

CONFRONTATIONAL EVANGELISM

Frequently Asked Questions

1 Peter 3:15 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear...*

From time to time, when engaged in Biblical evangelism, we are asked to defend our methods. Surprisingly, our worst antagonists are professing Christians who, by false teaching, have been conditioned to oppose the true gospel presentation. These hypocrites rarely present any Bible for their opinions but usually feel it is their duty to defend the sinners from the thundering of God's holy law. Alas, those who live in sin are the most hostile to its public condemnation. The following represents typical complaints and questions that are posed to us on a regular basis, some by sinners, others by religious hypocrites. Believe it or not, these are actual questions.

COMPLAINT #1: "AS A BELIEVER I AM OFFENDED BY THE WAY YOU EVANGELIZE."

Unfortunately, we have an obvious problem from the very outset. Such words cast a shadow on your state of heart as you readily admit you are "offended" with our method of evangelism. The Bible clearly states that we are not to be offended (this is especially true for those who profess Christianity).

Psalms 119:165 *Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

Furthermore, should we establish reasonable proof that our "way" is, in fact, Biblical, then you are in essence confessing that you are offended with the person of Jesus, as Christ and His Word are synonymous and inseparable (John 1:1). This is a very serious spiritual matter and should be grounds for sober self-examination.

Matthew 11:6 *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

The Bible teaches that *preaching* is God's ordained method for bringing sinners to repentance.

Romans 10:14 *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

1 Cor. 1:21 *...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

In these verses the two Greek words translated into the English words "*preaching*" and "*preacher*" literally mean, [1] To herald as a public crier, and [2] a proclamation. The Scriptures also teach that the *preaching of the cross*, which is God's ordained way of evangelism, is offensive to the religious mindset (those who profess godliness but are not truly in a relationship with God by virtue of their continuing in sin). Note the following Scripture:

1 Cor. 1:23-24 *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block (the Greek word skandalon, meaning: something that offends, offence)...*

Remember, the cross not only represents God's love and mercy toward mankind, it also communicates His unwavering wrath and judgment against sin. If we accurately preach Christ and His cross we must therefore boldly and passionately denounce sin. We cannot love God and yet fail to utterly hate sin (Ps. 97:10). Men only defend what they love. Why is the public denouncing of sin and sinners so troubling to you? Could it be that you are offended with Christ who hates sin (Hebrews 1:9)? Could it be that you are ashamed of God's Word (Mark 8:38)? Please consider the following Scriptural warnings...

Proverbs 18:5 *It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.*

Proverbs 28:4-5 *They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. 5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.*

COMPLAINT #2: "I AM OFFENDED WITH WAY THE MINISTERS FROM YOUR CHURCH CONDEMN EVERYONE AND CALL PASSERS-BY NAMES."

Is this a fair accusation? Have you personally heard us condemn *everyone*? Do we indeed condemn *everyone*? My answer is a simple: no, we certainly don't condemn everyone we come in contact with. Why? Because we meet genuine Christians who are obviously not condemned, i.e. damned. However, we do boldly preach the gospel. And the gospel emphatically communicates that **ALL MEN ARE HOPELESSLY DAMNED** unless they meet the conditions of: [1] repentance and, [2] faith in the finished work of Christ for salvation from all sin. If we fail to communicate that **ALL MEN** are damned apart from Christ then we've fallen short of our Christian duty (Ezk.3:17-18). The Bible, God's Word, teaches that **ALL MEN** are wicked, sinful, evil, and hopelessly lost without Jesus. This is the truth. God wants **HIS WORD** proclaimed, not the soft-peddled, men-pleasing, feel-good, self-exalting, physco-babble that is passed off as gospel preaching in this hour. It is the *truth* that makes men free (John 8:32). As Christians, we are unashamed of Jesus and we are unashamed of Christ's Word (Mark 8:38) regardless of how unpopular it may seem. Are you suggesting that we declare something other than the truth simply because it is unpopular and seemingly ineffective (which of course, it is not)?

Luke 13:3 *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

John 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Acts 10:42-43 *And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

You also charged us with calling people names. Apparently you are unfamiliar with Scripture verses such as...

