

CRITICAL THINKING IN A RELATIVISTIC WORLD

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OBJECTIVES:

- Identify some of the false claims and deceptions our kids are subjected to
- Define critical thinking and understand why it is important
- Note four dimensions of critical thinking and analyze six principles to apply to think critically
- Access effective resources to build your child's critical thinking skills

RIDDLE ME THIS?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Ever hear any of these claims?

- We only use 10% of our brains.

The truth:

- The rock band's name, KISS, is an acronym for "Knights (or Kings) In Satan's Service."

The truth:

- Microsoft (or Walmart, or any other big corporation) will give you \$1.00 for every person you forward this email to.

The truth:

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

To put it simply, critical thinking is the process of making reasoned judgments that are logical and well thought out. It involves wanting to see the evidence that supports an argument or conclusion.

WHY IS CRITICAL THINKING IMPORTANT?

- **God says so—Colossians 2:8**

Scripture:

Proverbs 14:15

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Acts 17:11

2 Timothy 2:7

John 4:1

Proverbs 18:17

- **Satan opposes it**

Post-modernism (obliterates truth; blurs the lines of morality)

4 DIMENSIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING

1. _____ Arguments and Truth Claims

2. _____ Personal Bias and Preferences

3. _____ Good Arguments

4. Make _____ Decisions

6 PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND TRUTH CLAIMS

1. Seek _____.

Key questions:

2. Strive for _____.

Caution: _____

3. Pursue _____.

Key questions:

4. Demand _____.

Two indicators to watch for:

5. Insist that arguments make _____.

Non sequitur: _____

Key question: _____

6. Keep the discourse _____.

Red herring: _____

Straw Man: _____

Critical Thinking Question Prompts

- What makes _____ possible?
- How could _____ and _____ function together?
- What details are most important and why?
- What evidence can you present for or against _____?
- How is _____ an example of _____?
- What are the most important parts or features of _____?
- Describe _____ from the perspective of _____?
- How could you judge the accuracy of _____?
- What is the big idea or main point of _____?
- How does _____ compare or contrast with _____?
- Do you agree that _____? Why or why not? Explain.
- Why is _____ significant?
- What information would you need to make a decision about _____?
- What solutions would you suggest for _____? Explain your reasoning.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of _____?
- What are the differences between _____ and _____?
- When might _____ be most useful and why?
- How is _____ related to _____?

Handout 6: How Do We Know That Jesus Rose from the Dead?



The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the strongest evidence we can present in support of His deity. However, when we use the resurrection as evidence that He is God, the question usually arises, “How do you know that Jesus rose from the dead?”

Locate and read the following Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 15:3–8
Matthew 28:1–8

Mark 16:1–13
Luke 24:1–12

John 20

Our first line of evidence in favor of the resurrection is found in the Bible. The Bible tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. All four Gospel narratives go into vivid details of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension (bodily going back up to Heaven). Paul dedicates an entire chapter to the resurrection in 1 Corinthians, beginning with the words, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). If the Apostle Paul used “the Scriptures” as his primary support for the resurrection, we would be wise to do the same.

In addition to the biblical case for the resurrection, numerous facts about the resurrection are documented in historical extrabiblical sources. These facts—established in the Bible and strongly supported by historical sources outside of the Bible—make for a very strong case in support of the resurrection. This is known as “The Minimal Facts Approach.”¹ What are these facts?

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. Jesus’ disciples encountered the risen Jesus and were radically transformed as a result.
3. The church persecutor, Paul, was suddenly changed because he encountered the risen Jesus.
4. The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed because he encountered the risen Jesus.
5. The tomb was empty.

Let’s consider these briefly.

1. **Jesus died by crucifixion.** While this may not seem relevant, a case for a “resurrection” cannot be made unless a death has occurred. In addition to the biblical accounts, numerous historians wrote about the crucifixion of Jesus. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, wrote, “When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst

¹ The “Minimal Facts Approach” was developed by Gary Habermas and Mike Licona, New Testament scholars who have researched the resurrection extensively. The complete case can be found in Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004). This section of the handout is adapted from their book.

us, had condemned him to be crucified”² He was not alone in confirming the death of Jesus by crucifixion. Pliny, Tacitus, Lucian of Samosata, and other ancient writers also attested to the fact.

2. **Jesus’ disciples encountered the risen Jesus and were radically transformed as a result.** On the night of Jesus’ arrest, the disciples fled in fear for their lives. Peter’s boldness quickly dissipated, and he found himself denying that he ever knew Jesus—because he feared for his life. Yet a few days later, these same disciples are found boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. All but John were apparently killed as martyrs for proclaiming the resurrection. How do we explain this? They saw a dead man come back to life!

In addition to the biblical case, Clement, the first century church father wrote, “. . . having received orders and complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and believing the Word of God, they went with the Holy Spirit’s certainty preaching the good news.”³ Seeing the risen Jesus emboldened the disciples and led them to spread the gospel throughout the world.

3. **The church persecutor, Paul, was suddenly changed because he encountered the risen Jesus.** Paul’s conversion is interesting because he was an enemy of the church when he claimed to have encountered the risen Jesus. He was radically transformed into a follower of Christ—literally from one day to the next. His conversion story was so powerful that it is found in the writings of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Tertullian, Dionysius of Corinth, and Origen (in addition to Luke and Paul himself).
4. **The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed because he encountered the risen Jesus.** The Gospels are clear that Jesus’ brothers, including James, were unbelievers during his ministry. However, 1 Corinthians 15:3–7 lists an appearance of the risen Jesus to his brother James. Not too long after that encounter, James is identified as a leader of the church in Jerusalem. Not only did James convert to Christianity, but his beliefs in Jesus and His resurrection were so strong that he also died a martyr for them. His martyrdom is confirmed by Josephus, Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius. Another scholar, Reginald Fuller, states that “We need such an appearance in order to account for two things: James’s conversion from skepticism and his elevation to the pastorate of the church in Jerusalem, the center of ancient Christianity.”⁴
5. **The tomb was empty.** It would have been impossible for Christianity to get off the ground in Jerusalem if His body had still been in the tomb. By simply producing the corpse, the enemies of Christianity would have shattered the hoax. It is worth mentioning that if the disciples had somehow managed to steal the body, none of the appearances of Jesus would have been possible. Thus, the empty tomb fits well with the previous four facts. Regarding the historical evidence for an empty tomb, Oxford historian William Ward states, “All the strictly historical evidence we have is in favor of the empty tomb, and those scholars who reject it ought to do so on some other ground than that of a scientific history.”⁵

² Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Ant. 1), 63–64.

³ Clement of Rome, *Letter to Church in Corinth* (AD 95).

⁴ Gary R. Habermas and Mike R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 68.

⁵ Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Resurrection: A First-Century Reporter Investigates the Story of the Cross*

These five historically documented facts make a very strong case for the truth of the resurrection accounts found in the Gospels.

One additional argument, more philosophical in nature, can be found in the writings of C.S. Lewis. In *Mere Christianity*, he presents an argument that helps us to evaluate Jesus' claims. It is called the trilemma, or "Lord, liar, or lunatic" argument.⁶ Lewis argued that those who claim Jesus was just a good moral teacher overlook the claims that Jesus made about being God. If Jesus were not actually God in the flesh, He couldn't be a good, moral teacher. He would have to be seen as either a liar or a lunatic (or both). However, if He was indeed a great, moral teacher, then it follows that He must really be God.

Watch the video *There Is No Evidence for the Resurrection* by scanning this QR code.



(Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2007).

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 55–56.