

SPECIAL: HOW DO I EVANGELIZE TO RELIGIOUS FRIENDS?

September 14, 2024

Welcome To BARAH MINISTRIES

**Rory Clark
Pastor-Teacher**

Good Morning!

Welcome to the Barah Ministries...an intimate, local Christian Church with a worldwide impact. My name is Pastor Rory Clark. Thank you for lending your ear to this Bible lesson.

As you may remember from last night, this weekend's lessons are part of Homecoming Weekend for Barah Ministries' Non-Resident Congregation Members. While we're together, we throw in a little Pastor Appreciation to the weekend, giving you the chance to express your gratitude for what the Lord can do through a couple of willing men who have made a lifetime commitment to serve you by teaching you the Word of God.

The subject matter for the lessons this weekend is evangelism. What would God want us to do as a ministry, as the Body of Christ...and as individuals in the matter of evangelism? We'll investigate.

What is evangelism?

EVANGELISM

The sharing of the gospel message...the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ's salvation offer...either by public preaching or by personal witnessing.

Evangelism is a critical part of the Christian experience.

Pastor John Farley and I are doing the teaching for the weekend, and if last night is any indication, this weekend will be filled with insights on evangelism. I'm glad to have Pastor John Farley of Lighthouse Bible Church in South Florida as a partner on this journey.

Here's the schedule for today...

THE SCHEDULE

Homecoming and Pastor Appreciation Weekend

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Saturday The Lessons
10:00AM-12:00PM

Ask the Pastors
An Afternoon of Food and Fellowship

The schedule for tomorrow is...

THE SCHEDULE

Homecoming and Pastor Appreciation Weekend

Sunday The Lessons
9:00AM-11:00AM

Ask the Pastor and Prayer Circle
11:00AM-12:00PM

If you're listening online and you're in the local area, join us! If you're outside of the area, stay tuned.

OPENING SONG INTRODUCTION

Let's hear some music! Evangelism is a call to freedom for those in the slavery of unbelief and religion. Galatians, Chapter 5, Verse 1 is a reminder to believers in Christ who were once in the bondage trap...

GALATIANS 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us believers in Christ free...therefore, keep on standing firm in freedom and do not be entangled again to the yoke of slavery.

June Murphy sings to unbelievers about the possibility of liberation in her song...**CALLING YOU TO FREEDOM.**

MUSIC

OPENING SONG

Let's Sing the Lord's Praises

CALLING YOU TO FREEDOM

June Murphy

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OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray...

We're grateful Heavenly Father for the privilege of studying Your absolute truth...the Word of God...

Father thank you for the opening messages in the first lessons on evangelism...thank you for helping us realize that our first obligation is as a body, and that all members of the Body of Christ are critical to the evangelism job...thank you for reminding us that getting to people for Christ certainly has mechanics...but we need to get to people in the heart...Your gospel message is sharper than a two-edged sword and it is piercing down to the heart...

...let God the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds to the messages of the day...and let Him help us to comprehend the challenge of evangelism that is before us...and help us to care for one another during the fellowship portion of the day...to spend the time really getting to know each other...

...we ask this through the power of God the Holy Spirit...in Christ's name...Amen.

WELCOME!

John Farley
Pastor-Teacher
Lighthouse Bible Church

Let's welcome up Pastor John Farley to get us started with today's lessons.

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**Welcome To
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**TODAY'S BIBLE LESSON
How Do I Evangelize to Religious Friends?**

LESSON INTRODUCTION

Whether we are evangelizing as members of the Body of Christ or as individuals, we have people who are important to us and who are religious. They are Baptist or Catholic or Mormon or Jehovah's Witnesses or Methodist or Protestant or Muslims or Presbyterians...the list goes on. They will describe themselves as part of one of the Christian religions.

Christianity is not a religion. It's a relationship with Christ. So how can you be Catholic and Christian, for example? A Pastor I respect calls this the great oxymoron. An oxymoron is a contradiction in terms...like Jumbo Shrimp...like the sounds of silence...like adult children. An oxymoron is two things that have opposite meanings.

In today's lesson, we'll investigate the contradictions between what the doctrines of religion teach and what the doctrines of the Bible teach.

TODAY'S LESSON PART TWO

Religion is a masterful deception.

