (11) It describes the Internet. It describes government. Art. Music. Entertainment. Gaming. Monetary Policy. Morality. University systems. Everything. A flight from reason.
 - (12) If we are simply a bag of impersonal matter and energy randomly mixed into a chemical soup through chance and random process, then there is no intelligence in the universe. No order. No transcendent truth. No love. No meaning. No purpose. Nothing to look forward to. Just the coming energy death of maximum entropy and the snuffing out of the light of life.
 - (13) But if a Creator has made us, and spoken to us, then there is hope. And there is every likelihood he has spoken to us about ourselves. And that is how we can be made whole.
 - (14) Your heart is a finely tuned instrument, an intricate wonder, a masterpiece of emotions and multiple moving parts. And the Maker has tuned you to the realities that matter most.
 - (15) In the mind of God, the world makes sense. And when you share his mind, your life — especially when you view it from above, from the vantage point of Mount Eternity — when you share the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, your life makes sense, your world makes sense, and your love makes sense.
 - (16) Because truth fits with truth, and you see the heart pounding beauty of the whole of the masterpiece of God's breathtaking creation.
 - (17) At the end of the day, Truth matters because love matters. Love requires trust. Trust requires truth. Truth matters because love matters.
 - (18) My prayer for you, me, and all of us is that we might escape the matrix, step out of the dream, shed the illusions, and plant our feet on the bedrock of the magnificent truth that is found in Christ Jesus our Lord.