

Missions Emphasis Weekend

Understanding "us" and "them" Better
A Key to More Effective Missions

 Bread of Life Church

Randy Richards





An Introduction to an Individualist Worldview

Who is this guy and why should we listen?

- Former missionary to Indonesia
- Ordained evangelical minister
- Christian teacher since 1983
- Husband for 44 years
- Inerrantist
- Proud grandfather!

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not “where,” not “why,” not “how” but “how not”



Culture as a Lens (helping me to focus)



Culture as a Lens (helping me to focus)



Culture as blinders

(keeping me from seeing what is there)



FOR I KNOW

THE
Plans
I HAVE
FOR *You*

declares the Lord, plans for
peace and not for evil, to give
you hope and a future.

JEREMIAH 29:11

*I know the plans I
have for all of you,
plans ... to give all
of you a hope and
a future*

(where the
“you” are
God’s people)

Individualist ←————→ Collectivist

• Individualist cultures:

- USA
- UK
- Some European countries

(commonly, “Western”)

• Collectivist cultures

- The so-called Eastern world
- Most of South America
- Africa
- The biblical world

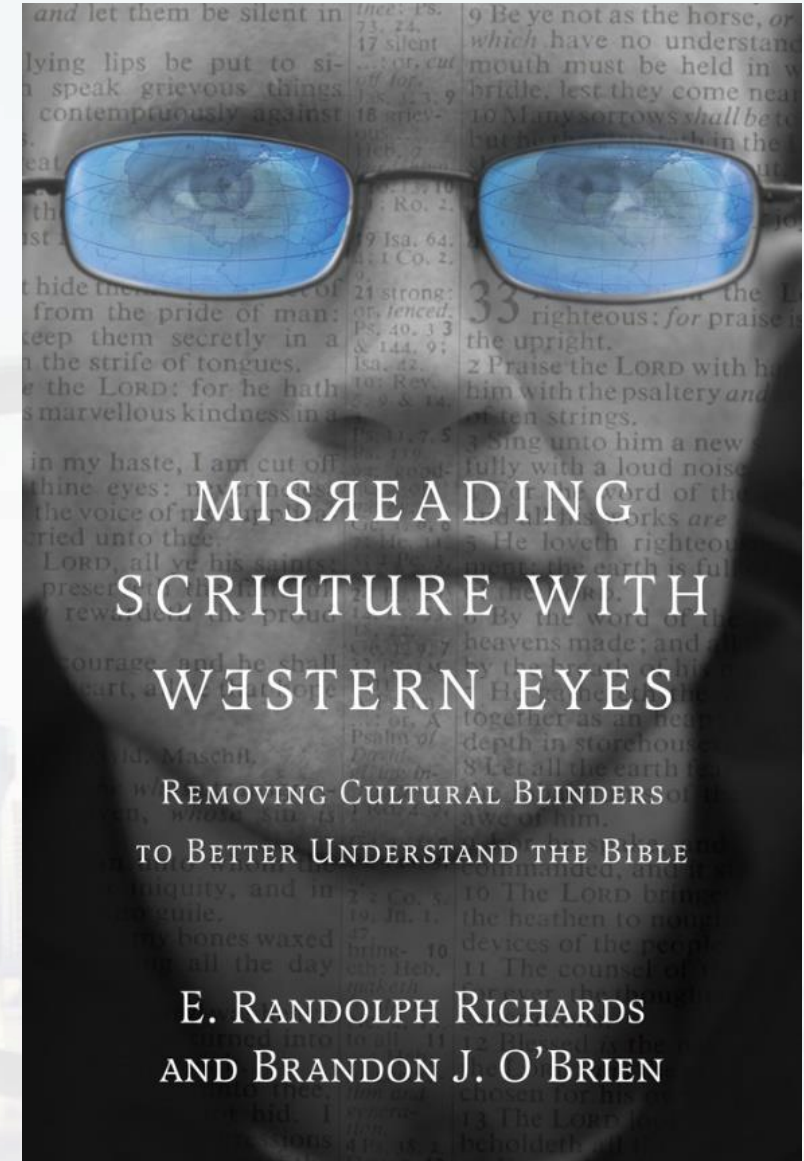
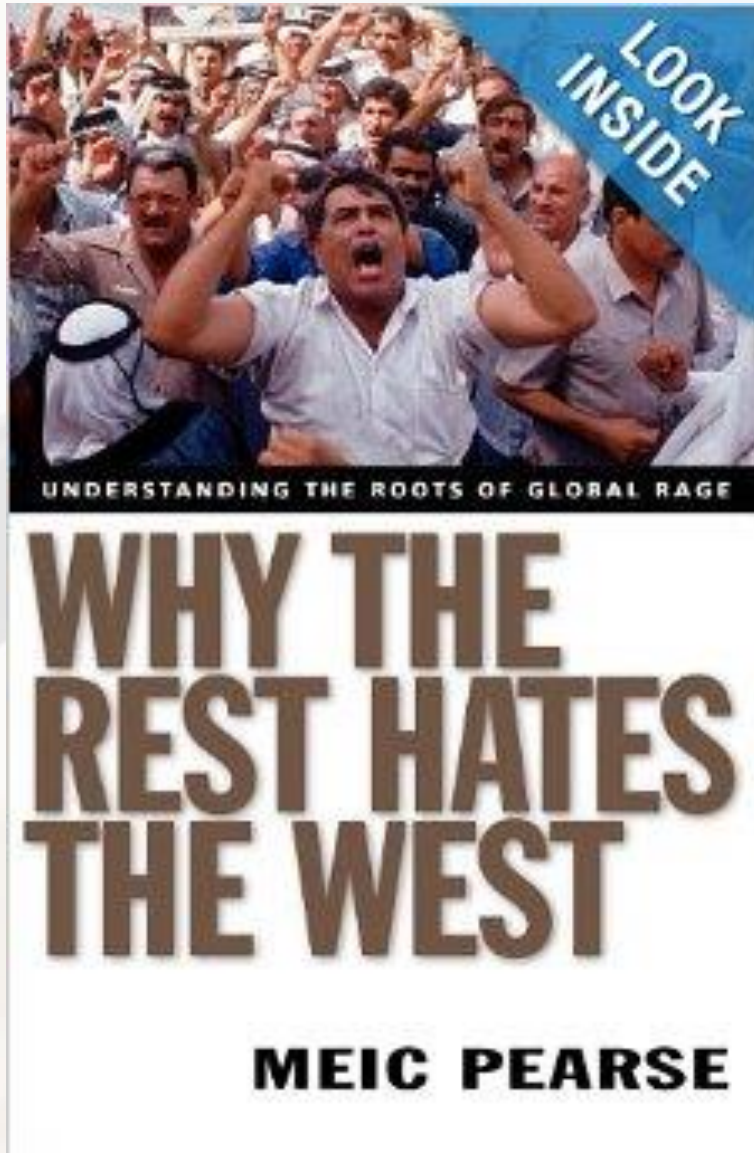
(commonly, “Eastern”)

Three Objections to This Topic (before we even get started)

1. Bashing the West is wrong.
2. Not all Westerners are alike
(nor are all Easterners)
3. Discussions like these are
just generalizations.

ALL TRUE!

#1 Bashing the West



#2 Westerners are not all alike

Not a right/wrong

or even a “which is better” discussion

I like this metaphor:

Apple trees and Orange trees.

Neither one is better; they are just different.

Let's suppose Westerners are like apples ...



