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Is Christianity Divisive? | Tim Keller

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The Veritas Forum

Some say that claiming to know God or truth is too exclusive in a pluralistic society and too divisive in a free democratic one. People who hold such exclusive beliefs, they say, tend to impose them on others and oppress those who disagree. How can Christians, then, justify their faith that says Jesus is the one true way to God? Can they fit in and operate in a free society? Some say Christianity and the pursuit of a peaceful world are incompatible. "I don't agree with that at all," says Tim Keller at a Veritas Forum from UC Berkeley.

Transcript

I'll tell you what you really need in this world. I want to tell you what you really need in this world. What you need is people who've got an exclusive truth that humbles them.

That's what you need. Some say that claiming to know God or truth is too exclusive in a pluralistic society and too divisive in a free democratic one. People who hold such beliefs, they say, tend to impose them on others and oppress those who disagree.

How can Christians, then, justify their faith that says Jesus is the one true way to God? Can they fit in and operate in a free society? At a veritas form from UC Berkeley, Tim Keller addresses the claim that Christianity and the pursuit of a peaceful world are incompatible. The topic is belief in an age of skepticism. I'd like to, in my address to you, which is only going to take half the time we're here together tonight, I'd like to drill down into one of those main reasons why people are skeptical about belief in God in general, Christianity in particular tonight.

If it's not maybe the question that you most wanted to hear about, half the time we'll have questions and answers and you can come and pose your question. The one I'd like to especially tackle is that people today are particularly skeptical about belief in God because they feel that to say, "I know God and I have the truth" is too exclusive a way of speaking in an age of 30. People in a pluralistic society filled with all kinds of views and religions and it's also too divisive in a democratic society, a free democratic society

because people, it is said that believe they know God and they have the truth feel impaled, may they can't help themselves, to impose those beliefs on us at least legislatively by law.

In some cases, to really oppress and marginalize people, in fact, a very often belief in God seems to lead to violence and to war itself. Now, how do you justify then belief in God and especially the most perhaps exclusive of all the religious claims which is Orthodox Christianity that says Jesus Christ is the one true way to God? How do you justify that kind of claim and how do people with those kinds of exclusive beliefs actually fit and operate in a free democratic society? Now, you know, a lot of the new atheist books by Mr. Dawkins, Mr. Hitchens, Mr. Harris and others say it doesn't fit at all. In fact, religious belief, unless it diminishes or even goes away, until that happens, we're really not going to have a peaceful world.

I don't agree with that at all and I'd like to share with you the five ways people are trying to deal with exclusive truth claims. Five ways people are trying to deal with the divisiveness of religion. I'd like to show why all five of them fail and I'd like to show in conclusion a way forward, not one of those five, but a way forward.

But let me start off by saying something that might surprise you. I do think religion is part of the problem with the world. I do think religion has a fair, to a great degree, contributes to division and conflict and war in the world.

And I'll tell you how it works. You know, being a believer in God, an Orthodox Christian, I know how it works. The first stage is it's actually I called a slippery slope in the heart.

Religion, first of all, starts with gives you a kind of sense of superiority because you have the truth and you're living a good life and these people over here are not. They don't have the truth and they're not living a good life. So you feel superior to them.

That's stage one. Stage two is separation. You just don't hang out with them.

You know, you don't spend time with them. They're kind of impure. Stage three is because you don't know them, you caricature them.

They become one dimensional. Ever seen cartoons, big ears, big nose, a cartoonish view you have of these other people over here. So from superiority to separation to caricaturing, and that leads to passive and then active oppression.

Because those are the kind of people you can push away. Those are the kind of people you can ignore. Those are the kind of people you can maybe not actively oppress at first but sort of passively just not give them the same kind of regard that you should.

And that slippery slope leads from religion, belief in the truth, to oppression. It really does. So now that we all agree, the religion is a big problem in the world and does not

lead, generally speaking, to peace on earth.

What are we going to do about it? Now right now there's five things that people are suggesting and five strategies that people are trying to use to address the exclusive truth claims of religion and Christianity in particular. And here's what the five are. None of them are going to work.

