

**Trending VS Truth**  
**The Abandonment Of God**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
**June 27, 2021**

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Well this morning it is my joy to begin a brief summer series. As I mentioned to you, I hope that in the fall we'll begin a verse by verse study of first John. But as we have this interim between Romans and first John, I want to take a few weeks to deal with some of the contemporary issues that we're all facing. I've entitled this summer series "Trending VS Truth."

It was back in the 1950s that the noun "trend" began to be used of new and popular fashions and cultural customs. But it wasn't until this century that the word trend was fashioned into its current form, "trending" and the word "trending" itself began to trim. The McMillan Dictionary writes, "trending refers to the topics and subjects that are currently ranked as the most popular on the microblogging platform Twitter.

"Trending" originated on Twitter thanks to the use of hashtags, words or phrases preceded by the hashtag symbol that are used to identify posts related to a specific subject.

It's a way for users to quickly and easily search for the topics that interest them. To stay up to date on breaking news, other social media, news and entertainment sites now include "trending topics" and trend rankings are very common. Now, if you're younger, you didn't need that explanation. It's intuitive, you're a digital native and all of this is like why is he explaining that? It's because there are some people here who didn't know that. "Trending" has now become part of our vocabulary. The Oxford Dictionary defines trending as "currently popular or widely discussed topics online."

Now some of the things that trend online are frankly hilarious. Last year, of course, it was the zoom video meeting bloopers. You've probably seen some of them like the woman who accidentally downloaded and used a fun filter and led her entire meeting that was supposed to be a serious one as a potato head. But sadly, not everything trending is funny. Many of the views that are popular are completely opposed to the truth of Scripture. Popular views on various moral issues are trending, including views on gender, sexuality, homosexuality, the cancel culture, the Critical Race Theory, Social Justice, and Christian Nationalism, among others.

Much of what is trending about those issues is, frankly, contrary to the truth of God's Word. I want to look at those issues in the summer that lies before us. But as we begin this series today and next week, I don't want to start with those specific issues. Instead, I want to begin by considering the root causes of our current cultural confusion. What is it that has led us here? Why is there so much confusion about those things that ought to be clear?

In fact, today, I want us to consider this: What is the ultimate cause, the fatally flawed foundation, on which our culture's flawed views is built? The ultimate cause, the foundational sin that has created our culture's many problems and moral confusion is this; it all comes back to this: It is the abandonment of the true God.

Increasingly, the people around us are abandoning the God of the Bible. So, I want us to look at that issue as the fundamental, foundational root cause that lies behind all that's going on. Now, as we consider this primary issue and the issue that lies behind confusion about gender and sexuality and Social Justice and all the rest, I want us to look at this issue and consider several insights that the Scripture gives us about our contemporary abandonment of God.

So let's look at it together. First of all, let's begin with this insight; The Cultural Expressions. How exactly is this trending? How does our culture's growing abandonment of God express itself? How do we see it regularly demonstrated in the lives of the people around us?

Now it's not something that's simplistic or simple. Instead, it is a complex of ideas. Satan is brilliant, so there's not a single strategy in this denial of God. Rather, there are multiple strategies and to fully appreciate what's going on in the culture, we need to look at these strategies, these expressions of this growing phenomenon of the abandonment of God. The first cultural expression, and we need to start here because, in many ways, is the largest and is growing even larger is Darwinian Naturalism. As we're going to discover in the coming weeks, almost all of our culture's problems stem from a rejection of the truths that are revealed in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. And man's abandonment of God begins with a rejection of the truth in the Bible's very first verse: "In the beginning, God created the heavens in the earth."

Today, the primary worldview in America, without question, is Darwinian Naturalism. Now what is this? Well, let's consider it. Again, the Oxford Dictionary defines naturalism this way, "it is the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes and supernatural or

spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted." This is Naturalism. Everything comes from natural properties and causes. Now, as I have shared with you before, James Sire, his excellent book, "The Universe Next Door" reduces Naturalism, which is a complex concept, to six graspable propositions. Here's what Naturalism teaches. As I list these, I want you to think about how these permeate our culture.

First of all, the first proposition of Naturalism is that matter is all that exist, and it has existed eternally. Immediately. You can see the shell and pea game that's going on here, the bait and switch. We're taking the attributes that belong to God; eternality and power and intelligence; and we're now attributing them to matter. It's eternal and it's responsible for all that is. This is how it begins.

