Chapter 2

Truth Or Consequence—
Absolute Truth vs. Relative Truth

[a transcription of the Sunday Bible class by Bill Karavatos, July 20, 2014]
(Please review the Notes at the end before beginning.)

Some think this is too dry of a subject to lead with. But, acceptance of any proof will not occur unless you get past this with understanding.

The Population’s Moral Truths

It’s findings like this that make “truth” our first critical subject —

Less than 44% of dedicated Christians are certain that absolute moral truths exist.

This is not necessarily just in the Lord’s church as we know it by how it’s defined in the NT. It’s the Christian population that labels itself as “born again” or evangelical.

Based on that, here’s the real problem for America— all the rest of those who call themselves evangelical/born again Christians, the remaining 56%, are all wrong! They believe it’s not absolutely necessary to believe in God of the Bible or Christ or anything else biblical. The reason they’re wrong is because God’s word is full of moral truths, and by their preference, they’re saying any or all of them are not absolute. [See note 10.]

Here’s the frightening part. If we include all self-declared Christians, the numbers get much, much worse.

This is the huge problem of Christianity in general. And it’s why society doesn’t make moral progress. It regresses in fact.

I have to say it again because it’s such a shocking report.

Less than 44% of dedicated Christians are certain that moral truths, which are absolute and unconditional, actually do exist.
Basic Definition Of Absolute Truth

Okay, so what is absolute moral truth? It’s anything which can be considered moral or good regardless of any circumstance, or anything which can be considered immoral or evil regardless of any circumstance.

So our first step in our journey has to be a real basic one. It’s this question of truth. If you or others are not convinced that absolute truth can exist then answering any issue is nearly impossible. Impossible for either convincing yourselves or anyone else. And the reason for that is because your reasoning can never reach a conclusion!

If absolute truth doesn’t exist, you can’t even prove that God exists. A critic can just wave off the considerable supporting evidence with a claim that it’s not persuasive by his standards. And it doesn’t matter how valid your evidence is. In a world where relative truth prevails, like ours today, anything goes.

Now convincing someone they need a savior in order to get into Heaven can be even more futile. They can be just as convinced that they don’t need one.

If you take all the fluff out of their conversation, this is their likely bottom line — “What I believe about this is true enough for me, so it doesn’t matter what you believe.”

You see, here’s the problem. As I just said, truth is almost a foreign subject in today’s society. The late, great Winston Churchill hit it on the nose when he said —

“Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.”

That’s about the size of the world’s attitude on truth for most all fields. Unfortunately, it’s an area that really counts for both us and the public to get right so you have to know how it effects everything.

Keep in mind, if you’re a Christian, God has marked you as being “in the world” but not “of the world.” Your actual home has become Heaven so you’re no longer “of the world.” You’re here to get to know how this world thinks and works in order to do our job better, the one God expects of you, here.

Discussion Question — Is that kind of job description a little too scary to bring up so early in the semester?

It could be a turn-off because people tend to want things with minimal effort. So it’s a little risky.
Whose Problem Is Truth?

Now, the issue of truth may not be your personal problem, or it may be. But it sure is for some other believers and the public. I said the research findings were that only 44% of “born-again” adults are certain that absolute moral truth exists. But worse yet, it’s only 9% for teens in that group. And worse again, that national survey was done in 2000, so it’s much worse, now. Christianity is dead unless that’s turned around.

You can’t convince someone to live by God’s word to mankind until you get them past this barrier; this position that absolute truth can and does exist.

Specifically, then, where is this important? Well, for one, it better be the support for these kinds of lessons —

- How a proof that you present can be accepted as absolute.
- How Christianity can rightly claim absolute truth and exclusivity.

So that’s the challenge handed to us by those in the relativism camp — Prove it!

Here’s The Contradiction In All This

We demand truth in virtually every area of our daily lives, like —

- What loved ones tell us.
- Info from doctors or employers.
- Auto repair mechanics, but we aren’t sure we ever get it.
- Food sources, but we don’t know if we get it from them (it’s rare).
- From Government, which is a joke in itself to even consider.

But when it comes to ethics and morality issues, the populace doesn’t want to hear about truth. In fact most plain reject that any religion can be the truth.

Regarding Government because of its importance here, it sets the national attitude whether we like it or not. And today, that attitude is what we call “postmodernism.” It’s today’s cultural philosophy that says — Absolute truth does not exist, and that all viewpoints are equally valid. Now there’s more to it than that, and it may be helpful to list a few of its other main ingredients so you get a better flavor of this postmodern thinking —

- No universal truths.
- Highly political.
- Focus on technology.
Perfectly acceptable to not be logical or reasonable.

