

Better Explanations 4 by Ben Huot

Better Explanations 4

4th Generation Writings

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Changing Our Own Minds

The key to most of the positive things in my life stem from my willingness to admit I made a mistake and / or need help. I learned this the hard way by constantly having to ask for forgiveness because I often offended people as a young adult by saying stupid things.

Failure was the key to my writing ability as well as I started almost 25 years ago with having failed in completing both college and my military commitment. That is what interested me in Taoism and at that time I even thought that I might be a Goth. Shortly afterwards I learned that I was mentally ill.

This is where my Christian faith becomes very useful in a practical sense. I was willing and able to admit I needed help. It is very hard for anyone to believe now that what they are experiencing may not be real or their closely held beliefs could be based on misinformation.

We often see ourselves as the lone hero against the world as a romantic view of life that we experience in movies. But we need each other and if everyone else seems to be wrong maybe we need to consider that we on the other hand are the ones with mistaken views.

Opening up this possibility also allows one to understand other people's point of view in other areas and is something I have developed in myself in the study of philosophy for many years.

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There are few things in life that have to be done one way and there are few things in life we can be sure about.

The big outlier is the Bible and God. I know sometimes from the outside faith in God sounds like the things people say when they are in a cult. But the difference is that mature Christians usually have learned often the hard way that their faith should be in God and not in other Christians. I realize many people today don't believe in God, but to understand Christians you have to accept this possibility.

You will quickly find that I approach Christianity from a wildly different point of view in some ways and in other ways I must sound like every other Christian you have ever heard. One of the ways in which I am different is that I only believe in the Bible and the Christian God and in every other area outside this I am a skeptic.

What does this mean in a practical sense? Most people believe in science the way Christians believe about God including Christians. I do not believe in science in this way. I know enough about science to know that it is not supposed to be a belief system technically. But from the way many average people act they very much treat Science like magic or faith.

Part of the problem is that scientists are people too and fallible and so are not objective, at least not fully. But the idea that science and math or facts cannot be disagreed with puts it into the same position as God in our lives. God does not share power with any other group or individual and since He created everything has every right and it is entirely reasonable and natural for Him to want control over His creation.

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So you cannot depend so much on science and math in your society that facts become more important than truth and still be a society that has faith in God. Why do even Christians argue about the reality of God but not the accuracy of science? It is very convenient that science can describe itself as a never ending process and continue to evolve over time. We live in the here and now and so we need some definite answer to some basic questions before we die.

Truth is too important to get right only centuries later and then realize that is wrong too. And science and scientists do not limit themselves to the minute details of how to do things. They stretch their hands into human relations with social and applied sciences and the creation and ending of reality. With the direction of advancements of technology they want to be the source of all knowledge and all power.

We are at a point that even non Christians should see that the future though far from certain to us at least is not going in a good direction. Most our major problems in society started after the Enlightenment which conveniently occurred around the same time as the Industrial Revolution and European Colonialism. So we attribute the problems to be the individual technologies and specific political powers of the time, but the problems are greater and more fundamental.

Ask yourself if you could not have America as we know it without oil or computers and that the different ideas we know that are killing us are all tied together. What if you needed to give up the modern world for God? Would you give up your belief in America or the usefulness of science for your belief in God?

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So we as a society need to now evaluate the modern world and see if everyone else in the world is right about America or are we right. Is our wealth a legitimate factor to justify us before God? Are we any different than other empires? And what would Christ do in the world today? Would He lead us into battle against our political rivals or would His second coming surprise us more than His first coming?

It is hard to stand against things that have been assumed to be right for so long. But for much larger periods of history and even most people throughout the world today might have a completely different view of what is important in life and how you should express your faith. Maybe we need to understand history better before we try to understand the modern world.

Mixing Things Up

Scientists cannot distance themselves from what bad people do in the name of science anymore than Christians can distance themselves from what bad people do in the name of religion. Both scientists and Christians cannot control what other people do as a result of what they teach.

Christians and scientists both teach non-professionals about their system of thinking. But many people that practice said systems often do not accept all aspects of the teachings.

For centuries Christians have fought hard to keep their theology pure and static. This has had a great cost in fragmenting the faith into multiple institutions and under many different leaders. Scientists today seem to have a similar problem.

Most scientists claim science is not magic or a religion and yet this is how most people relate with science. You could argue that this is based on misinformation or flat out ignorance but so could Christians make the same argument about why people do evil in the name of religion.

Christ lived as a perfect example of how a Christian should live, but most Christians do not do so. But the Bible does not argue with this assessment either. Christianity is based on the idea that you cannot earn your faith by being good enough and that salvation comes from what God did. Furthermore it is not based on what we do save our choosing to believe.

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So although the world expects Christians to live up to their ideals, Christianity very clearly and honestly says this will never happen. This may be a hard to understand concept for non-believers, but this is not contradictory and is consistent.

Christians often see science as necessary and reasonable but take issue when science moves into disciplines formerly thought of as best explained by theological arguments. When scientists try to explain the nature of reality and its beginning and end, many Christians would say that it is unfair that scientists can study these areas but if Christians take scientific ideas from Scripture that this is socially unacceptable.

