

An iceberg floating in a dark sea under a cloudy sky. The top of the iceberg is visible above the water, while the much larger, jagged base is submerged. The text 'THE TRUTH IS...' is rendered in a large, blue, 3D block font that appears to be made of ice, with the letters partially submerged and reflecting on the water's surface.

THE TRUTH IS...

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN AN AGE OF FOLLY

BY RICHARD ELWELL



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ULTIMATE OUTCOMES

WHY IDEAS MATTER.

Ultimate Outcomes is a non-profit organization founded on the fruit of the 30 plus years Pastor Richard Elwell and his wife Marty spent in church ministry, developing studies that would help their congregants discern and apply God's truth. Richard was a firm believer that the outcomes in our lives are a result of what ideas we choose to believe and follow.

After Richard died of a rare liver disease in 2018, Ultimate Outcomes has taken on the mission of sharing the Elwell's insights with all people who desire to live a better life and are willing to look to God for understanding of the way they are to go. To that end it makes available for free download on its website: Bible studies, Sunday school curriculum, and sermon podcasts.

Richard earned a Master of Divinity degree from the International School of Theology and was the founding and senior pastor at University Park Church, San Bernardino, CA for over 30 years. His passion was always to make God's truth understandable and applicable to all who hunger for it. Marty holds a Master's Degree in Teaching Processes from Claremont Graduate University. Her passion has been to train women and provide curriculum for parents who want to raise up their children up in the ways of the Lord.

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THE TRUTH IS...

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN AN AGE OF FOLLY

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STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to compare biblical truth to the philosophies that have taken root in our culture. In order to think correctly and hold to a coherent worldview, we have to discern what God says is true and understand the outcome of rejecting him and his truth.



WHAT IS REALLY TRUE?

INTRODUCTION

1. Why is our age an age of folly?
People have substituted man's ideas for God's truth. There is no fear of God and a rejection of God's wisdom and morality, which leaves people without guidance to follow destructive paths.
2. The rejection of God has ushered in the prevailing nihilistic philosophies of our age.
Nihilism comes from the Latin word for nothing. It is the rejection of all religious and moral principles. There is no God, no truth, no morality, no right way of doing things.

The philosophies that come out of nihilistic thought are:
Postmodernism – A general distrust of grand theories and ideologies. There is no coherent reality, only individual perception.
Existentialism – An emphasis on the individual person as a free and responsible agent. People determine their own development through acts of the will.
Romanticism – A focus on the inspiration, subjectivity and the primacy of the individual.
Critical Theory – An undermining of the authority of anything that claims to be true, i.e. the Bible. Everything is subject to criticism; nothing is self-evidently true.
3. What has been nihilism's effect on our society?
The attack on the existence and reality of God and his truth has led to the destruction of faith, family and the moral foundations of our society. People think life is only about themselves and what they believe and want. The individual has become paramount, not the good of society, family and others. People will believe anything.
4. Who was history's first nihilist?
Satan in the Garden of Eden when he challenged God's command, "Did God really say?"
5. Why is the denial of truth, morality and purpose such an attractive idea to so many people?
People want personal freedom to do what they want without any accountability or guilt.
6. What is the ultimate outcome if nihilism is right and there is no such thing as truth?
If there is no God and no truth then there is no meaning or purpose to life, which leads to individualism and despair. This meaninglessness leads to the breakdown of society and senseless actions like mass shootings and absurd thinking such as gender is what I want it to be.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE DECEPTION OF SATAN

Genesis 3:1-7

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”

² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

What was the three-step process Satan used to get Eve to reject the truth of God’s Word?

Step 1 (vs. 1b) **Questioned the truth and created doubt (Did God really say?)**

Step 2 (vs. 4) **Denied the truth, contradicted God (You won’t surely die.)**

Step 3 (vs. 5) **Offered a lie as an appealing alternative (You will be like God...)**

THE TRUTH OF JESUS

John 18:37-38

³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?”

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.”

1. Why was Jesus born into this world? **To bear witness to the truth, to testify to what is really true**
2. What was Pilate’s response to what Jesus said? **He asked what truth is, basically questioning whether truth can be known.**

John 8:31-32

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

What does knowing and applying the truth set us free from?

Satan’s lies, which result in bondage to sin. Lies have power if we believe them.

John 14:1-7

¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

1. What is the purpose of the truth?

The truth leads us to God. It is the way we are reconciled to God.

2. How does the passage from John 14 compare to the passage from Genesis 3?

They state the opposite. In the Garden Satan and his lies separated us from God and led to death. Jesus and the truth bring us back to God and lead to abundant and eternal life.

THINKING IT THROUGH

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVELY SHARING THE TRUTH

2 Timothy 3:16-4:5

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

What are the principles of sharing the truth in the passage?

vs. 16-17 Recognize that it is from God, is useful, and equips us to do what is right.

vs. 2 Trust in the truth completely, stick to it, and use it appropriately.

vs. 3 Recognize that the truth isn't what most people want to hear.

Proverbs 9:7-10

⁷ Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. ⁸ Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. ⁹ Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

¹⁰ The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

What are the principles of sharing the truth in the passage?

vs. 7-9 **Know who you are talking to and what is their likely response. Don't correct someone who rejects the truth.**

vs. 10 **Without the fear of God, people will not accept the truth and choose what is right.**

Matthew 7:1-6

¹ "Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

⁶ "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

What are the principles of sharing the truth in the passage?

vs. 1-5 **You need to examine and apply the truth first to yourself so you look at others with eyes of mercy.**

vs. 6 **You don't give valuable truth to those who won't value it. You don't share with those who will ridicule and trample the truth.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

DARKENED UNDERSTANDING

Ephesians 4:18

¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

How should we view a person who denies God's truth?

