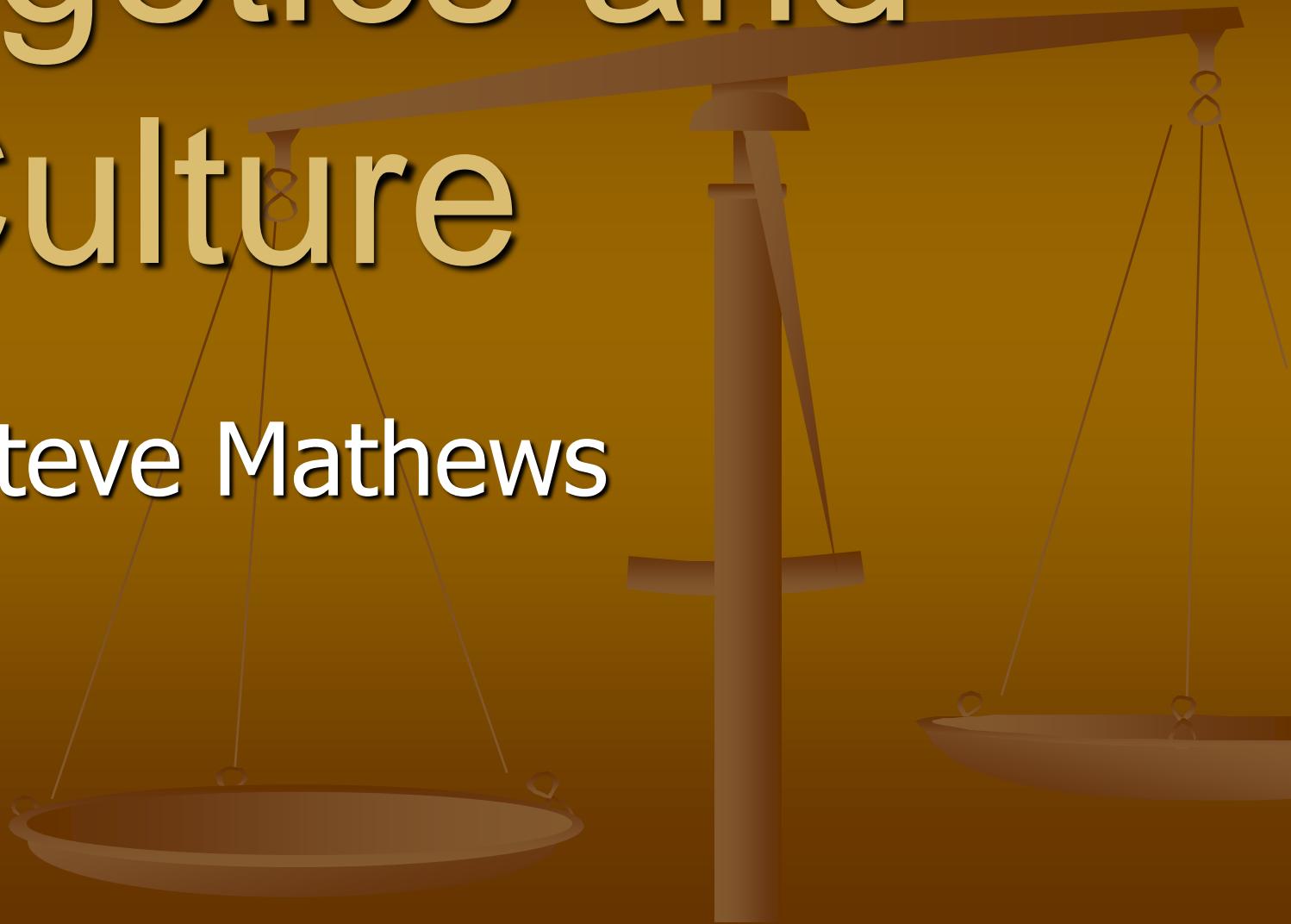


Apologetics and Culture

Dr. Steve Mathews



Cultural Apologetics

- An attempt to speak to the culture around us in terms that make the Gospel familiar.
- Jesus did this with His parables. He told stories of fishing, farming, and domestic life that His audience would recognize.
- Paul did this in Acts 17, speaking to the Athenians by quoting their own poets.