Pink Lady



Bramley



Red Delicious



Golden Delicious



Cox



Fuji



Granny Smith

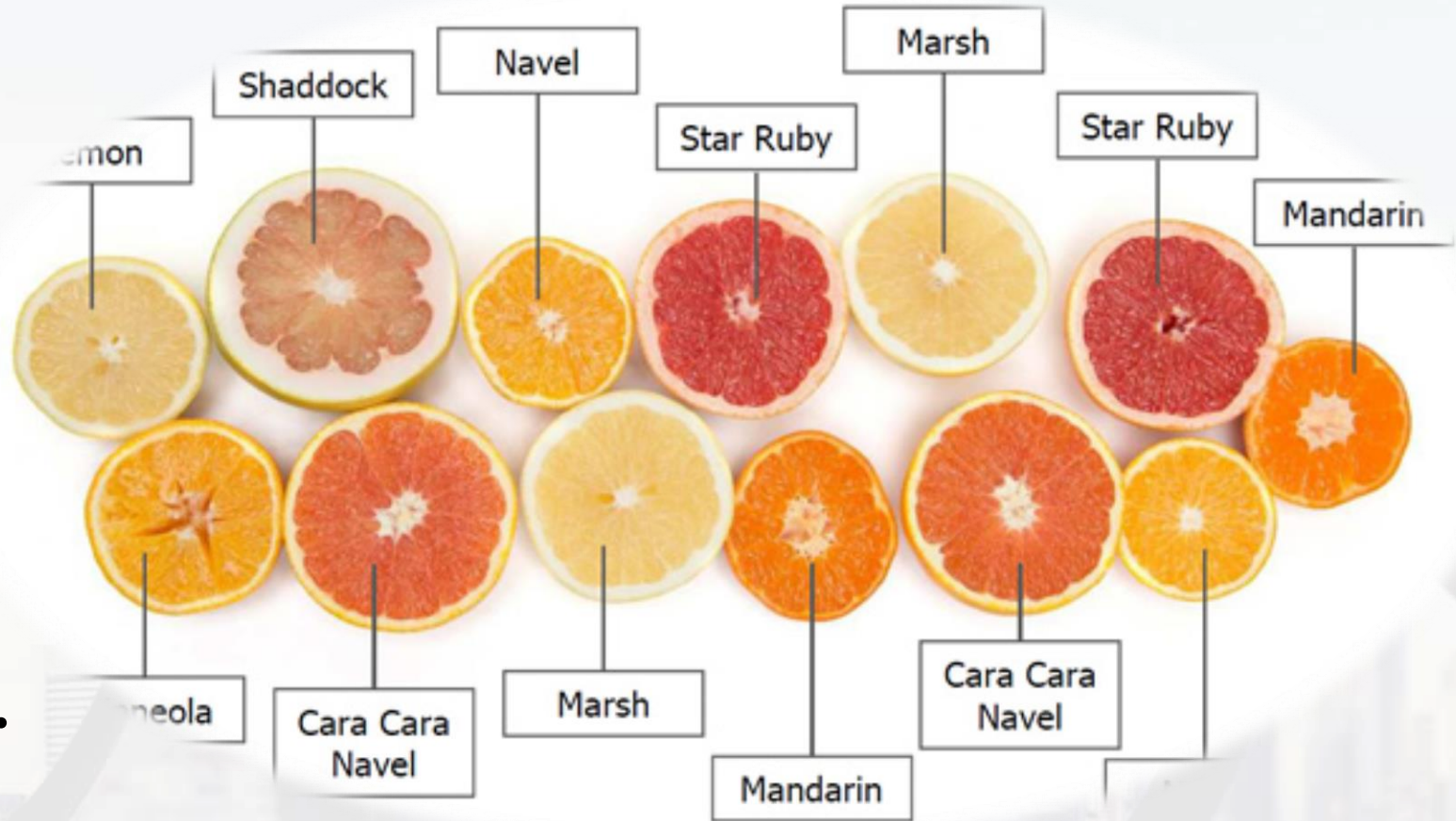


Royal Gala

There are a LOT of
different kinds
of apples.

