

# 800 Pound Gorilla (Week One)

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## “TRUTH”

### WHAT ARE OUR OBJECTIVES?

- To alert God’s people to deception. Too many have accepted ways of getting information that challenges their faith.
- To exhort God’s people to start reading Scripture daily in order to prepare themselves for the battle.
- To prepare the children and grandchildren of God’s people for the ways the world deceives—for the messages embedded in the world’s stories, media, etc.

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES IS TO DEAL WITH THE 800 POUND GORILLA WE CALL “CULTURE”!

- What does that phrase mean? Something big is going on that many are choosing not to talk about because they know it will lead to a battle.
- The problem for churches? We are in mixed company with believers at different stages of spiritual growth, and even unbelievers as well.
- If we don’t talk about these things because we don’t want to offend, then we leave Christians vulnerable.

### THE CHRISTIAN DILEMMA:

- Is the church service primarily for believers or unbelievers?
- Oftentimes we face a dilemma. Pastors don’t want to offend unbelievers, so they don’t address controversial issues.
- The problem is that so few actually read Scripture outside of the church service. Few study an issue through reading or proper research. So many go to X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, broad Goggle searches, podcasts from media, messages in movies, and so on. Universities shape content with their agenda. Even how search engines tailor their results can, in turn, shape our thinking.
- Check out the work of Dr. Robert Epstein. He earned his Ph.D. in psychology at Harvard University in 1981, was editor in chief of *Psychology Today*, a visiting scholar at the University of California, San Diego, and the founder and director emeritus of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies in Concord, MA. We are learning from his studies about how people’s minds and narratives are being shaped by moving and removing information (*called historical revisionism*), by social media, by friendships—even by Google. (See more resources at the end of these notes.)
- Our goal is to have our young people **ready for the world**.

### THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT WE SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE.

- **Ephesians 4:14-16**

### THE SCRIPTURE TELLS US WE HAVE AN ENEMY.

- There is a spiritual enemy behind the scenes—the puppet master (**John 8:44**). Most don’t know they are being played (*lying or being lied to*). We are going to have to take a stand, to put on the armor of God.
- Paul was writing to the people of his day to alert them to how the enemy works, and how the enemy is working today.
- We don’t need to be afraid, but we need to be alert and resolute. We need to become aware and create safeguards for ourselves and those we are responsible for (**2 Corinthians 11:12-15**).
- **Ephesians 6:10-13**

### WHERE DO WE GET OUR INFORMATION FROM? WHAT DO WE DO TO STAY GROUNDED; TO STAY ROOTED?

- **2 Timothy 3:12-16; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

### SO, WHAT DO I DO WHEN THOUGHTS AND DOUBTS COME? I WRESTLE AGAINST (**Ephesians 6:10**)...

I recognize the thought as incongruent with faith, God’s Word, and His promises.

- The only way this is possible is if we have hidden His Word in our hearts (**Psalms 119:11**) and have mature

believers to help us. The thought (*or doubt*) comes from our flesh, or the enemy, or the culture.

### **I remember where I was before Christ—when I lived the way I wanted to.**

- Saved from what? Remember honestly (not like the Israelites in the desert—See **Exodus 16:2-3**).
- For those who grew up in a Christian home and did not have to suffer, look around at the consequences others have had to live with. Look at the obvious effects of sin in our country!

### **I walk through the evidence and ask myself, “Why I am a Christian?”**

- I believe there is a God. Why? The complexity of the universe reveals that God is evident. There is evidence embedded in logic and morals. I look at the evidence of evil.
- I believe Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is unique; He said things that were stunning, did miracles, and rose from the dead.
  - You might notice I am using the Bible as my resource. Here is why: The New Testament is unique. The Scriptures have not been changed; they’re accurately recorded with real events, with reliable witnesses, and have been proven to be archaeologically correct.
- I remember who Jesus is and what He entrusted Himself to. Jesus affirmed the Scriptures, and they reveal truth.

### **I remember what Jesus has done for me—the **TRUTH** that changed my life.**

- Freed me from sin’s control and gave me salvation, relationships, and honor.

### **I recognize that the enemy is working on others, and I support them (**Deuteronomy 6:4-10**).**

- The church is a meeting place for people across an entire spectrum—from those who are thriving and have something to give to those who are struggling and need support.
- So many ask the question, “*What will I get out of this?*” rather than, “*What can I give?*”
- Teach your kids—your spiritual disciples you are walking with—how to recognize the enemy and defeat him.

### **REMEMBER:**

- I remember that truth is not decided by the majority nor by the loudest, most powerful people.
- I remember that propaganda and violence has always been used to silence people.
- Embedded in humans is the belief that there is something beyond the physical world, that we came from somewhere, as well as the understanding that life is more than just physical—that there is spiritual side too.
- Embedded in each person is an innate knowledge that there is right and wrong; that doesn’t make sense if there is no God.

### **RESOURCES:**

- **Books:** *Core 52: A Fifteen-Minute Daily Guide to Build Your Bible IQ in a Year* by Mark E. Moore | *100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know by Heart* by Robert J. Morgan | *The Grace and Truth Paradox* by Randy Alcorn
- **RightNow Media (and Books):** *Cold-Case Christianity* by J. Warner Wallace | *So The Next Generation Will Know* by J. Warner Wallace | *Finding Truth* by Francis Chan
- **Movie:** *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* with Ben Stein | **Website:** Gotquestions.org

### **SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:**

#### **Passages to consider: **Ephesians 6:10-13; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5****

1. What from the sermon is impacting you?
2. Read **Ephesians 6:10-13** and **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** two or three times. What is God communicating to His people through these passages?
3. What do you believe about: God, Jesus, the Bible? How do those beliefs shape how you interact with the world?
4. What relationships help you seek God’s wisdom and perspective? What is your primary source of information?
5. What Scripture have you memorized—hidden in your heart? What Scripture do you need to memorize? (*Suggestions: **Ephesians 6:10-13; John 1:1,14; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Genesis 1:1***)
6. What habits and patterns help you be rooted in relationship with God, His Word, and fellow believers? Who can you help grow in their own habits and patterns?

#### **Passages to Prepare: **Psalms 78:1-8****