The past is irrelevant relative to the present.

Temporary happiness is just fine.

This position about absolute truth is from the highest levels, on down. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that we’re in a moral cesspool. E.g., CDC stats of 2008 tell us that 110M Americans have a STD, a sexually transmitted disease, and it’s getting worse, yearly. That’s how bad it’s gotten.

Take Obama’s book, “The Audacity Of Hope.” He goes to great lengths arguing that there’s no such thing as absolute truth. So in the Oval Office is America’s first, full-fledged, postmodern president.

Ever watch those committee hearings where White House administrators and appointees are grilled? Those slippery folks show little-if-any evidence of a sense of absolute right and wrong.

**Demanding Truth In Particular Areas**

So why do people demand truth in one area and not another?

Because, for moral issues, people don’t want to be held accountable to a standard. God told us that.

> John 3:19-20 — 19 And this is the judgment: the light [God] has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

These are those people, those who sidestep the light, and they’re increasing! It’s really nothing new. It’s just people just closing their eyes to reality.

So what do they end up doing? They blindly accept claims about truth that either fit their personal attitudes or have been shaped to sound good to them. They blindly accept politically correct claims, good or bad, as well as contradictory truth claims. Claims that everything is relative; that there are no absolutes. To them, weighing evidence and coming to a valid conclusion is akin to wizardry.
**Principle Of Confirmation Bias**

Then we’ve one the biggest influences of all, the Principle of Confirmation Bias. This one effects everybody. You have to be constantly asking yourself if you’re holding onto something because of this.

This is what the Principle of Confirmation Bias is —

People have a powerful tendency to pay attention to, or seek out positions or information that *agree* with their own notions. Further, they tend to distort or ignore what *contradicts* their notions. So it all just strengthens beliefs they already hold, whether they’re right or wrong. This is a *powerful* influence on a person and is a powerful barrier to break through when getting absolute truth understood.

The downside of all this is people can easily end up believing a lie. Again, they don’t want to be held *accountable* to a standard they don’t like.

**Proof vs. Persuasion**

Also understand in all this that there’s a difference between “proof” and “persuasion.”

I can absolutely prove something to you, and you might remain *un-persuaded* by it. You see that all the time in life. Some people just don’t want the facts to get in the way of their notions.

Actually, our job is *not* to persuade. Now, I know that sounds a little strange. Our job is to present the proofs real well. As confirmation of that, the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 that’s the way it goes regarding Christianity.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 — 6 I planted, Apollos [the disciple] watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

You see, this is saying that, in the end, God has it happen. You’re like a lawyer in a courtroom presenting a factual case. That’s the job. But if you’re a poor “lawyer,” you lose!

Discussion Question — What does this mean in total?

Only God can cause a person to finally surrender into the proof. We glorify God, alone, for accomplishing that salvation of a soul. *We* just present the facts, but we do it so it results in persuasion, that flick of light in a dark room.
Without that final work of God, though, people will not submit to the truth, generally.

Discussion Question — Why won’t they, generally?

Because of that overwhelming bias that exists in the human heart.

Discussion Question — What do you do when a person doesn’t accept the proof offered?

Take Jesus’ advice in Matthew 10 — brush it off and go on to someone else.

Matthew 10:14 — And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town.

The Real Scope Of Our Work

So do you now see the real scope of our work?

You’re not just struggling against ignorance. You’re also struggling with the bias that’s against moral truth, against the things of God. You have to understand that’s what’s going on.

You should also understand that most changes in thinking don’t occur “on the spot.” Most people who lose an intellectual argument, know it. They may not admit it or submit to it “on the spot,” however. But later, they’ll often accept it and perhaps take action.

First, Undo Established Thinking

Our first step is to undo the existing damage.

To do this you need to address these four Qs about truth —

1— What is truth?
2— Can truth be known?
3— Can truth about God be known?
4— So what? Who cares about truth?

We’ll cover all of these and more as we go along.
Reiterating so you don’t lose sight of the objective — If you and others are not convinced that absolute truth can exist, then answering any issue is nearly impossible.

**What Is Truth?**

Let’s take the first one on the list, here, of “What is truth?” Very broadly, truth is “telling it like it is.” Or in other words, “that which describes an actual state of affairs.” Or In other words, the universal state of reality.

