

Always Be Ready

Proclaiming the Gospel by Defending the Faith

July 8th: The BIBLE: Has God Spoken?

A conversation I had around a campfire:

- “Faith is just religious wishful thinking”
- “To believe Christianity you have to deny reality”
- **Ambassador’s Essential Skills:**
- Tactic #1: Columbo Tactic
- Conversation Starter: “What do you mean by that?”

- What I thought to say (after the fact) was that to have faith in Christianity wasn’t to **deny reality, but to discover reality** – and we’re all in a different point in the process of discovering.
- What I don’t like about how we too often use the term faith is that we equate it to willful wishing – the most practical encouragement I ever heard about how to “grow in faith” was to ask God to grow my CONFIDENCE in what I believed to be true.
- I learned that the heart will not accept for long what the mind rejects.

1 Peter 3:15

¹⁵ 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

Head: God exists and has revealed Himself to us through the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness

- The question that must be asked about the Bible (or any other religious book that claims significance) is whether it is a book from God to men, or a book about God from men.
- If it is a book about God from men, it is no more valuable to us than any other literature floating around.
- If, however, it is a book from God to men, then that changes everything.
- A fundamental claim of the Christian worldview is that God exists, and he has spoken to us, revealed Himself to us through his word.
- IF CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE, then the facts ought to be on our side to be able to prove that the Bible has a divine imprint on it **UNIQUE FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES.**

Heart: The Creator of the Universe has chosen to make Himself known to us.

- Let's step outside of our routine Christian experience and look at this objectively... the very fact that a God existed with the notion to create living beings and then make Himself known (intimately) to those beings is amazing.
- We might be left in a sort of primitive understanding of "forces" out there that created everything (as some agnostics believe today) if the Creator God had not chosen to give us information about Himself!

Hebrews 1

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Hands: Learn how to defend what you believe about the Bible.

Common Objections:

1. The Bible has been copied and translated so many times we don't even have the originals.
2. The Bible is full of errors.
3. The Bible was written by fallible men.

Show that the bible is from God to men: (Using your hand)

INDEX FINGER: Index to History

- Throughout the ages people have tried to discount the historical accuracy of the bible...
- Luke was constantly criticized for information, titles and dates only to be proven right by further archeological discovery.
- The Hittites – a group that historians claimed never existed, until archeological evidence not only confirmed their existence, but confirmed that everything the bible had to say about them was accurate.

MIDDLE/BIG FINGER: Big Questions, Best Answers

- All worldviews must answer some big questions, and all religions attempt to answer these topics:
- Existence – why are we here and how did we come to be?
- Evil – how did we come to be the way we are, where did evil and suffering come from?
- Salvation – how do we come to be saved by the evil and wrong we see in ourselves and the world around us?
- Afterlife – what happens after we die? Are we punished or rewarded for how we live?

RING FINGER: Unity

- 66 books written by over 40 different authors, written over centuries, by Kings and Shepherds, doctors and tax collectors – all, who if you stand back and look, paint a unified expression of what God is like and what is true about the world we live in.
- Ask 10 people in London to give you answers to these sorts of questions and you'll get such a variety of answers you may find it tough to believe that they are all of one race let alone all from one city.
- The Bible is unified in thought, commentary and expression of what God is like and what he requires of His people.

PINKY: "P" for Prophecy

- Verified writings from hundreds of years prior to Christ arriving have detailed descriptions of what the Messiah would be like and what he would do... when Jesus came along he fulfilled hundreds of these prophecies.
- The possibility of a single human fulfilling these prophecies, that we can prove were written hundreds of years prior to Jesus' birth, is impossible.

THUMB: Life Changing

- The bible changes lives. Throughout history, men and women who put their faith in the teachings of the bible and in the Christ it reveals have their lives radically changed.
- It propels people (courageously) into persecution and martyrdom, it changes hardened individuals into soft, caring people, it makes arrogant men (like me) strive for humility before God and others... it causes people to move to a third world or give away all their possessions.
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FIST: Fighter.

- Throughout the years men and women have tried to destroy the bible or prove that it is merely a book written about God by men.
- "One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity seeker." — Voltaire (1694-1778)
- Within the century Voltaire was dead and his study was bought by the Geneva Bible Society and turned into the largest bible printing place to that point in history.
- No book evokes such drastic responses, both of hatred and fondness.
- It polarizes, and why shouldn't it? It is the very words of a polarizing God of justice and mercy.