

## **A World Without Jesus, Part One**

1. Can you remember being 16? 20? Remember how intense that was, how difficult? There is a reason for that. As we develop (age) and our body begins to take on its form, our brain is also developing. There are reasons why we don't let 12-year olds enter a contract or drive a car. There are reasons why we are appalled to see child labor practices in some nations or the use of child soldiers.
2. Erik Erickson developed a roadmap for those who work with young people but those stages of development were also a diagnostic tool. You could see where something went wrong when it was in this person's development that they went off the rails – or were knocked off it.
3. The stages are:
  - a. 0-18 months Trust vs. Mistrust. Is the world safe? Will I be fed? Will I be cared for?
  - b. 18 months – 3 years Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. Gaining control over our environment, starting to understand our separate nature and independence.
  - c. 3-5 Initiative vs. Guilt. Am I an acceptable person? Direct play. Social interaction.
  - d. 5-13 Industry vs. Inferiority. Am I competent in anything? Do I have gifts? Reading, writing, solving math or word problems.
  - e. 13-21 Identity vs. Confusion. Growth toward independence. Discovery of role, identity.
4. But there is something missing here: the bedrock, the assumptions of civilized people. What is the standard? What is the foundation? You have to have a place to stand, a marker, before you can know where you are or where to go.
5. Who are we? (referral to the Frank Peretti story quote). Are we mere accidents, detritus of a Big Bang, or are we created in the image of a Great and Holy God?
6. In March 26, 1791, the Academie des Sciences defined, for the first time, what a meter is. That original meter is still on display on 36, rue

Vaugirard across from the Palais du Luxembourg today. It IS what a meter is. All other meters must match that one or they are not a meter. (before this, people used a wide variety of measurements and, since they were not standard, chaos often ensued. Such as...a cubit. Whose cubit?)

7. I think we can all agree that it is important for us to have a standard way to measure height, weight, length, capacity, etc. While our systems may differ (Imperial, metric, standard, stones), as long as we understand the underlying foundational truth, we are able to join in and work with each other. (frequently used both standard and metric in lessons in Rochester).
8. But what happens when we don't agree on the existence of a standard? Not that we just don't use the same system, but we deny the existence of a standard? Jude 5-10. They go after the foundational truths and destroy them (or just slander them) so that they are free to behave in any way they want.
9. There is a reason why Satanists have always used the motto "Do what you will is the whole sum of the law." Isaiah warned about this in Isaiah 59:14 – "Justice is turned back and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square and uprightness cannot enter."
10. I get chills every time I read Isaiah 59 or Jude for it seems they are looking over my shoulder at the world we have right now. Other ages have faced this same challenge and what we do, how we respond will make all the difference when it comes to what kind of world is left behind for those we love.
11. Next week, we will go into great detail on our identity in Christ. That identity changes everything because it changed everything already. We accept reality when we accept what God tells us about ourselves and our place in His heart. But...if we dismantle our foundation and deny it exists...
12. Recent editorials in the largest papers in the USA argued that saying that  $2+2=5$  is perfectly acceptable and to deny that was racist. We've been told that however, you feel this day is true. Follow your

truth. Live out your truth. (rather like the original Star Wars movie when Luke is flying a fighter craft and told to stop thinking, just feel)

13. When you lose your standard of measurement, you will cast about for another one. Even those who deny the existence of any standard will demand that you agree with them, thus creating a new standard. (like the nonconformists who conformed to nonconformity in the 1960s).
14. Now, let's come back to that age bracket of 13-21. Their task is to find their identity or become diffuse, lacking a sense of self and purpose, adrift in the world and, thus, belonging to the last voice they hear. What message are they hearing today?
15. They are being told that their world is in crisis and it is too late to save it. They are taught that climate will kill us all and that those to blame are their parents and grandparents who didn't act fast enough.
16. They are being told that the only way to be famous and make a difference is to influence others on YouTube or Instagram. They have to be famous, talented, and rich or their lives are worth nothing.
17. They are being told that they must be celebrated. This is more than "everyone gets a trophy," this is demanding that others agree with them and rejoice with them about their decisions. That is not going to happen on a regular basis so...they are set up for failure, depression, isolation, and loss. In other words, diffusion.
18. They cast about hunting for identity, for meaning, and look in all the wrong places: politics, sexuality, feelings, body shapes, comfort, and lack of pain. The problem is, when water and trees find the easiest way to move forward, we end up with crooked rivers and crooked trees. When humans try to find a pain-free way to live where all will rejoice over them, they end up crooked, twisted, desperately unhappy.
19. And so, suicides are on the increase. If you are merely a speck in the universe with no meaning, why go through all this pain? The majority of girls aged 12-20 in the USA have considered suicide in the

last two years. The figures are very similar in Western Europe. Japan is facing an epidemic of suicide.

- 20.** Charities are drying up and struggling for funding because, if there is no Jesus, why should we feed the hungry or care for the abused, or lift up the fallen? (Karma vs. Christianity in India)
- 21.** Matthew 25: 31-40. Because there IS a Jesus, we feed, visit, care, share, sacrifice even to our own hurt. If that standard is removed or denied...depression, isolation, and genocide follow.
- 22.** We will come back to this again in the weeks ahead but, next week, we need to take a step back and get our footing secured. We need to make sure we understand who we really are and there is one thing for certain: you are not who you've been told you are. You are much better and you are much more valuable and precious than you can imagine...because we do not live in a world without Jesus...
- 23.** ...but many of our neighbors do. Let's get our footing squared, our foundation secured, so we can go show them a world where Jesus is King.