

Introduction

Last week brief review — we focused on the shift in thinking from modern to postmodern worldview. Overview of where this week fits into the evangelism equipping picture. We address apologetics in this class. To improve your evangelistic effectiveness consider taking the class "Sharing Your Faith."

Important Communication Guidelines

1. Find common ground.

Remember there are areas of common ground between Christianity and postmodern thought—even though we agree for very different reasons.

Why is connecting on **common ground** important?

We can correct misconceptions about Christianity. To meet loving, thinking, and culturally aware people is a great surprise to many—and often opens doors for further conversation.

Key areas of common ground: Consider, "What is the **biblical reason** for each point?"

- **Human subjectivity:** Humans are not able to be totally objective largely because of the fall. We are subjectively involved in everything we evaluate.
Romans 1:21, 28; Jer. 17:9
- **Inadequacy of reason alone:** Reason alone is inadequate for the construction of a comprehensive worldview.
1 Corinthians 2:14; Eph. 1:17, 18; Is. 64:4
- **The myth of "progress":** Modernism and its myth of progress toward utopia should be critiqued. Biblically, utopia is not expected before Christ returns. In fact, the Bible predicts that society will worsen as we approach the advent of Christ to such an extent that human extinction would occur without his return.
Matt. 24:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Matt. 24:22
- **Critique of racism and sexism:** Multiculturalism and racial/ethnic equality is a great concern of the postmodernist as it is with God. We should be very concerned about racism and sexism.
Gen. 12:1-3 (all nations blessed), Gal. 3:28
- **Concern for the environment:** We should be concerned for the care of the environment.
Gen. 2:15 (God's intention for humanity was benevolent rulership of the creation), Rom 8:20,21 (This expresses God's intent to restore the natural realm)

What are the limitations of communicating **only** on common ground?

You can't stop here, or you only give the impression that Christianity agrees with our current cultural ideology (the mistake of all theological liberalism). You have to go on to explain what else Christianity says, including where we disagree with the current postmodern consensus (e.g., absolute truth, one way of salvation, ability to adequately understand the author's intended meaning, etc.).

2. Pick carefully what to disagree with.

When talking about spiritual things with people influenced by postmodern thought, you will hear all kinds of things you disagree with (Examples: amorphous spirituality; relativism; positive statements about other religions, etc.). If you feel you must disagree with every false statement, you'll come off as excessively critical and probably not be heard. Instead, prioritize what you'll disagree with (e.g., "All forms of spirituality are equally valid.") and be prepared to let the rest go for now for the sake of continued open communication.

How can I deal with a controversial issue that threatens to kill communication?

The key is to be honest with what you want to accomplish with them. That is, to help them know God.

EG- "My beliefs aren't the same as yours, but I want to help you understand how I came to these conclusions rather than fight over it."

EG- "What do you think Christians think about this topic?" Often times we can find common ground with the non-Christian and help them see the true biblical perspective on a particular issue. "Let's see if we can find out what Jesus would say about this."

3. Be patient. Our culture is biblically illiterate.

Our culture is much more biblically illiterate than it was before. Formerly, most Americans had "theistic puzzle pieces." They understood the basic theistic worldview—they just needed someone to show them how they fit the puzzle together (e.g., salvation by grace vs. by works). We can no longer assume that people have this knowledge.

- **It takes people longer to understand and make an informed decision about the Gospel.** Today, we find that it takes not days, but weeks and sometimes even months for people to understand the gospel and make a genuine decision to receive Christ.
- **This means we must shift our thinking from "event evangelism,"** where we can explain and call people to a decision in one encounter—**to "process evangelism,"** where we may need to start with pre-evangelism and be very aware of the "decision continuum." (BOTH THESE TERMS NEED EXPLANATION)
- **Be gentle.** Remember that most people have not thought through the implications of their world view. We don't want to belittle them by destroying their position, even if we easily could. We need to help them see the inconsistencies in their world view and *gradually* they will develop a self critique. We rarely argue someone into saving faith!

