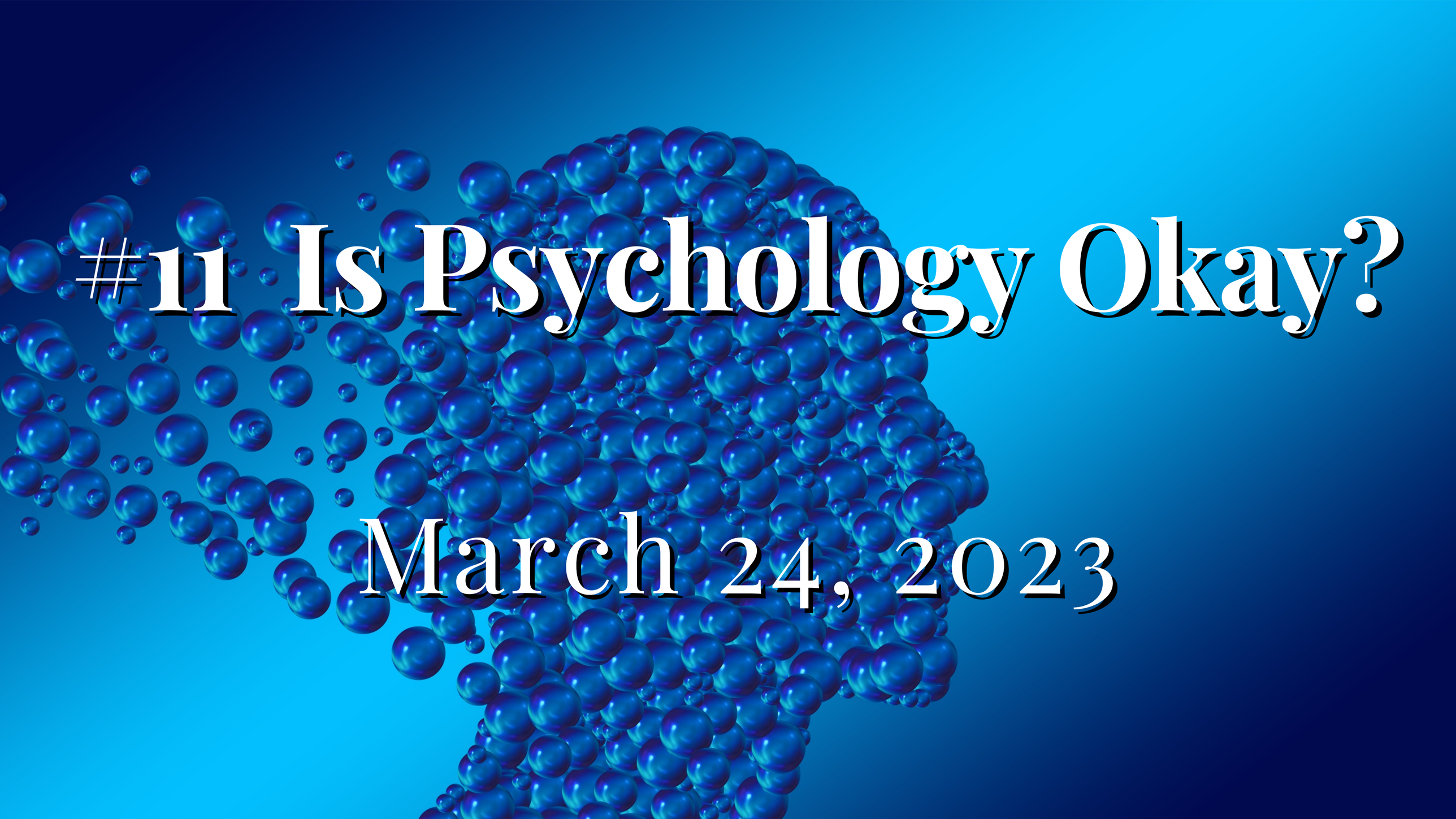
