

Set 4 - Lecture 1

(0:18 - 0:44)

Let's start out with a word of prayer. Lord, we offer up this time to you. Lord, give us clarity.

We pray for your Holy Spirit's presence to be able to understand the issues that are before us in the New Age movement, be able to come to some clarity, and above all, be able to speak the truth in love to people that we encounter. In Christ's name. Amen.

(0:47 - 2:10)

This New Age movement has been a movement that's exploded onto the American scene and internationally. And it's something that's been going on for quite a while. And I'm going to be trying to give you some insights in order to describe what it is and contrast it with a biblical view and then also give you some points of response that you can make to it.

But one of the most important things to keep in mind is that it's more than a matter of argument. It's often people that have emotional pain that's associated with their encounters with Christianity. I've had many different encounters with people within the New Age movement, including I've had a chance to meet with many of the top national, international New Age leaders.

In fact, one time I was at a conference for four days with evangelical leaders and New Age leaders from around the country, around the world. And we spent the days talking about our spiritual journeys and having many discussions over breakfast, lunch, and dinner on these issues. And as we talked and as people shared one by one their spiritual journeys, many of those who are believers in Christ, our hearts sank and stomachs twisted at the stories and how they've been treated by Christians and Christianity.

(2:10 - 5:53)

Every single one of the people that were there at that conference had been at some point part of Christian churches and had been profoundly hurt by those churches. In many ways, as we'll see later too with the issue of cults, the New Age movement is the unpaid bills of the church. There's profound pain that's present.

So that if you do anything, it's important to listen and really see what the true root is. If you start right in on engaging the subjects or issues intellectually or logically, you'll probably be missing the main point. Many people feel that they've tried Christianity and found it wanting and sort of X'd it off the list, whereas they may not know the true variety and they often have not gotten a real clear view of who Jesus is because of their encounters with Christians and Christianity.

It has obscured or clouded any kind of vision of who Jesus is. So the most important thing is to give them a clear picture of Jesus and be able to sift through some of the wrong conceptions or misconceptions, some of the hypocrisy and sinfulness of believers that they have encountered. So that's very important to really respond in love and to understand that there's often a deeper emotional issue behind the intellectual one.

All right, well, let me quickly try to describe, and this will be going through fairly quickly, some of these issues. What is the New Age movement? Essentially, the New Age movement, as I'm addressing it, is a combination of forces from Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Native American perspective. But in many ways, it's Eastern religion in Western dress.

Back in the 60s, it was Eastern religion in Eastern dress when you had the Hare Krishnas in their orange saffron robes and shaved heads. But the New Age movement has gone underground or maybe stayed on the surface and changed to where you can wear traditional Western clothes and have your material possessions. You don't need to tune in and drop out of society and live in communes without any possessions.

You can have your possessions and have your New Age beliefs as well. For instance, in Washington, D.C., there was a radio station back a while ago. It was called a New Age station, and it was symbolically, it had as the call letters, WBMW, perhaps indicating the socioeconomic level of people now in the New Age.

In fact, it takes a lot of money to participate in New Age seminars and the various techniques and methods that are involved. So it's often targeted towards people that are upper middle class or upper class rather than those that are more middle class and lower class. And that's often because the threats that are out there in this world of distinction are all too real with people, say, in the inner cities.

So you don't see New Age movement having quite the same appeal in that context as, say, in Orange County, California or in a sort of high-level suburb where you're immune from a lot of the different attacks or difficulties of life. I would say that the core of the New Age is clear, but the edges are unclear. I'll try to describe that core in just a minute, but the analogy I use for the New Age, it's much like a beef stew.

(5:54 - 10:56)

A beef stew is a beef stew, but just because you've had one beef stew, it doesn't mean you've had all beef stews, because the difference often is the cut of meat, whether some people put in carrots or leave them out, tomatoes or leave them out, celery and so on and so on, different spices. So even though you have a beef stew, it may be very different than other beef stews. But I would say that even though the core is clear, you can call the New Age the New Age, you call beef stew a beef stew, different people throw in their different elements that give them a unique twist to it.

Some people might throw a little bit of Hinduism in, some people leave it out, some people Buddhism, some people Taoism or Native American or various other kinds of approaches, and they make their own unique mix so that you have to listen very carefully for the shape of the thought or for the taste of the thought that you're listening to. But it's important to realize that underneath it there's some common assumptions despite all of the differences. You've got to listen for the differences, but you also have to know the similarities that underlie these different views.

Now there are many different and varying examples, just a couple for your mention of the many. Say one advocate that's often known as Shirley MacLaine, and she's written some books on the subject of the New Age and her experiences with them. And she's done a mini-series out on the limb for television that's sometimes replayed on late night television.

It really talks about her experiences with various New Age practices including channeling, where people will channel spirits from another realm that really teach very distinctively New Age beliefs. You go to New Age bookstores or to go to bookstores in general, say Borders or Barnes and Noble, you'll find very large New Age section. You'll find much channeled material as part of the books that are present there.

