

The Christian Arsenal

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Love vs. Apologetics and Evangelism Friends or Foes?

We often get letters from those who are disturbed by the information on our site and or the subject matter we address in our newsletters. Working in the area of Christian Apologetics, we expect that we would find those who oppose a ministry such as this. We certainly acknowledge the right of anyone to disagree with us. The curious thing is that some of the strongest letters of opposition come from Christians.

It seems that the emphasis of "Political Correctness" and "Tolerance" so prevalent in our culture has infiltrated into many churches. The letters that we receive are chiding and quite condemning about us being condemning. This presents quite an interesting paradox, that one condemns another for being wrong about condemning another for being wrong. This unfortunately escapes most people.

The central issue that many bring to the table of discussion is that of Love. "All Jesus told us to do was to love everybody. In *Matthew 22:39* Jesus tells us that we must love our neighbors as ourselves." "We are never to offend anyone about his or her religion. Jesus said in *Matthew 10:16* that we were to be harmless as doves."

So where does this leave those who are working in apologetics and evangelistic ministries? Do we violate the very Gospel and Bible we claim to proclaim and defend? The answer is a resounding NO! There are several problems that lead to a response like this from a Christian. We will look at some of them briefly.

1. It is being taught that the Bible must be interpreted in the light of political trends, "Political Correctness" for example.
2. It is being taught that the Bible must conform it's message to current trends in popular culture and society, "Tolerance" and "Universalism" for examples.
3. Not taking into account everything that God has to say on an issue, thereby minimizing the importance of God's word and setting one's self up as an authority above scripture.
4. Failing to be familiar with the content of the Bible on subjects pertaining to Discipleship, Christian Living and Christian Responsibilities, and what Biblical discernment really is.
5. Not having a total grasp of what God's love means to people.

Love is accepting everyone as the Bible clearly teaches. As the scriptures teach, without love

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we are nothing. Paul in *1 Corinthians 13:13* tells us that Love is the greatest and without it anything that is done is worthless. Love is being obedient to what God commands us to do. *Matthew 22:37-39* sets a base for the entire Christian Life. Unfortunately this is where most people stop and begin to over simplify what this scripture is saying. Notice that Jesus says, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." All that is in the Law and the Prophets point to one of these. There are many things in scripture concerning a Christian's relationship with God, Believers and non-believers. To say just love God and love everyone and that's all the Bible says, is narrow minded and dangerous to say the least.

When I became a parent for the first time I was told, "don't worry about what to do, just love the baby, that's all it takes!" How do you show a child love? You love a child by sheltering, feeding, clothing, teaching and protecting the child. You do not let the child develop ideas, habits or practices that will prove harmful. You wouldn't let your child eat garbage, drink from the toilet and then play with household chemicals, shards of glass and then let them go to play on the freeway with a known child molester during rush hour on a bicycle with no brakes and without a helmet! You would be seen as a terribly irresponsible person.

To make sure that this does not happen, you begin teaching your child many things. During this process you must love, teach, correct, reinforce, tell the child "NO", reward good behavior and deal with the bad, etc. You help the child to redefine their limited understanding of reality in a loving manner. There are times when the child does not want to hear anything that contradicts their thinking. As loving parents, we must do this. We teach them to be wary of strangers. We teach them to be careful before crossing a street. Why? We have seen the results of what happens when these rules are violated.

As a Christian we are to love for and care for one another. In the body of Christ, Jesus warns us in *Matthew 7:15* about those who would be like ravening wolves in the flock. In the book of 1 John we are warned about those who would attempt to deceive. In *1 Timothy 4:1*, the Holy Spirit warns of those in the church who would give head to seducing spirits. Jude warns of "certain men" who have crept into the church who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness and would deny Jesus. In *1 Corinthians 2:15* Paul tells us "he that is spiritual Judges all things". *Acts 17:10-12* tells us of the Bereans whom God called noble because they were searching the scriptures daily to see what Paul was preaching was true according to the Scriptures.

How do we show love as a Christian? First, we show love by obeying God. We study *2 Timothy 2:15* & *1 Timothy 4:13*. We pray for people. *Colossians 1:9*. We watch for false teachers.

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Matthew 7:15. We take the good news of salvation to everyone. *Matthew 28:19.* We teach everything that Jesus told us to. *Matthew 28:20.* We are prepared to give answers for the reasons for our belief in Christ in our hope. *1 Peter 3:15.* We care about others and take care of them. *James 1:27.* The list goes on and on.

Christians have many different responsibilities. No one individual or organization can fulfill all of them. In *1 Corinthians 12* Paul uses the human body as an example of how there are many members and functions of the body but still it is one body. Not everyone does the same thing. However the Bible is clear that there are some things that are expected of all Christians. Being a bit of an Evangelist and Apologist is required. We would certainly not be loving as God describes it to just roll over and play dead or to simply smile and say everyone is right and we are all going to heaven when the Bible clearly states that this is not the case.

In summary, showing God's love is not complete until the elements of evangelism and apologetics are present. First and foremost these must be done in love with the aim of winning, restoring, discipling and protecting the flock.