

## Title Slide

### THE PROBLEM WITH SIGNS

John 6:24-35

#### Slide #2

An old farmer always called his hogs to the feeding trough by hitting it with a piece of wood. Tap-tap-tap. That's all it took and they would come running. It was a great system, until, for some odd reason, he noticed them losing weight. He couldn't understand it. Then one day, he discovered the culprit. **(Click)** A woodpecker was pecking on a tree nearby. Every time the woodpecker pecked, tap-tap-tap, the hogs came running. I guess all that extra running kept them trim.

The people of Israel were no different from you and me. They were constantly looking for signs. The problem was, they had difficulty discerning the sound of the farmer with food and the sound of the woodpecker tapping on a tree. So it is with people who rely on signs and miracles rather than the Word of God.

#### Slide #3

Jesus said, "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." (Matthew 12:39) But we all do it. You stub your toe on the way to the kitchen in the morning and you moan, "It's going to be a bad day." It rains on the day of a wedding and we say, "This marriage is going to have problems." It's human nature. We attach significance to events in which, in reality, there is no significance. We think it's the call of the farmer, when it's only a woodpecker. And we wonder why the trough of our lives is so empty.

#### Slide #4

There is a beautiful story of Robert Bruce, who was crowned king of Scotland in 1306. Bruce, after being routed by the English, was confined on the island of Rathlin, off the coast of Antrim in Ireland. To pass the time, Bruce watched a spider **(Click)** trying to fix its web to a beam on the ceiling. The spider failed six times. "Now shall this spider," said Bruce, "teach me what I am to do, for I also have failed six times." In the seventh attempt, the spider succeeded in fixing its web to the beam. Bruce took it as a sign, gathered a handful of followers and returned to Scotland. After a series of successful campaigns, he won the battle of Bannockburn in 1314 after which England acknowledged the complete independence of Scotland.

Now, I need to warn you. **(Click)** It would be very risky for you to start

making your decisions on the behavior of spider. Spiders are just spiders. Signs are notoriously fickle. They are for superstitious people. They are not for Christians. **(Click)** Do you still “knock on wood?” We keep making the same mistake as the people of Israel . . . and every other people on earth. We keep looking for a sign.

### **Slide #5**

It’s interesting. Jesus had just performed an extraordinary miracle--the feeding of the 5,000. You would think that this would have convinced the people that he was the one they had been awaiting. But it was not enough. We always seek more. We find ways to explain away even the most dramatic acts. **(Click)** The rising of the sun each morning, **(Click)** the gentle opening of the flowers in springtime, **(Click)** the birth of a new baby--these ought to be evidence enough for anyone to accept belief in a Creator, but are they? We still clamor for more.

Now the people wanted a sign that Jesus was the Messiah. **(Click)** “What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you?” they asked. “What will you do?” Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”

### **Slide #6**

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” What does this mean? What is faith in Christ?

### **Slide #7**

**Faith in Jesus Christ is rooted in God’s love.** Do you know that God loves you? The truth of the matter is that most of us THINK that God loves us, **(Click)** but we are not passionately SURE about that. And if something should happen to us that we don’t understand, then that’s the way our faith will turn.

### **Slide #8**

Cassie Bernall, a 17-year-old student at Columbine High School, was killed in the worst disaster in U.S. high school history. The Denver Rocky Mountain News wrote, “People around the world know Cassie as the Columbine student who died confessing her faith. Her killer asked her if she believed in God. She told him she did, then died at 17.” What if you were Cassie’s family? Could you handle that and still believe in a loving God?

## **Slide #9**

And what about Arthur Ashe, the late, great champion tennis player who acquired AIDS through a blood transfusion at the time he underwent heart surgery? The medical personnel in the hospital did not suspect or inspect the unit of HIV contaminated blood which went into Ashe's veins. He did not realize that he was infected with the dreaded virus until five years later when he diagnosed with a brain tumor. After being released from the hospital, the seventh-ranked tennis star in all the world had to face rumors about his condition as well as deal with retirement from his beloved sport.

Arthur Ashe resisted the temptation to be angry at God. Who could have blamed him if he had been? In 1992, he addressed the students at the Niagara County Community College and testified that despite having his disease, his trust in God was firm. Ashe knew that regardless of the outcome, **(Click)** God would remain with him in his ordeal.