If you have religious friends who go to church regularly, they are probably in the grips of a religious deception with deep tentacles. They are in prison, most times without realizing it, and the grips of the prison run deep. They may be using the church as a social outlet...or for the divorce ministry while looking for a new mate...or for the accolades they get for their contributions...or for a great concert...anything except for a place they can get to know the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

Why is religion such a great deception? Well let's face it. If I want to lie to you

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effectively, the lie has to be mostly true. The truer the lie is, the deeper the lie penetrates. So if I want to lie to you in the spiritual realm, I simply take the Word of God, bury the lie in it, and when you only hear the truth part of the religion without bothering to find the lie, you're duped. For so many people all around the world, this is their situation. Billions of people...yes BILLIONS of people are deceived by religion. Matthew, Chapter 7, Verses 13 and 14 warn us to...

MATTHEW 7:13

“Enter through the narrow gate...for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction...and there are many who enter through the wide gate (into the Lake of Fire).”

MATTHEW 7:14

“For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to the resurrection life (into heaven)...and there are FEW who find the small gate.”

Finding the “smoking gun” a religious deception isn't easy, ESPECIALLY today. Satan, the enemy of God, isn't stupid. He knows how people work. He knows that once people see what they want to see, they stop looking. If you want to find a lie, that's not the way to operate.

In addition, challenging your religion is challenging people you love and respect: your parents and your family. It takes a lot of courage to go against your family. That's the reason many people refuse to investigate the lies of a religion. They feel that rejecting the religion is rejecting their family, and it is just easier not to do it. Deep inside they know something is wrong, yet they swallow their concern.

Perhaps a recount of my own journey out of Roman Catholicism can lend insights.

Before I detail my own journey, I should let you know that once I evangelized to a religious friend when I was a bit “tipsy.” That's an understatement. I'd had two glasses of wine on an empty stomach. I was drunk. The friend eventually became a Pastor and is teaching this conference with me. This is proof positive that God the Holy Spirit did not need my help in getting to John Farley. The Spirit's convicting ministry is quite effective and He can even use a drunk person to spread the gospel.

My evangelism to John was a seed planted. John actually did the work of his own

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evangelism. I simply prodded him to use skills he already had. He is a voracious reader and I challenged him to read things that didn't confirm his bias that Roman Catholicism is the way. He did, and the rest is history. His work on himself has had eternal consequences...he has led many to Christ.

I was a Christian before I was religious. I got the gospel message from men in an ice cream truck that would pass through my neighborhood every week. They'd give us free ice cream and solicit our mailing addresses. They broke the accurate gospel message into several pieces they would send via mail.

What a thrill it was at a young age to get mail! I was eight years old, and it was the year I had sneaked off from the house without my mother's consent. I got hit in the head with a baseball bat. On the way to the hospital, I promised God that if he would let me live, I would dedicate my life to Him. I did.

My ears were wide open to God after that trauma. As a result of the ice cream truck evangelism effort, I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I was saved. God the Holy Spirit came into the ghetto and saved a poor ghetto boy. A rebellion leading to a trauma had an eternal impact. Isn't God amazing? It's it interesting what He can use to get to us?

My Mom grew up in the Baptist church, and later she became a Roman Catholic. I'm not sure of this, but I'm guessing she became a Roman Catholic when she was getting to know my Dad. He was a Roman Catholic from Louisiana...from Natchitoches, Louisiana...a place so Roman Catholic that the state is broken up into "parishes." Natchitoches is the state's oldest parish. To my knowledge, neither of them were ever very interested in going to church. My Mom had a Bible, and she regularly consulted with all the Old Testament passages that talked about getting revenge on others.

I became a Roman Catholic on my thirteen birthday, April 13, 1968. I was confirmed in the same ceremony. I was in eighth grade. As is my habit, I dove into the religion head first.

I studied the Catechism of the Catholic Church voraciously. I lived in the church on Sunday. I was an altar boy at the 7:30 mass...a commentator at the 9:00 mass (doing the readings)...a guitarist at the 10:30 mass...and an altar boy at the 12:00 mass. The 12:00 mass was called the "high" mass because Father Haggerty was high by that time. 😊 He was Irish, and he always went a little heavy on the wine.

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All day Saturday I was in the rectory...the home of the priests and the seminarians (the aspiring priests). We were practicing for the guitar mass on Sunday.

In Catechism classes (CCC) I was the curious one who was always asking questions. My main question was, "Why don't we ever open up the Bible?" We had the Catechism of the Catholic Church on our desks, and we had a copy of the Bible on our desks, but we never opened the Bible. I opened it on my own and I saw contradictions to what we were learning from the Catechism.

