Lecture 2: 12 Common Questions and Misconceptions of the faith
An Introduction to Apologetics and Worldview
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The following lecture is taken largely from: Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World by Josh and Sean McDowell.
Questions and Misconceptions

1. “Being a good person is enough to get to heaven”
This question, and most questions result from a misunderstanding of both our perceived goodness and the severity of sin. The following prescription is important to know and memorize, as it will be one of the most frequently used apologetics tools available to you.

“Being a Good Person is Enough to go to Heaven”

• Diagnosis: misunderstanding of the severity of sin.
• Prescription:
  1. Romans 3:10
  2. Show them the Law
  3. PAPER
  4. The Courtroom Analogy
“Being a Good Person is Enough to go to Heaven”

1. Romans 3:10

No one is righteous, no, not one
Romans 3:10

This verse demonstrates that there is no such thing as a righteous person.
This tactic (From Living Waters ministries) demonstrates that they are a law-breaker, aka sinner. The question you then ask after running through these questions is ask, “Do you still think you are a good person?” More often than not, the person will still say, “yes! I am still a good person.” They will still think this even though they are a self-admitted liar, thief, murderer, and adulterer. Since you have helped, them understand that they are sinners, the next step is to show them the severity of sin and the insignificance of their perceived righteousness. This is because they might think that their “good deeds” might outweigh their bad deeds. This is easily by 1) demonstrating the severity of their sin and 2) demonstrating that all their righteousness is as filthy rags from Isaiah 64:6

“Being a Good Person is Enough to go to Heaven”

2. Show them the Law:
   • Have you ever lied? - Thou shalt not lie (Commandment #9)
   • Have you ever stolen anything? - Thou shalt not steal (#8)
   • Have you ever hated anyone? - Thou shalt not murder (#6)
     • However hates his brother or sister has committed murder in his heart (Matthew 5:21-22)
   • Have you ever looked lustfully at someone? - Thou shalt not commit adultery (#7)
     • However looks lustfully at another person has committed adultery with them in their heart (Matthew 5:31-32)
PAPER is one of the most useful apologetics tools available. It demonstrates the severity of sin and need for a savior. The idea behind paper is simple. In short, it is the idea that, with increased authority, the punishment for the same sin increases.

Let’s say you lied to your Mom as a child. The punishment for this “sin” is likely going to be temporary and not have lasting effect.
What if you lied to a professor by cheating on an exam? The same sin would have greater consequences and probably result in a failed exam or failed grade. The punishment likely has lasting consequences.
If you then lied to a judge, what would be the punishment? Lying would almost certainly land you in jail.
Now we don’t really have kings today, but if we did, what would happen if we lied to one? The penalty would most likely be death.

If then, we have reached the highest temporal authority and the punishment for one sin, lying, is death, what then should the punishment be for a be for an eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing God? If the punishment for lying to a finite authority is death, than the punishment for an infinite authority is infinitely worse than death! That is why sin is so serious. For any one sin, God would be just in sending us to hell.
This is true regardless of all the supposed “good things” we have done in our lives.
Based on looking at the law and at PAPER, we know we have committed sins or “crimes” that warrant a just punishment. You can then ask, “Do you still think you will go to heaven?” And occasionally, people will still say yes. They will say, “Even though I have sinned, God is a loving and will just forgive me.” To solve this misunderstanding, a great tool is the courtroom analogy.

The courtroom analogy is very simple. Picture coming before a judge for a crime that warrants a fine or punishment that you cannot pay. What would happen if you went up to the judge and said, “You know judge, you are a pretty good, loving, and kind judge. Can’t you just let me off the hook this one time?” What would the judge say if he was indeed a good judge? He would say, “It is because I am a good and just judge that you will receive your due punishment.” It is not for a lack of love that God could punish people to hell. It is because of His justice.