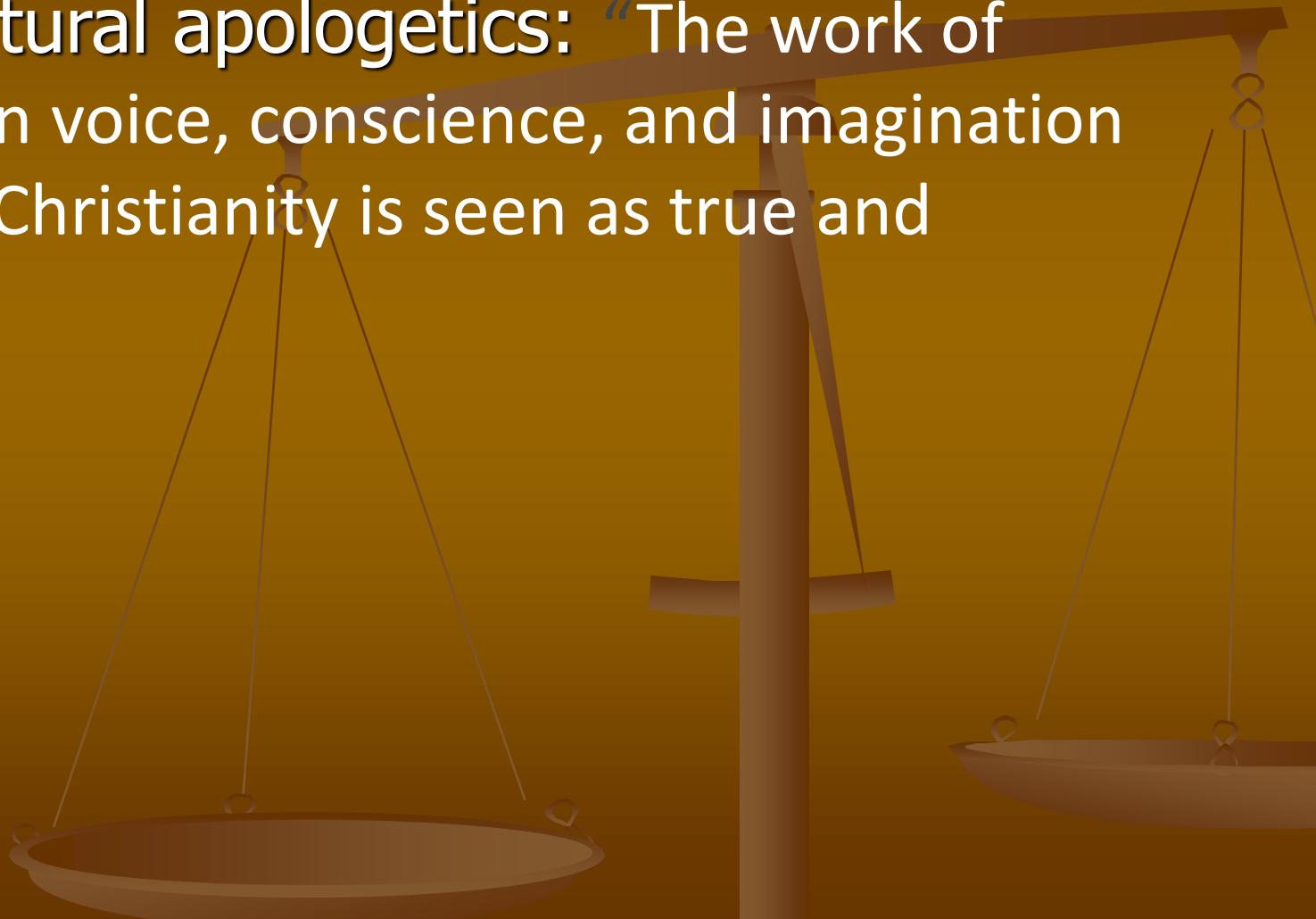
Cultural Apologetics

- Justin Martyr, Augustine, C. S. Lewis, and many other Christians have practiced cultural apologetics.
- Leslie Newbigin went as a missionary to India from England in 1936. He returned in 1974 and found that England was a post-Christian nation. He framed the question of cultural apologetics like this:
 - *What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call “modern Western culture”?*

