

The Way of Jesus

El Camino de Jesús

A Message of Hope!

The world in which we live is fraught with a wide variety of things that can cause people to worry or fret. You can't read a newspaper or magazine or watch a television news broadcast without some mention of some act of violence, man-made calamity, or natural disaster. However I would like to offer for your consideration an alternative way of viewing the world that offers hope.

Our Worldview Makes All The Difference

When a baby is born, the whole world around it automatically changes. It becomes the center of attention of everyone around it, especially its parents. For most new parents, their sleep patterns, social interactions, and priorities in their lives are turned upside down and reevaluated. Prior to a child entering into the lives of parents their priorities focused on them, their careers, wants and desires. Once a child is conceived though, these all begin to change with the primary concern being refocused away from the parents and centered instead on providing for and nurturing this new addition to the family.

Once the child is born, it doesn't care about whether or not their mother or father has slept, what they had to eat, what clothes they are wearing, or even if they've taken a shower and cleaned themselves up that day. They just want to be fed and then sleep. If they aren't fed, they let you know it! And if you are feeding them something they don't like, they let you know it too. When they wake up, if no one is there to take care of or entertain them, they let you know that too. (Mom's and Dad's, you know what I mean.)

Whenever anything is not to their liking or their world is disrupted somehow, they let you know it and they don't care where you are or who is nearby at the time. Their cries let the whole world know what their thinking, "Something's not right in my world and I'm letting you know I don't like it and will keep letting you know it until it's fixed!"

The role of the parent then becomes a melding of entertainer, chef, maid, and personal assistant. All the needs of other family members move to a subordinate level and the priority of meeting the needs of the baby moves to the top of the list, usually for all family members not just the parents. Typically, other family members often will spring into action as well, seeking to provide a remedy for or meet the needs of the infant in some way.

As the infant grows, ideally, they are taught and learn independence and interdependence and how to respond to difficulties in life. They are taught certain things are right and wrong, sometimes learning painful lessons in the

process. One of the roles of parents is to be an educator and to instill in their children a worldview, “a comprehensive conception or image of the universe and of humanity's relation to it,” and the necessary skills needed to operate in the world. Everyone has a worldview, even if they don't realize it. For some, this responsibility for teaching a worldview has been abrogated to some other institution: governments, schools, etc.. However, they often teach competing worldviews that conflict with each other leaving the child adrift with a longing for direction and meaning.

Most of these worldviews fail to truly answer the big questions for people, who am I and why am I here? If you believe evolution, humans are simply animals whose whole purpose in life is to do whatever we have to do to meet our needs, even if it means others have to suffer or die in the process.

And yet, if we are merely animals, why do these questions still linger with us, who am I and why am I here? I submit that it is because these other worldviews often stand in opposition to and fall short of God's original intention for the universe and how He wanted man to operate in it.

God's Original Intention

When God created the Universe, He began with a large expanse and slowly narrowed His focus to one galaxy → to one planet → to one continent → to a garden → to one couple. Along the way, He created many types of plants and animals, each separate and unique but allowed for variety (see Genesis 1:11-12, 20-21, 24-25). Finally, He created that human couple different from all the other parts of His creation. He created them in His image and gave them great freedom with some simple instructions.

Genesis 1:27-28 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **28** God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 2:15-17 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. **16** The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; **17** but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Genesis 2:18, 24-25 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” ... **24-25** For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. **25** And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

At this point, the created universe was perfect. However, Satan, a very real entity who seeks to turn God's creation against Him, enters the picture and deceives the couple and convinces them to do the one thing God told them not to do—eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This direct violation of God's command resulted in what is called the Fall of Man and all of creation was effected by it. The term used for a violation of God's command is sin.

God said that when the couple sinned they would die, but they didn't die immediately. What happened? This is where science can help us understand what

happened.

There are some laws that are at work in our physical universe that can help us understand how it all works. God established them prior to His creating the universe as we know it and they are at work in the world still (see Proverbs 8). Some of these are the laws of thermodynamics. Without going into much detail the idea is this. If everything is functioning according to God's intended design, we have equilibrium or "calm" in the universe. If something is functioning outside of God's intended design, everything moves very quickly from calm to increasing chaos, resulting in a rise in temperature, either physically or metaphorically, and will continue that way unless or until equilibrium can be reestablished.

Consider the following phrases: a heated debate, things are heating up in there, cool off, cooler heads prevailed, etc. As things move away from equilibrium, the temperature rises and will continue that way unabated unless or until an intervention occurs and equilibrium can be reestablished, resulting in things cooling down.

