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PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS FOR DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

COMMITMENT TO THE BIBLE

- ▶ We need to have an uncompromising, unapologetic commitment to biblical fidelity
- ▶ We cannot say, "I wish God would have..."
- ▶ We don't get to pick and choose what parts of the Bible we want to believe

WE CANNOT BE EMBARRASSED BY ANY PART OF THE BIBLE

- ▶ “If those who hate the Word of God can succeed in getting Christians to be embarrassed by any portion of the Word of God, then that portion will continually be employed as a battering ram against the godly principles that are currently under attack.”
 - ▶ Douglas Wilson, *Black and Tan*

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH CULTURAL CONFLICT?

- ▶ 1. Apologize and make excuses for the Bible
- ▶ 2. Agree that the Bible is wrong
- ▶ 3. Seek to understand the context and commit to follow God's Word, even when it is unpopular

CULTURAL CONFLICT

- ▶ What has more weight: this temporal cultural context we find ourselves in, or the word of the eternal, transcendent God?
- ▶ What is the standard that matters?
- ▶ Jesus promised us that we would be “unpopular”... He actually said “hated for His sake”.

THE GOSPEL IS THE RIGHT KIND OF OFFENSIVE

- ▶ Luke 21:12-18 "...they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.... You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake.

DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

- ▶ Genocide
- ▶ Slavery
- ▶ Gender and Sexuality
- ▶ Hell

GENOCIDE

- ▶ How can we serve a God who mandated genocide?
- ▶ Principle: God uses nations to execute His justice against the sins of other nations
- ▶ Remember: The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23)

GENOCIDE

- ▶ Deut 20:16-18 "But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, **that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices** that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God."

GENOCIDE

- ▶ This was not because of Israel's righteousness, but because of the Canaanites wickedness
- ▶ Deuteronomy 9:4-5 "Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

GOD'S JUDGMENT

- ▶ Don't forget that God also judged His own people
 - ▶ 722 - Northern tribes to Assyria
 - ▶ 586 - Southern tribes to Babylon
 - ▶ God's intricate providence: He used the idolatry of his people to spread them out all over the world so that they could settle there, set up synagogues and worship Him in captivity and then use those synagogues as spring boards for the Gospel in the "fullness of time"

SLAVERY

- ▶ First, we need to remember that American slavery wasn't exactly the same as Roman slavery in that it was more economically motivated than racially motivated and was usually entered into voluntarily to pay off a debt.
- ▶ American slavery was reprehensible, not because it was "slavery" necessarily but because it was ignorant, racially-based, and generated from the kidnapping of human beings, created in the image of God. It was racist and based on the false teaching that white races were superior to black or brown races and that is anti-Gospel, and anti-Christian.

SLAVERY

- ▶ The Christian ethic with its elevation of all people as image bearers of God would lead to the end of slavery if followed out completely, but in the cultural climate of slavery it was intended to be a catalyst for their fair treatment.
- ▶ Slavery wasn't instituted by God, however Christians were called to be faithful in whatever situation they were in.
- ▶ God was giving instruction on how to live distinctly as his people in the middle of a corrupt institution

GENDER

- ▶ Is the Bible oppressive to women?
- ▶ Where do they get this?
 - ▶ Titus 1; 1 Tim 3 Pastor/Deacon qualification
 - ▶ Eph 5 - Wives submitting to husbands

GENDER

- ▶ Let's remember that in the first century the Greek, Roman, and Jewish communities all had lower view of women. Women were often seen as property and not able to testify in a court of law.
- ▶ How does the Bible respond to that?

RELEVANT PASSAGES

- ▶ Genesis 2: woman was seen as the missing piece of Creation
- ▶ Women as the first witnesses of the resurrection
- ▶ The command to husbands in Ephesians 5
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 7 (cultural blasphemy)

HELL

- ▶ January 10, 2020 David Bentley Hart - New York Times - "No truly accomplished New Testament scholar, for instance, believes that later Christianity's opulent mythology of God's eternal torture chamber is clearly present in the scriptural texts. It's entirely absent from St. Paul's writings; the only eschatological fire he ever mentions brings salvation to those whom it tries (1 Corinthians 3:15). Neither is it found in the other New Testament epistles, or in any extant documents (like the Didache) from the earliest post-apostolic period. There are a few terrible, surreal, allegorical images of judgment in the Book of Revelation, but nothing that, properly read, yields a clear doctrine of eternal torment. Even the frightening language used by Jesus in the Gospels, when read in the original Greek, fails to deliver the infernal dogmas we casually assume to be there."

HELL

- ▶ Jesus specifically in Matt 25:46 And this will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.
- ▶ This is not a happy doctrine - this is sobering and should compel us to take the Gospel to the nations
- ▶ The Bible teaches us that we have all sinned and deserve the just wrath of a holy God.

HELL

- ▶ We cannot say, but God is loving... and then choose to define love the way that we want it to be. We do not get to describe God in a way that is contrary to the way that he has revealed himself in the Bible. To do so, is to preach a false Gospel, which is no gospel at all but only a sentence of death.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- ▶ God is who He is and we can either accept Him or reject Him. Those are the only options. A nominal, shallow, cheap, "Christianity" is not an option.
- ▶ Misrepresenting and/or softening the Gospel is an empty, false, religion.
- ▶ God is good and we can trust him.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- ▶ We are but finite minds trying to understand the infinite. Yet, he has revealed himself to us. Do not neglect that.
- ▶ Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.