Proverbs 27:5-6 *Open rebuke is better than secret love. 6Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

Proverbs 28:23 *He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.*

Ephes. 5:11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

Look in the pages of the gospels and you will find that Jesus called individuals names and condemned people. He called the King a "fox." He called two of His disciples "devils." He referred to a Gentile woman as a "dog." He exposed the unbelieving Jews as "children of the devil." He called the religious leaders of the day "vipers, snakes, hypocrites, blind guides, fools, and whited sepulchers." Not only does Jesus rebuke and condemn individuals and groups but he declares his generation to be "faithless, perverse, and adulterous." He pronounced judgment on entire cities, "Woe unto you Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum..." Finally, he exposes the spiritual hopelessness of the entire world: "Woe unto the world because of offenses..."¹ The Apostle Peter called men "wicked" and charged them with murdering Christ in his great Pentecostal message. The Apostle Paul called men "whited walls" (Acts 23:3) and "children of the devil" (Acts 13:10). And finally, the Bible itself uses every descriptive tool of language in depicting men as sinful and evil. Remember, the Bible is God's mind revealed to man. The thoughts expressed therein are what **GOD WANTS MEN TO KNOW!** If God sought to inspire such terms to describe sin why shouldn't we?

It is true, we preach a "if the shoe fits wear it" message. This means we take Scripture verses like...

1 Cor. 6:9-10 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

Then we systematically address every sin listed. This, in effect, is to preach the law of God. Contrary to the apostate and antinomian false gospel of today, the law must be preached if sinners are to see their need for a Savior (see Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24; 1 Tim. 1:8-10). We might, for example, declare, "All fornicators are hell-bound" or "Every drunkard will one day be cast into the lake of fire." Many, many times we are faced with men who brazenly boast in their sin. When this happens, we give them the Bible. We tell them what God says about the sinner. For example, if a man boast in his lying we tell him that God says, "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8)." We give them the Word of God because this is what we're commanded to give them...

1 Peter 4:11 *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God...*

Again, I ask you, isn't this the truth? Why does the truth seem to bother people so? It seems odd to me that a professing Christian would be so troubled by sinners being reproved for their sins.

COMPLAINT #3 "I AM NOT TRYING TO DISCREDIT YOU OR YOUR MINISTRY BY MAKING UP STORIES. WHILE LISTENING TO YOUR PREACHERS, I HAVE SEEN THIS HAPPEN MANY TIMES; IT IS NOT AN ISOLATED EVENT."

When? Who? What was said? I am not band-standing. Give me specifics, tell me what was said and by whom. Accusations are cheap. Case in point: I have preached on LSU's campus since the late 1980's. Time and time again people have sworn that I pointed out their girlfriend/sister/mother/professor in the crowd and called them a "whore." Now, I am not ashamed of the term "whore" as it is a Biblical term and there are certainly thousands of whores and whoremongers who attend LSU, nor would I be hesitant to use the term if the circumstances were appropriate. However, I cannot remember ever pointing anyone out at Free-Speech Alley and labeling them a whore before I spoke with them, not once. Yet, the accusation arises nearly every time I go to campus.

COMPLAINT #4 "YOU ARE WRONG BECAUSE YOU ARE JUDGING. DOESN'T THE BIBLE SAY, "THOU SHALT NOT JUDGE"?

It is a common misconception that the Bible contains a command, "Thou shalt not judge." However, there is no such command in Scripture. In fact, many will be surprised to learn that the Bible actually commands us *to judge*. Nevertheless, many quote Jesus' words in Matthew's gospel as proof that we are never, under any circumstances, to point out sin and its consequences in another's life. Matthew 7:1 is perhaps the most misunderstood and most often quoted Scripture verse in the Bible.

Matthew 7:1 *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

This isolated verse has been misintepeted to mean that we are never to make absolute moral decesions. This foolishness is not only unbiblical, nonsensical, and unrealistic, it is also absurd. We all judge. We must judge. Hence, people who promote this perversion of Scripture reveal that they harbor an ulterior motive.

The unwritten commands of much of the twentieth century Pentecostal/Evangelical church-world are these.

***Be extremely nice at all times:** To be *pleasant* is defined as love - To be *described as something other than nice* would constitute a walking outside of love as it is currently defined.