But the content of the channeled messages is very similar along the lines of the assumptions that I'm going to describe. There was, back a while ago, a full page ad put out in USA Today by Benjamin Cream in the Terra Center. And basically it was various quotes from someone who was going to be a New Age Christ soon to make an appearance.

Benjamin Cream was playing, so to speak, John the Baptist for this New Age Christ. And it said in the middle of the page, the Christ is now here. Your brother walks among you.

And had all these quotes from this New Age Christ. Well, Benjamin Cream maintained that this New Age Christ was a Pakistani living in London and would soon make himself known on national TV or in a very visible way, very dramatic way, so that everybody would know who he is. It's been years, 20, 25 years since he was saying these things.

And of course, nobody's ever been forthcoming. I came across another example of this, a whole magazine that was sent to me about meditating with Atmananda. And many of the different things in the magazine were experiences of people who gave their testimonies of what it was like to meditate with this guru.

And the experiences were very dramatic. And on the back of the magazine, it gave a picture of this man, a Caucasian, Dr. Frederick Lentz. And it gave on the back of the magazine his resume.

And his resume was from 15 so-and-so to 15 so-and-so, a Tibetan Lama. And from 16 so-and-so to 16 so-and-so, a guru in India, and so on and so on. His past life resume, the idea was the framework of reincarnation underlying it.

And often we find this issue of reincarnation surfacing in a lot of the different beliefs. In fact, some polls have shown that 23 to 25% in America and Western Europe believe in reincarnation. Now, that's pretty high.

One in four people believe in reincarnation. Some of them may not hold to fully full-blown New Age beliefs, but it's interesting to see that number, even so much so that it's touched middle America. Back a while ago, Garrison Keillor put together a poem on Prairie Home Companion, a cowboy's view of reincarnation.

And it's not a serious addressing of the issue, but I thought I'd read it to you. Here's the way it goes. What is reincarnation, the cowboy asked his friend.

(10:57 - 11:21)

It starts, his old pal told him, when your life comes to its end. They combs your hair and wash your neck and cleans your fingernails and put you in a padded box away from last travails. Now, the box in you goes in a hole that's been dug in the ground.

Reincarnation starts in when you're planted beneath that mound. Them clods melts down just like the box in you who is inside. And that's when you're beginning your transformation ride.

(11:22 - 11:43)

And in a while, the grass will grow upon your rendered mound until someday upon that spot a lonely flower is found. And then a horse may wander by and graze upon that flower that once was you and has now become your vegetative bower. Now, the flower that the horse done at along with his other feed makes bone and fat and muscle essential to the steed.

(11:43 - 13:42)

But there's a part that he can't use and so it passes through. And there it lies upon the ground, this thing that once was you. And if perchance I should pass by and see this on the ground, I'll stop a while and I'll ponder at this object that I found.

And I'll think about reincarnation and life and death and such. And I'll come away concluding why you ain't changed all that much. Well, not as serious dealing with the issue, but even new age people like it.

I've shared it with them and so it's, I don't think it's a low blow. It's just a fun thing. In any case, it perhaps shows reincarnation is known in middle America as well as on the fringes of our society.

So it's spread widely. Many people hold to it. I would say it's always good when you're addressing issue to put it very simply.

All conceptualization involves oversimplification and then move gradually into more and more distinctions and complexity. Let me just put it very simply to start out. The common values or common philosophy, the common assumption of the new age movement is all is one.

All is one. Or to put it negatively in the way that Marilyn Ferguson, new age author puts it, the negative way of putting the all is one is the principle of non-distinction. Again the principle of non-distinction.

And that means that the distinctions in terms of the ways that we think or the ways that we experience the world are somehow or another unreal. The distinction between you and me, between me and this podium, between me and say the books back there is somehow or another illusion or maya. That even though we see things and experience things and think of things as distinct or separate, they're actually one.

(13:43 - 15:35)

That's the bedrock assumption. We'll come back to that and illustrate it a little bit further in a minute. The common vision that makes the new age unique and different in many ways from Hinduism and Buddhism as held in the East is the optimism about a coming new age.

We see it back in the 60s and 70s in the age of Aquarius, that song. The idea that we're coming on the verge of an awakening. That if we just are able to get enough people meditating that there'll be an explosion of consciousness.

Some of the symbolic books like one of them, Childhood's End by Arthur Clarke, who also did 2001's Space Odyssey, or another little book called The Hundredth Monkey. It says if you get enough monkeys in a colony doing a particular practice, then the whole colony of monkeys starts doing it. The idea is that there can be a spread of consciousness.

If you get one people and a few people just reaching this level of consciousness of the one, then it will just spread exponentially throughout the society. The argument is we're on the wave of what's going to happen in the future. So it's a very optimistic perspective, whereas in many cases in the East it's very pessimistic with many, many reincarnations to go through.

