

I. Introduction

- A. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. (John 6:67, 68, NLT)
- B. Today, I'd like to talk about *Why I'm a Christian*. I probably have a hundred reasons, but I just want to mention three.

II. Why I'm A Christian

- A. A couple things happen when people find out that I'm a pastor.
- B. The first thing that happens is that people usually say, "I'm sorry." They just blurt it out. Totally random. It's weird.
- C. It goes like this:
 - 1. "So, Bill. Nice to meet you." Small talk, small talk, small talk...
 - a) Then the fateful question...
 - 2. "So what do you do?"
 - 3. "I'm a pastor."
 - 4. "Oh shoot, yeah... um..... I'm sorry."
- D. I get it. I totally get it.

III. A sense of moral failure...

- A. Most people carry around a sense of moral failure. Very few people imagine they're getting good grades from God.
 - 1. Even if they've never read the Bible.
 - 2. Even if they never hang out with Christians.
- B. There's a sense of falling short. A sense of letting God down.
- C. So when people find out I'm a pastor, they immediately apologize, and then things get really awkward.
 - 1. That's the first thing people do... issue random apologies....
- D. And the second thing is they try to remember if they said anything ungodly before they found out I was a pastor.
- E. I can literally see this happening.
 - 1. Back when I was single, I was on an airplane, flying to a ski trip in Colorado. I was sitting with my best friend, Tony. Tony's really outgoing, good looking, like me... and he started flirting with one of the flight attendants.
 - 2. She started flirting back, but not so much with Tony.
 - 3. She started flirting back... with me.... Because, look at me, right?
 - a) To be fair, Tony denies that part of the story, that she was more interested in me.
 - 4. I was very polite and nice and joking around.
 - 5. But the flight attendant started getting a little out of bounds... let's just say pushing beyond a PG-13 rating.
 - 6. She's going back and forth, working, and everything. But she keeps coming back to Tony and me, checking in, flirting, and all that.
 - 7. Finally, this flight attendant asks the fateful question:
 - a) "So, what do you guys do for a living?"
 - b) Tony said, "I work for a dairy."
 - (1) "Oh, that's cool."
 - c) And she looked at me. "How about you?"
 - (1) I said, "I'm a pastor."
 - (a) In that moment, her face changed.
 - (b) She had that look on her face like a toddler with a mouth full of cookies promising she didn't raid the cookie jar.
 - 8. I felt so sorry for her.
 - a) Her face turned red. She said, "I'm sorry..." because that's what people with an active conscience say to a pastor.
 - 9. And then her eyes went up, and off to the side. I could tell what she was doing.
 - 10. She pressed rewind on the whole flight, and then she pressed replay, and then she tried to remember how, um, sinful she was. And the more she remembered the redder she turned.
- F. This happens all the time. And it's not just me, either. Other pastors have the same stories.
- G. A pro golfer played a round with a famous evangelist named Billy Graham. When they were finished, a reporter asked how it went.
 - 1. The golfer said, "It was horrible. I felt so guilty."
 - 2. The reporter asked, "Why? What did he say to you?"
 - 3. The golfer answered, "Nothing."
- H. The first reason I am a Christian is because there is something in the human heart that just knows we are morally bent out of shape.

IV. 1. MORAL CONSCIOUSNESS

- A. Travel anywhere in the world, in any culture, at any time in history, and you will find that the human race is a moral species...
 - 1. There is a sense of right and wrong, of good and bad. And there is a sense of guilt for falling short.
- B. In fact, the human race is plagued by guilt and shame.
 - 1. Or, as the Bible says, God's laws are written on our hearts long before anybody has to tell them to us. (Romans 2:15)
- C. This moral consciousness has to come from somewhere, and to me, there is no better explanation than the biblical one...
 - 1. I don't think evolution can explain it. Survival of the fittest would favor NOT having a conscience.
 - 2. So where does this moral impulse come from?