You have to be careful with this, though. We often hear a claim of some absolute truth but it changes, later. E.g., that “big bang” belief of our universe’s birth is claimed to be absolutely true. But every few years there’s contrary knowledge, and that old version wasn’t “absolutely true” any more.

What society considers as absolute moral truth is similar; it changes. And as you know, the reason is because society, itself, changes. So if it’s changeable by man, it’s not an absolute truth. Therefore we must turn to a source that’s not changeable.

Discussion Question — What’s the only source outside of man?

It has to be the source of it all, the creator of it all. No other answer makes sense. There is no other source outside of mankind.

**Law Of Non-Contradiction**

Now, contrary to what’s taught in public schools and universities, truth is not relative but absolute. If something is true, it’s true for all people, all the time, everywhere. It excludes its opposite, the opposite of that truth. Something cannot be true and not true at the same time and in the same sense. There is no middle ground in this.

This is called the Law of Non-contradiction, the “first law” of logic science. This is true for everything, and that includes moral and religious truths. Watch out; people will avoid this Law when it suits them.

Discussion Question — Why do they tend to avoid it?

It’s just simple human nature, they’ll deny it whenever they want to avoid a conclusion they don’t want to accept.
But then, that person is denying rationality, meaning logical and analytical thinking. So if someone isn’t rational, his position is, by definition—irrational, illogical, and unjustified.

What About Opinions?
Keep in mind, now, objective moral truths are not just matters of public opinion.

Different cultures can have differing opinions. Their opinions cannot all be true, though. There’s always a higher authority to appeal to if there’s conflict. As Justice Robert Jackson pointed out — “There is a law above the law.”

Some Truths About Truth
Here’s some truths about truth you should keep in mind as we go forward —

- Truth is discovered, not invented. Gravity existed prior to Newton’s discovery, e.g.
- Truth doesn’t change. Our belief about it might, but absolute truth, itself, doesn’t change.
- Truth is true for all people, all the time. 2 + 2 = 4, e.g.
- Beliefs cannot change a fact. 90% of people might believe differently, but a fact is a fact. It remains unchanged.
- Right and wrong are not determined by individuals but by the reality.
- All truths are absolute truths. There’s no such thing as a relative truth. What you think about the state of something isn’t the relevant factor. It’s what that “something” actually is that matters most. And it doesn’t matter if others agree with you or not.

So, if truth is discoverable, you have to lead yourself (or someone else) to agreement on what it is. This is important because, later, I’ll outline the steps in proving the existence of God. One of the ways I’ll get there is by proving there are absolute moral truths; truths that are above man’s invention; truths that pre-date mankind.

Here’s an issue about this that’s destroying societies. Too many people generally say morals are relative, not absolute. They’re saying, “What I want to do with my private life is my business, not God’s business.” I’ll show they’re
saying, in effect, that God of the Bible does \textit{not} exist. So then, pay \textit{particular} attention to proofs coming up that shred that claim.

\textbf{Here’s What We’ve Got, So Far}

Contrary \textit{beliefs} are possible, but contrary \textit{truths} are \textit{not} possible. This seems obvious, right? But then, how do we deal with the popular claim that there \textit{is} no objective truth?

As long as that claim persists, the country will continue to slide into a moral cesspool.

\textbf{What Is Relativism & It’s Consequences}

Now one consequence of this wrong attitude is what’s called relativism. This is the main belief system in today’s culture. It is \textit{so} popular and \textit{such} a killer.

First, before we get into why it’s so, what exactly is relativism, and what does it produce? Relativism the belief that there’s \textit{no} absolute truth. In other words, if it’s right for me, it’s perfectly alright. So, anything goes, and “my conscience is clear.”

Relativism says that the truths or morals you hold are okay if they’re according to the culture of the day. Or even, according to your own version of it.

In other words, moral truth depends on the circumstances of the moment. It’s saying to everyone — “Your truth is \textit{your} truth, and my truth is my truth, and that’s the way the world is, period.”

Followers have severe problems dealing with absolutes. They, therefore, have problems with absolute moral truth. In other words, problems with God amongst other things.

Barna Research’s findings in 2010 tell us how bad this has become. By 3-to-1, adults say that truth is \textit{always} relative to the person and his situation. And most \textit{all} teens believe moral truth depends on the circumstances

We’re in real trouble, here.

\textbf{More Consequences Of Relativism}

Here’s some examples of the consequence of relativism.
In 2013, a columnist for Religion Today reported a class situation by a friend who was a high school teacher.

Up until 2003, if the concept of evil came up, he could always say —

“Hitler and the Nazis were evil,” and his students would readily agree.

