

Idols in Orbit – Why We Put God in a Box

Matthew Vander Els • 2022-07-16 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 3:1](#) • [Genesis 3:10](#) • [Genesis 20:11](#) • [Exodus 20:18](#) • [Exodus 32:1](#) • [Matthew 6:25](#) • [Matthew 5:44](#) • [Philippians 4:6](#) • [Hebrews 1:1](#) • [1 John 3:18](#) • [Ephesians 4:1](#)

Shabbat Shalom, everybody. You can be seated. And as the kids go to their classes, super excited about the curriculum that they're currently learning. I'm very impressed with Katie as well as the other teachers back there and everything that they're doing for our children. I'm just super excited about it.

Some really neat stuff has happened in the past week. Do we have any kind of nerdy people that like nerdy stuff besides Bible stuff a little bit? Okay, if you guys heard all the chatter about this new telescope that's been taking these pictures, right? What's the big deal? Get you caught up, everyone's familiar with the Hubble telescope. Launched a long time ago. I think it should have retired 15, 20 years ago. We kept going, got some great pictures out of it. But mid-90s, we started working on producing a larger telescope that is 100 times more powerful in how it reads infrared light. And this is known as the James Webb telescope. And we got our first images from it. Deep space images are the farthest into deep space that I think we've ever seen. A couple of people are excited. I'm excited. I'm nerding. Oh, my goodness. And so I wanted to share some of the photos.

The James Webb Telescope

Now, if it's out of sight, it's out of mind, right? And so when we think about space, right? We only think about really what we've seen—maybe the ISS or astronauts or go up and we see these pictures. We get the moon. We know about the moon and Mars and our solar system. Like we have the concept. And we know that space is really big, right? But until you see it, you don't really process how big it is. So first off, let's go ahead and look at some pictures. So the first picture I want to show you, let's see here. Oh, what is that? What is that? It doesn't look good, does it? It doesn't show up on the TV? Really? That's all we got? That's better. There we go. Oh, that was my background. Yeah.

So guys, this is the Southern Ring Nebula. Nebula is a fancy word for a bunch of gas and dust particles that create these kind of clouds, right? They're typically associated with stars that are slowly forming together or sometimes seen after a star dies. And so, yeah, this is the Southern Ring Nebula. It's also known as the Eight Burst Nebula. And, yeah, it's an expanding cloud of gas surrounding a dying star here. It's beautiful. Look at that. It is nearly half a light year in diameter.

Measuring Distance in Light Years

You guys understand light years, right? So space is so big, we have to fabricate a different way to measure speed and distance. So speed of light is the fastest thing we can go, or fastest thing ever. And so what this means is it's a half a light year across. So if you are going at the speed of light in a spaceship or whatever, you hit the hyperspeed or something, you're flying at the speed of light, you will reach one end of the other after six months, right? Yeah, right on the screen it's like that big, right? Oh, that's pretty cool. Six months. This nebula is located 2,000 light years away from Earth. Hop in a spaceship, hit the hyperblast, you're going at the speed of light, which we can't do yet, right? It will take you 2,000 years at the speed of light to arrive at this nebula. And you are still within our galaxy known as the Milky Way. You haven't escaped our galaxy yet. 2,000 years speed of light. Is it messing with you yet? That's fine, we'll go to the next one, the Carina Nebula.

Oh, also known as the Cosmic Cliffs. Yeah, this is beautiful, right? And so this is like a closeup of the nebula. Of course, it's much bigger, but this section is known as the Cosmic Cliffs, and this is from the James Webb, which is brilliant. And so you see these stars, like the ones that are lens flaring out? All right, those are cool, but those are simply stars, like our sun, that are within our own Milky Way, our own galaxy. So whenever you see those, kind of knock those out, and the ones behind them are stars and galaxies and all kinds of stuff that are further away. But this is beautiful, and so this star, if you will, is 8,500 light years away. Going at the speed of light for 8,500 years, and you will finally reach this. Everybody good? You have still not exited our galaxy, the Milky Way.

Galaxy Cluster SMACS 0723

So we have the first picture released that shocked and awed all of the astronomers and astrophysicists out there, and it is known as Galaxy Cluster SMACS 0723, right? We can name our galaxy the Milky Way, but we can't give this a different name. Anyway, so we'll go ahead, and this is a deep field space image. And I think you guys saw that, right? So what's neat about

this, holding on to something. Okay. So remember what I said about the stars, the ones that are star bursting? Those are stars within our galaxy. Okay, but just forget those. Just ignore those. Behind them, you see those fancy disks? Those aren't stars. Those are other galaxies. Galaxies like our Milky Way. All of them. And what's really cool, if we got some nerds in here in science, theory of relativity, right? Einstein's big thing, right? So if you look at the top right or in the bottom around the middle, you'll see some that look like when you have a camera and you move the camera too fast and it kind of blurs, it streaks stuff. So you'll see some galaxies that look like they're streaking. But that's not the camera's fault. That's actually the gravitational forces of the galaxy cluster in the center of this photo bending. It's the curvature of space-time, if you will. It's manipulating the way light is going around it before it hits the telescope. So you're actually seeing that theory of relativity at work there in that photo. Isn't this incredible? How beautiful? Just mesmerizing.