None of them do work. I'm going to try to give you another approach. But the five are, what do you do about exclusive religion? Hope it away, outlaw it away, explain it away, argue it away, privatize it away.

None of them are going to work. Let me show you why. Okay? First, hope it away.

Now I am older than a lot of you. And when I was your age, boy, don't you hate sentences and start like that? [laughter] When I was your age, everybody thought that modern societies, technologically advanced societies would become less and less religious as time went on. The idea was that thick, robust, orthodox religious belief was going to thin out the more developed countries got, economically developed, and more technologically developed they got.

The more people became educated and came to know something about what the whole world was like. It was understood that when human beings became more mature, that religion was slowly die out. It would thin out at first.

There's robust religion that believes in miracles and believes in absolute truth and believes in scriptures that are authoritative. And then there's the thinner kind of religion that says, "Well, we take those creeds and the stories sort of metaphorically, and we don't really believe that literally happened. We just think it's a symbol." And that's what you might call thinner religion.

And it was expected that the robust kind of religion would start to die out, then things would get thinner, and eventually things would get secular. And the more modern society got, the less religious it would be. And it was believed that Europe, because it was the most secular of all the continents, was ahead of the curve.

And that's where we were all going to go. None of that's happened. Between the time I was your age and the time that I'm my age, none of that's happened.

In fact, this is shocking to everybody. For example, North America. You know, Mark Lilla has written a book called "The Stillborn God." And you know what that book's about? The title? It's about the death of mainline liberal religion.

What's happening in this country is, yes, on the one hand, there are more secular people. There's more people who say, "I don't believe in God or I don't know what I believe in God or have no religious affiliation." But on the other hand, there's more

orthodoxy. There's more robust supernatural religion than has ever been.

And what's actually happened is the middle has atrophied. The moderate middle has atrophied. So for example, Pew Foundation just came out with this huge religious survey of the, you know, the religious state of the country.

And if you notice, evangelical Pentecostal Christians are the biggest category in the country, bigger than mainline Protestants by far bigger than the Catholics. That just was not true when I was growing up. Now, there's what's happened is you've got more orthodox religion and actually more secularism, and so we're more polarized than we ever were.

And that's just America. If you go to Latin America, Asia, and Africa, religion, Islam, and Christianity is growing like crazy. And it's refuting this idea that the more modern a country gets, the more secular it will get.

For example, Korea went from about 1% to about 40% Christian in about 100 years, as it was getting more modern. And right now, the same thing's happening in China. And today, there's probably more Christians in China than there are in America.

And in Africa right now, as some of you know these statistics, there's 2 million Episcopalians in America. There's 17 million in Nigeria alone. 8 million in Uganda alone.

How did that happen, you say? Well, because Africa went from 9% to 60% or 50% in the community of Christianity Christian in about 90 years. What's going on? The only place in the world in which say Christianity isn't growing like crazy is Europe. And now people are not looking at Europe as the forerunner.

They're saying, "What happened? Why is it the exception?" And the answer is it's not modernity. It was state churches. And that's another subject.

If you want to ask me about it, I'm not sure it's the most fruitful use of our time tonight. But the fact of the matter is, Orthodox religion is not going away. Robust, crunchy.

I believe in miracles. I believe in the truth. I believe in the Scriptures.

That religion is here indefinitely. There's something in the human heart that is so inexorably religious that you can really say it's a permanent condition. And one of the most amazing things, I've known about this for years, but one of the most amazing things, some time last year, the New York Times magazine, ran a survey of the fact that scientists, evolutionary scientists, are now trying to study the evolutionary roots.

I'm going to get back to this in a second. Of religion, because they are finding that basically human beings in general are very prone to believe in God. In fact, the studies have shown that children, when they're introduced to God, it's almost like children, are

almost... they're wired to... they're prepared to believe in God.

They find the idea of God incredibly credible. And so what they're trying to do now is they're trying to say, "Why aren't people so religious?" Because they're recognizing this is not going away. What are the evolutionary roots of it? I'll get back to it in a second.

