



Questions

4

MEN

in

College

*On Manhood, Dating, Sex, Marriage, Decision Making, Money, the Local Church, & Truth*

**GREG GIBSON**

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## *QUESTIONS FOR* **MEN IN COLLEGE**

*By Greg Gibson*

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## [ QUESTION ONE ]

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### *What is Biblical Manhood?*

What is biblical manhood and why is it my number one question in the series, Questions for College? I wholeheartedly believe that even though there are numerous questions of importance for a young person to think through, this question tops them all. It is in the realm of biblical manhood that all other questions concerning college get answered. Under this category we find out if we're ready to tackle the other questions. Let's call this question the precursor. This question is so huge that it must begin to be answered before college. As young Christians who are entering college, this question must become your identity.

Now you might say, "Greg, there are definitely more important questions for a young person to be asking than this." Christians might hark, "What about the gospel? Shouldn't that be number one?" Absolutely! That goes without saying, and as you will see below, finds itself within the answer to this first question on biblical manhood. Cultural critics will really disagree with this one as well. That's perfectly okay. The reason they disagree is because I'm mostly talking about them. Nonetheless, we must ask: What is Biblical Manhood?

## PREPARATION

### 1. *THE ABOLITION OF MANHOOD:* *Why Men Should Not Paint Their Toenails*

We must understand first and foremost why men should not paint their toenails, wear dresses, and put on tight jeans. Where have we gone wrong in passing along manhood to the next generation and the generations after that? CS Lewis once said, “We are making men without chests.” This is in fact what we are doing today. Culturally we are still demanding that men be big, strong, and in all honesty, stupid. Yet we forgo what makes a man a man – courage, integrity, honor, virtue, leadership – and we are making big, strong, and stupid men without any heart or qualities previously aforementioned.

### 2. *BOOT CAMP:* *Developing Courage for All of Life’s Tasks*

The next principal found within this idea of a biblical man is courage. A man must develop courage if he is going to develop the preceding qualities. This quality is reflective of the person of Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. With courage he embraced the cross, and lived counter cultural concerning what a man was in his day. We must have this type of courage to embrace this lifestyle of biblical manhood.

### 3. *THE GOSPEL:* *What We Must Believe, Know, & Defend*

The principal of courage bleeds into a foundational stance on the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no room for negotiating here. Everything we do as men must be centered around the gospel. The gospel is the message that a good and sovereign God forgives sinners through the blood of Jesus. As men, we must know this message, teach this message to others, and be able to defend this message at all cost. At TVN, we love apologetics. Apologetics simply means, “to give an

answer for.” Men must equip themselves to apologetically defend the faith, give answers for why they believe what they believe, and point people to this message of hope, restoration, and redemption.

### 4. *THE MOST IMPORTANT MISSION:* *Marriage*

This is what begins to separate biblical men from cultural Christian men. Cultural men have one aim and one aim only – success. Success is often found within making lots of money, having many degrees, having a huge house, having lots of cars, and having houses for your cars. Only then do we begin to think about marriage. A question that we have been thinking through at TVN is, “How should the church begin to champion this view of early marriage?” We believe that young people should begin to equip themselves to be husbands and wives before they equip themselves to be successful – all the qualities mentioned above. I know so many guys that want to date for years before they will deem themselves “ready” to be married. Here is my view: Don’t date until you’re ready to be married.

## THE BATTLEFIELD

### 5. *BEING A LEADER:* *Please, No More Wimpy, Lazy, and Passive Men!*

Here is where we begin to see biblical manhood played out in more tangible ways. We need men who will step up and be leaders in their homes, churches, schools, jobs, etc. We are not calling for a patriarchal headship view here. Yes, I hold to mutual submission because Paul teaches we should pursue marriage this way, but the man is also called to be the spiritual leader of the home and the church. Leadership is embodied in the person and work of Jesus. We should serve our wives, love them, and cherish them. We are not called to lead in the form of dictating, bullying, and overpowering women. Those are sinful actions that men should suppress. We should, therefore, lead like Jesus.

Leadership should be self-sacrificial, loving, and always embodied in the gospel. I am sick and tired of seeing men, especially young men, be passive, lazy, and in all honesty, wimpy.

