


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

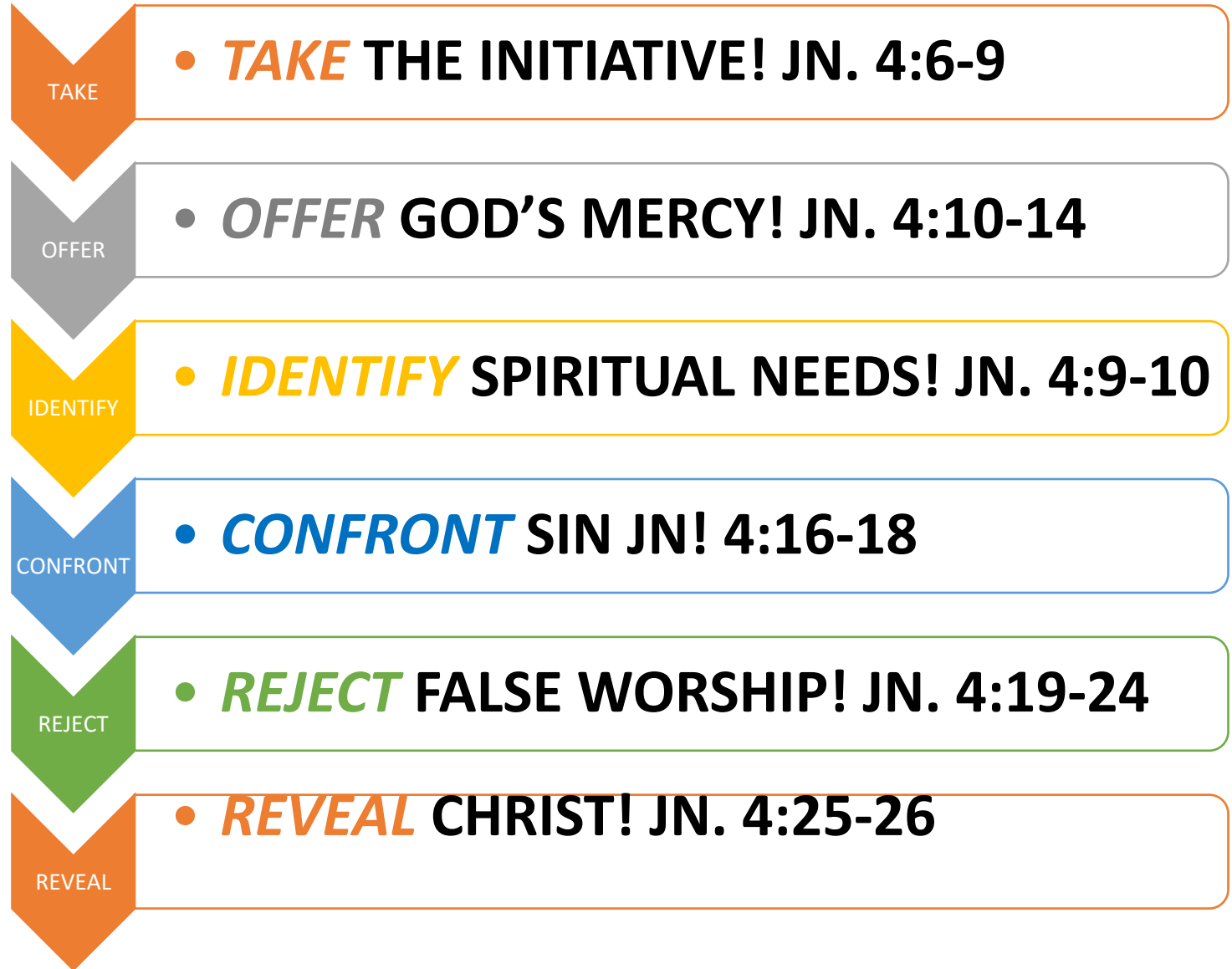


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”**



THE HIGH COST OF *REJECTING* GOD

- We rightly shudder at the eternal consequences of sin, and the perpetual punishment that awaits **UNREPENTANT SINNERS**. But we would do well to also consider the temporal cost of sin. We need to recognize how it pollutes, perverts, and corrupts—and particularly its destructive influence on the sinner.
- **PAUL** wrote about the **CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING GOD** in his epistle to the **ROMANS**. ***“FOR THE WRATH OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM HEAVEN AGAINST ALL UNGODLINESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS OF MEN WHO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE THAT WHICH IS KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS EVIDENT WITHIN THEM; FOR GOD MADE IT EVIDENT TO THEM”*** (ROM. 1:18–19).

