



Evangelistic Apologetics

The Church Under Attack

Part 5

By

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In the last part of our series about Evangelistic Apologetics we began looking at this question - What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We are asking and answering seven basic questions about our involvement in God's purpose for His Church:

1. Why has God placed 'you' in this spiritual battle?
2. What's at stake in this spiritual battle?
3. Are you really involved in fighting in this spiritual battle?
4. If not, why not?
5. If so, how is the battle going for you?
6. What part does Evangelistic Apologetics play in this spiritual battle?
7. What part are you playing in Evangelistic Apologetics?

We now come to the all-important **you** part of this series - and I include myself here. What part are we all playing in Evangelistic Apologetics? What part can we play in helping young Christians understand the powerful 'reasons' for being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. What can we do to reach more non-Christians with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Let's get specific.

You

The last thing I want to get mired in is 'legalism'. That's where I tell you what I think you should believe and do. That's where I set up a system of 'laws' and 'performance standards' that you have to follow as a Christian based on what I believe about Christianity. I've seen that done in Christian circles and it's not pretty. So many Christians have different views about how to live out Christianity. How can we possibly know which one is right?

Christians who want to know what part they can and should play in Evangelistic Apologetics can find plenty of guidance from God's Word, with or without another Christian's help. Years ago when I was struggling with a system of legalism and trying to figure out what was true, I turned to the Bible - specifically Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. I spent months reading, studying, checking out the original language ... and came to a marvelous conclusion about how God wanted me to serve Him. It revolutionized my life - the simple process of reading God's Word for myself and seeking Him for wisdom to understand it.

I credit the Holy Spirit for my experience. He is always the best Person to look to for guidance on how to live the Christian life and how to be involved in Christian ministry. The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible, so He best knows how we should use it. No Christian can even begin to compare to the Wisdom of the Spirit of God.

However, that doesn't mean you don't have to hear what other Christians say about living the Christian life. In fact, it would be unwise not to listen to a Christian brother or sister who you know is living their life in accordance with God's Word. That's why Paul wrote this -

"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern."

Philippians 3:12-17

"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us." 2

Thessalonians 3:6-9

The Apostle Peter reminded leaders in the early Church that they should be examples for others to follow -

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4
We also know that God has given gifted people to the Church to help guide us in service -

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended'— what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint

supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:7-16

However, that does not guarantee every person who calls themselves an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher can be trusted to guide you in the right way to go. There has to be another way to determine whether someone who says they are speaking for God actually does speak the truth of God's Word.

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him." John 13:14-16

Ah, yes. Jesus is our highest Example of how to live rightly and serve God. As we follow the examples of Jesus Christ and His apostles, we will know how to live rightly and serve God fully.

The Pattern

The pattern of Evangelistic Apologetics is fairly simple - far more simple than most church leaders would admit. That's one of the things I love about Christianity. The 'pattern' really is easy to understand and follow.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'
Matthew 16:24

The process of 'following' someone is basic. Go where they go. Do what they do. In the case of Jesus Christ, obey His commandments.

"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.' Amen." Matthew 28:18-20

The fact Jesus Christ has ALL authority in Heaven and earth is a pretty good reason to follow Him and do what He says. Jesus sends us out in His authority to make disciples of every people group (all nations). That means no one is left out. We don't pick and choose who becomes a disciple of Christ. All means all .. and that's all means.

We teach those who become disciples to obey ALL things Christ commanded us. Again, all means all. We don't pick and choose what disciples should obey. They should obey everything Christ and His apostles commanded.

Christianity is not a 'spiritual cafeteria' where we can take some of what we like and leave what we don't like. It's a full service restaurant where we partake of the 'whole counsel' of God (Acts 20:27).

Picking and choosing what we will believe and do has taken Christianity in some harmful directions. It's become so bad that many (if not most) Christians don't know how to compare spiritual with spiritual any longer.

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

That's what the Apostle Paul wrote the Christians in Corinth just before he wrote this -

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:1

Wow! Paul wrote that to a group of Christians in the middle of the 1st century AD whose church was started by an apostle of Christ. They were as close to the whole counsel of God as you could get and were still struggling with carnality. Any wonder Christians almost two-thousand years later are struggling with the same thing. Just like the Corinthians who were listening to many different voices, today's Christians are confused and divided by their own carnality.

The Choice

Rather than give you a list of the commands of Christ and the apostles, I invite you to read the New Testament from beginning to end and build your own list based on your own observations.

I will share with you two things that are emphasized throughout God's Word and should be a continual guide into both personal behavior and service. They are based on having a heart of God and for people.

Heart for God

"Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment." Mark 12:29-30

Heart for Others

"And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:31

I believe you will find that as you build your list of how God wants you to live for Him and serve Him, you will find most everything on your list will fall into these two biblical categories.

Once you finish building your list, realize that you will be looking at the most important choice of your life. Will you 'follow' Christ? Will you 'obey' His commands? Will you follow the 'example' of the apostles? Will you 'obey' their commands?

Each of us has to make that choice for ourselves. If someone 'talks' or 'tricks' you into believing something or doing something you later find is not true, you will have possibly wasted your time and energy. Listen to God's Voice. Read His Word. Hear what the Holy Spirit tells you to believe and obey. Don't be carnal. Don't be a babe in Christ. Be a mature follower of Jesus. As Paul wrote Timothy -

"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

May God bless you richly and use you greatly for His glory is our prayer for you and your family.

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