6. **BEING A PROVIDER:**  
*Wearing the Big Boy Pants*

Men are called to work. It is that simple. If you cannot provide for your family then you must do whatever it takes to do so. When I was in seminary, I worked 2 less than glamorous jobs often at the expense of 60+ hours a week. I know many guys who were in my situation who did the same thing. Why did we do this? Because as men we are called to work, sweat, and provide for our families. In the Garden, Adam was called to cultivate what was his – the entire Garden of Eden. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 is pretty clear on this one. “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

7. **BEING A WARRIOR:**  
*The Forgotten Virtue of Being a Protector*

We often forget that men are called to protect their wives, and not only their wives, but all women according to their differing relationships with them. This sums up the big 3 of biblical manhood: leading, providing, and protecting. As a protector we must always care for the well-being of women no matter what. Call this old fashioned but in what areas of your life is this playing out right now? Here are ways that this is being played out in my life: I always walk on the inside of the street corner. I always sit where I can see the door in any place we go. I always take the dog out at night. I always go get gas for my wife in the morning so that she will not have to do it in the dark of the morning. I always make sure the house is locked up. I sleep on the side of the bed closest to the door. How are you beginning to think through this stuff now as a young person with the females you interact with daily?

This goes beyond the physical aspect, as we are to protect women in the form sexual purity, emotional stability, and spiritual fidelity. Are

you doing this right now?

8. **FRIENDLY FIRE:**  
*Making Quick Decisions Amidst Numerous Possibilities*

One of the biggest skills that guys must develop is the ability to makes decisions quickly and timely. I’m not talking about where we are going out to eat or what movie we want to watch, but we must begin to hone the skill of being able to make big decisions quickly and competently. This could be any number of situations that we find ourselves in: at home with our family, decisions with our finances, local church decisions, decisions on the job, handling conflict, leadership decisions, etc. In a world full of numerous possibilities we must begin to be able to sharpen our decision making skills.

9. **R & R:**  
*Redeeming Your Time from Brainless and Stupid Activities*

As men we often find ourselves in situations where we are horizontal, a pillow under our head, a remote of some kind in our hand, and our other hand who knows where! Speaking as a man, I understand how easy and enticing it can be to want to sit and partake in brainless activities. This is not bad in and of itself. It is bad if we are neglecting what we need to do because of our participation in activities that I call brainless and stupid. Begin to be intentional about prioritizing your time to be effective in all that you find yourself doing. Our time is limited on this earth. How are you using your time in a redemptive manner?

10. **FIREFIGHT:**  
*The Battle for Holiness in Everything You Do*

This might just be the biggest principal of them all. Men, we must battle and wage war for holiness in our lives. How are you putting sin to death in your own life? What are you watching? What are you consuming as entertainment? What is on your computer screen? What

are you coveting? Begin to identify these areas of weakness and cut them off from your daily lives. Understand the gospel is crucial here. Hebrews 12 says, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” As believers we can look to Jesus for his example in the fight against sin. How are you embracing and fighting for holiness in everything you do? – relationships, friendships, marriages, work place, entertainment, finances – these are just a few.

### 11. *THE DEBRIEF:*

*A Man, His Family, His Church, and His Fun*

A man is more than just disciplined intentionality in everything he does. He is more than just an everyday leader. He is more than just a work horse. Yes, a man must have his priorities, but in doing so, a man must have fun. A man’s priorities should be this: 1) His Family; 2) His Church; 3) His Fun. It’s that simple. A man should prioritize and be intentional about time to have fun. In my life, my wife and I find this time during our Thursday night date nights. I also find this time on Fridays and Saturdays when I’m off of work. We prioritize trips to the mountains and do other pretty cool things around East Tennessee that both my wife and I like to do. A man should also prioritize serving in his local church weekly. This should go without saying but we often prioritize many other things above this one. As we grow as men, we come to find that our sweetest times in life are found in these 3 areas: family, church, and fun. Let us be intentional about all of them.

## CONCLUSION

Young men need to be thinking through this stuff NOW. Here is my challenge to young men: Think through this stuff and then get ready for college. When you think through this concept and begin to apply the principals laid out then your approach to college will change drastically. I pray that young men would step up and embrace this approach to biblical manhood.

## [ QUESTION 2 ]

### *Should I Date Her?*

This question is more of an enigma than anything. Nonetheless, here are some good questions for young men who love both Jesus and women.

