

FAITH DEFENSE

“But in your
hearts honor Christ the
Lord as holy, always being
prepared to make a
defense to anyone
who asks you
for a reason for the
hope that is in you; yet do
it with gentleness and respect,”

1-Peter 3:15

Why We Need Faith-Defense

On July 4, 1976, the Lord God turned my central life's focus and commitment from "self-defense" to "faith-defense" commitment. I left the land of independence for the land of dependence upon God the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. Since 1980, I have been serving as a missionary with Things to Come Mission, located in Indianapolis, Indiana. The arts of self-defense and faith-defense are as old as the history of the human race. In fact, faith-defense was the first art God taught the first human being.

"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden, to tend and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17) God created Adam, then, placed him in the Garden of Eden and told him "to tend and keep it." "To tend" means "to work or labor" in the garden. "To keep" means "to guard, protect, keep it safe, preserve" the garden.

We understand that the garden needed someone working in it to plant and harvest, but why did it need protection? God had a powerful enemy – not as powerful as God, but still powerful. That meant that part of God's creation had become an enemy. That is why God taught the first human being the importance of faith-defense at the very beginning of his life on earth. God created Adam and Eve to rule and to reign on earth with Him. Part of ruling with God meant guarding the earth from the enemy. How would Adam do that? It would be accomplished by obeying every command of God. What was God's first command to Adam? The Bible states, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat."* That is how faith defense began! God requires faith-defense from all of His people. That faith is in God's Word. God's Word has been under attack for thousands of years. The Lord still is calling on His people to defend it.

Satan – The First Faith-Bully

Satan was the first faith-bully. He bullied Believers in the beginning, because he wanted to be worshiped and praised as god. Satan was created by GOD as one of His most powerful angels. Being overcome with pride, Satan bullied angels in Heaven and people on earth to get what he wanted. *“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”* (Genesis 3:1-5)

The woman possibly was very young – possibly created just days or weeks before her confrontation with Satan. She had little life experience, so it may have been very easy for Satan to influence her. Even worse, her husband, Adam, stood nearby and did not do anything to protect her -- the very thing God had commanded him to do. Satan set the standard for faith-bullying of Believers. What you see Satan do to the woman is what faith-bullies do to people who believe in the God of the Bible today.

Here is how it works:

1. Satan misquotes and misuses God’s Word. That leads Believers to get confused about what God said and what He meant by what He said.
2. Satan questions God’s honesty and sincerity. That causes Believers to question whether they really can trust God in their daily lives.
3. Satan questions God’s motive and purpose. That leads Believers to wonder if God really loves them.
4. Satan questions God’s will. That causes Believers to lose hope that God really will help them in their time of need. This is how Satan bullies Christians. These are his tactics against us -- his schemes and tricks aimed at deterring us from being all that we can be for the glory of God.

God inspired the Apostle Paul to write these words to believers almost 2,000 years ago. *“Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:11-12) As we journey together to learn how to better defend the Faith, it is important that we understand the enemy. Satan has not changed in thousands of years. He uses the same battle plan on us as he did against our ancient ancestors. Don't be fooled by Satan's smooth talking. Don't be misled by the cleverness of his attacks. Satan is a liar and everything he says is a lie. Anything presented as truth, that is not confirmed by the Word of God, is a lie. Don't trust your feelings! Don't rely on your emotions! Believe the Truth!

“Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.” (John 8:43-45)

Bertrand Russell -- Faith-Bully

Every generation has its favorite faith-bullies. Russell was a British philosopher and logician. Also, he was one of the leading social critics of his time. He was born in 1872, and died in 1970. He wrote hundreds of books, articles and essays. Some of his books were: *Why I Am Not A Christian*, *Free Thought and Official Propaganda*, *A Free Man's Worship*, and *Am I An Atheist or An Agnostic?*.

Bertrand Russell would say things such as, “No one can sit at the bedside of a dying child and still believe in God.” We understand the possible sentiment behind his argument; however, how does sitting at the bedside of a dying child prove that there is no God? It simply does not! What the question does do is to cause some people of faith to question God and His Word.