They are slaves of deception, prisoners of an ideological war. They are separated from God and are blind to his truth as a result. They need Jesus. They need prayer. Do I care enough about the person to pray for enlightenment?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

A suggested strategy for helping people see the truth is:

1. Pray for the light of Christ to shine on them so that they are able to see the truth.
2. Ask them to explain to you what they believe and why they believe it.
Examples: Why do you think abortion is good? Where does evil come from and what is the solution to it?
3. Respectfully compare their beliefs with God's truth.

PRAYER

Pray for people you know who are blind to God's truth. Pray that God would prepare their hearts to hear and that you would be able to effectively share the truth with them through the power of the Holy Spirit.



*He chose to give us birth through the word of truth,
that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.*
James 1:18



LESSON 2

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD AND REALITY

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

What is nihilism?

It is the rejection of all religious and moral principles. There is no God, no truth, no morality, no right way of doing things.

How are the verses marked with an asterisk in the song “Imagine” an example of nihilism?

- 1) There is no eternal life.
- 2) People aren't accountable for their actions. There is no punishment for evil or rejection of God.
- 3) There is no meaningful future. Immediate gratification
- 4) There is nothing worth dying for.
- 5) There is no true God worth worshipping.
- 6) Utopia is possible on earth without God.
- 7) There are no property rights (Marxism, communism)
- 8) There is no distinction among people or nationalities.

Imagine by John Lennon

^{1*}Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
^{2*}No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
^{3*}Living for today...
^{8*}Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
^{4*}Nothing to kill or die for
^{5*}And no religion too
Imagine all the people
^{6*}Living life in peace...
You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one
^{7*}Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
^{8*}Sharing all the world...
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
^{8*}And the world will live as one

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson looks at the truth about God and reality by examining the question: “What caused the physical universe to come into existence?”

The two causal possibilities:

- **Theism:** Reality was created by supernatural, intelligent causes.
- **Atheism:** Reality came into existences by unintelligent, random, natural causes.

Which possibility does the evidence mostly support and why?

Theism, because design and order are evident in everything in the universe. It isn't random.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis 1:1-3

¹ *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* ² *The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

³ *And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*

1. What does the idea that there was a beginning of the universe imply?

There was a supernatural cause to it; it didn't create itself. Something had to exist outside the universe that brought it into being.

2. What existed before the creation of time, space, and matter?

A creator who is different from the creation (time, space and matter). God, who is eternal, supernatural and immaterial.

John 1:1-3, 14

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*



Note: The word “was” in verse one means the Word always existed; it never not was.

1. What does it mean that before anything else existed the “Word” was already in existence?

The triune God has always been. Jesus, (intelligence and truth) was there in the beginning with that which always existed.

2. What does it mean that the “Word” became flesh and dwelt among us?

The supernatural, eternal Word became part of his creation, the natural world.

3. Why would God want to become a man?

So we could see God’s glory, experience his grace and truth, and be brought back into a relationship with him.

Colossians 1:15-17

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.



Note: The term “firstborn” does not mean that Christ was the first created, but rather that he has the position of the firstborn son. He has preeminence over all creation.

1. What is Christ’s relationship between the natural and supernatural realms?

Christ makes the supernatural visible and understandable to those in the natural world.

2. Why is this bridging of the natural and the supernatural important to us?

It enables us to perceive God in a way we couldn’t before. Through the life of the Son we can see who God is.

THINKING IT THROUGH

THE INTERPRETATION OF EVIDENCE

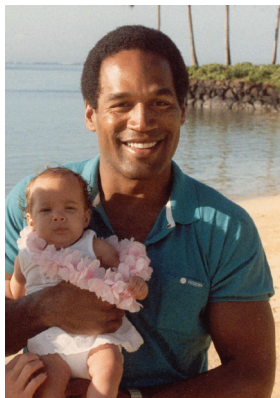


photo by Alan Light

Illustration of O.J. Simpson Trials

In 1994, Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were found murdered. The famous athlete O.J.Simpson was accused of the murder. His defense team proclaimed his innocence and accused the police of planting the evidence against him. There was a body of evidence that included: O.J.’s blood on the fence of the home, blood in his Bronco, a glove with blood on it, and a bloody shoe print from an unusual shoe that O.J. wore. Looking at the same body of evidence, the jury in the criminal trial found him not guilty, while the jury in the civil trial held him responsible for the murder.

Why was O.J. found not guilty in the criminal case?

What people thought could have easily affected how they viewed the evidence. The criminal jury may have had a distrust of the police. Their life experiences could have dictated their viewpoint and affected their interpretation of the evidence.

THE PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE

What is the most likely cause of the natural world?

The two theories: Theistic supernaturalism or atheistic materialism

Examination of the evidence: **CSI**

C-Causality: Everything has some initial cause.

S-Science: The search for causality. The scientist wants to discover true causes.

I-Information: Knowledge or understanding that is passed on.

1. CAUSALITY

Theistic view: Believes in both supernatural intelligent and natural unintelligent causes

Atheistic view: Believes only in natural unintelligent causes

What is the difference between intelligent and unintelligent causes?

Intelligent involves thought, design, order and purpose. Unintelligent is random, a result of chance. There is no organization or purpose to it.

Examples: The Grand Canyon was carved by natural processes; it has no order to it. Mt. Rushmore was carved by intelligent design; it portrays design and purpose.

2. SCIENCE

Why is the study of science impossible to undertake if a scientist limits himself to look only at natural causes and doesn't consider intelligent causes? **Scientists can only make and test their theories if the natural world is ordered and predictable. If it were caused by natural causes, it couldn't be tested as it would be random and unintelligible.**

Example: It would be impossible to read a random series of letters on a page and determine what they mean because they would have no meaning. In the same way, if the natural world wasn't scientifically ordered, then scientists would not be able to make sense of it.