But the idea that you can hope it away, the idea that hopefully... the idea that if we could just get rid of this kind of orthodox religion, then we could really swing in this country, it's not going to happen. We're going to have to learn to get along. We're going to have to learn to talk.

We're going to have to learn how to do civil discourse and talk about these issues. You can't hope it away. Secondly, and this is going to take like one minute.

The second strategy, which by and large is going away, I think. The second strategy for dealing with the divisiveness and the exclusiveness of religion is outlawed. Now that has not worked very well.

A perfect example of this is the two biggest projects of it was Russia and China under communism, in which they basically said religion is... it undermines the state, it undermines the authority of the state, and many of these religions were outlawed or highly controlled. But one of the great ironies of history, and I think 500 years from now everybody's going to see this, the best thing that communism ever did for the growth of Christianity and China was to kick all the missionaries out in 1945. Because when they said, "We're clamping down.

We're getting rid of all the Western missionaries." And they kicked them all out and they said, "That's that." And what happened was it turned Chinese Christianity indigenous. And it became far, far more powerful and far more potent and it began to grow like wildfire. Outlying religion does not help.

Okay? So for the most silly of the five strategies, hope it away, to the most futile of the strategies outlawed away, we move to a third strategy. And I said explain it away. Now, explain it away and argue it away.

This is what a lot of intellectual folks and a lot of scholars are trying to do, hoping to sort of decrunchify religion. And the first way is to explain it away. Now, one of the ways to sort of diminish its impact, one of the ways to say this, we need to tame religious people.

And I'm not trying to be pejorative about it. I know that this is one of the ways it's done, is we're going to explain it. The New York Times magazine I mentioned was a survey of the last ten years in which evolutionary scientists have been working on this question.

Why are human beings so religious? And if you grant there's no God, if you say there's no God, and everything has to have a natural cause, and if you say, therefore,

everything, every feature of your brain and my brain, everything about its belief forming faculties is the product of natural selection. Every single thing about my brain is there because it helped my ancestors survive somehow. Then you have to ask this question, why are people so religious and you have to give it an evolutionary answer? And the answer, now right now nobody quite knows, that's what the debate's about.

The evolutionary scientists that were being reported on all agree that there must be some way in which belief in God was something that helped our ancestors survive, otherwise it wouldn't be in our brain. And everybody's trying to decide how it happened. And there are people like Richard Dawkins who actually says it's sort of a misfiring of evolution.

He doesn't even want to grant that it helped our ancestors survive, he just thinks of the byproduct of some other trait that helped our ancestors survive, he won't even grant this. And on the other hand, there are other folks who saw it, I don't go into that, here's what I want to point out. I have been absolutely amazed at the negative reviews by secular people of the new atheist books.

The new republic gave a very learned and very devastating negative critique of Daniel Dennett's book. So many, Thomas Nagel of NYU, who's a philosopher, did a tremendously negative review of Dawkins book. And you know what, here's what they said, these men were not writing as Christians.

And this is actually right. So we have a problem with saying, yeah, most people believe in morality. They believe that there are moral absolutes.

And most people believe in God. But it's because our evolution, it's because our genetic, it's because we're programmed by evolution to feel that way. Our belief forming faculties, that there is a God and there are moral absolutes, do not tell us that there really is a God.

If you have belief forming faculties that tell you there's a God, it doesn't mean there is a God. It just means that that feeling helped your ancestors survive. So the belief forming faculties being a product of evolution only helped survival.

They don't necessarily tell you what's really there, your belief forming faculties. They don't tell you what's there, they just help you survive. And all these reviews said, but wait a minute, the problem is that evolutionary scientists use that scalpel on everything else.

I think there's a God, well, you were just programmed for that. I believe in morality, we are just programmed for that. I believe in evolution.