#### 1. *ARE YOU ATTRACTED TO HER?*

This is a no brainer. The answer should always be yes. I would recommend Tyler Smith’s article at The Veritas Network called, “Godly & Hot: An Anti-Gnostic Approach to Dating & Marriage.”

#### 2. *DOES SHE LOVE JESUS?*

This should be the first thing that makes or breaks a relationship. The apostle Paul tells us that we are not to be unequally yoked (1 Cor 6:14). Guys, if she loves Jesus and you are attracted to her then those seem like pretty good odds. The gospel must be the center of every relationship. It is the rock and foundation that every relationship must be built upon. You must be a man who loves Jesus and shows it in your actions. When you do this, girls who love Jesus will notice you.

### 3. *ARE YOU LIKE-MINDED?*

I do believe there are more to relationships than the attractiveness and gospel-centeredness aspects, although they are the two biggest in my opinion. As you begin a relationship there should always be an angle where you are learning the theology, goals, and aspirations of the other person.

### 4. *ARE YOU READY FOR MARRIAGE?*

It is no secret that my position on dating is a minority position. And I don't apologize for it. For the Christian, dating should always be practiced in the shadow of marriage. If you are not ready for marriage then you should not date. The question now is, "How should I prepare myself for marriage?"

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## [ QUESTION 3 ]

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### *How Far is Too Far?*

(By Ryan Rindels)

How far is too far? This pre-marital question never ceases to hold young single and/or dating couples in amused and anticipatory suspense. With temptation causing non-vigilant believers to fall into sexual sin being further augmented by a society that scoffs at abstinence for the unmarried and condones fornication to such a degree as to call it anything but 'abnormal,' many Christians seek advice in order to live out what God's Word says. While a passage directly answering the posed question does not exist in the Bible, there's much to be learned from Scripture and interestingly enough, the question itself.

Physical demonstration of affection between men and women comes naturally when attraction is involved. God made humans this way. Physical touch is vitally important from the tiniest infant who cries until wrapped and cradled to an elderly woman receiving a warm embrace from a child. The examples are platonic and, typically, satisfy their recipient in their given form. There is generally not an appetite to progress to another, more intense stage.

For a man and a woman attracted to each other for more than friendship alone, physical displays of affection that continue unabated naturally follow a course ending with sexual intercourse. All preceding actions – hugging, kissing and touch – are not an end in and of themselves. The inherent sex drive of humans leads them to an intended

destination. With this fact known and established, it's only a matter of time that people will not find satisfaction at any level less than intercourse. Sex is the consummating act. If it were not the final stage then humans would continue to some other sexual stage but they do not. Therefore, the question of, "How far is too far?" is pertinent because physical acts are a natural part of a normal relationship and because we fully-comprehend where they are leading us.

With no precise and lucid scripture reference to show us exactly what to do, many contemplate our present question then become confounded and even frustrated. But what would appear to be ambiguous becomes much more clearly seen upon close examination. The fact is that no one is going to find physical contentment where they are because God made us sexual beings. It would seem strange to hear of a married couple fully content with only kissing and hugging but never engaging in intercourse -no one would believe it. At its most basic (but not the only) created purpose we see sex as a God-ordained means of procreating the human race. God made sex a natural desire in humans and is pleased and glorified when it is done in the context of marriage.

For the unmarried desiring purity, there is a line that we do not want to cross. The safest and surest place to be so as not to cross the line is the farthest place from it. The solution here is quite simple but the natural sexual urges, as well as a sinful nature bent on fulfilling selfish lusts (contrary to God's law), wage war against what is righteous. Biblical references to sexual purity and not falling into sin nearly all involve words such as "escape," "avoid," and "flee". You do not hear words such as "fight," "endure," or "strive." The most prominent example is Joseph in Genesis 39.

v. 10 "And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her."

v. 12 "She caught him by his cloak and said, 'come to bed with me!' But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house."

Also, Proverbs 5:7-8,

"Now the my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep a path far from her; do not go near the door of her house."

Those who truly desire to please God in this area must comprehend the key to victory: A realization of your own weakness and the great strength of sex.