Science depends on both the examination of intelligent and unintelligent causes. If God didn't create the natural world, then there are no intelligent causes. It is interesting that scientists using their intelligence are unable to replicate what they think happened by random processes.

3. INFORMATION

What does information have to come from?

An intelligent source that has the capability of passing on information

Can natural unintelligent causes produce information?

No, it can only break it down and make it less understandable.

Examples:

Words: Printed and ordered words on a page in a book pass on information; randomly splattered blots or disordered words don't pass on any understanding.

Cells: A living cell contains information, which it passes on through replication. Randomly combining the elements that make up a cell would not carry information.

If unintelligent natural causes are unable to produce information, what does the existence of information prove?

There has to be some intelligent cause to all the information that is found in the physical universe and in living things.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Isaiah 5:20

²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

1. How does the verse from Isaiah relate to nihilism?
It is a warning to those who deny God's absolute truth.
2. What makes something evil?
It is not good or beneficial; it is harmful to us and others.
3. How do we know what is evil?
We can't know what is evil unless there is an objective standard of good outside of ourselves.
4. If there is a good, all-powerful God, why does evil exist?
**Evil isn't a created thing; it is a diminishing of what is good. What was good had to exist in the first place and then be corrupted. It comes because God gave us a free will.
(You can use rust on a car as an illustration of diminishing what is good)**
5. Why is the existence of evil more of a problem for the atheist position than the theist position?
An atheist can't say something is evil if everything is just the result of random processes. The existence of evil requires understanding of what is good, which is a theistic position.



Remember: If there is evil, then there has to be good. If there is good, then there has to be a determiner of what is good. The determiner of what is good also determines what is evil, the corruption of good.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to ask an atheist on the truth about God and reality are:

1. How do you explain the order and design of both living and non-living things? What is the likely cause of the universe based on the evidence of order and design?
2. The law of biogenesis states that life cannot come from non-life. How then did life begin? Why can't intelligent scientists replicate that?
3. What is the scientific evidence that things which appear to be the result of intelligent design were in fact caused by an unintelligent natural cause?
4. How could natural causes create the natural world if natural causes didn't exist before the natural world?
5. If natural causes couldn't have created the natural world, then what is the only other alternative?

PRAYER

Thank God for being the creator of all things. Thank him for the order, design and purpose of life. Pray for those you know who reject God as creator, that you would ask good questions and be able to articulate clearly to them what the evidence shows.



LESSON 3

THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What is the purpose of the truth?
The truth brings us understanding and draws us back into a right relationship with God.
2. What does deception do?
It obscures the truth and leads us away from God.
3. What is the basic premise of nihilism?
There is no absolute truth.
4. What is the premise of atheism?
There is no God.
5. In terms of the origin of the natural world, what do causality, science and information demand?
An intelligent cause, a designer and creator. Evolution is a force leading away from God.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will focus on the nihilistic dismantling of God's design for marriage and the family.

The two competing definitions of marriage and family are:

1st idea: Marriage and family were designed and instituted by God to fulfill his purpose as the primary building block of society. As God is unchanging, so is his definition of marriage and family.

2nd idea: Marriage and family are a social construct. The definition of marriage and family is decided by society as a whole and is therefore changeable. As societies change and evolve, the definition of marriage and family also changes and evolves.

1. Which idea currently dominates in America today?
Social construct, the rejection of God and his design.

2. What are some examples of the reengineering of marriage and family in our culture?
Marriage can be between any two people, not just a man and woman. A family is whatever people want it to be: no dad, no mother, two dads or two mothers.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:18

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?

Bible – Men and women were designed to be in a complementary relationship with one another. They are mutually dependent on one another to be complete.

Culture – Men and women don't need each other. Women often see men and fathers as unnecessary. "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle."

Mark 10:6-9

⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?

Bible – God instituted marriage for the man and the woman to become one unit. The union is not to be broken.

Culture – Marriage is just an agreement between two people to meet one another's needs and can be broken if that is not the case. The erosion of union and oneness permeates society.

Ephesians 5:33

³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?

Bible – There are different roles to fulfill (husband, wife) and different ways to relate to one another (love, respect). Husband and wife are equal before God but function differently.

Culture – Holds the idea that equality doesn't allow for differences; roles are interchangeable. There is often an elevation or put down of the other's role. Women want to do it all.

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?

Bible – Man and woman are designed to reflect God's image more perfectly in their union together. They are to procreate, populate and steward the earth.

Culture – Marriage is more about self and getting personal needs fulfilled. Procreation and family is denigrated in many circles.

Psalms 78:1-8

¹ Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

² I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³ things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

⁵ He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶ that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷ so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ⁸ and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?

Bible – Parents are the primary teachers and have a mandate to train up their children in God's deeds and statutes so they don't become stubborn and rebellious.

Culture – The schools are instituted to train up children in the prevailing philosophy of the time. Parents aren't qualified to do the job of teaching their children.

Colossians 3:18-21

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

In the passage what are God's ideas for marriage and family and how are they being challenged in today's culture?'

Bible – Each person in the family has a role to fulfill and is responsible to do well within God's hierarchal design. Men-love, women-submit, children-obey

Culture – Everyone is their own authority. Men don't take the leadership role, women are unwilling to submit and children are not taught to obey.

THINKING IT THROUGH

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

1. If the definition of marriage and family is always changing, where are we heading?

Anything will go, everything will be acceptable

What possibilities of new perversions lie in our future?

Pedophilia, bestiality

Illustration: A video was posted on YouTube where a group of people were in the water marrying the ocean.

2. Why does the rejection of God's design for marriage and family appeal to so many people?

Man's natural state is rebellion and perverted ideas. People are free to do whatever they want if there are no rules or restrictions.

3. What evidence is there that rejecting God's design is beneficial?

There isn't any. There is only confusion, a breakdown in healthy living, family structure and societal stability.