Why would God let an innocent child suffer and die? For people who do not believe, the question confirms what they think about faith in God. They view faith as foolish, childish and/or simplistic. Faith-bullies say things such as this to attack the minds and hearts of people. Most people love children. The thought of a child's dying is difficult for anyone to accept. We look at children, with great hope for their futures. When a child dies, his/her future is cut short. If there is a God, why would He let a child die? It never was God's intention that children should die. It was never was God's intention that anyone would die. He created the human race to live forever. Who is to blame for the sad affairs of humanity that could cause the death of a child? Let us place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the living beings who caused this terrible thing -- Satan, Adam and Eve. Satan deceived the first woman. Her husband simply stood by and watched it happen. So, that is who is to blame for the death of a child! Russell did not believe in God. He did not believe in the Words of the Bible; however, that does not change the facts about the existence of God and the reliability of Scripture. *"The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God!'"* Bertrand Russell said and wrote many other things during his lifetime to bully people of Faith. He had a profound effect on people of the 60's generation and on the preceding generation and continues to impact the thinking of atheists and agnostics today! Russell may be dead, but his lies still are being told by those who are following in his bullying footsteps. Whose lies are they? They come from the father of lies – Satan. Bertrand Russell was just a man. It is the spiritual power behind Russell and those like him that we need to guard against.

Christopher Hitchens: Another Faith-Bully

Christopher Hitchens was a journalist and an outspoken atheist and faith bully. Christopher Hitchens calls the Biblical accounts "a practice of fraud." We call the Biblical accounts "God's Truth." Hitchens says that only "stupefied peasants in the Jerusalem area" believed the Scripture. We say that tens of millions of intelligent, thoughtful, well-educated people around the world have believed the Scripture for the past 2,000-plus years. Hitchens calls Christianity "the Jesus myth." We call Christianity "the Jesus miracle." *"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. .And the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend i."* (John 1:4-5)

We believe that Christianity is the reality of good in the world. Hitchens blames “organized religion as the main source of hatred in the world.” We believe that pure religion is the main source of unconditional love in this world. *“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.”* (James 1:27) Hitchens -- along with Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Victor Stenger and Daniel Dennett -- believes that recent advancements in science have made religion something that no longer should be tolerated. Hitchens and the others believe that people who are members of the “enlightenment” should expose, criticize, and counter religion through rational argument. We, the members of the Body of Christ, believe that advancements in true science are more supportive of Christianity and the Bible than ever before. No amount of argument will change a person’s heart. Only the Truth of God’s Word -- with the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer shared in Christ’s love -- is able to transform a person’s distorted thinking. Hitchens was a faith-bully. This so-called “new atheism” is not new at all. It is the same tired, old argument that unbelievers have been using against Christianity for centuries. Scientific research during the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries is supportive of the Bible in many areas. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy over 2,000 years ago. *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely- so-called; which, some professing, have erred concerning the faith.”* (1Timothy 6:20-21)

Absolutely, Christopher Hitchens was a **“faith-bully.”** He bullied people with his thoughts and words for decades. As we look at Christopher Hitchens, we can think, “There, but for the Grace of God, go I.” We, too, could have been faith-bullies, if we never had heard a Gospel presentation.

Christopher Hitchens’ and Bertrand Russell’s writings, as well as others like them, have had a profound negative impact upon millions of teenagers and young adults. They have made these thoughts their thoughts, these beliefs their beliefs. Hitchens, Russell and many others like them have died, but they still are bullying millions of people from the grave with their lies from hell.

They are not here to rail against Christ, but their anger and hate will be repeated in the minds and by mouths of others who will take up their cause. According to the Word of God, the Bertrand Russell's and Christopher Hitchens' of the world will stand in judgment before God "without defense." Those words are frightening to consider!

