

Sin: That Dirty Little Word

The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible. – Dwight L. Moody

Do you have trouble talking about “sin?” Our worldly friends get offended when we call something sin, but our Christian friends often squirm uncomfortably as well. At best it seems quaint to call something a sin, and at worst it’s intolerant, unloving, and judgmental.

Part of our problem is that when we call something “sin,” we don’t always really know what we mean. Some sin is easy to define: lying, stealing and murdering are pretty easy to agree on. Why? Because they’re in the Bible.

And there’s the key. Sin is actually a biblical concept. Recently I read a great blog post from Julian Freeman on the uneasiness we feel when the term “sin” is used. Julian shares:

“I’m convinced that a lot of time when we lack clarity in our conversations and prayers regarding sin, it is because we are not laboring to think in biblical categories. Several years ago, someone challenged me to try to keep my conversations about sin tied to biblical words. That way we can speak of sin as sin. ... and if something is not sin, then we must deal with it in the realm of *preference* or simply *freedom*.”

He goes on to give a list of Scriptures that define sin specifically. Next, he went through them to create a “chart” of sins separated into three categories: heart, mouth and body. You can see the chart at the link above. (Guess which has the most sins listed in the Bible? Heart!)

This can be helpful in several ways. First of all, I need to examine my own life regularly and prayerfully to root out sin and idolatry. It was Socrates who opined, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” I want to live a life of integrity,

where my behavior is consistent with my beliefs and with Scripture.

This also gives us an objective framework to discuss sin with those we lead—at home, work and church. In Lamentations 3:40 Jeremiah exhorts us, *“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.”* Testing means you need to know what the standard is. For Christians, that standard is defined clearly in the Bible.

Finally, let’s not call something sin that isn’t defined that way in the Bible. It actually is judgmental to decide something is a sin based on my opinion rather than Scripture. When I put my opinion over Scripture, that would be, well, a sin!

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Israeli Party Pulls ‘What, You’re Not Jewish?’ TV Ad After Russian Complaints

Complaints by Russian-speaking immigrants prompted an ultra-Orthodox party in Israel to pull a TV commercial plugging

their election campaign which shows a man recoiling in horror at discovering his bride is not Jewish.

In the advert, a Russian-accented bride receives a faxed certificate during her wedding ceremony attesting to her conversion to Judaism. With disgust in his voice, her Israeli husband blurts out: "What, you're not Jewish?"

The controversy reflected long-standing tensions between the religious Shas party, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, whose core constituency is made up of Jews of Middle Eastern or North African descent, and parties representing immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

There are at least 2 million Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel and hundreds of thousands do not meet Orthodox standards for recognition as Jews.

Several immigrants complained about the commercial in letters to the Israel Central Elections Committee and many more posted protests on social media sites such.

Nino Abesadze, immigrant lawmaker and candidate for the centrist Labour party, denounced the Shas advert in a notice posted on her Facebook page as "racist and mocking of the immigrants", and demanded it be taken off the air.

In a statement the committee said late on Wednesday it had found the advert offensive and that Shas had agreed not to run it anymore. The minute-long spot aired for two nights in the run-up to the Jan. 22 parliamentary election.

Parties championing Russian-speaking immigrants such as the far-right Yisrael Beiteinu led by former Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, want to simplify Jewish conversion procedures in Israel controlled by the Orthodox Rabbinate.

Shas opposes this, as it does calls for civil marriage in Israel. The Rabbinate, also in charge of marriage procedures,

issues marriage licences only to couples it deems Jewish under ritual law.

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Meteorologists Calling for Wet Israeli Winter

Israel's meteorological service says this winter will be the wettest in the past decade. With temperatures continually plunging, much of the country, including the capital of Jerusalem, began to see snowfall on Wednesday.

High winds and heavy rainfall lashed Israel on Monday, downing power lines and trees and causing several minor injuries. Winds were reported to be gusting at speeds of up to 74 miles per hour and neighborhoods across Jerusalem felt the effects.

Trees were toppled at the Temple Mount and branches were strewn in streets across the city while electricity outages were reported throughout the country. The Water Authority reported Monday morning that the level of the Sea of Galilee had risen almost four inches in 24 hours.

Heavy snow fell Wednesday in the northern Golan Heights, with a meter measured on Mount Hermon overnight. Snow also fell in Nazareth, Galilee, Migdal Oz and Beit El.