4. What are we to do if we have personally violated God's design for marriage and family?

- Confession – agree with God that his way is right.
- Repentance – turn from sin and go God's way from this point on.
- Restoration – make right whatever can be made right.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

SATAN'S PLAN

John 10:10

¹⁰ *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Why is the destruction of marriages and families a main objective of Satan?

Satan wants to destroy what is important to God. Marriage and family are the foundation and core of society. Satan doesn't want people to experience the abundant life that Christ came to give. He wants to keep people out of God's kingdom and his blessing.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to ask someone who holds to the secular view of marriage and family are:

1. If all forms of the family are equally valid, then why have studies shown traditional nuclear families to be healthier than the alternatives in terms of relationships, finances and behavior?
2. If marriage and family are only a social construct, then why should society change what has been the tradition for thousands of years? Are we smarter than the generations of our ancestors?
3. If marriage and family are unchangeable institutions created by God to fulfill his purposes, then what will be the inevitable consequence of altering God's design?

PRAYER

Thank God that his design for marriage and the family is good and beneficial to everyone. Pray that you would hold to his truth and defend it articulately.



³ *It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it.*
⁴ *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*
3 John 1:3-4



THE TRUTH ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

What is postmodern nihilism?

It is the denial of absolutes. Everything is questioned and critiqued. There are no foundations for understanding and no basis for truth, morality, etc.

In the study so far, we have examined the nihilistic ideas that there is no absolute truth, there is no God, and there is no fixed design for marriage and family.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will examine the secular idea that there is no natural design for sexual orientation and gender identity.

The two conflicting ideas about sexuality and gender are:

1st Idea: God created only two genders: male and female. The natural sexual orientation for both genders is heterosexuality. Any sexual orientation other than heterosexuality is unnatural, and any gender identification that differs from one's biological gender is unnatural.

2nd Idea: There is no right, moral or natural definition for a person's sexual orientation or gender identification; it is all just social construct and can be redefined. People determine for themselves what their sexual orientation is and with what gender they identify.

1. Currently, how many different sexual orientations have been legitimized in our secular culture?
Impossible to know as there is a continual invention of new terms and identities. The list is ever expanding.
2. Currently, how many different gender identities have been legitimized in our secular culture?
A multitude. Facebook lists 58.
3. According to physical design and the Bible, how many natural sexual orientations and gender identities are there? There are two genders, male and female, which are designed for a heterosexual relationship.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE CLARITY OF GOD'S DESIGN

Genesis 1:27

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

1. How many genders did God create? **Two, male and female**
2. Where did the idea that there are more than two genders come from?
Satan's Lies. It is an invention of man; it is not from God. It comes out of a rejection of God and natural law

Deuteronomy 22:5

A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

What does the verse say is God's view of mixing gender identities?

It is disgusting to God, an abomination. This is just referring to cross-dressing; the current acceptance of sex-change operations and hormone treatment must be even more grievous to him.

Romans 1:18-27

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameful acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1. According to the passage, what has God made clear to all people?
God makes himself and his truth clear so people are without excuse for their behavior.
2. According to the passage, what role does God play in homosexual orientations? (vs. 19-20)
He gives people free will to choose what to believe and follow and then gives them over to their choices. As with all sin, there are consequences to sexual perversion.
3. What do people who engage in perversion think about themselves? (vs. 22)
They think they are wise when they are really foolish.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Why is it an unloving act to affirm transgender or homosexual people in their beliefs?

You are encouraging sin, which leads to death. They are separated from God and won't go to heaven. All sin is destructive to the individual.

Jude 1:6-7

⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—
⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

What does the example of Sodom and Gomorrah teach us?

They are an example of God's judgment for engaging in what is immoral and unnatural. It emphasizes that God will judge the affirming culture that supports the abomination.



Note: If our culture didn't celebrate the sin of homosexuality, it would be easier for people to acknowledge it as sin and come back into a right relationship with God. Continuing in sin separates us from our loving God, who really wants life to go well for us.

1 Timothy 1:8-10

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

What does a person have to reject in order to affirm the modern view of sexual orientation and gender identity? **God's law, sound doctrine, everything that is good, beneficial, and natural.**

You have to deny God's truth and morality and nature itself to affirm homosexuality.

THINKING IT THROUGH

NATURAL OR UNNATURAL

1. Besides the Bible, what are other sources that testify to heterosexuality being the only natural sexual orientation? **The design of the human body itself, as male and female fit together and both are needed for reproduction. Most religions and cultures also affirm it.**

2. How can a homosexual's unnatural desires be explained?

It is a fallen desire like all sin. We all struggle with wrong thinking and our sinful desires that are contrary to God's good plan. When we reject God and don't feel good about ourselves we seek all kinds of things to fill the void.

3. What can we learn from nature's physical design about male and female genders?

The distinct design of each has a purpose. They complement each other and are compatible sexually. Both are needed for the reproduction of the human race.

4. What does a Christian have to reject in order to embrace the cultural idea that each individual person defines his or her own sexual orientation and gender identity?

God and his will and design for men and women. The idea that anything that goes against God's good design is sin. The supremacy of scripture.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

RELATING TO HOMOSEXUALS

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

How should we relate to homosexuals and transgender people? **We are sinners too and no better than they are. It is only by God's grace through the sacrifice of Jesus that we have been brought out of the sin that enslaved us. A transformed sinner is still a former sinner.**

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to ask a person who believes the current secular ideas about sexual orientation and gender identities are:

1. Are homosexuals who give into their desires healthier and happier than those who don't? Why is there more suicide, depression and disease among practicing homosexuals?
2. Do you believe that God supports the idea that he made people to live in ways contrary to his natural design?
3. If it is healthy for homosexuals or transsexuals to live out their natural desires, then is it healthy for all people to act out all of their desires (theft, murder, drunkenness, gluttony, etc.)?
4. If some human desires are destructive (evil) desires, then why can't homosexual desires be considered destructive (evil), especially if they have negative consequences?
5. Why do you think we are asked to embrace homosexuality as natural, but not other destructive behaviors like alcoholism and drug abuse?

