**“I Will Be Exalted … To the Ends of the Earth”**

**Psalm 46:10**

*Be Prepared!*

Our age is one of the most difficult ages in which to be a Christian. A staggering number of students *(some have estimated as high as 70 percent*) who head to college confessing Christ are no longer active in their faith by the time they graduate.

When it comes to the Christian faith, the cultural landscape has shifted, and the challenges have intensified. It used to be that if you were a Christian, you were thought of as a bit strange, perhaps naïve. Now, Christians are often targeted as the enemies of societal progress. More than ever, we need to be prepared to understand a Christian worldview. But can faith be defended? Many people assume there is a tension between faith and reason.

* Richard Dawkins writes, “Faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence. Faith is belief in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of evidence.” (1)
* 2) The biblical definition of faith, on the other hand, comes from Hebrews 11:1: “Now, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Which of these two quotations do you think accurately describes faith? Why?

The seventeenth-century mathematician, physicist, and inventor-turned-theologian Blaise Pascal claimed that: “God has given us enough evidence to believe in him rationally but not so much evidence that we can

 believe in him based on reason alone.” (2)

Do you think that is a fair statement? Why or why not? What rational reasons do you have for believing in God?

So, what is faith, anyway? Good question. Let’s complete the diagram to illustrate biblical faith:

 From the point of view of our *intellect*,

faith is

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 (John 17:5)



From the point of view From the point of view

of our *emotions*, faith is of our *will,* faith is

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 (Hebrews 3:14) (Romans 10:16)

**Read 1 Peter 3:15-17.**

What does Peter mean by the phrase: “Set apart Christ as Lord”?

Set apart = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

As Lord = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (See Ex. 3:14-15; 6:2-3)

Why is it important to regard Jesus as true God when sharing our faith with others?

*Agree/Disagree*: When people feel that their questions about God aren’t being answered, they will assume that good answers to their questions must not exist.

*React to this statement*: Peter encourages us to be ready to ask and answer hard questions. The health of the Church in the days ahead, in large part, will be determined by the way we handle questions.

What are two or three questions about your Christian beliefs that you hope you will never be asked by a non-Christian because you would not know how to answer them?



Christian apologist and speaker, Michael Ramsden, often emphasizes that if you knew the questions in advance for an interview for your dream job, you would spend time preparing to respond well to those questions. The opportunity to witness your faith clearly in a person’s life is even more important than getting your dream job, so you need to take the time to be prepared.

So, how does Peter describe the attributes of a “prepared” Christian?

See the following verses to discuss **how** and **why** we are different in our worldview as Christians:

1 Peter 1:3 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 1:18 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

It’s about establishing a relationship of trust with others. Setting conversational goals in the context of community and encouraging one another in those goals can make an enormous difference in the ***faithfulness*** and ***effectiveness*** of our attempts to share Christ with others. The goal this week is simply to ask two questions and then to listen well to the answers. These questions are meant to lead you into conversations about faith.

Your conversational goal is to commit during the next week to ask the following two questions of someone who not a Christian:

*What is your biggest objection to Christianity?*

*What do you think it would take for you to change your opinion about Christianity?*

**References:**

(1) Richard Dawkins, “The ‘know-nothings’, the ‘know-alls’, and the ‘no contests’, ” The Nullifidian, December 1994.

(2) Blaise Pascal, The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal, trans. C. Kegan Paul (London: George Bell, 1905), 206–7.