**Clearly, the behaviors of young persons are setting themselves up for failure.** An overwhelming majority of teens and twenty-something's have had sex (statistics show over 90% for males over twenty and females are less than 10 percentage points behind at the same age). Incidentally, Christians are part of these statistics and most are not married by age twenty.

Being in a relationship and maintaining God-glorifying purity is tough. It always has been. The question is how hard are you willing to work? Joseph could do nothing less than run! Do you run from what you know will make you fall?

Staying as far from the line as possible is a foundational principle. But what is some practical application? The easy answer would be a list of "okays" and "not okays," but even that would not work because we have agreed that the progressive nature of physical actions will not satisfy us for any extended period of time.

In his candid sermon series on the book of Song of Solomon Mark Driscoll, Pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, challenges men in dating relationships to treat their girlfriends like they would their own sister. What an intriguing and unambiguous concept! A big brother protects his sister; he shows some physical displays of affection but nothing like what is seen in most "normal" dating relationships. He treats her with respect, not as a means of fulfilling self-gratifying lusts. Treating a girlfriend as a sister is not just some contrived concept. A girlfriend is a sister in Christ. She is part of the Family of God and should be treated accordingly by her brother.

Valuing and honoring her is what we are talking about here. Any guy who would practice treating his girlfriend as a valued family member would stay far from the line.

In the Bible's love manual, the Song of Songs, the following line is repeated three times throughout the book: "Do not arouse love until it so desires."

The love we are talking about here is erotic love. We are advised and even warned against it. Love will be aroused and awakened but we should not arouse it before the proper time. And the proper time of arousal is the time of marriage. Pushing things physically invariably arouses love preemptively.

So what are you going to do? Do you want to push the limits and risk what most do and fail? Does your desire to honor God and the accompanying blessings outweigh the short-term pleasures of sin? Maybe we should rethink the question we are asking.

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## [ QUESTION 4 ]

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### *Should I Marry Her . . . & When?*

My wife, Grace and I, got married after about 11 months of a dating and engagement process. We dated for 6 months, were engaged for 5 months, and the rest is, well, history as they say. Honestly, my wife is so hot that waiting any longer to get married would have been extremely disastrous for me, and I would have ended up repenting and asking her to forgive me for my human-man-sin-nature-sex-drive.

Question number 2, *Should I Date Her?*, ends with the question, “How do I know if I’m ready for marriage?” Let’s continue to be honest, young people ask these questions all the time. I’ve had numerous conversations with young guys about why they date their girlfriends and why they won’t marry them. If a young guy tells me about his girlfriend, my first response is, “When are you getting married?” The most common response, and most childish in my opinion, is . . . “Oh, not for awhile.”

This is childish, idiotic, and sinful.

It is childish because you are running from responsibility. Remember when your parents asked you to clean your room when you were a kid and the last thing you wanted to do was actually clean it? Yeah, well that is the same thing as dating a girl for a long period of time without any form of commitment to the responsibility of becoming a husband or preparing yourself to be one.

It is idiotic because you are not treating your sister in Christ like

your sister in Christ. If you are a man with a sex drive then you are probably putting her in vulnerable situations where your actions will lead to guilt and then repentance. It is impossible to protect a woman emotionally, spiritually, sexually, etc. without a sense of intentionality shown by you to her for what exactly your intentions are.

It is sinful because you are pursuing worldly desires before biblical desires. I see young college guys get into relationships when they are freshmen in college and don't have any intentions of marriage until they graduate college. In turn, this leads to 4 years of repentance, sexual struggle, and an unhealthy emotional relationship where you probably fight all the time because your affection level does not match your commitment level.

If you fall into any of the three categories above (childish, idiotic, or sinful) then I implore you to begin thinking about marriage before you think about dating.

The question that you should go into in any dating relationship with is, "Could I marry her?" This is foundational. The dating process from beginning until end should be all about finding out if the two of you are compatible for marriage. If it is anything but that then you should not be dating. Again, doing so would be childish, idiotic, and sinful. So, should you marry her? Questions for the both of you to ask are:

- Do your theological views connect?
- Do your life goals connect?
- Do your family goals connect?
- What does each of you think about having children?
- What are your views on money?

The positive affirmation of these questions should in turn point to the final question that you will ask that will end one season of your life and project you into another season, the beautiful season of preparing a wedding and a life together.