- Planted in the heart of every human being is the knowledge of God. We don't need to be told that God exists—our ability to *reason*, to *understand* the simplicity of *cause* and *effect*, is enough to point us to the existence of our Creator. ***IN THIS CASE, THE EFFECT SCREAMS FOR THE REALITY OF THE CAUSE.***
- ***PAUL*** makes that very point: ***“FOR SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD HIS INVISIBLE ATTRIBUTES, HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE, HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD THROUGH WHAT HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT THEY ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE”*** (v. 20).
- ***NO ONE CAN CLAIM IGNORANCE OF GOD'S EXISTENCE—HIS CREATIVE WORK LEAVES THEM NO EXCUSE FOR REJECTING HIM.***
- The apostle continues, describing the extreme and irrational lengths men will go to in their attempts to deny God's creative authority over this world:

“FOR EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT HONOR HIM AS GOD OR GIVE THANKS, BUT THEY BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR SPECULATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED. PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS AND EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR AN IMAGE IN THE FORM OF CORRUPTIBLE MAN AND OF BIRDS AND FOUR-FOOTED ANIMALS AND CRAWLING CREATURES.” (ROM. 1:21–23)

- **WHEN SINNERS REJECT GOD, THEY REBEL AGAINST REASON.** Reason recognizes that the intricacies of creation testify to a Creator—**THAT HIS CREATION SPEAKS TO HIS CHARACTER AND NATURE, AND POINTS TO HIS FULL SELF-REVELATION IN HIS WORD.**
- But **REBELLION** actually extinguishes man’s capacity for reason altogether—**PAUL** says they become fools with darkened hearts, as they run from reason into the illogic of false gods and idolatry just to escape the truth about God.

- But the *tragic consequences of rejecting God* don't end there. In one of the most profound passages in all of Scripture, **PAUL** illustrates the devastating results that follow, as **GOD UNLEASHES THE FULL CORRUPTION OF THEIR SINFUL REBELLION.**

“THEREFORE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS TO IMPURITY, SO THAT THEIR BODIES WOULD BE DISHONORED AMONG THEM. FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE AND WORSHIPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN. FOR THIS REASON, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO DEGRADING PASSIONS; FOR THEIR WOMEN EXCHANGED THE NATURAL FUNCTION FOR THAT WHICH IS UNNATURAL, AND IN THE SAME WAY ALSO THE MEN ABANDONED THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF THE WOMAN AND BURNED IN THEIR DESIRE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN COMMITTING INDECENT ACTS AND RECEIVING IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THE DUE PENALTY OF THEIR ERROR.”

“AND JUST AS THEY DID NOT SEE FIT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD ANY LONGER, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEPRAVED MIND, TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT PROPER, BEING FILLED WITH ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, WICKEDNESS, GREED, EVIL; FULL OF ENVY, MURDER, STRIFE, DECEIT, MALICE; THEY ARE GOSSIPS, SLANDERERS, HATERS OF GOD, INSOLENT, ARROGANT, BOASTFUL, INVENTORS OF EVIL, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING, UNTRUSTWORTHY, UNLOVING, UNMERCIFUL; AND ALTHOUGH THEY KNOW THE ORDINANCE OF GOD, THAT THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS ARE WORTHY OF DEATH, THEY NOT ONLY DO THE SAME, BUT ALSO GIVE HEARTY APPROVAL TO THOSE WHO PRACTICE THEM.” (ROM. 1:24–32)

- That repeated phrase, ***“GOD GAVE THEM OVER,”*** is legal terminology—***GOD IS HANDING THOSE WHO REJECT HIM OVER FOR THE EXECUTION OF HIS SENTENCE AND PUNISHMENT.*** He turns them over to the pursuit of their sinful desires, and the destruction that follows.