The Scale Made Visible

So I want to show you a video because... A little video. Oh, you playing it already? Don't play it yet? Okay, we're here to put it to scale. That was the picture we just looked at. Go ahead and play it. We're going to zoom out from where this image was taken with the telescope pointed at this spot. Y'all okay? So this image was taken. To put it in perspective, let's say the Earth disappeared and you're just floating, right? Here we go in space. If you took a grain of sand and you held it at arm's length, that is the picture. That is where the telescope was pointed. That's how many galaxies we are receiving light from. It's going to take you all a few minutes, huh? Y'all got that feeling? You get the feeling? Yes! Light, yeah, so we have just light coming from all of these galaxies. And so anyone got that feeling in their stomach? Did anyone just get a little dizzy? Slightly? Okay, it's a very overwhelming feeling. It's actually a thing. It's called cosmic vertigo. It's a real thing. And it's just the complete being overwhelmed at the size of the cosmos.

Cosmic Vertigo

That's why they call it space, right? But there's a lot out there. So many stars, so many planets, and here we are, little old us. So you can look at that two ways. We're so insignificant or wow, how significant are we, right? But here we are, and maybe you have a sense of anxiety. You're not sure how to process the sheer vast nature of the universe. Maybe it's a little scary. Don't know how to put it together. How was that? What about life? I mean, what? Yeah. We like to process this through movies. It's easier when it's Star Wars and they just hyper jump or hyperspace. Yeah, they show up and it's fine. And bloop, bloop, they dance around. It's not that

big of a concept. We never have to deal with the distance in space. The asteroid belt that has its orbit in our solar system between Mars and Jupiter, right? We see it in movies, right? Whenever the dogfights are going on and all the spaceships are going through and you can't hit the, right? Bad guys always hit the rock, right? They can't dodge them like the good guys can, right? So in our asteroid belt in the Milky Way, this is the first belt. The average distance between the objects, the rocks, is about six to eight hundred thousand miles apart from each other. It's not like, oh no, did we go through it? I don't know. That's how big it is. The whole solar system. So this feeling in your stomach, I feel like is appropriate. Cosmic vertigo.

Why Aren't We Overwhelmed by God?

And the question that I think we owe ourselves as believers is why is this overwhelming feeling that we get by looking at the size of the universe, why is it so unfamiliar when we think about God? I called me out, did I call you out? I mean, why is this feeling, if we truly believe God is that big, why is this feeling so unfamiliar when we think about the bigness and vastness and boundarylessness of our God and what he is capable of? Why are we not completely overwhelmed with the sheer vastness of who our God is or we pretend him to be? And so today we're going to be speaking a little bit about putting God in a box. And just like last week, I hope you'll hear my heart today. Yeah, because we may be inspecting areas of our lives and even our theological lenses of how we view other people. And we're going to look at some of the ways that we end up making God into something else so that he's easier to worship.

Putting God in a Box

We tend to put God in a box, and sometimes that box is ever-changing, caused by maybe our circumstances in life, where we either don't feel like we can trust God in whatever these circumstances that we have are, or that we yearn to sometimes make God a little bit smaller so we can take his place and be in control. That's what the temptation in the garden was, right?

What it tends to come down to is—and there may be more to it, this is just my pondering of this topic—when we put God in a box, it comes down to control and fear. And those two are actually linked. Control and fear. Maybe fear would be the core.

We desire to be in control. Anyone like to be in control? Anyone enjoy being out of control? You're in control because it needs to be done right. I need to do it because everyone else would do it wrong. Control makes us feel safe. Control makes us feel secure. Or control allows us to dominate others with how we think things should be done correctly. And that can be layered

from what they think, their opinions, to how they do their job. Control. That's how we become like God. And if we can be like God, then we can grasp for power and manipulate reality our way.

Control and Fear

Often it's not malicious, but it's the result of being scared and not having a level of trust that God is that big—that we can't actually trust him in whatever situation this is. Or we would rather assume the power of controlling, and we don't want the opportunity to trust him because, well, he just gets in the way of what we truly want. And that's the story of the Bible. We reach for the fruit of determining good and evil for ourselves, making judgments for ourselves in an effort to become like God. And if we can become like God, we can control things. If we can control, then we can feel secure. And if we can feel secure, then we are no longer afraid.

And so I hope this message does one of two things for you today, depending on where you're at. Maybe you're in a good place, maybe you don't struggle with this. Maybe you always get the cosmic vertigo when thinking about God. But I hope this message gives you hope. I hope it gives you hope if you're in a place where you don't trust that God is big enough to handle it, to be in charge, to bring peace, or to be present in the situations you feel he is absent from.