I personally take issue when scientists say they are right about something that contradicts the Scripture and say then that to be rational we must accept the scientific explanation and stop believing in our faith. Many might think it easier to get Christians to stop believing because faith makes the study of science more complex and controversial, in some areas. But most Christians do not think science and Christianity contradict each other.

I flat out say that science is not always compatible with Christianity but then I will believe my Creator over a human expert. One of the evidence based and practical reasons for believing in faith over science is because faith has been the same since the beginning of creation. Science, on the other hand, has not reached a permanent decision on anything and never will. I also see my Creator as having more relevant knowledge, experience, and morality than any scientist.

Some of the changes recently in science challenge the whole basis of what it means to be a rational study of nature. Science cannot currently explain and prove why physics works totally differently

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at different scales. Even things like the existence of dark matter and dark energy are so vague that they are non answers. String theory is not testable by natural methods.

Also the complexities of the math involved to understand some of these theories really limit how a average person could ever have the time to master math enough to appreciate how they are not magic. Some of the ways in which scientists try to teach physics in general or explain theories like quantum mechanics without math make them seem more like science fiction or fantasy. The push to go back to the Moon or go to Mars fails to calculate in the economic factors necessary for this to work or be useful in any tangible or practical way.

It sometimes seems that some scientists are so concerned with separating science from faith that this hinders the progress of scientific discovery. Also the treatment of scientists with different views is very hostile considering many times their new theories prove to be correct and are then adopted by mainstream science. Black holes are one example.

During the life of Einstein, he had to argue against the idea of ether, which is very irrational and sounds very spiritual. Currently science is trying to cope with the obviously effective principles of Qi that comes from Chinese philosophy and medicine and that makes the nature of science even less clear. And many scientists have non-Christian religious views as well which makes it harder for them to be objective.

I think the world does not like change and Christianity challenges the status quo of the richest parts of the world today. America does not see a need for Christianity for its ideological narrative of being the good guy in the world today.

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It is interesting that both conservatives and liberals both think America should be intimately involved in the world and this will make the world better. Both seem to want to use technology and law to force people to change their beliefs to what they want. Both also seem to want to change the moral system of the other group and none of them want to follow the morals the other group values.

Traditionally the conservatives in America were the dominant group because they held to a consistent message but today liberals have risen because they have been able to form a consistent coalition and consistent message of their own. It is interesting that the biggest issues in both conservative and liberal groups are so explosive because they make the other group look immoral in the way they look at life and the issues.

Religion and science are often coopted by both sides to push their agenda. Science is often used to put down people who disagree with them because they can say there is only one answer and their answer is the right one which cannot be argued with. Unfortunately religion in America is often used the same way. This is not to say there is anything wrong with either religion or science but that, although they are not exactly parallel conceptually, they are used and abused in similar ways.

One of the big similarities that most of society agrees on is they want justice or punishment on individuals they think are disruptive to society because they do not conform to their particular morality. Both liberals and conservatives have values as do scientists and Christians. It is possible to have a different moral philosophy or different moral priorities.

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Most conservatives will agree that the environment or racial justice is important but likely will not prioritize it to the same level as many liberals would. Similarly many liberals still believe in having a justice system and a national defense but they may prioritize these issues differently.

Similarly with Christians and scientists priorities are really what separates the two disciplines of theology and science. Science is focused on the material world and Christianity on the spiritual especially the afterlife. Most Christians do care about the material world, but do not prioritize it over the afterlife. Many scientists do have religious beliefs but their professional focus is on the physical needs of people.

Values, Politics, and Technology

Values

Many people see Christianity as being about fear. I think non believers might come to this conclusion because Christians are quick to point out that God is not just about love but about justice as well. Fear is the opposite of what God is about because He wants to form a close connection with all His creation. This is especially true with us because we are made similar to Him in some ways.

God wants to motivate us out of love and He forgives us unconditionally but then He wants us to do good plus forgive others unconditionally as well. Having both love and justice be compatible is hard for us to understand in our society. Reconciling these two values only really works when you add mercy and forgiveness as an alternative to justice enforced by punishment.

Much of our society does not like the concept of enforcing justice at all and some like it too much. Mostly we like to pick on the individual who breaks laws that we seldom break. This way we can be for justice but not worry about being the object of the law's wrath.

Christianity brings in radical equality in that all evil and all violation of law including our evil thoughts are considered bad enough to bring the greatest punishment. The flip side is that it is very easy to get out of if you can conquer your pride and accept God's point of view on this. Ultimately God can be both merciful and enforce justice because He has taken the penalty for our evil on Himself.

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Many are used to treating God like they would someone in a business exchange where you do some thing for God and then He does a favor for you. This is the pagan or pre-Christian model for dealing with the spiritual world. It is the same way politics and many people's relationships work. It is a big part of Confucianism.

