

Can You Defend Your Faith? – 1 Pet. 3:15

Other Message Titles: In Defense Of Our Faith, How To Defend Your Faith

1. The Issue (The Leadership Challenge)

- Our faith is under attack more than ever today
 - The New Atheists define Faith as blind and without evidence
 - They claim that the Bible is based on myths and false stories
 - They claim that the Bible contradicts itself and is not true, e.g.
 - Gen. 1 and Gen. 2 tell two different stories about Creation
 - People in Moses' day could not even write – how could Moses?
 - People named the Hittites never even existed
 - The walls of Jericho never fell down, as recorded by Joshua
 - Scientific statements in the Bible can't be believed
 - They claim that Jesus never rose from the grave
- The challenge to church leaders and to believers today
 - How can we answer these claims by atheists and skeptics?
 - How can and do we defend our faith?
 - Should we just rely on church leaders and theologians?
 - Our faith is not blind, and is in fact based on evidence
 - We can have confidence in our faith
- **First** [issue], why is our challenge in defending our faith so important?
- According to US pollster George Barna:
 - Only 9% of “born again” teenagers believe absolute truth even exists
 - At least 60% of the children from evangelical homes are estimated to leave the church once they leave home
- **Second**, we need to understand the reasons for the challenge:
 - Indoctrination of our youth in secularism and evolution
 - No answers from the church for the hard questions asked by our youth
- **Third**, we find (in the US) many believers do not know:
 - What we believe
 - Why we believe what we believe
 - How to defend our faith
- We are commanded to be ready to defend our faith
 - **1 Pet. 3:15**, But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;
- We can use our mind and logic/reason
 - **Matt. 22:37**, Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your **mind**.'
- Know how to answer the questions put to you
 - **Col. 4:5-6**, Walk in wisdom toward those [who are] outside, redeeming the time. [Let] your speech always [be] with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

- Let us as believers then see how we can and must face the challenge:
 - Understand the roadblocks to overcome
 - Appreciate the classical arguments for God's existence
 - Know the evidence that we have to present
 - Study examples of leadership in apologetics
 - Respond with confidence!

2. Roadblocks To Overcome (Roadblocks to Faith)

- There are many reasons that people give for not coming to Christ
- The most common reasons are those given here
 1. Lack of intellectual knowledge of God
 - People claim not to have any knowledge of God
 - **Hos. 4:6**, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children."
 - **Rom. 1:18-22**, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown [it] to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible [attributes] are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ... Professing to be wise, they became fools,"
 2. Perceived hypocrisy of other Christians
 - Unbelievers watch what believers do
 - In many cases their walk does not match their talk
 3. Accepting Christ would require turning away from sin
 - It is a moral issue
 4. Pain, suffering and evil in the world
 - If God is all-loving and all-powerful, why is there so much pain, suffering, and evil?
 5. Perceived conflict between Science and the Bible
 - e.g. Creation v. Evolution
 - The reliability of the Bible scientifically
 6. No answers from the Church to the hard questions
 - Children who go to Sunday School and do not get answers are more likely to leave the church over the years
 - Sunday school programs had a negative effect on their beliefs about Christianity
 - Ultimately parents are responsible for their children's training

3. Classical Arguments For God's Existence

- Theologians and philosophers have given four common arguments for God's existence from Natural Theology over the centuries
- Thomas Aquinas is one of the most famous theologians who has articulated and written about these four arguments:
 1. Cosmological argument
 - Whatever began to exist must have a cause [Law of causality]
 - The universe began to exist [2nd Law of Thermodynamics]
 - Thus the universe had a cause [The 1st cause is (eternal) God]
 2. Design argument(s)
 - Design and order in the universe
 - Anthropic Principle – 100+ precise physical constants
 - Design in living organisms
 - Information in the living cell
 3. Moral argument
 - Moral law implies a moral law giver
 - Conscience
 - Right vs. wrong
 4. Ontological argument
 - The concept of God
 - Greatest conceivable and necessary Being
- These classical arguments are still valid today
- But we have more evidence for the Truth of our Faith

4. Evidence To Present (Evidence For Faith)

- We do have answers
- We do have evidence that the Bible is Truth
- For the believer,
 - We can show that what the Bible says (The Truth) matches (corresponds to) reality
- For the unbeliever,
 - We can provide the evidence for the Truth of the Bible
 - We can also challenge the unbeliever with the question – Does what you believe (your truth) match reality?
 - When you apply the same tests described below to "your truth," does it match reality?
- Let's look at some highlights of the evidence for the Truth

4.1 Jesus Is God

- We cannot know whether God exists or what He is like – unless He takes the initiative and He reveals Himself
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago – God Incarnate (in the flesh) – as prophesied in the OT
- Jesus claimed to be God

- **Matt. 16:15-16**, “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”
- **John 14:6**, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”
- **Matt. 12:40**, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
- Jesus was sinless, the **I AM**, crucified, buried, rose on the 3rd day
- There are only four possibilities:
 - He was a liar, a lunatic, a legend, or the Truth – which one was He?
- Jesus’ credentials verify that He is who He said He is