This is exactly what happened the first time man sinned, equilibrium was broken and the spiritual temperature of the universe started to rise, leading to more sin and the temperature rising still further. Eventually it got to the point God couldn't take it anymore and He instructed a righteous man, Noah, to start building an ark because God was going to intervene with a flood—metaphorically cooling His overheated and out of control creation. God destroyed mankind and also promised that He would never do that again.

Those of you who know these laws will say that the third law insists that this cooling is impossible. Normally, if the universe is left to itself, this is true, but remember nothing is impossible with God (Matthew 19:25-26; Mark 10:26-27; Luke 18:26-27).

God's Planned Intervention

We see in the story of Cain and Abel, that God started warning men to beware of sin because it can only result in harm from the very beginning.

Genesis 4:6-7 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Cain didn't heed God's warning and killed his brother, which resulted in God punishing him. He could have resisted and controlled his anger but instead, he allowed it to build resulting in chaos in his relationship with his brother, which led to Abel's death at the hands of Cain. This same warning is still valid today.

Men tried to create their own guidelines (laws) to teach each other what to do or avoid so that men could maintain the equilibrium but the urge to fulfill our selfish desires often still causes men to violate the very laws they created.

This resulted in a further separation from God and a growing misunderstanding of who He was and led to the development of religions to answer this growing chaos but never really abating it because they didn't lead people to peace with their Creator, God. They assigned the attributes of God to parts of His creation or their own icons and idols and stopped worshiping the one true God. Every culture has some concept of something greater than men because we are

all created in God's image. It's wired into us to acknowledge that there is something greater but as mankind moved farther away from its Creator, they looked for something to fill the gap.

God, through the Jewish people, gave men additional guidelines to help them know how to live at peace with Him and with each other. These are recorded in the Old Testament books of the Bible. In them we see not only God's guidelines but also a history of how men kept, or didn't keep, God's commands and what happened as a result.

People misunderstood what the laws meant and how to implement them in their lives. As a result, a ritualistic religion developed rather than men seeking to have a relationship with God resulting in true peace through right living. If we aren't ever vigilant, seeking to resist sin and flee from it, it will get the better of us resulting in unending, ever increasing chaos in our lives, unless there is a divine intervention. That divine intervention came through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. God sent His only Son, Jesus, into the world to reveal Himself in a tangible way to mankind and explain what He desires, a relationship with us not ritualistic religion.

Jesus summarized God's heart and commands in two basic teachings.

Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength—everything you are or have available to you.

Love one another as much as you love yourself.

Jesus taught that to love God was to keep His commandments and that to keep them it wasn't enough to just follow the letter of the law but required changing the way we think.

Consider the Ten Commandments. The first part of them has to do with our relationship with God: worship only God and not idols of any kind, give Him the respect He deserves, and set aside time to worship Him each week. The second part has to do with loving others: honor our parents, don't murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, and don't want something someone else has to the point that you consider taking it from them.

One begins by allowing God to have first priority in your life and seeking to be at peace with Him. He can't be found in idols of any kind. He is an actual being and not some figment of our imagination, even though that is what Satan wants us to believe.

How do we love others then? Jesus taught it like this: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you follow this simple principle, you will begin to have peace with others. Do you want anyone to kill you, or have sex with your spouse, or steal from you, etc.? I think you get the picture. In fact the last of the Ten Commandments makes it a sin to even think about doing any of these things.

Let's be honest, we are all sinners and there is nothing we can do to restore our equilibrium with God on our own. So God had to intervene and sent His Son to provide a means of restoring equilibrium or peace with Him through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He makes restoration available to all who would put their faith in Jesus and the redemption offered through His death, burial, and resurrection. I urge you to place your faith in Jesus today, while you still have time!

A Framework for Living

I would like to suggest a framework within which to build one's life so that we can continue to live at peace with God and our fellow man. This isn't anything new necessarily and it's not original to me. I think I heard the basics of it while listening to a sermon by Alistair Begg (truthforlife.org) which I believe he got from someone else. Sadly I don't remember which sermon or who the original speaker was. I took his basic outline and expanded it a little and offer it now as a framework for living at harmony with God.

First, Acknowledge the Lord is in control.

Let's be clear about this point. Without doing this, nothing we do will amount to anything. Sure we might receive accolades or awards in this life but it will be of no eternal value nor get us any closer to being at peace with God. Consider the following verses.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 115:1-8

- 1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.
- 2 Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?"
- 3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.
- 4 Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands.
- 5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see;
- 6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell;
- 7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat.
- 8 Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

All of the Bible, from the first book to the last, points to the reality that God is and there is nothing that can take His place. In fact, God warns that if we begin putting other things ahead of God and refuse to follow His commandments that dire consequences will result.

