**Series Slide**

Trevor Noah is the current host of the Daily Show on Comedy Central.

I recently read his memoir full of stories about his life growing up in S. Africa, both during and after apartheid.

Much of the book is dedicated to stories of Trevor’s mom, Patricia Noah, a single woman raising her mixed race son in a country where it was illegal for a black person and a white person to be together.

Having a mixed race baby was LITERALLY a crime.

His mother used to get a light skinned friend to pretend like Trevor’s mother, and she would act like their maid, just so she could walk down the street with her son.

Many of Trevor’s memories of his mother have to do with her Xian beliefs. Beliefs that Trevor no longer holds.

He tells stories of prayer meetings in his home, of entire days spent going to 4 different churches all across their city.

One Sunday, their old car didn’t start, so they had to catch a terribly unreliable bus to get to church.

The bus they got on was run by the mob and Trevor and his mom were held captive on the way home from church. Patricia, knowing the men were going to kill her and Trevor, threw her 9-year old son, who was asleep in her lap at the time, out of the moving bus, and then jumped herself.

After they had shaken the guys trying to kill them, Trevor said to his mom, “You should have listened to God when he told us stay home when the car wouldn’t star… because clearly the Devil tricked us into coming out tonight!”

His Mom replied, **“No Trevor! That’s not how the Devil works. This is part of God’s plan, and if He wanted us here then He had a reason.”**

Later in Trevor’s life….

His Mom married the man who became Trevor’s step-Dad. His name was Abel.

He was an angry and abusive alcoholic.

Eventually, she left him… got remarried, had another kid.

When Trevor was around 19 and away at college, their family was coming home from church. There was a bunch of extended family with them, aunts, uncles, cousins and such.

They had just pulled into the driveway and got out of the car when Abel pulled up behind them in the driveway… drunk…with a gun.

“You’ve taken everything from me.” He said, “Now I’m going to kill all of you!”

He raised the gun to fire at them, and Patricia jumped in front of the gun to protect them. She was shot in the leg.

She collapsed to the ground and screamed “RUN!”

As everyone scattered, Abel kept shooting. Then he stood over Patricia, pointed the gun at her head and he pulled the trigger. Nothing. Happened. The gun misfired. He pulled the trigger again. And again. And again.

4 times the gun misfired while pointed directly between her eyes. Bullets were falling out of the gun and down on Trevor’s mom laying on the ground.

When Abel stopped to see what was wrong with the gun, she shoved him aside, bleeding leg and all, and jumped into the car. Her other son, Andrew dove in with her. And as she turned the ignition, there was another gunshot…and the windshield went red with blood.

Abel had shot her in the head from behind. The bullet went in the back of her head and exited near her nose.

Andrew, pushed her aside, jumped in the drivers seat and sped to the hospital.

Trevor showed up at the hospital to find his mother with a bullet hole through her face.

They waited through the night during her emergency surgery, to find out what, if any, chances she had to live.

When the doctor emerged from surgery, he told them, “**I don’t like to use this word, because I’m a man of science and I don’t believe in it. But what happened to your mother today was a miracle. I never say that, because I hate it when people say it, but I don’t have any other way to explain this.”**

The bullet entered below the skull at the top of her neck, missed the spinal cord by a fraction of a hair, missed the medulla oblongata, and traveled through her head just underneath the brain, missing every major vein, artery and nerve.

She was out of the hospital in 4 days, and back at work in 7 days.

When Trevor learned his Mom had been shot he said, “**I was angry at the world, angry at God. Because all my mom does is pray. If there’s a fan club for Jesus, my mom is definitely in the top 100, and this is what she gets?”**

It wasn’t until later, that Trevor got his Mom’s side of the story.

When she was looking down the barrel of that gun, she started to pray. That’s when the gun misfired.

To this day no one can really explain what happened. Even the police were baffled. Its not like the gun didn’t work. In fact, it worked for EVERY SHOT except the point blank shots aimed at Patricia’s head.

The gun worked for EVERY SHOT that Patricia wasn’t praying against.

Trevor, ended up paying his Mom’s entire hospital bill, which came out to around $4,000 US, because she had recently canceled her health insurance.

Later, when Trevor and his mom went back and talked about the event, he told her, “You’re lucky to be alive. I can’t believe you didn’t have health insurance.”

She said, “I have insurance”

“You do?”

“Yes. Jesus.”

“Jesus is your health insurance?”

“If God is for me, who can be against me?”

Trevor said, “For once, I cannot argue with you. The gun, the bullets…I can’t explain any of it. So I’ll give you that.

But where was your Jesus to pay our hospital bill, hmmm? I know for a fact that He didn’t pay that.”