Cultural Apologetics

- Paul Gould defines cultural apologetics: “The work of establishing the Christian voice, conscience, and imagination within a culture so that Christianity is seen as true and satisfying.”

“”



Cultural Apologetics

- Cultural apologetics sees apologetics as a missionary activity to one's own culture.
- This is especially important as America today is post-Christian. Many people do not know the basic truths of the Bible which Christians have understood for generations.
- Cultural apologetics seeks to speak the same language as non-Christians, rather than expect them to understand us.

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

- “These three universal longings, for **truth, goodness, and beauty**, can serve as fitting starting points for a cultural apologetic.... Humanity was made to be nourished on them. These universal human longings cannot be eradicated. Unfortunately, they can be and often are muted and repressed. It’s possible to settle for cheap counterfeits too. This is why God has provided guides within the human soul to help us on our journey. Reason guides us on the quest for truth. The conscience leads us to goodness. And the imagination transports us toward beauty. This is also why we have intellectuals, prophets, and artists. They can perform a priestly duty, leading us if we allow them toward the ultimate object of our soul’s longing: Jesus Christ, **the source of all truth, goodness, and beauty.**”
- Paul Gould

Human Factors in Cultural Apologetics

- Reason- the culture rejects objective truth, but lives as if some things are really true and some are false.
- Conscience- the culture rejects right and wrong, but lives with guilt, depression, anxiety, and unforgiveness. Clearly, some things are right and some are wrong.
- Imagination- the culture distorts beauty, but feeds on cinematic creations which lift people from this world to other worlds.

Cultural Barriers

- Assumptions- many do not even take the existence of God as established, much less any obligation to Him.
- Ignorance- Many have never considered the basic questions the Gospel asks us to answer.
- Morality- Many believe themselves to be good, or that morality is subjective, so they do not have a sin problem for the Gospel to solve.
- Body Politics- Many do not want to be “those kind of people”. Religious associations are negative.

The Agape' Principle

- God's Love- His unconditional "agape" love- cuts through cultural barriers and opens hearts to truth, beauty, and goodness.
- Cultural apologetics provides bridges from the Gospel to the culture, but it focuses on meeting the deepest human needs through connection with God's love.
- Love negates the materialism that our culture is built upon.

The Agape' Principle

- Truth- God's love is the most basic truth that penetrates the hardest human heart.
- Beauty- God's love bestows beauty on sinful people. God does not love us because we are lovely; He makes us lovely by loving us.
- Goodness- God's love enables us to act in love to those around us.