But that’s no longer the case.

Hitler, they now tell him, was probably just doing the best he could.

Yes, he made some mistakes, but who are we to judge him or his culture?

These kids are now in their late 20s. How do you bring them to the truth when they’re blind to truth? They’re so marinated in relativism that one of the worst genocidal leaders in history gets a free pass.

That’s scary. See why it’s a #1 priority?

There’s examples of this all over; secondary students unwilling to criticize obvious acts of outright cruelty. “Maybe in another culture, it’s okay,” they say.

So much for this “values education” that’s promoted now; the process of students learning “life values” from their teachers. This is about as safe as toasting marshmallows in a dynamite factory.

The overriding message these students are getting is — Never judge, never criticize, never take a position. The reasoning — Most everything is relative so it’s a sound strategy.

In public schools all over, students are being taught that there are no moral absolutes. That there’s no objective standard of morality that applies to all people. And those who claim otherwise are usually characterized as ignorant or prejudiced.

Unfortunately, the indoctrination of younger generations by these educators has proven to be very effective. And it’s effective because students just don’t know enough on how to challenge what they’re being fed. So they walk away thinking there are no answers. Thirty minutes of class on Sunday mornings doesn’t do it, you see.

This is a real tragedy in education. This is about the leaders of tomorrow. And we’re now seeing them in place!

**Research In Allen Bloom’s Book**
Here’s some more interesting research in Allen Bloom’s “The Closing of the American Mind” — 94% of high school grads entering colleges are already assuming the philosophy of relativism. And then, in the following four years, it becomes set in concrete.

Why is this happening? For one, the academic community has a mind that’s closed to objective truth. It’s closed because of where it leads. It leads to God, and they’ll have none of that, thank you.

Discussion Question — What attitude results from that by students?

- A mentality of — “I can do what I want, and so can you.”
- Or, “There’s no need for any so-called god to set my standards.”
- Or, “There’s no benefit to me for that.”

**Combating These Results**

How do you combat this, for any age group?

Well, isn’t the standard answer to teach God’s word far and wide? Well, sure. But it’s how you do it that counts. The Apostle Paul, in his Mars Hill sermon in Athens, is a great example of tailoring the message. We should review that, early-on. Then realize that’s the solution— tailor the message.

You see, the problem is mainstream culture has an increasingly hostile view of Christian ideals. So it has isolated Christianity into something that only deals with values.

The obvious solution, then, is young and old need to develop a global view. Young and old need to address and understand all of reality. Why? You can’t battle untruth unless you know what it’s about.

That doesn’t mean to live this world view. It means to know it and use it to your advantage.

A Sunday-school understanding of Christianity used to be enough. In today’s hostile world, it isn’t. You have to be more intentional. You have to answer criticism or apathy, head on.

In Christianity, this is included in the field of apologetics. Apologetics doesn’t mean apologizing for something, by the way. Apologetics is defined simply as the defense of the Christian faith. (That word is directly from the biblical Greek word that means exactly that.) The primary aim is not necessarily to
convert someone, although that’s often an outcome. It’s to refute someone’s wrong thinking so he cannot harm others.

By and large, you don’t know how to do that. You can memorize the top 500 verses in the Bible and still not know what to do.

P.S. — We’re not going to be doing that.

We’re In A Battle

We’re in a battle of world views and must be prepared for battle.

Sound familiar? It’s just a continuation of Ephesians 6, the armor of God. This is all about satanic doings, after all.

Christianity requires both an offense and a defense. Other than Ephesians 6, here’s our marching orders for the offense —

2 Corinthians 10:5 — We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

And don’t forget that our defense order is 1 Peter 3:15.

1 Peter 3:15 — but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

What presses my emotions in this area is that familiar, old song “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Read the lyrics. You’ll see what I mean.

Fielding Negative Opinions About Truth

What do you do when you get that push-back? Like, “There’s no such thing as truth.”

Here’s a tactic that’s probably the most valuable you can learn. It’s a good place to start because you can often win a person over to your position, the truth, right away. It deals with how to identify and discredit statements you’ll often get, like this — “There’s no such thing as truth.”

This is what’s called a “self-defeating statement.” When you examine it, it’s a bunch of nonsense. It’s like me saying — “I can’t speak a word of English.” It’s self-defeating. I just spoke it in English! (I borrowed that example.)
So, a self-defeating statement is one that fails to meet its own standard. It defeats itself, and the source along with it.