She smiled and said, “You’re right. He didn’t. But He blessed me with the son who did.”

* **TITLE SLIDE “Jesus is My Health Insurance: How to Arm Yourself with Theology and Surprise Your Enemies with Beauty”- 1 Peter 3 & 4**

How do you have that sort of confidence?

That kind of composure?

That sort of trust and perseverance?

How did Patricia have what she needed

…To live through the injustice of Apartheid…where she had to pretend her son wasn’t her son to avoid being arrested.

Where did she get the kind of faith and confidence that when she had to jump from a bus, she believed that was a part of God’s plan instead of a curse from him.

And how does she have the presence of mind to pray with a 9mm in her face. …and then come out the other side…better…instead of bitter.

Today, Peter the Apostle is going to tell us…where that confidence comes from...and how to access it on the regular.

* **1 Peter 3:8-4:5**
* **8 Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, 9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.**
* **10 For the one who wants to love life**
* **and to see good days,**
* **let him keep his tongue from evil**
* **and his lips from speaking deceit,**
* **11 and let him turn away from evil**
* **and do what is good.**
* **Let him seek peace and pursue it,**
* **12 because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous**
* **and his ears are open to their prayer.**
* **But the face of the Lord is against**
* **those who do what is evil.**
* **13 Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear or be intimidated, 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. 16 Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.**
* **18 For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 in which he also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison 20 who in the past were disobedient, when God patiently waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. In it a few ​— ​that is, eight people ​— ​were saved through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not as the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.**
* **Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding ​— ​because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin ​— ​**

**2 in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will. 3 For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you don’t join them in the same flood of wild living ​— ​and they slander you. 5 They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead.**

**1 Peter 4:12-13**

**12 Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.**

**1 Peter 4:19**

**19 So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.**

**TRANSITION:** This is one of those chunks of Scripture that flows in and out of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy.

* + Orthodoxy means “right belief”. Believing the things about God that he tells us about himself.
	+ And Orthopraxy means “right practice”. We call it Ethics.
	+ The thing is, though, often we make orthodoxy an academic exercise…you know…doctrine is just stuff you know *about* God…like stuff you can be tested on so other people can figure out whether or not you’re a heretic.
	+ …and then our orthopraxy…our ethics and the way we live and carry ourselves…they aren’t really tied to anything. They are just sort of these free floating practices that are more associated with what people around us think is good and right than what God shows us about himself.
	+ But Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy are married to each other.
	+ Orthodoxy produces orthopraxy.
	+ And orthopraxy…actually deepens your orthodoxy…it helps you believe right things about God.
	+ That’s why I love passages like this. That just flow from orthodoxy to orthopraxy…and back again.
	+ …because that’s the way the 2 work. Right Beliefs drive beautiful ethics…and practicing beautiful ethics deepen right beliefs.
	+ If you need a picture of that…just think about Patricia Noah.
	+ Put a gun in her face, and she prays.
	+ Threaten to kill her son, and she throws him off a bus…in a good way …and then gets back on the bus to go to church the next week.
	+ Put an unjust system on her, and she finds a way to be the mother she is called to be…even when the system says she has no business loving her son of another race.
	+ …fire a gun at her family…and she jumps in front of the bullet.
	+ …and behind it all is perhaps the deepest orthodoxy known to man…
	+ **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”**
* Peter is telling a deeply threatened, suffering, and worn out church here…

