Christianity is Just a Crutch Memory Verse: Psalm 37:23-24

July 20th, 2025 Scripture Reading: Psalm 28

**[SLIDE 1]**

Apologetics is all about being able and ready to give a defense for the things you believe. It is about providing answers to the real questions and objections that people have when it comes to our faith. We have good reasons to believe. Our faith is not blind, it is not just wishful thinking. This sermon series has focused on many of the prominent questions non-believers have and I have tried to provide some reasonable answers that might both strengthen your own faith, but also equip you to engage in conversations with people who do not believe.

 Last week, we looked at a specific assertion that is sometime brought against Christians. It’s the idea that Christians are narrow-minded hypocrites. We could be offended by such a description, or as we talked about last week, we could absorb it. We could readily admit that, yes indeed, the Christian faith provides us with parameters and guidance. That in a world of freedom where virtually any choice is available to us, we live out a more narrow way, on purpose and for our good. We also can admit that there are times and occasions in which we do struggle to live out our faith authentically. We have all been hypocritical. We need to take responsibility for it, maybe even apologize for it, and not try to defend ourselves on such a point.

 Similar to this view, today we are going to take up a prominent critique of the Christian faith: **[SLIDE 2]** Christianity is just a crutch. The impact of this assertion is of course the idea that Christians are weak people, or at least that we are injured. We need a crutch because we cannot get around on our own. We need the extra support of an imaginary God in order to make ourselves feel better and get through the day. We would rather be happily deluded than face reality.

 How can we respond to such a claim? Well, we respond as we ought to respond to any accusation: with **[SLIDE 3]** grace and humility. We might feel that our feathers have been ruffled, we might feel the sting of harsh words, but we are mandated to turn the other cheek and to respond with grace and humility. And I think grace and humility demands that we do not just take the hit and move one, but can we take the hit and hang in there? Can we stand strong enough to take the hit and then engage with the person in question?

 If we do come across someone who holds such an opinion, if we can stand strong and engage this person, we can offer up a simple question in response: **[SLIDE 4]** *What do you mean by that?* Remember, clarity is our friend here. We want to be sure that we understand the person and that we are understood in return. It is completely appropriate to engage such a comment by looking for a little clarity. “What do you mean by that?” can be asked in a harsh way, but when it comes from a heart that seeks to love the person in question, it becomes a very gracious way of putting the ball back in their court. You are not ignoring their point, nor are you getting defensive; you are taking their words seriously and attempting to turn the interaction into a conversation.

 If they have a few reasons to offer for their opinion, good for you! You can take each of the items they offer and explain where you stand and why. You have a wonderful opportunity to clarify your beliefs and provide good reasons for them. **[SLIDE 5]**

 ((In all my life, I have never had the need to use crutches. But I know people who have had to change their entire mode of living in order to get anywhere, because, for whatever reason, they are no longer ambulatory, that is, they are unable to walk. The crutches help make it possible for these folks to get from point A to point B by providing a sort of peg leg. For those who need it, a crutch provides support.

 If that is the function of a crutch, then I suppose we can ask, does Christianity provide support to those who follow Christ? If I ask myself this question, I must respond with a resounding **[SLIDE 6]** “Yes”! I find support in my relationship with Jesus each and every day! Is Jesus Christ my crutch? It’s hard for me to deny it. Scripture echoes the same. Starting with our memory verse for this week, Psalm 37:23-24, **[SLIDE 7]**“A person’s steps are made secure by the LORD when they delight in his way. Though they trip up, they won’t be thrown down, because the LORD holds their hand.” That sounds almost exactly like a crutch. David paints a picture of a little toddler who cannot walk on his own…he needs to hold his Father’s hand.)) Also, **[SLIDE 8]** Psalm 28:7 “The LORD is my strength and my shield. My heart trusts in him. I was helped, my heart rejoiced, and I thank him with my song.” David thanks God because God has helped him. David trusts in God, he received help, God holds his hand and he appropriately gives thanks. A quick overview of David’s life reveals a man of courage, deep faith and great successes. He defeated the giant Goliath, he took on lions and bears in defense of his sheep. He led his army into great military victories. David was a strong, capable leader. A great warrior, a great king! Does David, of all people, need a helping hand? David spent many of his days fleeing from King Saul. He spent over a year living among the Philistines, Israel’s brutal enemies! David knew victory, but he also knew that he was woefully incapable without the help of God. Isaiah reflects the same sentiment. In 41:10 God speaks directly to us saying, **[SLIDE 9]** “Don’t fear, because I am with you; don’t be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.” God offers us help and strength, a veritable crutch in times of need. Yes, indeed, my relationship with God is a crutch that helps me get through this life.