Carl Sagan, the leading voice for Naturalism until his death, began each episode of his television series "Cosmos" with these famous words, "The cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." That's what naturalism teaches.

A second proposition is that the cosmos is a closed system. There is nothing supernatural. There is nothing miraculous. It simply doesn't exist. No one will intrude from outside.

Thirdly, human beings are complex machines. Personality is simply an interrelation of chemical and physical properties that we do not yet fully understand. In other words, all those things that we think of as metaphysical, as non-physical, beyond the physical, in reality, they would say they're just physical. It's just physical, chemical properties interacting.

Number four, death is the extinction of personality and individuality. When you die, it's done. It's over. There is no eternal life. There is no eternal death. There is no eternity.

Number five, morality is determined solely by the individual and the circumstances. Now, this can expand to include not only individuals but a collection of individuals, a culture, and that's what we see happening around us. You can see how this world view is affecting everything. I mean think about what happens with morality today. We vote on what's moral. That comes from this worldview.

Number six History is a linear stream of events linked by cause and effect, but without an overarching purpose. In other words, life as we know, it is completely random. There is no larger

story, there is no plan, there is no purpose, there is no meaning. It's simply a linear stream of events linked by cause and effect.

What does the Bible say about Naturalism?

Well, it doesn't address it specifically, but it does address it. Turn with me to Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4, Paul wants to encourage us that we should stop living like we used to live before Christ. And he says this in Ephesians 4:17, "So this I say and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles," as the pagans, "also walk." And notice the first way he describes those who are without Christ, who are pagans, how they live, how they walk, what their lifestyle is like; they walk in the futility of their mind. The Greek word translated mind here is a complex word that can be used in a variety of ways. Here, Paul uses it in the sense of one's entire disposition. Your frame of mind, your way of thinking or your mindset. It's essentially what we mean by the word worldview. It's the universe of ideas in which we live and think. And Paul says in verse seventeen that all of the worldviews, all of the mindsets, the grids through which unbelieving pagans see the world; all of them are without exception, notice, futile. They lack meaning and they lack purpose. And that is just as true of our age's dominant worldview, Darwinian Naturalism. It is futile, it is worthless, there is no meaning, there is no purpose, we are adrift. Not only in the universe physically, but spiritually.

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul talks about the fact that there are fortresses; it's the idea that have been built up in the pagan world in which we live; and he says, we need to respond to those fortresses. Here's what he says in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "we are destroying speculations. And every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." The picture here is the idea of a fortress or a stronghold on a hill. In Greek culture often, cities, like the city even of Corinth, were built near an acropolis where you could build a kind of fortress, a place into which the people of the city could retreat if the city were attacked. That same fortress often also served as a prison which is appropriate for what Paul is describing here. So, what are these fortresses? Well, notice 2 Corinthians 10:5, calls them speculations. It's an interesting word. The Greek word is "logismos" (λογισμός). It's a general word you can recognize the word "logic" in there, the English word. It's a general word that refers to all human or demonic thoughts, opinions, reasonings, philosophies, theories, psychologies, perspectives, religions. You get the idea. All the unbiblical systems of thought that are exalted as the truth against

the knowledge of God, they are speculations. They are fortresses to be attacked. Instead of embracing those systems, we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. How do you do that? Well, the only thing that exposes unbiblical thought and ideologies is the truth of Scripture.

You remember, in Ephesians 6, as Paul is talking about the armor that we're to put on, he says, we're to take the sword of the spirit which is, what? The word of God. That's how we attack these speculations, these philosophies and ideas that are raised up as the "truth" against the truth of God. The point I want you to get is this, our nation has fled from its Creator into an enslaving fortress and one of the chief enslaving fortresses of speculation into which we have fled is Darwinian Naturalism. And it is a tomb, a prison for the people around us.

There's a second trending expression of this growing denial of God in our culture and its Philosophical Atheism. This often accompanies and follows Naturalism.

It is the philosophical conclusion that there is no God. You see this expressed in several places in Scripture by wicked people: Psalm 14 as one of those. In Psalm 14:1, David writes, "the fool" and in biblical terms we're talking about someone who is foolishly wicked, someone who is overcome by their sin, they're a fool in the moral sense; "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." He goes on in the rest of verse 1 and verses 2 & 3 to describe this person who denies the existence of God as an extreme example of depravity, but of course, Paul borrows from those same verses in Romans 3 to describe all of humanity. But the wicked fool says in his heart "There is no God," he denies the existence of God.