[laughter] And here's the question, if your belief forming faculties don't tell you the truth, but only what you need to survive, why believe them? Why believe that when you

actually observe the environment, they're telling you what's actually out there? Or that when you decide, I believe in evolution, why should you believe that? Why put the scalpel on everything else? Alvin Plantinga, who's a philosophy professor at Notre Dame, has argued this at a very high level, much higher than I could possibly get across to you, but he's pointed out, and a lot of other philosophers have pointed out, that mild paranoia is going to be much more helpful for survival than an accurate assessment. Assessment of your environment. And therefore, if you have a theory of evolution, I'm not saying I'm against all understanding of evolution, but if you have a theory of evolution that says, you can't trust what your brain tells you, you can't trust what your brain's belief forming faculties tell you, including what they tell you about evolution, then you can't trust your theory of evolution.

C.S. Lewis put it like this some years ago, he wasn't talking about this directly, but it applies. He says, you can't go on explaining everything away forever. He's really talking about people who deconstruct it everything.

He says, you cannot go on explaining away forever, or you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. For example, you cannot go on seeing through things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something else through it.

It is good that you can see through a window because the garden beyond is opaque. But if you could see through everything, then everything would be transparent, and a wholly transparent world would be an invisible world. So to see through everything is the same as not to see at all.

And so how does that apply? Like this. If, as Nietzsche says, all truth claims are really just power grabs, then so is his, so I listened to him. If, as Freud says, all views of God are really just psychological projections to deal with our guilt and insecurity, then so is his view of God, so why listen to him? If, as the evolutionary scientists say, that what my brain tells me about morality in God is not real, it's just chemical reactions designed to pass on my genetic code, then so is what their brains tell them about the world.

So why listen to them? In the end to see through everything is not to see. So, you know, if you try to explain away religion, you'll explain away explanation. You'll explain away what you believe too.

Doesn't work.

[Music] Now, a little bit less esoteric. Strategy four.

People want to say you mustn't make exclusive truth claims. They're trying to argue religious people into saying, I shouldn't do that. In other words, when people say who are Christians, Jesus is the one true way to God.

Christianity is the truth. Well, the strategy goes like this. You mustn't say that.

It's wrong to say that. It's illegitimate to say that. It's divisive to say that.

It's exclusive. It's now to say that. I don't think those arguments hold up.

I give you three versions of them that I can almost guarantee, since I'm a father to people your age, that most of you believe. The first one is if somebody says, if I say, for example to you, Jesus is the one way to God. The only way to get to heaven, the only way to get to God is through Jesus.

One reason you'll come back and say, no, no, no. All religions are equally right. Don't say that to me, mister.

All religions are equally right. So my comeback to you on this is that's impossible. It's impossible that all religions are equally right.

And when you say that, it just shows you're not listening to any of the religions at all. You're a bad listener. I'm really not trying to make fun of you.

But, well... [laughter] I was once on a panel with a rabbi and a mam and myself, you know, Protestant clergyman. And we agreed about this statement. I'm about to... Let me give you the lead up to the statement.

Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God from heaven. He made unbelievable claims. You know, you have in John chapter 8, he said, before Abraham existed, I am.

I saw Abraham. In fact, before Abraham existed, I am. There's a place for Jesus says, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

I'm sure the people around him were saying, when was that? And where were you standing? And who are you? See, there's a place where Jesus actually says to his critics, you know, I've been sending you prophets and wise men for years and you keep killing them. [laughter] What? Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. The founders of all other religions said basically this, I am a prophet, come to help you find God.

Jesus is the only one who came and said, I'm God, come to find you. Now, either what Jesus said is a fact or not, and I'm not even going to argue for it now, just just... I'm just dealing with what you just said, which is all religions are equally okay. You know, they're all right, don't say that yours is better than any other.

Jesus said that, and therefore if it's a fact, if he actually is the Son of God, he'd have to be a better way to get to God. He is God. If he's not, if he's not right, if it's not a fact, then he's deranged or he's fraudulent and it's an inferior way.

And you know, the rabbi and the imam were perfectly happy, he said, that's exactly

right. Either Christianity is better than other religions or it's worse, but it's not the same. It couldn't be the same.

And for you to say they're all the same shows you just haven't, listen, you see, a fact isn't narrow. I wish very often that I wouldn't have to... I wish I wouldn't have... you know, sometimes you get really busy, gosh, I wish I didn't have to eat. I did wish I didn't have to sleep.