A simple example...in Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 7 the Lord says...

MATTHEW 6:7

"...when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do (Gentiles is a reference to unbelievers)...for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words."

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we were encouraged to pray the rosary.

<ROSARY SLIDE>

Ten Hail Mary's...one Our Father...one Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...the Apostle's Creed. Then we'd "rinse and repeat" five times.

The rosary is described by the Roman Catholic Church as "a repetitious and meditative prayer...rich, beautiful, and profound. In the rosary, we Roman Catholics pray and meditate on the lives of Jesus and Mary." It was anything but "rich, beautiful and profound." It was boring as hell.

I couldn't resolve the different messages in my mind. When I asked about it, lightning came up from hell in the form of a stack of rulers bound with rubber bands. Sister John Mary and my knuckles were great friends. "Stop asking questions," she would say, "Just learn!" I would retort, "But Sister John Mary, how can I learn without asking questions?" Here came the rulers again. It was a ritual. I ask. She hits. I'm pretty sure Sister John Mary was a distant cousin of Adolf Hitler.

Over the years, my Roman Catholic journey was up and down and in and out. There was something empty about it. Something dead. I wanted to get to know God, but not this way. I had a perception that God was a punishing God

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who was always counting my mistakes against me...gathering them into a computer. I was sure that when I came to die, He was going to spit all my sins back in my face. He'd scold me and send me to a punishment area called Purgatory so I could be cleansed by fire from my sins. At least that's what Roman Catholicism taught.

In high school, I was trained by the Jesuits. They are the "Marines" among the priests. They were known as God's soldiers. As members of the Society of Jesus (S.J.), this Roman Catholic order of religious men founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola, Jesuits were noted for educational, missionary, and charitable works. Ignatius Loyal was a military man, and he was certain the Roman Catholic Church needed reform. His group of men was committed to strict academic discipline, higher learning, and religious perfection. I was committed to being a Jesuit priest when I left high school.

My first wife was an unbeliever...I was a believer...so we were unequally yoked. She became a Catholic at my insistence so we could be married in the Catholic Church.

We tootled along in Roman Catholicism, but I knew something was wrong. It was a goal of mine to study the Bible. When an invitation to a Bible study came in the mail, she and I went to the home of a Seventh-Day Adventist to study the Bible. Instead of teaching the Bible, they were bagging on Roman Catholics. It made me mad. But I decided that if I was going to find out what was wrong with Roman Catholicism, I had to listen.

One of the critiques of the Roman Catholic Church was about the sacrament of Penance. They said that when Catholics sin, they go to a priest to confess their sins, and the priest says, "Absolvo te." As a six-year Latin scholar, I knew exactly what this meant. It's Latin for "I absolve you" from your sins. I knew a human being has no power to absolve sins. It was the smoking gun. I curled up on the floor in the fetal position and cried my eyes out. For days!

I had allowed myself to be deceived. For twenty-one years I was committed to deception. It was devastating to me. It was heartbreaking. It was humiliating. I had known all along that something was wrong. Now I knew what was wrong.

Another critical teaching from the Seventh-Day Adventists was that if you wanted to see the deception of a religion, you had to examine the doctrines of the religion

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and compare them to the Bible. I knew it! Sister John Mary didn't want me doing that! She knew what would happen. Oh My God! I was lost.

I'll stop the journey here but there is much more. There's the twenty-five-year journey through Systematic Theology. Forty-six years of living hell for a person who wanted to get to know God. Getting to know God through religion is a tall task.

So why did I tell you all of that?

If we are going to evangelize to religious people, staunch and devout religious people, getting them to see the light of the gospel, we may have to help them examine the doctrines of their religion and to compare those doctrines to what the Bible has to say. It's a tough task. As Pastor John said last night, there are the mechanics of this task...but more importantly we have to get to their hearts.

Let's look at some examples.

Let's start with a basic question. What does a Roman Catholic have to do to be saved? Here are some things the Catechism of the Catholic Church says on the subject. See if you can detect the lies.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #846

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Roman Catholic Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation...hence a person could not be saved who, knowing that the Roman Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter the Roman Catholic Church or to remain in the Roman Catholic Church.

Simply stated, if you're not a Roman Catholic you can't be saved. Once you're in the Roman Catholic Church and you're saved, if you leave, you can't be saved. You can lose your salvation.

What does the Bible have to say about salvation? Acts, Chapter 16, Verse 31...