Let Go of Control

I hope it encourages you to let go of the idol of control, feeling you have to be in the place of God so that everything works out. And I hope you'll be able to take a breath of relief knowing that God is still bigger, no matter how much control you think you have. And it's okay. Because no matter how much you want to control it, not everything is on you in whatever situation. Not everything is on you.

And for others, I hope this message brings conviction—conviction for putting God in a box so you can take control of other people, so you can grasp for power in order to minimize, to beat down, to oppress others. Taking the God that is bigger than everything and turning him into an idol that you wield at others.

Two Trees in the Garden

God places two trees in the garden. We've been on the [Genesis 1](#) through 3 content for every single message. It hasn't been intentional, but I love the depth of how the story of the Bible

starts out. We have two trees in the garden. He gives permission to one and prohibition toward the other. This one brings forth life, and the other will bring forth death. Don't eat of the tree of knowledge and good and evil. That's all he says.

Notice God never elaborates anything. He never talks about what the inner meaning of that is, what's going to happen, why not. Just don't do it. Experience what is permitted, the goodness and array of everything else. Man, what's the message of that? He didn't have to talk about the knowledge of the tree of good and evil. He didn't have to expound on it because the message here is trust. Trust. Don't eat that fruit. Why not? Please just trust me. Trust me.

The Serpent Arrives

Story goes from a man and a woman in solidarity with God—in covenant, if you will—and then we turn the page. We have a new scene of the movie, of the play. The curtains draw back and a new character enters into the scene. The man and the woman don't just obey God in the garden; before this, they trust God in the garden. They've taken on the vocation as image bearers that we discussed, partaking in the goodness of God.

Chapter three—who's the new character that comes in the scene? The serpent. You know the answer, but maybe you're not sure it's right. Yes, a serpent. He comes onto the scene.

And what does the serpent do? I think we have a slide for it. Let's just read it. The serpent talks, right? That would be a plot twist. You know, we never stop and talk about that, but I didn't realize it was such a plot twist until new believers came to the faith and trust in Christ later on in life began reading. And they're like, the snake talks in the story. I'm like, yeah, of course the snake talks. I love it. It's all perception—how you're raised. If you're used to something, it seems normal.

The Most Cunning of All

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals. Oh, that word cunning. The Hebrew word is adrom. Adrom means cunning or subtle. He was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say you can't eat from any tree of the garden?"

The woman said to the serpent, "No, we may eat the fruit from the trees of the garden, but about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said you must not eat of it or touch it or you'll die."

A little variation. A little variation.

"No, you will certainly not die," the serpent said to the woman. "In fact, God knows that when you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. The woman saw the tree was good for food and delighted to look at it, and it was desirable to obtain wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate of it. She took it, and then she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked."

So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for them. That's neat. So there's a word play here. The serpent is subtle—it's *arom*. And then here the word for naked is *arom*. So the idea is when we follow the ways of cunningness and subtlety like the serpent, *arom*, it only ends up getting us *arom*. We always end up naked.

Twisted Words

A few things here. Here's how he starts: the serpent twisted the words of God to Eve so he could win an argument. You see the discourse? Hey, eat this tree. No, God told us we would surely die. No, you won't die. And here's why. Here's why. You want to know why God said that? Because he knew you would know good and evil and that you would be like him. He doesn't want that. He wants to keep you down. He wants to keep you beneath God, keep you out of touch.

This was not true, but it makes sense. It made sense.

Therefore, Eve was deceived. First conspiracy theory came from the serpent. The serpent debated Eve, twisted the meaning of God's words, and then used logic to convince Eve that she would no longer rely on trust in her relationship with God, but rely on knowledge instead. So they ate. They had wanted knowledge rather than trust.

Knowing Good and Evil

And now they have it. Their knowledge starts with realizing they're naked. They're naked. They have no clothes. The first thing they realized: they can't run away now. In grasping for power, they know more than they ever wanted to know. And now they can't escape.

God comes walking in the garden and he calls to man. And what does man say? [Genesis 3](#), verse 10: "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

When you trade trust in God for knowledge of God, the end result will always be fear and uncertainty. Now you need to manage this. You got it now. Now you're naked and everyone sees it. Now you need to cover yourself. Now I feel responsible for what everyone else thinks of me. Now I need to use this power to control things in my life. I need to change it. This is uncomfortable. How do I change it? And I need to use it to control other people and how they affect me in my life.

The World Erupts with Violence

And then the world erupts with violence. The world erupts with violence because everyone has traded their trust for power. And if everyone has power, then everyone is threatened by everyone. So we fight. We don't like other people having power because you know what might happen? If they have power, then they'll take away my power. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard, but whatever. If they have power, then they might threaten the power that I have.

One of the many mass shootings that happened this year occurred on May 14th in Buffalo, New York, where an 18-year-old man pulled up in front of a grocery store, turned on his camera to live stream it, and got out of his car with an AR-style rifle and began shooting at people crossing the crosswalk to enter the store. People getting out of their cars. People loading groceries. Shooting them dead without hesitation. He then walked into the grocery store and 10 people died that day. Brutally executed, point blank, with a high-powered rifle. And in the video, when he walks to the front of the store where the cash registers are, he turns the corner and there's a man laying on the ground cowering saying, please, please, and he points his gun at him.