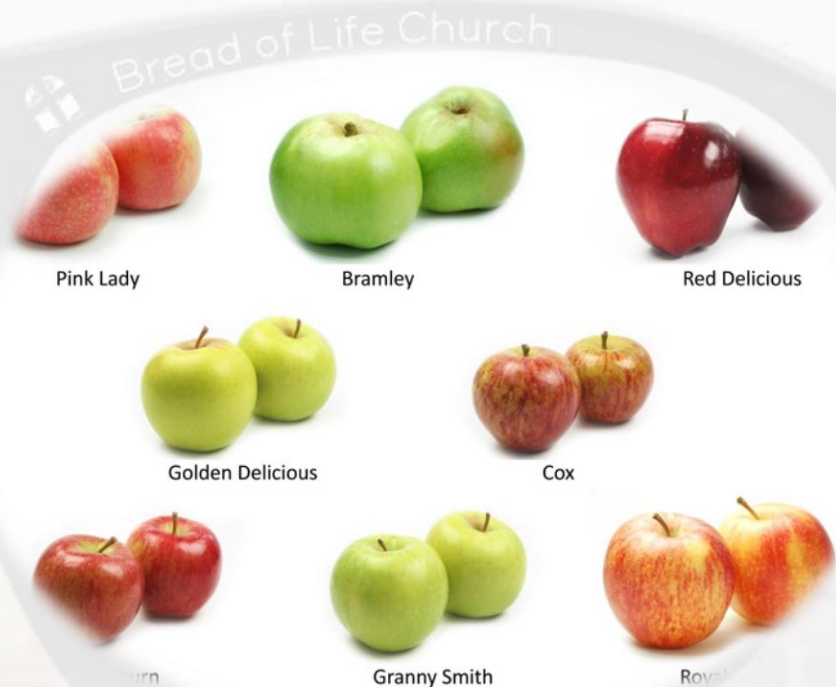
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Let's suppose Easterners are like oranges ...



There are a LOT of different kinds of oranges.

So yes, there are lots of kinds of apples
and they are not the same.



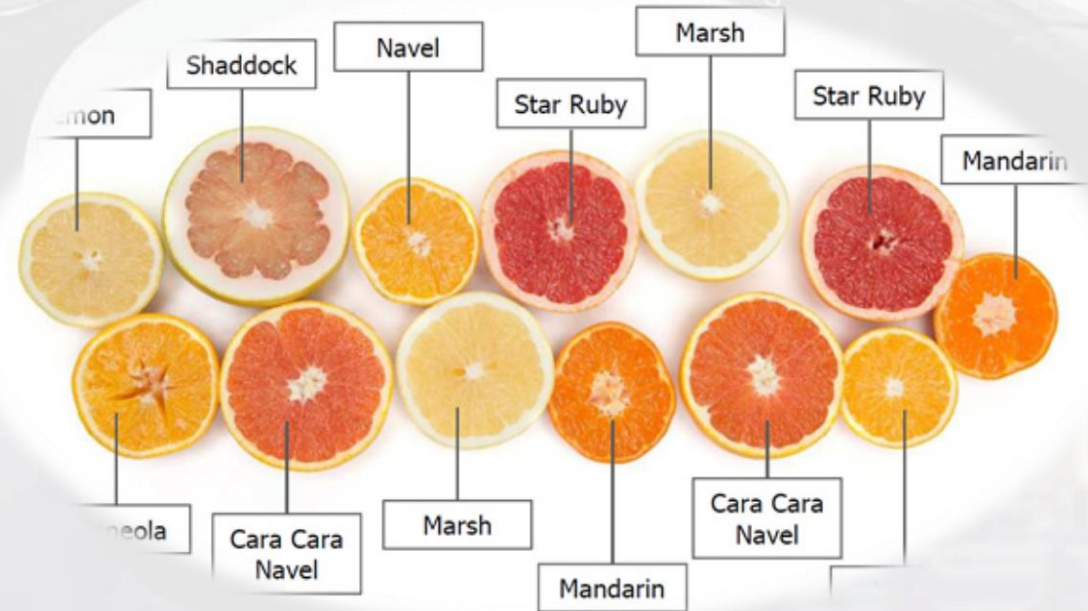
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Wisconsin
apple-growers
can be touchy
about it.