Philosophers: Faith-Bullies

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. Some philosophers see themselves as being very wise. The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek word meaning, "the love of wisdom." One of the problems with some philosophers is that they want everyone to know how wise they are, so they teach, hold seminars, and write books. Their subjects often include political philosophy, moral philosophy, religious philosophy and metaphysical and philosophy. If you attend the seminars presented by these "cosmic cowboys," you will hear them go on about dualism, materialism, cosmology, ontology, truth, justice, and faith. These are the people who are guiding and dumbing down the minds of boys and girls and young men and women in our school systems around the world.

When I have instructed Tai-Chi exercise classes through the years, I have had to contend with many students parroting new-age "psycho-babel," that was rooted in the teaching of Eastern philosophers who followed the general philosophical systems first established by ancient Greece. These Eastern philosophers followed the general philosophical systems first established by ancient Babylon, Persia, China and India. None of those systems were based on Christian beliefs, yet, millions of children from Christian homes are being taught these philosophies every day. The question for Christian parents is this: Which spiritual perspective should they follow? Do we know what our children's teachers believe? Do we know what they teach our children and why?

God warns His people about the dangers of philosophy. The Apostle Paul was a missionary to the Gentile world, so he was constantly facing arguments from the philosophies of both East and West. Here is what Paul suggested we do about philosophy: *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* (Colossians 2:8)

The Apostle Paul warned Christians to use great discernment in the matter of philosophy, because it can take us captive and can distort Godly thinking. That is what the philosophy of the world does to people. It takes them mentally, morally, emotionally, and spiritually captive. What happens when people are taken captive? They usually do not come back. That is exactly what is happening in many churches!

Here are some hard facts gleaned from several recent research projects:

1. 70-75% of Christian young people leave the Church after high school.
2. One of the major causes of their leaving the church is intellectual skepticism (philosophy and vain deceit).
3. Most Christian young people are not equipped to deal with the anti-Christian message from professors, fellow students and friends.
4. College professors are five times more likely to identify themselves as atheists than members of the general public.
5. More than half of all college professors view students with Christian backgrounds unfavorably. Look closely at the children and teenagers in churches. If we do not equip them now to deal with these faith-bullies, we will not see most of them after they graduate from high school. Statistically, about 30% of those who leave churches will return to church sometime after the age of 30, but that means that they will lose ten or more years of productive Christian living. 70% of those who leave never will return!

None of us like those statistics. Something must be done. Church leaders and parents need to realize the importance of equipping their young people to deal effectively with a world that hates Jesus Christ and those who follow Him. People who hate Christ will bully His followers until they either are taken captive, are made to cower, are forced to deny Christ, or are dead. Remember what Jesus said about the enemy of His people! *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”* (John 10:10) Paul, also, warned about “vain deceit” or *“deceit that is void of anything profitable.”* The word deceit means *“to cheat, deceive, beguile.”* The philosophies of the world cheat, deceive and beguile people of all ages and are void of anything profitable. Paul strongly warned the Colossian Church against following the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The philosophies that our children are learning in schools and universities today have the same elementary principles that were first handed down by Satan many thousands of years ago and have been handed down from generation to generation. These philosophies are empty, vain, deluded, and dangerous and, of course, they are not “after Christ.” Philosophers want only one thing: To take the minds and hearts of our children captive to their foolishness. How do we stop it? We must help our children, teenagers and young adults to learn how to think Biblically and to see everything in life from God’s perspective. We must encourage, support and equip parents who attend our churches to take time to answer their children’s questions when they are asked philosophical questions that they are hearing from their friends, teachers or other adults. Parents need to let their children know they are interested in their thoughts and beliefs. Treat their ideas as important. That is the only way they will treat your answers with the same consideration.

Seekers, Skeptics and Scoffers: Knowing the Difference

People who ask Christians about God, the Bible, and Faith in Christ usually come in one of three basic categories: Seekers, Skeptics or Scoffers. It is important for a Christian sharing the Gospel of the Grace of God to know the difference.