The sort of slow way up the mountain, whereas the new age movement in many ways, in a characteristic Western way, shows the fast way up the mountain. The way to get there now or very quickly. Not pessimistic but very optimistic about world peace and unity and being able to accomplish consciousness.

(15:36 - 19:37)

Being able to alter reality on our own. Well, we'll come back to it in a little bit to give further clarification. But why do we need to know about it? I think it's exploded onto the scene in the United States and internationally.

And we see it in many different levels. First of all in films. We see many different films that come from a new age perspective.

Perhaps the most famous is the Star Wars series. Joseph Campbell in a video series, Power of Myth, talks about a time when he was living on Skywalker Ranch with George Lucas. And he said that Lucas' purpose in creating Star Wars was to create a new age mythology that would prepare the groundwork for people to be able to receive new age teaching.

Just to say, I'm putting it this way, as C.S. Lewis had to have his imagination baptized so that he could come to understand belief in God. So Star Wars' purpose, according to Lucas, was in another way to baptize the imagination of people to prepare them for the new age teaching that was to come. Prepare the groundwork.

Give people the framework and the ideas that are present. There are many things in the Star Wars series that show it. In the first series, if you've ever been to Disneyland or Disney World, you may have been through the Star Wars simulator, the jet that goes in, the spaceship that goes in.

And in the final scene of Star Wars, the first one that was made, you have Luke Skywalker going into the trench and he's going to have to hit his torpedo into this little hole in the front of the ship. The first time he

goes through, he uses his instruments and he fails with the issue. And the second time he goes through, it's the last time before the Death Star is armed and able to take out the planet.

And he's getting shot and the situation looks desperate and the word comes to him, you know, listen to the force or feel the force, Luke. And he does away with his instruments. And you can hear the people up above saying, he's gone off his instruments, Luke, Luke.

And so he more or less closes his eyes and he feels the force and goes with his intuition and his feelings, gets rid of his mind, his senses in this mechanical world. Just goes with his feelings and of course he hits the bullseye. Very much New Age, a depreciation of reason and experience and senses and a really going with your heart and with your experience as being the primary value of things.

Well, there's been an explosion as well, we see it in culture, of New Age books. It used to be there were many New Age bookstores, not too long ago. Now, there are not so many because they've been taken over by Borders and Barnes and Noble and many other places where it used to be that New Age books or channel books were in a very tiny section of the bookstore called the occult section.

Now, in all these big book chains, you'll see a New Age section that will be at least as large or larger than the Christian or religious book section. And that shows the market that there is out there and available, a massive market for these books. It shows something of the receptiveness of people in American society to this movement.

(19:38 - 20:00)

In psychology, there's a transpersonal and human potential movement. Some advocates that have, are along these lines, Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow. Carl Jung had many encounters with, his views are very close to Taoism and he had many different encounters with spirits.

(20:00 - 33:34)

In fact, one of his main works, it seemed, was Spirit Channels or at least it was automatic writing where he wrote down in this one essay all the major ideas that later became the shape of his thought. Abraham Maslow thinks of a hierarchy of needs and the highest level is that of the peak experience, which is more an identification or merging yourself with that of the one than a biblical or Christian idea of worship of God. In any case, there's many developments along the lines of psychology that would be in this camp.

In science, there's a New Age physics. For instance, there's a book, Fritzov-Kopra has written a book called The Tao of Physics that argues that physics really moves us in a New Age direction. In business, there are many New Age management seminars and I've had many different people come and talk to me about these seminars.

I don't have time to go through and illustrate them, but there are many that are out there being sponsored and mandatory for people in government agencies and in major corporations where at least on the surface, you might not see the New Age perspective, but in the leadership development level, it becomes explicit in teaching the leaders that will teach the seminars. In education, there's much use of visualization techniques or guided imagery. Now, guided imagery and use of imagination is a good thing, but often these are used to perpetuate a New Age philosophy or perspective.

In medicine, there's the use of holistic health. And again, Western medicine doesn't have all the answers and we are holistic people and we do need to take into account the physical and the emotional and the spiritual dimensions, but the holistic health is in many cases very profoundly connected with the New Age movement so that if you go to a holistic health practitioner and it helps you at all, if it works at all, you're often given the New Age perspective or New Age thought as the reason why it works. So the entry point for many people into the New Age movement is through holistic health and I'm not speaking negatively about all of holistic health, although I think it's a mixed bag.

Different approaches or techniques have varying values for different reasons and there are whole books available that will evaluate all these different approaches according to their value. In politics, there's a book called *New Age Politics* by Mark Satin and there are lobby groups up on Capitol Hill that work to push New Age agendas into government bills. In sports, there are many, many books out on how meditation or the New Age approach can help in terms of tennis and golf and other sports.