4. Seek to understand and tell your story.

"Socratic evangelism" means asking people questions, and then following their answers up with more questions. Get used to asking people about their beliefs about God, spirituality, etc. People are generally much more willing to talk about this today than they were ten years ago—especially if you really listen and don't immediately negate, correct, etc.

- **Share—don't declare.** In general, it is better to simply share what you have discovered rather than to declare what is true. This is not a cop-out to moral/ideological relativism; it is an understanding of communication dynamics. In a group setting, the speaker can be much more declarative and forceful because the individuals don't feel put on the spot. In personal conversations, declaration tends to close down communication, while asking questions and sharing your discoveries tends to open it up.

5. Remember the witness of Christian community.

Community is much more important in our culture than it was before, because of the unparalleled failure in relationships (marriage, etc.). Few things are more attractive to postmodern people than the discovery that we, as Christians, know how to build real love relationships. Not just the real love we must have for them, but also the real love they observe that we have for each other (Jn.13:34, 35). When they see this, they are often more open to hear about your explanation of this relational richness.

Therefore, rely more heavily on ongoing friendship evangelism than on one-time encounters with relative strangers ("warm" vs. "cold" evangelism). Where should we look to develop such "warm" relationships? How can we do this?

In addition, include ways to intentionally expose your non-Christian friends to your Christian friends (corporate vs. solely individual witness). What ways have we developed to do this?

Now let's see how we can apply these communications guidelines to some common objections to Christianity.

Objection #1: "How can you say that Christianity is the only valid religion?"

Let's deal with the perspective, "All religions are simply different paths to the same goal."

(Different mountain roads which all lead to the summit).

1. Many religions are contradictory. While all religions have superficial similarities (Webster's: "The service and adoration of God or a god expressed in forms of worship"), they make contradictory claims about foundational issues.

(Steve Turner) "We believe that all religions are basically the same . . . They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God and salvation." (Steve Turner, British Journalist; quoted by Ravi Zacharias in Harvard lecture "Is Atheism Dead? Is God Alive?" in November, 1993.)

Are all religions basically the same as Steve Turner asserts, or are there substantive differences?

Consider the disagreement between the five great religions of the world on these crucial issues:

	WHAT IS GOD	OUR SPIRITUAL DILEMMA	WHAT IS SALVATION
CHRISTIANITY	Personal & Trinitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Conscious, personal fellow with God for all eternity
JUDAISM	Personal & Unitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Conscious, personal fellow with God for all eternity
ISLAM	Personal & Unitarian	Separation from God because of moral guilt	Enter Paradise for an eternal sensual pleasure (<i>bur</i>)
HINDUISM	Pantheistic or Polytheistic	Ignorance that all is one	Freedom from conscious, existence ("moksha")
BUDDHISM	Pantheistic or Atheistic	Ignorance that all is one	Freedom from conscious, existence ("nirvana")

There are many fundamental contradictions as we review this chart. For example, God can't be personal and impersonal at the same time. Salvation can't be conscience existence and personal annihilation at the same time. The way of salvation can't be a free gift and a wage earned at the same time. The differences are very clear and all religions cannot be held as true. **Don't just contrast Christianity to the other religions.** Evaluate the claims of Hinduism from an Islamic perspective, or the claims of Buddhism from a Jewish perspective.

Consider the conclusion of these scholars of world religions:

ANDERSON (Christian): "The fact is that generalizations about religion are almost always misleading. Nothing could be further from the truth than the dictum . . . 'Religion has not many voices, but only one.' . . . Even the most cursory examination of the theology of these different religions reveals far more contradiction than consensus." (Sir Norman Anderson, *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984, p. 15].

Zaehner (Hindu): "To maintain that all religions are paths leading to the same goal, as is so frequently done today, is to maintain something that is not true . . . (T)he basic principles of East and West . . . simply are not starting from the same premises. The only common ground is that the function of religion is to provide release; there is no agreement at all as to what (we) must be released from. The great religions are talking at cross purposes." (Colin G. Chapman, *The Case For Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1981], p. 143).