They’re used all the time. Especially by those we’ve been talking about. We, here, may use them ourselves in thought or action at some point. It’s a common mistake.

Let’s take it back to that attack of, “There’s no such thing as truth.”

He’s, of course, rejecting God’s word as binding on him. Your response is not to immediately say, “Yes there is!” Your response is to immediately say, “Well, is that true?” What you’ll probably get back is a blank look.

Do you see his contradiction clearer, now? His statement is self-defeating. It doesn’t meet its own standard! According to him, his own claim can’t be true. So he’s beaten right off and probably ready to listen with a more open mind.

The objective, here, is to open his mind about truth. To agree there can be such a thing as truth! Then, you can go on to — What is the truth?

Self-defeating statements are routinely used in today’s culture. And you can tear them apart immediately. This quickly lets you get on to more pressing matters.

So remember — Self-defeating statements are crushable. Look for them in your own thinking, someone else’s statements, the news, reading material.

**The Skeptics Typical Claim, One More Time**

Skeptics of moral-related issues are famous for claiming that truth can’t be known.

Discussion Question — So what do you say back to them, again? —

“So your claim can’t be true, then.” Adding — “If truth can’t be known, neither can your own claim about it. So let’s go and prove those truths that can be known.”

And off you go explaining objective moral truths.

Once again so you’ve got it. The critic is boldly claiming that truth can’t be known while claiming his view is true. You’ve pointed out his statement is self-defeating as shown. There; there’s three times I’ve said it. Got it?

Here’s another rebuttal if you want to pile it on. Point out that his position is an absurdity of logic. The statement is a self-contradiction! Something can’t be X and non-X at the same time. Again, it’s that firm Law of Non-contradiction.
How About Religious Truths?

Why can’t all religions be true, then? That’s a popular one that comes up a lot in your or other’s minds. Or it’s popular parallel, “There’s many paths to heaven.” Each of us may have wrestled with these things at one time or another.

This is about that notion that all religions basically teach the same truths and following any one of them gets you the same results. Well, that’s a plain misunderstanding of world religions! Don’t fall for it. In fact, they have more contradictory beliefs than matching ones. They disagree with Christianity on every major issue, like — Nature of God ... Nature of man ... Sin ... Salvation ... Heaven ... Creation.

For example, Christianity says people are saved by grace. All others teach salvation is determined by your works; that you work your way into a heaven. That’s one example of dozens for each one.

Sorry; all religions do not teach basically the same thing. So, that notion is simply not true. Get it out of any discussion.

Skeptics Will Check The Strength of Your Position

This often comes up when you’re not sure of the truth of your own belief system.

Here, a skeptic usually wants to show your defense of the Bible is weak. So the question to you goes something like this — “How can you trust that Christianity is true if you haven’t evaluated all the alternatives?”

Now proving this, here, is ahead of our classes. But we need to examine the validity of the request, itself. I.e., how do you handle this request about truth, itself? This one can make you stutter a little. . . . “How can you trust Christianity is true if you haven’t evaluated all the alternatives?”

A right answer is to look at this like a trial in the courts. The prosecution is not required to examine every possible, alternative suspect. There’s no obligation to make the case about anyone other than the prime suspect. The jury decides, based on evidence, whether one person is guilty or not; decides whether the accusation is true or not.

The case for Christianity is made in a similar way. Only Christianity needs to be proven from an evidence standpoint. No other negative claims from
alternatives need to be made part of the proof. If there's enough evidence to show Christianity is true (and there is), you don't need to look any further. Jesus, e.g., repeatedly presented evidence to support His claims of deity.

Luke 7:22 — And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."

He didn’t present evidence that everyone else was not the Savior. He didn’t need to.

So, to the question — “How can you trust Christianity is true if you haven’t evaluated all the alternatives?” Simply respond — “I don’t need to evaluate all the alternatives. I only need to sufficiently prove Christianity, itself, is true, just like in a court trial. Why on earth would I have to do more for you than what’s done in court?”

**Tolerance Toward Other Religions**

Now what about this issue of “show tolerance” toward those other religions? How do you respond to that? After all, it’s “politically correct” to do that. We’re told we’re supposed to do that; show tolerance in other words.

This takes up more space in our minds than it should. Reason — Others teach opposites. Some say black is white, and some say black is black. It can’t be both at the same time and in the same sense. Again, it’s the Law of Non-contradiction.

But in America today, you’re not supposed to think they’re wrong. You’re supposed to be tolerant of all beliefs. You’re supposed to accept every belief as true, or at least act like it is, publically. This is part of what’s called “pluralism,” a plural of religions (many religions) equally.