4.2 Prophecies Fulfilled – Messianic + Others

- The Bible contains over 1000 prophecies – more than half fulfilled
- There are 300 prophecies about the Messiah in the OT
- 109 of these are fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s First Coming (birth)
 - e.g. birth place, born of virgin, in line of David, garments divided
 - **Ps. 22:18**, “They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”
- The others are yet to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s Second Coming
- The Bible has many predictions about kings, nations, and cities
 - Many of these have already been fulfilled
 - e.g. the destruction of Tyre in **Ezek. 26** – 7 specific prophecies fulfilled
- The Bible has many predictions about the Jewish people, the Israelites
 - Some of these have already been fulfilled
 - e.g. regathering of Israel in **Is. 11:11-12**
- What is the probability that these prophecies came to pass?
- The reliability of the Bible is confirmed by the accuracy of its prophecies

4.3 Christ Rose From the Grave

- The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation stone of the Christian faith
- Prophesied in the OT that the Messiah would be raised from the dead
- **Ps. 16:10-11**, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
- It was prophesied by Christ Himself in **Matt. 12:39-40**, “... And no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
- Paul emphasizes the importance of the Resurrection in **1 Cor. 15:14**, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”
- A dozen appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection, including one with more than 500 witnesses

- Accounting for the empty tomb – Body stolen? Body moved? Wrong tomb? Swoon theory? Hallucination theory? Empty tomb?

4.4 The Bible Is God’s Word

- How do we know the Bible in its totality is God speaking?
- **Heb. 1:1-2**, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”
- Bible is comprised of 66 books written by 40 different authors over a period of 1500+ years
- Yet the Bible tells one cohesive story that reveals our Creator’s love and plan for a relationship with each of us
- The Bible makes many claims of supernatural origin
- How were the books of the Bible recognized as canon?
 - Was the book written by a prophet of God?
 - Was the writer confirmed by the acts of God?
 - Did the message tell the truth about God?
 - Does it come with the power of God?
 - Was it accepted by the people of God?
- God cannot lie, **Heb. 6:18**, “ ... it is impossible for God to lie ... “
- Jesus affirmed the Old Testament
- **Matt 5:17-18**, “ ... I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ... “
- Extra-biblical writings confirm the history of the Bible

4.5 Archaeology Verifies The Bible

- The Bible provides the details of historical events, and ties them to people, nations, places and the geography relevant to those events
- If these events, people, nations, places, and geography were true, we should be able to verify some of them through archaeology
- The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the **Ebla Tablets**, and other archaeological dig results verify biblical events, people, places and geography of the OT
 - Scroll of Isaiah found – dated to 125 BC
 - Moses could write in his day
 - Hittites did exist
 - Walls of Jericho unearthed
 - Secular history confirms the biblical record
 - Improves our understanding of the Bible
- For the NT, we have more than 24,000 copies of NT books
 - Time between original document and earliest copy is very small
- Archaeology has verified the accuracy of the biblical record
- Archaeologists now in fact use the Bible to plan archaeological digs

4.6 Science Supports Creation

- There are only two possibilities for Origins – Creation or Evolution
- The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth

- God revealed Himself in His Word (Special Revelation)
- He also revealed Himself in His Creation (General Revelation)
- Since God is Truth, these two revelations must agree
- Atheists tell us that our universe and life came about by Evolution
- Moreover the atheists would have us believe that:
 - Evolution is science, and
 - Creation is religion
- Even some professing Christians would say that the Bible is a book of religion that applies only to spiritual matters and that God could have used Evolution to bring about the Universe and the life we observe today
- We can't use the Scientific Method to prove Evolution or Creation to be true because we cannot repeat experiments on Origins
- Both are a matter of Belief and Faith
- However, we can make predictions for each model – Creation and Evolution – in different disciplines of science
- Then we can look at the evidence that God has given us
- **Which model best fits the evidence** – Creation or Evolution?
- The evidence to consider:
 - Everything in the universe is bound by fixed laws – this is what makes science possible in the first place
 - The universe, and the earth in particular, appear to be designed to support life, and the life of man in particular
 - Creation is consistent with the Second Law of Thermodynamics, but Evolution is not
 - No credible fossils found to support Evolution
 - Non-living material -> living organisms – is mathematically impossible
 - Classification of living organisms is only possible for Creation
- What conclusions can we make?
 - Laws of science are consistent with Creation
 - There are signs of intelligent design in the universe
 - The mathematical probability of forming life from non-life is ZERO
 - Abrupt appearance of fully-formed animals in Cambrian Explosion
 - The missing links are still missing
 - Man did not evolve from ape-like ancestors
 - Catastrophism explains the “geological column”
 - There is NO credible evidence for Evolution!
 - Science supports Creation

4.7 The Bible Is Reliable Scientifically

- The Bible is not a book of science, but it does make scientific statements
- Are these scientific statements accurate?
- We trust the Bible for spiritual truth
- History, geography, archaeology, prophecy confirm the Truth
- Do we trust the Bible for Truth when it speaks on science?
- The Laws of science are consistent with the Bible