 But my faith is much more than just a crutch. **[SLIDE 10]** It was July 4th many years ago in Winona MN. My family was enjoying a poolside barbeque with other members of our church at the time. Once the burgers were done, we all headed into the house to eat. As I was filling my plate someone noticed something black in the bottom of the pool. It was the t-shirt of our oldest son Noah, and he was still in it. He was \_\_\_\_\_ years old at the time and unable to swim. Having discarded his life-jacket, he slipped through a pool innertube and sank. When Noah was pulled out of the water, he was distinctly blue and not breathing. One of our friends began performing CPR on his limp little body with no effect. It wasn't until another friend turned Noah onto his side and violently smacked him square on the back before he coughed and began to breath very slightly and shallowly. Let me tell you, Noah was as good as dead, but God stepped in. He used the knowhow and the mindfulness of our friends to revive our son. Noah was spared, and despite the inability of his parents, he is still alive today. Truly Psalm 23 holds true: “The LORD is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive…” You are probably familiar with the translation, “he restores my soul.” He revives us, he brings us back, he breathes upon us and give us life.

Psalm 85 is a song written by Israel’s priests. It’s a song that pleads to God for forgiveness. Verse six is phrased as a question, asking God, “Won’t you bring us back to life again so that your people can rejoice in you?” Later in verse 12, the song concludes by saying, “Yes, the LORD gives what is good.” God, bring us back to life! Revive us! Restore us! So, in this sense, Christianity is actually much more than a crutch…I am going to call it a **[SLIDE 11]** defibrillator. A defibrillator is a machine that sends an electrical shock to a stopped heart in order to reset its rhythm and get it pumping again. It is a means of reviving a malfunctioning heart. It is a means of bringing renewal and revival. It can provide life again. Indeed, my faith in Christ is a defibrillator that revives my heart and brings me back to life.

But my faith is much more than just a defibrillator. The truth is, when I am in need of being revived, my heart is in no shape to take the shock. The hard and true fact is that I am dead…my heart is no good…it is beyond the ability to be revived. Scripture says that we are dead in our sin. Our hearts are beyond hope….What we need is more than a crutch, more than a defibrillator...we need a **[SLIDE 12]** transplant.

Our good friend and long-time church member Diane Geving has just lived this reality. **[SLIDE 13]** She struggled for over a year with a failing liver. We all saw her as she slowly faded. Her skin yellowed, her muscles weakened – things were not looking good. In fact, her condition became so bad that not even a partial liver donation from her daughter was possible. Diane’s situation was hopeless…and yet…somehow Diane and her husband Glenn attended Red Rock camp past month. She struggled through, but during that week of camp, Daine was prayed over. A large group circles around her, laid hands on her, and asked God for a miracle. Camp ended on a Sunday and late that next Tuesday night, the call came: Diane was to receive a full liver transplant. It happened! She went through the surgery and is currently in a rehabilitation unit where she is feeling better and better every day. God is good!

But what played out in Diane’s life is a spiritual reality for us all. We need a miracle! We need a transplant; not necessarily a liver but we need something brand new… **[SLIDE 14]** a new heart and a new mind. And God promises exactly what we need! Through the words of Ezekiel 36:26 God says, “I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart.” This is the transplant we need! This is the only measure that goes far enough to bring life and hope to a people mired in sin and death.

The only way this transplant works is because of the great love of God as seen at the **[SLIDE 15]** cross. The cross, from which our Savior hangs, is not just an image, not just something that happened in history, not just a painting in a church, the cross is where we come to die as well. The apostle Paul says in his letter to the **[SLIDE 16]** Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God’s Son, who loves me and gave himself for me.” The cross of Christ and the subsequent empty tomb makes this newness possible. We take hold of new life, we receive the transplant of a new heart. We can live again because Jesus lives again!

So, as a Christian, is my faith a crutch for me? The answer is yes, and so much more. My faith in Jesus is a crutch that supports me, a defibrillator that revives me, and a transplant that gives me new life! Our faith is not something that merely helps us through life, it is something that transforms our lives. God is involved in every detail, every corner of our lives. He wants to know us completely. He is a constant help in times of trouble, he brings revival to our souls, and ultimately, he provides us with a new heart that opens up to us a whole new life.

**[SLIDE 17]** Enter into that life today. Come to the cross, undergo the transplant surgery and rise with Christ into the victory of new life. It’s available to each of us. If we can come to Christ recognizing our weakness, recognizing that we cannot walk on our own, that we need his forgiveness, if we can come to a place of trust in him, believing that he died for us in order to give us new life, if we can simply cry out to him, “Help me! Save me!”, he will help. He will save. **[SLIDE 18]** 2 Corinthains 5:17 promises, “If anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!” Thanks be to God! Let us live into the new things he has provided. Amen.