There’s a number of problems with this. Here’s a couple.

One is that these folks, pluralists, say we should not question other’s religious beliefs. And the reason they give is — It’s wrong to judge others. This is the culture-of-the-day, now.

Discussion Question — What did you just learn on how to demolish this position as absurd?

They, in fact, are judging anyone who’s not in their camp. They’re judging that you are wrong for judging someone’s beliefs.
They can judge, but nobody else can? That’s actually laughable.

Again, this is an absurdity of logic. Or an absurdity of justice. Or at least, stupidity for anyone going along with it.

You see, logic is the policeman who God put in our brain to blow the whistle to recognize the lie. The whistle blows when things don’t compute.

The laws of logic apply to all of reality. Logic is within a firm science. It’s not just something philosophers tinker with.

In fact, judging other religions is prominent in the NT. Now, I know we haven’t proved the Bible is 100% true yet. That is, proving it’s true without using the Bible. But let me mention this anyway.

Discussion Question — Who did Jesus constantly accuse?

He constantly accused the Jewish religious leaders for their belief system. He was judging them, in effect. Paul, Peter, Jude — They really laid into a leading denomination of the day. These were the Gnostics referenced in 1 John 4 and Galatians 1.

1 John 4:1 — Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

This is telling you to not be timid. Never let untruths go uncontested.

Galatians 1:8 — But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

What’s The Main Point On This Tolerance Issue?

Well, it’s this, and it’s all about love and respect for other people — You should tactfully but forcefully tell them the truth. And the reason is because it has eternal consequences for them. Actually, you are their ticket to Heaven.

Forward progress for getting people into Heaven depends on two things— their rejection of relativism and your presenting Christ lovingly to your friends, family, neighbors, and strangers. And that’s doing it powerfully. Nobody believes a wishy-washy talker. That’s what Colossians 4 tells us.

Colossians 4:5-6 — 5 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
Just your understanding of God’s worldview isn’t enough, you see. You have to communicate it in a way others can understand. You have to know some stuff to do this but not that much. Some of this semester is it.

I say again, it’s vital to keep in mind that a Christian is “in the world” but not “of the world.” That means you have to know how it functions to do our job. Don’t make it as your way of life, though.

**The Culture We Need To Work In**

What kind of a climate do we have today?

The climate in today’s culture is much like the one described in Acts 4. Peter and John were taken into custody because they preached the exclusivity of Christ. The Apostles’ stance in court was like this — "Do whatever you must to us, but we cannot stop speaking about what we’ve seen, and about what we’ve heard. We will not shut up; you cannot stop us."

Christians, today, need to stand for that same exclusivity, regardless of the cost. But it’s questionable whether Christians of today have that kind of commitment; that kind of backbone. Seems they only want to do whatever it takes to just survive. Or at best, keep their public enthusiasm for Christ at a subdued level. Tread water.

Christianity loses with those attitudes.

**How Did The U.S. Get So Wimpy?**

America is an experiment in democracy for fighting despotism. Despotism is a form of government in which a single class rules with total power, often a suppressive power. Democracy spreads the power to the people and protects it.

Alexis de Tocqueville, the astute French observer of American democracy, warned in the early 1800s that even America could fall into a soft kind of despotism. That could happen when the people expect their elected leaders to take care of them and their needs. And they yield freedoms in order to get it from them.

Sound familiar?

There’s a sneakier way this happens, too. Here’s an example in our own ballpark of interests.
When the moral foundations of society crumble, people tend to become easily influenced. They tend to embrace relativism as we have in the U.S. today. They no longer accept absolute rights and wrongs.

One outcome is the educational and political elite then teach us that it’s wrong to judge others. If you’re judging, you’re not going with their philosophy! And they don’t like that because they don’t want to be judged. So tolerance then becomes the supreme public virtue. They say, “Tolerate what you see us, the elite, doing.” Then, of course, you’ll have to be tolerating immorality in the process, e.g.

But it’s tolerance only as that group defines it. When all that happens, however, somebody has to then enforce the tolerance. And what emerges are so-called cultural judges— the media, the academics, political leaders, action groups, camera-ready “mannequins”. They begin to prescribe which things are in-bounds and which things are out-of-bounds.

**Examples Of Fighting The “Tolerance Cops”**

Remember what happened with political commentator Brit Hume? When Tiger Woods’ adulterous affairs became public? Hume recommended that he consider Christianity. He was publically crucified in the media for that recommendation. That’s how far society had fallen.

