

## How to think like a Christian Session One

### 1. Introduction

- a. I want to start out this morning by talking to you about ideas.
  - i. That word, idea is one that we use in all sorts of different ways and the connotation of the word can cover a wide range of things.
    1. For example, you might have the idea to go to the movies, or you might have an idea that your spouse is cheating on you. Both ideas. Both on opposite ends of the spectrum.
    2. Ideas are complex agents, and once they get into your head it can be hard to get rid of them. For example, I could start talking about how there were ants all over our house this week. I was killing the ants and for about twenty minutes afterwards I kept finding ants crawling on me
      - a. Now here is the funny thing about that story. I was not trying to plant an idea in your head, but right now, one of two things will happen to some of you.
        - i. One, some of you already feel ants crawling on you.
        - ii. Two, some of you are going to go home and immediately check your house for ants.
    3. You know how it works. “Did I leave the iron on?” “Did I close the garage door?”
  - ii. What’s the point? Whether big or small, an idea has the power to change the way we think, alter our behavior and influence the way that we see the world.
  - iii. Because of this, ideas are dangerous things
- b. We saw this play out back in 2006 with the Duke Lacrosse Team
  - i. Ten Years ago, three of the four co-captains on the Duke men’s lacrosse team held a day-long party for their teammates at their off-campus house, just off the school’s Campus, in Durham, North Carolina. One of the supposed highlights of the party was to be a performance by two “exotic dancers” that the players had hired for a total of \$800. Crystal Mangum, a single mother of two children and a student at the nearby North Carolina Central University, also in Durham, was one of them.
  - ii. You may remember bits and pieces of what happened next. Mangum was black. All but one of the players on the lacrosse team were white. Among them were three particular young men, all of whom Mangum later accused of raping and sexually assaulting her in the house’s small bathroom. The young men were subsequently indicted by a Durham County grand jury and the indictments created a firestorm that played out in the media (including this publication) and on cable-news channels, and all across the Internet.

- iii. Almost immediately, everyone believed that this happened. There were marches across the campus, the team as a whole was under attack. There were calls for them to be castrated. People were genuinely outraged. They just knew that these elitist athletes had committed this crime.
  - 1. None of that was true. But it got reported that way over, and then it became fact, and it took a year for the truth to catch up
- iv. The thing is that there was actually no proof that anything ever happened. There was not even proof that any of the lacrosse players had ever laid a finger on her.
  - 1. To be clear, false rape allegations are few and far between. According to a 2010 study by Violence Against Women, only 2 to 10 percent of rape allegations are false.
  - 2. But in this case, it turned out that the interim DA fed the hysteria in an effort to be re-elected to the office.
- v. By the time the truth came out, it was too late. Lives were ruined and the young men, who no doubt made some bad decisions, became national villains.
- c. Ideas certainly don't have to be dangerous, but it is clear that the wrong ideas can catch hold and not let go.

## 2. Body

- a. First let's define a couple of terms that are going to be important to our discussion over the next several weeks. Ideas are thoughts and suggestions about what we ought to do.
  - i. Our ideas largely determine our understanding of life's meaning and guide us in the way we live.
  - ii. There are important questions that we all ask at some time in our lives and we all have ideas about each of them. Questions like:
    - 1. Am I loved? If I were to disappear, would anyone miss me?
    - 2. Why do I hurt? Bad things have happened to me. Can I overcome them and find joy?
    - 3. Does my life have meaning? Is it possible for me to find direction in life?
    - 4. Why can't we just get along? What will it take for us to stop fighting and find harmony?
    - 5. Is there any hope for the world? So many things seem to be going wrong. Are we doomed?
  - iii. The set of ideas that we form in answer to these questions is called a worldview.
    - 1. A worldview monitors the ideas we are exposed to and isolates the ones that appear to be destructive.
    - 2. But it's possible to have a worldview that is porous, letting through some of the most damaging ideas.
    - 3. Or a worldview might be skewed in some way, welcoming ideas bent on doing us harm.<sup>1</sup>