Romans 1:18-25 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. **21** For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. **24** Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their

hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

God desires for us to acknowledge His rightful place in the universe but also gives us the freedom to not acknowledge Him in this life, but there are consequences and a future wrath to come if we don't. Some would say that really isn't a choice but it is.

In this life, every choice we make has a consequence of some kind, both for good and/or bad. Often those choices effect the lives of others as well, either leading them to grow closer to God or not. God has already made the initial necessary intervening step by providing salvation to all through faith in Jesus, His Son, through grace. Acknowledging God and His rightful place in the universe is our first step in our move back to equilibrium.

Jesus came into the world to reveal God, His Father, to us. As previously stated, He taught that the two greatest commandments from the Father were to Love God and to Love Others. The way to love God was to keep His commandments and the way to love others was to treat others the same way you want to be treated, even if they don't do the same.

Mark 12:28-31 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "**The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'** 31 "The second is this, '**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**' There is no other commandment greater than these."

John 14:15, 21 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." ... 21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

Matthew 7:12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Luke 6:31 "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you."

Second, Do your part.

Once we have come to the place where we have acknowledged God's rightful place of preeminence in the Universe as its Creator and Sustainer, we have begun a new phase in our relationship with God. As in any relationship, each person has a part to play in it. Think of your relationship with God like any human relationship. If it is all one-sided soon the one who is doing all the work becomes disillusioned and begins to pull away (see the Romans quote above). So our part is then to begin keeping His commandments, not rigidly or legalistically but with a view to growing in our relationship with God.

One of the last commandments Jesus gave before ascending into heaven was the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go**

therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Our part then is to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to observe all His commandments. You make disciples by telling them about Jesus. As we tell others about Jesus, they have the opportunity to acknowledge God's rightful place and place their faith in Jesus, God's Son.

Romans 10:8-10 But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Then we are told to baptize them. This is exactly what Peter told a crowd on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus ascended into heaven.

Acts 2:38-39 Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

The baptism that Jesus and His disciple practiced was believer baptism and the mode was immersion. No where in the New Testament is the practice of infant baptism seen practiced. Besides infants can't conscientiously choose to follow God. Additionally, full immersion was practiced because it is a picture of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. By placing our faith in Jesus, we are dying to ourselves and our old way of life and beginning a new life in Jesus.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

How? Begin Where We Are

Doing our part doesn't necessarily mean that we will be called to some distant country. That might happen in the future but for not God asks us to begin where we are. Jesus told the disciples this same thing.

Acts 1:7-8 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

How? Use What You Have

God asks us to love Him with our heart (the essence of who we are and what drives us), our soul (our very lives if necessary), our mind (intellect and emotions), and strength (all the resources we have available to us). Each of us have unique abilities, talents, and resources available to us to make available to God to help others and to tell them about the salvation that can be found in Jesus. There are too many verses to include in this limited space but I would suggest reading the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) and asking

God for additional help as needed. He will provide.

How? Do What You Can

Two passages come to mind regarding this idea. One is in Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus describes how to go about doing what you can. In that passage He lists various groups we are to provide assistance for: the hungry, the homeless, the poor, the sick and those in prisons. Matthew 6:1-4 and James 1:25-27 both address this idea as well, emphasizing the need to do it humbly and in private, seeking God's blessing and not the accolades of men.

Third, Let the Lord be responsible for the results.

Far too often we feel the burden of doing all the work in telling others about Jesus. That isn't what God asks us to do. He asks us to acknowledge Him and do our part. We are to simply tell others about Jesus and to help those who are in need as we have the means and opportunity. We can pray that God will change lives through our efforts and that people will not respond just because of us but because of the truth as revealed in God's word.

Isaiah 55:8-11 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. **9** “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. **10** For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; **11** So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.”

Matthew 16:16-18 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus said to him, “**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.** **18** I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**”

We cannot change the hearts and minds of men and if we use trickery or clever persuasion techniques we aren't trusting in God and His word to accomplish what He intended it to do. Let God do the changing.

The Way of Jesus—A Message of Hope!

No religion truly offers hope that is eternal in nature and will result in people's lives changed for eternity. There may be some short term changes that happen in people's lives, but when the difficult times come, and they will, those who have truly placed their faith in God will have a sure foundation to stand on.

Romans 10:11 For the Scripture says, “**WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.**”