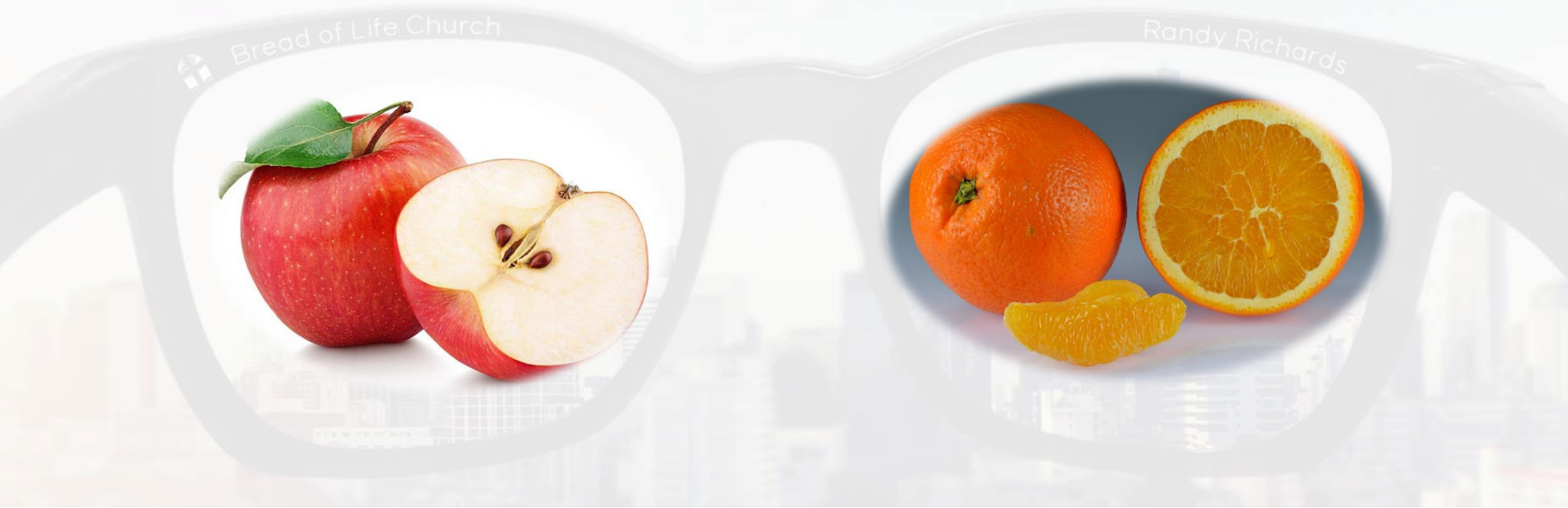
Yes, there are lots of kinds of oranges
and they are not the same.

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Florida orange-growers can be touchy about it.



Not the same. True, true, true...
but in the most general way,
you can say an apple is not an orange.



#3 Okay, but aren't we just left with
generalizations? Yes, but...

**Generalizations
are always wrong**

**and usually
helpful.**

So, if we can move past these objections,
let's get started

-We are NOT bashing the West.