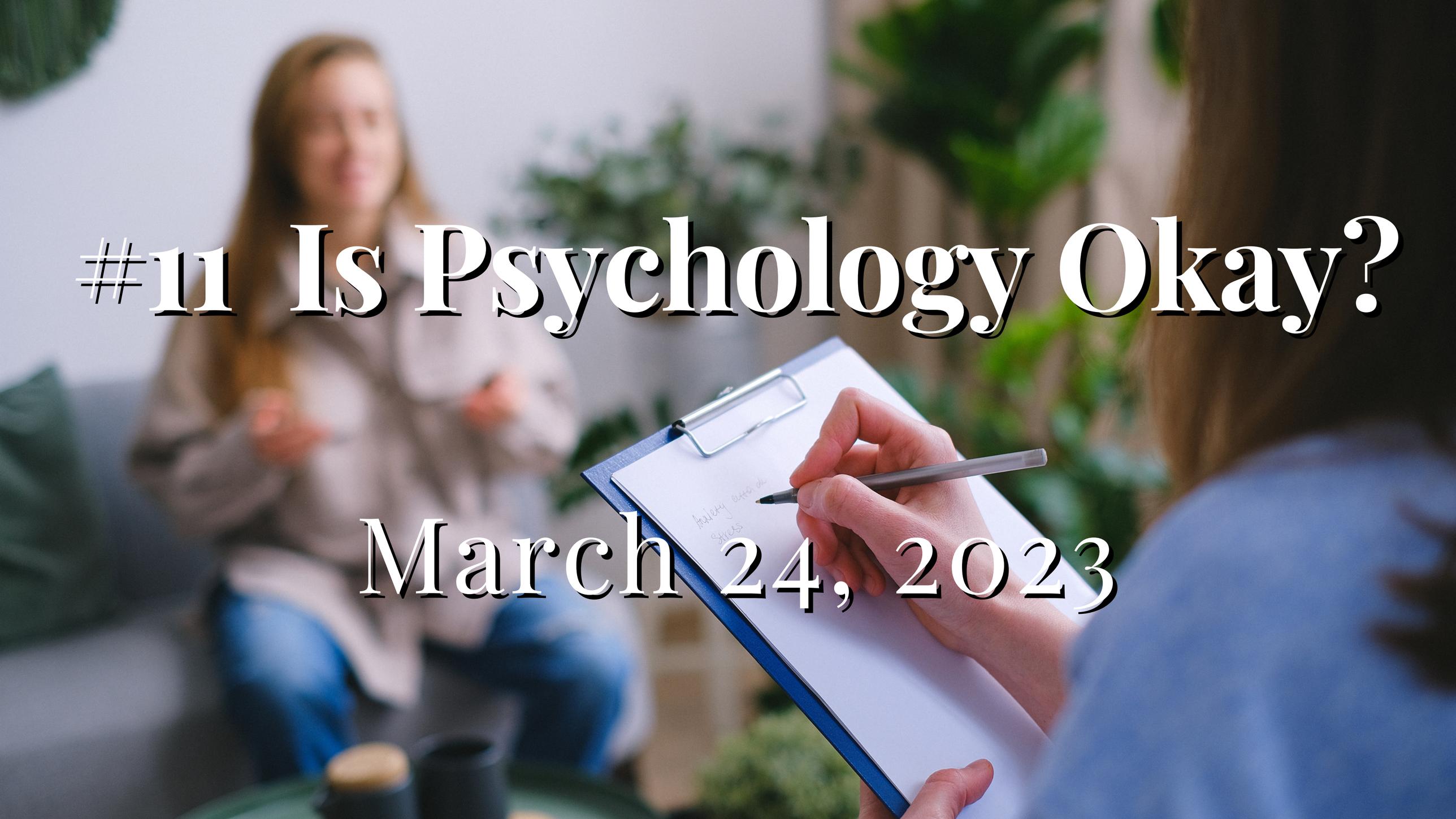