- Space won't allow for a thorough exposition of these verses, but we need to pause long enough to recognize our own society amidst the rubble. ***GOD'S JUDGMENT TURNS PEOPLE OVER TO A SEXUAL REVOLUTION, UNTIL THE WHOLE CULTURE IS SWIMMING IN A SEPTIC TANK OF PORNOGRAPHY.***

Consider the way our society aggressively ***sexualizes children***, corrupting their view of God's design before they can even fully comprehend it. And it doesn't end there—the sexual revolution gives way to a ***homosexual*** revolution that ushers in ***transgenderism*** and other kinds of unspeakable deviance. Such perversion has so thoroughly permeated our culture that we're now debating the question of ***how young is too young for children to begin mutilating their bodies in defiance of God's creative design.***

- ***PAUL*** says such corruption ultimately leads to a ***“DEPRAVED MIND” (V.28)***—that is, ***A MIND THAT DOESN'T FUNCTION.*** It's ***the inability*** to think straight or do right. It defaults to ***wickedness, selfishness, strife***, and all the other sinful dispositions Paul describes.

- Moreover, the **DEPRAVED MIND** applauds and promotes those who sin likewise. Today we have **POLITICAL PARTIES** that have constructed their platforms on:
 - **KILLING BABIES IN THE WOMB.**
 - **DESTROYING THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY.**
 - **PROMOTING SEXUAL PERVERSION**, and many of the other sins **PAUL** describes here in **ROMANS 1**. And with the hearty approval of other depraved minds, they are elected to office where they can institute and normalize their corruption.
- What we see, then—both on the pages of Scripture and in the chaotic world around us—is the dreadful cost of **REJECTING GOD. ON TOP OF MAN'S NATURAL SINFULNESS IS THE ADDED REALITY OF DIVINE JUDGMENT UNLEASHING THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF MAN'S REBELLION.**

- ***BASED ON THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONY***, we see mankind's sinful corruption is ***systemic***—***not socially, but personally***—and no one escapes. It's not related to a lack of ***opportunity, money, privilege, or education***. Man is a naturally sinful beast who rejects God and His law.
- ***ALL OF US ARE BORN WITH THAT INTERNAL WRETCHEDNESS THAT CORRUPTS AND DEFILES. IT SCARS BEAUTY, DARKENS WISDOM, DEFILES LOVE, ROBS PURITY, AND STEALS PEACE.***
- That brings us to a natural question: If man's corruption truly runs that deep, is there ***ANY HOPE*** of restraining the sinful chaos it creates? Since humanity is so depraved, deceitful, degenerate, destructive, and deadly, how did God ever expect us to survive? ***HOW DID HE EXPECT US TO GET THROUGH THIS LIFE WITH ANY MEASURE OF MEANING, FULFILLMENT AND JOY—OR EVEN SIMPLY TO CIVILIZE, SOCIALIZE, AND SURVIVE?***

***REJECTING* GOD'S RESTRAINTS**



- ***THE ONLY TRUE HOPE FOR ALL SINNERS IS SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST.*** Apart from that, mankind remains ***“DEAD IN [HIS] TRESPASSES AND SINS”*** (EPH. 2:1). Only through ***GOD'S MERCY*** and ***LOVE*** can the spiritually dead ***be made alive*** with Christ (EPH. 2:4–5). And by God's grace, ***HE CONTINUES*** to redeem sinners, drawing them to Himself in ***REPENTANCE*** and ***FAITH.***
- But in the wisdom of His divine design, God has also placed ***RESTRAINTS*** within us and ***WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY*** to mitigate the effects of man's corruption and ***HOLD BACK THE FULL CHAOS*** into which the world repeatedly devolves. And when these restraints are carefully maintained, life can be ***ENJOYABLE.*** ***BUT WHEN THEY'RE ASSAULTED, DIMINISHED, OR DESTROYED,*** ***LIFE QUICKLY BECOMES DIFFICULT AND MISERABLE.***

