**"HISTORY’S #1 HOAX"**

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ince it’s been known to rain cats and dogs here, you do know the difference by now, don’t you? A dog looks at you with those Bette Davis eyes and thinks, “You love me, care for me, pet me and feed me, so you *must* be God.” But a cat smirks, “You love me, care for me, pet me and feed me. Therefore, *I* must be God.”

One of the top hoaxes ever pulled on America, excluding our politicians’ promises, was Orson Welles’ 1938 radio broadcast of H.G. Wells’ classic, *War of the Worlds*.

Now fast forward to April Fool’s Day, 1996. Taco Bell announces that to help the national debt, they’ve purchased the Liberty Bell and rechristened it the Taco Liberty Bell. What next? The Lincoln-Mercury Memorial? SmithBrothersonian Institute? Diana Ross and the Supremes Court? Statue of Liberty Mutual, Chicago the Wendy’s City. Maybe The Tower Records of London, Red Lobster Sea, Epsom Salzburg, Vienna Sausage Opera or The Great Wal-Mart of China?

Beth Moore, in her book, *Believing God*, recalls what God said to the Old Testament Jews: “You are my witnesses and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may *know* and *believe* me and *understand* that I am he” (Isaiah 43:10) "If you do not stand firm in your faith,” God cautioned, “you will not stand at all" (Isaiah 7:9).

To equip followers of Jesus Christ to stand firm, though confronted by spiritual hoaxes, Beth offers a “five-statement pledge of faith that encompasses virtually everything we're challenged to believe.” Let’s drill down into this 5-star faith and its counterfeits.

**HOAX #1. WHAT YOU SEE IS ALL THERE IS.**

**THERE IS NO SUPREME BEING.**

**DISCUSSION: What are some reasons given for denying or doubting the existence of God?**

**FACT #1. GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS.**

**DISCUSSION: What are some perceptions that people have about God?** **How does our view of God affect how we live?**

Let’s read Exodus 3:13-15 (p. NIV), John 1:1-5, (p. NIV), Mark 1:9-11 (p. 78 MSG), Matthew 16:13-17 (p. 44 MSG) and John 14:1-7 (p. 229 MSG).

While it seems narrowly arrogant to be dogmatic about ultimate truths, and seems so magnanimous to tolerate everyone’s spiritual master, the stakes are much too high for political correctness. My friend Tom Shrader nails it: “I’m sure of one thing: there *is* a God, and I’m not him.” Jesus Christ proved He’s God by His resurrection.

**HOAX #2. I AM A PRODUCT OF MY BACKGROUND**

**AND OF OTHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ME.**

**DISCUSSION: Why and how do we define people?**

**FACT #2. YOU ARE WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE.**

DISCUSSION: How would others describe you? How has that affected you? How do you describe yourself?

Let’s read Ephesians 1:3-12 (p. 422 MSG), 1 John 5:9-13 (p. NIV), and Ephesians 2:1-6 (p. 423 MSG),

Being certain of who God says we are is our baseline of Truth. Any other opinion is irrelevant. When the *all-mighty God* of the universe tells you, “My son, I love you, I’ve forgiven all your sins, and in my eyes you’re perfect,”… pray tell, what else matters!!!

## HOAX #3. THERE’S ABSOLUTELY NO ABSOLUTE TRUTH. THE BIBLE’S FULL OF FABLES AND ERRORS.

 **DISCUSSION: How do people assess right from wrong?**

**FACT #3. GOD WILL DO WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO.**

Astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross: “Unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events, in detail, many years, sometimes centuries before they occur. Approximately 2,500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2,000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors. (The remaining 500 or so reach into the future and may be seen unfolding as days go by.) Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten, and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in 10 to the 2,000th power (that is 1 with 2,000 zeros after it)!”

What *has* God promised? He’ll never abandon those who trust Him (Hebrews 13). Jesus will return to take them to be with Him forever in heaven (John 14, 1 Thessalonians 4). Because Jesus sacrificed His life for us on the cross to forgive *all* our sins, believers will never face God’s eternal judgment for their sins (Hebrews 9, Romans 8). (Of course, in this life we’ll pay the natural consequences for our sins.) God will give His believers peace that’s indescribable (John 14), and wisdom to make right choices (James 1), protection (Psalm 91), and meet your needs (Philippians 4). All this and heaven, too!

**HOAX #4: I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.**

The poster boy here is 19th century poet William Earnest Henley:

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the Pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll.

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.

**DISCUSSION: How much control over life’s circumstances do we truly have? What attitude does this foster?**

**FACT #4. WITH CHRIST’S STRENGTH**

**I CAN DEAL WITH ANYTHING.**

After turning yourself in to God, agreeing with Him that you’re a sinner, and then receiving His no-strings, 100% pardon, be sure to read the disclaimer that your new life with Jesus won’t be pain-free.

But God’s warranty is all-inclusive, assuring you that He’s able and faithful to see you through any and all gunk.

Every salesperson worth his rate card knows and acts on this axiom: NO PROBLEMS = NO PROFIT. And NO PROBLEMS = NO GROWTH. So why should following Christ down here be any different! We’re not Superman; ah, but we have a Super God!

**Let’s read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10 (p. 404 MSG) and Philippians 4:6-14 (p. 430 MSG).**

**FACT #5. GOD’S WORD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE IN ME.**

*Purpose Driven Life* author Rick Warren: “ … life is preparation for eternity. We were made to last forever, and God wants us to be with Him in Heaven (not in a place of endless torment which the Bible calls “hell”). … We were made by God and for God, and until you figure that out, life isn't going to make sense.”

To help us figure that out, God has given us His owner’s manual. He made us; He made the world; all we need to know about Him, life and eternity is there to shine His light on our daily path.

This 5-star Shield of Faith is an instant reminder of the Rock-solid hope and meaning on which your new life in Christ is anchored. It’s either that Good News, or we slide back into believing …….

**HISTORY’S #1 HOAX -- IT’S ALL ABOUT ME!**

No, it’s all about *God*. And His love is all about *you*.

Are you on board God’s peace train? Here’s how to get your ticket? Simply tell Him something like: “Dear God, I’m in shock to think that You’ve already forgiven *me* of all *my* sins? But that’s what the Bible says, and I’m ready now to believe it and to receive this Gift of all gifts. Your Son Jesus hung there for me on that cross and paid my ticket in full. I humbly accept it now, and give You my life. And I’ll thank you for the rest of my days. Amen.”

His Deal

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www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

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The Believer’s

**5-Star Shield of Faith**

**FACT #1. GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS.**

**FACT #2. YOU ARE WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE.**

**FACT #3. GOD WILL DO WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO.**

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