The Fear of Losing Power

And then he instantly jerks the gun up and says, "Oh, sorry." In his manifesto, the shooter said his purpose for targeting this grocery store, which he drove hours to arrive at, was to kill as many black people as he possibly could. Why? Because minorities in the US are growing too quickly, and one day they might outnumber white people. And that would take away our power and our privilege. And that just can't happen. The person on the floor was the manager. He was white. Didn't mean to scare you as I came around the corner. Scared of losing his power and his privilege, threatened by other people having power through population.

This is what caused the flood, according to Genesis. The same thing that Abraham said in Genesis chapter 20, verse 11, when he explained why he lied to King Abimelech—why he gave

his wife and said she was his sister. I was afraid instead of trusting. My wife's hot, and I was afraid. Isaac does the same exact thing six chapters later. Sarah saw Hagar and took Hagar and gave her to her husband. Same echoing story. The chapter before this, God promises Abraham that he would have a son, an heir, but Sarah was barren. She's old. This was hopeless. God is not that big. So she took control. Not only that, she took control over someone else to make herself feel more secure. She gave Hagar to her husband to make herself feel more in control instead of trusting God.

Scrambling for Control

I know this message is for somebody today. You may be in unknown circumstances, a scenario where you know God is good. You know God says he's in control. You know God has a plan, but you're having trouble trusting. And as a result, you're afraid. And you cannot help but scramble to be in control of this situation or that situation, as if you can change the ultimate circumstances at all.

Many times when we find ourselves in this situation, it's not only harmful to us, but in trying to take care of family members also affected by it, we end up hurting them in the name of control. Where can we find our trust in God again?

Permission, Vocation, and Prohibition

Not that you just let things go—no, but you come back to a place in the garden where mankind had three aspects to his relationship with God: his vocation, his permission, and his prohibition. These three balance together as an image bearer of God. If you take one of them away, it gets distorted, right? Take one of them away, it gets distorted. You have permission and vocation without prohibition, it gets all perverted. You have prohibition and vocation without permission or access—it gets all kinds of distorted. You have permission and prohibition without vocation—what's the point?

Coming back to being responsible for taking care of the garden, maintaining the garden—and you do the things you can do and you trust God with the things that you cannot.

When Worry Meets Trust: Matthew 6

Matthew 6, 25—the most annoying section of scripture ever written. It says this: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or about your body or what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds in

the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life?" That's just so irritating. It's like, I know you're right, but it's as if you have never experienced real life, right? We look at this and sometimes even I'm like, that seems so irresponsible. Just let go? Lazy? Just do nothing?

And then you take the statements that God takes care of all the birds and the grass. Didn't take care of that bird from the cat. Birds die, right? I had a beautiful grass. We planted some grass a couple months ago in my backyard. It was glorious—beautiful long blades of green, luscious Eden backyard. And then my dog peed on it. It's all gone. The grass was not taken care of. God didn't take care of it. What do we do with this?

Well, as always, what is the context? It's not saying to be lazy. It's not saying to be irresponsible. It's a poetic narrative depicting the birds and the grass and these absolute statements that we know aren't absolute. Yeshua's making a point. The context is that he's speaking to his followers who just left everything to be with him. They have put their complete trust in Yeshua by leaving it all behind to follow him, to be committed to him. And he's encouraging them—just like in the garden—God's goodness will still be poured out if you trust. Stop worrying. Put your trust in me.

The section right before this is about our favorite topic: money. And how Yeshua says we should be handling our money and where our money goes. It's the same message. Do you trust God or do you not? [Philippians 4](#), 6—Paul riffs on this idea as well. We all learned that in Sunday school. It's about trust. It's about trust and letting go of the fear of not being completely in control about everything. Man, I thought this was supposed to be an easy message. No, but it's a truthful one. Trust, trust, trust.

A God We Cannot Tame

Your God is not too big. No matter how many galaxies out there, God is beautiful and humbling. If we can only get to that humbling place with God... You know, in fact, maybe for some of us, what scares us the most is that God is so big he cannot be controlled. There's a flip side to this. Sometimes God scares us because we can't control him. We love the idolatry of control. We love the idolatry of certainty in so many aspects of our life. He can't be controlled. He can't be anticipated. Man, we love putting boundaries on God, putting him in a box because we hate boundaries. We hate when God's radical, infinite nature strips us of our power over

others. It scares us. Or it scares us when God's infinite power minimizes the power we all learn to grasp for.

How about when Israel put God in a box? And no, I don't mean the tabernacle, but rather how he went from a mountain to a tent, to a temple, and then was unleashed through the hearts of man, right? Right? The temple without walls in Zechariah or the temple that has no doors that close in Revelation or in Ezekiel.

Exodus chapter 20, verse 18. The people were—this is too much. This is no. God's speaking to them from Mount Sinai. They say, "We cannot tame this God. Out of control. No, we don't like this. Go, Moses."