THE *CONSCIENCE*

- The first restraint is built into the heart of every man—*THE CONSCIENCE*. We know the conscience exists because so many people are full of *GUILT*, *ANXIETY*, *FEAR*, and *DREAD*. *ALL THOSE ISSUES FREQUENTLY POINT BACK TO A CONSCIENCE THAT WON'T BE SILENT*. Why?
- We look to *ROMANS* for the answer. *PAUL* writes, *“FOR THERE IS NO PARTIALITY WITH GOD. FOR ALL WHO HAVE SINNED WITHOUT THE LAW WILL ALSO PERISH WITHOUT THE LAW, AND ALL WHO HAVE SINNED UNDER THE LAW WILL BE JUDGED BY THE LAW; FOR IT IS NOT THE HEARERS OF THE LAW WHO ARE JUST BEFORE GOD, BUT THE DOERS OF THE LAW WILL BE JUSTIFIED”* (ROM. 2:11–13).
- PUT SIMPLY, *ALL SINNERS STAND EQUALLY GUILTY*, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ACCESS TO GOD'S LAW.

- **HOW IS THAT FAIR? PAUL EXPLAINS: “FOR WHEN GENTILES WHO DO NOT HAVE THE LAW DO INSTINCTIVELY THE THINGS OF THE LAW, THESE, NOT HAVING THE LAW, ARE A LAW TO THEMSELVES, IN THAT THEY SHOW THE WORK OF THE LAW WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS, THEIR CONSCIENCE BEARING WITNESS AND THEIR THOUGHTS ALTERNATELY ACCUSING OR ELSE DEFENDING THEM” (ROM. 2:14–15).**
- **BUILT INTO EVERY HUMAN IS A MORAL REALITY**—a sense of **RIGHT** and **WRONG. THE CONSCIENCE IS A GIFT FROM GOD.** In the same way that physical pain alerts you to not rest your hand on a hot stove, your conscience cries out to warn you of moral danger—it pleads with you to not do the thing you know you shouldn't do.

- The **CONSCIENCE** isn't a substitute for the law of God, or some means through which He speaks. **RATHER, IT IS ALIGNED TO THE HIGHEST MORAL LAW IT KNOWS.** That means the law of God that is written in every heart—**don't lie, don't steal, don't kill**, and the other basic moral lines common to all people—**CAN BE OVERRULED AND REPLACED.**
- In that regard, the **CONSCIENCE** can be assaulted through **misinformation**. Some people have so twisted and distorted their consciences that they believe the right and moral thing to do is **MURDER UNBORN CHILDREN, ATTACK POLICE OFFICERS**, or wear explosives into a crowded part of town to **KILL AS MANY CIVILIANS AS POSSIBLE. HISTORY SHOWS US JUST HOW SUSCEPTIBLE THE CONSCIENCE IS TO PROPAGANDA AND FALSE TEACHING.**

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- The **CONSCIENCE** is also assaulted through **ABUSE**. Go back to the analogy of the hot stove—if you ignored the painful warnings long enough, not only would you suffer severe physical consequences, but the consistent abuse could also cost you **THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE** the pain altogether.
 - **IF YOU IGNORE YOUR CONSCIENCE LONG ENOUGH, EVENTUALLY THERE WON'T BE ANY ALERT TO IGNORE.**
 - **WHEN YOU REPEATEDLY IGNORE THE INTERNAL WARNINGS AND RETURN TO A PARTICULAR SIN, YOU'RE SEARING YOUR CONSCIENCE AND DESTROYING ITS ABILITY TO FUNCTION PROPERLY.**
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- One of the great costs of removing the Bible from a culture is that **PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER MAKE SENSE OF THE CONSCIENCE—BOTH WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT SHOULD BE INFORMED.** What should be seen as a great gift from God is considered a curse—one that must be silenced or reoriented.
 - Of course, our therapeutic society is quick to tell people not to listen to their consciences in the first place. Psychologists are happy to redirect feelings of guilt and shame somewhere else. ***When that doesn't work, many people turn to drugs and alcohol to drown out a conscience that WON'T SHUT UP.***

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- And when the truth of God's Word is withheld and denied from the conscience for long enough, you wind up back in **(ISA. 5:20)**, with a culture that calls good evil, and evil good.

YOU HAVE A CULTURE *LIKE OURS*.

- Because man's conscience is so easily corrupted, God has also instituted external restraints and authorities within society for reining in the destructive chaos sin creates.