Perhaps the most famous person that uses it is Phil Jackson who uses more Buddhist meditation with the Bulls and now with the Lakers and there are many other approaches that are used in sports to improve your athletic game and we can evaluate that in tremendous ways. There are various religious movements infiltrating other countries and are spreading nationally and internationally. Back after the Berlin Wall came down, I went over and spoke a couple different times for weeks at a time in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union on a variety of issues, but particularly on the New Age movement.

I spoke for a couple days to 120 pastors in Cluj, Romania. I spoke in Budapest two different years to various audiences on the New Age. I spoke in Novosibirsk, Siberia to Baptist district superintendents from all over Russia and it was amazing as I spoke like in Sofia, Bulgaria at the university there and got people's responses and questions.

The number of people that were being drawn to New Age beliefs, the number of books in the bookstore, say you go through Budapest, Hungary and on the walking street there are many, many books in the bookstores that had a New Age feel to it. So when the wall came down, there are many believers in Christ that went into the Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but so did many other groups, many different cultic groups and many New Age groups went in there and having a great influence. When I spoke to those 120 pastors, it was amazing to see how well they knew these influences and how profound their questions were.

Again, we spent Friday night and really all day Saturday addressing the issues. I was supposed to be done at 4.30, but because of having to speak and have translation, it took longer and they insisted that I go on to 6 because I hadn't finished all the things I had to say. They were really hungry to have tools to be able to respond to these things in their ministries.

Well, how can we recognize a New Age movement in a deeper way? Well, essentially, as I said earlier, it's all is one and the negative way of putting it is the principle of non-distinction. Let me give you a couple illustrations of how this works out. George Leonard, in his book, *The Transformation*, talks about how in a recovery of this New Age perspective, we've got to do away with certain ways of thinking that Western thought has perpetuated.

Like in Western thought, we think of the idea of the separate species. We spend a lot of time in biology and botany classifying and distinguishing between species of animals or types of plants or even elements in chemistry. We spend a lot of time doing that kind of thing, but he said when we recover this New Age or Eastern way of thinking, we'll do away with the idea of the separate species and we'll come to realize that there's only one species on this planet and its name is life on Earth.

We spend a lot of time in the West, he says, dealing with the idea of the separate ego and our own individuality and uniqueness and perpetuating that in terms of human potential and in terms of psychology. He said that when we recover this Eastern or New Age way of thinking, we'll do away with the idea of the separate ego and we'll come to see that consciousness has no skin. Again, consciousness has no skin, that these things that we think are separate and distinct are not really separate and distinct.

Along with this, and we'll come back to this in a little bit, good and evil are one. There's no ultimate distinction there or that which is true and false is ultimately one. All the distinctions we make in terms of logic, all the distinctions we make in terms of the words we write, the ways that we think, the distinctions we make in our communication, even though they may sort of get us up the ladder sooner or later, these are realities beyond any ability to conceive or beyond logic, beyond good and evil.

So it's a radically different way of thinking that undermines or contradicts all the assumptions that we hold within the West and within the biblical and Christian framework. Second main assumption that really flows out of this all is one idea, is the idea that you are divine or in a sense you are God. Because you participate in oneness, there's a sense in which you have deity within you.

For instance, Shirley MacLaine in her miniseries *Out on a Limb* has this one scene where she and her guru are seated on a beach and he's trying to get her to think through the implications here. All is one, the universe is so to speak divine and you're part of it so that there's a sense in which in participating in the oneness of all things that you are God. You're a part of God but you are God.

Can't you say it? You know, I am God. And she first of all tentatively says it and by the end of the scene she and her guru are standing facing the beach with arms upraised and shouting, I am God. I am God.

Now not every New Age approach would lead to this kind of expression but many, including say Sai Baba, a leading guru in India that's very much respected by people in New Age says something like this, that you are the God of this universe. In fact, one of the things that's characteristic throughout all New Age literature and even a lot of the channel literature is this idea that you are God. You participate in oneness, there's a sense in which you are God.

And it's held that this approach has great potential to increase your self-image. However, I would say on the other hand, when you see that the ultimate end or destiny of your Godhood is extinction or absorption, which is the end in Hinduism, the ending goal of life is absorption like a drop is absorbed in the ocean. That's the image that Shankara used in Shankara, Advaitin Hinduism.

Or in Buddhism, at least some forms of Buddhism, the end and goal of life is extinction. So that on the one hand you are God but your destiny is to really obliterate your individuality. That there is no self in the first place, many Buddhists say.

Third, the whole purpose of life is to alter our consciousness so that we see that all is one and that we are divine. The most basic problem that human beings have is not biblically speaking sin, but it's in the New Age the problem is ignorance or a failure to alter our consciousness to see things or experience things as they really are. And so there are many different methods and techniques, what I would call psycho-technologies.

These are methods and means of altering the psyche so that you come to have a different experience, this experience of oneness with the universe. Now there are hundreds and thousands of these. In fact, I've come across New Age directories, say one called *Common Ground*, where there will be a couple hundred pages of groups and have three or four or five advertisements per page of different groups that use various techniques to alter the consciousness.