God doesn't want to have this kind of interaction with us. He wants to be part of our family where we can be called children of God and Christ even says we are His friends because we are in on what His plan is for us. He is in a leadership position over us but it is not the typical one where it can become a power struggle or even abusive.

We know we do bad things and God knows even better on all the details, reasons, and results. God does not hate us for this but while God is merciful He is also perfectly good to the point that He cannot associate with any evil or person who sins. God made a bridge of Himself and suffered the curse of sin on His Son. Christ went to Hell Himself so that we wouldn't have to go to the underworld or Hell after we die.

So the Christian solution to suffering is God using His Son's death and resurrection, His Church, His Spirit living in Christians, and history itself to ease our sufferings. After we die we need not suffer anymore at all. The only thing stopping God from doing anything is His determination to only save people who want to be part of His plan.

Politics

This is why it is futile to have a nation that is governed by people to think it can successfully fool people into believing it is of the Christian God. The Christian system only works where Christians are all volunteers. God gives His forgiveness freely, because He has chosen to, and has already paid the price.

Trying to combine America together with Christianity is a hard combination to join together. The Church and Christ offer everything free and capitalism is based on the idea that nothing is free. Furthermore capitalism promotes the idea that we are never satisfied with what we have while Christianity is based on the idea that the only thing you need is God. America promotes the idea that Americans are more important than other people in the world whereas Christianity is for all regardless of birth, politics, geography, or even criminal status.

This twin ideology was useful to get the support of many conservative Americans. These citizens would provide the backbone of the Army, Intelligence, and opinion leaders in America during the Cold War. This was because they needed people with education and discipline which were areas the Church was historically a leader in. Also most our Cold War allies of any economic, military, or political value at the time were also predominantly the same culturally.

The Church was a natural opponent of Russia because the Church was persecuted in a more obvious way there at that time. Although the Church was strong both before and after the Soviet Union in Russia. And both those times had nothing to do with America or any of its ideology.

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Over the years, the Church and academia have parted ways and so has the government felt less and less need to force the idea of America and Christianity together. But the idea that America thinks it is better than the rest of the world remains. This is because America has never been different fundamentally in its thinking than it is now.

America shows it continues to think it is better than the rest of the world. America continues to attack computer infrastructure around the world and on its own citizens and allies. The US continues military operations around the world when there is no war declared and it monitors of its own citizens when no warrants have been issued. We continue to use what we now call soft power to get the US what it wants that are difficult to document without access to classified information.

The US continues to favor legal immigration to the United States that is not fully based on legal record, persecution, or relative world population levels. The US continues to support many nations that support terrorism, torture, and war crimes when it denounces non allies for the same behavior. We still control all the world's sea lanes by armed force. Furthermore, the US is still trying to start another cold war or world war with China.

America has always been a country that chose economics over all else and believed that it was better than those who had the land or resources they wanted. This pride in America is why so many other countries hate us. If you claim to be different than the rest of the world and are not, people are going to bring that up over and over again.

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Invariably some of the most evil and destructive forces in the world have been put at the center of our empire on purpose over the last hundred years or so. We are the product of the European Enlightenment which was the big force that drove most the major European attempts at utopia. They were all based on human solutions all of which resulted in various kinds of totalitarianism and greater suffering.

To argue that American liberals and conservatives are working for different aims or using different methods are just talking point used to divide American citizens. You cannot be better than the other powers and still be the dominant power. Power and morality are not compatible. Other powerful people want what you control and the one that wins is the one that is willing to do evil in order to do good. This is why politics itself is often incompatible with Christianity.

Technology

Today information of common ordinary people is now worth more than oil. America and the rest of its Empire and its businesses want people to be as careless, lazy, and uneducated as possible. This contributes to them not critically thinking about what they are doing or what the country is doing.

America's world cares less and less if you love it because it knows you live in fear of nuclear annihilation, terrorism, or disease. Christianity is more of an obstacle today because it makes people less afraid of death and adds a competing loyalty for its citizens. Christians are starting to realize America is not predominantly Christian anymore and wasn't most of its history either.

Instead of having to fight wars to divide people now it can do so by hacking businesses and infrastructure and manipulating media coverage and opinion leaders. You don't actually have to fight real wars anymore because you can cause as much suffering and destruction with computers. If you control others minds you often control their souls as well.

The reality of the Internet has changed things so much that the appearance is as important as reality. This may change so that appearance is the same as reality in the near future. Those who realize what it going on are starting to live like cloak and dagger spies did 20 years ago.

There will be nothing hidden soon unless you have enough money to pay the blackmail and are vigilant enough to avoid all scams. The current value of information relative to the difficulty in acquiring it means that we are all of sufficient importance to be

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at risk. The information age has not just made information a commodity but the ability to automate hacking has made it realistic to hack everyone at once. This means that it is also profitable to go after everyone and everything in a meaningful way.

So in our desire to fight off totalitarianism we have in effect not only grown up the same capabilities and institutions to carry this out in America with the precision and effectiveness of the NAZIs, we have also exported these same technologies and business / government hybrids globally and locally. We have created a future that values information so much that we no longer value spiritual things.