3. Moral laws imply a Moral Law Giver. There is a good and holy Law Giver, and we instinctively know we must measure up to His standards.
- D. Moral consciousness is the first reason why I'm a Christian.
- V. The Dilemma
 - A. If you are a thinking person, you have to think long and hard about this dilemma.
 - B. On one side, you have the presence of Justice in the universe. That justice has a source... to me the option that makes the most sense is that there is a God of Justice standing behind it all. God is just; that is one side of the dilemma.
 - C. On the other side, you have the presence of evil in the universe. And actually, in our own hearts. Because not only have we all been victims of other people's evil, one way or another. Other people have been victims of our evil, our sin, our unkindness, one way or another, too. That goes for all of us.
 1. So God is just, one side of the dilemma.
 - a) I am unjust, at least sometimes, the other side of the dilemma.
 - (1) So let's state the dilemma: *How can God be just and justify the guilty?*
 - b) How can a perfect, just, and righteous God ever come together with an imperfect, unjust, and unrighteous human?
 - c) If that question has never haunted you, might I suggest you're not thinking deeply enough about who God is, and about who you are in relation to Him.
 - (1) But, alone, among all the religions and systems of philosophy, there is one system that tackles the question head on. That is, Christianity.
 - d) In all the concentric circles of biblical thought, the center of the center of the center is the Cross of Christ.
 - (1) On the Cross, God made peace between justice and grace, once for all.
 - (a) He punished our Substitute, Jesus Christ, for all our sins. That satisfied Justice for our guilt.
 - (b) He released the mercy of forgiveness, for all who would believe. That fulfilled His grace.
 - i) So, the dilemma is solved, so the Bible can say....
 - (1) *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, (Romans 4:5)*
 2. Only Jesus Christ offers a message that can cleanse a conscience without just defining away sin, and for that reason, I am a Christian.
 3. Now, let's move to the second reason.
 - VI. There's a funny duality
 - A. Look at this list:
 1. Math. Accounting. Physics. Nursing. Medicine. Pharmacology. Biology. Chemistry. Engineering.
 - B. Then look at this list:
 1. Music. Art. Literature. Psychology. Bible/Theology. History. Business. Social Science. Political Science. Liberal studies.
 - C. The first list... those are called 'hard sciences'. Because they're really precise. They're really quantifiable. Usually, you're either right, or you're wrong, and there's no debate about it.
 1. Measurable things. The smart people. You can get a job.
 - D. But, the second list... those are called 'soft sciences'. Hey, don't blame me, I didn't make it up. They're not so easy to quantify. There's room for debate. Room for disagreement.
 1. How do you feel about this.
 2. The fun people, or the caring people, (I'm in advanced calculus, Wow you must be smart. Oh, I'm in Drawing 101... Wow, I'm sorry...) but why is one smarter than the other?
 3. You'll be broke.
 - E. I want you to know, I totally disagree with those conclusions. But it's the poison our culture is drinking.
 - F. I think it's an idea made popular by a really famous philosopher, mathematician, and author a generation ago. Bertrand Russell... He said,
 1. *"Whatever knowledge is attainable must be attained by the scientific method. And what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know."* ~Bertrand Russell...
 - G. Unless you're in the hard sciences, you can't say anything about truth with a capital T.
 1. I don't buy that for a second. There's a hidden dimension here, in our hearts. There's a complexity that we don't get.
 - H. The reason we can do a lot of cool things in math and physics, is because scientists are doing simple things. Sending astronauts to the moon? That's simple stuff. We're just applying a formula for this, a formula for that.
 1. We know $f=ma$.
 2. We know $e=mc^2$.
 - I. But, is there a formula that can help you in your lame love life? Is there a formula that can give a lonely person love, or a desperate person, hope?
 - J. Is there a formula that can help a person have a better marriage?
 1. You come home, and your wife says, "How's your day..."
 2. You say... "Well, honey, square root this..."
 - a) It doesn't work this way. There's no way.
 - K. Issues of race, gender, sexuality, equality, love... there's no formula, no math, no science, that speak to matters of the heart... and to the complexities of human experience and the magic of human relationships.
 1. Do we understand that stuff?