Prayer

Pray that you would remember that in all God says is right to do he has the best interest of his creation at heart. Pray that you would love those who reject God in the way you should and call your own sin for what it is, sin.





*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech
but with actions and in truth.*
John 3:18



THE TRUTH ABOUT EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

How has the study shown that nihilistic philosophies have been dismantling foundational ideas about truth, God, marriage/family and sexual orientation/gender identity?

- Truth – **There is no absolute truth. Truth depends on your perspective.**
- God – **There is no God and therefore no meaning or purpose to life.**
- Marriage/Family – **Marriage and family can be whatever you make it to be. Deny need.**
- Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity – **These are determined by people themselves, not nature.**

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will compare the postmodern ideas of equality and justice to the biblical ideas of equality and justice.

1. Historically, in the U.S. what has equality referred to?
The state of being equal, especially in terms of status, rights and opportunities.
2. Historically, In the U.S. what has justice referred to?
Fair or unbiased treatment under the law

The Two Competing Ideas of Equality and Justice

1st Idea: Equality and justice are measured by an equality of opportunity and by an impartial and equal application of the law. In this case, Lady Justice is blind to any special group, treating all groups the same. Her scales are balanced, favoring no one based on who they are or what group they belong to.

2nd Idea: Equality and justice are measured by equal outcomes and equal results. Anytime there is an unequal outcome or result then efforts must be made to favor whatever group has a perceived disadvantage for the sake of equality and social justice. In this case, Lady Justice takes off her blindfold and creates an imbalance in her scales in order to achieve equal results for everyone. Instead of being impartial, she shows partiality to any group that needs her help to obtain the same equal results as any other group.

What are some examples of how the second idea is dominating our culture? **Everyone who participates gets a trophy, affirmative action, Title IX athletics (men and women must have equal opportunity to participate in sports), tax system/welfare (take from rich to give to poor), free college tuition for everyone**



Illustration: With the second idea of equality, in running a race each runner would have a different starting time to ensure that everyone crosses the finish line at the same time, or there would be no finish line so that no one wins and leaves others in a lesser position.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

GOD'S VIEW OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Exodus 20:17

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

1. What does the 10th Commandment say?

The Bible says we are to be content with what we have and not jealous of others and want their possessions.

2. How would following that commandment do away with the need for equal outcomes?

If you aren't covetous, inequality of outcome isn't important. Jealousy is the basis for wanting equal outcome. Comparing what you have with others causes discontent.

Romans 2:6-11

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

1. To whose justice are we ultimately accountable? **God's**
2. What will God's justice be based on?
Justice is based on what we have sought after and done. It is equally just, as there is no partiality.
3. Will there be equal outcomes to God's justice?
No, some will receive honor and glory, others tribulation and distress. What people receive depends on their belief and actions.

Leviticus 19:15

¹⁵ *"You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.*

1. What is God's view of justice?
God's ideal is that we are all treated equally and judged fairly under the law without partiality.
2. What are some examples of justice being partial in our times? **Hilary Clinton getting away with the mishandling of classified information. The rich or powerful get breaks in the judicial system while poor, black people don't. Hate crimes are more heinous than other crimes.**

Deuteronomy 27:19

¹⁹ *"Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'*

What happens to those who treat the powerless unfairly?
God curses them. They won't escape justice.

Numbers 15:15-16

¹⁵ *For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a statute forever throughout your generations. You and the sojourner shall be alike before the LORD.*

¹⁶ *One law and one rule shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you."*

2 Samuel 8:15

¹⁵ *So David reigned over all Israel. And David administered justice and equity to all his people.*

1. In the scriptures what is the idea of law and justice?
It applies equally to all people. People are not to be treated differently under the law. The Founders followed this principle when setting up our system of government.
2. How does the postmodern view of equality and social justice differ from biblical justice?
One group may be favored or treated differently depending on their circumstances, or who is in power and administering justice.

Proverbs 22:22-23

²² Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, ²³ for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.

What does God say about the treatment of the poor? **They are not to be treated poorly because of their position. A person will be accountable to God for how he treats those who are impoverished.**

Proverbs 20:10

¹⁰ Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

Why is inequality an abomination to the Lord?

It's against his holy nature and his design. God measures things rightly and fairly.

Matthew 7:12 - The Golden Rule

¹² So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Why is the Golden Rule the essence of equality and justice?

The standard to use for how you treat others is how you would want to be treated. You shouldn't show yourself or others like you partiality. Empathy.

THINKING IT THROUGH

ANALYZING THE RESULTS

1. What does the attempt to achieve equal results for all people do for those who are more ambitious and productive?
It kills their incentive, hinders their creativity and inhibits individuality.
2. What does the attempt to achieve equal results for all people do for those who are less productive? **Encourages complacency and slothfulness, discourages effort and achievement. Diminishes their humanity; it tells them that they are incompetent to achieve**
3. What happens to groups that are given special treatment under the law?
They develop a sense of entitlement and become dependent upon the help of government. They think of themselves as victims if they don't have an equal outcome with others.
4. When Lady Justice takes off her blindfold and changes the balance of her scales, why do we all lose? **It creates animosity between people and breaks down societal unity. The only way to safeguard liberty and harmony is if there is no preference or hostility toward a particular group of people.**

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

EQUAL JUSTICE AND THE GOSPEL

Romans 3:19-26

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How is the gospel an expression of God's equal justice under the law?