***Judge not:** You may approve of anything and everything that professes Jesus Christ - but you must never speak negatively about anything - God alone is judge. *It takes as much eternal...*

***Never, under any circumstances offend anyone:** Offending someone might be equated with having a demonic spirit.

There is this underlining pressure to fulfill these unwritten commands. I may be oversimplifying things but this is so prevalent in the church world today. People truly believe that if they are **NICE** they will go to heaven. We should be tender hearted and kind people but we will not always maintain, if ever, such a reputation if we follow Jesus. Jesus was not murdered because He was considered **NICE!**

THE NATURE OF LIGHT: IT REVEALS & EXPOSES! The Devil wants to extinguish all light. Satan wants to cloud the difference between **right** and **wrong!** It isn't the will of God to cloak the light.

Ephes. 5:13 *But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.*

John 9:5 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Matthew 5:14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

I will illustrate my point with an analogy: Suppose you were employed by a large manufacturing company that was owned by a sole proprietor. Not only was the owner of the company brilliant and shrewd but he also had a no-nonsense reputation in his business affairs. He was strict but universally fair, and for this he was highly respected among his employees. Such employment was difficult to find and you were thankful for your job. You were well paid, had wonderful benefits which enhanced your salary, and most importantly, you were employed by a man whose word you could trust. Now, early one morning, upon entering into your work area, you notice a company announcement, printed on official company letterhead, and posted on the company bulletin board announcing a new policy that would go

into effect immediately. The policy read: "ALL EMPLOYEES WHO FAIL TO HAVE THEIR HEADS SHAVED BY NEXT MONDAY WILL BE TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY!" The new policy carried with it a signature from none other than the owner of the company, leaving no doubt of its authenticity. Now, such a policy seemed somewhat unusual and harsh. Nevertheless, the owner had authored and signed the policy. It was his company and no one could challenge his he could certainly run it the way he saw fit you reasoned. So, as your fellow employees began to arrive for their work day you felt obligated to warn your fellow employees regarding the news.

"Gentlemen, according to company policy, you will be fired if you refuse to amend your ways."

It takes as much eternal wisdom to discern something or someone is *right with God* as it does to judge that something or someone is *not right with God*.

COMPLAINT #5 "TRUE CHRISTIANS PROMOTE LOVE, BUT ALL I SENSE FROM YOUR MINISTRY IS HATE."

COMPLAINT #6 "DOESN'T GOD UNCONDITIONALLY LOVE EVERYONE?"

No. This is another great misconception held by the vast majority of professing Christendom. However, this is an unbiblical thought. There is a universal benevolence

COMPLAINT #7 "YOUR MINISTRY IS NOT LIKE JESUS' MINISTRY. JESUS SAID, 'LET HE AMONG YOU WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE.' (JOHN 8:7)"

Above, you have cited John 8:7 as a proof text in your argument that implies that exposing sin is somehow unchristlike. However, you fail to properly interpret this Scripture and henceforth have grossly misapplied it to our preaching methods. Jesus did not rebuke the Jews for exposing this adulterous woman's sin, rather, he rebuked them for: [1] their willingness to stone her to death contrary to the law, and [2] Their unwillingness to repent when they were as guilty as she was in breaking God's law. The law stated that the death penalty could not be administered apart from two or three witnesses and that both of the guilty parties were to suffer the consequences.

Deut. 17:6 *At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*

Deut. 22:22 *If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.*

Leviticus 20:10 *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.*

In John 8 we have one of the best known and most misunderstood stories in the Bible. Ironically, In this narrative our basic message is illustrated as well as validated: "Make Jesus your Lord, and stop sinning. (John 8:11)" Jesus was not try to communicate that sin will be overlooked, but rather, the truth expressed in...