Now, it's important for you to understand what's going on here. Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Psalm 14:1, writes this, "This assertion that there is no God is not a sincere, if misguided, conviction but an irresponsible gesture of defiance. In other words, in Biblical terms, and we'll see it in a moment, a person who struggles believing that there is a God who says there is no God that person is not a victim, instead, he is acting in deliberate and culpable defiance of God as Creator. Recent surveys by the Pew Research Center have shown that, while the group of atheists in our country is still small, it has grown over 30% in just a few short years and it probably will continue to grow. It will never, however, be, I don't think, the predominant view in our country as some of these others will.

Let's move on to a third expression of our trending rejection of God, It's Paganism. Paganism is the worship of any god or gods, but the true God revealed in scripture. In biblical terms, a pagan is one who doesn't claim to worship the true God of the Bible, but some other god. This is described in Romans 1:23 where Paul describes pagans this way, "they exchange the glory of the incorruptible God, for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds, and of four footed animals and crawling creatures" and other Scriptures add "and the sun and the moon and the stars, and on and on the list goes. Now scripture constantly condemns Paganism, the worship of other gods besides the one true and living God. In the Ten Commandments, that's how it begins in Exodus 20:3, "You shall have no other gods before Me." We sang that affirmation this morning.

In 1 Corinthians 10:20, we read, "the things which the pagans sacrifice..." so when you think about people in other religions, people who are attached to to idolatry. He says, "the things which the pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God." What Paul is saying is that false religion ultimately is energized by, directed by demons. People think they're worshiping God, but they have been deceived, they've been led astray and in reality, they're worshiping a demonically inspired, satanically inspired substitute. Understand this, the people in our world who are involved in the religion of Islam, the people in our world who are involved in Hinduism in Buddhism and on and on the list goes, they are not sincerely seeking and sort of, through that mode, worshipping the true God. They are worshiping demons. That's what the Scripture teaches.

First Corinthians 12:2 says, "you know that when you were pagans..." talking to the Corinthians, that was their background, "you were led astray to the mute idols, however, you were led." You were just led along. Galatians 4:8, "at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which, by nature, are not gods." About 6% of the US population, and it's growing, is pagan by the biblical definition that is, they claim to worship a different god or gods than the true God of the Bible.

A fourth expression of our abandonment of God is Syncretism. Syncretism is a combination of a distorted view of the true God put together with another view of reality such as Naturalism or Paganism. In other words, it's combining them together. This is one of the most common expression of our culture's abandonment of God, just as it was in ancient Israel. There are many places I could show you this but turn with me to the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah 7:1 "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Here's what I want you to do Jeremiah stand in the

gate of the Lord's House..," in other words, go to the gate of the temple "and proclaim there this word and say hear the word of the Lord, All you of Judah, who enter by these gates..," don't miss this "to worship Yahweh." You've come to the temple to worship Yahweh. But that's not all that's going on, go down to verse 9, "will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely in other words they were breaking the Ten Commandments in coming to worship, but that isn't all they were doing. They weren't just breaking the second half out of the Ten Commandments, they were breaking the first half of the Ten Commandments: "you are offering sacrifices to Baal and walking after other gods, you've not known. Then you're coming and standing before Me in this house, which is called by My name and you're saying we're delivered. So that you can do all that you want." You can do whatever sin you want. You see what's going on here? These are people who hadn't abandoned a claim to worship the true God that was still part of their life and their faith. But they added to that, in a syncretistic way, the worship of other gods.

Now, this is so common in our country. 65% of the people in America claim to be Christian, and if you just look at that statistic, you might say, well, that's encouraging. I'm sorry to say this, but don't be encouraged. Because that's not accurate because a large percentage of that 65% are in fact Syncretists. Roman Catholics, for example, they worship the true God, but they also add to that the worship of Mary and the Saints and of course, have a false gospel beyond that. You have the charismatic movement with its prosperity gospel and much of that movement worships, health and wealth and prosperity. Many professing Protestants are at the very same time Darwinian Naturalists. Understand folks, this is Syncretism. This is not the following of God, this is the abandonment of God.

