



Reinforcing Your Faith

Zoom Bible Study
led by Mary Lowman

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Reinforcing Your Faith – Session 2 Are Your Roots Deep Enough?

Introduction

Last week we were briefly introduced to what progressive Christianity is, what “deconstructing your faith” is, and how this new “gospel” can look attractive if you are not truly informed of its deception.

Today we’re asking the question: “Are your roots deep enough?” If your spiritual roots are shallow and undeveloped, your faith won’t grow, you won’t bear spiritual fruit, and eventually your faith will die.



In this session we will look at the essentials of true faith and the threats that assault it.

This progressive Christianity says there is no way to know truth. Certainty is offensive to them; it's okay to ask a question but it's arrogant to say you have answers.

In the video they talked about a “healthy agnosticism.” This new gospel creates a “culture of doubt.” Having doubt is viewed as a virtue. But if you come to an answer, you are arrogant or you are not really thinking right. They are “truth seekers” but they don’t really want to know “the truth.”

What is historic Christianity? There's something that defines it, something has made it unique for 2000 years.

Core Essential Foundational Beliefs of Progressive Christianity

Last week I gave you five beliefs or characteristics that identify this progressive Christianity gospel:

1. There is a lowered view of the Bible
2. Feelings are emphasized over facts
3. Essential Christian doctrines are open for re-interpretation
4. Historic terms are re-defined
5. The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice

What is a creed? Google says it “is a system of Christian or other religious belief; a faith.” There are creeds in the Bible which clearly define Christianity.

Biblical Creeds

This is the earliest creed in the history of Christianity.

1 Corinthians 15:3 - 8

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost, they began to remember things Jesus told them before he died, such as:

Mark 9:31: He was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.”

So, they received understanding through the Holy Spirit now living within them.

John 14:16-17, 25-26, 28-29:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth.

“All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

“You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”

In this passage from 1 Corinthians 15, Paul delivers to them what he received. And this is the basic creed of our faith; this is what the first believers held to be true:

1. They believed Jesus died for their sins.

Within two or three years of Jesus’ death, Christians were affirming the atonement.

2. They believed that Jesus was buried and raised from the dead.

Paul tells them that without the resurrection, there is no Christianity:

1 Corinthians 15:13 – 14, 17:

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.
And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. . .
And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

3. They believed that Jesus’ atoning death, burial, and resurrection were inseparable from the Scriptures.

The OT affirms what is written in the NT and the apostles of old taught how the OT prophesied Jesus as Messiah. They also had the Apostles’ teachings:

Acts 2:42: They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

4. They believed that their core belief in the Resurrection could be verified by evidence.

It’s grounded in eye-witness testimony. Alisa writes: “This wasn’t some kind of ‘What does Jesus mean to you?’ mushy oatmeal faith. It wasn’t based on a guru sitting under a tree, receiving some cosmic revelation, and then convincing a bunch of people to buy in. It centered on history and the evidence of eyewitnesses to an event—the Resurrection” (pg. 33).

Within the New Testament we find Paul quoting Luke's Gospel:

1 Timothy 5:18: For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." (Luke 10:7)

Peter refers to Paul's letters as Scripture:

2 Peter 3:15 – 16: Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

"There is one thing we can be certain of: The earliest Christians—the ones who knew Jesus personally, who saw him with their own eyes and touched him with their own hands—believed the teachings laid out in the earliest creeds and New Testament writings" (Childers pg. 40).

Progressive Christianity allows you to pick and choose what you want to believe in the Bible. For this other "gospel," truth is what conforms to your internal reality. What feels good to you. So, if looking inside is how you discover truth, then you will not know what is true outside of you.

Why have people been attracted to Progressive Christianity?

Abuse of Power

Many who are following this new teaching are blaming the teachings of historic Christianity for real or perceived wrongs done to them. So, the easy thing to do is to chuck the whole thing and go for something new.

No Safe Place to Doubt

Many people leave their churches because of the way their honest doubts have been dismissed. Alisa points out that unbelief and doubt are two different things. Unbelief is a decision of the will which runs contrary to the way God created the universe. Someone who sincerely doubts is seeking to get an answer to puzzling questions. Alisa points out that "biblical faith is trust—and that trust is based on good evidence" (pg. 50).

The Moral Demands of Historic Christianity

Mark 8:34: Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

Denying yourself does not mean tweaking your behavior here and there. It is saying "no" to your deepest sense of who you are, for the sake of Christ. . .

Jesus requires everything of everyone. Alisa writes:

"Even many Christians who don't experience same-sex attraction have adjusted their theology on the issue because they think it is the most loving stand to take. So in order to maintain some semblance of faith, they redefine Christianity and progress beyond its historic understanding, while others abandon the faith altogether" (pgs. 54-55).

We need to come to grips with the fact that as followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot expect to be admired and loved by the world all the time! Jesus wasn't!

2 Timothy 3:12: In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Let me remind you of this:

1 Corinthians 7:31b: For this world in its present form is passing away.

Why should we invest all our time and money and love in a world that is passing away? Why should we try so hard to please people who don't know Jesus—to win their favor and be their friends? Of course, we should love them and befriend them and let them see Jesus in us. But we don't need their approval if we have God's approval.

When we live by biblical principles of sex, we avoid such horrific consequences that we see all around us.

Trouble with the Bible

It is not easy to swallow or solve all the tensions found mostly in the Old Testament. But there are explanations and answers for specific passages which simply take study and time to understand. But for Progressive Christians, the Bible is presented as morally dubious in parts, and the only option offered is to reject or reinterpret the sections that are troubling. We'll cover this more in a future session.

The world offers a more attractive option

Often the latest hot issue in our culture can be presented as morally correct, even morally superior to the Bible, and people who don't adhere to biblical truth are persuaded by it. Christians get confused when they think that it is loving and kind to agree with these hot issues.

Alisa covers several other reasons that Progressive Christianity is attractive to some, including:

- Hyperfundamentalism or legalism (pg. 61-63)
- The Problem of suffering (pg. 63-67)
- Growing up in a Christian bubble (pg.67-69)

Conclusion

Everything we're talking about has been accelerated and complicated by the internet. It has literally changed the world. What began as a movement seeking reform became Progressive Christianity leading to a false gospel. Their beliefs are built around their responses to questions like "Why did Jesus die?" "What is the Bible?" and "What is the gospel?"

Childers, Alisa; *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*, Tyndale, 2020.