Many believe the abundant outpouring of precipitation in Israel, following several years of drought, is truly an answer

to many prayers and a cause for great thanksgiving.

The Jerusalem municipality has entered a “snow emergency readiness,” and has sent dozens of plows to keep main arteries open.

Get Radical About Your Health

You don't have to go to medical school to know where food goes after you swallow it. Any first grader can tell you it goes into your stomach, not your heart.

Still, many people eat for emotional (heart) reasons rather than physical (stomach) reasons, and they struggle with their weight because of it. I know I did. I grew up morbidly obese and weighed 207 pounds when I was five feet tall!

So often, we try to fix our negative emotions with what I call “false comforters” –quick fixes, like food, that make us feel worse rather than better in the long run. I know this from my own bloated personal experience, having been grossly overweight.

Food is only one of many false comforters. Other people use drugs, alcohol, gambling, shopping, working, and even hobbies the way I once used food. They turn to those things to fill up those empty places that only God can fill. Or they develop physical pain problems and other stress-induced conditions in response to stressful emotions—conditions such as fibromyalgia, migraine headaches, neck and back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, pelvic pain, depression, anxiety, and others. I know this because I'm a pain management specialist physician and see this stress-turned-physical phenomenon daily.

As for me and my weight problem, I learned from my studies of obesity psychology while at Cornell how to eat in response to my body's natural hunger and fullness signals rather than stress, anxiety, and other unwanted emotions. That's how I was able to lose 75 pounds and keep it off for almost 30 years, now, thank God.

What about you? Maybe you don't have a weight problem. Maybe your problem is something else. Everybody deals with some kind of thorn in their side, after all.

No matter what your specific issue is, probably the root cause is something like what I experienced. There's a good chance you're being triggered into unhealthy behavior by *lies that you believe about yourself*—lies that you internalized during childhood, such as "I'm [bad, stupid, ugly, responsible, worthless, unlovable, alone, abandoned, invisible]," or "I'm just like [my bad father, my bad mother]" or "I'm *nothing* like [my *perfect* father, my perfect mother]." Perhaps you internalized those lies during a traumatic time in your life, but maybe you just "read between the lines" of how others treated you back then.

Maybe other issues are at play, too. Maybe you're under stress because you're running from shame over your past sins—even those you already repented from. Or maybe you're harboring resentment toward people who hurt you in the past.

I once heard that refusing to forgive people is like taking poison and expecting it to hurt the other person. I think that's true.

As I said, very frequently, I see the physical effects of three factors among my patients (1) lies that we believe about ourselves; (2) sins that we haven't repented from and given up to God; and (3) unforgiveness. That's why I want to encourage you, for the sake of your health (not to mention cutting the cost of your medical bills) to get real with yourself and with

God.

The first step is to take your thoughts captive. When you're tempted to partake of your false comforter (i.e. when you're tempted to reach for the bottle or the donut), stop and ask, "Lord, help me identify the emotion I feel right now. Is it anxiety, anger, fear, loneliness, etc.?"

Go on to ask, "Lord, show me the root of this emotion. When is the earliest time I felt this way in my life?" And "What lies did the Accuser lead me to believe about myself during that difficult period?" And what truth do You want to show me to replace those lies?"

To find out more ways to break free from those lies, sins, and unforgiveness that bind you and threaten your health, look for my book, *Radical Well-being: A Biblical Guide to Overcoming Pain, Illness, and Addictions*, released this week.

And if you get discouraged at any point along the way in your emotional healing and recovery, remember this: in your life-long quest to achieve better health, God's mercies aren't new only once a year, on New Year's Day, they're new every morning.

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ACLJ Launches Petition Opposing Hagel Nomination

The nomination of Sen. Chuck Hagel for Secretary of Defense

puts Israel at an even greater risk by creating instability and weakening our military effectiveness in one of the most dangerous areas of the world, according to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ).

“The fact is former Senator Hagel is the wrong person for this job,” said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLJ. *“His record is deeply troubling. Instead of backing Israel, Hagel refused to sign a letter of support for Israel. He opposed labeling Hezbollah a ‘terrorist organization.’ And, he supported direct dialogue with the terrorist group Hamas. We need a Defense Secretary who understands the critical relationship and will work to strengthen it – not weaken it. The country deserves a sound and capable leader who directs our Armed Forces through strength, not appeasement. We urge the Senate to reject the nomination of Hagel.”*

To aid in its campaign against former Sen. Hagel’s, the ACLJ is launching a national petition urging members of the Senate to defeat this nomination.