#11 Is Psychology Okay?
March 24, 2023


#11 Is Psychology Okay?
March 24, 2023

Psychology is the study of human behavior.
Psychiatry is study of mental disorders.

Secular therapy seeks to be neutral or values-free.
Goal: produce well-adjusted happy people based on whatever values are important to counselees.
Self at center of reality instead of God.
“follow your heart”; “be all you can be”; “you deserve a break today”; “look out for number one”

!

I. Four Horseman of the Psychological Apocalypse

Sigmund Freud

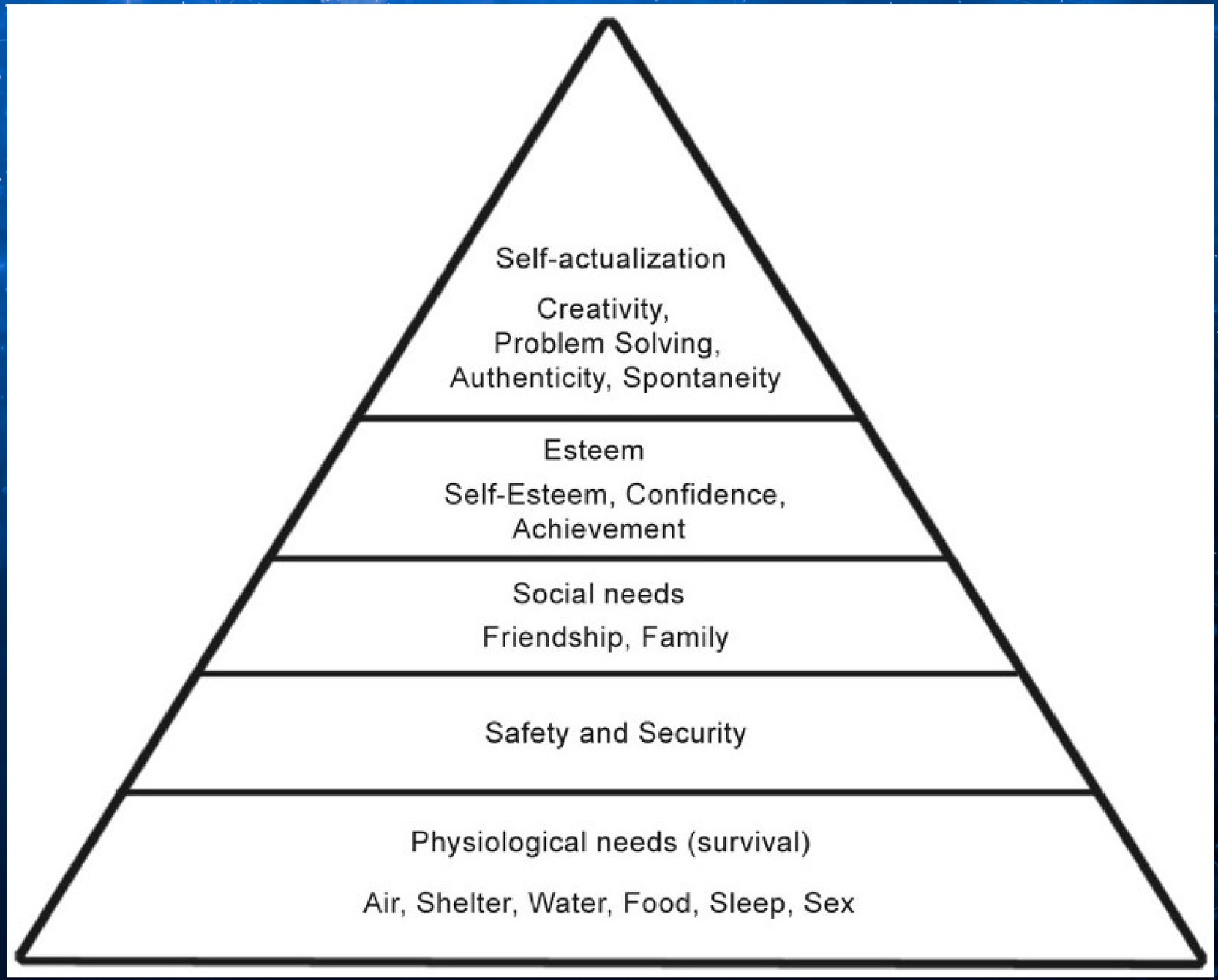
B.F. Skinner

Carl Jung

Carl Rogers

Other influential psychological thinkers include Abraham Maslow and William James.

Maslow's Heirachy of Needs



!

II. Modern Psychology and Christianity

Integrationist [syncretistic] model of Christian Counseling. One Christian counselor put it like this:

"Think of the dashboard control for the HVAC system in a car. The cool side represents secular insights into human behavior. The hot side represent Biblical insights. We must mix them together for most comfortable setting."

Christian Smith has accurately characterized modern mainstream evangelical belief as “moralistic therapeutic deism.” He characterizes the beliefs of this quasi-religious outlook at follows:

a. A God who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.

b. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

c. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself [the primary goal of modern psychological therapy].

d. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when He is needed to resolve a problem [with the help of psychological therapy].

e. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Biblical Counseling movement:

- Christian Counseling & Education Foundation (CCEF)
- ·Association of Certified Biblical Counselors (ACBC).

Goal: help Christians cultivate the fruit of spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) in the pursuit of godly Christ-likeness (sanctification) why mortifying the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13).

Sin is no longer a relevant category in secularized society. We avoid personal blame and responsibility. Instead, we are to regard ourselves as victims.

Therapy is designed to minimize suffering and increase happiness. But God uses suffering as a means of sanctifying us (Phil. 3:10-11; Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:12-13; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

!

III. What is Biblical Counseling

1 Thessalonians 5:14 provides a good metric.:

"And we urge you, brethren,	Especially those who are spiritual (Gal. 6:1; cf. Ephesians 4:25)
(1) admonish the unruly,	Confront personal responsibility for sin.
(2) encourage the fainthearted,	Relieve spiritual suffering due to trials & tribulations.
(3) help the weak,	Strengthen those who are immature in their faith.
be patient with all men."	Recognize change can take time.

