

The Five Great Truths of Life

“I Am Stupid” * December 14, 2008

I. Some clarifications

A. “Pastor Barry, Mom says I’m not supposed to call anyone stupid!”

B. We don’t mean in saying this that human beings are unthinking _____ incapable of rational thought.

1. God actually thinks quite highly of our capacity for thought.

a. What did God know about us way back in the Tower of Babel days?

C. It’s not a reference to our intellectual capacity – it’s a reference to our _____ capacity.

The Christmas story is here to remind us this morning that we are stupid, unable to _____ God on our own, unable to _____ the truth of God on our own, and worst of all, unable to _____ to God on our own.

II. Exhibit A – The Wisemen

A. What can we likely say about them?

B. What brought the wisemen in the end to Jesus?

Their status? ___ Their education? ___ Their wealth? ___ Their effort? ___

Their search for God and their finding of God began with _____.

C. What Scriptures support this idea?

III. Exhibit B – King Herod and his Advisers

A. What do we know about King Herod?

B. Where do we see stupidity in this part of the story?

C. How does the Bible describe a person in his or her natural, unconverted state?

IV. The Stupid Spectrum

A. Stupid Unbelievers

1. Those who _____ grace – those who live only for this life and never consider eternity. Examples:

2. Those who _____ grace – those who fight God in rank unbelief. Examples:

3. Those who _____ grace – those who hear a portion of the gospel, but can’t yet connect the dots. Examples:

B. Stupid Believers

1. Those who _____ grace – those who think once they’re saved, they can do whatever they want. Examples:

2. Those who _____ grace – those who lose sight of the Cross and drift into legalism or laziness. Examples:

3. Those who _____ grace – those who stop growing as Christians. Examples:

4. Those who _____ grace – those who fall back into sin and abandon the faith. Examples:

V. The Way Out Of Our Stupidity – Do What The WiseMen Did

A. First, I have to admit...

B. Then I respond to grace as the wisemen did:

I _____ on grace by _____ Jesus.
I am _____ by grace in _____ Jesus.

What’s God speaking to me this morning?

The Five Great Truths of Life

*“I Am Stupid” * December 14, 2008*

I. Some clarifications

A. “Pastor Barry, Mom says I’m not supposed to call anyone stupid!”

B. We don’t mean in saying this that human beings are unthinking **clods** incapable of rational thought.

1. God actually thinks quite highly of our capacity for thought.

a. What did God know about us way back in the Tower of Babel days?

God actually thinks quite highly of a human being’s capacity for thought and reflection. He after all created the brain, with its 100 billion neurons and knows its full potential. God was impressed with us thousands of years ago way back in the early Bronze age when the tower of Babel was first constructed. In Genesis 11, God says of us, “Nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.” (vs.6). And even back then, God saw where the human mind would take us when we’d decide to use it.

C. It’s not a reference to our intellectual capacity – it’s a reference to our **spiritual** capacity.

The Christmas story is here to remind us this morning that we are stupid, unable to **comprehend** God on our own, unable to **understand** the truth of God on our own, and worst of all, unable to **come** to God on our own.

II. Exhibit A – The Wisemen

A. What can we likely say about them?

They were certainly not kings, although it’s clear from the story they were comfortable around them. Magi were probably royal astrologers who watched the stars, and based on how easily they marched right up to King Herod, they probably gave advice to their rulers. With that, we can assume they were highly educated, truly *wise* men. And they were unquestionably men of great wealth. They also had some awareness of and belief in the Jewish God. They were men of real faith in the real God.

B. What brought the wisemen in the end to Jesus?

Their status? ___ Their education? ___ Their wealth? ___ Their effort? ___

None of these.

Their search for God and their finding of God began with **God**.

C. What Scriptures support this idea?

“No one can come to me unless the Father...draws him.” ~ John 6:44

“We love because he first loved us.” ~ 1 John 4:19

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me.” ~ Isaiah 65:1

III. Exhibit B – King Herod and his Advisers

A. What do we know about King Herod?

He ruled as a Roman-appointed king over Judea for 33 years, and he ruled with what they call an iron fist. To preserve his power, he murdered his wife, three of his sons, his mother-in-law, his brother-in-law, an uncle. Whacked ‘em all. This guy was Tony Soprano in a tunic.

B. Where do we see stupidity in this part of the story?

It’s one thing to know about the Bible from a distance, and to suspect that it’s a holy book, but then still choose to ignore it (Herod). It’s quite another thing to know the Bible like the back of your hand, and still fail to see what it’s truly all about (the chief priests & teachers of the Law.) There’s a lot of stupidity going on here.