Led by Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow, the American Center for Law and Justice focuses on constitutional law and is based in Washington.

Study: Vitamin D Won’t Derail Osteoarthritis

Taking daily vitamin D doesn’t keep knee pain from getting worse or slow the loss of cartilage for people with osteoarthritis, according to a new study.

Previous research suggested that among people with the joint

disorder, those with higher levels of vitamin D in their blood tended to have a slower progression of symptoms. But whether that meant taking more in supplement form would also have a protective effect was unclear.

“It looked compelling at that point,” said lead author Timothy McAlindon, from Tufts Medical Center in Boston.

For the new study, he and his colleagues randomly assigned 146 of their patients with knee osteoarthritis to take a daily dose of vitamin D or a vitamin-free placebo for two years.

None of the participants knew which type of supplement they were assigned to take. The vitamin D doses started at 2,000 international units (IU) per day and were increased to as high as 8,000 IU daily in some patients. (For most adults, the recommended daily allowance of vitamin D is 600 to 800 IU.)

The vitamin D group started out slightly worse off than their comparisons on measures of knee pain and function.

However, the vitamin didn't seem to offer clear relief: on a 0-to-20-point pain scale, people taking vitamin D saw a decrease during the two years, compared to a decrease among those taking placebos. That small difference could have been due to chance, the researchers wrote Tuesday in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Changes in knee cartilage volume – a measure of the progression of osteoarthritis – and knee function were also similar among the two groups during and after the study period.

Osteoarthritis is typically treated with over-the-counter pain medications or steroid injections along with moderate exercise including physical therapy. For people who are overweight or obese, weight loss is recommended to take pressure off the joints.

Results Differ

Dr. Robert Heaney, who has studied vitamin D at Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska, said he wasn't surprised the study didn't find a beneficial effect on knee pain across all patients.

"It's almost certain that vitamin D's effects are different from person to person," Heaney, who wasn't involved in the new research, told Reuters Health. "It's very important for some people, but may not make any difference for others."

That may have to do with genetics or other factors that doctors aren't yet able to test for before they prescribe vitamin D, Heaney added.

But because vitamin D may have other small health benefits—and virtually no side effects at these doses—he said it's still worth a try for people with osteoarthritis.

McAlindon disagreed, however.

"It doesn't look like knee osteoarthritis is in itself an indication to take vitamin D," he told Reuters Health.

Vitamin D can be bought over-the-counter for \$25 to \$50 for a year's supply.

The researchers said it's possible that higher doses of vitamin D supplements, leading to higher levels in the blood, would have a beneficial effect on knee pain – but so far the results don't support that idea.

"Vitamin D broadly is the vitamin of the moment," McAlindon said. "There are hopes that it will have wide health benefits."

But, he added, this study shows that each of those claims needs to be checked out carefully—and they may always not hold up with rigorous trials.

Before You Fail, Discipline Yourself in Christ

Each Friday I meet a number of new men at the TGIF Men's Bible Study visitor's table. Each week the comments are remarkably similar. Here is a sample from last week:

- "I always wanted to give 30 percent to Christ and the 70 percent I ran. In the end I lost everything."
- "My career is advancing, but I feel my time with God evaporating."
- "I need organized religion I need to get back in the fold."

No man ever fails on purpose. No man wakes up in the morning and thinks, "Well, I guess I'll see what I can do to mess up my life today." Yet, every day we do see men fail morally, financially, relationally, and spiritually. How can a man keep his life on the right track?

Five Goals

The Bible says . . .

- Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).
- We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Our ministry has adopted five spiritual goals we want to encourage every man to build into his life to help him be 'fully committed to the Lord.' None of these is a requirement

to be a Christian. A man doesn't do these five 'disciplines' to gain the cross. Rather, because a man has the cross he willingly, even enthusiastically, performs these five disciplines to walk more closely with Christ to make Him Lord to keep himself on track.

1. Consistent Quiet Time (Mat 14:23; Jos 1:8)

Bill said, "I'm drifting." He was asked, "Are you doing daily devotions?" He replied, "No, I've just been so busy lately." Nothing else will keep a man close to God like a time of consistent private devotions.