!

Humans are composed of body and soul. The medical profession is necessary for body care. Biblical Counseling is necessary for soul care. But sometimes body and soul interact (Psa. 32:3-4; 2 Cor. 4:16).

!

Principles of Biblical Counseling (David Powlison)

1) God is at the Center of Counseling.
2) Centrality of Scripture.
3) Sin is the Problem.
4) The Gospel is the answer.
5) Change is progressive sanctification.
6) Situational difficulties are not the cause of problems.
7) Counseling is Pastoral Care.

IV. Some Popular Psychological Categories

A. Low Self-worth/ self-esteem

Robert Schuller: "I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelicalism enterprise, than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition."

David Seamans in Healing for Damaged Emotions says low self-esteem is "Satan's deadliest weapon."

!

B. Learn to Love Yourself

No command to love yourself. Self-love and self-esteem are twin brothers. See 2 Tim. 3:1-4. Matt. 22:37, 39: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind…and…You shall love your neighbor as yourself"

"I hate myself" is often code for "I have failed." My pride is hurt.

Everything we do is done in the service of self-interest.
Blaise Pascal said: "All men seek happiness [i.e., their own well-being]. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.… The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

!

C. Forgiving Yourself

No command to forgive yourself.

God forgives sinners and forgiven sinners are called to forgive one another.

God > sinners

forgiven sinners >< forgiven sinners

!

V. Mental Illness

The secular Bible of mental illness: The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders
DSM-1 came out in 1952 and DSM-5 in 2013.

A couple of examples of so-called disorders that have no medically verifiable (testable) cause are:

- OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). Personality?
- GAD (General Anxiety Disorder). Spiritual sin or immaturity? Read Philippians 4:6-7, 8-9.
- PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder). Traumatic experience.

Two views of mental illness in secular psychology:

- Psychodynamic – Treated by psychotherapy
- Bio-chemical – Treated by psychotropic medication

!

35% of patients who are given placebos for depression improve after taking them. In some cases, 70% improve after taking medications, but even the medications themselves can have a placebo effect and there is no way to determine that.

9% of US children diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder) take psychotropic medication (such as Ritalin). However, only 0.5% of French children diagnosed with ADHD take psychotropic medications.

Sometimes the DSM characterizes disorders as a medical conditions that Scripture defines as sin.

- Sexual perversions
- Pyromania (unable to resist the urge to set things on fire),
- Kleptomania (unable to resist the urge to steal).
- Alcoholism – Bible calls drunkenness (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10).

VI. Chemical Imbalance and Depression

Daniel Carlat, says in a recent NPR interview:

"We don't know how the medications actually work in the brain.... I'll often say something like the way Zoloft works, is, it increases the level of serotonin in your brain (or synapses, neurons) and, presumably, the reason you're depressed or anxious is that you have some sort of a deficiency. And I say that [chuckles] not because I really believe it, because I know the evidence really isn't there for us to understand the mechanism—I think I say that because patients want to know something. And they want to know that we as physicians have some basic understanding of what we're doing when we're prescribing medications. They certainly don't want to know that a psychiatrist essentially has no idea how these medications work." (Qtd. in Lacasse and Leo).

Advertisement for Zoloft (antidepressant similar to Prozac):

Social anxiety can be overwhelming. You might shake, sweat, or feel panicky. You may feel embarrassed when you are in a group. You may worry that you are being judged. You just feel so isolated. These are some signs of social anxiety disorder. It is a *real medical condition* [?] that can get in the way of your daily life. The *cause is unknown* [?]. But *it may happen* [?] when natural chemicals between the brain's nerve cells are out of balance. Prescription Zoloft works to correct this imbalance. [Brackets and italics mine]

A new exhaustive review of the evidence, the first of its kind, was released on July 19, 2022, in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry* by University College London Psychiatry Professor Joanna Moncrieff and a team of five other top European researchers entitled: “The Serotonin Theory of Depression: A Systematic Umbrella Review of the Evidence.” They found “there is no evidence of a connection between reduced serotonin levels or activity and depression.” They state that “85-90 percent of the public believes that depression is caused by low serotonin or a chemical imbalance.”

Resources:

Books:

- Richard Ganz, *PsychoBabble: The Failure of Modern Psychology and the Biblical Alternative*
- Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*
- Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*
- Michael R. Emlet, *Descriptions and Prescriptions: A Biblical Perspective on Psychiatric Diagnoses & Medications*.