- Biblical references to astronomy, geophysics, geology, hydrology, meteorology, biology, physics – shown to be amazingly accurate, and in fact, in some cases, anticipate scientific insights discovered by scientists in the last few hundred years
- Some examples in astronomy, physics and biology:
 - **Is. 40:22**, “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth. ...” [Sphere]
 - **Job 26:7**, “He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.” [Earth suspended in space]
 - **Job 28:25**, “When He gave to the wind its weight ...”
 - **Lev. 17:11**, “For the life of the flesh [is] in the blood, ...”
 - Blood circulation – life in the blood
 - **Lev. 11:40**, Hebrews told to wash after touching dead things
 - **Gen. 17:12**, “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child ...”
 - Immune system and blood clotting ability at max. on day 8
- Scientific disciplines established largely by Bible-believing scientists
 - Kepler, Pasteur, Newton, Linnaeus, Kelvin (Thermodynamics)

5. Leadership By Example (Leading in Faith)

- We have all this evidence for the Truth of our Faith
- We have the giants in the faith who set an example for us, e.g. **Heb. 11**
 - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, Samuel, etc.
- **Heb. 12:1-2a**, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, ... “
- Biblical models of leadership:
 - **Jesus**: We can use our mind and logic/reason
 - **Matt. 22:37-38**, **Jesus** said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is [the] first and great commandment.
 - **Peter**: Eyewitness to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection
 - **2 Pet. 1:16**, For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.
 - **Paul**: We should bring every thought captive
 - **2 Cor. 10:5**, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
 - Don't believe lies or be deceived
 - **Col. 2:8**, Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

- **Acts 17:17**, So he reasoned in the synagogue ... and in the marketplace ...
- **James**: Exhorts us to be doers, not just hearers
 - **James 1:22**, But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- **Jude**: Commands us to contend for our faith
 - **Jude 3**, Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.
- Modern examples of leadership:
 - John Newton, slave ship captain, author of “Amazing Grace”
 - William Wilberforce, British MP, abolished slave trade
 - Skeptics who tried to disprove the Bible:
 - Frank Morison, a lawyer wrote “Who Moved The Stone?”
 - Josh McDowell, wrote “More Than A Carpenter”, “Evidence That Demands A Verdict”, + many more books
 - Lee Strobel, wrote “The Case For Christ” + other books
 - Antony Flew, an atheist who was convinced by the design argument
 - Chuck Colson, became believer through the witness of a friend, a remarkable conversion, founded Prison Fellowship
 - William Lane Craig, American Christian Apologist
 - Ravi Zacharias, born in India, studied in the West, Christian Apologist
- Ultimately parents are responsible for their children’s training:
 - **Is. 38:19**, “The living, the living man, he shall praise You, As I [do] this day; The father shall make known Your truth to the children.”
 - **Eph. 6:4**, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
 - **Prov. 22:6**, “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.”

6. Responding With Confidence (Confidence in Faith)

- We do have supporting evidence for the Truth of the Bible
- The Truth of the Bible does match reality
- Believers can be confident in their faith
- There are no errors or contradictions in God’s Word
 - **Gen. 1** and **Gen. 2** tell two complementary stories about Creation
 - People in Moses’ day could write – Moses did write the 1st 5 books
 - People named the Hittites did exist – Ebla Tablets
 - The walls of Jericho did fall down, as recorded by Joshua
 - Scientific statements in the Bible are accurate and can be believed
 - The evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection is overwhelming
- Believers can defend their faith boldly
- The foundation of our faith – Christ did rise from the dead
 - The evidence supports this

- **1 Cor. 15:13-14**, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching [is] empty and your faith [is] also empty.”
- Be a Berean and check it out for yourself
 - **Acts 17:11**, ... they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.
- Be able to exhort and convince others of the Truth
 - **Tit. 1:9**, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”
- Christianity is a rational faith that can be defended
 - **Ps. 100:3**, “Know that the LORD, He [is] God; [It is] He [who] has made us, and not we ourselves;”
- Apologetics is important for the church
 - All church leaders must set the example
 - Every church member should be involved
- Christian Apologetics is critical for
 - Discerning the Truth
 - Reaching new believers
- Creation Apologetics is also important for
 - Establishing the Truth from the very first verse
 - Explaining why Jesus came to Earth and died for our sins
 - Providing answers to the hard questions
- Know the Truth and learn how to defend it
 - Know what you believe
 - Know why you believe what you believe
 - Learn how to defend your faith
- What will you do with what you have learned?
 - **2 Tim. 2:2**, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
 - **Be a discipler and fulfill the Great Commission**
 - You don’t have to go to the uttermost parts of the world
 - You can be a witness in your own village, town or city
 - We do have the evidence in prophecy, archaeology, etc.
 - Also in science
 - Our truth does match reality
 - Our faith is rational
 - Be ready to defend your faith:
 - What and why you believe
 - Answers for those who ask you for an explanation