ACTS 16:31

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved by God...you and everyone in your household who also believes."

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The Bible says once you have salvation, you cannot lose it. John, Chapter 10, Verse 28 says...

JOHN 10:28

"...I (the Lord Jesus Christ) give eternal life to believers in Christ...and they will never perish...and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

If we were presenting this to a Roman Catholic, do we need to get persuasive? The "smoking gun" is right in front of them. God the Holy Spirit takes over from there. In evangelism, the apostle Paul says in First Corinthians, Chapter 3, Verse 6...

FIRST CORINTHIANS 3:6

I (Paul) planted...Apollos watered...but God the Holy Spirit was the One causing the spiritual growth (in the mission field).

We evangelize to plant the seed, lofting the evangelism ball toward the net, and God the Holy Spirit spikes it...to use a volleyball analogy.

Wait. That's too simple.

You can see, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible are saying exactly opposite things. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says the church is necessary for salvation. The Bible says a relationship with Christ is necessary for salvation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says you can lose your salvation. The Bible says you can't lose your salvation.

Here's another contention from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1257

The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation.

Where?

This is a masterful part of the deception...the attempt to use the Bible against itself. You will see that more today than ever before. If you "Google" questions about a religion, they will always take you to the Bible today, and rarely take you to their publications. They think once you hear what you want to hear you will go away. They're counting on you NOT doing a comparison. Most won't.

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So first, the Church is necessary for salvation. Now add Baptism as necessary for salvation. But wait...Roman Catholics baptize their children before the children have had any teachers...before the age of discernment. Of course, this is not a salvation. Parents can't decide for their children whether or not to believe in Christ. Another deception.

Here's another contention from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1129

The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation.

What are the sacraments? Baptism...Confirmation...the Eucharist...Penance...the Anointing of the Sick...Holy Orders...or Matrimony.

Holy schnikes! More conditions for salvation? The Bible is so much simpler... John, Chapter 3, Verse 36 warns and invites...

JOHN 3:36

“He who believes in the Son (the Lord Jesus Christ) has the resurrection life right at that moment...but he who does not obey the command to believe in the Son will not see the resurrection life...instead the wrath of God (the Lake of Fire) abides on him.”

Easy peasy. Can you see the deception. Do you think most Roman Catholics know? They don't.

Here are other contentions from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #694

The symbolism of water signifies God the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into the divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #2010

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Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then MERIT FOR OURSELVES and for others the graces needed for our sanctification...for the attainment of eternal life.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1035

The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, “eternal fire.”

Here are a quick few excerpts from the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, commonly known as the Mormons, lest you think I am simply "picking on" Roman Catholics. Look for the deceptions.

What does Mormonism teach about God?

MORMON TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD

There is only one God of this world in Mormonism, but there are countless other gods of different worlds or universes. Mormons often refer to the God of this world as Heavenly Father but believe Jesus and the Holy Ghost are also gods. Mormons believe three separate gods make up one godhead. They are united in purpose but not in personage.

Christians worship a Triune Godhead. There is One God who reveals Himself to mankind as three beings who are separate...distinct...co-equal...co-infinite...co-eternal Persons...God the Father...God the Son...and God the Holy Spirit.

MORMON TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD

Mormonism teaches that Heavenly Father was once a man elevated to godhood and that his human characteristics limit God's power. In other words, he's not omnipresent, and he did not create the universe from nothing.

Christianity teaches that the members of the Godhead are omnipotent. They have ALL the power.

MORMON TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD

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Mormonism teaches that humans, by adhering faithfully to the Mormon plan of salvation, can become not just like God but exalted as gods themselves.

Wow! My Mormon friends are aspiring to be gods.

Four publications are part of Mormonism. The Bible...The Book of Mormon...Doctrines and Covenants...and The Pearl of Great Price. Here's an excerpt from founder Joseph Smith's Doctrines and Covenants...

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 130:22

God the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's...the Son also... but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

The Mormons see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as different beings who do not have the same attributes and essence.

MORMON TEACHINGS ABOUT SALVATION

Being "saved" and "salvation" have various meanings. Through this covenant relationship, followers of Christ are assured salvation from the eternal consequences of sin if they are obedient.

If we are going to be successful in evangelizing to the religious...we'll need to expose these doctrines and compare them to what the Bible has to say. God the Holy Spirit is completely competent to take these seeds and to produce fruit.

If the religious don't examine their doctrines, how will they ever see the deception?