



Evangelistic Apologetics

A Closer Look

Part 3

By

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Introduction

Our series follows the popular series *Evangelistic Apologetics – The Church Under Attack*, which published as a 33-part series on FaithandSelfDefense.com from January 2014 to March 2020. That series is now available for free as **a set of five eBooks**.

The purpose of this series, *A Closer Look*, is to address the challenge our Lord has given us to preach the Gospel and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). We are looking deeply into the basics of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how to share it effectively with family, friends and others God leads into our lives. We are looking at the importance of personal evangelism and how to use apologetics as we tell others of the wonderful grace of our mighty God.

We looked at the “Pure Gospel” in the last part of our series and how Jesus consistently preached it.

Jesus never compromised His Gospel. He never allowed it to be polluted, corrupted, or watered down. He never became too tired or frustrated so as to let His Gospel become less than perfect and pure. We should aim for that same thing in our lives. Let us never allow anything in life to corrupt what God has entrusted to us – His pure Gospel.

In this part of our series, we’ll look at how Jesus **preached** His *pure Gospel*.

How Jesus Preached

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matthew 4:17

The Greek word translated “preach” in Matthew 4:17 is κηρύσσω. It means “to proclaim, to herald.” The idea is of proclaiming a message publicly and with conviction – “always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to obeyed” (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan, 1978).

Jesus preached (proclaimed) His message of repentance and “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” publicly with conviction, gravity, and authority. He also preached with humility. His objective was always that people would obey the will of His Father.

Jesus Preached Publicly

Jesus preached His message of repentance and the Kingdom of God in houses, in cities and villages, in marketplaces, in synagogues, in the temple, on roads, on mountain sides, by the seashore, before religious councils, and government officials. Jesus' ministry was public. Also notice that Jesus modeled excellent preaching for His disciples. We can a lot from how Jesus preached.

And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.

Mark 2:1-2

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. Matthew 9:35

But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth. And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. Mark 1:38-39

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight. Luke 3:3-4

Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.' And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. Luke 4:42-44

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him. Luke 8:1

Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple and preached the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him. Luke 20:1

While often teaching His disciples privately, Jesus' preaching was done publicly. He wanted everyone to hear His message. It was the message His Father had sent Him to preach – “the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:49).

Jesus also taught His disciples that they should preach publicly what He had taught them privately.

And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons Mark 3:13-15

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick ... So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Luke 9:1-2, 6

Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:27-28

And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!” So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. Mark 6:11-13

But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Mark 13:9-11

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Mark 16;19-20

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14

Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Luke 24:46-48

Jesus preached with Conviction

Preaching with conviction means proclaiming a message with “a strong persuasion or belief” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Other definitions of the word include the idea of one’s beliefs being “firm and fixed.” Jesus did not waver at all in His preaching ministry. He always said what He meant to say. He said what He meant and meant what He said.

Jesus preached with great conviction in what He was saying. Preaching with conviction is necessary because of opposition to the Gospel. Satan was the first opponent, but Jesus answered Him with great conviction and reliance on God’s Word.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It

is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him, 'It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him. Matthew 4:1-11

The next groups that opposed Jesus' preaching were the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus responded to them with great confidence, wisdom, and power.

Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong

man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Matthew 12:22-30

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.’ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, 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 great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this

generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. Matthew 12:34-42

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. Matthew 16:1-3

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows'

houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. 'Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and

faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,³⁰ and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' 'Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of

vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Matthew 23:13-36

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the

seven will she be? For they all had her.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. Matthew 22:23-33

The Apostle Paul echoed that conviction in his letter to the Thessalonians:

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. 1 Thessalonians 1:5

The Greek word translated as “much assurance” is πληροφορία. It means “full assurance, conviction, confidence.” That’s how Jesus preached and how His disciples preached on and after Pentecost. Jesus told them that “when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” The Spirit of God gave the disciples conviction – a strong persuasion and belief – that the message they were preaching was true.

The Greatest Gospel Preacher

Jesus Christ is the great preacher of the Gospel who has ever lived. We can learn much about how He preached in the four Gospel accounts: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As we've seen in previous parts of this series, Jesus preached with great purpose, organization, and power. Jesus never wasted a moment of time – never wasted a Word – never wasted a movement. He was and is the Perfect God/Man. Though we are human beings and subject to so many fallacies, we can still learn from the Master about how to best use our time, talents, and energy to accomplish His will for our lives.