We are all equally guilty and there is equal access to God's mercy. There is not equal outcome, however, as outcome is dependent upon faith in Christ.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to challenge thinking about equality and justice are:

1. Why are students given grades? Why shouldn't there be a redistribution of grades in order to make all students' grade point average equal?
2. What was the original purpose of giving out trophies? What value does a trophy have when everyone receives one?
3. If you work harder than your co-workers and are given a promotion and raise, should they get a share of your increased paycheck?

PRAYER

Pray that you would treat all people equally and fairly, the way you would like to be treated.



³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."³⁸ "What is truth?" retorted Pilate.

John 18:36-38a



THE TRUTH ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

How has postmodern nihilism dismantled the truth about equality and justice?

It has turned the idea of equality from that of equal opportunity into equality of outcome. It has changed the idea of blind justice, which shows no favoritism, into justice that favors certain groups.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will examine the idea that is dismantling the truth about human rights.

The Declaration of Independence (signed July 4, 1776)

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

1. What does the term “unalienable (inalienable) human rights” mean?

You can't separate the rights from people themselves. They are rights that belong to all human beings because they come from God.

2. What are the unalienable (inalienable) rights that every human being is entitled to?

The dignity of the individual underlies all unalienable rights: freedom of conscience and religion, self-preservation, self-determination, keeping fruit of labor, justice, etc.

Contrasting Ideas about Human Rights

1st Idea – liberty Rights: These are rights protecting our freedoms. Liberty rights are referred to as negative rights because they protect us by prohibiting other people or government from taking away what rightfully belongs to us. The Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution to ensure liberty rights.

What are examples of negative rights?

Freedom of speech, conscience, religion, private property, pursuit of personal interests. The unalienable rights listed in the Declaration of Independence.

2nd Idea – Welfare Rights: These rights are referred to as positive rights because they require other people to provide for us things that we haven't been able to or have been unwilling to provide for ourselves. President Franklin Roosevelt's 1944 State of the Union Address (Second Bill of Rights) instituted the idea of welfare rights in our society.

What are examples of positive rights?

Welfare, social security, health care, education, family leave, etc.

Why are negative human rights in conflict with another person's claim to positive human rights?

The negative rights of one person are violated to provide positive rights for another. To give out positive rights you have to take away property that belongs to another person.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

AN EXAMINATION OF RIGHTS

Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

What are all human rights based on?

Every human was created in the image of God and has personal value and innate dignity, which is the basis of our human rights.

Exodus 20:1-17

20 And God spoke all these words, saying, ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³ "You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ “You shall not murder.

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ “You shall not steal.

¹⁶ “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

1. What are the human rights that come from the Ten Commandments?

Vs. 3-6 **People have a right to worship the one, true God. God has a right to be honored.**

Vs. 8-9 **People have a right to work and rest.**

Vs. 12 **Parents have a right to be treated with respect. People are to be treated rightly.**

Vs. 13 **All people have a right to life. This would include the unborn people.**

Vs. 14 **Married people have a right to an exclusive relationship.**

Vs. 15 **People have a right to personal property.**

Vs. 16 **People have a right to their personal reputation and are not to be maligned unfairly.**

2. Are the rights that come from the Ten Commandments negative or positive rights?

They are negative. They come from God and are not to be taken away.

3. Is there any place in the Bible that supports the idea of positive rights?

Not coming from the government. We are individually commanded to give to those in need.

4. What does violating the 10th Commandment not to covet usher in? (vs. 17)

The desire for positive rights. Covetousness is at the heart of the violation of others’ negative rights.

THE OBLIGATION TO OTHERS

Deuteronomy 15:7-8

⁷ “If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸ but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

1. What is one’s obligation to the poor within one’s community?

Help a person in need by lending what is needed. We are not to be hard-hearted towards those we know.

2. Who is responsible to do that?

We all are if we have the means.

Proverbs 19:17, 21:13

¹⁷ *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.*

¹³ *Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.*

How does God respond when we help or do not help the poor?

He gives payment in kind. He responds to us in the way we respond to the poor.

1 John 3:17

¹⁷ *But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?*

What is generosity towards others a proof of?

It shows the love of God is in us.

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷ *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

How does biblical generosity differ from state enforced entitlements?

It is voluntary, not compulsory. People are to give from a heart of generosity not because they are forced.

THINKING IT THROUGH

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Preamble to the constitution

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

According to the Preamble to the Constitution, what is the role of government?

To protect us and our liberties from inside or outside forces that might destroy them.

ENTITLEMENTS

1. Why are welfare rights called entitlements?

To justify them as rights so that someone else is obligated to pay for them. If people are entitled to them then they have a right to them and other people have to provide them.

2. What happens when giving to the poor is forced by government coercion?

It isn't charity; it is an obligation. Being forced to give can harden the heart, rather than soften it. Neither party is blessed by generosity when it becomes an obligation.

3. If one person is entitled to some part of another's property, then what is the owner of the property entitled to?
Basically nothing. His property doesn't even really belong to him if any part of it can be taken away by coercion.
4. What does the idea of welfare or positive rights do to the idea of liberty or negative rights?
It tramples and denigrates the idea of liberty and the value of negative rights. Instead of being the protector of negative rights, the government is taking them away by giving positive rights.
5. Why are these two categories of rights unable to coexist?
They are diametrically opposed. You can't have positive rights without violating someone's negative rights.
6. Why can God's call for us to be charitable coexist with our liberty rights?
Charity is a free will choice a person makes to be generous as it isn't compulsory; it is an expression of liberty. Charity comes from the heart and is a gift freely given. It is an act of kindness to another person, which should create gratitude in the recipient, not a sense of entitlement.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

HARD WORK VS. NO WORK

Acts 20:35

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

⁶ *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."*

¹¹ *We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies.*

¹² *Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

1. What does hard work enable us to do?
Provide for ourselves and be a blessing to others.
2. When should charity be withheld from a person?
When the person is able to work, but isn't willing to.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to challenge thinking about human rights are:

1. If people are not entitled to go into a store and demand the store owner give them free food, then what entitles people to the right to take someone else's money through taxes to pay for their food?
2. If people think they are entitled to what belongs to other people, how grateful will they be when the government confiscates another person's property and then gives it to them?
3. Studies show that conservatives who favor liberty rights give more to charity than liberals who favor government-given welfare rights. Why would that be so?