Seekers:

A “seeker” is someone who is in search of truth. Seekers often are friendly and open about their search. Their journey for truth often takes them into and through a variety of faith systems. They may have had negative experiences in some of those systems, so they may display some defensiveness in response to our sharing Gospel Truths with them. It is helpful for Christians to have some understanding of the historical background of the religions and philosophies of the world to better understand the quest for immortality. Seekers are interested in what the Bible says. They are sensitive to spiritual matters and will often will compare what you read from the Bible with words they have learned from other religions or philosophies. They often believe that Jesus was a good man, good teacher, moral leader, etc. You may want to consider sharing with them that this good man, Jesus Christ, created of the world and said these words to His followers:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” (John 14:6-7)

Jesus said that no one can approach God the Father except through Him (Jesus). As you look at this verse and many others in the Gospel accounts of Christ’s life, it is clear that Jesus claimed to be absolutely God. Jesus Christ ruled out every other religion and philosophy with His teachings. We get various reactions from seekers when we tell them about Jesus. Some will listen. Others will disagree. Many will walk away. What we are doing with seekers is speaking “The Word of God” to them in love. The Bible tells us what happen when we speak The Word to unbelievers. Some will believe; some will not. Our job is to preach The Word to everyone and to have our speech seasoned with salt.

We have only three options in which to place our faith and trust! Let us consider the words of Jeremiah. (17:5, 9 & 7):

1. We can choose to **be cursed** by putting our faith and trust in mankind. *“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.”*
2. We can choose to **be a fool** by putting our faith and trust completely in ourselves. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”*
3. We can choose to **be eternally blessed** by putting our faith and trust in God our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope and confidence is the LORD.*

“Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” (Matthew 13:18-23)

Another insight into the principle of “sowing the Word” is from the Apostle Paul. *“I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”* (1 Corinthians 3:6-7) When you talk with a seeker, you may be planting a new Word seed or you may be watering a Word or seed someone else planted; however, know that God is the One who gives the increase. Pray for wisdom as you share the Word with seekers and be confident in God’s Power to save their souls. We are privileged above words to be God’s chosen ambassadors for Christ -- to teach, to equip and to share the Gospel of the Grace of God with those whom the Lord brings to us.

Skeptics and Scoffers:

A “skeptic” is someone who questions the validity or authenticity of something presenting itself as fact. Many skeptics are quietly skeptical and do not become confrontational about their disbelief. However, some skeptics become “scoffers” -- verbally berating and attempting to invalidate the Christian’s faith. Skeptics doubt the Truths that Christians believe -- e.g., the existence of God, the reliability of Scripture, the Life of Jesus Christ on Earth, etc. Many skeptics are atheists, while others would call themselves agnostics (i.e., no one can know). The agnostics often try to avoid Christian conversation, but they will fight back if they feel threatened. However, most atheist scoffers are faith-bullies looking for a fight. Sharing the Gospel with a skeptic differs from talking with a seeker. Some skeptics are not interested in what you think or believe. They do not want to know what you know! They simply may not ask question of Believers. Scoffers, on the other hand, will say things with the intention to bully, by bringing out your emotional side. They have some idea about what the Bible says Christians should be (for example e.g., loving, patient, kind, long-suffering, etc.), so they say things specifically to evoke emotions responses that are contrary to what the Bible teaches. If one gets angry or loses patience with a scoffer, the scoffer is quick to point out how far one is from the ideal of what he claims to believe. That is one of their favorite tactics. Scoffers find it easy to get Christians angry. There is a way to deal with these people effectively. Many atheists and some agnostics spend quite a bit of time reading atheist books and talking with other unbelievers about the Christian “delusion.”

