

What Christians Ask Others To Believe

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We, as Christians, are under divine mandate to tell the Good News to the world. Have you ever considered just what it is that we're asking folks to believe?

First, we're asking them to believe in a Supreme Being we can't see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. We're asking them to believe that this God created from nothing everything that exists in the universe.

Then we're asking them to believe that God has revealed Himself to humankind, both in the written volume we call the Bible and ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ. We're asking them to believe that this Jesus was God in the flesh, that He lived an absolutely sinless life, that He bled and died on the cross of Calvary as the ultimate atonement offering for our sins, and that He came forth alive from the tomb on the third day.

We're asking them to believe that Jesus ascended back to Heaven where He reigns on the throne of David at the right hand of the Father. We're asking them to believe that He will return to raise the dead and to judge the world.

Do we have the right to ask people to believe these things? Emphatically **Yes!** God has given us abundant evidence. Our faith is **not** "blind faith," but evidenced faith. The question is, "Are we, as Christians, informed and equipped to explain why people ought to believe things that seem at first glance to be not only unreasonable but outrageous?" In other words, "Can we defend our faith?"

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Cross Cutting

I once saw a cartoon reminiscent of the scene from Mark 8:34 in which Lord Jesus challenged believers to *"take up your cross."* Within the cartoon, numerous figures were dragging large crosses. Each moved slowly under the weight of the oversized burden. Suddenly, a character spoke out and asked, "Is there a way to lift some of this load?" The next depiction showed the cartoon character sawing off a portion of the cross, thereby lightening his load.

From that moment on, the cartoon character (with his "new and improved" cross) moved out ahead until he reached a large crevasse. The huge gap had no bridge, thereby stranding the character. Others arrived, lowered their crosses onto the crevasse, bridged the gap, and then resumed the journey. Suddenly, the character discovered that his new and improved version did not reach the other side. He found himself stranded. Realizing his mistake, the character fell to his knees in prayer.

This story may be fiction, but it mirrors a common problem: a lack of true dedication among church members. Rather than being devoted to Lord Jesus, some choose to take a non-committal approach. Sadly, the "short cross lifestyle" often leaves people unprepared and unequipped for the tough times. Such a choice is inconsistent with the words of Christ when he exhorted: *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"* (Luke 9:23, NKJV).

Don't be a cross cutter!

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Procrastination is the grave in which opportunity is buried.

--David Hamrick

PERILOUS TIMES

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3: 1 NAS).

The King James Version translates the Greek word for perilous as grievous. Paul warns Timothy of grievous times; it simply means dangerous times. He further said the dangerous times shall come in the last days, which is the gospel dispensation or age.

For Paul, the perilous times are due to perversion of truth by evil men. Traits of these men are given in 2 Timothy 3:2- 6. The last trait Paul mentioned is, *"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (v. 7). They cannot understand the truth because they seek error. Today, false teaching and traditions have been introduced into the practice of churches. All this is an attack on the truth, the Word of God. We are now in dangerous times.

Having diagnosed the problem, Paul proposed two-fold preventives. He charged Timothy to continue in the work of God (3:10-14). Paul offers him his own ministry as a pattern and tells him, *"... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*

The next prevention is to continue in the Word of God. As a minister, he will find the Holy Scriptures useful for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness. One who allows the Word of God to direct his life finds salvation at the end. *"God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4).

--Nehemiah Gootam (Kakinada, India)

The precise location in our lives where choice, coincidence, and providence intersect is impossible to plot under most circumstances. But these things we can know with total certainty: God knows what we need, God cares about what happens in our lives, and God loves us and thus wants what is ultimately best for us. He is never ignorant, never apathetic, and never unloving towards us.

--John Gaines (via Facebook)