

TOUGH QUESTIONS

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**INTRO: HOW DO WE INTERACT  
WITH CULTURE?**

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- ▶ There has been a movement from...
- ▶ 1) a “premodern” concern for knowledge and a just society based on **revelation from a just God...**
- ▶ 2) To a “modern” attempt to find a guide to justice by using **universal reason...**
- ▶ 3) To a “postmodern” **despair of any universal standards** for justice or sources of knowledge

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- ▶ Modernity
  - ▶ We can know everything, autonomy of human reason.
  - ▶ Truth source: Science and human wisdom
  - ▶ Religion: Scientism (Hard sciences provided reality)

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

### ▶ Post-Modernity

- ▶ Kept the boundaries of science, but didn't accept the metanarrative of science (that it can answer all our questions).
- ▶ Truth Source: No absolute truth, only pragmatic truth. Whatever works and whatever we can get our community to agree to. If we get others to use our language, that's as true as it gets.
- ▶ Religion: "moralistic therapeutic deists." If there's a god, he/she is all about making my life better, and otherwise stays out of my way.
  - ▶ God leads to metanarrative and responsibility, so no thanks!

## CONVINCING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- ▶ **Psalm 34:8 Apologetic: Taste and See**
  - ▶ We don't necessarily need to argue for the faith at first
  - ▶ We don't necessarily need to argue for the inspiration of scripture, just take them along, get them involved, and see what happens.
  - ▶ Argue from the existence of God rather than to it. We don't have to prove His existence, rather explain all of reality through a particular (Biblical) lens.
- ▶ **1 Peter 3:15b Apologetic: Is it in you?**
  - ▶ Don't ignore the second part of the verse! The intent is to encourage believers to be ready to discuss the hope that is within them. Why does it matter to you? That often has weight in today's culture
  - ▶ We start with significance and meaning, because the story is compelling, especially in a meaning starved culture

# EXEGETING CULTURE

- ▶ What does culture say about important topics?
- ▶ **Suffering** = random pain.
  - ▶ Solution: Fall/rebellion makes much more sense of the world.
- ▶ **Desire**: Whatever strikes you as pleasurable without causing pain. Christians are too stuck up to enjoy life.
  - ▶ Christians don't love other things less, but love God MORE so their loss won't devastate them on the one hand, and they don't have to harden their hearts from things to manage emotions on the other hand.
- ▶ **Identity**: Expression of inward desires and feelings. Christianity tells you to suppress too much.
  - ▶ Reality: we're not that simple. We have many inward desires, and suppress many. Our culture tells us what to suppress and what to live out. The culture is not "more liberated".

## EXEGETING CULTURE

- ▶ **Ethics:** Cause no pain
  - ▶ **Reality:** What is pain? Defined by culture or individuals. Naturalists want us to be humanitarian, BUT WHY. Humanitarian actions, for a humanitarian, is believed BY FAITH. If you're a naturalist, there is no reason to be nice.
- ▶ **Truth:** Whatever is true for you without imposing a metanarrative on other people.

## TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ What do you mean by that? (demand clarity)
- ▶ How did you come to that conclusion? (demand coherence)
- ▶ Shift from argument mode to fact finding mode (play by your rules when it gets hostile)
- ▶ “Let me think about it” (If you don’t know, don’t pretend like you do!)

## TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ Combat questions that try to trap you or paint you as a bigot with other questions...
  - ▶ Example: "Now, that is a personal question, so I just want to make sure it's safe to answer. Do you consider yourself a tolerant person who's ok with people who differ from you?"
- ▶ The atheist must answer the question: How do you identify evil? Are moral laws the product of chance? If so, why obey them? What - or who - establishes how things are supposed to be?
- ▶ *"We start with guilt, then reason back to morality and a moral lawgiver. We start with evidence for design, then reason back to a designer. We start with personal worth and significance, then reason backward to the source of all meaning. We start with reality, then reason backward to a cause that makes the best sense of what people already know to be true." (Gregory Koukl)*

# RESOURCES

- ▶ D.A. Carson:
  - ▶ Christ and Culture Revisited
  - ▶ The Intolerance of Tolerance
- ▶ Tim Keller:
  - ▶ Making Sense of God,
  - ▶ The Reason For God
- ▶ Gregory Koukl:
  - ▶ Tactics: A Gameplan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions
- ▶ John Piper and Justin Taylor:
  - ▶ The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World
- ▶ James Sire:
  - ▶ The Universe Next Door