We jump over a couple chapters later. What's Moses do? He goes up the mountain. Forty days. And then what happens in Exodus chapter 32, verse 1? Probably died. Thundering God up there.

So Aaron said to them, "Listen, take off your rings of gold from your ears, and take your wives' rings and everything—your sons, give them all to me." Give me all your gold. So all the people took off the rings of gold from their ears, brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with the graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt."

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. I love this translation—"to play." I love that. So Israel did not want an untamable God. Didn't like him at the mountain. Moses is gone. Israel says, "Aaron, make us gods to go before us. Get the gold, make the golden calf." They made the golden calf.

And notice the wording changes. So they wanted him to make gods that go before us. But now after the calf is made, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Tomorrow we'll have a feast under the Lord." Aaron didn't make some foreign god to go before them. He made a representation of Yahweh. And Israel ate it up. They loved this version of Yahweh. They loved this Yahweh that's tamed. They loved this Yahweh that's nice and controllable. Put him in a box. They like this Yahweh. I can stay in control with this. This is good.

The Worship of Control

Because of our thirst to grasp for power, our insecurities and fear and our need for control, we much prefer a God we can manage over one that is limitless. We want a God that orbits us

instead of trusting God and orbiting him.

And what's so bad is many times we use our status as believers in God as a way to control the world around us and people around us. We use the knowledge of God to condemn people as if we were God. The consequences of sin, what are they? Death. Even though they didn't die, God's mercy. Radical plot twist of God's mercy right there in the beginning.

The consequences of not trusting but wanting to grasp at power and control. Remember what he said about the woman? He said the woman will desire to control her husband, and he's going to turn and fight back. Conflict. Conflict. Everybody's going to seek to dominate.

Everybody's going to seek to be the winner, to be the one in control. Remember last week, Adam claims authority over the animals by doing what? Speaking and naming him. Right after this verse is given, Adam names Eve. It's part of the story. It's conflict. I want to dominate you. I'm going to dominate you. Conflict. Wanting to be a winner and trying to make someone the loser is a consequence of sin. Goodness. Put that on vibrate. Consequence. That's what the story of Jonah is actually about.

Jonah gets spit out of a fish, and he says... It says in Jonah chapter 3, Nineveh is three days journey away, right? So God says, go Jonah, tell these people the words of the Lord. And it says Jonah traveled one day's journey. How far away is Nineveh? He traveled one day's journey. And he preaches a five-word sermon in Hebrew. 40 days and Nineveh will be overturned. That's it. That's all the man says.

I know he had that fish incident and come to Jesus meeting. He is still the same guy. He doesn't want to do this. Minimal effort. Minimal effort. He didn't even tell them to repent. But guess what? They did. Not only did the people repent, it says the entire city repented. The king repented. And they go into this atmosphere of fasting and they wore sackcloth during this time of repentance. Even the animals of Nineveh wore sackcloth and fasted. The cows are fasting and joining in with... Okay, that's how Jonah's written. You're supposed to smirk. I promise. I promise you that's how it's written.

Will You Trust God?

Because the whole story is about irony, and it's not even about Jonah. It's about you at the end. Will you trust God? 40 days, Nineveh will be overturned. 40 days, like Moses, right? When Israel tried to make God into the God they wanted instead of the God that he was. And here, how does Jonah respond to Nineveh repenting? Chapter 4, verse 1. This displeased Jonah

exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, Oh, Lord, is this not what I said when I was yet in my country?

Jonah was mad because God broke out of his box and his grace and mercy was untamed. Jonah doesn't think the people deserve redemption. He wants to be in control of their fate. One day's journey, five-word sermon, running away, and they'll get what they deserve. Because they're wicked, and they're unbelievers, and they're evil, and they're everything fill-in-the-blank that we don't like. Jonah would rather die than see things not go his way. He would rather die than see these people receive mercy from God. He would rather die than be out of control. Jonah was putting God in a box and intentionally manipulating these efforts for the outcome.

When God broke out of his little box, instead of celebrating the magnificent goodness of God revealed, Jonah couldn't stand it. When we re-image God into something that serves us, we make an idol. That's what Israel did, literally. And it may be an idol that we call Yahweh, but unless it is limitless in power and grace and mercy, it's not Yahweh. We sure do the same thing with the Bible, by the way. We can make theology an idol.

Theology in the Place of Obedience

In [Genesis 3](#), when the serpent engages in theological debate with Eve, God is treated as a third person, right? God is not invited to the argument. He's not invited to the discussion. God is minimized into a mere object within the discussion. It was not a speech that was to God or with God, but it was a discussion about God. And I have this quote from Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann. Oh, it hit me in the heart. It says, the serpent is the first in the Bible to seem knowing and critical about God and to practice theology in the place of obedience. The serpent is the first to practice theology in the place of obedience. I'll give that a minute.