**1) Don’t arm yourselves with weapons, …arm yourselves with orthodoxy.**

* + The overwhelming thrust of this passage, and really the entire letter of 1 Peter, is to convince a suffering and persecuted church that though it feels like they have lost, they have actually won.
	+ Peter’s aim is to teach the church that the right response to their suffering IS NOT, to grab a sword and challenge the Roman gov’t, or their pagan neighbors to a duel.
	+ Rather, its to love, serve, honor, and respect their neighbors and their authorities.
	+ **4:1**
	+ So, its very interesting that in a letter where Peter is saying things like “Don’t return evil for evil…Don’t fight your persecutors with slander or insults…”
	+ Its interesting that he says “Arm Yourselves”.
	+ He says, “Don’t arm yourselves with weapons to fight back, arm yourselves with orthodoxy to fight sin.”
	+ Now, WHAT IN THE WORLD DOES THAT MEAN?
	+ How do I ARM MYSELF with Theology?
	+ Let me show you.
	+ **3:18-19**
	+ Chapter 3:19 has been known throughout church history as one of the most difficult passages in the NT to understand.
	+ And typically the way this verse is approached is in a sort of theological trivia way.
	+ You know…its about figuring out what Jesus did between his death and resurrection. Did he pay a visit to hell? Is purgatory a real thing?
	+ But this isn’t theological trivia. In fact, I’d argue that there is no such thing as theological trivia. If God revealed it about himself, then there is some important reason that we know it.
	+ God doesn’t reveal things about himself for trivial reasons.
	+ AND THIS IDEA…along with the simple, but confusing phrase “Baptism now saves you” are the bullet in the theological gun that Peter is instructing the church to arm herself with.
	+ SOOOOOO? What is he talking about.
	+ Well, don’t forget the context.
	+ Peter is giving these Xians a breath of fresh air.
	+ He’s giving them an oxygen mask, because they feel absolutely smothered by the evil system that’s oppressing them, and their pagan neighbors persecuting them.
	+ **3:10**
	+ That’s why he quotes extensively from Psalm 34.
	+ If you were in intense suffering because of worshipping Jesus…wouldn’t the statement “For the one who wants to love life and see good days…wouldn’t that get your attention?
	+ I’d be raising my hand…jumping up and down…
	+ “oooo oooo ooo, Me, me, me. I want see good days. I want to love life again…cuz you know frankly right now…LIFE STINKS! I HURT! And this Jesus thing doesn’t seem to be working in my favor!”
	+ Right after that, in Psalm 34, the psalmist goes into a list of ethical practices…orthopraxy.
	+ **3:11-12**
	+ He says, “Don’t lie. Seek Peace. Do good.”
	+ And then he links that to orthodoxy. Good doctrine.
	+ What’s the doctrine?
	+ The Lord sees your righteousness…the Lord hears your prayers.
	+ You think Patricia Noah believed that? Yep. And that 9mm didn’t stand a chance.
	+ Think about how beautifully refreshing that doctrine is to people who feel like God has forgotten them in suffering. He sees you. He hears you.
	+ And then, the face of the Lord is against people who do evil.
	+ In other words, when you feel abandoned…like the good you are doing is going unnoticed… like evil will win if you pick up a sword and strike back…
	+ DON’T DO IT!
	+ Keep doing Good. ORTHOPRAXY.
	+ Because God sees you, hears you, and he will WIN IN THE END and EVIL WILL LOSE.
	+ **3:18-19**
	+ So whatever it means that Jesus “went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison…”it has to mean something about God winning in the end.
	+ Because that is the idea that Peter is trying to get across.
	+ Let me cut to the chase without offering all the theories that I think COULD fit within orthodoxy.
	+ Here’s what makes sense to me in this verse.
	+ After Jesus was crucified. For our sins. In our place.
	+ He descended to the place of the dead.
	+ Now, in the Jewish understanding of this. That does not mean that Jesus is hanging out with unrighteous people who have died.
	+ If you read the parable about Lazarus and the rich man (among some other places), you’ll see a picture of the in between time…when a person dies and Jesus returns renewing the earth and resurrecting the just.