Both the principle of escalating authority and the courtroom analogy are great segues to the gospel. You can’t pay the fine. They are going to take you to prison until you can pay the fine. Then, someone walks into the courtroom and says, “I will pay for the fine. I will pay for the fine with my very life because I love this person.” That’s the gospel, and that’s why it is good news.
For a more detailed explanation of this question, read “Chosen, but free” by Norman Geisler.

People will say, “since God chooses those who become Christians, why would he create those he did not choose just to send them to hell.”

A couple common verses used to support this is:
John 15:16a You have not chosen me, I have chosen you.
2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.
The context here for this particular verse is a reference to Jesus’ choice of the twelve to be his disciples, not God’s choice of the elect to eternal salvation. After all, Jesus is speaking to the eleven apostles (John15:8, 16:17) In addition, the word “chosen” by god is used of persons who are not the elect (i.e. Christian). Judas, for example was “chosen” by Christ but was not one of the elect. John 6:70 says “Jesus replied, Have I not chosen you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!”

Context changes everything. I could play a recording of me saying “I’m gonna kill you!” Play the recording a little longer, you hear a basketball in the background and my buddy laughing at me as he dunks on me again. Was I actually going to kill him? Nah. See how importance context is.

Understanding the literary medium is also important. If you were to read a building plan that read, “the front doors of this building should be 2” thick planks of cedar. It would be safe to assume that the door plan was to make them out of cedar planks, 2 inches in thickness. What if we then then read a poem I wrote about Mr T. and how his arms are as big as great logs of cedar? Does that mean that his arms are literally made of cedar? No. That is why understanding the literary category or type.
That is why we have to be careful about saying we take everything in the bible literally. While it would be easier to take everything literally, the interpretation would then not be always be what the author intended. One might actually think Mr. T’s arms are made of cedar in that case. There is also symbolism in the bible that, by the nature of symbolism, is not meant to be taken literally.

Jesus himself shows us an example of this in Matthe 16:5-12

5 When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. 6 “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
7 They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”
8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? 9 Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? 11 How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus used parables and symbols to convey truths. The disciples here are wondering, “man, we can’t eat the yeast or bread of the Pharisees? That’s weird.” That’s because they didn’t understand that yeast is a symbol for sin all throughout the bible.

We also need to be careful about those who say we can’t take the bible literally. Those who say this will place their own worldview into what the bible says and change it’s meaning to be something much more subjective.

So do we take the bible literally? The answer to that question shouldn’t be necessarily yes or no. It should be, what does the author intend the interpretation to be.
The other verse often quoted to support that God chooses who is saved before they were even created and that God chooses people to go to hell before they were created. Yet in this very verse, they disprove the thing that they are trying to argue in the last part. They are saved through God and through what? Belief in truth. Do you choose what you believe in and what you don’t believe in? Yes

Romans 5:1 says that we are justified by faith, Acts 16:31 says we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

That doesn’t mean that God doesn’t know whom is going to be saved and who isn’t going to be saved. God knows all events that have, are, and will come to pass. The difference is that God allows us to make that choice. He allows us to have the option to love him.
They will say “God is a God of Love! It is impossible for Him to hate!” Another statement that relates to this thought is “Isn’t God forcing people to love Him be threatening them with hell?”
The question really results from a misunderstanding of sin. There are a couple ways to address this. The first question is would it be loving to send someone to heaven who hates God? The second question would be, “can love exist in the presence of hate?”

The answer to the first question is: absolutely not! Even in this country, there are severe punishments for when an adult forces their “love” on another adult without their consent. As there should be! God does not force anyone to love him. He gives them two options: to love him and be with Him for eternity, or to not love him and be eternally separated from him. In the end, God gives people what they want. People just don’t realize that they actually won’t like what they want.

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<td>1. Rhetorical question: Would it be loving if God forced people who hate Him to be with Him?</td>
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The question “Would a loving God send people to Hell?” isn’t so much a question of God’s love, as it is a question of His justice. Perhaps a more refined way of asking the question is, “How could God be so unjust in sending people to hell?” This question is easily answered by the previously mentioned process of 1) showing that there is no one righteous 2) Show them the law 3) PAPER 4) the courtroom analogy 5) share the gospel.
Why did God create malaria, which infects millions of people per year. Why do millions of children have to inherit HIV from their parents who made poor decisions. Why do good people suffer? Why does God allow natural disasters?

