

In Defense Of Our Faith – 1 Pet. 3:15

Message Titles: Can You Defend Our Faith?, In Defense Of Our Faith, How To Defend Our Faith, Leadership in Apologetics

1. The Truth Of Our Faith

- Our faith is under attack more than ever today
 - The New Atheists define Faith as blind and without evidence
 - Skeptics claim that the Bible is based on ancient myths
 - They claim that the Bible contradicts itself and is not true, e.g.
 - A. **Gen. 1** and **Gen. 2** tell two different stories about Creation
 - B. People in Moses' day could not even write – how could Moses?
 - C. The Hittites mentioned in the OT never even existed
 - D. Sodom and Gomorrah were not real places, **Gen. 14:2**
 - E. Scientific statements in the Bible can't be believed
 - F. Jesus never rose from the grave
- The challenge for believers today
 - How can we answer these claims by atheists and skeptics?
 - How can and do we defend our faith?
 - Does your truth (what you believe to be true) match reality?
- **Issue #1:** Why is our challenge in defending our faith so important?
 - According to the latest Barna polls:
 - 26% of Christians don't think it matters which religion one follows; they all teach the same lessons
 - 40% of Christians say Christians & Muslims worship the same God
 - Only 9% of adult Americans have a biblical worldview
 - Only 34% of American adults believe in absolute truth
 - Only 9% of "born again" teenagers believe absolute truth exists
 - At least 60% of the children from evangelical homes are estimated to leave the church once they leave home
- **Issue #2:** 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
- **Issue #3:** 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.
- Understand the times in which we live (with a biblical worldview)
 - **1 Ch. 12:32**, Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.
- Today we will demonstrate:
 - Our faith is not blind, and is in fact based on facts
 - Our truth does match reality
 - We can have confidence in our faith
- Let us as believers then see how we can and must face the challenge:
 - Understand the Roadblocks to overcome in coming to faith
 - Know the Evidence that we have to present for our faith
 - Study Examples of leaders in defense of our faith
 - Be confident of the Surety in our faith!

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 reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.
 - God is evident in the nature of man by reason and moral law
 - **Rom. 1:18-22**, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [v19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [v20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ... [v22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools,
 - Our conscience gives us a sense of right and wrong
 - **Rom. 2:15**, They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.
 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
 - The believer can have confidence in his/her faith and defend it
- 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
- One person is to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 61
- **Is. 61:1-2**, ... the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; ... to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; ...
- Jesus confirmed that He fulfilled the prophecy in **Is. 61:1-2b** in **Luke 4**
- 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**, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."
- Extra-biblical writings confirm the history, geography, nations 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 are true, we should be able to verify some of them through archaeology
- **For the OT**, the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, the **Ebla Tablets**, and other archaeology digs verify biblical events, people, places and geography
 - Scroll of Isaiah found, dated to 125 BC [previous earliest - 1100 AD]
 - Moses could write in his day [Ebla Tablets written 1000+ yrs. before]
 - Hittites did exist [verified by Ebla Tablets and other writings]
 - Five cities of the plains, including **Sodom** & **Gomorrah**, are among 5000 cities listed on the Ebla Tablets, **Gen. 14:2**

- 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
 - e.g. fragment of Gospel of John, 30 years after written
- 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, the first living organism, and complex life forms 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, e.g.
 - 1st & 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics, Biogenesis, Cause & Effect
- 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]
 - **Lev. 17:11**, “For the life of the flesh [is] in the blood, ... ”
 - Blood circulation – life in the blood
 - **Job 28:25**, “When He gave to the wind its weight ...”
 - **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)
- New scientific discoveries by telescope, microscope, CERN
 - galaxies, cells, DNA, Higgs boson

4.8 Evil/Pain/Suffering Is The Result of Sin

- **Gen. 1:31**, And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.
- Man given free will
- Man’s choice lead to sin, the Fall, and the curse
- Suffering results from:
 - Direct human sin
 - Deliberate act of others
 - Government social policies
 - Natural disasters or accidents, e.g. tower of Siloam
- God’s purposes in our suffering:
 - To build character
 - To glorify God
 - Discipline for known sin
 - To test/build our faith
 - To equip us to comfort others
- Jesus endured suffering on our behalf and sympathizes with us

- Our resurrection and heaven is our source of hope

5. Defense Of Faith By Example (Faith By Example)

- 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 17:2**, Paul reasoned with them (Jews in synagogue) from the Scriptures
 - **Acts 17:11**, The Bereans examined the Scriptures for themselves
 - **Acts 17:17**, Paul 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 (Surety In Faith)

- We do have supporting evidence for the Truth of the Bible
 - Prophecy, archaeology, history, geography
 - **Deut. 18:22**, when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken;
 - Also in science – astronomy, geophysics, geology, hydrology, meteorology, oceanography, physics, biology
- The Truth of the Bible does match reality
- Our faith (Christianity) is rational and can be defended
 - **Gen. 1:26**, Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."
- Believers can be confident in their faith
- Alleged errors in God’s Word are refuted
 - 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
 - Sodom and Gomorrah were real historic cities, **Gen. 14:2**
 - Scientific statements in the Bible are accurate and can be believed
 - The evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection is overwhelming
- We can answer atheists and skeptics
- The foundation of our faith – Christ did rise from the dead
 - The evidence supports this
 - **1 Cor. 15:14**, And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.
- 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.”
- Apologetics is important for the church
 - All church leaders must set the example
 - Every church member should be involved

- All parents must be involved in the training of their children
- 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

In Defense Of Our Faith [TREES]

1. The **T**ruth Of Our Faith
2. **R**oadblocks To Faith
3. **E**vidence For Faith
4. Faith By **E**xample
5. **S**urety In Faith

Some Useful Concepts:

1. Absence of proof is not proof of absence.
2. Though we cannot know everything perfectly, it does not follow that we cannot know *anything* for certain.
3. Can’t see the Forest for the **TREES**.