- a) That stuff is so hard. It is so complicated. You can't quantify it.
 - L. Think of it like a fish. The mathematician is given a fish that is cleaned, down to the little fish skeleton. Someone says, "Hey mathematician, can you count the bones?"
 - 1. She counts the bones. "1, 2, 3 ... 57 bones." "Wow! You're so measurable. You're so precise."
 - 2. "Can you count them again?"
 - a) She counts again. "57." "Wow. Repeatable data."
 - M. That's amazing.
 - 1. The *biologist* is dealing with the same kinds of questions, but the fish is still alive.
 - 2. The *historian* is dealing with the same kinds of questions, but wondering where the fish was a week ago and a month ago.
 - 3. The *artist* is dealing with that the fish saw, and what the fish felt.
 - N. The world has this crazy idea that science can answer our questions. But it can't.
 - 1. Science is easy. Math is easy. We can fly to the moon and back, because it's all formulas. We can build tall buildings, because it's all formulas. That's the easy stuff.
 - O. But the reason we have a hard time getting along with one another, and forgiving people who hurt us, and loving our neighbors, is because that's hard.
 - P. There's this complexity in the world about beauty, and justice, and freedom, and meaning, and it's very, very hard... and it has no math and no science.
- VII. Hard Questions
- A. See, we all have to answer some hard questions.
 - 1. Who are you? What are you doing here? Where are you going?
 - a) They're the same questions you answer a bouncer when you have a fake id.
 - (1) I've been told...
 - B. Just the fact that you're alive, means that you have decided to answer these questions in a way that is specific and personal to you.
 - 1. I'm choosing to be here at Pathway, and not somewhere else.
 - 2. I'm choosing to go down these paths, and not other paths.
 - C. We're all making choices.
 - 1. You're choosing to present yourself as this kind of person, and not some other kind of person.
 - D. Nobody gets a pass on these hard questions. There's no get out of jail free card.
 - 1. Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going?
 - E. Some of us are choosing to answer those questions as a Christian.
 - 1. You might be choosing to answer those questions as an agnostic or an atheist. Or maybe as a Muslim or a Hindu.
 - 2. You might be in denial that these questions exist, but your heart knows. You can't lie to your heart for long.
 - F. Whatever your position, it's like getting on a plane.
 - G. You have to choose. You have to be all in.
 - 1. I'm going to answer the questions this way, as a humanist, or a Darwinist, or a Christian... but you have to get all in. Every day, with every choice, you've got an operating system. Even if you're not solid on the definitions.
 - 2. You're on the plane. You have to get in and commit and close the hatch. You're never "sort of" on a plane.
 - H. You've decided to answer these questions, somehow.
 - I. You've decided to get on a plane, and commit your life to that plane's set of answers.
 - 1. You can get on the 'Buddhist' plane... you say, this one makes the most sense to me. Great.
 - 2. Or on the 'Atheist' plane.
 - 3. You can be on an 'I don't care' plane. Okay... you're still committing to your system.
 - a) Still, you're choosing to say how you're going to answer those questions.
 - 4. You can also say, I like a little Christianity, maybe 20 percent, a little Buddhism, maybe 20 percent, 20 percent Islam, and the rest humanist.
 - a) That's the 'American Buffet' plane. You'll probably spend a lot of time going in circles.
 - J. You've gotta pick some plane to live your life by. So, how do you make that choice?
- VIII. For me
- A. For me, the 'Christian' plane makes most sense.
 - 1. And it's not because I was raised as a Christian. Like many who were raised as a Christian, I was an inch away from changing planes.
 - 2. I am a Christian because that plane answers the big questions the best for me.
 - 3. That's my second reason. No system, no religion, and no philosophy gives answers as beautiful, answers as satisfying, answers as life-giving, to the big questions as biblical Christianity.
 - B. I'm calling this second reason *EXISTENTIAL CLARITY*.
 - C. Not other system answers the hard questions like Christianity.
 - 1. *Who am I?* I am a child of God, created in His image, sacred, and belonging to Him.
 - 2. *What am I doing here?* I'm here to experience His grace, and bring glory to His name, while I live and share my faith as best as I can. What I'm doing here is helping people find and follow God, even as I experience His blessings, and His grace, and His love along the way.