	+ And in that in between time, in death, there is a righteous compartment and an unrighteous compartment. They are separated by a chasm, but communication is still allowed between the two sides.
	+ I think this is Jesus after his death, going into the righteous compartment of the death (also known as Abraham’s bosom), and essentially looking at all the rulers and principalities (as Paul calls them) the spirits of evil and disobedience…and he’s saying, “You thought you won. You’re wrong. I Won. When you killed me, you only made it possible for me resurrect everyone who ever put their hope in God to make them righteous.”
	+ Its what we call vindication.
	+ It's the closest Jesus comes to sounding like LL Cool J.
	+ It's the Father, Son, and Spirit saying, “Don’t call it a comeback, we planned this for years…”
	+ **3:20-22**
	+ And the first ORTHOPRAXY that FLOWS from believing this ORTHODOXY is baptism.
	+ Peter draws our attention to Noah. He says, “The spirits of evil were really active back in Noah’s day”.
	+ In fact, the Bible says that everyone did evil, all the time. It says that Noah and his family were the only people who believed God and were seeking righteousness. Imagine how Noah felt.
	+ Well, he felt exactly like this early church does.
	+ He felt exactly like Patricia Noah did riding that bus home from church. Or staring that gun in the face.
	+ He felt like Trevor Noah did when he got the call his righteous mother had been shot in the head by her ex-husband.
	+ “WHY GOD? WHY IS EVIL WINNING?”
	+ But Noah was vindicated. Eventually evil was judged. And Noah survived through the floodwaters of God’s justice.
	+ Though the water came down on him and his family, they ATTACHED themselves to God’s plan of salvation. They PRACTICED what they believed about God, that he was trustworthy. They climbed aboard an ark…and they floated on God’s justice…instead of being consumed by it.
	+ IT was salvation. AND it was vindication.
	+ When that gun misfired 4 times in Patricia Noah’s face…it was salvation…and it was vindication.
	+ THROUGH Salvation God proved that Evil loses, and HIS righteousness wins.
	+ SO now, Peter instructs the church…baptism saves you.
	+ And his point is not that the ACT of baptism is what saves you…
	+ …that’s why he caveats it.
	+ He says its not the washing away of dirt from your body… Its not the physical act that saves you…
	+ It is the pledge of a good conscience…
	+ Or it is the looking at Who JESUS is…the ark that saves us from the righteous Justice of God…
	+ … it is the outward act of an inward appeal to God that we believe what Jesus did in his death and resurrection…is what allows us to be on his SIDE…instead of the side of the evil spirits now imprisoned.
	+ Now, here’s what that means about baptism.
	+ While you may be tempted to look at this verse, especially if you are Baptist in theology like me, …you are tempted to look at this verse and spend the entire time explaining away baptism and emphasizing that its not as important as the appeal to God for a good conscience.
	+ But that’s not what Peter is saying here.
	+ No, Peter is EMPHASIZING the importance of baptism.
	+ Peter is saying, “God has given you the gift of an outward ORTHOPRAXY to go with this INWARD ORTHODOXY.”
	+ A way to proclaim both to yourself…and to your community…that I’m ON JESUS side….and though I die, I will be resurrected with him in vindication.
	+ Though I suffer the effects of sin…I will not suffer the condemnation of sin.
	+ I will, like Jesus did to the spirits in prison, with my baptism I will make a proclamation, “NOT TODAY DEVIL! NOT ANY DAY SATAN!”
	+ “Come at me bro! I’m hidden in Christ! I’ve climbed aboard the Ark! No accusation you throw at me can stick…because I am RIGHTEOUS in CHRIST! You pulled the trigger… and you misfired!”
	+ YOU LOSE! CHRIST WINS!
* **Back to 1)**
	+ See, that IS the orthodoxy that I arm myself with.
	+ Its an INNER PROCLAIMING to the spirits that are tempting me…in suffering, in the middle of evil, hurt, exhaustion…when I my orthopraxy begins to slip away…or become empty….
	+ …when I want to give up…
	+ I remind myself of ORTHODOXY…Jesus Life, death…his descent to the dead…and his resurrection…and his promise to make all things new.
	+ I remember my baptism into him.
	+ And in one breath…I thank him for it.
	+ And in the next, I’m singing “I’m gonna knock you out. Father says knock you out.”