Psalm 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

Why did Jesus show mercy on this adulterous woman and not the Jews who exposed her? Did he love them less? No. The Jews refused to humble themselves and repent while the woman was broken, repentant, and believing as she referred to Jesus as Lord (John 8:11). This woman did not try to defend or excuse her sinful behavior as many do today when they are confronted. She knew she was wrong and was willing to change or Jesus would never have forgiven her. The scribes, in contrast, walked away, each convicted by their own consciences which told them that they were wrong; but still they refused to repent and believe. They refused to follow Jesus. So it is with most today in America. The Word of God convicts their consciences, showing them their sins. But instead of repenting most, sooner or later, walk away. Some stay around asking questions to test us. Others will mock or heckle. Most will offer excuses and justifications for their sin and yet erroneously claim that they can love God while they live in rebellion (John 14:24; 1 John 2:4).²

Furthermore, the Pharisees in John 8 wanted to kill the woman caught in adultery. We have never literally thrown stones at anyone, nor have we promoted the killing of sinners. In fact, by preaching the gospel to the fornicators, drunkards, sodomites, etc. we are pointing them to the only escape and remedy for divine retribution, the atonement of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, by preaching the gospel and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ we have indeed exposed sin - yet, no where in the Bible is this forbidden.

COMPLAINT #8 "I GUESS WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND IS HOW YOU INTEND FOR YOUR METHOD OF PREACHING TO WORK?"

The validity of any ministry is not to be judged by "success" or the lack thereof, but rather, by its conformity to Scripture. In other words, is it Biblical? As Christians, and especially as ministers of the gospel, we must not be pragmatic, but obedient. Our first goal as gospel preachers is to render obedience to God. Christ commanded that we "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This is God's way, no questions asked. God's ways and methods are far above our ways and methods (Isa. 55:8-9), yet faith demands that we surrender to God's wisdom. Jesus came, He preached, He ministered and yet He was murdered. Obviously, His ministry at a glance, especially from the view of time, seems to be unsuccessful. It is only in retrospect that we see God's wisdom manifested in the person, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Bible refers to true preaching as foolishness in the eyes of those who are lost.

1 Cor. 1:18 *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

The Greek word translated "foolishness" in the above verse literally means *absurd* or *silly*. I've always found it to be true that those who are in darkness are the first to tell us, "It's absurd for you to think that you'll ever win anyone to Christ using these methods!" However, the Bible says that "...he that winneth souls is wise (Prov. 11:30). Yet, notice what true Biblical wisdom does...

Proverbs 1:20-23 *Wisdom crieth (means shouts) without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: 21She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, 22How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.*

Hallelujah! I choose to trust in God's eternal wisdom and to believe the Bible which says...

Romans 3:4 *God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar...*

COMPLAINT #9 "WHERE IS YOUR FRUIT?"

Open-air preaching is primarily a sowing ministry, however, we have seen several repent. Nevertheless, this question is meant to discredit our method simply due to the fact that we do not have a mega-church to show for our efforts.

COMPLAINT #10 "YOU PREACH ABOUT JUDGMENT AND HELL, WOULDN'T IT MAKE MORE SENSE TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS AND HIS LOVE?"

In this hour many false doctrines are masked under the term "love." It is apparent to any serious student of the Bible that the *love of God* is grossly misunderstood today. Many speak of God's "love" but in essence they actually promote an unbiblical and humanistic "tolerance." They offer God's promises of forgiveness, restoration, and fellowship without clearly communicating the Biblical conditions of repentance, faith, and obedience. God is not tolerant, but loving. There is a vast difference between tolerance and love. In His love, God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross so the sinner could be set free from his sins. Nevertheless, if sinners refuse God's love by the rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ then they must face God's wrath. If we leave men with the impression that God will not judge them for their sins then we do them a great spiritual disservice and misrepresent God's character as revealed in Scripture.