A fifth expression of our abandonment of God is Practical Atheism. Not Philosophical Atheism, we've already talked about that. Not an intellectual denial of God's existence. Rather, it is the practical denial of God's existence by living as if He did not exist even if, theoretically, you still affirm that He does. It's a kind of practical deism: "God created, and He's out there somewhere, but frankly He just doesn't matter." Look at Psalm 10. You see this disposition displayed here. Psalm 10:3, "For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire and the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord. The wicked and the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, 'there is no God.'" now at first glance, you might say, "well, this maybe is a philosophical atheist." No, it's not. Let me show you why.

First of all, if you have a version of the NAS that has marginal notes, you'll notice there is a marginal note for the word "thoughts" there in verse 4. It's literally the word "plots" or "schemes," so it's not saying his thoughts are there is no God, but his plots, his plans, his schemes are all made as if there were no God. He doesn't necessarily deny God's existence, in fact, he doesn't really. This is just a person who plans his life as if there's no God, because notice down in verse 11. He doesn't deny that God exists, instead, he says to himself, "God has forgotten He's hidden His face, He's never going to see what I do." Verse 13, "Why is the wicked spurn God? He has said to himself, you will not require it." So, it's not an outright denial. It is a practical denial. Twenty percent of US adults are irreligious. They claim no faith of any kind, and they're not atheists. That means they are practical atheists.

So look at that list. Folks, understand that this is how we have gotten where we've gotten. It's because there has been an abandonment of God in all of these ways, not in one centralized way, but in all of these ways as people have left God their Creator.

Secondly, let's briefly consider why this is true. Let's consider the spiritual foundations. What is the source of this abandonment? Where does this temptation to abandon God come from? Well, there are two reasons for this cultural trend. Let me just briefly highlight them for you:

First of all people abandon God because of a willful ignorance of God's existence. Mark the word "willful." It is a willful ignorance of God's existence. Turn to Romans 1. We're going to spend a little time here. Now some of you are thinking, "Ah I knew this whole series is really just an excuse for Tom to stay in Romans." Not true. But there is a lot of important points that Paul makes. There are a lot of important points here. Considering our theme. Notice, I want you to start with me in verse 21 Romans 1 because here, Paul has just said that God has revealed Himself in creation. We're going to look at that in a moment, but here's how man responds to God's revelation in creation. He responds in hard hearted rebellion. Notice verse 21, "for even though they knew God..," doesn't mean they had a personal relationship with God. It means in the creation they saw and understood that God was. That He'd revealed Himself. "Even though they knew God" here's how they responded, "they did not honor Him as God" that is, they didn't glorify Him as God, "nor were they thankful." Instead, they were willfully ignorant of His existence. Go back to the end of verse 18, they suppressed that truth that they knew from creation and what did they do instead? Verse 23, they worshiped false gods.



So understand, folks, that the real issue, the reason all of those common expressions we just talked about are present in our culture; that's not because God hasn't revealed Himself clearly. Instead, it is a willful ignorance of His existence.

There's a second reason for the trending abandonment of God. It's here in Romans 1 as well, it is a willful rejection of God's law. A willful rejection of God's law. Go down to verse 32. Speaking about people who've never held the Bible in their hands, pagans, who don't know the truth from the Scripture. They know the ordinance of God, 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. Notice here, Paul says the pagan knows that God is a righteous law giver who demands obedience verse 32, "They know the ordinance of God." We'll talk about how, in just a minute. And they know that God hates and will judge their sin, verse 32, they know the ordinance of God that those who practice such things are worthy of death, but what do they do? They keep on doing them and they give approval to those who do them.

So, understand then that the reason people abandon God, if you're here this morning and you are doubtful about whether or not God exists, or perhaps you've concluded He doesn't; understand this; the problem is not an intellectual one. It's a moral one. There is a willful rejection, a willful ignorance of God's existence, and a willful rejection of God's law. That's the reason. Those are the reasons for our culture's abandonment of God in the ways we just saw.

That brings us to a third insight and this is where I want us to spend a few minutes here, and that is the biblical correction. The biblical correction. What is the truth? You see? We don't want to just lament the negative trends. We need to know what God and the Scripture are against, and so we're going to do that as we've already done. But we also, at the same time, need to celebrate the truth that the Scripture champions. I mean as those who believe in the true and living God, let's be honest, our hearts ache over the culture's growing rejection of our Creator. It should grieve you when people deny God the glory and the thanks that He so much deserves. So we grieve, our hearts ache, but at the same time folks we have so much to celebrate.