Websites:

- Association of Certified Biblical Counselors: www.biblicalcounseling.com
- Christian Counseling & Education Foundation: www.ccef.org

Articles:

- *A Decisive Blow to Blow to the Serotonin Hypothesis of Depression* www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/side-effects/202207/decisive-blow-the-serotonin-hypothesis-depression

April 2

Is Capitalism Better than Socialism? - Dave

April 9

No Sunday School - Easter

April 16

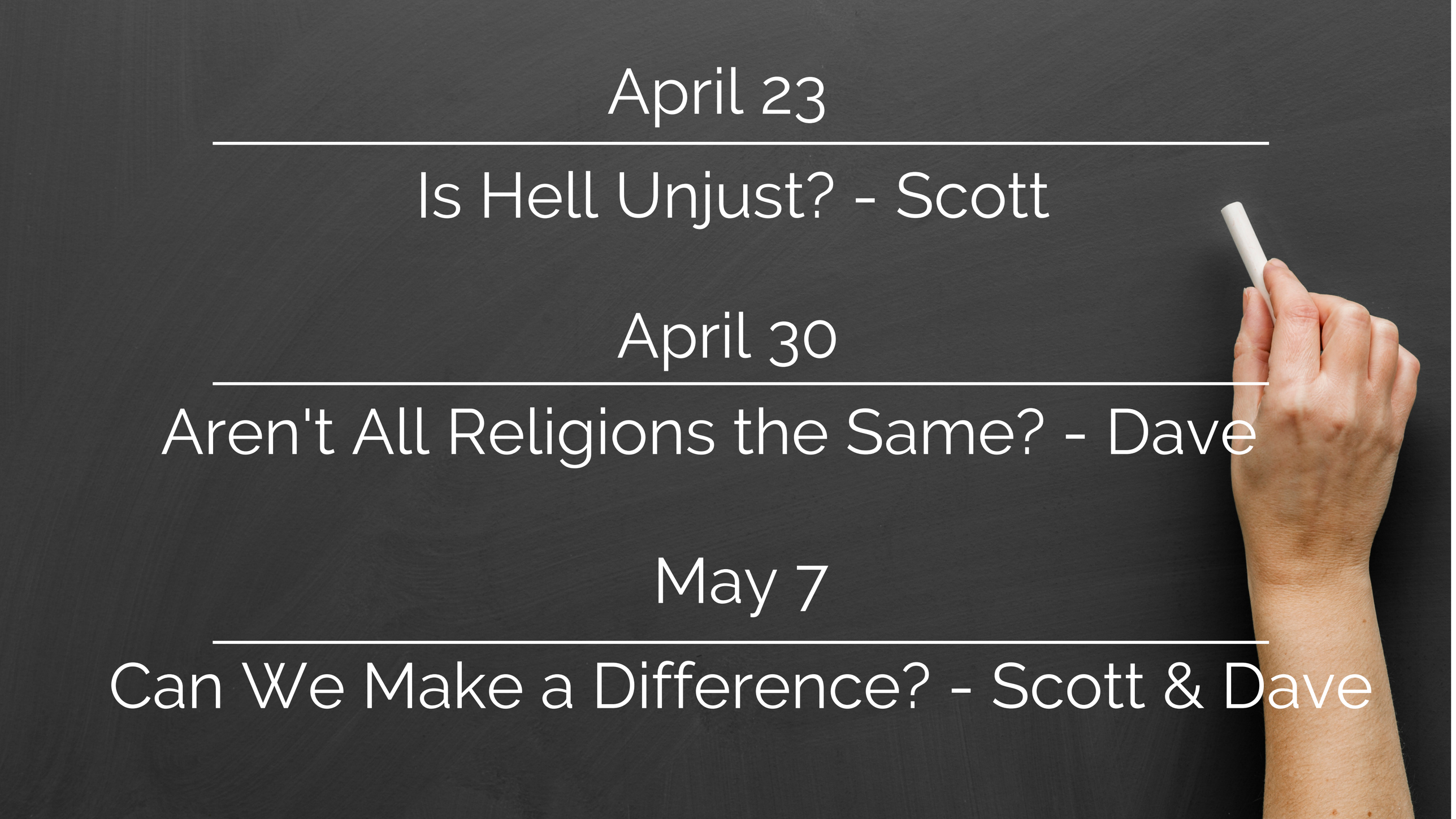
Aren't Christians Judgmental and Hypocritical? - Scott

April 23

Is Hell Unjust? - Scott

April 30

Aren't All Religions the Same? - Dave

May 7

Can We Make a Difference? - Scott & Dave