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Included Simple Formula- Apologetics

Below is a brief sample of my theology and beliefs that will help explain my biblical understanding and Christian worldview. I believe it's imperative we continue to develop and articulate what it is we believe and why we believe it. This really is something I invest heavily in. My daughter Mercedes is 18 and growing up with significant *Post-Modern* philosophy influencing her and her peers. I think it's essential that the church at large is very specific, ready to discuss, and invites all questions, easy and hard around spirituality. Not only are pastors to be equipped biblically but also philosophically. *"The kids these days"* bring a fast fact check, skepticism towards influence and a retreat from any meta-truths. A pastors tool kit needs to continually be updated while holding firm to God's foundational truths. To minister to the next generation just like my daughter and those living in and entering into a potential "post Christian era" in the US, all followers of Christ need a robust biblical literacy and ways to speak truth into the modern era. In the remainder of this document you'll see a brief description of:

- I. A basic treatment of my core theology.
- II. The tool I use to develop worldview.
- III. My simple approach to apologetics. (Not limited to)

BASIC TREATMENT THEOLOGY

I believe the bible is The Word of God

The bible is fully inspired by God, without error in the original manuscripts written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. The bible is sufficient for all things to guide us in our faith and conduct. Although the bible may not speak to every human experience, (ie. what to do about my teenager and facebook) it is sufficient to gain wisdom and direction from while hearing from God about how to glorify Him in any situation. It is wholly authoritative and the only trustworthy guide to living.

2nd Tim 3:16, Mark 13:31, John 1:1

I believe in the Holy Trinity

The one true God is made up of three ecumenical persons in nature, essence, and being that are economically different. God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We see in scripture the Trinity working in lives of people. God sent His Son (*Matt 3:18, John 3:16*) to save us and be God with us. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us (*the Helper, John 14:16-17, Acts 2*) The persons of the Trinity are perfect and divine and equally God.

God is the creator

I believe God created the heavens and the Earth and He created man in His image. I believe that the universe has its beginning and end with God's will and is in no sense independent from God. Adam and Eve were created in God's image without sin. Due to the high science era right now where creation is under significant scrutiny due to science and technology, maintaining that God is The creator is absolutely vital.

Gen 1, 2, Rom 1:20

The Human Condition

Adam and Eve through free will chose to disobey God and as a result there are two human experiences with God, *connection and separation from* God. This corruption in communion with God has permanently altered humanity. Jesus' coming created a way to pass the chasm between God's goodness and man's sin. Man is depraved and dependent on God's grace. God did not make us sinful in anyway, and yet we all are born with a sin nature due to the fall and corruption that happened to mankind.

***A specific point on sexuality**

Due to culture I must point out I believe biblically marriage and sex is to happen between a biological male and biological female and this is God's plan and design. I believe sexual practices and gender expressions outside God's biblical design are incorrect. God did not make anyone LGBTQ. These as-if "innate" sensations are not part of **Imago Dei** but part of the bi-product of a sin nature. All those in the LGBTQ community deserve not only truth, but also grace, love, and invitation into the transformational journey that is following Jesus Christ.

Gen 3, 4, Rom 3:10-12, 23, Eph 2, Rom1:24-27

Jesus is the Savior

The **prophesies, birth, arrest, death, and resurrection of Jesus are historical fact.**

Because this is true, we can trust what He said and know that it is good. Obviously, unpacking Jesus is worth several books of writing, but I believe Jesus is who He says He is, and modern technology only confirms and affirms Jesus is real, is divine and did resurrect. For without the resurrection, our faith is futile. *1st Cor 15:14* Jesus died for us, forgave us, taught us, and prepared the way for us.

Gospels, Epistles, Prophets,

Baptism and Communion

I believe we should all be baptized fully submerged in water because Jesus did. (*Matt 3, Mark 1*) This is our public declaration that we do believe in Jesus, follow Him, and live a life dedicated to His teachings. If you don't get baptized you're not denied God,

(*thief on the cross*) however, if your heart is to not get baptized there might be some issues to address. Communion is our way of remembering what Jesus did for us. We should have our heart prepared, loving, following, and repentant to participate. The bread and wine (juice) represent Jesus body and blood. (*Matt 26, Mark 14, 1st Cor 11*) (I do not believe in transubstantiation or consubstantiation, however recognize their positioning and beauty) Communion is also an expression of devotion and should only be participated in by those that understand their devotion and love.

The Church

The people are the church, not a building. The modern church in the US looks very different than the ancient churches. We must not get detached from the truths of the church, a primary function is to worship God. Another is to be in community. Another is to serve one another and use the gifts to edify the church. There are biblical structures and ways God wants His church to function through leadership methodologies He's prepared in His word.