We have a good and generous and gracious God. Our God has graciously shown the entire world that He exists and He has revealed Himself to them. Let's consider that for a moment. Let's consider what Scripture teaches about this instead of the sort of abandonment of God because "well, we're

just not sure if He exists, and we're not sure if He does exist what He's like." Let's consider what scripture teaches.

Number one, God has revealed His existence, eternity, and power; don't miss this; to every person through the creation. God has revealed his existence, eternity and power to every person through the creation. Look again at Romans 1:18, He says, God is, displaying His wrath against men, notice, "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness..," What truth? The truth that is revealed about God in the creation. So, Paul goes on to explain that God has in fact revealed Himself, verse 19, "because that which is known about God is evident within them." The Greek word translated evident there means visible, clear, plainly seen, open. It's a fact that every sinner knows. Every sinner knows. "That which is known about God, is evident within them." And then notice he adds "for God made it evident to them," literally, the Greek text reads this way, "for God caused it to become known to them." For God caused it to become known to them. God has made certain truths about Himself clear, plain to every human being that has ever lived.

Years ago, John Blanchard wrote a book with a title I love. The title of the book was "Does God Believe An Atheist?" Think about that for a moment. The answer to that question is, "no, God doesn't believe in atheists because He's made Himself known." You say, "when?" Well, verse 20 says He revealed Himself since the creation of the world. There has never been a time when this revelation of Himself wasn't ongoing. Notice what God revealed about Himself: His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen. His invisible attributes, specifically, His eternity or his eternality. I mean think about it folks the world has been here long before we came on this globe, thousands of years, clearly, the One who made these things is not susceptible to decay and death. His eternal power: the grandeur of the earth, the Vastness of the heavens make it clear that the One who made and sustains all these things has power beyond our wildest conception.

I mean just think about a single Dallas thunderstorm. Nobody doubts God's power and His divine nature. He's made it clear that He possesses the qualities of deity, that He is God. How did God reveal Himself? Verse 20 goes on to say, "these invisible attributes have been clearly seen." In other words, all people have clearly seen these invisible attributes, and then he goes a step further, "being understood through what has been made," every person who has ever lived on this planet and who is alive now, gets it. They grasp it. They understand it. You say "well, why are there so

many people around, saying they don't?" Go back to verse 18, "they suppress the truth in unrighteousness." The only reason there is a single person on this planet who denies the existence of the true and living God, is because they have made not an intellectual decision but a moral decision.

What's the results of God's revelation in creation? At the end of verse 20, "so that they" who's they? All the pagans, people who've never held the Bible in their hands. You know, I get the question all the time as a pastor, "what about that person out there who's never seen the Bible, that doesn't know the truth?" Listen, what Paul says is they know these things about God. There isn't a single person out there who doesn't know these things about God. God has written it in the creation and He's made it evident within them and they know and they have chosen to sin against the truth they know. They're not going to be judged for the truth you and I know, they're going to be judged for the truth they know, but they know enough and they've rejected it so that everyone is without excuse.

God has unmistakably revealed His existence, His eternity, His power to every person through the creation. What a good God we have! Folks, let's celebrate that. There's no confusion in the world about God. It's the suppression of the truth God has made evident.

A second biblical truth is that God has revealed His righteousness and holiness, again, to every person. How? Through the conscience. Look at Romans 2. We ended Romans 1 saying they know the ordinance of God. Here are pagans who have never seen the Scripture, they know the ordinance of God. How? Well the answer comes in Romans 2:14. For when pagans, "when gentiles, who do not have the written law," they have a copy of it in front of them, "when they do instinctively the things of the law," doesn't mean they perfectly keep God's law. It means they know right from wrong. They know you shouldn't be suing from your friend, they know you shouldn't be committing adultery on your spouse; they know certain things are true. And when they do that; when they instinctively understand that; these, not having the written law, are a law to themselves. How? verse 15, "they show the work of the law," that is, the substance of the law, the basic core content of the law, "written in their hearts." Whose hearts? Every single human being who's ever lived. The substance of God's laws written on their hearts. Who did it? Of course, God did it and it's in the conscience. Verse 15 goes on to say, their conscience then, informed with that substance

of God's law, bears witness and their thoughts marry with their conscience, either accusing them or defending them.