Clendenin (Christian): "Contrary to the idea that all the religions teach the same thing, by virtue of their historical particularity and specificity the many religions offer us radically divergent pictures of God, the world, life, death, the afterlife, and humanity . . . Historically and empirically it is obvious that a common essence is precisely what religions do not have; they aim at different goals, teach contradictory doctrines, and prescribe radically different experiences. Religion as a

common genus simply does not exist." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 64, 108).

Netland (Christian): "It is difficult indeed to escape the conclusion that some of the central affirmations of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Shinto are opposed; as long as the meanings of the doctrines within the respective religious communities are preserved, they cannot be jointly accepted without absurdity." (Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], pp. 110, 111).

Panikkar (Pluralist): "(Pluralists must abandon their quest for a common essence because) the incommensurability of ultimate systems is unbridgeable . . . (and any) alleged common denominator is a sheer reductionist abstraction." (Raimundo Panikkar, "*The Jordan, the Tigris, and the Ganges*," In Hick and Kitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988], p. 110).

Conclusion: Therefore, the "**Different mountain roads which all lead to the summit**" analogy is simply not true. The roads are on different mountains, they lead in fundamentally different directions and they end on completely different summits! We cannot hold the view that all religions are basically the same if we know the basic tenets of those religions.

2. Even the pluralist doesn't accept all religions as true or valid. Especially when they prescribe practices that are morally repulsive, even the most thoroughgoing religious relativist will usually admit this.

How many of us are really prepared to say that Baalism (with mandatory child-sacrifice), or many African Islamic sects (with mandatory clitorrectomy), or Australian aboriginal animism (with headhunting) are valid religions? How open-minded would we be about our children converting to these religions? How many of us would be able to say with a clear conscience "I'm glad you've found what's true for you?"

How many of us are ready to accept Hinduism's teaching that women cannot enter the eternal state, or the Koran's teaching that (Jihad) holy war is a virtuous way to spread the faith?

(Daniel B. Clendenin) "Do we really want to say . . . that all religions and religious practices without exception are pathways to God? . . . What about Hindu widow-burning, female infanticide, or Aztec human sacrifice (Hans Kung notes that 20,000 people were sacrificed in four days at the consecration of a temple in Mexico in 1487)? . . . But in assessing religion, pluralists have the problem of avoiding radical relativism, which . . . is inherent in their position. In fact, consistent relativism would render both praise and blame impossible. As the pluralists themselves acknowledge, without some criteria it is impossible to distinguish between Jim Jones and Mother Theresa, between an Amish village and David Koresh's Waco compound. To make critical judgments of any sort requires some standard or standards, but to introduce such criteria in order to judge religions is to no longer accept them all as equally true and good." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 50, 51).

3. A sad irony: no religion is taken seriously.

By insisting that all religions are really talking about the same thing (the "Real," the "sacred," etc.), it refuses to take seriously the truth claims of those religions. Thus, religious relativism, which accuses absolutist religions of being condescending and dismissive toward religions that disagree with them, is actually condescending and dismissive toward all religions!

(Daniel B. Clendenin) "Pluralism . . . is incompatible with and even antithetical to any traditional account of religion. If the pluralist is right, then the adherents of all the major religions . . . are badly mistaken in their traditional understanding and practice of their various faiths.

Consequently, a consistent pluralism requires a drastic revision . . . a genetic-like mutation, of all human religiosity as it has been conceived and lived throughout human history. It is obvious that such an absolutistic diagnosis and prescription are as theologically and culturally imperialistic as one can imagine . . . Pluralism's residual patronization lurks in the idea of a common essence. It suggests that the particularity of a religion's cumulative tradition really does not matter, that its many incongruities with other faiths are merely accidental or arbitrary. The more one emphasizes an essential core of religion, the less reason there is to take the particularities of a religion with genuine seriousness . . . Rather than a celebration of the world's heterogeneous and particular

faiths which might inform and challenge one's religious worldview, we have here a suffocating homogeneity . . ." (Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995], pp. 90, 108, 109).