Now if you were to experience these groups, say see individual advertisements for these things, you might not connect it with the New Age movement unless you knew that there are certain common ground. The common ground is resources for personal social transformation, but the common ground is also in this all is one philosophy. So it's many and diverse, everything from various holistic health methods to massage therapy to various spas, yoga classes, and some of the areas that are sensory deprivation tanks, where you float in a kind of weightlessness and you have hallucinations or altered state of consciousness that you experience, various seminars such as the forum, also LifeSpring or Silver Mind Control, various types of yoga, Hatha yoga, Tantric yoga.

Yoga is a central discipline for reaching the Hindu altered state of consciousness and connecting with the one. Various holistic health methods, various therapies, Gestalt and many others are part of these psychotechnologies. Again there are hundreds and hundreds of these that are out there in the culture as methods or means for altering the psyche.

The ultimate result, fourthly, is unlimited power. That if you can alter your consciousness, the idea is you can do anything. You could travel to other planets through astral projection.

You could theoretically be perfectly well. If all reality is a matter of consciousness and I'm sick, theoretically then I could make myself well. I could live forever.

It could stop old age and death. I could theoretically pick up, say, a chair here and without touching it with my consciousness move it around the room and set it down. Anything's possible theoretically to an altered consciousness.

(33:34 - 35:19)

If all is consciousness and I can learn to channel my consciousness, I can do anything. Another statement that's often used in new age circles is something like this, that you create your own reality. That you're responsible for whatever happens to you.

The reason that events happen in your life is because you've made them happen. You've, through your consciousness, brought them into being. Or another statement that was in Marilyn Ferguson's book, *The Inquiring Conspiracy*, over the chapter on holistic health was this, you can have it as you imagine and as you will.

Again, the statement is you can have it as you imagine and as you will. The only limit to your being able to be healed is your imagination. You can accomplish anything through your imagination.

If you believe the word, if you believe what you think, then it will happen. Many examples of this in the new age movement, some firewalking seminars where you spend a whole day meditating on various things and then you walk across a bed of hot coals at the end of the evening. Or various levitation seminars where you sit in a lotus position and on something that's bouncy and you bounce up and down with the idea if you focus your consciousness enough, you can get yourself a little bit higher the next time.

With the idea of ultimately levitating. Various forms of healing. In one case I met with a man that was coming back towards Christ through going through one of these techniques.

(35:20 - 35:30)

He'd been involved for 15 years as a senior researcher for a very large, famous new age think tank. He was a senior researcher. Worked with Bill Moyers on a holistic health series.

(35:31 - 36:49)

And essentially at a firewalking seminar, they said, well, what is it that you can accomplish if you're able to walk across this bed of hot coals? What is it you could also accomplish? And everybody was going around the circle and saying what it was, and when it came to him he didn't know what he was going to say, but he said, I want to know God better. When I heard him say that, I got goosebumps. Because I realized in that step of I want to know God better, he moved from the impersonal one to a God who was distinct from him that he could really know.

That's a major jump. To jump across the Grand Canyon from a new age perspective to a more biblical perspective. Very radical move.

And so he came to me to see whether he could find a home in his Christian heritage where he had ultimately started. Because he said he couldn't find a home, even after knowing all the top national international new age leaders, couldn't find a home in any of the eastern disciplines. And he also said he was profoundly disillusioned and disappointed by these leaders because he found them so narcissistic.

(36:49 - 37:46)

And we'll come back to that at the very end of the talk today. In any case, what then is the contrast between the new age and the biblical perspective? Well, to put it quickly, it's this. First of all, the new age movement says that all is one.

Biblically we'd say no, creation is real and good. That's the main assumption, that this world of distinction is real and it's good. In the new age movement, all is, or you are divine.

Biblically, no, you're not divine. You are a creature, created in God's image to be sure, but the ultimate distinction is between you and the creation and between you and God. And you are not divine.

(37:47 - 38:16)

You're created to worship your creator. The ultimate gap between the creature and the creator is very important, right through the Old Testament and the New Testament. The kings, for instance, in the Old Testament are evaluated by the degree to which they compromise with this pagan worship, but often that pagan worship was a worship of various aspects of the creation, like the moon, or the golden calf, or various other things, some manifestation of the creation.

(38:16 - 46:30)

So that in many ways, ancient paganism was connected with something of this new age, old age perspective, this pantheist perspective, or the idea that all is God, or all is one. So the ultimate purpose for the new age is to alter consciousness, so that you see that all is one and that you're divine. The ultimate purpose, biblically speaking, is to alter the direction of our existence.

I would say, first of all, you could probably put it in other ways to say that to glorify God and enjoy him forever would be the ultimate purpose of the believer. But you could put it another way, just to keep the phrases clear, the new age movement says to alter your consciousness, whereas biblically we want to alter the direction of our existence, so that we are by our own sinful nature in opposition to God, saying my will be done. We're headed this way.

