

Why should Christians be able to defend their faith? Why speak out against those Churches which are Cults?

Often, I have heard people, from cults and Christianity alike, tell me that they did not feel that it was right for them to debate the Gospel with anyone. Their reasoning seems to be, “I have the truth and if the person is willing to listen and accept what I have to say then I will tell them, otherwise forget it.”

It is my opinion that whether you are a Mormon, a member of another cult, or a believer in historic Christianity, an attitude such as this one is not very well thought-out. Obviously, Mormonism and historic Christianity are not both “right” and “true”, yet both believe they have the truth. People from both religions can offer you very sincere testimonies.

So where does that leave you? If a person’s eternal destiny really depends on the truth of his or her religion, isn't it worth pursuing a discussion of differing views? At least to the point at which you both agree disagree. I am not saying that you should have heated arguments that only develop animosity. Many people are willing to listen to your side of the debate if you will listen to theirs also. A Mormon (or anyone else) who believes he knows the truth and suddenly accepts what the believer in historic Christianity has to say concerning God, Jesus, and salvation without searching the Scriptures and other sources of fact then that “believer” was not stable in the belief and will probably soon be carried off by some other teaching. The same is true if the roles are reversed. The common ground between these two religions is the Bible, and any book that both people may consider noteworthy, such as a dictionary.

My opinion on this matter is not enough, though. What does Scripture say about this?

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV):

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

What can we do to help us rightly divide the word of truth?

Was this just a suggestion or an instruction?

Jude 1:3-4:

3. “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints.

4. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

(“**Contend**”, according to Webster's College Edition New World Dictionary, means “to strive in debate or controversy; argue; dispute.”)

What does it mean to contend earnestly for the faith? (Jude 1:3)

Was this just a suggestion or an instruction?

2 Timothy 4:1-3:

1. “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2. preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove**, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires...”

(“Reprove”, according to Webster's, means “to refute; disprove”.)

When should you be ready to preach the word? (Verse 2)

What does reprove mean and why should you do it? (Verses 2 and 3)

Was this just a suggestion or an instruction?

1 Peter 3:15

“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a **defense** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

(“**Defense**”, according to Webster's, means “a defending; guarding against attack; an argument to justify or vindicate”.)

What does it mean to make a defense for the hope that is in you?

When should you be ready to do this?

In what frame of mind should this be carried out?

Is this just a suggestion or an instruction?

Ezekiel 33:1-9:

1. "And the word of the LORD came to me saying,
2. 'Son of man, speak to the sons of your people, and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman;
3. and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and he blows on the trumpet and warns the people,
4. then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and as word comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head.
5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life.
6. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'
7. 'Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.
8. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand.
9. But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your life."

Did God consider it important for the Prophet Ezekiel to warn the wicked?

Acts 18:5-6:

"But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles.'"

Does Paul seem to assume the same responsibility that God placed on Ezekiel when He responded "your blood be on your own heads?" (Ezekiel 33:1-9 and Acts 18:6)

We are warned of false teachings and false prophets in Matthew 24:24-25, 2 Peter 2:1- 2, as well as many other places.

In your opinion do you think it is important to warn others who have fallen into the trap of believing in a false teaching?

Are their souls worth debating with them? Praying for them? Loving them?

I would like to end this section by asking you to picture something in your mind. Imagine that your neighbors' house has caught fire. You can see the smoke and the flames starting to flicker at the back of the house. Your neighbor is out in front of the house watering the lawn. Should you run over and tell him that the house is on fire? What if he doesn't believe you? Or worse yet, he might become offended because you pointed out what he should have seen, and your neighbor will stop talking to you. Does it seem ridiculous not to warn anyway? Of course it does! But we are in a spiritual war. We have neighbors who need to know the truth despite our own fears of rejection. Contend for the faith? YES— but remember to do it with love. Your neighbor is not the enemy — the fire or / the lie is!