-We know not all

Westerners are alike

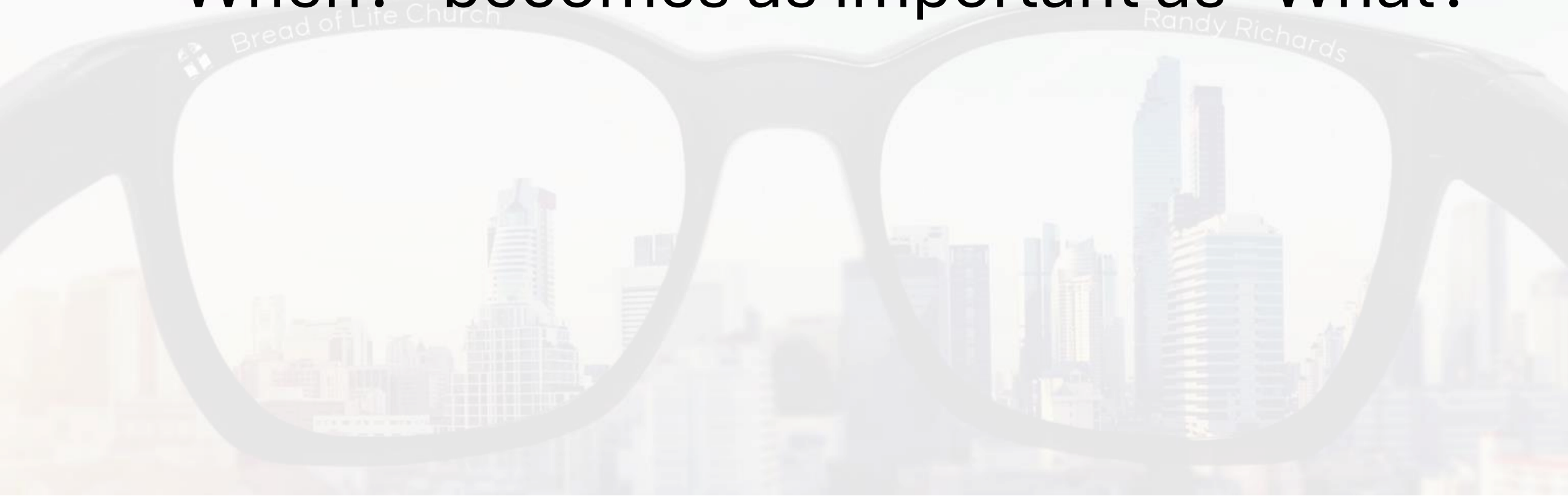
(nor are all Easterners).

-We are not pidgeon-holing you.

-We are dealing with generalizations
as a way to orient ourselves and to
begin to understand ourselves.

What makes someone an individualist?

- “When?” becomes as important as “What?”





The most important things go without being said.

- In my Texas culture, floors are “dirty.”
Tables are “clean,” as are chairs and countertops.
- We don’t stand on top of things that are “clean.”
If we have to climb on top of them, what do we do?

The most important things go without being said.

- It is deeper than that, though.
- It explains why we use tables and chairs.
- When do we learn this?

As kids, before we even knew how to reason things out.

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ComeTogetherKids.com

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Bread of

shards

dreamstime

When we see the world
(or read our Bible) ...

the most important things ...

usually go without being said.

(It is true in our own culture.)

So as I read scripture,
when is my **WORLDVIEW**
acting as a **lens** and when is it a **blinder**?



My worldview can keep me from noticing what the Bible was shouting

- But we don't know or notice that because it is not part of our culture.
- Therefore it is easy for us *not* to notice what the biblical writer thought he was making obvious.
- Remember the story where Abraham has three angelic visitors?



18 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.

2 Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3 He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. **4** Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. **5** Let me get you something to eat..."

18 ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.

⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

Culture as blinders

Pragmatism as an American Virtue



Culture as blinders

Efficiency as an American Virtue



What do you see?



American Culture as a Lens

Cleanliness is
next to _____.



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What does my
worldview tell me to
see?

Did I see a deacon at
church? Why not?

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Culture as a Lens

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God helps
those

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who _____.

A pair of dark-rimmed glasses is centered in the foreground, slightly out of focus. The lenses show a clear view of a city skyline with several skyscrapers. The background is a bright, hazy cityscape. The text is overlaid on the image.

Self-Reliance as an American Virtue

...but it is a
Biblical vice

So as I read scripture,
when is my **WORLDVIEW**
acting as a **lens** and when is it a **blinder**?



So as I read scripture,
when is my **WORLDVIEW**
acting as a **lens** and when is it a **blinder**?



Peter might say it clearer for us



“We are like living stones,
being built into a spiritual house.”

2 Peter



**Questions?
Comments?**

**Observations?
Objections?**

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My culture tells me to ignore something...

The Widow's Offering

Luke 21 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Before Luke's story of the widow's offering...

⁴⁶ "Beware of the teachers of the law...

⁴⁷ They devour widows' houses

The Widow's Offering

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Right after Luke's story of the widow's offering...

The Widow's Offering

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⁵ Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and **with gifts dedicated to God**. But Jesus said, ⁶ "As for what you see here, the time will come when **not one stone will be left on another**; every one of them will be thrown down."