Acts 2, Hebrews 10:24, Romans 12:9, 1st Tim 3, Titus 1:5-9, Eph 4:1-7

***A specific point on polity**

I believe churches have two specific office of leaders that are reciprocal, the Senior Pastor and the elders. The Sr. Pastor being fully submitted to the Spirit is the main point of leadership influence and decision making. Vision casting, internal staff management, ministry planning, program organization, recruiting, training, discipleship methodology, teaching schedule and content, budget planning, are all under the Sr. Pastor's leadership, influence, and decision making. The relationship of the elders to the Senior Pastor on these issues is a co-laborious function. The elders contribution to the Sr. Pastors decision making is prayer, suggestion, wisdom, insight, and affirmation of/for/to the Sr. Pastors leadership. If there is sin, or an obvious grievance, the elders are to interrupt the Sr. Pastors leading with biblical considerations for decisions, restoration from sin if possible, and dismissal and termination from pastorship. In summary, along with considerable prayer, visual presence throughout the church relational moments, elders are to hire and/or terminate the Sr. Pastor and be in prayer and support in his leadership unless grievous issues arise.

Sin and Salvation

In my theological perspective, sin and salvation are foundational to grasping God's love and the essence of humanity. A biblically grounded understanding is crucial, especially in guiding pastoral leadership, as it allows for a more profound exploration of questions surrounding faith, sinfulness, and God's goodness. Historical debates on salvation and sin, including diverse atonement theories and the divergence between Arminian and Calvinist viewpoints, highlight the complexity of these theological concepts.

On a personal level, I align with the belief in libertarian free will, rejecting the notion of beings predestined for eternal punishment. Supported by biblical references, I emphasize human choice, universal atonement, and the potential to resist grace. Within the Church of God (CHOG), I identify an Arminian inclination, focusing on conditional election, universal atonement, and the importance of persistent faith. In orthopraxy, I stress the significance of doctrinal alignment within a church community. Clarity in leadership's understanding ensures consistency in preaching and discipleship, influencing congregants' sense of responsibility in the world. My perspective reflects a nuanced understanding of sin and salvation, rooted in biblical interpretation and applied to personal beliefs and the dynamics of a church community.

Spiritual Gifts

I believe each believer has a spiritual gift, relevant to today to be used in service of His kingdom and the church. An individual may have a specific life-long gift or gifts may be present only in a moment God wants them present. The "Perfect" discussed in 1st Cor 13:10 is Jesus on the next arrival, therefore spiritual gifts still exist today. Gifts are *important, powerful and desperately needed today* in the church and can be used *appropriately*. The fivefold ministry gifts in Ephesians represent essential gifts to be present in a church for it to be a healthy. I believe God provides these gifts. I am a and believe in continuationism of the gifts and do not subscribe to cessationism.

1st Cor 12:1-11, Romans 12, Eph 4:11, 1st Cor 14:22-33

Eternity

I believe humans have an eternal existence created and sustained by God. Heaven and Hell are real places that are experienced by how we receive His gift of Jesus and repent.

John 3:16, Rom 10:9, Rev 21:4

MY WORLDVIEW FILTER

In my experiencing pastoring, worldview is a significant obstacle people wrestle with. It's getting more difficult daily to articulate fully what beliefs a person holds to and why. Often, I, like so many others get accused in my evangelism of being a Christian because I'm an American and grew up in a somewhat religious home. Even if this is true, living where we live I get the chance to freely and without fear explore other religious worldviews and beliefs. I can study Islam, Hinduism, Taoism and more without fear. As fortunate as we are and with an inquisitive mind, *Christianity is the only belief systems that sufficiently addresses the construction of a robust world view in my opinion.* Below is a filter I use frequently that is borrowed and adapted by RZIM. It's potent, powerful, and for some reason uncommon. This is called the the 3-4-5 method. Personally, I want to continually work on my articulation of my worldview to better present the Gospel.

Step one, there are three things a worldview must be.

1. **Logically Consistent** – Its teachings cannot self-contradict.
2. **Empirically Adequate** – Its teachings must align with what we see in reality.
3. **Existentially Relevant** – Its teachings must speak directly to how we actually live our lives.

Step two, each worldview must resolve the following four questions:

1. **Origin** – Where do the universe and human beings come from?
2. **Meaning** – What is the meaning or purpose of life?
3. **Morality** – How do we know what is right and what is wrong?
4. **Destiny** – What happens to us after we die?

Step three, there are five academic disciplines that must be used to study a worldview:

1. **Theology** – The study of God.
2. **Metaphysics** – The study of what is ultimately real.
3. **Epistemology** – The study of how we can know things.
4. **Ethics** – The study of moral right and wrong.
5. **Anthropology** – The study of what and who humans are.

MY SIMPLE APOLOGETICS FORMULA

Apologetics is often a big part of a *pastor's tool kit*, even if we're not formally "debating" often. Small questions come up often about faith and belief and those influence our conversations. I believe having an apologetic formal to draw from is essential to help guide conversations to helpful Jesus centered conclusions. From my experience, most apologetic conversations fall somewhere on this breadcrumb track below. Remaining intellectually honest I usually can demonstrate a reasonable argument to believe in and follow Jesus absent logical fallacy. This is the formula I've adopted and adapted from North Point.

God exists, therefore miracles are possible> the new testament documents are reliable, therefore Jesus rose from the dead> since He rose from the dead then everything He said about God is true> therefore everything He taught about the Law and Prophets is true.