This might sound crazy to some people, but it's really not all that crazy when you line up the X's and O's. What are our priorities as

men? How do you show love to your sisters in Christ? How much repentance are you prepared to do in college if you date without intentionality or put yourself in vulnerable positions? Believe me, I've been there and I wish there was someone who came alongside me and shared this with me during this great season of my life.

Let me ask one last question, "When should you marry her?"

My answer should say it all...

...dating should be intentional, engagements should be short, and marriage should be early.

## [ QUESTION 5 ]

### *What Should I Do With My Life?*

There are not many questions that plague young people like the question, “What the heck should I do with my life?” It is a common thing for college students to enter their freshman year without the slightest idea of which major they will choose. Many do not know by the time they are sophomores.

The answer to the question, “What should I do with my life?” is not very simple. The principal at hand, however, is.

As men we must begin to cultivate the ability to make good decisions that have long-term effects rather quickly. As leaders we must have the ability to do this well. Leaders often make decisions on the fly, in the heat of the moment, and each decision is expected to be beneficial for the good of the organization. How can we expect to make good decisions quickly if we cannot answer the most important question: What is God calling me to do with my life? It is a common error to view decision-making as some type of mystic experience. I often hear people say that they are “waiting on God to make a decision”, or they “don’t feel like God is leading here”, or that “God is telling me to break up with you.”

This is ridiculous.

If this is you then I pray that you would repent of using God as a cop out and begin to make hard decisions well for the edification of those around you and to bring glory to King Jesus.

Here are some personal rules for making big decisions:

**1. Pray about it.** I make sure that every BIG decision is always taken before the Lord in a humble manner. I pray that God would reveal his will to me through his Scripture, through wise counsel, and through the ability to make a good and wise decision.

**2. What does Scripture say?** I always ask this question second. What does the Bible say about this issue? Make sure to avoid proof texting here. We must interpret Scripture with Scripture, and we must look at a topic from Genesis to Revelation to see what the entire counsel of God’s Word says about it. The next step is crucial every time and is especially beneficial when dealing with issues the Bible does not directly address.

**3. Seek wise counsel.** Ask the advice of those in your life that are wise. Make sure to ask those who won’t just tell you what you want to hear. Remember, there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Proverbs 11:14), and that is what we are all about here... wisdom.

**4. What are your desires?** Many people often downplay this last point, but I want to highlight this last point as the icing on the cake when making decisions. Desires, if righteous, are God given. We must not turn away from our desires as mystical or play off our desire with the thought of God’s will not being our own. Delight yourself in Yahweh, and he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

Finally, we must always remember that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism, letter A). Whatever we decide to do with our life must be seen under the umbrella of this glorious truth. When we understand this truth, we might not know exactly what God wants us to do regarding a major or career, but we will know what the entire aim of our life is and always will be with absolute certainty.

## [ QUESTION 6 ]

### *Why Should I Care About Giving?*

In a culture that celebrates the triumph of success, it is only plausible, when magnified by our sin nature, that we would see success in terms of the money we have, the cars we drive, the degrees on our wall, and the jobs that we have. We have grown up in a 'next big thing' society where the next big house, promotion, or car reflects how successful we are. The Bible, however, reflects a God who cares about none of this.

I could direct you to a number of passages that reflect this truth, but I have recently been studying the book of Ruth, and Ruth, chapter 2, reflects this truth so profoundly in the character of Boaz. The gospel according to Boaz is found in how he cares for the poor, specifically in how Boaz cares for Ruth, then a Moabite. Let me take you back a chapter and explain how we got here. Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died after they sojourned to the country of Moab from Bethlehem. There was a famine in Bethlehem (which is a play on words if you know the original language), which was their reason for the sojourn to Moab. Upon arriving in Moab, Elimelech's son married Ruth. His other son married Orpah. They lived there about ten years, then both sons also died. Naomi was then left with only her two daughters-in-law. They were poor. They had nothing. So they returned to the land of Judah.

Fast forwarding a little, Ruth and Naomi arrive back in Bethlehem and Ruth then goes off to 'glean' among the ears of grain. This is important because this shows us that Ruth and Naomi had very little. In the Babylonian world at this time, it was custom for each farmer to store grain away for the poor who might come and ask for it. Boaz did this, and it 'just so happened' that Ruth came to Boaz's field to glean.