Jesus never compromised His Gospel. He never allowed it to be polluted, corrupted, or watered down. He never became too tired or frustrated so as to let His Gospel become less than perfect and pure. We should aim for that same thing in our lives. Let us never allow anything in life to corrupt what God has entrusted to us – His pure Gospel.

Jesus preached with Gravity

The idea of ‘gravity’ from one of the Greek words for preach (κηρύσσω) is seen in many of the places where Jesus preached His message of repentance and God’s Kingdom. The word means ‘to preach, proclaim openly as a herald, tell a message publicly and with conviction, often urging acceptance of the message, with warnings of consequences for not doing so.’

Synonyms for ‘gravity’ include –

- determination
- resolve
- intensity
- solemnness
- concentration
- seriousness
- earnestness

- decisiveness
- deliberation
- purposefulness
- attentiveness

All of those describe Christ's preaching attitude and style. We see and hear it from His first words on earth to His last –

Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel. Mark 1:14-15

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

One of the first messages Jesus preached was at the synagogue in Nazareth where He grew up. These were His neighbors and friends, but there is no mention of Him glad-handing people, making small talk, and trying to get everyone to like Him. Instead, Jesus stood up to read from the prophet Isaiah. The message was full of gravity, intensity and seriousness –

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4:17-21

What followed was a verbal exchange between the people in the synagogue and Jesus that led the people to become so angry that they ‘thrust Him out of the city’ and tried to ‘throw Him down over the cliff.’ Jesus walked away unharmed, but He made His point. He was determined to proclaim the ‘pure’ Gospel that God had sent Him to preach. Jesus had integrity.

Jesus Preached with Authority

His authority was often challenged, but Jesus was always in charge of both His message and the outcome.

And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matthew 7:28-29

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him. Mark 1:27

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. Luke 9:1

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. John 5:26-27

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. John 12:49

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'
Matthew 28:18-20

Notice that Jesus preached with absolute authority – authority given to Him by God the Father. When did Jesus receive that authority? From Eternity. Jesus is not a human man who God chose as He did Abraham or Moses. Jesus is the Eternal Son of God! Jesus came from Heaven to bring Good News (Gospel) to people living on earth.

And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:35-40

Jesus always spoke with authority. He spoke authoritatively to the rulers of Israel. He spoke authoritatively to the crowds. He spoke authoritatively to His disciples. He spoke authoritatively to demons. He spoke authoritatively to the devil.

And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Matthew 7:28-29

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him. Mark 1:27

And the devil said to Him, 'All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours ... And Jesus answered and said to him, 'It has been said, 'You shall

not tempt the Lord your God.’ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. Luke 4:6-7, 12-13

After His death on the cross and resurrection from the grave, Jesus told His disciples –

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus spoke with great ‘authority’ throughout His earthly ministry. He came from Heaven with that authority and He ascended back to Heaven with great authority –

... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He

raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Ephesians 1:19-21

Jesus Preached With Humility

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, could have entered into the world He created in any way He wanted. He could have come riding in a great chariot driven by dozens of white horses surrounded by thousands of angels. How did Jesus come from Heaven to earth? As a 'baby.' The Son of God/Son of Man took upon Himself human flesh. He humbled Himself, being found in appearance as a man, and was obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus lived and preached 'humility' –

Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 5:5

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29

Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.' Matthew 21:5

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Luke 18:14

To be ‘humble’ (ταπεινῶω) is to be made ‘low’ or demonstrate ‘lowliness.’ To be ‘meek’ (πραῦς) is to be ‘mild, gentle.’ Synonyms for ‘humility’ include –

- meekness
- lowliness
- submissiveness

How does Christ’s ‘humility’ blend with His ‘gravity’ and ‘authority?’ Though Jesus was co-equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, Christ came to do the ‘will’ of His Father. He was meek and lowly – submitting to His Father –

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 6:38

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

John 17:1-5

The ‘Why’ Question

It's important that we remember ‘why’ Jesus preached **publicly** and with great **conviction**, **gravity**, **authority**, and **humility**. The Son of God came from Heaven to accomplish several things that He and the Father and Spirit determined in Eternity.

1. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8)
2. Jesus came from Heaven to earth because “so loved the world” (John 3:16)
3. Jesus came from Heaven to earth “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10)
4. Jesus came from Heaven to earth “to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15)
5. Jesus came from Heaven to earth “to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)
6. Jesus came from Heaven to earth “To do Your will, O God.” (Hebrews 10:7)

7. Jesus came from Heaven to earth as “A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel” (Luke 2:32)
8. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to “bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37)
9. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to be “our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” (Ephesians 2:14-16)
10. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to preach “peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:17-18)

Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God. Jesus shares all of the attributes of God, including love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Jesus Christ will also 'judge' the nations and every human who has ever lived or will live. Jesus took the 'judgment' of God's wrath for humans on Himself when He died on the Cross. The 'judge' Himself paid the penalty for sin. This is the time for sinners to look to Jesus, repent of their sin, and turn to Him for eternal life.

Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. Acts 17:29-31

Jesus called His disciples to ‘follow’ Him. Did they? Did they preach the ‘pure’ Gospel? Did they preach publicly, with great conviction, gravity, authority, and humility? That’s what Jesus ‘modeled’ for them in His earthly ministry. Would His apostles and disciples follow His model?

The ‘Evangelistic Apologetics’ Model

Jesus came from Heaven to earth to ‘destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8). The Apostle John wrote – ‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.’ We know that this was a plan God devised ‘before time began’ .. ‘before the foundation of the world’ (e.g. 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Peter 1:19-21; Ephesians 1:3-5). We know that this plan was based on the love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit had for one another (e.g. John 17:23-25). God loved the world and sent the Son. The Son loved the Father and the world and died in obedience to His Father’s will. The Son loved the world and sent the Holy Spirit. The Spirit loved the Son and the Father and came to convict the world of ‘sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ (John 16:8).

Jesus rose from the dead, proved His resurrection through multiple physical appearances, and taught His apostles more about how to see that everything in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures) was about Him, before ascending back to His Heavenly Throne (e.g. Luke 24:44-53). Just prior to His ‘ascension,’ Jesus commanded the apostles to do a specific work in the world –

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matthew 28:18-20

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

We see how the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles for the work Jesus had given them to do in the early chapters of Acts. However, what we don't see is a 'secret' part of God's plan that wasn't revealed until Jesus called an 'enemy' to become His greatest 'champion of truth.'

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' Acts 9:1-5

Jesus said that Saul (Paul) was a ‘chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel’ (Acts 9:15). Paul’s travels through the Gentile world of the Roman Empire provide us with an abundance of insight into how to do ‘evangelistic apologetics.’ In fact, the Apostle Paul used the Greek word *apologia* (speech in defense, verbal defense) more than any other apostle. The word *apologia* means –

- intelligent reasoning
- properly, well-reasoned reply
- a *reasoned argument (defense)* that presented *evidence* (supplied *compelling proof*) [Bible Hub]
- a thought-out response for the purpose of adequately addressing an issue that is raised
- a clear answer of defense to a charge

Paul faced a great deal of opposition from both Jews and Gentiles during his ministry, so he developed a strong *apologia* (with the Spirit's guidance) to each situation that he faced. Paul spent many years in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was eventually martyred because of his ministry. I mention that to remind us all that having a strong *apologia* does not mean we won't suffer for preaching the Gospel. In fact, Jesus told Ananias of Damascus that He would show Paul 'how many things he must suffer for My name's sake' (Acts 9:16).

Remember, people will hate a good Christian apologist because they hate Jesus. We will suffer because we do speak in defense of the Gospel. Christians who stay quiet about what they believe, don't attempt to evangelize, and don't speak up in defense of what the Bible teaches will face little opposition, if any. It's important we don't lose sight of that truth. Knowing opposition, sometimes fierce opposition, awaits you as you speak in defense of the Gospel will keep you close to dependence on the Holy Spirit. Don't depend on your intellect, your wit, your charm, or your ability to speak well. Depend on God. Yes, know the Scriptures well. Yes,

know the arguments of other worldviews and how to address them. But don't think that you will be able to persuade people or elude opposition based on your natural abilities. Keep in mind what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians –

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 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. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

No To ‘Compromise’

We live in a world of ‘compromise.’ We see it everywhere, including in churches, denominations, and Christian schools. The number of Christians who believe it’s ‘wrong’ to evangelize is growing rapidly. That’s compromise. The number of Christians who believe it’s okay to look, sound, and behave like the world – even during church ‘worship’ services – is also growing. The number of Christians who believe they need to ‘blend in’ with the world in order to ‘represent’ Christianity is growing. The number of Christians who ‘keep their faith to themselves’ is also growing.