Reading atheist literature and talking with other unbelievers prepares scoffers for their “mission” to confront God’s people and show them the “error” of their ways. We need to be prepared to deal with skeptics and scoffers. Their arguments appear to be logical. However, their logic and reason are rooted in foolishness. *“The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.”* (Psalm 14:1)

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” (John 16:8-11)

Considering these Scriptures, Christians can find themselves in a position of superiority with a real need to exercise humility. We have the true wisdom of God dwelling in us. Here are some things we can do to be ready to defend the Gospel. First, know what the Bible teaches -- in context. Atheists and agnostics do not have the guidance of the Holy Spirit when they quote Scripture, so they do not understand its true meaning. We do have the Spirit of God’s love guiding us, so that puts us in a position of superiority, as we talk with them about the Bible.

Atheists will push back when we use the Bible to prove the Bible, but be sure that they cannot push us into a corner because they know more about the Bible than we do. Knowing a little something about the sciences that support the Bible (e.g. archaeology, astronomy, physics, astrophysics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, hydrology, geology, meteorology, etc.) can be helpful. Skeptics and scoffers love to use arguments from science, because so many people are intimidated by the so called “higher criticisms” and a knowledge of science. What Christians need to know is that true science is on the side of Faith! Science is the study of knowledge that can be tested, so why should that intimidate us? Who is the Source of knowledge? Your Heavenly Father is. God created all of the laws and principles of true science, so any real test of knowledge will support what He knows. Atheists look for holes in a believer’s armor. We need to do our homework. Read what Christian and non-Christian scientists are writing about science and the Bible. It is eye-opening and confidence-building to see how true science agrees with the Bible.

Pray with and speak with other Christians about facing skeptics and scoffers in your life. God made us a family of believers for many reasons. Getting prayer support is one of them. We can trust God to help us as we talk with skeptics and scoffers. The Lord laughs at the wisdom of men. It is foolishness to Him. *“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”* (1 Corinthians 1:20)

“Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their own craftiness’ and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’” (1 Corinthians 3:18-20)

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts.” (2 Peter 3:1-3)

Let us remember, *“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 2:10-11)

What Is This Faith We Defend?

We believe in God of the Bible and that the Bible is God’s Word.

We believe God created the universe and everything in it.

We believe God is actively involved in the universe and everything in it.

We believe God is more powerful than anything He created.

We believe God has spoken to the people of the world through prophets and His Son.

We believe that Jesus Christ is God’s Son Who created all things.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Brightness of His Father’s Glory and the Express Image of His Father’s Person.

We believe that Jesus Christ was born miraculously to a virgin.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Promised Messiah of Israel.

We believe that Jesus Christ purged our sins by dying for us on the Cross 20 centuries ago.

We believe that Jesus Christ rose from the grave and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords and Rules over His Church.

We believe that Jesus Christ will return for His Body, the Church, and they will be with Him forever wherever He goes.

We believe that Jesus Christ will destroy the armies of the world and rule on earth for a thousand years.

We believe that the dead, small and great, will stand before God and that Jesus Christ will judge them according to their works.

We believe that anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire.

We believe that Jesus Christ will destroy heaven and earth and create a new heaven, a new earth and a New Jerusalem.

We believe that God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of those who live with Him in eternity and that they will never again experience death, sorrow, crying, nor pain.

We believe that Heaven and Eternal Life will be the most amazing experience of our life -- the best part being that we will be with God forever!

Defending Our Faith

Jesus defended the Faith with His Life. The Apostles defended the Faith with their lives. Tens of thousands of Christians of the early Church defended the Faith with their lives. Millions of Christians around the world today are defending the Faith with their lives. It is God's Will that we defend the Faith with our lives. **Why? Because the Christian Faith is worth defending!**

People defend themselves. They defend their honor, their families, their possessions, their property, the innocent, the weak, and their country. What is greater than any of these? It is the Faith Jesus Christ gave us through His Great Sacrifice. That is worth defending! That is Faith- Defense! God makes His will clear to us. Everything He says to His children in His Word is that nothing is more important than defending the Christian Faith! Consider what God says about those who give their lives in defense of the Christian Faith.

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trials of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, and were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” (Hebrews 11:32-40).

Triumphantly in Christ’s Love and Grace,

Bob Xavier, Missionary/Pastor