TRANSITION: …and then my mind and heart are right where they need to be for what Peter says in the rest of these verses…

**2) Don’t be surprised by the horrors of suffering. Surprise others with the beauty of orthopraxy.**

* + I loved Patricia Noah’s response to her son saying, “Jesus didn’t pay your medical bills.”
	+ She said, “No he didn’t. But he blessed me with the son who did.”
	+ In that moment, she was pointing something out to her son.
	+ The ordinary everyday grace of God.
	+ It wasn’t miraculous.
	+ It wasn’t the misfire of a gun.
	+ It wasn’t a bullet that went clean through a head without causing any permanent damage.
	+ It wasn’t something that no one could explain.
	+ It was a son, that loved his mother, practicing love.
	+ And it was beautiful.
	+ Just like it was beautiful that Patricia threw her son from a bus, worked multiple jobs, and raised him to love others in a highly divided and racist country.
	+ None of that seemed miraculous.
	+ All of it was beautiful.
	+ Its interesting how much we take beauty for granted. Yet we’re surprised by suffering. We spend so much time thinking about how evil the world is…and it is.
	+ And so little time noticing the beauty of God working in ordinary ways through people around us.
	+ Take a look at what Peter says.
	+ **4:12-13 & 19**
	+ He says, “Don’t be surprised by suffering. Recognize rather that Jesus also suffered. And he was vindicated. Recognize that every moment you suffer, is an opportunity to grow more like Christ. Its an opportunity to reject temptation. To do good. To practice beautiful orthodoxy.
	+ You know, from Friedrick Nietzsche to Kelly Clarkson, a lot of folks believe “What doesn’t kill me makes me stronger.”
	+ But…that doesn't just automatically happen.
	+ Suffering, pain, weakens you. It can make you cynical. Angry. Bitter.
	+ That, is not STRONGER. Its certainly not beautiful.
	+ No…it takes effort and ORTHODOXY to practice beauty in the midst of suffering.
	+ It takes arming yourself with the salvation and vindication of Jesus Christ in order to truly use suffering to make you better…instead of bitter. It doesn’t automatically happen.
	+ That was the difference in Trevor and his Mom.
	+ Trevor was angry at God for putting his Mom through that.
	+ But his focus wasn’t on Jesus.
	+ Patricia, on the other hand…all along she kept her faith in the God she knew had already saved her from her sin.
	+ And so, she could see God working his love…not only in the miraculous…but also in the ordinary sacrifice of handing over a credit card to a hospital by her son.
	+ **4:3-4**
	+ Peter says, “Don’t be surprised by evil and suffering. If you have orthodoxy, if you are looking to Christ, the only TRULY righteous person ever to live, hanging on a cross…you know that your suffering isn’t God’s judgment on you.”
	+ So don’t say to God “How could you do this to me?”
	+ Instead, he says, “Surprise others by abstaining from evil…and choosing to good.”
	+ Don’t join in the murder and orgies and idol worshipping happening around you.
	+ Rather…well…our fighter verse this month. BTW, we call it a fighter verse because its what you ARM yourselves with.
	+ **3:8-9**
	+ **Finally, all of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble, 9 not paying back evil for evil or insult for insult but, on the contrary, giving a blessing, since you were called for this, so that you may inherit a blessing.**
	+ Being united. Like minded. Loving one another.
	+ Being compassionate…humble forgiving…blessing those that do evil to you.
	+ Wow. Go ahead. Try to convince me that THAT’s not BEAUTIFUL ORTHOPRAXY flowing form BEAUTIFUL ORTHODOXY.
	+ The impact that we are going to have on the world is not going to be dependent on God miraculously saving us from bullets.
	+ Its going to be when the bullets hit us…will we be able to bless and forgive those that shoot them.
	+ I’m speaking BOTH metaphorically…and literally.
	+ Will we be the means of God’s ordinary everyday grace, through generosity?
	+ Paying each other’s medical bills. Paying each others rent.
	+ Caring for those in need.
	+ Will anyone in this church ever say, “Jesus didn’t pay my medical bills, but he blessed me with a church who did.”
	+ Honestly, its already happening here.
	+ And I’m hungry for more.
	+ **4:7 & 4:9**
	+ I love the ordinary grace…the beautiful orthopraxy that flows from orthodoxy in these 2 verses that we covered during our hospitality series.
	+ First, the ORTHODOXY- “THE END IS NEAR!”
	+ Now, typically, that would cause a bunch of chaotic scrambling. People trying to save themselves from the coming flood of Judgment.
	+ But not for those who by their baptism know they have already died to sin, and are now floating on the Ark of Jesus Christ.
	+ No. The end is near proclamation has us picturing Jesus proclaiming victory over evil…and it makes us hungry to show more people the beauty of being welcomed in to safety.
	+ So…what does the church do when the end is near? What’s the orthopraxy that flows from the orthodoxy?
	+ WE open our homes to the stranger. And we don’t complain about it.
	+ What could be more beautifully ordinary than that?
	+ Have a dinner party. Invite the outcast. It's a miracle!
* **TRANSITION:** The truth is…our ability to do that…all hinges on a son…who paid a debt….and I’m not talking about Trevor Noah.
* **Peter writes at the end of chapter 4**
* **4:17**

**For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God?**

You know what he’s saying.

He’s posing a question that he doesn’t answer for you. That he wants you to think about. To search yourself for how you answer it

If God is just…and you are sinful.

If you have sinned…have hated…have lusted…have been prideful…have ignored God…have sought your own way instead of God’s way…

Which, its safe to say describes all of us.

But if you haven’t trusted him. If you never climbed aboard the ark. If your baptism wasn’t based on a pledge of a good conscience…a belief that Christ died in your place…took your condemnation…

…if the Orhtopraxy that flows from the ORTHODOXY you say you believe…if it doesn’t match what Peter outlines here.

If bitterness, anger, unforgiveness is what suffering produces in you…perhaps you have really yet to believe and obey the gospel.

And Peter calls you to think about what your fate is.

What happened to those who didn’t climb aboard the Ark in Noah’s day.

If you aren’t in Christ…Peter is calling for you to think…what will happen to you who do not believe and obey the gospel?

Will you believe today…that Christs death paid for you sins.

That his resurrection is your resurrection if you will trust him, listen to him, follow him.

And will you then do what he commands? Will you take a step of Orthopraxy and be baptized. Its not what you HAVE to do. Noah didn’t look at the Ark and go…”Ok God, I guess I’ll get on board”

No. It was with great joy he climbed aboard his salvation.

Baptism, is the beautiful Orthopraxy of proclaiming “I HAVE CLIMBED ABOARD MY SALVATION!”

Have you done it? Will you do it?