What I need is to be turned around, to turn around so that I'm no longer pursuing my own will, but saying thy will be done. So there's a whole different direction, and the basic problem is that of sin, and my rebellion against God. And so this idea of repentance, or this 180 degree turnaround, this metanoia is the biblical word that's used for it, a change of mind, a change of direction, is at the very root of the biblical perspective.

Fourth, the promise of the new age is unlimited power. In the scriptures, you have the promise of power, but it's limited. Only God has unlimited power.

There is power, dunamis, available, but we don't have unlimited power as is promised in the new age. The basic promise of deity given in the new age is the most basic sin right from the beginning of scripture. In Genesis 3, the temptation of the serpent was, ye shall be as gods.

In idolatry is worshiping anything in the creation. In Romans 1, it talks about the problem being worshiping and serving the creature rather than the creator. Many ways that new age perspective perpetuates the ultimate imperfectionism, where we say about ourselves and about the universe, we are unlimited, infinite, perfect, and we can ultimately be in control of our lives.

And I've actually seen books from a new age perspective that will lay that out, that you are perfect is the main idea. And the main problem we have in life is we don't realize that we are already perfect, that you're okay just the way you are. There is no such thing as sin.

You don't need atonement because you already have the at-one-ment, and there is no such thing as sin or evil that separates us from God. On the other hand, biblically speaking, we're to say we are limited, finite, and fallen. We're limited and finite with respect to creation.

We're fallen, of course, with respect to the fall, and we cannot ultimately be in control of our lives. And of course, we need redemption. We can't redeem ourselves, we need the redemption of another.

So that the ultimate distinction there is at the root. Well, how can we respond to this new age? Let me just underline again the idea that remember that the problem is often more emotional than intellectual, but I want to touch on some of the places where we can respond intellectually. First of all, the view of reality that the new age movement puts forward is profoundly flawed and is in many ways an Achilles heel of the new age perspective.

If truth is that which corresponds to reality, what greater lie could there be than to deny all of that reality? That essentially is what the new age movement does. It denies the idea of logic, my ability to distinguish between you being there and not being there, the reality of experience, the idea that you are distinct from me, and the idea of individuality. It denies the reality and goodness of the creation around us.

So as we look out at the birds and the trees and the fish and everything out there in the creation, it's somehow or another is unreal or maya or illusion. So in many ways, it's either the most fantastic truth and totally counter logic, counter experience, counter intuitive, or else it's the greatest lie that could be told. In many ways, it takes less faith to believe in the Biblical worldview than it does to believe in this Eastern or new age worldview.

Ellis Potter, who for 15 years was a Zen Buddhist monk, tells about this. He was a Zen Buddhist monk for many years and now he's a believer that was a teacher at Labrie and he's had churches and he's still speaking all over, particularly over in Europe, but sometimes over here in the U.S. on new age issues. And he said that one of the things that was radical was when he embraced Christianity, it took less faith to believe in Christianity than to believe in his Buddhism because in his Buddhist perspective, he had to regard the world as being very insubstantial and unreal.

The world was like dew, very shadowy. And now he could embrace real people in real trees. He didn't have to do a double think on reality and say that all the things that he thought he saw were actually unreal and all the ways that he thought were actually illusion.

So he didn't have to do the double think on all of reality. He could actually embrace reality as real and good. The great difficulty with the new age is it can't be consistently lived.

There was a poem written by a Buddhist man and this little poem is so short it might go by you and you won't even have heard it. Os Guinness said that at Labrie, this was one of the most helpful little poems that would get people from Eastern perspective to think about the nature of reality. This Buddhist man had lost five sons, one after the other.

You can imagine the pain and grief that would come from just losing one child. But losing five sons, you can imagine the grief was overwhelming. Yet the Buddhist would say your problem is desire.

And you shouldn't desire, shouldn't be so attached to this world. And this world is substantial and unreal, kind of like the dew that appears on the grass in the morning and then vanishes very quickly when the sun comes up. And the poem goes like this.

Very short. Says the world is due. The world is due.

And yet, and yet. The world's insubstantial and unreal, and yet. Look at the pain.

Look at these sons. Look at the grief. The tension between the actual experience of the world and the love and the care.

And then the theory that's there in the Buddhist perspective. Just another example of Sai Baba. Sai Baba is the guru of gurus over in India.

He's the one that all the other gurus go to to be blessed. And Sai Baba has a famous saying that goes like this. And again, you have to listen carefully to get the radical perspective that's there.

(46:30 - 50:59)

The way Sai Baba puts it. Man was rebuked by his wife because he didn't shed a tear over the death of his only son. And the man said, last night I had a dream in which I had seven sons.

And when I woke, the dream vanished. Who shall I weep for? The seven that are vapor or the one that is dust? The seven are a dream, the one a daydream. I don't know if that went by you too fast.