This by far the most common question that you will here being raised, if you have not asked it yourself.
1. Habakkuk cried out to God and said “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, ‘Violence!’ and You will not save?” (Habakkuk 1:2) because he wondered the same thing. This question often has a personal aspect at the root of the question. If you get the sense that the person asking it is coming from a background of suffering, try to be sensitive to it.
This question isn’t a question of God’s goodness, so much as it is a question of God’s justice. This arises from a misunderstanding of sin. If the diagnosis is made for a misunderstanding of sin, you prescribe them PAPER. This will demonstrate the seriousness of sin, which helps to understand why God could allow suffering into the world: because we deserve it. Is God just in allowing suffering? Based on this, the answer would be yes.

Another question is how does one determine if something is just vs. unjust? C.S. Lewis famously said, “Man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line.” The idea that something could be just or unjust requires a moral standard that transcends us. This ends up being an argument in favor of God known as the “Moral argument.” This argument states that if there is a moral law that transcends us and is built into each one of us, than there must be a moral lawgiver.

Why does evil and suffering exist?

2. Re-define the question: How could God be so unjust by allowing suffering?
It is a hard truth to understand that suffering exists because sin is in the world and the consequences of sin is death. In other words, sin exists in the world because we deserve it. You never want leave a person with only that knowledge. You must also give them an eternal perspective. Life on earth is finite. Our life afterwards is infinite. Our time on earth is going to be like a blink and then be over in the context of eternity.
It is also important to realize that suffering can be allowed by God for specific purposes in our own lives. We may not always realize the reason for the suffering. I would also stay away from pretending like you will always find out the reason for a given suffering. Sometimes, we won’t know. The thing is, that’s okay, particularly when we have an eternal perspective and that God does not want us to suffer, but allows it. We just don’t always know why.
Questions and Misconceptions

5. “Sin isn’t a big deal. God will just forgive me anyways”
"Sin isn’t a big deal. God will just forgive me anyways"

• Diagnosis: misunderstanding of the severity of sin.
• Prescription:
  1. Romans 3:10
  2. Show them the Law
  3. PAPER
  4. The Courtroom Analogy

See slides 4-7 to review the prescription for a misunderstanding of sin.
“[Faith is a] delusion...a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence.” –Richard Dawkins

Dawkins also writes “Thomas demanded evidence. . . . The other apostles, whose faith was so strong that they did not need evidence, are held up to us as worthy of imitation.” Was Jesus discouraging an evidence-based faith?
The statement “Christianity does not need evidence because faith is blind” results from a misunderstanding of the definitions of faith vs. blind faith.

- **Faith** is a belief in something you have evidence for, but cannot see (gravity, invisible gasses like helium, and etc.)

- **Blind Faith** is the belief in something without evidence.

Three Problems with Dawkins Claim:

1. Jesus predicted his resurrection on multiple occasions in the presence of the disciples. Thomas should not have been surprised at the return of Jesus.
2. Thomas heard eyewitness testimony (evidence) from the rest of the disciples and yet still refused to believe. (The vast majority of scientific knowledge we possess depends upon trusting the conclusions of other scientists, which is true for virtually all disciplines.)
3. Jesus did many miracles during his ministry as proof of his identity. In fact, right after the story of Jesus scolding Thomas, John said the miracles of Jesus were recorded “so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.”
I often hear Christians say, “You just have to take it by faith” regarding subjects in apologetics that they haven’t explored. For example, a non-believer might ask, “How could God allow ______?” or “How could you possibly believe in an old book like that?” More often than not, I hear Christians say, “you just have to take it by faith.” In actuality, it is because they don’t know the answer and their faith is blind faith. This is dangerous to both the believer and the non-believer because it discourages the pursuit of evidence, for which there is no small supply. Jesus said to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind (Mark 12: 30). The Lord said to the nation of Israel, “Come now, let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). God calls us to live by faith, but not by blind faith.

From Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Sean and Josh McDowell:
In the Old Testament, God showered Egypt with miracles before inviting Israel to follow him into the wilderness. Rather than asking Israel for blind allegiance, God’s miracles through Moses gave them good reasons to trust him. Exodus 14: 31 makes this clear: “Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses.” Miracles preceded the call to belief, laying the foundation for a rational step of faith. Even so, many Christians use the term “faith” to mean “blind faith” rather than biblical faith.
But Christianity itself does not demand blind faith. In fact, quite the opposite: when Jesus Christ and the apostles called upon a person to exercise faith, it was not a “blind faith” but rather an intelligent faith. The apostle Paul said, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim. 1: 12). Jesus specifically performed miracles to show who he was SENT FROM GOD, and, as a result, many confidently placed their faith in him. During a trip to Capernaum, Jesus healed a paralytic. After forgiving the man’s sins, Jesus said to the crowd, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed and go to your house’” (Mark 2: 10, 11). Jesus healed the man so people would know he spoke with authority from above.
Questions and Misconceptions

7. “Christianity isn’t true because the church has committed injustices”

Common arguments: the sins of the church, the Inquisition, witch-hunts, the Crusades, and modern-day sexual abuse.
From Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Sean and Josh McDowell:

For at least two reasons, the character flaws of the church should not surprise us. First, the Bible speaks of human nature as gloriously made in God’s image, but profoundly fallen in sin. Human nature is deeply flawed (Rom. 3: 9–18; Mark 7: 14–23). Even true Christians are capable of wretched acts. The Bible does say we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 17), but this is only fully realized in the next life. Second, many who claim to be Christians have not placed their faith and trust in Jesus and therefore do not truly know him. Jesus taught that both believers and nonbelievers would be part of the institutional church, but that their true identity would not be revealed until the end (Matt. 13: 24–30). He also taught that there would be people who thought they were acting in his name— even doing “many wonders,” but they will not enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 7: 21–23). Just because someone claims to be a Christian, then, does not mean he or she really is. Could it be that the church is often indicted for the actions of people who are not even Christians? This is why the standard of Scripture is so important. Ultimately, we need to compare the actions of both individuals and the corporate church with the genuine teachings of the Bible.
If the Christian faith is true, it would be true regardless of how well people followed it. Likewise, if it were false, if there was no apparent hypocrisy that would not make the faith true.
Positive Contributions to Society:

• Hospitals, which essentially began during the Middle Ages
• Universities, which also began during the Middle Ages
• Literacy and education for the masses
• The separation of political powers
• Civil liberties
• The abolition of slavery
• Modern science
• The elevation of women
• Benevolence and charity; the Good Samaritan ethic
• High regard for human life

…and the list goes on
Common arguments: the sins of the church, the Inquisition, witch-hunts, the Crusades, and modern-day sexual abuse.
It is tempting for Christians to respond by pointing out the hypocrisy in other people and worldviews. For instance, the voices of tolerance and inclusiveness are often remarkably intolerant and noninclusive of people with traditional values. Such hypocrisy should be rightly pointed out. But this doesn’t get Christians off the hook.

However this claim is similar to the previous misconception, and is an example of both the genetic fallacy and ad hominem. If the Christian faith is true, it would be true regardless of how well people followed it. Likewise, if it were false, if there was no apparent hypocrisy that would not make the faith true.
Questions and Misconceptions

9. "The intolerance of Christians is a good reason to reject the Christian faith"
When Christians act in an arrogant manner towards others, they are not following scriptural teachings.

The accusation usually comes from a distorted view of tolerance as there is a difference between respecting others vs. approving of others values, beliefs, or practice. Tolerance itself is a dangerous idea. Tolerance is a dangerous idea because it allows one to hate a person internally while “tolerating” them outwardly. Tolerance is vastly different than Love. Tolerance says to ignore people in spite of your hatred for them whereas Love calls us forgive those that hate us.

