



Talks

GLUE – Session 2 – Collapse

Recapping from Session 1 – Creation

So far, God has made human beings to be co-creators with him in the world. God and humans are together working to bring order out of chaos and everything is good and right and lovely. Perfect

1. Making the duff choice

A few years ago I attended a local community event - a free occasion being organised by a loving group of committed volunteers. Instead of finding a legitimate parking space a woman parked her red sports car in the disabled parking bay by the doors of the building, she then pushed her way to the front of the queue to get in, and during the event proceeded to speak in a loud voice that the event was not going the way *she* thought it should. The people around her began to avoid her and even her friends distanced themselves from her. Sadly, she was oblivious to the consequences of her perceived self-importance.

C.S. Lewis who wrote the Chronicles of Narnia was a Christian and he wrote lots of books about Christianity. In one of them he wrote this:

“There is one vice of which no person in the world is free, which every one in the world loathes when it is seen in someone else, and of which hardly any people ever imagine they are guilty themselves.”

In the words of Sir Rolf Harris, “Can you guess what it is yet?” It is pride.

For some reason human beings decide that they don’t need God.

Pride is putting ourselves first ahead of God and others. Do you notice that there is an “I” in the middle of the word pride? And when we put ourselves first, when the world revolves around us as individuals, things start to go wrong in the world. Without pride there would be no greed, anger, jealousy, lust, apathy or lack of self-control. Like the self-important woman with the red sports car, pride breaks relationships.

In one way this makes no rational sense whatsoever but in another way I understand this problem because it’s me. I do stuff all the time where I put myself first.

For all our advances in technology and collective knowledge, for all our rationalisation that there is no need for God or religion, the world really is in a bit of a mess isn’t it?

Christians assert that we are wired to be co-workers with God, to help bring order out of the chaos in peoples lives, relationships and in the environment. And yet the reality is that the world doesn’t seem to be getting any better. There is a problem and I wonder if the problem is pride.



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2. Let's take a look at our world

We live in a world where one group of people thinks they are better than another and wipes them out with machetes. We live in a world where thousands of children die every day because they don't have enough water, food, shelter or basic medical attention. And at the same time we live in a world where people spend billions on weaponry that they will probably never use. If you don't believe me go and check out a news website.

How many stories are good stories or how many are because of humans putting themselves first? Sure, there are some massive natural disasters and we do live in a world where there is still untamed chaos but perhaps if we worked together on earthquake prediction or made sure buildings were stable or sea defences were impenetrable we would see less harm? Right now we do little or nothing in global terms. I know that it's not all doom and gloom but we have to face the reality that there is something wrong with humanity. We have to own up and take responsibility for our part in the mess.

3. The consequence of pride

What's the consequence of our pride? Well, there is something about God that we need to bear in mind. God is perfect – perfectly good, righteous and just. One of the writers in the Bible describes God as 'love' itself. To sum it up in one word, God is holy. And our choice to put ourselves first before God and others puts a gap between us and God. To put it another way we are unholy. Remember – pride breaks relationship. It is not that God has withdrawn from us but us that have withdrawn from God.

Another biblical word for pride and all that results from it is the dreaded word 'sin'.

A theologian called Jürgen Moltmann defines sin as "that which separates us from God." Sin doesn't just mean the things we do but also can mean the things we don't do. Sin can be apathy or indifference. For example, if we stand by and don't act when we see an injustice in the world then that is also sin. So, some theologians assert that we are all sinning all the time! That's a scary thought!

4. Hope

The good news is that there is hope. Christians believe that God hasn't given up on the world (phew – that's a relief); that he loves us despite the fact that we've put ourselves ahead of him and ahead of others.

When God made the world and human beings he didn't just say, "Oooh, that's nice." No, he said it was "Good, very good." God loves the world he made and he loves us – despite the fact that we've put ourselves ahead of him and ahead of others. God longs to be joined with us again, for us to be holy so we can get on with the task of bringing order out of chaos together. And because God made us in his image he gave us the capacity to use our creativity for good. Despite our mess-ups and failures, God believes in us.