I've got so much work to do. It's a fact. You're going to wither and die if you don't eat.

It's not narrow. It's just a fact. (Laughter) And if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, your soul will shrivel without him and you'll die.

And that's not narrow. Just a fact or it's not a fact, but it's not narrow either way. It's right or it's wrong.

Well, some people say, no, no, no, no, you can't say Jesus is the only way. Not because all religions are equally right. That's not what Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens and Company would say.

They would say no because all religions are equally wrong. And what they would say is all religions just have little bits of wisdom, but nobody sees the whole picture. It's very, very typical of folks to say, don't you dare say that your religion is the right religion because no religion is the right religion.

All religions only have a little piece of the pie. They only see a little bit of the whole. And the traditional illustration of this is the blind men and the elephant.

Right? Have you heard this illustration? Imagine five blind men and they come upon an elephant. And each one grabs the elephant at a different place. And one says, ah, the elephant is grabbing the trunk.

Sort of long and flexible. But another guy has hold of their legs and say, he's not flexible at all. It's kind of stumpy.

And so every one of the blind men tends to think they sense the whole elephant, but they only see a little part of the elephant. And none of them really can see the whole elephant. And no religion ought to say it sees the whole thing because all religions have a little part of it and nobody sees it all.

However, Leslie Newbiggan pointed out something very important some years ago in which he said this. In the famous story of the blind men and the elephant, so often quoted in the interest of religious agnosticism, the real point of the story is constantly overlooked. The story cannot be told except by someone who is not blind but can see what the blind men are unable to fully grasp, which is the whole elephant.

The story is constantly told to neutralize and the affirmations of the great religions to suggest that they learn humility and recognize that none of them can know the whole truth. But the story is told by one who claims to see and know the full truth, otherwise you wouldn't know the men were blind. You see what he's saying? He says, the only way you can know that these men are blind is if you say you're not.

And the only way you can say no religion sees all the truth is if you believe you see more of the truth than they do, or actually all the truth. In other words, you are claiming the very thing you say no religion must claim. Superior knowledge.

And that's the reason why Newbiggan says there is an appearance of humility in the protestation that the truth is much greater than any one of us can grasp. But if this is used to invalidate all claims to discern the truth, it is in fact an arrogant claim to the very kind of knowledge which it says no one can have. See if you say I don't know which religion is true, that can be a statement of humility.

But if you say no one can know which religion is right, you are being dogmatic and presuming you have a far better view of ultimate reality than any of the other religions and that's the very claim you're criticizing. In fact, I've even had somebody, listen, I've had this conversation several times. I'm talking to somebody about Jesus and suddenly somebody says, what are you doing? And I say, I'm evangelizing you.

[laughter] You mean you want me to adopt your view as better than my view? You know, you're trying to say your view of spirituality is right and I'm wrong and you want me to convert? Yeah, I say. That's arrogant. How dare you say that your view of spirituality is better than anybody else's and try to convert? I say, wait a minute.

What are you suggesting? And the person says, well, I think that you need to keep, you know, everybody, you ought to keep your religion private. If it's good for you, it's good for you, but you need to honor what other people think and not try to convert them. I say, wait a minute.

You're saying your take on spiritual reality is better than mine. And you're trying to evangelize me right now because you're saying I need to adopt yours. And you think the world would be a much better place if everybody adopted your take on spirituality rather than mine.

And of course, I believe that the world would be a better place if everybody adopted my view of spiritual reality than yours rather than yours. Who's being more narrow here? Nobody's being more narrow. As soon as you say nobody should make exclusive truth claims, that's a universal claim.

See? It's a universal claim. You're just laying down on everybody. You can't avoid exclusive truth claims.

Let me tell you what real narrowness is, not the content of what you say because as soon as you start to say, you shouldn't be drawing lines here. What did you just do? There's good people like me who don't draw lines and there's bad people like you who do. You just drew a line by saying nobody should draw lines.