The accusation also assumes the existence of an objective moral standard/moral law. If there is moral law, there must be a moral lawgiver (The Moral Argument)
Questions and Misconceptions

10. “There can’t be just one right religion”
Truth is exclusive. For example, if 1+1 = 2, then it can’t equal 3, 4, 5. There is a possibility that all religions could be wrong, but it is impossible for two religions contradictory to one another to be correct by the law of non-contradiction.

Jesus says in John 14:6 that He is the only way to heaven “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” Therefore, it impossible to go to heaven other than Jesus. Whether you believe that good works, Muhammad, or anything else that you think will get you to heaven, either you are wrong, Jesus was wrong, or both are wrong.
Questions and Misconceptions

11. “Christianity is at Science at War”
We will cover science more in a future lecture in this series, as well as having a full series devoted to Science and apologetics in the future.

From the Soul of Science by Nancy Pearcy and Charles Thaxton:
- Christian teachings have served as presuppositions for the scientific enterprise (e.g., the conviction that nature is lawful was inferred from its creation by a rational God).
- Christian teachings have sanctioned science (e.g., science was justified as a means of alleviating toil and suffering).
- Christian teachings supplied motives for pursuing science (e.g., to show the glory and wisdom of the Creator).
- Christianity played a role in regulating scientific methodology (e.g., voluntarist theology was invoked to justify an empirical approach in science). Among professional historians the image of warfare between faith and science has shattered. Replacing it is a widespread recognition of Christianity’s positive contributions to modern science.

Famous Scientists who were Christian:
Francis Bacon (1561-1586): One of the early fathers of empiricism and is credited with establishing the inductive method of experimental science via what is called the scientific method.

Galileo Galilei (1563-1642): Astronomer, physicist, engineer, philosopher, and mathematician, played a major role in the scientific revolution during the renaissance.

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662): well known for Pascal's law and Pascal's theorem. A physicist and mathematician.


Johannes Kepler (1561-1603): Discovered Kepler's laws of planetary motion.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778): Botanist, physician, and Zoologist- "Father of modern Taxonomy".

Alessandro Volta (1745-1821): Physicist whom the volt is named after.

Georges Cuvier: French naturalist and zoologist, known as the "father of paleontology".

Andre Ampere (1774-1836): one of the founders of classical electromagnetism, the Ampere unit is named after him.

Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864): First to distill petroleum and was the founder of the American journal of science, the oldest scientific journal in the United States.

Michael Faraday (1791-1867): Famous for developing Faraday's constant.

Gregor Mendel (1822-1895): Discovered the principles of vaccination, microbial fermentation, and pasteurization.

James Prescott Joule (1818-1889): Studied the nature of heat, the Joule is named after him.

Lord Kelvin of Glassglow (1924-1907): Worked on the first and second laws of thermodynamics. The units for Kelvin were named after him.

William Rontagen (1845-1923): was the first to produce and detect X-ray radiation, which earned him the first Nobel prize in physics.

Max Plank (1858-1947): worked on quantum theory and Plank's constant.


...and the list goes on.
Why doesn’t God write “Jesus Saves” on the moon or “Made by God” on each cell?
This is wrong because He has made himself known! Romans 1:19-21 says “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Also, Romans 2:14-15 says “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.”
A few prominent arguments for the existence of God (We will discuss these more in future lectures):

- **Cosmological Argument**: Scientific and philosophical reasons help us conclude that the universe had a beginning and the cause of that beginning happened outside of the universe, which points to an intelligent creator.

- **The Nature of the Laws of Physics**: The slightest changes in any of the laws of physics or in physical constants would make our universe inhospitable for life.

- **The Design Argument from DNA**: The amounts of information contained in living organisms cannot be explained by natural phenomena and points to an information giver.

- **The Moral Argument**: Since objective moral values exist, there must be a God. If God does not exist, morals and ethics are subjective.