Objection #2: "Why should I regard the Bible as God's Word? What about all of the other scriptures?"

In a religiously pluralistic culture, the Bible no longer commands respect.

Examples: Hinduism (*Rig Vedas; Upanishads*); Buddhism (*Pali Canon; Sutras; Tibetan Book of the Dead*); Confucianism (*Analects of Confucius*); Islam (*Quran*); Ba'hai (*Writings of Baha'u'llah*); Mormonism (*Book of Mormon*).

1. Most other scriptures don't claim to be revelation from God.

- **Most "scriptures" of Hinduism and Buddhism never claim to be a revelation from God** for the obvious reason that the eastern god is not a Person who speaks. Rather, they normally claim only to be human speculation. Likewise, the sacred Chinese books claim no supernatural inspiration or authority, Confucianism being less a religion than a venerable moral tradition.
- In fact, **only those religions rooted in the Bible** (including Islam and the Christian sects, like Mormonism) **are virtually the only ones who claim to have books that are actual revelation from God.**

2. Only the Bible is rooted in history.

- **Why is this so important?** Because the nature of spiritual truth claims is that they cannot be directly verified. How can we directly verify whether God is personal or impersonal? What the afterlife is like? Whether salvation is by works or by grace? **If all we had were the assertion of the scriptures, there would be no way to decide.**

But if that same text made factual assertions about areas we could test-like, say, historical matters-then we could indirectly test their spiritual truth claims. If they interface inaccurately in these areas we can test, why should we trust them in the areas we can't test? On the other hand, if they DO interface accurately in these testable areas, we have a basis for taking more seriously their spiritual truth claims.

Is 41:21,22 "Present your case," the LORD says. "Bring forward your strong arguments," The King of Jacob says. 22 Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them, and know their outcome; Or announce to us what is coming.

Is 43:9 All the nations have gathered together In order that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, "It is true."

- **Isn't the Bible full of undeniable historical errors?** Although it was once confidently assumed that archeology would prove the historical inaccuracy of the Bible, this is far from the case. While we cannot say that archeology *proves* the authority of the Bible, it is fair to say that **archeological evidence has provided external confirmation of hundreds of biblical statements.** See [Unit #3, Inspiration of the Bible](#)

Old Testament example: Scholars considered the Genesis account of Abraham (including Sodom and Gomorrah) to be mythological or ahistorical. Ur was excavated and shown to be a flourishing city around 2000 BC. The Ebla Tablets include some of the kings mentioned in Gen. 14. Tel Mardikh tablets mention Sodom and Gomorrah.

New Testament example: Scholars scoffed at Luke's references to Lysanius as tetrarch of Abilene (Luke 3:1) because the only Lysanius known from ancient sources was executed in 36 BC-60 years before Luke's reference. But two Greek inscriptions from Abila, northwest of Damascus, now prove there was a "Lysanius the tetrarch" between the years AD 14 and 29. (Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Archeology and the New Testament," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 653.)

- **Other scriptures are historically inaccurate or contain no history.**

The eastern scriptures have no interest in history, because according to their world view, this is the world of illusion from which we are to be delivered. Ancient polytheistic religions likewise had no interest in history. Their gods acted only in myths, removed as far as possible from real history.

The Koran is almost entirely assertions of Allah. It has very little historical material and when compared to parallel biblical material it often differs. A study of the Koran finds that Mohammed's references to Judaism are drawn from contemporary Jewish folklore (Josh McDowell. *The Islam Debate*. page 48.)

EG When the Israelites set up the golden calf in the wilderness they did so at the urging of a Samaritan. But Samaritans did not exist until then.