Look, everybody's exclusive. Well then who's open and who's narrow? I'll tell you. Narrowness is distaining and sneering at and belittling people who've got a different exclusive truth claim than yours.

Because you've got an exclusive truth claim. I'll tell you what you really need in this world. What you need is people who've got an exclusive truth that humbles them.

That's what you need. Look, I have to be quick here because I want you to be able to ask me questions. The fifth strategy is privatize it.

And there's a huge problem with this. That is to say, look, do not go out into the public realm and ever argue from a religious point of view. If you're going to try to pass a law, you should have a secular reason for it, never religious reason for it.

Richard Rorty says the problem with religion, when you talk about it in public discourse, is other people, if you're speaking out of your religious convictions, other people don't have access to that. So what we need to do is put your religion in the back. Let's agree on practical solutions to the problems that we're really facing, like AIDS and poverty and education and things like that.

And let's work together and just keep your religious views behind you. That won't work and I'll tell you why. As soon as Richard Rorty says, let's all agree to work together on the problems that we have.

You can't begin to work on those problems unless you have underlying commitments to what human flourishing is. And those underlying commitments to human is are based on views of human flourishing that are based on views of human nature and spiritual reality that cannot be proven in a test to the human nature. They're not self-evident to everybody and everybody's got moral commitments that are not accessible to everyone else.

So a quick example and it would have to be quick. Look at divorce laws for a second. Okay, let's try.

Let's try to come up with divorce laws that really work for everybody, that really help human flourishing. And let's leave our worldview commitments and our, let's just use scientific reasoning. You can't do it.

I tell you why. If you come from a traditional culture, Confucianism, Hinduism, if you come from Christianity, Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, traditional cultures have

always said human beings flourish best when the individual right is supplemented to the community. The family is more important than the individual.

The clan is more important than the individual. Community values and traditions are more important than the individual. But the Western Enlightenment said no.

The individual is more important than the community. Individual rights have to be, you know, are more important than the community. So people from a background in, with a more traditional worldview, a view of human flourishing is different.

It says let's make divorce laws hard. It should be very hard to get a divorce because the most important thing is to keep people together so you have a stable environment for raising children. But if you come out of an Enlightenment view of human flourishing, what you're saying there is, well, no, the whole purpose of marriage is to fulfill the individual needs of the two adults that get into it.

Okay, now how are we going to come to agreement? So in other words, that group wants to make divorce laws easier. How are we going to get to agreement? Well, let's find these neutral, universal, scientific principles we all can agree on. They're not there because your belief about what will be a good divorce laws depend on certain commitments and views of human nature and human flourishing that are based on things like the dignity of the individual, know the importance of the community, and those things cannot be proven.

They're either formally or semi-formal religious commitments. And therefore, again, what you need is to be able to go out into the public square and talk about your religious commitments or your semi-religious commitments that admit what you're doing, but with humility. Let me show you what I think is a way through.

Now, at this point, if you don't mind, I'm just going to quickly talk to Christians. We are, we Christians, are the biggest faith group in the world. We're still twice, Christianity's still twice the size of the next religion at this point in the world.

And the only way that we're going to break this is not to say, what are we, what are we, you secular people? Why are you being so mean to us? Christians have to recognize, number one, that you're a big part of the problem, and number two, that we also can be at the heart of the solution. Okay? Two minutes, and I'm done. There are two basic ways of thinking about your self-image.

One is what I'm going to call a moral performance narrative. A moral performance narrative says, I'm okay, I'm a good person, I feel significant, and I have worth because I'm achieving something. So if you are a liberal person, and you feel like I'm a good person because I'm working for the poor, and I'm working for human rights, and I'm open-minded, you can't help in a moral performance narrative, your self-image is based

on your performance as a generous liberal activist person, you can't help, but look down your nose at bigots.

You can't help but feel superior to bigots. On the other hand, what if you are a traditional religious person, and you go to church and you read your Bible, or you go to synagogue and you read your Bible, or you go to the mosque and read your Quran, and you're working really hard to be good and to serve God, et cetera. Now in that case, you have to look down your nose at people who don't believe your religion, and they're not being as good as you are.

