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Part One: The Wonder Wall: Cynicism as Self-Preservation

Welcome to 40 Days of WOW! For the next two months at TSH, we'll address the root cause of cynicism, which is the belief that nothing will ever really change because people essentially selfish. It's hard not to be a cynic - especially during the Christmas season, when it feels like everything is materialistic: the presents, pictures, parties, and all the pressure!

But Christmas is supposed to be the most WONDERful time of the year, so what happened to the wonder? With this series, we'll reclaim the wonder of the season by reimagining the story of Jesus' birth, reflecting on the power of God's sacrificial love, and counting the blessings we so often take for granted.

What was Cynicism originally? Where did the Cynicism movement start, and how might it have helped pave the way for the spread of Christianity?

When we talk about cynicism today, we don't usually mean Cynicism in the classical sense.
What has cynicism become?

You can find traces of cynicism all over the Bible, especially in the Old Testament book called Ecclesiastes. Written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, and full of snark and doubt, Ecclesiastes often leaves readers thinking, "That's not supposed to be in the Bible!" Check out how the book begins:

Ecclesiastes 1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.



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The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.

What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago. No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.

I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. I said to myself, "Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."

Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

Who wrote Ecclesiastes, and how do you think he got so cynical?

What do you think we have in common with Solomon that causes such cynicism in us?

Cynicism changes how we see people. **How does the Bible say we should see people?**

Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

When do you have the most trouble believing that people are made in God's image?

Matthew 5:13, 17 "You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world."

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

What is your plan to be less cynical and more wonder-ful this Christmas?

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