Bottom line – Christians in many parts of the world are compromising the truth of the Gospel of Christ. That is the ‘opposite’ of Evangelistic Apologetics. I’ve wondered for decades why I’ve met with such opposition from pastors and other church leaders about teaching ‘apologetics’ to their congregants. They said they didn’t want their people to ‘argue’ people into Heaven. Knowing that apologetics is simply a well-reasoned ‘defense’ of the Christian worldview, I

thought that was an ‘odd’ reaction from pastors who are supposed to care about people’s ‘souls.’ However, after seeing the ‘degeneration’ of preaching in churches and ‘deconstruction’ of church members, I now realize the opposition I and other Christian apologists received was really based on a spirit of ‘compromise’ among church pastors, denominational leaders, and college and seminar professors. We are literally ‘surrounded’ by compromise.

Pastors, compromise does not lead to spiritual or numerical growth in your church. It leads to fewer real Christians, less evangelism, and more ‘Nones.’ Nones are people who are not affiliated with any organized religion. The number of ‘Nones’ in the United States grew from about 1% in 2000 to 30% in 2022. According to Pew Research and other research groups, about 63% of Nones describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular.’ The rest are either atheists (17%) or agnostic (20%).

Who are the 'Nones?' They are predominately young (69% under the age of fifty) and white (63%). So, what happened to Christianity in America? Comprised by religious leaders. They wanted to 'play nice' with everyone and it cost them big time. Show me anywhere in the Bible where 'compromise' trumps 'truth.' It doesn't. Jesus did not say, 'Compromise will set you free.' He said, 'the truth will set you free.' The apostles didn't tell churches to 'compromise.' They told them to 'obey God, 'tell the truth,' 'preach the Gospel, and 'speak the truth in love.' There's no 'compromise' in any of that.

Pastors – you don't want your members to develop a bold and reasoned approach to the truth of God's Word? Then, sit back and watch your churches slowly melt away to nothing. Watch them look and sound just like the world. Read Revelation chapters two and three. You'll find Jesus addressing your church somewhere in there. Hold up the words of Jesus and His apostles to the 'activities' and 'attitudes' of your church members. You'll find how far your church has fallen from the 'biblical model' given for us to follow.

If your church is growing, but you are a compromising leader, you may disagree with me. Disagree all you want, but that doesn't change the facts that come from both accurate polling results as well as evaluating what your people do and don't know about God, and what they do and don't do for Christ. Attending church is not the goal of Christianity. What did Jesus say to His disciples? What did the apostles say to the churches? Look at the churches of the first few centuries of Christianity, then look at your church. Do you see anything that appears similar? It might if your compromise has led to the acceptance of heretical beliefs or if your 'worship' services look more like a rock concert on a Saturday night. Many of the leaders of Christianity in the first few centuries were pastors who also had 'apologetic' skills. They understood the necessity of 'evangelistic apologetics.' Do you?

Yes To ‘Conviction’

Do you believe Jesus was convinced that what He was doing and saying was true? Do you believe the apostles and early believers were convinced that what they were doing and saying was true? Do you believe that led to their ‘strong conviction’ about preaching the Gospel with gravity, authority, and humility? If you’ve read the New Testament with your eyes open, the answer has to be ‘yes.’

Have you read the ‘woe’ chapter in Matthew? That’s Matthew 23. Jesus used the word ‘eight times’ while speaking to the religious leaders of His day.

1. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men
2. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

3. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
4. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it.*' Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?
5. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!
6. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.
7. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear

beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.

8. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

When's the last time you heard preaching like that? Unless you are in your 70s or 80s, my guess is you've never heard anything like that in a church. Yet, it's how Jesus preached to the 'compromising' religious leaders of His day. He went on to call them 'serpents, brood of vipers!' I don't think Jesus would be welcomed into most Christian churches today for not being 'politically correct' and 'divisive.' How sad.

What about the apostles who obeyed Jesus and were guided by the Holy Spirit? How did they preach?