And how about the firing of the president of Mozilla, a large California hi-tech firm. He was essentially fired after a week on the job because, five years earlier, he donated $1000 to California’s Proposition 8. Prop 8 was for defining marriage as a man and a woman only.

Then there’s the cancelled TV show on flipping houses. The lead players were outspoken, conservative Christians in their private lives. A liberal group for gays and lesbians didn’t like it and complained. That intimidation got the show cancelled.

This just goes on and on, and it’s getting worse.

It’s akin to the “soft despotism” de Tocqueville warned about. It’s where the cultural elites eliminate the free expression of moral views in Christian lives. It's the kind of despotism that can catch you by surprise You wake up one day to find the Government stole your freedom. This’ll sound familiar if you think about it. Look around.

Here’s one that’s right in your belly for some.
The Attleborough Baptist Church put this on their marquis – “If you think there is no God, you better be right.” Underneath the words where flames pictured. One 20 year old complained to the police that the sign wasn’t loving. The police charged the church with hate crime and made it take it down. Doesn’t it sound like the Government is stealing your freedom? You bet it does.

What Needs To Happen At A National Level?

A true spiritual awakening has to take place real soon. If not, Christians need to be prepared to face real persecution for their faith.

You see, in a macro sense, the days of socially acceptable Christianity are over. It's no longer easy to be a faithful witness to the truths of the Bible. Oh, if you’re silent about its truths, you can be comfortable. But then, you’re showing that you’re ashamed of its content. But, you’ll be socially accepted.

But then, what do you do about Jesus’ words in Matthew, Mark, and Luke?

Luke 9:23 — And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

In other words, Jesus is telling you who won’t get into Heaven. He’s talking about changing your basic attitudes. We’re to renounce pride and instead, live to hold God high. We’re to renounce self-will. That means renounce calling the shots according to what we want in life, and live to do God’s will, instead. Put another way, it’s about renouncing self seeking, living mainly for our own goals and pleasure. We need to live, instead, to seek God’s righteousness.

So the quandary for too many folks is what to do when they learn all this stuff in the Bible is actually true!

Today then, Christianity includes taking risks and making sacrifices. It meant the same back then, too. Things never seem to change much for those who God wants in His corner.

Discussion Question — Are you a self-seeking person if you go to church every Sunday?

Maybe, or maybe not.

Many use the Bible and church to fulfill what they see as their own needs. The hub of their life is “self,” not God. He just happens to be one spoke in their wheel of a happy life. You have to make God the hub of your life, not a spoke.
What about the phrase “take up his cross daily.” We have to nail that down. First, though, we have to know what the cross represented, historically.

Discussion Question — What was the cross for in the First Century?

- Executions, death. The cross was a tool for slow, torturous execution.
- Everyone knew that. They knew that taking up a cross meant you were a dead man.
- You might as well give up all interest in this world, including self-fulfillment.

Discussion Question — What does “take up his cross” mean, here?

- Well, it’s not like putting up with a difficult mate or suffering from a painful affliction. It means you are dead to self, self-satisfaction in other words; dead to it. You’re here to now serve God according to His will for you. And it’s not difficult!

Discussion Question — What’s the payoff when you do this?

- A fulfilling life here, and Heaven afterward.

Discussion Question — What about the word “daily,” what’s that mean?

- It’s not something you accomplish in one moment of spiritual dedication. It must be an ongoing thing. The verb tense in the original Greek demands it.

What Needs To Happen At A Local Level?

In too-many areas, penetration by Christianity looks like a brick wall.

For example, take the 20-something population which is huge. Notre Dame U. sociologist Christian Smith researched their spiritual and moral lives and found that most are not anti-religion at all. They’re plain indifferent. They don’t object to talking about faith; they just never do anything about it.

Guess why?

They feel they have nice and pleasant relationships and life. They feel formal religion will only bring controversy to them. So why rock the boat? Why bring in situations where somebody might feel judged, e.g.?

This is just plain self-righteousness in addition to everything else. What they’re saying is, “My self is good enough, thank you.”
This is what you have to be aware of while in the world doing some good for God.

**Fighting The Lie About God’s Existence**

When you roll all these points and counterpoints together, as expected the main issue comes down to God, and that’s God in a real and personal sense. It’s a specific charge—God’s existence or nonexistence?

What are we doing about *this* specific charge at Christians? Why is this so important?