[Mentioned in Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, (Moody Press. Chicago. 1994) p. 549-552.]

The Book of Mormon makes many historical references, but it too is full of historical anachronisms and geographical inaccuracies.

[See also Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, (Moody Press. Chicago. 1994) p. 553-556.]

3. Only the Bible provides predictive prophecy.

This is a unique means of authenticating its claim to be God's inspired Word.

The Bible actually **anticipates** our need for such unique authentication and provides its own means of authentication via the phenomenon of **fulfilled prophecy**. The Old Testament prophets made hundreds of predictions about the coming Messiah, most of which were beyond anyone's power to deliberately fulfill, or beyond anyone's desire to fulfill unless they were the Messiah.

Is. 46:9,10 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

Time (Dan. 9:24,25) Over 500 years earlier, his death was predicted to the year. Refer to *Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense* by Dennis McCallum, Tyndale House Publ., for full treatment.

Birthplace (Micah 5:2) Of course, Jesus had no control over this.

Rejected by his people (Isa. 53) So detailed that prior to the Dead Sea Scrolls, many thought it was a Christian forgery.

Mode of Execution (Ps. 22:1-18) This was predicted several centuries before crucifixion was invented!

What about other "scriptures" and prophecy? In the vast majority, there is no prophecy at all or any comparably unique means of self-authentication.

Muhammad acknowledged that the biblical prophets were confirmed by miraculous signs (*Surahs* 3:184; 17:103; 23:45)—including prophecy, but when he was asked for similar confirmation that his message was from God, he refused (*Surahs* 2:118; 4:153; 6:8,9,37) and regarded the request as impious. (Norman Geisler, In Dean C. Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996], pp. 265, 266).

The predictions of other so-called prophets are unworthy of being compared to the biblical prophets. They usually lack context and the syntax is so general that any specific interpretation (and therefore, any verification) is impossible.

Baha'u'llah (Founder of the Baha'i faith in *The Hidden Words*, #63, about 1858): "O ye peoples of the world! Know ye verily that an unforeseen calamity is following you and that grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not the deeds ye have committed have been blotted out from My sight. By My beauty! All your doings hath My pen graven with open characters upon tablets of chrysolite." This is so general that it has no verification value.

Objection #3: "Why should I accept your interpretation of the Bible? Everyone has their own interpretation."

This is addressed extensively in [Unit #3, Biblical Hermeneutics and Inductive Study](#).

Objection #4: "How can your religion consign people to hell if they have never even heard about Christ?"

There are two distinct issues in this objection:

God's judgment of *all* people.

The justice of God's judgment.

1. Will God condemn all those who have never heard the Gospel?

While the Bible insists that all people are saved only through Jesus Christ, it does not say that people can only be saved *if* they hear about Jesus Christ.

(C.S. Lewis) " . . . God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no person can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him." (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 65.)

- **The Bible clearly teaches that God is just. Psalm 89:14** says, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you." In Genesis 18:25, Abraham rightly asserts "Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

There are many implications of justice, but one of them is that one is held responsible only for information which he has received—not for information which he has not received. Paul upholds this principle with regard to sin in Romans 4:15 when he says, " . . . where there is no law there is no transgression."

- The Bible also teaches that **God gives a significant amount of revelation about himself to the person "without the Bible."** Paul declares in Romans 1:18-20 that God has "made it evident" to such people not only that he exists, but also that he has certain attributes: namely, tremendous power and creative intelligence. These attributes have been revealed "through what has been made"—through the order of the external universe.

Paul says in Romans 2:14,15 that people without access to special revelation ("the Gentiles who do not have the Law") also know that God is a morally righteous Being. They know this because of the moral conscience, which he has instilled in each person. These passages make two important points.

First: The amount of light is considerable. God reveals to the unevangelized that he is powerful, personal (because he is intelligent and righteous). Man's conscience also convicts him that he has violated God's righteous character (Romans 2:15). Responding to this light properly would mean humbly coming before God asking for mercy. Thus, though the **means** of man's forgiveness is not revealed through general revelation, the **need** for it is revealed.