Spiritual things are in direct conflict with a certain level of technology because too much available information leads to more sin as it fuels addictive behaviors. It gives the common person too much power and temptation. It also allows some people who understand how to use information against people almost unlimited power. Organized crime thrives because basically you are expanding their market into everyones living room. It also starves people of time and social skills so that people have less time for God or other people.

What makes things easier for government, businesses, and schools also makes things easier for hostile governments, criminals, and bored teenagers to cause problems for everyone. We have been democratizing the technologies and skills that typically were used by spies for the general public and we wonder why it is destabilizing.

The government, media, and educational institutions keep evangelizing these tools and how much we as a society need to

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master them. At the same time these same groups have failed to master them and society mastering them creates more problems for them and everyone else.

Meaningful Responses

So what should America do? At this point we should unwind our journey into the information revolution and try an Amish or low technology approach. At this point there is no meaningful difference between America and the world. This will never happen as so many Americans cannot contemplate a world without indoor plumbing or electricity. Ultimately America is not fundamentally worse than every other empire, but it is not fundamentally better either. America likely is much more powerful though.

The only real options we have as individuals are the choices we make in our lives. We should stop being distracted and discouraged by following politics and major media platforms. We should focus on preparing for the inevitable collapse of the world system we created. We should learn as much as possible about how the technology works, prepare for disasters, and find peace with God. Also let this unwind peacefully because any violence will come back on our own heads and politically justifies further violence.

As an individual, I found the war on terror utterly devastating. We were in a decade of peace (in the 1990s) after suffering a very long state of war for America. Then we got brought back into a number of wars mostly in the same country when an entirely different country clearly caused the entire issue. And people continued to buy bigger and bigger cars while fewer and fewer sign up for the military.

It seems we win one war only to set up another one in the process. And so many people seem to care so little about even

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their own citizens. They think saying thank you for your service or a 10% off a major purchase is some sort of repayment. How about stop voting for wars?

Neither Product Nor Service

Christianity was not designed to be a business and should never be one. Unfortunately many see strong similarities between the way businesses sell things and the way Christians evangelize. Some of the big elements of this include the rush to get non-believers to believe and the free aspect.

Both of which are good but in the context of contemporary America, many are very suspicious of things that they are told they must do immediately and things that are offered for free. There are many companies that use similar strategies in trying to market their products and / or services.

Many Christians feel the need to adapt to our mainstream culture and fight the label of being irrational. I don't think Christianity needs to fight for being rational as the Scriptures alone show the complexity and the importance of faith in Christ. Certainly there have been and always will be deep thinkers who are Christian in their faith.

But this struggle to make Christianity feel normal to people is hard to reconcile with Scripture. Most of the world will always reject Christ and this is throughout all of Scripture. We are told we are not going to be liked by the world as we are not even of this world anymore.

The world in its wisdom rejected God. That is a big part of why Christ died for our sins in the first place. God wanted to show us that even the weakness of God is greater than the might of men.

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Certainly Christians should never abandon education (although they have in many ways) but they should never feel the need to fit in. Christianity is never going to be popular or respected and if it is then it is not very effective or faithful to Scripture. People in power realize that in the lives of Christians faith competes with the ideology of the government.

If people really follow God they are constantly going to be critical of the moral compromise at the basis of the concept of politics. They are not going to keep buying more and more stuff.

Christians are going to speak out when they feel the government and industry are trying to take the place of God in their lives. So many of the most dishonest business models are based on the idea that they are giving you something for free and you need to accept it right away. This is a big red flag for critical thinkers.

How do you think they could pay for the high salaries of many employees, expensive facilities and equipment, and stay in business long if they have no revenue source? So if the revenue source does not come from those who are getting the product or service this doesn't add up. This is unless something else is going on that is not being advertised.

The other thing is that if they feel a need to hurry you in making a decision it makes the critical thinker wonder why would they need you to decide so quickly. If they are selling a legitimate product and they have have enough customers to stay in business than this would be hard to believe. This is also a big red flag.

Today many businesses do not find a business model until they have a certain number of customers. Then they are either bought

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out by another company or their management decides they need to fundamentally change the nature of the product in order for them to make money.

The default way of making money is a combination two things. The product is offered for free or at cost and the company expects a very small percentage of people to pay for essentially meaningless trinkets. The company may also be very aggressive in upselling them and limit the products so they aren't useful without paying huge amounts of money.

On top of this almost every company, government, and organization is selling and / or buying personal information and this is often their biggest revenue source. It isn't that we are trying to hide anything, but it makes us suspicious when people want to know about things that have no value for legitimate uses.

For all the costs associated with collecting and using the data I have a hard time believing it is actually very useful for advertising things to us. I can see on the other hand it being very useful to criminals, oppressive governments, businesses running scams, and individual hackers.

It is hard to build trust on deception and that is what the Church is up against today. Our entire society is running like a bunch of rogue intelligence agents running organized crime and the government watching and taking notes. In the context of the Church it makes sense that they want people to not take too long so they can be saved before they die. It is also reasonable to offer things for free because God does not need money. But people's experiences with the world bring with them some emotional and financial trauma.