- **Peter** – ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’
- **Peter** – ‘Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.’
- **Peter** – ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.
- **Peter** – We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to

Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.

- **Stephen** –*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*.
- **Paul** – Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: ‘Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.’
- **Paul** – It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

- **Paul** – Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.
- **Paul** – O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it* was in vain?
- **Paul** – For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who

subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

- **Paul** – But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.
- **Paul** – As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.
- **Paul** – If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is

obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.

- **John** – Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
- **John** – Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
- **John** – Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the

Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

- **John** – Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.
- **James** – Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- **James** – If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit

orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

These men sound just like their Master, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Why would that be? Because they are preaching with ‘conviction’ and not ‘compromise.’ Jesus did not compromise and neither did the apostles (except for Judas Iscariot). I believe that if any of the apostles were to preach in most Christian churches today, they would be asked to leave and not return.

If you are a pastor, what kind of preacher are you? If you are attend a church, what kind of preaching are you hearing? Does it sound anything like what Jesus and His apostles preached? If not, you may be a listening to a ‘compromiser.’ That’s not good for you, your family, friends, or neighbors.

Rooting Out the 'Rot'

The 'root' of the 'rot' in many Christian churches is the leadership of those churches (along with the denominations that support and guide the local churches and the seminaries and Bible colleges that train the leaders).

Jude, the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James, described them this way –

- For certain men have crept in unnoticed
- who long ago were marked out for this condemnation
- ungodly men
- who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ
- these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries
- These are spots in your love feasts
- they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves

- They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds
- late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots
- raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame
- wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever
- These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts
- they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage
- mockers walking according to their own ungodly lusts
- sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit

We could look more deeply into all of these, but for the purpose of this study I'd like to focus on "late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots."

Fruit trees are expected to bear 'fruit.' Those that are 'late autumn trees' are expected to bear fruit in late autumn. What would you think of a tree that didn't bear any fruit? You'd try to figure out why. Maybe do some research, talk with experts, give it more fertilizer, wait to see if it produces fruit next year? Check the root system. That could be the 'root' of your problem.

The words 'twice dead' are a translation of the Greek words δις ἀποθανόντα (twice having died, utterly dead, entirely dead, decayed). What do you do if you discover 'rot' in the 'roots?' You remove the tree. It's dead, utterly dead – meaning 'plucked up by the roots.' There is no reason to keep the tree around. It's not coming back to life. It's useless to the farmer. Better to remove it, work on the soil to make sure that's okay, then replant.

From a human aspect we can ask – how can anyone be ‘twice dead?’ Here are some thoughts –

Spiritually these men were “twice dead” in having returned, after baptism, to the death of sin. The writer piles up metaphor on metaphor and epithet on epithet in the effort to express his indignation and abhorrence. The epithets here are in logical order: in autumn, fruitless, dead, rooted up. Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers

Twice dead — First in the stock, and afterward in the graft; first by nature, and afterward by apostasy. Or dead under the Mosaic dispensation, (those ungodly teachers being mostly of the Jewish nation,) and though at first apparently quickened on their reception of the gospel, yet, through the abuse of its doctrines and privileges, dead and barren a second time: plucked up by the roots — As hopeless and irrecoverable. “There is a striking climax in this description of the false teachers: they were trees stripped of their leaves, and withering; they had no fruit, being barren that season: they were twice dead, having borne no fruit formerly: lastly, they were rooted out, as utterly barren.” Benson Commentary

Apostates hold out the claim of providing a spiritual feat, but instead deliver famine (cf. Luke 13:6-9). Doubly dead trees will never yield fruit and, regardless of what they say, will always be barren because they are uprooted. CF Matt. 7:17-20. The MacArthur Study Bible, Second Edition, Thomas Nelson, 2019, p. 1818

twice dead—First when they cast their leaves in autumn, and seem during winter dead, but revive again in spring; secondly, when they are “plucked up by the roots.” So these apostates, once dead in unbelief, and then by profession and baptism raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, but now having become dead again by apostasy, and so hopelessly dead. There is a climax. Not only without leaves, like trees in late autumn, but without fruit: not only so, but dead twice; and to crown all, “plucked up by the roots.” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