Second: The point of Paul's argument in Romans 1 and 2 is that these people have been given enough light to be justly condemned. But it would seem to follow (because of God's justice) that this would also be enough light to be saved-if people respond to it properly.

Another biblical fact is relevant to this question. **Old Testament believers were saved by their faith before the Jesus came.** Hebrews 11 lists many Old Testament figures who fit this description. Old Testament Jews had access to special revelation, but they had no clear understanding of God's plan of salvation, because the fact that the Messiah must die for our forgiveness was not clearly revealed (Luke 24:44-47; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Furthermore, some of the Old Testament people who were saved (like Melchizedek and Job) had little or no access to the special revelation to Abraham.

Another possibility is that God will judge based on his knowledge of how people **would have responded** had they heard the message.

Conclusion: If the "person without the Bible" responds properly, (as defined above) to the light God has given him, he would be saved by grace through faith by asking God for mercy. He will be saved only through the death of Christ, because "no man comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). In this way, the unevangelized person today is much like the Jew before the time of Christ: he is justified before God by responding in faith to the light, which he has. (For an extensive discussion see Donald Richardson. *Eternity in Their Hearts*.)

Two important qualifications need to be mentioned at this point.

Qualification #1: Does this mean any unevangelized person who is a devout follower of his religion will be saved?

By no means. Most world religions are animistic, polytheistic, or pantheistic. But Romans 1 teaches that **the truly open person will recognize that there is one God** who is intelligent and personal, and that worshipping other god(s) is therefore an act of willful rebellion. Again, virtually all world religions teach a "works" approach to the deity—that the acceptance of the deity is attained by human effort through good works and/or ritual observance. But Romans 2:14,15 teaches that **humans instinctively know that they are morally guilty before God** and therefore have no claim on God's acceptance based on their own effort (works or ritual). Therefore, those who respond to God's general revelation by casting themselves on his mercy will be at odds with crucial elements in their native religious setting. Missionaries have reported many such people who responded quickly to their message of the one true God and his way of salvation.

Qualification #2: If people can be saved apart from hearing the gospel, is evangelism and missions necessary?

- **This question, if answered "no", would render Christ's commission to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) pointless.** The answer is "yes" because there is evidently a general correspondence between the amount of light given and the number of people who repent and are saved.
- **Jesus teaches** this principle in Matthew 11:20-24. He says that Tyre, Sidon and Sodom would have repented if they had received the light that Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida had received.
- **This principle is also readily observed in history.** While probably some Africans responded properly to the light of general revelation and were thus saved, clearly they were a small minority in unevangelized Africa judging by the paganism which pervaded Africa in the mid 1800's. It is no coincidence that today, after 150 years of missionary activity, almost 50% of Black Africans are evangelical Christians. Therefore, **the number of people who get saved through general revelation is probably very small, and this fact preserves the strategic importance of Jesus' mission mandate.**

Note: Furthermore, people who get saved by responding to general revelation have fewer spiritual resources available to them than individuals who hear and respond to the gospel. They would be like the "disciples" that Paul met in Acts 19:1-6. These men were evidently saved, but did not receive the Holy Spirit until Paul explained the gospel to them. The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as well as the other New Covenant ministries of the Holy Spirit, may be given only to those who have heard and responded to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

2. Is there justice in God's judgment?

We think, "It just doesn't seem fair for God to judge people and sentence them to hell." I don't like the idea, and neither does God (Eze. 18:23,32)—but consider these points:

- **Can we trust our ability to judge what is fair for ourselves?**

People tend to think that what they do is not very bad and does not deserve much punishment. Most **prisoners** believe that they are sentenced too severely. Because of our imperfect criminal justice system, some of them probably are—but it is highly unlikely that most of them are. **Children** demonstrate that this is an inborn attitude. This is why we don't let children or criminals choose their own punishments; they tend to go too soft on themselves. But God's judgment is perfect. He knows all the factors, every mitigating circumstance—and on that day he will demonstrate that he has been absolutely fair in his judgment.