Let me just say it quickly again. Rebuked by his wife for not shedding a tear over the death of their only son. The man said, last night I had a dream in which I had seven sons.

When I woke, the dream vanished. Who shall I weep for? The seven in the dream that are vapor or the one that's just died, that's dust. The seven are a dream, the one a daydream.

It's caught up in this world of Maya and illusion. In many ways, it leads to a massive denial of any pain or suffering or reality that's out there. And this is perhaps the great problem that new age people have to deal with and behind often are common sense objections to it.

When this whole issue of reality and pain is introduced to Hindu gurus, sometimes they say, well, don't ask the question. Often the answer, though, from some philosophers is the problem is that of Lila, L-I-L-A. The idea of Lila is the idea of play, a kind of cosmic play, cosmic insanity.

In some ways the idea here is that the reason the world has become distinct and why we have this problem of distinction is because of a divine insanity. Put it in Star Wars terminology that there's been a disturbance in the force. It's kind of like this, that there's this pond out there that's very quiet and you have a rock that's thrown out into the pond.

And of course there's a splash and the ripples go out in concentric circles from that rock going into the pond. And the idea is somehow or another there's been a disturbance in the force and this world of distinction has come forth. The world is actually one, but the question is, well, then why do we have the problem of thinking that the world is distinction? Has there been somehow or another a fall from the reality of oneness? Why do we experience the world as distinct? And that's often the reason that's given.

It's Lila. It's a divine insanity. In many ways we are gods, so to speak, who are deceiving ourselves about the nature of things, or the one, the god, the more impersonal force is deceiving itself about the nature of reality.

We need to get back to this idea of oneness. It's a severe problem really at the root. Christian science, which is an Eastern related discipline, has the same problem with regard to the nature of good and evil that's really at the root of things.

Christian science says all is one, all is good, therefore there is no such thing as evil, pain, and suffering. Now that's very problematic. There's no such thing as evil, pain, and suffering.

How can you deal with this idea that there's no evil, pain, or suffering? And the great problem is how do you account for the reality of the illusion? If all is good and all is one, why do we even have the problem of the illusion of evil, pain, and suffering to overcome? Is this illusion of evil, pain, and suffering good or evil? If the illusion of evil, pain, and suffering is good, who needs to worry about it? Then you don't need Christian science. If this illusion of evil, pain, and suffering is evil or bad, then there's something bad or evil in the world. I don't know how you avoid it.

(51:00 - 52:35)

And in many ways, how do you account for the reality of experiencing the world as distinct? One Hindu philosopher, Radhakrishnan, says he doesn't know. He really is agonized over this problem. He says in the end, he doesn't know which side to choose.

This world is distinct or all is one. And so he says both are true. We'll just say the world is one and the world is distinct as a contradiction, and we'll just leave it there.

Most people don't say that, but shows you how agonizing the problem is for those who really think about it. This is the central problem right at the very root. Another thing that you need to look at is the idea of experience.

Experience is often the reason that people connect with the New Age. They have a dramatic experience. But it's important to understand that experience is not self-interpreting.

People go to these various seminars or New Age psychotechnologies or techniques, and these techniques do produce results. If you go in there and you have a very dramatic supernatural experience, when you use one of these New Age techniques, you might think that it's true, especially if given the New Age interpretation. But could you separate, perhaps, the experience from the interpretation and say that the experience is real, but the interpretation actually is another interpretation that better satisfies what happened than the interpretation that's given along the Eastern religious perspective.

(52:36 - 1:01:46)

In fact, Ellis Potter, this former Zen Buddhist monk, said that he could teach each one of you certain breathing exercises. And if you practice these breathing exercises long enough, you'd have an experience that you might think were supernatural. Then if you were to get up and give the Buddhist explanation for it, might you be tempted to believe him? I think you might.

But could there be another explanation? He believes that there is another, that you could interpret more along a physiological explanation than a supernatural or religious experience. Or another example, transcendental meditation is made much of using its Eastern meditative techniques to produce physiological results and done research on the physiological benefits. Well, Dr. Benson did a control experiment and basically had people stop twice a day and just relax for 15 minutes.

And he found that he got the same physiological results that transcendental meditation got by using its Eastern meditative techniques. So could it be that TM works physiologically, not because of that distinctive approach that's being used, but because it's good to stop occasionally in the midst of our hectic lives, stress-filled lives, and be able to relax or meditate. So is the explanation for it, explanation given, really the accurate one? Or say acupuncture is another major issue.

I don't have time to go into a thorough analysis of this. But acupuncture seems to work to alleviate pain. Yet the theory of acupuncture should mean that it works for everything.

In China or in India, the body is an energy field and has certain chakras or other words that are sometimes used, meridians, where energy becomes blocked or imbalanced. And the theory of acupuncture is you put the pin into this chakra or meridian and the energy flows to become equalized within the body. Well, this theoretically should work to be able to cure any disease.