PRAYER

Thank God for his provision. Pray that you would recognize the importance of liberty rights and work to protect them. Pray for a generous heart that shares God's provision with others.



THE TRUTH ABOUT PROPERTY RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

What do all the previous lessons in this study have in common?

They have all examined anti-biblical ideas that have taken hold in our society and are deconstructing or questioning the foundational truths of our society, and undermining the pillars of western civilization.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will examine the question of who has the rights of ownership and how our view of private property affects our material well-being.

The two contrasting views on property rights are:

1st Idea: God-centered View of Private Property (Individualism)

God owns all things and has granted to us the right to individually possess and steward what belongs to him, starting with the fruit of our own labor. In this view each person has the right to possess and exchange or dispose of any material asset that rightfully belongs to him. All people are ultimately accountable to God for what they do with the property they possess.

2nd Idea: Government-centered View of Private Property (Marxism)

The concept of property is divided into two categories: personal property and productive property. Personal property is personal possessions like clothes, toothpaste, iPods, etc. Productive property is property that creates increased value. Productive property is what communists call the means of production (private sector businesses large and small). This view holds that productive property should be held in common and the value it creates should be evenly distributed among the people. In this view of property rights the government should control the means of production on behalf of its citizens and no one has the right to own any value generating property, including the fruit of one's own labor.

1. Why did Karl Marx oppose property rights?

Marx saw human envy, caused by the unequal distribution of wealth, as the ultimate problem of society, underlying all human conflict. He believed that by getting rid of personal property rights the problem would be solved.

2. What actually happens when Marxist political theories are put into practice?

There is a huge underclass of unmotivated people who are ruled by a rich oligarchy. All opposition to the ruling class is brutally oppressed and silenced. There are shortages of goods and services and worse poverty.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STEWARDSHIP AND WORKS

Deuteronomy 10:14

Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

What on earth doesn't belong to God?

Nothing, ultimately everything belongs to him as he is the creator of it all.

Genesis 1:28

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

What has God given humans dominion over?

Everything on earth. People have the authority and responsibility to steward the earth.

Exodus 20:15

You shall not steal.

What belongs to us that no one has the right to take from us?

Our possessions, the fruit of our labor, our rightfully owned property

Exodus 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

How should we view what doesn't belong to us?

Without envy, but with satisfaction and gratitude for what we have. Coveting what one doesn't have and being envious of others leads to a dissatisfied life and the breaking of other commandments.

Various Proverbs

Proverbs 10:4 - *A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

Proverbs 13:4 - *The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.*

Proverbs 19:23 - *In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.*

What is the relationship between work and ownership?

Hard work brings increase and the reward of the fruit of one's labor, gaining and owning property.

You have no right to ownership or increase if you aren't willing to work.

Luke 19:11-15

¹¹ As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. ¹² He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' ¹⁵ When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.

In what ways are we accountable to God for our stewardship of what has been given to us?

We are accountable to use what we have been given for productive purposes and to bring honor to God. We are to bring increase for God's glory.

THINKING IT THROUGH

PRIVATE PROPERTY VS. COMMONLY HELD PROPERTY

1. Why are assets that are managed privately much more productive than those that are managed publicly?

People care more if they are personally responsible and/or will personally benefit or make a profit.

Example: The Automobile Club is much better run than the Department of Motor Vehicles. There is better service and less wait time.

2. What happens to markets and productivity when government interferes with the free exchange of goods and services?

They diminish and become less productive. Shortages and higher prices result. People stop investing.

Example: Rent control causes there to be a decrease in investment in new rental properties, since owners can't make a profit. That means less units are available for rent. Owners also stop making property improvements because they can't get a good return for their investment, so housing conditions deteriorate. In other words, the availability of housing decreases and what there is becomes less desirable. Free public education is another good example.

3. What happens when there is not strong legal protection for private property?

People are afraid to invest in property. They won't make improvements on what they do own for fear it will be taken over.

Example: Economist Hernando de Soto in his book, The Mystery of Capital, asserts that reliable, secure, and well-organized documentation of the ownership of personal property, such as land, houses, businesses, vehicles, and bank accounts, is the key to a prosperous country.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

GOVERNMENT CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY

1 Kings 21:1-15

21 Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. ² And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." ³ But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." ⁴ And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.

⁵ But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" ⁶ And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" ⁷ And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

⁸ So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city. ⁹ And she wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth at the head of the people." ¹⁰ And set two worthless men opposite him, and let them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." ¹¹ And the men of his city, the elders and the leaders who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. As it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, ¹² they proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹³ And the two worthless men came in and sat opposite him. And the worthless men brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. ¹⁴ Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

¹⁵ As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

What are the issues that this passage raises about government authority versus property rights?

Should having political power give someone the right to confiscate property? When does the government's right to tax become theft? How far should the right to eminent domain be exercised?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to ask that challenge ideas about property rights are:

1. Would you rather buy products made by private or government owned companies? Why?
2. What happens to businesses when wages are set by the government?
3. What happens when the prices of goods and services are set by the government?
4. What would happen if you weren't able to own or keep what your labor produces?

PRAYER

Thank God for his creation and the abundance it produces. Thank God for the ability to work hard and keep the fruit of your labor. Pray that you would be a wise steward over what you have been given and use it in a way that brings benefit to your family and society and honor to God.



*Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are
God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
Psalm 25:5*



THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN AND SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

The previous lessons have looked at the truth of God's design for social order and the deconstruction of God's absolute truth related to the nature of reality, marriage and family, sexual orientation and gender identity, equality and justice, human rights and property rights. In what way have each of these ideas been undermined by nihilism?

1. Truth – **There is no absolute truth. Truth depends on your perspective.**
2. God – **There is no God and therefore no meaning or purpose to life.**
3. Marriage and Family – **Marriage and family can be whatever you make it to be.**
4. Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity – **These are determined by people themselves, not nature.**
5. Equality and Justice – **Equality depends upon equal outcome and justice shows partiality.**
6. Human Rights – **Positive rights come from government. Other people must pay for them.**
7. Property Rights – **Government has the right to tax and confiscate property**

LESSON FOCUS

This concluding lesson will look at the most important foundational truth in understanding the problem of evil and its solution. The understanding of evil human behavior and its solution depends on one's view of human nature.

The two contrasting views of the nature of man are:

1st idea: Man is fallen by nature.

This view holds that man was created good, but became corrupted because of his disobedience to God. In this view, the source of human evil and corruption isn't external to an individual, but rather internal in each person. Evil behavior has its origin in the heart of a person. In this view, people do bad things because they want to do them.

2nd idea: Man is good by nature.

This view holds that people are born innocent and are by nature holy; it is the forces external to people that corrupts them. People aren't born evil; they become evil as a result of being mistreated by evil human institutions such as dysfunctional families, poor schools, negative peers, unjust governments, etc. In this view, the bad things we do are a result of bad things that were done to us.

1. How does our view of human nature affect how we try to solve the problem of evil human behavior? **If the problem is outside evil then the focus is on fixing things outside of oneself (family, society, government), rather than dealing with personal sin and the evil in one's heart.**
2. Which view has dominated our age? **People are corrupted by what is outside of them.**

Example: Freudianism and the idea of victimization represent a whole group of theories about negative human behavior, which propose that we do bad things because bad things were done to us. It is negative, unjust or traumatic experiences that defile us. It is our experiences with evil people or institutions that corrupt us. Therefore, the solution to sinful or negative behavior is to create families and institutions that are right, just and fair. It denies individual responsibility.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

Psalm 51:1-6

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

1. What was David's view of his nature?
He was born a sinner and his heart was bent toward evil. He saw his transgressions.
2. What did David see was the solution to his fallen nature?
He knew he needed God's mercy and cleansing power to make him right.

Mark 7:14-23

¹⁴ And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand:
¹⁵ There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him."

¹⁷ And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

²⁰ And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

What did Jesus teach us about the cause of evil human behavior?

The evil that comes out of us through our actions resides in our heart. It is part of us.

THE SOLUTION TO EVIL

Romans 12:1-2

¹² I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

1. What should be our response to God's grace?

To offer ourselves to God to do a transforming work, so we are able to do what God wants.

2. How does a correct response to God lead to the solution of evil human behavior?

God changes us into what he wants us to be. Transformation of the mind changes the way we think and therefore act.

3. Once we are transformed what are we able to do?

Test and see that God's way works. We can do what God wants us to do and see how good it is.

Hebrews 8:7-12

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those

days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹¹ And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. ¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

How does the gospel relate to the solution to evil human behavior?

Being saved changes us on the inside, so our hearts and minds want what is right. When we know God, he writes his law on our hearts so we want to do what is right to do.



THINKING IT THROUGH

TESTING THE VIEWS

1. How can we test which view better fits reality?
We compare outcomes. Trying to fix or change the people around us never works. Dealing with our own sin is all that we can do to make our personal life better.
2. In terms of the source of evil, what can be learned from the example of holocaust survivors?
Their suffering was horrendous, but they didn't become evil like the Germans who were so evil to them. The outside evil didn't corrupt them.
3. In terms of the source of evil, what can be learned from the Menendez brothers who murdered their wealthy parents?
They were children of great privilege who never experienced deprivation. Their evil was on the inside in their hearts and that is why they killed their parents.
4. How can we keep external evil from corrupting us?
By forgiving people who hurt us and do us harm.
5. What does a person's behavior reveal?
Behavior is an expression of the will and shows what is hidden in one's heart.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

HUMAN NATURE AND CHILD DISCIPLINE

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

1. What is the biblical view of the nature of a child and the purpose of child discipline?
The nature of a child is foolish and you have to discipline him in order to overcome his folly.
2. Why is the biblical view of child discipline rejected by our secular culture?
Children are seen as innocent and pure. Parents want to see the child's misbehavior as coming from somewhere other than the child himself; they want to think of the child as good.
3. Why are some parents afraid to discipline their children?
They think they might traumatize the child or hurt his self-esteem. They're afraid they will do something that will ruin the child. Instead of disciplining, they make excuses.
4. What ultimately results from believing one's child is born innocent and good?
The sin that resides in the heart isn't dealt with in the way it needs to be. When bad behavior isn't dealt with it becomes a habit. There is always an outside excuse to explain the behavior away and the child never learns to take responsibility for his actions and overcome his sin.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

STRATEGY

Recommended questions to ask that challenge ideas about human nature are:

1. Who created the evil institutions that have corrupted good people? Why haven't good people been able to create good institutions?
2. What was the Founders' intention when they formed a government of divided powers?
3. If Jesus was a good moral teacher, then can his teachings on the origin of moral evil be trusted?
4. Do children lie? Who teaches them to lie? What is the implication of that?

PRAYER

Thank God that he has made a way for all people to overcome the evil that resides in their heart. Pray that you would become more open to conviction of sin and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in your life.



*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,
a worker who has no need to be ashamed,
rightly handling the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15*