Your Greatest Doubts and Fears
How to Keep the Faith When Facing Life's Toughest Questions

#7: If Christianity is true, then how we do explain the bad behavior of Christians?

Intro: The Rise of the Modern Atheist

"Christians damage Christ's cause more than his enemies and foes." –John Chrysostom

I. Understanding the Problem

A. Christians Don't Always Behave Like Christians

1. Institutionally (e.g., The Crusades, inquisition, theological wars, abuse scandals)

2. Personally (e.g., professing Christian you know who cheats on their spouse, lies, or is inexplicably cruel)

B. Key Question: Why is Bad Christian Behavior So Troubling?

II. Responding to the Problem

A. Wrong Response #1: Nothing to See Here

1. In an effort to protect the church, sometimes we downplay the problems
   - Hagiography: "An adulatory and idealized biography of a founder, saint, monk, nun or icon in any of the world's religions"
   - What's the matter with hagiography?

2. Why We Should Not Be Defensive
   - The non-Christian will not be persuaded by minimizations and cover-ups
   - Doesn't Christianity teach Total Depravity? So, why are we so surprised?
   - The Gospel is about admitting sin and repenting from it, not downplaying it

B. Wrong Response #2: Everything in the Church is Bad

1. In response to real problems, some are perpetual critics, only finding the negative
   - This can lead to "cancelling" historical figures who had flaws and sins in their lives

2. But the Church is Still the Bride of Christ
   - While not perfect, Christ has promised to build and purify his church (Matt 16:18; Eph 5:27)
   - And the church has been, and continues to be, a great blessing to our world
   - Can you think of some examples?

C. Key Points to Remember

1. Christianity Anticipates This Very Problem

- Because of <u>indwelling sin</u>, even Christians can do shockingly wicked things
  - "For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . So now it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me" (Rom 7:15-17)
  - **Sin is deeper, darker, more pernicious than you think
  - Example: King David

- Because of <u>common grace</u>, even non-Christians can do really good things
  - God restrains sin in the non-Christian so they are not as bad as they otherwise would be
  - The fact that the non-Christian is made in God's image, has God's law on their heart, means they can still do formally good acts

- Key point: these factors mean that sometimes the behavior of Christians and non-Christians is not that different

2. Hypocrisy is Always Something We Should Be Fighting Against
   - In Jesus' earthly ministry, hypocrisy was a primary target of his critiques (Matthew 23)
   - Why was Jesus so concerned about hypocrisy? Is that the worst sin?

3. Sometimes People's Bad Behavior Can Mean They Are Not Really Christians
   - While true believers are capable of serious evil, we must remember that sometimes evil acts are evidence a person is not really saved (it's not always easy to tell)
   - So, some evil acts done by "Christians" may not have really been done by Christians

4. Keep Your Eyes on Jesus, the Perfect Human Being
   - Christianity can still be true, even if people who follow it make a mess of things
   - Place your ultimate hope in Jesus, and he will never disappoint you or let you down

<u>Class Schedule:</u>

Jan 9: Doubting Christian: What Role do Doubts and Fear Play in the Christian Life?
Jan 16: [Class cancelled for snow]
Jan 23: If Christianity is True then Why do so Many Intelligent People reject it?
Jan 30: Does saying Jesus is the Only Way Make us Arrogant or Intolerant?
Feb 6: Does the existence of evil and suffering in the world mean that God doesn't exist?
Feb 13: Some parts of the Bible seem morally troubling—are we sure it's a "good" book?
Feb 20: How Do I Deal with Depression and Anxiety About the Future?
Feb 27: Missions Week, Combined Sunday School
Mar 6: If Christianity is true, then how we do explain the bad behavior of Christians?
Mar 13: Isn't Christianity just the same as all the other religions? What makes it different?
Mar 20: What if the Gospels are just made-up stories? Is it possible everything we believe is a lie?
Mar 27: Lots of Christians are "deconstructing" their faith? Does that mean Christianity isn't true?
April 3: What do I do if Christianity Just isn't working for me?
April 10: What if I am Not a Christian? How Can I Know for Sure?