Exodus 34:7 *Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children...*

Nahum 1:2-3 *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked...*

If you were to ask most Christians in America to sum up the gospel in five words or less they would reply without hesitation, "Jesus Loves You." No real Christian will deny the fact of God's love expressed to mankind through the person of Jesus Christ. However, Jesus Himself, nor the Apostles ever uttered these words as they preached the gospel. A close examination of the N.T. will reveal that the **TRUE** gospel message and the method in which it was delivered is much different than our current "much improved and inoffensive version." Jesus was indeed motivated by love but He only speaks of God's love for humanity in **SIX** verses of the four gospels. In contrast, Jesus mentioned hell, judgment, condemnation, and wrath in 163 verses in the same four gospels. The Book of Acts [which records more public proclamation of the gospel than any other book in the Bible with the exception of the gospels] **NEVER** mentions the love of God. Not in one public sermon by either Paul, Peter, Philip, or Stephen did they ever mention God's love. However, they mentioned the fear of God six times and repentance several times. Let me ask you, are we wiser than Jesus and the Apostles? Are our methods Scriptural? Whose gospel is out of balance? May we learn that it is more important for us to be 'motivated' by love than to speak of love. The Bible says in **1 John 3:18** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Likewise, many today boast of their "love for God" and yet rarely manifest any clear Biblical fruit to validate such a claim. Our love for God is not a warm-fuzzy-feeling-inside but a **COMMITMENT** to accomplish His perfect will and keep His Word! In this hour many who claim to love God are only interested in what God can do for them. Tragically, they deceive themselves if they believe that this constitutes a genuine love for God.

"The language of love and the language of seduction are basically the same; The one who wants a woman for a wife and the one who wants her just for the night both say, 'I love you'....but they mean totally different things. One speaks of commitment the other of gratification." *Richard Wurmbrand*

Luke 6:46 *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

1 John 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

COMPLAINT #11 "WHY NOT CONSIDER DOING SOME ACTION TO SHOW JESUS' LOVE? FOR EXAMPLE, YOU COULD GIVE OUT FLOWERS TO GIRLS WHO PASS BY INSTEAD OF ASSUMING THEY ARE FORNICATORS?" (*I know it's hard to believe, but yes, this was an actual question*)

Do you really believe that giving flowers to someone will reveal Christ's love? Did Jesus give women flowers? Why can't you see that your opinions are based on something other than God's Word? We cannot reveal Christ's love unless we do as Christ did (1 John 2:6). Contrary to popular theology, we are not called to convince men that we love them, we are simply called to love them. Unfortunately, true love will rarely be recognized by the unregenerate. Jesus was God's perfect expression of divine love, yet He was utterly rejected while rendering perfect obedient. Sir, take heed to your spiritual philosophy. It appears that you are implying that if men hate us we must be wrong. It seems that you are saying that if we were truly obeying God we would be accepted by men. The Bible teaches the exact opposite.

Matthew 10:22 *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*

John 15:19 *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

2 Tim. 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

1 John 3:13 *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

Notice that the Bible reveals why Jesus was hated...

John 7:7 *The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*

COMPLAINT #12 "FOR THE MOST PART, YOU ARE ADDRESSING AN EDUCATED AUDIENCE, IF YOU ARE TO CONVINCE THEM THAT THEY NEED TO TURN FROM THEIR SIN, YOU MUST SHOW THEM THAT THERE IS SOMETHING BETTER."

Once again, you have made assumptions apart from the wise counsel of God's Word. Let us consider what the Bible says about the audience that we are confronting:

Job 28:28 *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*

Psalms 14:1 *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 12:1 *Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish.*

Romans 1:22 *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools...*

Hence, our audience is anything but "educated" but rather stiff-necked, proud, self-sufficient, and arrogant. Yes, they assume that they know the truth but, in fact, are under the influence of the most grievous lies, therefore, they are willingly deceived. The Bible teaches that this is the common and universal experience of fallen mankind. The remedy? In Christ and His gospel, the unchanging God has unveiled His unchanging plan of redemption and His unchanging method for its delivery. What man needed in A.D. 100 is what man needs in A.D. 2002 - the clear, bold, and anointed declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, you suggested that we, "...show them that there is something better." We would do well to understand that the true preaching of the gospel rises far above the lowly and earthly craft of salesmanship. The gospel preacher is not to appeal to the inherent selfishness of mankind by presenting the precious atonement of Christ as the spiritual-bargain-of-the-day offered at cut-rate prices. Such a spirit does great violence to the holy and transcendent nature of the Lamb of God. Notice God's spiritual posture and appeal to mankind:

Acts 17:30-31 *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

As we see, men have no license to haggle and dicker with God's Spirit and Word regarding their obligation to follow Christ, they must bow the knee and cry, "Holy is the Lord!" How then, are men who are blind to their **NEED** and adamant in their unbelief, brought to a place of humble submission?