And maybe just a secular person, and you're a hard-working, decent chap, you can't help. If your self-image is based on the idea that you're a hard-working, decent chap, you can't help, but look down your nose at people who you consider lazy. But the gospel, the gospel is something different.

The gospel says Jesus Christ comes and saves you. The gospel says you're a sinner. The gospel says you don't live up to your own standards.

The gospel says there's no way you're ever going to be able to live up to your own standards. The gospel says that you have failed. Your moral failure and salvation only belongs to people who admit their moral failures.

And Jesus came in weakness and died on the cross. And he says, "My salvation is only for weak people. It only is there for people who admit that you're not better than anyone else that you just need mercy." If you have a grace narrative, if you say the reason I can look my mind, the reason I can look myself in the mirror, the reason I know I have significance, is because Jesus died for me, though I'm a sinner, saved by grace.

You can't feel superior to anybody. I've got a Hindu neighbor in my apartment building. And I think he's wrong about the Trinity.

I think he's wrong about a lot of things. But he could be, he probably is a better father than me. He could be a much better man.

Why? Aren't you a Christian? He's a Hindu. Don't you think you have the truth? Yeah, but here's the truth. The truth is I'm a sinner and I'm saved by grace, so why in the world I'm not saved because I'm a better man.

I'm saved because I'm a worse man than I've really. And so what happens is the grace narrative takes away the kind of superiority and removes that slippery slope that I mentioned in the very beginning that leads from superiority to separation to caricature and to passive and then active oppression. It just takes it away.

Now Christians have got to admit to a great degree we operate out of the moral performance narrative and we don't have to because we got the gospel. And yet to a

great degree we do. To a great degree we do.

But let me tell you what happens when the grace narrative is really ascended. You go back to the earliest days of the church. Here's the Roman Empire, the Greco-Roman Empire, and they believed in pluralism.

They had a very, they didn't believe there was any one God. Everybody had their own God, right? Open minded. Along come the Christians and they say Jesus is the true God.

Very, very rigid. And yet the lives of the pagans and the Christians were different. The pagans looked down the nose at the poor.

Christians loved the poor. The pagans were very stratified. They never mixed different classes and social strata.

Christians got everybody together. Races together, classes together. The pagans were extremely oppressive to women.

Christians were much more open to the leadership of women. By the way, you can all see this in Rodney Stark's book, Rise of Christianity. Why would what looks like an open minded philosophy lead to so much oppressiveness? And what over here the Christian looks like a rigid philosophy lead to so much peacemaking and so much generosity? I'll tell you why.

I remember not long after 9/11, I was reading an editor out to my wife out of the Sunday morning paper that says, you know what the problem with the world is? Fundamentalism. If you're a fundamentalist, it's going to lead to violence. And of course I just try to show you we're all fundamentalist actually.

But what my wife sat there and she says, that's ridiculous. It all depends on what the fundamental is. She says, have you ever seen an Amish terrorist? She says, you know, she says, if, if, if, if, if, listen, if Amish aren't fundamentalist, there ain't no such thing.

But here's what their fundamental is. A man dying on the cross for his enemies. A man praying for the forgiveness of his enemies as he's dying.

If that's at the very center of your life that destroys the slippery slope. If Christians are willing to say, we're going to start, we're, we're going to start. If we start acting that way, we start acting, you know, Martin Luther King, Jr. when he saw racism in the south.

And he looked at all those white people churchgoers. What did he say to them? He says, you know, your problem is you guys are too religious. You guys are too conservative.

You guys read your Bible. You know, you just, you know, we got to get more relativistic and then things will get better in the south. Is that what he said? No, what did he say? He said, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

That's the book of Amos. He didn't say, let's get less religious. What he said was, get true to the religion you got.

You don't need less Christianity. You need real Christianity. That's what I'm saying to you.

Okay. Time is up and Clint's going to come back up here and I know that sounded more like a sermon than a lecture, but I'm a minister and I kind of got carried away at the end. And so, so, Clint.

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