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Today being normal is not good because normal means creepy. When your entire economy and political system are directly profiting from what would be considered crime if it wasn't involving computers, businesses and governments have lost all credibility in the eyes of most their citizens. The Church should want to be different than society, especially today. Not morally compromising today is considered revolutionary.

So although the Church shouldn't be different for the sake of it, people now want something different. The Church is different and should want to be seen as so. So continue the fight but share with the world that Christians are dealing with issues too. One of the big things keeping non-believers from the Church is that they think they are not good enough yet to be Christians.

Christianity is a completely different concept than the world is used to. People need to have time to wrap their minds around this. And those who really want to serve God and are serious about it realize it that there is more to pleasing God than a 5 minute prayer. And I believe God will give us the time necessary to plead our case before they die.

The Church today is the alternative to the Internet ideologically, practically, and socially. This is the best situation to be in because this is where the future of society will be going. Many people see the future as more computers, but this level of technology will naturally unravel society. If people of the future continue to advance technology, there will be no functioning society.

Future of Church Strategy

The future of Church strategy should be the same as that of the Apostle Paul. We should adopt no strategy but to go where we find an opportunity as individuals. We need to realize that our human ability to target the best approach fails in comparison to God's knowledge of everything and His ability to do everything better than us.

One of the most devastating things to set the course over Christian history was the acceptance that we can interpret truths from Scripture primarily through reason and then augment this with faith when necessary. Jesus choose as the leaders of the church average men with conflicting political ideas and with volatile emotions. Even the writing of Scripture was never reserved exclusively for those entirely loyal and fully educated.

Sometimes I think that the entirety of Western Civilization is contrary to Scripture, but it wasn't always this way even in the West. The general ideas of individuality, freedom and equality are from Scripture, but different in specifics. These basic concepts have always been true and may actually be a stumbling block or cause a misconception of Christianity in the rest of the world.

We are individuals because God treats us individually in terms of our salvation. We are equal because all have sinned and are far from God's moral perfection. We are free because of God's sacrifice if we accept it. We have freedom, individuality, and equality within the Church and within relation to and because of

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what God has done. Christ should be the center of everything, not people.

There are aspects of Gods relationship with us that make sense from an Eastern Civilization point of view. God wants us to be part of His family, live in peace, practice humility, and create a legacy for Him. Just as many in the the rest of the world need to learn from the West in terms of understanding Christ so also the rest of the world needs to learn from the East.

God wants us to be at peace with each other but to do so we must be at peace with Him and within ourselves. God wants us to be servant-leaders as Christ is in our communities and in our ministries. He wants to call us back home and become reconciled with Him so we can be part of His family again. God also wants us to take make use of the abilities He gives us and do good works as an evidence that we are saved.

There are aspects of Gods relationship with us that make sense from a Middle (East) Civilization point of view. God wants us to take Him seriously about the severity of sin, understand the significance of the spiritual world but not get involved by ourselves, commit to Him eternally, and identify with Him as our Lord and Savior.

Christ does not always talk about peace and joy. Christ had to suffer in hell Himself to save us. Christ was not happy about those selling in His place of worship. Christ disrupted the established religious groups of the time. He was rejected by His own people. He says when we take His message into the world we will get the same responses He did.

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I am sure there are many other aspects of God that can be learned from different cultural areas of the world, but I do not feel I know enough to comment outside Eurasia. The concept I am sure follows through though.

In ancient times, people who thought they were wise rejected God. God has chosen leaders who had a giant flaw that made them unfit for leadership. They were often from poor backgrounds or in the case of the rich and educated Paul started out as an enemy of the Church and Moses had problems with public speaking. God wants us to do things only He could make happen so that we see the reality of who He is.

We don't need more money and God certainly doesn't. We don't need to be smarter or less divided as God knows everything and can be everywhere at once. What we need is a willingness to make sacrifices to follow through with what we know God is asking of us personally.

God will give us any ability that we need. If we pray for spiritual things, God will always give them to us as it says in James or like when Solomon asked for wisdom.

We need to continue to be the feet and hands of God but not the brains. We did not design this theology or create this movement. We have chosen to follow God, not people and our ministry efforts should reflect that.

One of the biggest things that sets Christianity apart from Science is that we are not the ones leading the people. We can no longer accept a partial truth or share God with guesswork and tests. If we limit ourselves to being led by people, we are selling ourselves and God short.

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Let us stop allowing Christianity to follow the lead of the world or try to synchronize it with the latest intellectual fads and human created beliefs. The way forward is to look back in history and see where things have been going and see patterns.

The societies most focused on Science historically ended up with more suffering than ever before. Societies committed to Science have also traditionally been the most hostile and effective at holding back the Gospel. Maybe this is because we give Science a free pass as being inevitable or unchallengeable.

Christians are afraid of the supernatural with good reason. It is not an area that should interest Christians too much. They definitely should only seek out connections to God Himself. And then only through Scriptural commanded means like prayer, fasting, reading the Bible, communion, speaking in tongues and the like.