Knowing the Bible is a huge deal, huge deal. Absolutely huge deal. Katie, can you take this from me, please? You got alarms, you can't turn off or silence, no matter how good the technology is. And just take that away, throw it in the kitchen. Knowing the Bible, guys, is a huge deal. I love studying the Bible. It's the story of God. It's beautiful, it's powerful, it's convicting, it's full of hope. But me knowing the Bible inside and out, memorizing all of those Bible verses and even understanding whatever structural theology that I subscribe to so that I can articulate how God works, it's no different than me being really good at playing Call of Duty if I don't actually do anything with it in action.

Or worse, if I use it to control people instead of trusting God. You hear me? And when we actually believe that our God is as big as he is, a call to action in the world, a call to trust him in

any situation, and the ability to dismiss anyone trying to articulate the words of God so that it limits God, guys, all of that comes easier if we trust that God is as big as he is. As long as we're focused on that, we can't grasp for power off the tree.

Trusting in a God That Big

Stephen understood how big his God was, trusting him to the end. Peter understood how big his God was. Upside down, yeah. Paul understood how big his God was. Proclaiming in Rome, Caesar's not the Curia, Caesar's not Lord, Yeshua is, as the sword came down on his neck.

But we like to be in control, and the reason we like to be in control is out of fear. And the reason we fear is because we lack trust, and so we make a version of God that is more timid and that is more digestible to us. And this leads to a believer who knows a lot about God, a lot about theology, is really good at fighting for the faith, but does nothing when it comes to showing the one thing that Jesus said his believers would always show, and that is love poured out. God's mercy, grace, and love is bigger than what we want to be comfortable with. And that's something that we just have to come to terms with and trust.

That's what ticked the Pharisees off about Jesus. You cannot love those people like that. What people? The people with that inappropriate sexual lifestyle. Yep. If he knew what that woman did, that was before him now. Remember that? The dinner? The people that exploited the poor through financial gain. Yep, you can love them. You can. That's how you engage with them. That's the Trojan horse, but you can't call it a Trojan horse because that's manipulative and the love of Christ is not manipulative. It's authentic. You can pour out love to people, even if they don't want it.

Jesus Breaks All the Standards

The tax collectors. The people that thought you can bring peace through violence. Yep. The enemy soldier that fights to oppress you and defeat your nation. Yeah. Feed them. That's what Jesus says. Feed them. According to our constitution, you deserve death if you do that, by the way. Bless them. Yeshua says you can love them because we trust in a God that big.

The people. The gospel accounts record that. Yeshua just continuing to break the standard in showing grace, mercy, and love. And we need to come to a place where we catch ourselves because we all do it. And that's why Jonah was written the way it is. We all do it, but we need to start learning how to practice catching ourselves, being Jonah to the Ninevites. And we need to learn and practice catching ourselves so that we can stop being the snake to Eve.

Your Vocation is to Be an Image Bearer

And I want to conclude with a call of action. Your vocation is to be an image bearer of God. That means speaking life. Remember that. That means pouring out energy into others for their benefit. That's why you bless your enemies. That don't make sense. Why would you do that? Because you're trying to show them the image of Christ that they need in their life. And as his ambassador, you're the only one that can do that. So do it. Give them whatever they need in their life as they take it away from you.

Yeshua says in [Matthew 5](#), 44, that the reason that you love everybody, your neighbor, the reason that you love the righteous and the wicked is why you love your allies and your enemies. He says the reason why Israelites are supposed to love the Ninevites. Why? So you can be like your father in heaven. So you can be like your father in heaven. It makes the sun shine on both the righteous and the wicked. That's how your love should be. You don't seek to manipulate and control others, to lord over them. You serve them. That is true power.

Matt, what about all those people that are wrong? What about the sinners? Perfect candidate for you to serve. Perfect. No, but the Bible says they're wrong. So you're going to go tell them. Good. Yeah, you're going to go tell them that they're wrong when you don't even have a relationship with them. That's going to work great, right? You're really going to make a dent in fill in the blank that they're wrong about their sin, their lifestyle, how they act. You're really going to do that. Yeah. No, you're not.

Relationship Before Judgment

It doesn't work. It doesn't work. That's why Yeshua is so adamant about sitting down, about connecting with, about speaking, about giving empathy, about showing love. Because you can't change the world unless you're actually trying to do so. And it comes at a cost that you're willing to give as a believer.

If you want to condemn everybody without having any form of relationship with them, it's a clear indicator that your concern has nothing to do with them being reconciled with God. The world is never going to care about your theology until they see your actions. I love my theology, but it's worthless to the world who doesn't give a hoot about what your Bible says, by the way. They don't subscribe to it. I mean, they're looking for actions. That's how you build the resume of the God that you serve. Actions are the resume of your intent. I used to debate and argue using the Bible a lot. Oh man, I feel like I was good at it, even though I may not have been, but I felt like I was good at it.