If you don't already have a consistent quiet time, set aside five minutes daily to read a chapter in the Bible and say a prayer. Start by reading a chapter in the New Testament. Underline passages that capture your attention. Memorize passages for strength, courage, and faith.

Next, use the acronym "ACTS" to help you pray. 'A' is for adoration. Worship God for His attributes His holiness, power, majesty, beauty, kindness, mercy, and goodness. 'C' is for confession. Confess and ask God to forgive all known sin keep 'short accounts' with God. 'T' is for thanksgiving. Express gratitude to God for His blessings and mercies especially things we ordinarily take for granted like a good night's rest, daily provision, health, family, and so on. 'S' is for supplication. Nothing is too big or insignificant to bring to God in prayer.

Lorne Sanny, former President of the Navigators, suggests we pray backwards through yesterday step by step, and forward through today. Praying backwards will lead to prayers of thanksgiving and confession, while praying forward will lead to prayers of supplication.

2. Organized Bible Study (Prov. 4:23, 2 Tim. 2:15-17)

Someone once asked Billy Graham, "If you were a pastor of a

large church in a principle city, what would be your plan of action?"

I would have imagined that Mr. Graham would outline a mass evangelistic plan to take the city by storm. Instead, in The Master Plan of Evangelism, it is reported that he answered, "One of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of eight or ten or twelve men around me that would meet a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. I would share with them everything I have, over a period of years. Then I would actually have twelve ministers ... who in turn could take eight or ten or twelve more and teach them." Not a bad idea. It's been done before with some success (smile).

Personally, I have never known a man whose life has changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God's Word. We can do nothing more concrete to get to know God than to study the Bible.

Most men do not have the aptitude, interest, or time to do the 'close work' to study Bible passages in depth. That's why it's valuable to attend a Bible study in which a teacher takes Scripture, helps you discover what it means, and shows how you can apply it to your life.

It will work best for everyone to pursue Bible studies offered by your church. Attend a couples study or meet with men. Try a Bible study with your wife. If that doesn't work out, there are often community-based Bible studies offered by independent Christian ministries. Examples include the Christian Businessmen's Committee, PriorityOne Associates (Campus Crusade for Christ), and Bible Study Fellowship.

3. Accountability Group (Gal 6:1-2, Jam 5:16)

Most of our lives are lived at the cliché level. The accountable relationship is a tool to get past 'news, sports, and weather'.

Most men are not accountable. They have no one who knows how they are really doing. Accountability means to be regularly answerable for each of the key areas in our lives to qualified people. Let's briefly look at the four parts of accountability:

- Answerable—To be willing to give an answer, or an 'account', for the goals you have set for yourself and the standards of God's Word.
- Regularly—Why do we wash our cars, mow our lawns, and clean our glasses regularly? Because if we don't they will deteriorate. In the same way we must regularly examine the different areas of our lives or they, too, will deteriorate.
- Key Areas—Key areas include relationships with God, wife, children, financial decisions, career, integrity, and temptation.
- Qualified People—Find three other men in similar situations, men of wisdom and skill you believe can help keep you on track. Look for co-pilgrims. Find men who will be transparent and vulnerable, especially as your trust in each other goes up. Be sure to not only find someone who will be confidential, but be that way yourself. No women, except your wife. She would make a great accountability partner in areas like child raising, family budget, and spiritual walk.

4. Active Church Involvement (Hebrews 10:24-25)

There is no such thing as a 'Lone Ranger Christian'; you can't be a Christian by yourself. Hebrews 10:25 says, *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another."*

Notice the goal is active church involvement, not attendance. I'm constantly amazed at how many men think they can be Christians without the fellowship, encouragement, and mutual worship of God among fellow believers in the ministry of a

local church. The church is God's New Community a group of people living out what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

5. Personal Ministry (1 Pet 4:10-11, 2 Tim 2:2)

Once you have been practicing the four spiritual disciplines just discussed you will begin to notice that you are developing a close, personal, love relationship with Jesus Christ.

Your heart will be filled to the overflow with gratitude for all Christ is doing in your life, and the hope of what He will do in the future. You will long to do something to express your faith in acts of service.

God wants every believer to have a personal ministry. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

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Men, Lead an Uprising Against Our Culture

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles

called Uprising from Kenny Luck, where God's men seek to reject the material world and embrace God's world. This series will be featured weekly in 's New Man during January.