What an amazing testimony of faith. Could you do that? Is your faith that strong? You see, many, if not most of us, are insecure about God's love. If things are going our way, if the children are healthy, if the house payment is made, if things are going well on the job--then yes, God is with us. But let sickness come, or financial adversity, or an attack of the blues for any reason, and then we begin to doubt. We start looking for a sign. Has it all been a mistake? Is God really with me?

## **Slide #10**

Corrie ten Boom was arrested in Holland for sheltering Jews from the Nazis. She was transported to a death camp in Germany. She was subjected to all manner of humiliation and torture. She watched her sister die there in that camp. And yet later Corrie ten Boom would write, **(Click)** "However deep the pit, God's love is deeper still."

## **Slide #11**

Christian faith is rooted in God's love. The Old Testament character Job experienced all manner of grievous misfortunes. He lost his health, he lost his children, he lost his great wealth--and yet he was able to cry out, **(Click)** "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him . . ." (Job 13:15)

## **Slide #12**

Later he exclaims, "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a

scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes--I, and not another.” (19:23-27)

That’s faith. **(Click)** Not dependent on external circumstances but on an internal assurance. Christian faith is rooted in God’s love.

### **Slide #13**

**Christian faith is also rooted in God’s natural laws.** We live in a lawful universe. We drop a book, and it falls to the floor. Why? **(Click)** That’s called the law of gravity. We drive a car off a ledge and we smash into the canyon floor below. Does a Divine hand reach out of the clouds to stop our fall? It could happen, for sure, I mean anything is possible with God. But it is not very likely. We live in a lawful universe. And what a magnificent universe it is.

### **Slide #14**

Writer Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the much-beloved *Little House on the Prairie* series puts it this way: “What a beautiful world this is! Have you noticed the wonderful coloring of the sky at sunrise? For me there is no time like the early morning, when the spirit of light broods over the earth at its awakening. What glorious colors in the woods these days! Did you ever think that great painters have spent their lives trying to reproduce on canvas what we may see every day? **(Click)** Thousands of dollars are paid for their pictures which are not so beautiful as those nature gives us freely. The colors in the sky at sunset, the delicate tints of the early spring foliage, the brilliant autumn leaves, the softly-colored grasses and lovely flowers--what painter ever equaled their beauties with paint and brush?”

Do you understand that creation works the way it does because God structured it to obey certain laws? That is why we can expect the sun to rise tomorrow morning at just the time it is supposed to. If it did not, every molecule in the universe would likely be affected. We simply are foolish when we ask God to suspend any of His laws even for a minute. Life upon this earth depends on those laws. Intellectually I think all of us understand that. And yet, we still pray, “Please, Lord. Don’t let it rain on my daughter’s wedding.” We would be better off praying, “Please, Lord, regardless of the weather, help me to have a positive attitude so that I can radiate the kind of cheerfulness that will make this a great day for the people I love.”

### **Slide #15**

**Most important, Christian faith is rooted in God's revelation.**

Christian faith is not a philosophy. No one sat down and thought this stuff up. Christian faith is rooted in God's revelation. When we could not reach up to God, God reached down to us in Jesus Christ. That is what distinguishes the Christian faith from every other religion and philosophy of life? **(Click)** Jesus Christ is what makes the Christian faith unique! We believe that indeed he is the bread which came down from heaven.

**Slide #16**

The Hebrew Bible--which we call the Old Testament--we share that with both the Jews and the Moslems. What makes us unique is that we boldly claim that in **(Click)** Jesus Christ we get a definitive picture of God. Jesus is God in human flesh. It is an extraordinary claim, but we stake our lives upon it. **(Click)** But for so many, even among us, the Bible is a confusing and difficult Book.

**Slide #17**

Do you know the real reason for most of this confusion and difficulty? **(Click)** We do not study or read the Bible as thoroughly as we ought. Even with all the Bible study that I provide, I have only reached 15% of our members. As I look around here (tonight – today) I see many of you who have not joined me in any kind of Bible Study. Why? **(Click)** You will never have to answer to me. It is not my word. This is God's Word – and one day you will have to explain your neglect to Him. The reason we have so much trouble with life is that we fail to realize that **(Click)** the Bible is Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.

We believe in Jesus. We believe he is the Son of God. We believe that what He says is true. He is the bread that came down from heaven to feed our souls. We ask no more than to live for him and continue to grow in Him.

**Slide #18**

Christian faith is **(Click)** rooted in God's love; Rooted in God's natural laws; Rooted in God's revelation in Jesus Christ our Lord and the bread of our life. **(Click)** How rooted are you?