Allow me to use a simple illustration. See that man floating face down, unconscious in the Mississippi river? If he is not soon rescued and pulled from the water he will perish. Unfortunately, he is unaware of his impending danger because he is unconscious. Telling this man the virtues and benefits of a life-preserver means absolutely nothing to him unless he understands the danger of His situation. You may throw him a life preserver but to no avail. Why? Because he is completely ignorant of his **NEED** due to his state of mind. So it stands to reason, if this man is to be saved he must be awakened. Once awakened, once he sees the grave danger of his situation, then he will readily take the life-preserver as a means to his salvation. Do you see the parallel? The sinner must first be awakened to his danger of eternal hell-fire. He must see the righteousness of God's law, the justice of divine retribution against all sin, the inescapable doom of his sinfulness apart from Christ, and then, and only then will he cry out for the life-preserver of the gospel.

Remember what Jesus said...

John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

John 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

Now, the Spirit of God is not arbitrarily or haphazardly influencing men's lives as some suppose. When the Holy Ghost was sent on the day of Pentecost He came to inhabit the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The Spirit of God's ministry is *in* and *through* the Body of believers in the earth. Hence, if a man is truly led of the Spirit of God in evangelism he will be in agreement with the above description of the ministry of God's Spirit to lost humanity. The Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost, lives and speaks through consecrated and sanctified human vessels. Such men's preaching will reprove sin, promote righteousness, and warn of judgment. Therefore, the Holy Ghost didn't come primarily to show men something better, but to expose them for what they are. Yes, Christ is better than sin, but in general, men would rather have sin because they are deluded by the deceitfulness of sin...

John 3:19 *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Therefore, it is our duty, as gospel preachers, to be led of God's Spirit and allow Him to awaken the sinner to his impending danger and to make "sin exceedingly sinful" (Rom 7:13) so as to drive the sinner to Jesus (Gal. 3:24).

COMPLAINT #13 "I'M SIMPLY SUGGESTING THAT YOU SHOW THEM SOME OF CHRIST'S LOVE."

We reply that this is exactly what w're doing by reproofing sin. Sadly, you are implying that exposing sin is unloving. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Reproof and love are often linked throughout the Scripture.

Job 5:17 *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:*

Proverbs 3:12 *For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

Proverbs 6:23 *For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:*

Proverbs 15:10 *Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die.*

John 3:20 *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

And finally, Jesus said...

Rev. 3:19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...*

In light of these verses, how can you deny that reproving sin is a manifestation of Christ's love?

When Jesus established the second love command in *Matthew 22:39* he was quoting the Old Testament law. If taken in context, we can easily see that reproving sin is inseparable from loving one's neighbor.

Leviticus 19:17-18 *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. 18Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.*

So, I defend our methods of evangelism as not only Biblical, but irrefutably motivated by holy love and concern for our fellow man.

COMPLAINT #14 "I UNDERSTAND YOUR POSITION OF LOVING PEOPLE BY SHOWING THEM THAT THEY ARE ON THE WRONG PATH, HOWEVER, IS THIS THE ONLY PART OF LOVE? LOVE IS CERTIANLY MORE THAN ONLY DENOUNCING SIN AND SHOWING MEN THAT THEY ARE IN IT."

Indeed. However, in the context of public proclamation of the gospel the message is paramount. Furthermore, the message is often dictated by the condition of the "congregation's" heart. As Christians, we are called to give men what they *need* not what they *want*. For example, Jesus' message throughout the four gospels to the Pharisees and scribes was, without exception, scathing. Why? Because they were proud and unrepentant.