3. *Where do I think I'm going?* I'm going to a place of no more sorrows, and no more tears, a place where God will wipe away every tear from my eyes. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And a place where I shall be my truest, deepest self, with the glory that is rightly mine finally unveiled, face to face with Christ my Savior.
 - a) *Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, "Are you going to leave, too?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life. (John 6:67, 68, NLT)*
 - (1) Existential clarity can be found in this person alone.
 - D. I am a Christian because of all the big questions in my life, Christianity answers 87% of them in deeply satisfying ways.
 1. Now, I'm 100% all in. I'm all on board the plane.
 2. But there's still like 13% of Christianity that doesn't make sense for me, or makes me scratch my head, and maybe I don't like...
 - a) But I'm just a stick floating on the vast ocean of knowledge... who am I think that everything God has reveal should make sense to me.
 3. So I'm all in.
 - E. So, the 'Christian' plane is like 87%. And the other 'religious' planes are maybe 35% for me. And the 'humanist' plane is 40 percent, but the 'secular humanist' plane only works maybe 10% for me.
 1. So, out of all the options, I choose the 'Christian' plane. That's my ride.
 - F. I believe Christianity for the same reasons I believe in science, and math, and history, and art.
 1. I've got a clarity, a deeply settled peace in my heart that far transcends anything any other system can offer.
 2. I am a Christian because being a Christian makes the best sense of the world. It's the best we've got, and it's the best by far.
 - a) Not just the scientific world, and the created order...
 - (1) But the much harder questions like beauty and justice and right and wrong, and a life after this life. Friendship. Love. Meaning. Purpose. Value. Sacredness.
 3. So, moral consciousness. Existential clarity. Two reasons I am a Christian.
- IX. The Third Reason
- A. My third reason is... *Jesus*
 - B. I've read the mythology of Greece and Rome. I studied that stuff at the University of Illinois. I've read Norse mythology... Thor and Odin and Loki... before Marvel made it cool.
 - C. There's just nobody like Jesus, not even close.
 1. Jesus loves me... none of the other gods makes that claim.
 2. Jesus died for me... He was crucified, dying in my place, to actually resolve the problem of moral consciousness, pay the penalty in full, and balance the scales of justice forever. No other gods have ever made that claim.
 3. Jesus lives for me... He walks with me, and He guides me, and He protects me, and is with me all the time.
 - D. However you look at Jesus, He is one of a kind. There is no one like Him, no one beside Him.
- X. Look at Jesus!
- A. In His message, only will you find forgiveness. In Christ alone, you have an exalted status, royalty before God. In Christ, you have an inheritance in heaven that defies description.
 - B. You have a true purpose, and a reason for getting out of bed in the morning.
 1. In Christ, you have strength.
 2. In Christ, you have a Friend in need.
 3. In Christ, you have an ever-present Help in time of trouble.
 4. In Christ, you have a Shepherd for your soul.
 5. In Christ, you have a Comforter.
 6. In Christ, you have a Strengthener.
 7. In Christ, you have wisdom for living, and you have confidence for dying.
 - C. Only Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I'll pay the whole bill."
 1. "Come to Me empty handed.
 2. "Come to Me without money and without price and I will make you whole and I will connect you to God.
 3. "Come again and again as often as you need. As often as you've strayed.
 - a) *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30, NKJV).*
 - D. Jesus is the giant among humankind.
 1. The celebrity of the cosmos.
 2. In my opinion, there is no plane worth getting on that doesn't have Jesus in the pilot's seat.
 - E. And those are some of the reasons why I am a Christian.