Cultural Preservation as Pre-Evangelism

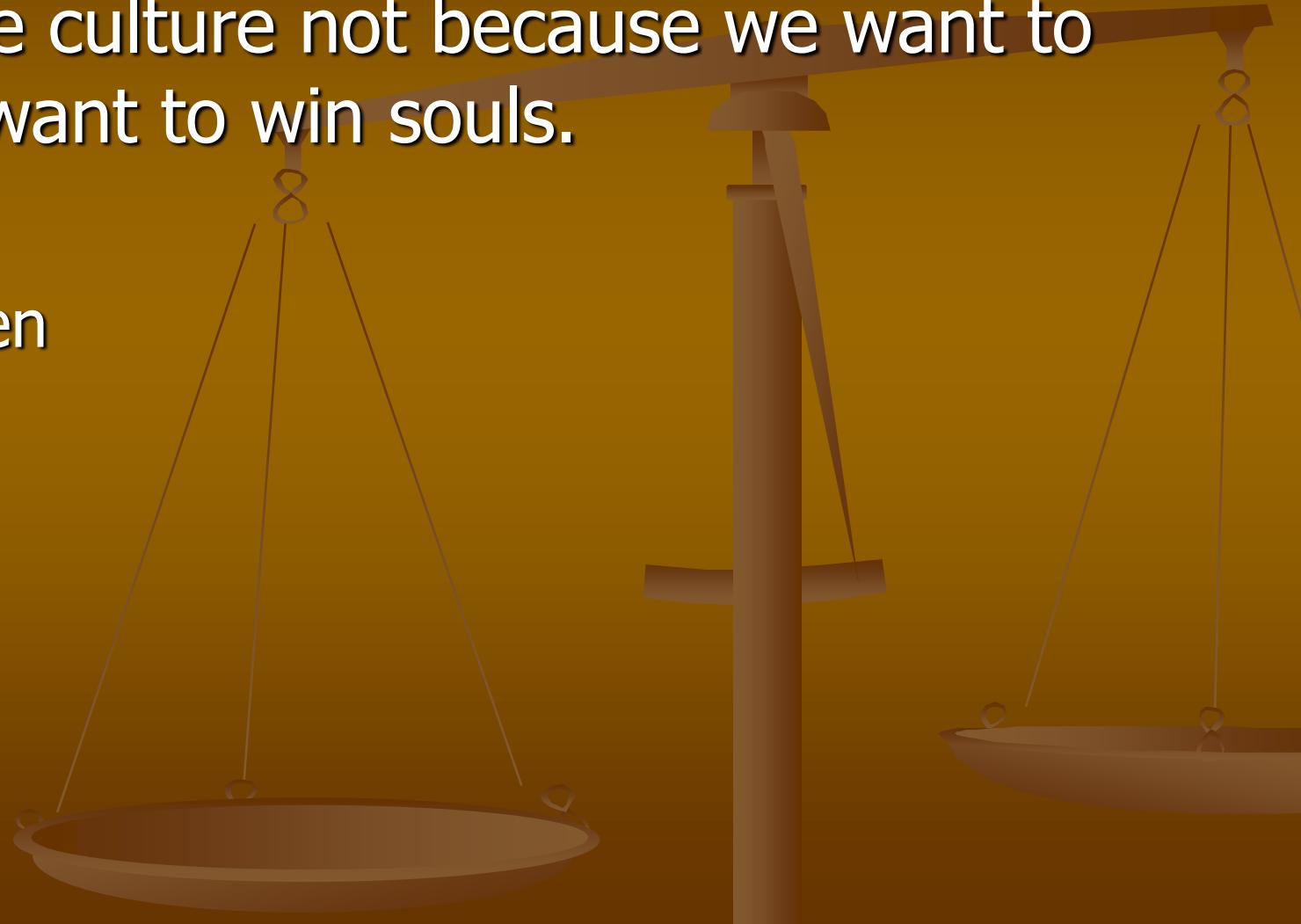
- The Gospel is not primarily concerned with saving the culture, but with saving souls.
- The Bible says that the world will become more and more sinful until Jesus returns.
- Why should apologists/evangelists be concerned about culture?
- Cultural preservation makes life better for all, and lays the groundwork for Gospel witness.

Pre-Evangelism

- Pre-evangelism is laying the foundation for Gospel witness by teaching the basic knowledge and values necessary for accepting Christ.
- A culture that understands sin, grace, love, goodness, truth, and beauty is better prepared to understand and accept the Gospel.
- Individuals who are not as deeply immersed in sinful lifestyles may be better prepared to accept the Gospel.

Pre-Evangelism

- Apologists fight for the culture not because we want to win, but because we want to win souls.
- Issues include:
 - Sexualization of children
 - Transgender ideology
 - Legalization of drugs
 - Pornography
 - Abortion
 - Others



Pre-Evangelism

- Preserving values compatible with the Gospel will reduce human suffering.
- Preserving values compatible with the Gospel demonstrates Christian love.
- It will also help to prepare hearts for the Gospel.