You understand this. Listen, how many times have you said to yourself, "I really shouldn't have done that." You were showing the work of God's law written on your heart. This is God's goodness. He's revealed Himself. He's revealed His righteousness and His holiness to every person through the conscience. People know. Listen, all the people debating these issues, they know it's back to verse 32 of Chapter 1. They know the ordinance of God. They know that they deserve judgment for breaking God's law, but they're going to do it anyway.

Number three God has revealed His goodness and generosity to every person through His providence. His goodness and His generosity through His providence look at Acts 14. I Love this passage. I often come here at Thanksgiving because it just reminds us of God's goodness in all that He's surrounded us with. You remember the story. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas healed a man and they started to be worshiped by this crowd. Verse 15 of Acts 14. They try to restrain them. Paul says "men, why are you doing these things? We also are men of the same nature as you who preach the gospel to you, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. In the generations gone by, he permitted all the nations to go their own ways." Now, watch verse 17, "yet, God did not leave Himself without witness." Witness to whom? To all of humanity. What was the witness? "In that He did good and He gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your heart with food and gladness." Look at the good things you enjoy in this life, that is God's revelation to you of Himself that He is good and generous and kind even to His enemies. In fact, in Romans 2:4, Paul says, Don't you understand that God's goodness is intended to lead you to repentance?

Number four, God has revealed Himself, His law, and His gracious salvation through the Scripture. God's greatest revelation that we've looked at today comes in the Scripture, in special revelation.

You see you can look at general revelation, which is what we've been talking about, and you might misunderstand because your conscience is messed up, it's flawed, your picture of the world might give you a wrong impression about God, but not the Scripture. Second Timothy 3, of course, one of the most familiar passages to us all but listen to it again, "from childhood," Paul says to Timothy, "you have known the sacred writings," you've known the Scriptures, "which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Talking about the Old

Testament. New Testament was still being written. And then he goes on to say, "all scripture is inspired by God," it's the product of God's breath in the same way that my words are the product of my breath right now. All scripture is the product of God's breath, "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate equipped for every good work." Salvation and sanctification. It's all here. Our good God has revealed Himself in everything you need to know to have a relationship with Him, to be right with Him to be with Him forever. Do you treasure this revelation? This is such an amazing gift.

Number five. God has ultimately revealed Himself and His saving character through His Son. Ultimately, He has revealed Himself in His saving character through His Son. Look at Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1:1, "God after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and many ways," there's the Old Testament, "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son," Jesus Christ was God's last word and, of course, everything He did and everything He taught, and the ramifications of that are all recorded in the New Testament and that book you hold in your hand through the inspired authors that He Himself chose and gave this responsibility. He says He's the one that was appointed heir of all things to whom also He made the world. He's the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His nature, in other words, He's just like God because He is God, and He upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high. God has revealed Himself in His Son. Folks, look at that list. When you look at what's going on in our world, when you look at their denial of God, their rejection of God, their abandonment of God; when they say, "I just don't know if He's out there, I don't have enough evidence, I don't know whether or not there is a God" or "I know there isn't one" or they add in all of their paganism and their syncretic ideas that muddy the truth of who God is; understand that is not for lack of information, that is not for lack of truth, our God could not have been clearer than He has been.

Those are moral decisions, not intellectual decisions. The truth that we need to believe and to celebrate even as our culture abandon its Creator is that He is and that He has revealed Himself.

Finally, and quickly, a fourth insight I want you to see as the practical ramifications. Why does it matter the practical ramifications. First of all for unbelievers. This background is so important because their abandonment of God is the root of their moral confusion. Let me say that again, their abandonment of God is the root of their moral confusion. It's our culture's abandonment of Him

that has brought in confusion about things there should be no confusion about. Proverbs 1:7 says "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," or knowledge. This is where wisdom begins. It's with the fear of the Lord. John MacArthur writes, "while the unbeliever may make statements about life and truth. He does not have true or ultimate knowledge until he is in a redemptive relationship of reverential awe with God." This is the problem. The reason our culture is trending in the wrong direction on all the moral questions of our times is because of its fundamental departure from and dismissal of God.