The other side is we have no need to be afraid of spiritual things either. The best way to fight is to get rid of sin in our own lives and make public declarations of what side we are on. We need to continue to convince others that there is no other explanation for why we do what we do than that we are Christians.

The key reason for spiritual awareness is that pagan communities have been the easiest to convert historically. This is because they understand the reality and power of the spiritual world. The hardest obstacle today to bring people to Christ is convincing them that spiritual things are real. We have been given an opportunity in this area by both feminism and science fiction becoming mainstream.

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One of the great opportunities for American Christians is they need not go anywhere to evangelize, as the biggest area needed to be evangelized is in our own country. There are several generations who have almost no knowledge of Christianity at all and might be very open to the idea. This evangelical field is wide open.

Mental Illness Stereotypes

Many people today who were marginalized in the past are now being accepted as normal. One group that seems to still be the other and a group that is still targeted for discrimination is the mentally ill. It is still considered socially acceptable to blame social problems on the mentally ill.

Obviously people of different races and genders are very easy to accept into normal society because little to no accommodations need to be made and those that do are generally physical. The same is true of people with easily understood physical or mental disabilities.

For many people depression can be managed by medicine and counseling. For people without sight, hearing, or with mobility disabilities there is much in the way of technology that can make things much easier at least than it was 20 years ago. There is also less social stigma with these categories of disabilities.

When it comes to mental illness and Schizophrenia in particular many people are still quite afraid of those with mental illness. Ironically most people who know someone with Schizophrenia realize that people with Schizophrenia, although going through difficult things, are the same as everyone else in other areas. Most people with Schizophrenia have average intelligence and abilities. Their biggest problems are often money and relationships like most people.

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But beyond that the most disabling part of Schizophrenia is not the way you are perceived but the way you perceive reality. Schizophrenia is defined as a split between reality and fantasy and most people with Schizophrenia have trouble distinguishing between fantasy and reality. Some have trouble with auditory hallucinations, others with delusions about people plotting against them, and others have trouble with other types of delusions about reality in general.

Many people especially within the mental health community see religion as a trigger or source of confirmation of the reality of their psychosis. They often discourage religion and religious communities and participating in them. The reality is more complex.

Although not a primary treatment of Schizophrenia, religion can be useful in helping people with Schizophrenia to live more healthy lives. Religion provides community, belonging, and socialization. It helps people get out and exercise, helps focus their minds on positive things, gives them hope and peace, promotes self esteem, and helps provide a more balanced perspective to help counter delusional thoughts.

True religion should be based on the deity not the people and Christianity works because it is not primarily about what someone thought of and has a long view of history. Most religions dominated by an individual are not as cross culturally relevant and do not have the longevity of major world religions. Christianity has clear moral standards and a realistic and complex perspective on how people think and act.

Study of the Bible and the practice of Christianity helps build a sound mind and a healthy lifestyle as it encourages moderation

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and self control. Christianity is accessible to everyone and many people have spent a great deal of effort making sure the Bible and the church include everyone that want to be part of it.

Mental illness has some strong similarities to addictive behaviors in terms of symptoms and treatments. Many people with Schizophrenia have or had addictions. Some of the longest lasting and successful treatments for addiction are based on Christian ideas.

Many powerful people have seen the mentally ill, especially people with Schizophrenia, as useful targets to make people feel better about themselves. Both parties often try to associate mental illness with evil and so it gets blamed for criminal behavior. In reality though morally bad things are not done any more frequently by those who have a poorer grasp on reality.

People do bad things because they choose to, not because they don't know better. They are doing what they think will improve things for themselves but don't think or care about the effect it has on others. Having trouble controlling your thoughts does not lead to bad behavior anymore than having diabetes or consuming alcohol does.

A person with Schizophrenia may do irrational things although so do many who have no good reason to do so. Just like people can have their sight, hearing, or mobility compromised by many factors, permanently or temporarily, some in and some out of their control.

People with Schizophrenia are disabled and need help like someone with physical or relatively minor mental issues. This is

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where you see that helping with mental illness can become costly and difficult. And this is why there is so little support for it.

People with mental illness are often living in poverty and so have all the problems associated with this like needing low income housing, financial aid from the government, and government paid health care. Just like upgrading your sewer system these things are not fun or exciting and so get little interest amongst the voting public or the powers that be.

Maybe we could transform our society into something that could provide meaningful work for those with severe mental illnesses. But in order to do so we might need to undo most of what we consider to be the defining characteristics of a society. Some people with mental illnesses could survive effectively without much help, as well as anyone else today, if society totally unwinds itself though.

But the biggest factor that triggers symptoms for almost any mental or physical illness is stress. Lowering people's stress in ways we control by treating each other with kindness, patience, and empathy would go a long way. Many of the problems in our society now arise from people unwilling to see things from someone else's point of view.

We assume too much about people today but people are diverse, not just in physical ways but in their views of reality and what is important in life. Some of these problems highlight deeper problems in our society that are not easy to solve. Making things better for the mentally ill would likely improve things for others who are not considered fully normal by large segments of society.