Well, our culture, and even many within churches, are in the grip of “the great lie.” The lie insists that God either does *not* exist or is *not* relevant to human happiness; that every person must decide for himself where to find happiness; that every person must find his own way that seems right.

So you’ve got to show the right way and have everyone believe Proverbs 14:12.

*Proverbs 14:12* — There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

**Let’s Take Relativism Versus “The Lie”**

The most obvious demonstration of the lie plaguing modern culture is relativism. Again, it’s the idea that there are *no* absolute truths. Relativists insist that truth is what people understand it to be depending on their circumstances and desires.

Those who know eternal truths cannot let this slip by. It’s a lie that ruins families, relationships, and churches.

But you *cannot* be tempted to merely have an angry rejection of the position and, then, walk away. That doesn’t influence anyone. You need to respond in careful, pointed, and effective ways. You’re just not being a decent person unless you leave those entangled in the lie well persuaded about the issue.

**The End Objective In All This**

What’s the end objective in all this, in *our* minds or another’s?

It’s to get to the truth about God, firstly. And then, to the need for a savior. It’s a long road for some, short for others.
And what has to happen, first? Agreement that there is objective truth. Remember, society fights that, especially for anything touching on moral issues. You may have even fought it, yourself.

So a big step is agreement that there is universal moral truth. Once that happens, you or they begin the path that will lead to God’s will for your entry into Heaven.

That’s the objective.

**Here’s Another Key Question That Hurts To Answer**

From how far do you have to come to defeat all this? Well, here’s a report that tells you how far. A high school teacher reported this about his class — Not one knew that Jesus was associated with Easter Sunday. This is Judges 2:10 all over again.

> Judges 2:10 — ... And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that He had done ...

We’re losing that generation unless we get with it. So you can’t just sit around wringing your hands. You’ve got to address them and their concerns in ways where they understand what the truth is and how it effects their lives.

**Future Comings**

Key issues about truth will also be covered in the chapters about proving the self-existence of God and about evil, pain, and suffering.

**One-sentence Take-aways**

So, our major, one-sentence take-aways on all this are —

#1 — There’s no such thing as relative truth. If the issue is the same, there cannot be truth for me and truth for you, unless they’re the same. The Law of Non-contradiction tells us that.

#2 — Here’s a good response to a skeptic that’s aggressive but non-threatening:

> “What you think doesn’t matter. The only thing that matters is what’s true. After you discover that, you can go do whatever you want. But at least base your decision on facts, on what’s true.”
End Notes —

1) These Notes were not part of the class material.
2) Bible verses are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
3) Most section headings in chapters were added during the transcribing process to help readers follow what’s going on.
4) The spoken form and style has been retained in the grammar.
5) Use of italics — Italics mean that the word or expression was vocally emphasized in the presentation of the material during the class.
6) Abbreviations used in these chapters — OT = Old Testament; NT = New Testament; e.g. = for example; i.e. = that is; M = million; B = billion; K = thousand; FW = free will; FK = foreknowledge; MK = middle knowledge
7) Contributions during class by attendees and associated discussions are not included due to limitations within the class environment.
8) The teacher’s answer to any Discussion Question serves either as the preferred answer or as simple prompts for class participation.
9) References (About references listed here — These transcriptions were done a long time (years) after the class. As a result this list of references is a “best estimate” of the authors used in that distant past. Admittedly, we are not good at keeping track of references for classes, speeches, or sermons at the time of preparation, probably because a publishing process was not anticipated, then. Here they are given by name of the author probably referenced during preparation of class notes.) — References for Chapters 2–6, 8–12, and 15 — Barna Research, Pew Research, evolvingcreation.com, creation.com, sentry.quora.com, youthworks.net, icr.org, C Smith, F Graham, T Rainer, J Denison, P Davies, R Likabyo, B Reichenbach, P Nelson, C Hunter, D DeWitt, G Purdom, S Meyer, D Axe, K Ham, J Tour, T Pratchett, Q Smith, S Hawking, RC Sproul, R Zacharias, J Sarfati, J Mason, R Jeffress, M Matthews, M Behe, B Thomas, C Luskin, A Goel, G Bates, W Rossiter, D Berlinski, L Cosner, J Stewart, D Batten, JW Wallace, J Miller, C Hunter, C Wieland, W Jackson, WL Craig, CS Lewis, T Stratton, J Mason, J Harnett, M Ambler, W Smith, J Tomkins, N Geisler, R Dawkins, F Zindler, F Turek, J Marks.

10) The herein population research is by Barna Group. "Born again Christians" are defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.