What is an uprising? When we study historical movements, we find that uprisings have common denominators. First, all uprisings—both locally and globally— have one or more deeply felt issues at their core.

One common denominator of uprisings is that they convey a sense of deeply felt injustices that are perceived to be going on in society. Injustices could fester for decades, or simmer for centuries, but eventually they explode, unleashing a revolution. Remember the Green Revolution in Iran a couple of years ago? Do you recall the French Revolution? The American Revolution? The Bolshevik Revolution? Tiananmen Square?

All of these revolutions – and many other uprisings – have common issues: Deeply felt issues of injustice, emotional pain or being marginalized followed by a flash point eruption. Everything unravels after that.

As God's men, how does this relate to us right now?

Guys, it's about masculinity. It's about the partnership between evil and the broken male culture worldwide that has been allowed for centuries to run over our women, our children and the innocent bystanders of the world, pulling them into pain and suffering. The Bible – in Isaiah 5:7 – warns us is a centuries-old problem.

Guys, we just can't be part of it. As God's men, it's our role to stop it.

We need to stop the "male blast zone," the male mantle of global leadership that is sometimes misused to inflict suffering sometimes even among God's men. That's what Isaiah is saying is happening in this passage of Scripture. God's men, Isaiah warns, are creating suffering and God's prophet

speaks to us about it in verse 7.

The Lord's Vineyard – Isaiah 5:7, New Living Translation (NLT): “The nation of Israel and the men of Judah are the Lord's vineyard. The people of Judah are his pleasant garden. He expects a crop of justice, but instead He found oppression. He expected to find righteousness, but instead he found cries of violence.”

I want to pause there. I want you to think about this for a moment. God is our Father. We are His sons. There is a separation between His sons and everyone else on the Earth. This does not say our daughters are less important. What this says is that there is a generational feeling between a father and a son.

We are to protect our daughters like they are diamonds. Our legacy, however, is in our sons. So when the Bible says that the men of Judah are the “garden of his delight,” it means that men are the object of the Father's watchful eye. It means that men are a reflection of Him in the masculine. Our Dad – God – has high expectations of us. He wants us to be like Him: faithful, honorable, truthful.

Both then and now, God looks for justice, but sees bloodshed. He looks for righteousness, but hears cries of distress. So when we talk about global injustice and global suffering being connected to the broken male culture, we are not talking about a new phenomenon. This is the corruption of sin in the world. What we are talking about is a centuries old phenomenon.

God is watching. God is tracking. He is particularly tracking His sons; their part in it, what they are doing about it, and that's why he would send us His prophets – the men of God – to call out His boys and say enough is enough. It ends here.

What is the war for male identity that is going on right now in your life? I know it's there because it's reality for all

of us. How does it happen? What is the formula behind the broken male culture? What is it going to take to defeat it? What is an example from the Scripture that shows us the way out? After we answer that, then I want to ask you point blank: Are you going to lead the uprising at home, with the men of your church?

In 1 John 2:16-17 (NLT,) God talks about the genesis of the broken male culture.

Do Not Love This World

“For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.”

What do we glean from this passage?

We glean that there is a very powerful force out there. God tells us not to love culture, and specifically, the masculine vision of what you should be. Reject the broken male identity. Reject our desire to be great, and our need to contribute and to be significant in the world.

When you study “*Uprisings*,” whether it’s the French or Bolshevik revolution, there are common elements. They all begin with injustices, deeply felt emotions and issues. And then, the simmering turns to a boil, unleashing a flash point where things explode. Across the globe, we are currently seeing an increase in flash points clearly showing us that we are being pulled into uprisings.

God’s men are responding around the world with our own *Uprising*! Men are turning away from the carnal world and embracing the spiritual world. There is a spiritual “*Uprising*.”

Sign up now to receive Every Man Ministries' FREE Email Newsletter.

Kenny Luck is the men's pastor at Saddleback Church and is the founder of Every Man Ministries. His 20th book—*Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God without Men of God*— is a blueprint for men's ministries, and was recently released through Broadman & Holman Books. Follow Every Man Ministries on Facebook and Twitter.

No Matter How Painful, Forgive Your Neighbor

It's often said that since a Christian is forgiven, he should be willing to forgive more readily than others. But in your heart you know that it's just not that simple. You may even be frustrated that you seem to hold a grudge just as easily now as you ever have. Why is forgiveness so hard?