- **Furthermore, the alternative to this—universalism—is definitely not fair.**

Is it fair for people to never be called to account for their actions? **Is it fair** that wicked people and not the righteous God have the last word on evil (STALIN: safe to the end, clenched fist at the end)? **Is it fair** for repentant people to spend eternity with an unrepentant STALIN? **Is it fair** for God to allow this world to go on for so long if he will send everyone to heaven? If people can't make a decision about where to spend eternity during this life, what is the point? If there is no ultimate accountability for our lives, then what is the difference between heaven and hell?

- **Finally, this objection assumes that we have a proper moral standard by which to evaluate whether God's judgment is fair or unfair.**

Most Americans believe that if there is a hell, only really bad people will go there. But there is a fatal flaw in this belief. How bad is bad enough? If Mother Theresa is good enough to go to heaven, and if Stalin is bad enough to go to hell, should we draw the line exactly halfway between them? What if you were one sin on Stalin's side of that line (that bad thought you had about your mother when you were ten years old)? Is this fair? No matter where you draw the line in this scenario, you always have the same dilemma. The Bible rejects this answer for one simple reason: it draws the line at God's moral perfection (Jas. 2:10; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 11:32 For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.). It makes perfect sense, and God is certainly within his rights to draw it here. However, it is really bad news because it means **all** of us—Stalin, Mother Theresa, you, me—are under God's judgment. But the good news is that God has offered to take the rap for **all** of us. He says he has come in the Person of Jesus to bear God's judgment for us on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). Now the way is open for **all** of us to escape God's judgment—if we put our trust in his payment. That's news you won't find anywhere but in Christianity.

- **More "Common Objections" are responded to in the teaching series by the same title.**

For the CD: <http://www.xenos.org/cgi-bin/shopper.exe?preadd=action&key=CD006>

Tape set: <http://www.xenos.org/cgi-bin/shopper.exe?keywords=tapes&search=action>

What could you do to help build and maintain an outreach ethos in your home group?

1. **Discuss evangelism regularly.** Matt 24:34b- "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." If this is important to you, you will talk about it.
2. **Celebrate conversions.** People learn what is important (in part) by what we get excited about. We want them to know that we share the joy of the angels when one sinner repents. We want them to share our awe at the power of the gospel to penetrate all barriers.
3. **Praise evangelistic efforts.** We transmit values (in part) by whom we admire. Sharing our faith is emotionally and spiritually difficult, especially when people don't respond. People easily get discouraged, and they need to hear us express God's heart—that he is delighted at their love for the lost and their willingness to step out in faith to share their faith. Consider Bill Bright's adage in "Witnessing Without Fear": "Success in evangelism is sharing your faith in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results to God. Failure in evangelism is failure to witness."
4. **Pray for the lost corporately.** In our home group's weekly prayer, we make sure that we pray by name for the people we're reaching out to. And we weave this theme through our entire prayer time so that younger Christians learn that reaching others is ultimately why we're here.
5. **Share what you've learned about evangelism.** Christians will be more equipped and motivated to evangelize if you do this periodically. .

6. **Model outreach.** Reach out to your neighbors, get to know your kids' friends and their parents, witness to the non-Christians other church members are bringing around, etc.
7. **Maintain evangelism as an important "family value."** Our children will learn to value what we value. If we regularly discuss our burden for the lost, they will "catch it." If on the other hand we prioritize other values they will catch those instead. If we want our kids to be godly, we can't just protect them from the dangers of culture—but we must teach them how to live victoriously in the spiritual battle. If we have not modeled a love for lost people and an excitement about outreach, we have failed to protect them from the greatest danger of all—narcissism!

Memory Verses

Matt. 28:18-20* - The Great Commission.