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Some of these issues might bring us back to what causes evil and how we could reduce it. But certainly blaming evil or equating it with mental illness is factually incorrect, not useful in solving the problem, and is a form of discrimination. This may not sit well with much of the population but so did racial integration of public schools.

End of the Womb

What if this is not all there is? What if this is just a waiting room for our real lives? Many often think of death as the end but what if it is just the beginning? Maybe this world is just like being in the womb or in a bad dream. Will this world still be real to us, once we die to this world? If we want to experience Heaven on earth, we must give up this world already.

Many think of death as an ending even if it is never ending; even many Christians do. Heaven is more than a place to rest. It is meant to be a life without suffering and without ending. It is a return to the Garden of Eden, but it exists beyond anything we can imagine.

If you think of time as placing limits on what you can do, imagine there being no limits even on what you can imagine and then being able to create without having to know how to do it. But we will all be working together in pursuit of God's objectives. There will be entire universes for each of us where we can travel farther than our imaginations can go and still be right with our fellow believers and our God.

Completely breaking down the hostile wall between people and God breaks down more than just suffering. It breaks down all possibility of evil. Eternal life is the greatest creative effort for God and offers the most limitless expression for us to make out of it.

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If you compare everything you know to a seed in the garden described in a sentence and then you wake up to see it for the first time fully blooming with thousands of its friends with no imperfections at all, this is something like Heaven. The beauty is not so much in the possibilities but in the impossibility of doing evil.

It always requires much more to create than to destroy things. This is likely why it takes so long to build a civilization from scratch but it can often be removed from memory in a very short amount of time and with much less effort.

Our understanding of Heaven and the afterlife on earth is like a child who doesn't yet know how to speak trying to understand what it is like on the other side of the galaxy in a thousand years. We cannot even understand how far away the moon is from us and yet we think we can describe Heaven with words.

The Kingdom of Heaven describes both everlasting life in paradise and the Church. What does this say about what is important in Heaven? We think of the jewels on the streets of Heaven or its physical size and are in awe, but true joy and connection with our Creator is infinitely greater.

The same God who created the universe is creating a future for all of us to live with Him without suffering or boredom. This is after knowing full well that we are in the process of destroying His creation and His plan for us out of our pride and foolishness. We are like prisoners coming out of a lockdown into greater safety and freedom than we give to those who sacrificed everything for us get.

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The gift of Heaven is that we no more need to worry about anything. The limitations we experience on earth are not relevant anymore. There are no rules because God rules directly over us. There is no need for any army because there is no evil anymore. God finally makes it impossible for us to hurt each other as we no longer seek more of anything. What is there to steal when the whole thing is made of gold, everything you want is there for you, and there is no market or scarcity of anything good?

Many seem to fear running out of things to do as if we are merely there to do crafts or play card games. Think of how amazing it is how God created people out of absolutely nothing. Not dark matter, not black holes, not empty space, no other realities or universes, singularities or superstrings, absolutely nothing and not even an empty vacuum. When you compare a person to a rock that doesn't give you anywhere near enough to understand what making a soul out of nothing even means.

So if we are to exist in Heaven in bodies that never deteriorate and we still have all our memories and personal spiritual identities preserved, this sounds like the best of being in a dream, being a child, and being retired with perfect health, immense wealth and technology. But again even things like having perfect health would pale in comparison to not having to suffer and being royalty alongside our Creator.

How can you possibly discount or be frightened of eternity with God? Just because we cannot fully describe it doesn't mean there is anything disappointing about it. Certainly if all we get is a seat next to Christ and nothing to do but look at Him, certainly this is better than anything we could possibly come up with. When and if you are truly happy and content and never suffer, does it matter if you have everything or not?

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So just like a birthday party or a meeting with your best friend any preparations necessary are not burdens or responsibilities but fun activities to do in anticipation. We need to stop thinking of doing things for God because we think we owe Him something. We certainly do, but God has given us this gift freely and so we need to focus on gathering the rest of the guests.

We could ponder forever as to why God wanted to save us, but for whatever reason He did. Yes we are unworthy and yet He stands at our door with a gift for us even though we destroyed His house beforehand partying without Him. Let's focus on the next step of preparing for His homecoming by creating the kind of party He would want.

He wants everyone at the party and time with Him is better than any gift we could make. To get ready for the party we need to create a space for Him in our hearts, our churches, and our society. We have to pray that He will return. And we have to make peace with Him and everyone else. He is not coming back to destroy our enemies as they are invited as well.

We need to give up and get over the idea of being right and being rewarded for being faithful. God sees no rank amongst people because all people need a miracle to come to faith in Christ. We all have been promised great futures that none of us have sufficiently earned and never will. Our inheritance is not about possessions or even possibilities but about being children of our Creator.

Christ defeated sin permanently but we will not experience this fully until after we physically die. We do evil because we do choose to but our motivation is different once we choose to follow

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God and so we will not need to fight evil in God's Heaven. We will no longer be tested and our side has been chosen. This is why there will be no suffering in Heaven.