Using the Bible as a Weapon

And I argued with other people about the Bible by seeking out arguments. That was awful. It was awful. I would intentionally seek out arguments, whether in person or on social media. Prime people, they'd bite. Now I get to reel you in like a fish, right? I used to debate so much and argue. And I did it from a place of self-righteousness. This is me. I used God's word as a weapon to make me feel powerful over others. I was the serpent, right? I manipulated the scriptures in a way that supported my interpretation, and then I would mix logic into it, not to have an edifying effect on someone else, but so that I could make someone else look stupid while I got that dopamine hit of feeling like I've won. I'm powerful. It was Highlander. You take out someone, and you get nobody. Nobody? Okay, younger guys, yeah. That's why I did that, and I used the Bible to do it. And I was against God because I molded God into something I would wield instead of someone in whom I would yield.

What do people know you for? What is your witness that we're supposed to have? Are you constantly telling people they are wrong and it being rooted in the vanity of your own flesh?

Matt, are you saying we're not to correct people?

I'm saying there's a lot of stuff that needs to be corrected in this world. That's why you're here, to fight hell on behalf of heaven. That's why you're here. There's a lot of stuff to correct, and Jesus taught us how to do that, the strategy to use to do that. And it's powerful when we put it to use. He demonstrated it.

Do we constantly lift up ourselves as the one that has all of the knowledge in the world? Ate the fruit? Why do we do that? Because we're scared. I was scared. I was scared to not have that status. I was scared to feel weak. I was scared to feel like a nobody. That's why I did it. Scared.

We're Scared

We're scared to actually see and do the work we're called to do. And we're scared that we might actually have to work as the hands and feet of Jesus.

We're scared because the world is changing, guys, and it looks different. Looks different? It looks a little bit different, doesn't it? From 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 60 years ago, 100 years ago? It looks different. It's constantly changing. It's changed from 500 years ago and 1,000 years ago. It's always gonna keep changing. And it's scary.

And how do we as Christians respond to that in a way that is portraying God as righteous, that is fulfilling our vocation, that is showing what is permissive as well as holding on to the

boundaries of what is prohibited? How do we do that? And there's no checklist that I can tell you. It's discernment. But there are some tactics that we love to do so that we don't have to even worry about that.

Easier to Condemn Than to Love

It's easier to condemn from a distance like a coward than it is to have an authentic relationship where you actually care about someone and you actually want to see them experience the overwhelming big God that we claim to serve.

It's easier to criticize mothers and fathers, people, for not being able to take care of their families than it is to become a foster parent that encourages those same parents to be the parents they're called to be.

That's an aspect of foster care people don't realize. That's what the state is trying to evolve foster care to be. They're trying to get foster parents to actually be mentors or be in a place of encouragement for parents that need it. Because Lord knows they need it. They need it. There are parents out there that want to be the parents of their children and the parents they need to be. And they're not able to for a variety of reasons and circumstances and choices. And it's easier to shut the world up than it is to become a foster parent and actually talk to them on the phone and actually send them pictures of their children and let them know that they can do it. Your kid's doing great and they can't wait to see you.

Some people are like, whoa, it's not anonymous and everything. You can still remain anonymous and have a Google Voice number. But it's hard work. And it's something that believers are called to be a part of in whatever way they can.

Maybe you can't be a foster parent. How about a support team member, someone that supports foster parents? You guys know we're about to have another foster family working on their paperwork? Zach and Julia? Isn't that great? I think we're going to notarize some paperwork tonight. Paperwork. You just got to fill a bunch of paperwork. You go to a class. They got to vet you because you might not be the type of person. Paperwork.

And they're going to need a support team that surrounds them, that prays with them, that calls them every week to check in. They're going to need people to bring them a meal every once a week on rotation. They're going to need people to go and maybe babysit while they have to take one of the kids to the doctor. That's putting the hands and feet of Jesus to work.

Listening to the Oppressed

It's listening to cries of the oppressed when they cry out and not ignoring them because your political party told you to. Political parties are beneath you as a citizen of heaven. I'll say it. I vote, I vote. Yeah, go vote. Yeah, it's great, it's great. Good stuff. But secular legislation is secular legislation. We can influence it, but that does not wash our hands of our vocations, period.

All empires will crumble under the feet of Christ. But we love the opportunity to watch TV and judge people. We love to walk down the street and judge people. We love to think that we're so righteous. And we totally minimize the light of God when it shines on us.

Half the men in this room actively look at pornography. Statistically, 50% of men in churches. About 27% of women in churches. But we're going to point fingers at other people and say they're so bad. They're sinful. I'm going to judge them. They shouldn't be like that. They need Jesus.

As we have gotten so comfortable on our high horses of righteousness and holiness, we need to start realizing that a broken world includes us. We know the love of Christ. We need to walk away from the things that are prohibited and seek out our vocation to others. And stop being so dang hypocritical all the time. Because I sure am. Sure am.

Converting Judgment to Love

We need to practice catching ourselves and converting our judgments into how can I love a person. And that's hard work. Yeah.

The world is waiting to see a God that they can trust. The world is waiting to see your God. You are the resume of that.