4. For example, if you answer the question “Am I loved” in the negative, you are going to see the world much differently than someone who believes they are loved.
- b. As much as we might like to think that we make all our own determinations about who we are and what the world is like, the truth is that we are heavily influenced by many different voices around us. And an idea can be like a virus.
    - i. In 2014, a ruinous Ebola outbreak occurred in the desperately poor African nation of Guinea.
      1. A critical-care physician named Rob Fowler traveled to Guinea to offer his help, knowing this could be a death sentence. He arrived at the Kipe Hospital in Conakry, where doctors and nurses— the frontline defense against the Ebola virus— had been infected with the disease they were trying to fight. Fowler saw few others receiving care at the hospital.
      2. “Where are the patients?” he asked. “They ran away,” he was told. A rumor had spread that people were dying because doctors were killing them. Fearful and feverish, the patients had returned home.
      3. In doing this, they signed their own death warrants and those of their family members. Some 3,800 people in Guinea came down with Ebola. More than 2,500 of them died.
      4. Viral outbreaks are frustratingly hard to stop. Viruses aren’t alive and thus can’t really die. And viruses are everywhere, with new ones being discovered all the time.
      5. Viruses are often coated with protein so that the body does not recognize that something bad has arrived until it is too late.
      6. Viruses enter the body through small cuts as well as through the eyes, nose, and mouth. Once in a person’s system, they take cells hostage and reproduce rapidly. When a person has the flu, his or her cells might have churned out one hundred trillion virus copies.
      7. Fortunately, when alerted to their presence, the immune system goes into action isolating infected cells. The sick person gets better in a few days.
      8. Viruses such as Ebola, however, are more difficult for the body to deal with because they shut off its alarm system and reproduce themselves without being detected
    - ii. Ideas, bad ideas in particular, can act just like a virus. Bad ideas can multiply out of control, like the spread of a virus that becomes a pandemic.
      1. In truth, Ideas spread even faster than an actual virus. Through social media, they can travel the world in nanoseconds. At this moment, every “ism” from every part of the world— from communism to terrorism to materialism— is

- recruiting followers right here, among people who have backgrounds and outward lifestyles very similar to our own.<sup>ii</sup>
2. And even though idea viruses can cause great damage, it is difficult to accurately identify bad ideas until after they have struck.<sup>iii</sup>
    - a. Bad ideas can hitch rides on someone or something that otherwise seems completely harmless.
    - b. Just as viruses trick the body because they're coated with proteins, something the body finds beneficial, bad ideas attempt to make themselves believable by coating lies in bits of truth<sup>iv</sup>
  - iii. This is an important concept- that bad ideas attach themselves to the truth so that they sound like good ideas even if they are bad ideas.
    1. This idea is not a new concept but a very old one. Satan has always used ideas to manipulate us.
      - a. The serpent tempted Eve in the garden with an idea. You will not surely die. Eat the fruit and you will be like God.
    2. Open your bibles to Revelation chapter 13
      - a. In this chapter of the book of revelation, it describes three different creatures
      - b. There is the dragon that was cast down out of heaven. It is powerful and in charge of what is going on
      - c. There is the beast out of the sea.
        - i. **Revelation 13 2-4** The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"
      - d. Then there was the beast out of the earth
        - i. **Revelation 13:11-14** <sup>11</sup> Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. <sup>13</sup> And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the

people. <sup>14</sup> Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

3. What has Satan done? He has given the world a copy of the Father, the son, and the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Satan copied the design that God had laid out.
  - b. But instead of a loving father, a humble son, and an indwelling spirit, we get all the manifestations of human power.
  - c. And those who are not in the lamb's book of life worship these beasts.
4. In fact, we even see Satan try to use this trick when he tempted Jesus.
5. **Matthew 4:1-7** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted<sup>[a]</sup> by the devil. <sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."
 

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'<sup>[b]</sup>"

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'<sup>[c]</sup>"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'<sup>[d]</sup>"

  - a. It is worth noting that Satan does not try to (except for the third time) get Jesus to do something blatantly wrong. Instead he injects truth into the argument so that it makes it more difficult for Jesus to stand firm
    - i. If he can Get Jesus to agree- you're right, that is who I am, then he can convince Jesus to violate God's will
- c. But surely Christians know the difference between what God wants and what God doesn't want. We have the bible after all
  - i. Yes, we have the Bible. But we are also encouraged by several different voices to see the world through eyes other than God's. The most widespread and influential counterfeit worldviews are:
    1. Secularism, which claims that we can use human intelligence to control life and make it turn out the way we want.

2. Marxism, which declares that life is about capital, and the true path to peace and equality is through violent overthrow of all existing social structures (government, economic systems, family, and religion).
  3. Postmodernism, which insists that objective (capital-T) truth doesn't exist, only the subjective (lowercase-t) truths we create for ourselves.
  4. New spirituality, which asserts that a higher consciousness or god force is at the core of reality.
  5. Islam, which teaches that everyone is born Muslim (in submission to Allah) and must conform to Islamic truth or be conquered through jihad (the struggle against anything opposed to Allah and Islam).
- ii. Each of these worldviews tells us something about God, right and wrong, life, the soul, society and government, law, money, and history. They often adopt disguises to keep their motives and strategies hidden. That's why they can powerfully influence people without their awareness.
  - iii. A study conducted by Barna Group, commissioned by Summit Ministries, shows the need for strengthening the biblical of practicing Christians now more than ever.
    1. In previous Barna research, they have determined that only 17% of practicing Christians have a view of the world that holds to the model the Bible sets out.
      - a. That leaves a stunning 83% of those who consider themselves to be Christians but do not hold a biblical worldview, what *do* they believe?
    2. This new Barna research has found these 83% to be adapting an extraordinary amount of ideas that are rooted in competing worldviews: new spirituality, secularism, postmodernism, Marxism, and Islam.
    3. Summary of the findings:
      - a. 61% agree with ideas rooted in New Spirituality.
      - b. 54% resonate with postmodernist views.
      - c. 36% accept ideas associated with Marxism.
      - d. 29% believe ideas based on secularism.
      - e. 38% are sympathetic to the teachings of Islam.
    4. New Spirituality
      - a. 28% strongly agree with the statement that " All people pray to the same god or spirit, no matter what name they use for that spiritual being"
      - b. 23% strongly agree that "Many religions can lead to eternal life; there is no 'one true religion'" and
      - c. 32% strongly agree with the karmic belief that "If you do good, you will receive good. If you do bad, you will receive bad"