And I don't know that any Western doctor would try to take seriously using acupuncture for anything. But it seems to work to alleviate pain. Well, why does it work to help alleviate pain? Well, it could be because the body releases endorphins.

And I used to prefer this explanation. It could be because of a distraction. If you put, have caused pain in one part of the body, then it, you have, you're distracted from pain in another part of the body.

Or it could be because of a psychological effect, a psychosomatic effect. The more you believe that it will work, the more likely that it actually would work. I think most research has shown that acupuncture seems to work on those people that are most hypnotically suggestible.

So perhaps this more psychosomatic explanation may be closest to the truth. In any case, it's not a thorough analysis of the subject, but just the fact that some of these techniques work doesn't mean that the explanation is established for why it works. This good and evil issue of good and evil is perhaps where I would start in addressing someone from a New Age perspective.

According to New Age, good and evil are one. You see this shot right through Marilyn Ferguson, George Leonard, Joseph Campbell, and others. Joseph Campbell encounters a guru where he speaks about good and evil as mere apparitions of temporality, just mere shadows.

He asked this guru, must we say yes or no to things like brutality and vulgarity? And the guru, after a while, says we must say yes to such things because in some ways there's no basis to say no. In the area of sexual ethics, one New Age author has a chapter that is critical of the incest taboo in Western culture. And he has this statement that you've got to listen to carefully because it goes by very quickly.

And here's what it says. When we see that all bodies are ultimately one, that is part of the same field of being, then we will not hesitate to touch that which is really ourselves. So anything goes within the sexual arena.

Various other illustrations. Rajneesh says, I don't believe in morality. I'm bent on destroying it.

My ashram makes no difference between the demonic and the divine. One passage from the Bhagavad Gita says, kill, murder. This is commenting on a passage from the Bhagavad Gita.

This is not a quote from the Bhagavad Gita. Kill, murder, fully conscious, knowing that no one is murdered and no one is killed. That's Rajneesh's commentary on this passage.

Zen master Yun Min says, I want you to get the plain truth. Be not concerned with right and wrong. The conflict between right and wrong is sickness of the mind.

Or Herman Hess in Siddhartha says, the world, Govinda, is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a path of perfection. No, it is perfect at every moment. Therefore, it seems to me that everything that exists is good.

Death as well as life. Sin as well as holiness. Wisdom as well as folly.

Final illustration from journalist Arthur Kessler, who interviewed a Japanese expert on Buddhism. Kessler said, you favor tolerance towards all religions and political systems. What about Hitler's gas chambers? Buddhist, that was very silly of him.

Kessler, just silly, not evil. Buddhist, evil is a Christian concept. Good and evil exist only on a relative scale.

So that it might be worth bringing up this issue. It is a real Achilles heel of Eastern perspective at the very root. Finally, the issue of love.

Although there's much talk in the New Age movement, their philosophy, I believe, actually undermines it. The whole thrust of the New Age movement is inwards to the divine within, or upwards to merge my identity with that of the one, but definitely not outwards. Why is it definitely not outwards? Well, because the world out here is somehow or another Maya or illusion.

It's nondistinct. So why would I be thrust out in an agape way, this outward thrust, to love or care about anything in the world? The answer is, you really don't and can't consistently. Now, many New Age people

certainly love, they love their spouses, they love their kids, they love other people, because we're made in God's image.

But their philosophy, the more consistently you follow it, the more it takes you away. That's why this New Age, the guy from New Age Think Tank says they're often, many of the leaders that he'd met over 15 years were so narcissistic. Because the more consistently you follow it, if you try to practice it 24-7, it takes you away from a thrust out to this world.

Again, the whole thrust is inwards to the divine within, or upwards to merge your identity with that of the one, but the more consistently you follow it, the less you're thrust out to care about people in the world. Tal Brook, who was for many years the closest Western disciple of Sai Baba, noticed the distinctive agape love of a missionary couple that he tried to convert to Hinduism. And after many different encounters, he noticed the difference between that and the Hindu disciples, and above all, he was being discipled by Sai Baba.

The utter lack of this distinctive, other-centered agape love in Sai Baba, this guru of gurus in India. And when I heard him tell his story, I got goosebumps, because I thought of the passage in Scripture, how will they know that they're my disciples? They will know them by their love. Love is crucial in speaking to New Age advocates.

Many have been hurt, as I mentioned, by Christians and Christianity. At this New Age retreat that I was part of, one woman, the wife of a leading New Age advocate, said, and she was the last person to share, that for 15 years she'd not even been able to say the name of Jesus Christ. And when she said that name, she broke down and wept, sobbed uncontrollably.

She'd not been able to say the name because she'd been profoundly hurt by Christians and Christianity. In many ways, we need to get by that emotional barrier and be able to not only speak about these issues, but to be able to demonstrate the love of Christ to people. Let's close at that point.