We're going to conclude here with [Ephesians 4](#). This is Paul speaking to the church of Ephesus. What's those words? Humble and be patient. Bearing with one another. What's this word? In love. Okay. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

We don't like that, right? Divide. So all of this is being defined as what? In love. These are attributes. These are the characteristics when you pour out love to someone.

What I love is that at the end of the chapter we find the verse that says you speak truth in love. That's our favorite verse, our pet verse. You guys know it, right?

Wow, that was really harsh and condemning toward them. You don't even know them. I'm just, I love them. That's why I got to tell them. Y'all know you've totally used that as a sword to stab

somebody in the face, right? I love them. Therefore, I am going to condemn them without any ounce of authentic love or relationship.

Speaking Truth in Love

Speaking truth in love is supposed to look like that. It's supposed to look like that.

Can we practice, practice catching ourselves and auditing ourselves in the face of that?

Why? Why is it so important? Because [1 John 3:18](#) says, We can talk theology without obedience like the serpent, or you can live out your theology through action. The two have to go together. This is how Paul imagines a community of believers.

And so I don't know where you're at today in your theology or wherever, but I want to remind you, and I hope that if you take one thing from this message, it's that your God is that big, and you either need to learn to trust or deal with it and trust. Those are the two things, and I hope you walk away with one of those.

God is that big. He's bigger than your situation. He's bigger than your fear. He is also bigger than your self-righteousness and your pride. And all he asks from us is to trust, just trust.

Trust God

Will you trust God today? Will you trust what Yeshua commanded us to do in his name? Will you trust where God is calling you to go?

He's not calling you to just use your mouth. That's someone else's tactic. He's calling you to use his hands and feet. Engage your neighbor and love them as an ambassador of Yeshua.

Those people you think are wrong and therefore need to be corrected, yes, yes, in love, bearing their burdens with patience and goodness and mercy and grace. Yes, humble. Anything less than that is a perversion of God's mandate.

When we are filled as vessels of God's love, we have no fear. Your God is that big, and I want you to trust that today. He has equipped you to bear the burdens of others, even when it seems hard. He's equipped you to love others radically, outside the standard. He's equipped you to serve self-sacrificially through his example. And he is in control of those circumstances that seem so overwhelming to you. Trust him, because perfect love casts out fear. Perfect fear casts out love.

And so please stand as we conclude with prayer. Guys, we're going to have a time of worship. And during this time, you can sing. You can worship. You can have a time of meditation.

A Time of Prayer

You can pray. It's meant to be a time of self-reflection, a moment between you and Yeshua. But if you need prayer today for any and all situations in your life, maybe something you're going through, a burden that you want to leave here today, you can do that. We have a prayer team on either side of the stage, kind of out of the way. So we invite you to take advantage of that.

Our Prayer

Yeshua, our King, our Master. We humbly come before you today with heavy hearts, knowing that we may not trust you as much as we should. And we ask, Father, that you would help us through your Holy Spirit that you say is within us now, the life-giving breath of God, that you would help us practice catching ourselves when we judge others, practice when we gossip about people in our own heads, practice when the feelings of condemnation and selecting people that we feel are unworthy of God's mercy and justice and grace and forgiveness and redemption, that you would help us practice catching the Jonas within our own heart.

Father, I ask and I thank you for this reminder that you are bigger than all of the galaxies that we can possibly see, that you are bigger than the universe itself, and that we would begin harboring that cosmic vertigo with you, understanding that you are in control of it all. But also that you would pour that same power into us, that we would actually do what we're called to do as your image bearers, and that is to correct the things in this world that ought not be through the strategy that you left us in your son, Yeshua—love, mercy, and grace.

We thank you, Father, in the name of our mighty King, we pray, amen.

Shema Yisra'el

Let's sing the Shema.

Shema Yisra'el Adonai Elohein Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity.

Now may the God of patience and encouragement grant you to be like-minded with one another. In the manner of Messiah. So that together with one voice. You glorify the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

And may the Lord bless you. And may he keep you. And may the Lord make his face to shine upon you. And be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you. And give you his peace.

Amen. Shabbat Shalom. Shalom.

Thank You and Giving

We pray this message has blessed and encouraged you and your relationship with God. And we hope that it has made the Bible more beautiful and more powerful in its impact in your life.

Founded in Truth Fellowship exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message has blessed you, or if you see God working in and through this ministry, we invite you to prayerfully consider partnering with us so that the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach all nations.

If you would like to take part in this mission, then you can do so at [foundedintruth.com slash give](https://foundedintruth.com/give), or you can scan the QR code on the screen. These offerings go toward providing resources for both our local fellowship as well as our online fellowship—future ministries that the Lord would allow us to walk through and walk in to impact the world around us with His love and grace and the bold proclamation of the gospel of King Yeshua.

We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [Foundedintruth.com](https://foundedintruth.com) EMAIL: Info@foundedintruth.com FACEBOOK: facebook.com/foundedintruth WEBSITE: Google:

Watch or listen: foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/idols-in-orbit-why-we-put-god-in-a-box/

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: foundedintruth.com/give