5. Secularism
  - a. 20% strongly agree that "Meaning and purpose comes from working hard to earn as much as possible so you can make the most of life"
  - b. 13% strongly agree that "A person's life is only valuable if society see it as valuable"
6. Postmodernism
  - a. 23% strongly agree that "What is morally right and wrong depends on what an individual believes"
  - b. 19% strongly agree that "No one can know for certain what meaning and purpose there is to life"
7. Marxism
  - a. 14% strongly agree that "The government, rather than individuals, should control as much of the resources as necessary to ensure that everyone gets their fair share"
  - b. 32% say the problem with society is "Rich people exploiting the system in a way that hurts the working class"
8. Islam
  - a. 24% say that "The Allah of the Koran is the same God as Yahweh of the Bible"
  - b. 13% say the problem with society is "Failing to appease God's wrath by punishing non-believers"
- d. God has always been concerned about the influence that other voices have on our way of thinking.
  - i. You live in the crosshairs of a secret battle of ideas. The enemy's objective is to win this battle for your mind. Satan knows your life will reflect the ideas you adopt. In fact, it's likely this battle has already affected you, though you may not realize it.
  - ii. God has been concerned for good reason. God has seen this happen from the beginning.
  - iii. God actually gave instruction to his people so that he might protect them from being influenced
    1. **Deuteronomy 7:1-4** When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—<sup>2</sup> and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.<sup>3</sup> Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons,<sup>4</sup> for they will turn your children

away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you

- a. God knew that when they went into this land, they would be surrounded by "other gods" and if they married these people, their beliefs would be challenged and they would lose sight of God.

iv. Paul reinforces this idea in the book of Ephesians

1. **Ephesians 6:10-12** <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
2. Two things I want us to notice. WE are to arm ourselves against the devil's schemes. His plans and his ideas.
  - a. The struggle that we face is for our minds, the way we think, the way we see the world because Satan knows that if he can influence the way we think, then he can pull us away from God.
3. Ideas have consequences.

e. We can't avoid asking the core questions about life that come with being human, and we'll always be driven to seek answers.

i. But we need a reliable guide. We can learn to trust what God has revealed about himself, the world, and humanity. Trusting his truth changes lives and ultimately the world. Ideas have consequences, and true ideas give life.

ii. Here's a simple set of "declarations of freedom"— five truths that release us from the grip of idea viruses that intend to do us harm.

1. These declarations help us get a proper view of the world and for the world and resist the bad ideas trying to penetrate our defenses:
2. I am loved. Deep, unconditional love exists, and I can have it.
3. My suffering will be overcome.
4. Hurt will not win. Indeed, it already has lost.
5. I have an incredible calling. My life has meaning. I bear God's image.
6. I am meant for community. I can overcome conflict and live at peace with those around me.
7. There is hope for the world. I am not doomed. What is right and just and true will win.<sup>vi</sup>

iii. Bad ideas seek to convince us that love isn't real, suffering is meaningless, our lives have no purpose, we are alone, and despair is unavoidable. Only a strong, truth-based worldview can keep idea viruses at bay.

### 3. Conclusion

- a. What are we attempting to do?
  - i. We want to know what we are up against
  - ii. We want to be able to tell the difference between what is from God and what is not
- b. We combat idea viruses with the only antidote. The Christian worldview. This worldview says that life is about Jesus Christ.
  - i. Jesus Christ is at the heart of Christianity. He has shown us not only who he is but what he wants for us and from us. Other worldviews may offer interesting insights, but they ultimately leave us unfulfilled. Only in Jesus can we find answers to life's toughest questions

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<sup>i</sup> Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 238-248). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition

<sup>ii</sup> Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 358-360). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iii</sup> Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 257-259). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iv</sup> Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 448-450). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.secretbattlebook.com/research.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Myers, Jeff. The Secret Battle of Ideas about God: Overcoming the Outbreak of Five Fatal Worldviews (Kindle Locations 324-331). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.