Twice dead; wholly dead; dead over and over; dead by nature, and dead by that hardness of heart they have contracted, or that reprobate sense to which God hath given them up. Matthew Poole's Commentary

Twice dead; that is, entirely, thoroughly, and really dead in trespasses and sins, notwithstanding their pretensions to religion and godliness; or the sense may be, that they were not only liable to a corporeal death, common to them with all mankind, but also to an eternal one, or to the death both of soul and body in hell. Homer calls (d) those "twice dead", that go to hell alive: or rather the sense is this, that they were dead in sin by nature, as all men are, and again having made a profession of religion, were now become dead to that profession; and so were twice dead, once as they were born, and a second time as they had apostatized: plucked up by the roots; either by separating themselves from the churches, where they had been externally planted; or by the act of the church in cutting them off, and casting them out; or

by the judgment of God upon them, (b) Zohar in Exod. fol. 36. 3, 4. (d) Odyss. I. 12. lin. 22. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

It was Dwight L. Moody who said that when a man is born once, he will have to die twice and that when a man is born twice, he will have to die only once. Well, Jude says that the apostates are spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins-and yet trying to lead others! Also the apostate's body will have to die; so he is twice dead. What a picture of the apostate. *Thru The Bible With J. Vernon McGee*, 1983, Vol. 5, pp 864-865

The Rotten Among Us

I believe it's difficult for many Christians to look at their pastor or other leaders in their church and/or denomination and think of them as 'rotten.' I understand. We look at people we admire and may have known for many years and just can't imagine there's anything wrong in their hearts and minds. However .. the type of people that Jude described are 'rotten to the core.'

One of the saddest chapters in the Bible is Isaiah 5. That's where God described how disappointed He was in His people – the people He had chosen to belong to Him. God used the image of a vineyard to describe Israel –

“What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have not done in it? Why then, when I
expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring
forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you
what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its
hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its

wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it.” For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.” Isaiah 5:4-7

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!” Isaiah 5:20-21

“Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 5:24

What did God find in His vineyard? Rottenness – exactly what we find in many churches and denominations today. In the words of Jesus Christ –

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” John 15:5-6

Do you see the similarities between Isaiah 5 and John 15? God wants obedience. He wants vines that bear fruit. However, in both Israel and the Church, God often finds ‘rottenness’ at the root –

“So their root will be as rottenness, And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”

Christian, we have rottenness at the root in our churches. So many church leaders have rejected and despised the Word ‘of the Holy One.’ Yes, you may find it difficult to believe that some leader in your church or denomination may have a wicked and perverse heart. You may not want to believe that people you know and trust have rejected and despised God’s Word. However, it does happen – more often than many of us imagine.

I’m not suggesting that every pastor in every church is rotten. I’m not suggesting that every denominational leader is rotten. I’m not suggesting that every seminary professor is rotten. What I am suggesting is that you should be “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Remember – Jesus has sent us “out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10:16). He did tell us to – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

If we are going to participate in Christian ‘Evangelistic Apologetics’ with the Holy Spirit of God, we must listen to what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2 & 3).

Unfortunately, finding yourself attending a church that ‘compromises’ itself in preaching and/or teaching God’s Word ‘rightly divided’ is not uncommon. Many people grew up in a particular church and have only known the teaching and ministry of that particular church. Other people may have lived in different cities, but always attended churches that were of the same denomination of their youth. Some people, like myself, may have been unbelievers until they were adults and gotten involved in the church where they were saved. They may have or have not learned how to ‘rightly divide’ the Word of God, depending on the teaching of their pastor or pastors. If they haven’t learned how to ‘rightly divide,’ they can easily be deceived by the evil teachers.

I’ve lost count of the number of people I’ve spoken to through the years who have struggled with this dilemma. What advice did I give them? What advice would I recommend for you? The same advice that you have read in this series and in many other **Faith & Self Defense publications**. The Bible is every Christian’s guide to what is true and what is false – both doctrine (teaching) and practice. God spoke through His prophets and His Son:

“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.” Hebrews 1:1-2

We know what Jesus said because of the writings of His apostles. As you look back through earlier parts of this series you will see that has been my consistent message. Along with that message is the importance of ‘rightly dividing’ the Word of truth:

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

Again, you will find that I have been consistent in emphasizing the importance of ‘rightly dividing.’ Consistency in preaching and teaching God’s Truth is one of the ways you can tell whether you are attending a church that refuses to compromise. Of course you have to make sure that the consistent message of a church matches the

uncompromising truth of the prophets and apostles. Many churches are consistently wrong, so be aware of that possibility in your church.