I wish I had time to take you to Romans 1 and walk you through the rest of that chapter. I did six years ago. You can go back and listen, but in the end you remember, because God has revealed Himself and because man, knowing God, doesn't glorify God or give God thanks but instead starts worshiping everything else, what does God do? Three times It says God gives them over, God gives them over, God gives them over.

God gives them over to sexual sin, God gives them over to the cultural wide acceptance of homosexuality, and thirdly, God gives a culture of people group over to a depraved mind. What is a depraved mind? It's not sinning. People have always sinned. The same sins people are committing today, they committed fifty years ago, they committed a hundred years ago, a thousand years ago, they committed before Christ came; the same sins, they're still out there. Nothing has changed in terms of the sins. So, what's the depraved mind? It's when those sins begin to be called good, and right, and celebrated. That's when you're at the end of Romans 1, that's when God has given a culture over because of its paganism, because it's abandoned Him, God abandons them to their sin.

Now you understand the double meaning behind my title this morning, The Abandonment Of God. I phrase it that way because on the one hand, man abandons God and that's happening constantly in our culture and because of that God abandons them to their sin. Now don't misunderstand, Paul does not mean that God gives up permanently on all idolaters. That's what the King James implies with its wording, "God gave them up," sounds like He's done, washes His hands, It's not what it says. It says, "it gives them over." Gives them over to these sins but God's wrath of abandonment is not necessarily permanent. Obviously, it will be permanent for those who refuse to believe the gospel, but it's not permanent for those who hear the gospel, in God's grace, repent and believe in that gospel.

I love 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Paul says to the Thessalonian believers, "you turn to God," what? "From Idols to serve a living and true God." Listen, if you're here this morning and you're not a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have abandoned your Creator in one of those ways we talked about; whether it's philosophical atheism or practical atheism or any other expressions we talked about, understand this, God hasn't given up on you, He's still is making a generous and true genuine offer of the gospel to you to say, "if you will repent and believe He will forgive your sins." This is who God is. You can turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God. God will enable you to do that.

What about for believers? Why is this important for believers? Understand this, our acceptance of, and submission to, God is the foundation of our moral clarity. Why is this an important place for me to begin this series? I mean, after all, we're all Christians here. Like, "Tom, you're preaching to the choir. We haven't abandoned God, and we're never going to abandon God." You're right. But here's the problem, although we would never embrace this foundational position of our culture, tragically, many Christians unwittingly embrace the culture's position on trending issues and they do so, ignorant of, not realizing that those positions are based on a worldview that denies the very God they believe.

You see Satan has deceived many well-meaning Christians into embracing views on a lot of cultural issues that are built on this flawed foundation. Well-intentioned but culturally influenced Christians end up holding viewpoints that are not based on the truth of Scripture, but the lies of Satan. Why? Because they are embracing viewpoints that are not built on theism, on biblical theism, the existence of the one true and living God, but on something else; on an abandonment of God. As followers of Jesus Christ, I don't want us to embrace the trending moral values of our culture, but the eternal truth of God, and folks, it starts here.

Rather than asking what the people around us think, we start instead with the bedrock conviction that God is, and that He has revealed Himself clearly. As Francis Schaeffer says, "He is there and He is not silent." You don't have to wonder what God thinks. He is and He's revealed Himself. And next week, we'll look at how and where He's revealed Himself and our source of authority. But folks, it begins here. If you're going to get the cultural issues right, you've got to realize that everything trending out there is built on the flawed foundation of the abandonment of God and

you've got to scrap all of that and come back to this bedrock conviction and start to build your view of the world here. And we'll talk more about how that happens, Lord willing, next week.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You are. Thank You for the generous and gracious way You have revealed Yourself. Lord, we live in a world of people who either want to deny You or to blame You for why they don't know all that they need to know. But Father thank You that, that's not who You are, that You have graciously made Yourself known in so many powerful ways. Help us who know and love You, to take advantage of all of those different ways You have revealed Yourself to us. And Father, I pray for those here this morning who may not be believers Lord, help them to see that if they're rejecting You, if they're denying You that, that is simply an expression of their defiance and not of their intellect. Father, I pray that You'd bring them to true repentance and faith even today and Lord for the rest of us moving forward, forgive us for embracing flawed cultural world views. Influenced, taught by, directed by, those who deny You. Father help us to start with You, and then as we'll learn next week with Your word, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.