Here we find the character of Boaz reflect the character of God. In verse 14 of chapter 2, Boaz gave Ruth an abundant amount of food. So much so in fact that she had 30-50 extra pounds of grain to take back to Naomi.

Fast-forwarding a little more, Matthew 25 points to the truth that God cares abundantly for the poor. We see it in how God sovereignly provides a law in the Torah for Ruth to be fed years later in Boaz's field (see Deut. 14:28). We see it in Genesis 3:15 when God gives us the first promise, though only a shadow, of a coming Savior who will defeat sin and death and one day usher in the New Heavens and New Earth, a place where 'poor' will no longer be a word.

I implore you to begin to think through your giving now. As we grow as Christians, we should grow in our giving. We are not called to make more money to live more abundant lifestyles. As Christians, we are called to care for the poor now. We do this because we want to reflect God's character, because God is a God that cares for the poor.

If we do not care for the poor then we are not the people of God. Why you may ask? In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us pretty pointedly that what we do for the least of these, we do also for him.

## [ QUESTION 7 ]

### *Why Should I Join & Serve in a Local Church?*

It is absolutely imperative that professing Christians join and be involved in a local church. I have heard young people say way to often that they love Jesus and call themselves Christians but they see no reason to be involved in a local church. I believe that this stems from many different sources. Maybe they have never been taught the importance of a local church; maybe they are involved in some sort of campus ministry; maybe they just don't have time; or maybe they don't see the local church being a primary role in their lives during this season of life. There are many reasons that self-proclaiming Christians could give for not being a part of a local body of believers but when it boils down to it... every reason is a wrong reason. Here are several reasons why every so-called Christian must not only attend a local church, but join a local a church, and serve within that local church.

#### ***1. King Jesus came to die, in a saving way, for the church.***

You cannot say that you love Jesus but not his church because Jesus came to die for the church. It is wrong for anybody to make this claim. Loving Jesus means loving his church. Loving his church means becoming a member of a local church, living within its confessions and covenant, submitting to the pastors/elders, participating in the ordinances, participating in gospel community, putting sin to death, clothing yourself with Christ's righteousness, etc. This must be of primary importance in the life of the believer.

#### ***2. God is establishing his liberating Kingdom here on earth through the church.***

It is through believers that God is continuing to save sinners. As the message of the gospel goes out into all the world, it goes out through the medium of the saints. God is saving people all over the world, and the method God uses to save sinners is only and exclusively the preaching/sharing of the Word of God found in and through the message of the gospel.

The majestic Creator of the cosmos finds it pleasing, right, and good to call you and me into a relationship with himself through the glorious and demonstrative blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. Not only does he call us into a restored relationship with him but he viciously brings us into gospel-centered community with one another, known as the local church.

#### ***3. The Christian community is central to Christian identity.***

The mark of a true believer, as we find in James 1:19-27, is obedience to God's Word. We come to know obedience not only as we come face to face with the text of Scripture, but we come to live in obedience with God, the Father, as we begin to live in community with each other. Christian community is critical for authentic growth, fellowship, repentance, and even decision-making.

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis write this about the Christian community in their book, *Total Church*,

By becoming a Christian, I belong to God and I belong to my brothers and sisters. It is not that I belong to God and then make a decision to join a local church. My being in Christ means being in Christ with those others who are in Christ. This is my identity. This is our identity. To fail to live out our corporate identity in Christ is analogous to the act of adultery: we can be Christian and do it, but it is not what Christians should do. The loyalties of the new community supersede even the loyalties of biology (Matthew 10:34-37; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 11:27-28). If the church is the body of Christ, then we should not live as disembodied Christians (41).

#### 4. *The Christian Community is Central to Christian Mission.*

God's mission and purpose for creation is teleological. This means that everything is moving toward an end goal, the telos. All of history points toward to this telos. The Missio Dei (mission of God) is teleological by means of the church. The church is God's instrument in saving and redeeming sinners through the message of the gospel of hope and restoration. If we break down Christian mission even further, we find Christian community at the very center. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis continue,

God is a missionary God, and God's primary missionary method is his covenant people. Humanity was made in the image of the Triune God. The purpose of an image is to represent something, and we were made to represent God on earth. God made us as persons-in-community to be the vehicle through which he would reveal his glory. But humanity has grasped for autonomy from God. We fell under the curse of God, and human community has become fractured. The image-bearers of God fall short of his glory (41).