Forgiveness is a free gift—to the recipient. It is expensive to the giver. Tim Keller, in his book *The Reason for God*, explains why:

God's grace and forgiveness, while free to the recipient, are always costly for the giver ... No one who is seriously wronged can "just forgive" the perpetrator ... But when you forgive, that means you absorb the loss and the debt. You bear it yourself. All forgiveness, then, is costly.

This is why forgiveness is so hard. When you forgive someone of a slight, it doesn't just go away; you must "bear it yourself." For instance, if I forgive a loan I made to someone, they don't have to pay me back, but I still don't

have the money!

When God forgave our sins, the sin didn't go away. The cost (or "wages" in Romans 6:23) of sin still exist—and Jesus paid that cost on our behalf with His own death.

This is what we are called to do. In Luke 6, Jesus says, *"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven."*

Jesus tells us that the way we treat others will actually affect our lives. He goes on, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Here is our second heart-based New Year's Resolution for 2013: Acknowledging the cost, I will "give forgiveness" to others this year.

Don't do it alone. Find another brother or your small group and make this resolution together. Practice forgiving each other. Encourage each other to forgive even when it's costly or painful. And give thanks to God for His forgiveness as you follow His example.

Brett Clemmer is a Christ-follower, husband, father, rock climber, runner and avid reader. He lives in Central Florida and works for Man in the Mirror. In his role as Vice President of Leadership Development, Brett spends the majority of his time writing, training and equipping church leaders to disciple men. Brett co-authored *No Man Left Behind*, a guidebook for church leaders who want to build male disciples in their church. He is active on Facebook and Twitter, and maintains the One Man, Under God blog at .

Argument of Jesus' Existence Still Rages

Even though the vast majority of historians accept that Jesus lived (even if they do not believe He performed any miracles or was raised from the dead), a large number of Internet atheists parrot the claim that the early Church made Jesus up entirely. They argue that Jesus must be made up because there is no "contemporary and local" evidence to the contrary.

This insistence uses a standard for Jesus that is not required for other historical figures. They want (as one insisted to me) to find a manuscript from AD 30-40 speaking of Jesus. However, the ancient world had no newspapers. In many cases, scholars rely on surviving documents written decades or even centuries after the events they describe.

For example, few scholars question the existence of Alexander the Great, but historical documentation (such as some skeptics insist we provide for Jesus) can be found! The first documentation available for Alexander is Diodorus Siculus' Library of World History from the first century BC, a full 200 years after Alexander's death.

Granted, it is based on older works (Diodorus states whom he used), but those are lost. No contemporary accounts of Alexander's life have survived. To apply the same standard that atheists hold Jesus to, we must conclude that Alexander did not exist and was made up by the Greeks to explain their empire's sudden expansion and split.

On the other hand, accounts of Jesus from the ancient world are astonishing in both their number and how close they are to the time. While the atheist will insist that we disallow the

New Testament, we still have a wealth of material. Here are some of the most important.

Josephus was born in AD 37 in Galilee. He wrote two extensive histories of Judaism. Twice, he mentions Jesus in Antiquities (ca. AD 90). While one likely has some later additions (for instance, it is likely that he wrote "some called him the Messiah" instead of "he was the Messiah"), both mentions of Jesus are considered as authentic by the vast majority of scholars. These references can be found in Antiquities Book 18 3:3 and Book 20 9:1.

The Roman historian and senator Tacitus wrote about Jesus in Annals book 15 chapter 44. This work comes from AD 116. This work is from an enemy of the church, who was a historian and dates to only 80 years after Jesus' death. Such close time frames are almost unheard of in ancient studies. That the author was not a Christian, but accepted their testimony about Jesus (and he was not a man who merely took his opponent's word as truth) also adds to the weight.

Mara ben Serapion (AD 73) mentions the "wise king" of the Jews who was slain in a letter.

Suetonius in Life of Claudius 25:4 (AD 121) speaks of Chrestus. Suetonius states that "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome." He states that this happened in what we would call AD 49. Most scholars are certain that this passage was written by Suetonius and is not a Christian addition because it places Jesus in Rome in AD 49, calls Him a troublemaker and misspells His name.

There are other references to Jesus and Christians from the ancient world. Some merely speak of Christian beliefs and worship practices, but others speak of Jesus himself.

For other historical figures, one mention from sources so close to the time would have scholars salivating. You can be

sure that Jesus existed historically.