C. How does the Bible describe a person in his or her natural, unconverted state?

Without Christ, left to yourself, in your natural state you are spiritually blind, deaf, dumb and dead – other than that, you’re in pretty good condition. (See 2 Cor.4:4, Isaiah 6:9, Romans 1:21-22; Eph.2:1)

IV. The Stupid Spectrum

A. Stupid Unbelievers

1. Those who **ignore** grace – those who live only for this life and never consider eternity. Examples:

The rich farmer of Luke 12:20-21 who is the beneficiary of a bumper harvest, and the only thing he can think of doing is to build bigger barns so that he can kick back in retirement. But God appears to him and says, “You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”

2. Those who **despise** grace – those who fight God in rank unbelief. Examples:

Psalm 14:1 – “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” And this is King Herod who shows militancy and violence in his unbelief. Men like Richard Dawkins who wrote last year’s best-seller “The God Delusion”. You say, “Why aren’t these people worse than the first group?” Because, oddly enough, people like this are closer to conversion than those who ignore grace. Jesus said, he’d rather a person be hot or cold than lukewarm. Because someone who’s absolutely cold to God, to the point of militant unbelief, is actually wrestling with God, and that’s not a bad thing.

3. Those who **confuse** grace – those who hear a portion of the gospel, but can't yet connect the dots. Examples:

The chief priests and teachers of the Law. They're so close. They know the Scriptures. Jesus had great tenderness in his heart for people in this place, like with Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus could also be very frustrated with people like this, who get so close then stop. They settle for religion, when they're that close to a real relationship with God. John 5:39 – "You diligently study the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." One other group of people in this place, who confuse grace, are those who are broken by life and know it. They're so close! Sometimes even closer than religious people who stop at religion. Jesus said to the religious leaders in his day who refused to believe in him, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." (Matt.21:31).

B. Stupid Believers

1. Those who **abuse** grace – those who think once they're saved, they can do whatever they want. Examples:

If that's you, let Jude 4 serve as warning to you. "They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." If you live this way, if you're life doesn't change after you become a Christian, you go on doing the same stupid stuff you did before and think that now you've got yourself a 'Get Out of Jail Free' card. Forget it – it's doubtful you're even a Christian. Christians fight their sin, they don't give in to it.

2. Those who **forget** grace – those who lose sight of the Cross and drift into legalism or laziness. Examples:

The Galatians forgot grace, and Paul had to write them a letter to snap them out of it. "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified...Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (3:1,3) Legalism is one of the ugliest and unhealthiest forms of Christianity, and there are so many churches like this. Rules, rules, rules, rules...and God will strike you down if don't toe the line. Jesus didn't die on the cross so you'd have to live that way. Spiritual laziness can be just as bad. Jesus had to take an entire church over his knees and spank them – the church in Laodicea – because they forgot grace and thought they could just kick back. Revelation 3:17 – "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." What a frightful, and stupid place, to be at.

3. Those who **short-circuit** grace – those who stop growing as Christians. Examples:

You can spend your entire life plumbing the depths of Christianity and still just be scratching the surface, yet there are countless Christians who still let their

Bibles gather dust. Stupid! There are Christians who also stop growing in holiness. Jesus wants to make you more like him, more loving, more pure, more giving, more of the fruit of the Spirit showing in your life. But ten years into your Christian walk, you're still struggling with the same stupid things you were struggling with before. Such a waste! You and Jesus are better than this. They stop growing in their service to Jesus. The author of Hebrews said to his readers: "You are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truth of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" (Heb.5:11-12)

4. Those who **trash** grace – those who fall back into sin and abandon the faith. Examples:

Can you lose your salvation? The Bible has many verses that suggest such a frightful possibility. Or it could just be that such a person was never a believer to begin with. But the problem is, only God knows the true heart of a person; you and I don't. To our eyes, there are people who appear to be walking with Christ, strong in faith, mighty in service, and then a time comes when they trash it all. Was it because they lost their salvation or that they never were saved to begin with? In a way it doesn't matter. The Bible's point is to say to you as emphatically as it knows how: don't let that happen to you. Don't risk hell-fire with such unspeakable stupidity. 2 Peter 2:20-21 – "If [you] have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, [you] are worse off at the end than [you] were at the beginning. It would have been better for [you] not to have known the way of righteousness than to have know it and then to turn [your] back on it..."

V. The Way Out Of Our Stupidity – Do What The WiseMen Did

A. First, I have to admit...

Once again, as with the other great truths, it begins by me admitting that this great truth of life applies to me. That this is me, without Jesus, left to myself. And that in me, in my flesh, there is nothing, absolutely nothing that I have to offer God with which to earn his heaven. This is where my freedom and my healing begins: On my face before him, admitting my wretchedness and helplessness, and my utter dependence on his grace.

B. Then I respond to grace as the wisemen did:

I **rely** on grace by **seeking** Jesus.

I am **motivated** by grace in **servicing** Jesus.

What's God speaking to me this morning?