Though we fall short, God begins his plan to create a new humanity, a redeemed humanity, through Jesus Christ – the true Adam, the true seed of Abraham, the mighty son of King David. It is through Jesus that God calls people into community. It is in community that we find the centrality of Christian mission. Living life together means bringing in people from all walks of life. This means having meaningful relationships with unbelievers, bringing them into this Christian community, and encouraging from them a response to the gospel. Christian community, by default, encourages a response to the gospel of Jesus. It is community that unbelievers see true Christianity lived out, whether it is in your home, times of fellowship, or within the walls of your local church building.

We must be a generation that loves the local church!

## [ QUESTION 8 ]

### *What is Absolute Truth?*

In a culture full of relativism and pluralism it is often thought to be lazy intellectualism to hold to any form of objective truth. Getting a college degree for young people today means coming to the conclusion that there 'may' or 'may not' be meaning at all. What is more, students are leaving colleges without holding to any form of absolute truth whatsoever, and ironically, they are 'absolutely' sure about it.

CS Lewis says this about a complete subjective and relative world, "You cannot go 'explaining away' for ever; you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on 'seeing through' things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to 'see through' first principals. If you see through everying, then everyting is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see" (The Abolition of Man, 81).

If one looks up at the sky and refuses to acknowledge that the sky is actually there, it doesn't mean that the sky is not there. One is just refusing to simply acknowledge something that is objectively true. Similarly, many people refuse to believe in the God of the Bible, but just because they refuse to believe in Him doesn't mean that He is not there and that he has not revealed himself in Scripture.

In today's culture, it is politically correct to think and live in pluralistic ways – there is no right and wrong. What is right for someone is right for them alone; what is right for another person is right for them alone as well. Who is to say what is right and what is wrong? Where is the foundation for morality? Again, the ironic thing here is that this is simply lazy intellectualism and refusing to search out what is in fact objectively true. The question is not, "What (or who) is right and what (or who) is wrong?" but the better question is, "What is truth?"

This is where the gospel comes in.

The gospel gives the only sufficient answers to the hard questions of life. At this point we must ask, "What is the gospel?"

The gospel is in its most simplest form 'good news.' What is this good news?

The gospel is the message that God the Father created the world good and humans in his image as very good. Man was created to be in relationship with his maker and to give glory to his maker, but early in the story we find that man sinned by substituting himself for God and because of this all of creation was effected.

Sin in turn separated man from God. The rest of the story finds man in turmoil with God and in need of a Savior to pay the punishment for sin that man deserves. Jesus, God the Son, then comes to earth and lives a perfect life – because we could not – and dies on a cross as a substitute for sin. In doing so, Jesus substituted himself for us taking on the punishment that we deserve, in the same way Adam substituted himself for God in the garden.

Jesus rose from the dead defeating death and ascended into Heaven at the Father's right hand. After taking his rightful place, Jesus sent God the Holy Spirit to call people to salvation, redeem cities and cultures, and build his church until he comes back. Jesus, through the Spirit, is calling everybody everywhere at all places to repent of all sin and put their faith in him for the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus will return but he will not return empty handed. Yes, he will return and bring with him the new heavens and new earth. He will return as a Warrior King – one who completely defeats sin and death

and ushers in the completeness of shalom (peace). He will then judge all people everywhere who have ever lived on whether or not they have repented of sin and put their faith in him.

Jesus will graciously forgive those who do repent and punish and judge those who do not by sending them to the real, eternal, and conscience torments of hell.

That is the gospel.

It is also truth.

Just because one refuses to believe the gospel does not mean that it is not truth. Much like the sky, simply because one refuses to believe that it is there does not mean that the sky is not there. The sky is there and it is real. One is simply refusing to see what is opaque and is looking at all things transparently, much like looking through multiple windows attempting to see through all things until they try to see through everything, making the world invisible. However, what one refuses to see as opaque – the gospel – is the only thing that allows you to see everything else objectively.

Without the gospel, which is truth, one has no firm ground to stand on as one sees through all things... and the world becomes invisible.

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*By Greg Gibson*