If you find yourself in a church and/or denomination that is either consistently wrong or has strayed from the truth of the Gospel, you face a tough decision. If you are new to a church and discover that the pastor or other teachers are false teachers, your decision may be easy. However, if your personal roots in the church go deep because of family, friends, or other reasons, your decision may be tough. What do you do?

Making Tough Decisions

The Bible introduces us to hundreds of people who made tough decisions during their lifetime. Some made decisions that were right; some made decisions that were wrong. We can learn many important lessons about how to make tough decisions that turn out to be the right decisions by studying the lives of those people.

I enjoy reading the Bible over and over again. My goal is to read the Bible through every 12-18 months. I've sometimes paused on a section and modified my goal for a short time. I spent several years going through the Book of Proverbs every month and eventually wrote a lengthy series for our martial arts program from my study:

- [Teaching Wisdom to our Children – Part One](#)
- [Teaching Wisdom to our Children – Part Two](#)
- [Teaching Wisdom to our Children – Part Three](#)
- [Teaching Wisdom to our Children – Part Four](#)
- [Teaching Wisdom to our Children – Part Five](#)

I've done the same for Psalms, the Gospels, the Apostolic Letters, etc. However, those were more for the purpose of studying the Bible for sermons, teaching sessions, or writing. While I certainly recommend highly the 'study' of God's Word, I also recommend reading through the Bible regularly throughout your life as a follower of Christ. You will discover new things every time you read through familiar passages. Ask God's Spirit to open your mind and heart to find something fresh and new as you read and He will do it. God wants you to 'hunger and thirst' for Him and for righteousness. Reading through the Bible in addition to 'rightly dividing' the Word of truth will help you as you make tough decisions throughout your life. You may also consider reading through the Bible with a friend or family member. Sharing your thoughts with someone you trust is a wonderful experience.

I've written for years about **false preachers and teachers**, so you can look at some of the other studies to get ideas about how to determine what to do if you find yourself in a church and/or denomination led by people who aren't speaking the truth about God and His Word. Whether you are new to the church or have attended there since you were a baby, you have to decide whether you will stay under the teaching of a false teacher or not. If you are in a position in your church where you have some influence about what is taught and who teaches it, use your influence for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. As Jesus said to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2 & 3). That's what every church needs to do.

If you have little or no influence in your church or denomination, then you may have to leave it and find another place to worship and serve God. I know – easier said than done – especially if you grew up in the church. **This study** may help you through the process, but I want to warn you that the power of the enemies of the Gospel in your church may be too strong to overcome. Remember that even Jesus

warned some of the churches in Revelation that He would come ‘against’ them if they did not repent. Keep in mind as you read these verses that Jesus was addressing leaders of Christian churches at the end of the 1st century AD:

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place —unless you repent.” Revelation 2:5

“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” Revelation 2:16

“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Revelation 2:22-23

“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” Revelation 3:3

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Revelation 3:15-20

If that's how Jesus addressed some of His churches at the end of the 1st century, what message do you think He would have for His churches in the 21st century?

The key to making tough decisions about how to respond to false teaching in your church and/or denomination is to read God's Word carefully and often, rightly divide His Word, and listen to the Holy Spirit. Making any tough decision is easier when you know you are following God's leading. That includes whether to stay in a church or denomination that has strayed from God's truth for the purpose of speaking out strongly for His truth, or leaving and finding a fellowship committed to rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

In Conclusion

I congratulate you on your desire to be involved in ‘Evangelistic Apologetics.’ That’s what Jesus Christ and all of His apostles did. That’s what He wants all of us to do. We have different spiritual gifts, but the same Lord (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12). Our approaches may be different, but the message and the goal are the same. We want people to know Christ as their Lord and Savior, serve Him as their King, and share His Gospel with the world. I want that for myself and you. My prayers are with you as you seek the lost every day – even as He did.

eBook

You can download a free eBook of Chapters One – Five [of this study here](#). Please share with family and friends as God leads.

You can download a free eBook of Chapters Six – Twelve [of this study here](#). Please share with family and friends as God leads.

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