A Better Reality

Better than a drug, like the happiest moment of your childhood, Heaven makes your life on earth look like living in a computer by comparison. The Bible uses similar words for both the afterlife and space. I think this might be a reference to both the size and magnitude of reality that Heaven is all about.

The Kingdom of God is about true equality and true freedom. Think of Heaven as a utopia better than people's greatest dreams for America in terms of the best and most universal American ideals. There will be true peace in Heaven just as Jesus is described as the Prince of Peace. This means we will experience peace, on all levels: peace with God, peace with each other, and inner peace.

Everything on earth has records and so does Heaven. All who are saved are written in a book called the Book of Life. We think of records as punishments, obligations, and bureaucracy. Heaven is very much not like that. The kind of records necessary are minimal because God already know everything, evil we be impossible, and God is accepted by all as the supreme authority.

Imagine how well things would work on Earth if we had complete peace on all levels and had a supreme authority we could trust to be fair. Even better would be if there were a system where we could have kindness and mercy along with justice and equality. This can be possible only through Christ and His death and resurrection. That is truly revolutionary by itself.

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Christ says that once He left and returned to Heaven He would prepare a place for us in Heaven. After He returns to earth He will make a new Heaven and a new earth. Imagine Earth before the flood where people lived hundreds of years or more and there was so much more abundance than even in America when the Europeans first stepped on soil in the Americas. Then also imagine Earth before the fall and how we could grow things easily and never have to work hard to produce food or anything. Even nakedness had no shame in it or any weird meanings that it does today.

Imagine sex which we are so obsessed with today was actually designed by God, but that there is no sex in Heaven. Imagine having things so much more enjoyable than sex to do so that people don't even miss it. Men especially spend much of their lives trying to find either spouses or relationships with a big focus on sex. Imagine if people had no sex drive and no desire for it. This alone would help heal us tremendously.

In the Earth today, we see the power evil as being real and it is hard to find God in our society. God speaks softly and the devil shouts. We are so busy doing what we are told today that we have no time or energy to have rest and have a relationship with God.

Imagine if you didn't need to maintain your image to keep a good paying job. Not keeping an online presence alone would lower most peoples' stress levels tremendously. Think of how more relaxed many retired people are who have secure incomes. That would be all of us in Heaven.

Christ was a servant as well. Imagine if you have ever had the experience of everyone just getting together and getting the work

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done so you can move on and do something fun. Have you ever had a manger or employer who would work along with the employees to do whatever was necessary to get the job done? Have you ever had a leader in your life who would do whatever was necessary for you and everyone under their leadership to be successful? This is the kind of leader Christ is.

Christ is always described, as we will see Him in Heaven, as human even down to the scars on His hands and feet from His crucifixion and likely He will likely look the age He was when He died, 33. We are also told we will have bodies that will never age, wear down, or stop working for any reason. We will have perfect health and never will need to worry about anything medical going wrong.

Not only will there be peace in our lives in our daily life but there will be no hostilities, wars, disagreements, or even awkward situations to deal with. The lions are said to live with the lambs like they did during the flood. Imagine animals where one is a prey and one is a predator being friends. This also means there will be animals in Heaven and they will be happy on a level that even the best pampered pets on earth are not.

God is also our Creator and He first wanted us to share in creating with Him. Adam was charged with naming the animals and people were given the responsibility of taking care of His creation and making sure animals were well taken care of and had good lives. Obviously we fouled this up so bad that we have a hard time relating with this, but in Heaven we will be able to follow through with this again.

Christ also talks about us having responsibilities in Heaven as well. We are given in the parables examples of how in some ways

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earth is training us for Heaven. We are told that God wants us to use the gifts He gave us to make the situation better on earth and tell people about the Gospel. The Apostle Peter was told by Christ that He would be a fisher of men and we are told that the harvest of souls is great but the workers are few.

It is hard to imagine what Heaven will be like but if you look closely through what scripture talks about Heaven and compare that to our experiences on Earth, this should at least encourage you and give you something to look forward to.

Of course there is also a Hell too that is just as real. We don't know much about it but the best analogy on earth is a place of burning trash. But you will not accidentally screw up and end up here without many experiences and people leading you away from it. God designed hell for demons, not people. Remember Christ talked about how no Christian with genuine faith will be taken away from God by foolishness or attack by evil.

The world has suffering and pain because we screwed up. God never designed for us to live as we do now. We have changed everything fundamentally so that things don't work well for anyone. But God has seen this coming as He knows everything and so made a plan that we can not screw up no matter how much we try.

The apostles definitely screwed up majorly in numerous ways when the situation was the most pivotal. God can and will use any of us. Christ even brought a man back from literal death to serve God (Lazarus). Christ said that God can raise stones to be the sons of Abraham and that if no one worships God, the stones will cry out in praise of Him who created them.

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So do not worry about Hell or losing your faith. God will do everything to get you to Heaven save He wants you to choose to be with Him of your own free will. This is because human choice and free will are very important to God.