Luke 16:15 *And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.*

This is really the root condition of heart that defines Phariseeism - those who profess to love God, yet, remain in, defend, sympathize with, and excuse sin. Let us remember, if we want to know what true love is then we must look toward Jesus, for He is the love of God manifested to mankind. Jesus always was motivated by love, therefore, his ministry to the Pharisees, as brutal as it was, was a perfect manifestation of God's love. True, these isolated words/sermons/rebukes to these religious men certainly doesn't fully frame Jesus' ministry on earth. However, to the Pharisees, Jesus perfectly manifested God's divine love in that he gave them what they needed. Not once in the gospels is it recorded that Jesus fed, clothed, healed, hugged, or otherwise comforted an unrepentant Pharisee. Not once. Yet, who would be so bold as to accuse Christ of failing to love these men? Likewise, the typical LSU crowd that gathers while we preach (the ones who are vocal and garner most of the attention) generally profess to love God, yet unashamedly declare their love for all manner of brazen sin. They constantly justify themselves and their sinful actions. Love demands that we rebuke such behavior. Love has no plan B for such a situation. Love **ALWAYS** rebukes hypocrisy. When these religious hypocrites refuse to repent and confess that sin is inconsistent with Christianity love requires us to rebuke and reprove again and again (Titus 1:13). This is love and this a perfect and accurate demonstration, as modeled by Christ, of God's pure love toward such people.

Allow me to use an illustration: Suppose you were reading your Bible on the bus and a young man approached you with a somber countenance and asked, "I saw you reading your Bible and it provoked me to ask you a question that has troubled me for some time. Sir, if I am not a Christian and I should die in my sins what will be my fate?" Now what does love demand that you do? Why, you must frankly answer the man's question, so you reply, "Unfortunately, sir, you will go to Hell." The man is immediately disturbed at your answer and again presses you to alter your comments, "How absurd and narrow-minded! Do you really believe I will go to hell if I do not believe in Jesus?" Again your answer is firm, "Sir, unless you are born-again you will not go to heaven." This enrages the young man and he lifts up his voice in threatening tones, **"WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I DIE WITHOUT JESUS?"** Without hesitation, you offer the same answer, "You will go to hell." Now the entire bus is moved to passion and several begin to ask all at once, **"ARE YOU SAYING WE WILL GO TO HELL IF WE ARE NOT CHRISTIANS?"** There is no escape, love demands that you repeat what you've already said, "Except you repent and believe on Jesus you will all likewise perish." The bus arrives at your destination and you quietly exit. As you walk down the sidewalk a young lady approaches you with this startling accusation, "I'm a Christian and I overheard your comments on the bus. I was appalled and offended. You are so unloving! All you did is tell everyone they were going to hell! Why didn't you show them the love of Jesus?"

My point? Though Jesus' ministry to the Pharisees does not fully define Biblical love, it nevertheless can be seen as pure and loving. In the above illustration the young man's answers to the irate young man and angry crowd on the bus cannot be understood as representing the full scope of Biblical love, nonetheless, it was the appropriate *display of God's love* for the circumstance. Likewise, though our evangelistic ministry is often volatile, blistering, and stern it

is indeed loving and, as representatives of Christ, the **ONLY** response which we can rightly offer to those who refuse to humble themselves.

James 4:6 *...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

COMPLAINT #15 "I AM NOT SAYING THAT HATING SIN IS WRONG. I WOULD JUST LIKE TO SEE IT DONE IN A WAY THAT, AS THE SAYING GOES, 'HATES THE SIN, BUT LOVES THE SINNER.' THIS IS NOT A DIRECT QUOTE FROM THE SCRIPTURE, BUT I BELIEVE IT IS VERY BIBLICALLY BASED."

Well, not really. Allow me to quote the well respected Preacher/Author, E.M. Bounds-

"Deal with the sin and not with the sinner is a maxim of popular acceptance, but like most popular maxims when adopted by the pulpit it makes havoc of truth and righteousness. The sin and the sinner are inseparable. Sin is not an abstract entity. It has its being through the sinner. Sin is not an accountable thing. The sinner is accountable for the sin. The only way to destroy the sin is through the sinner. Our gospel is a personal gospel. 'Thou art the man' is the epitome of its purpose. To separate and purge the person from his sins is the chief aim of the gospel."³

Psalms 5:5 *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*

COMPLAINT #16 "I KNOW THAT THE BIBLE SAYS THAT THE GOSPEL WILL BE OFFENSIVE TO SOME, AND WILL SOUND SILLY TO OTHERS. HOWEVER, THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO DELIBERATELY MAKE IT OFFENSIVE."

Wrong. The Bible doesn't say that the "*preaching of the cross*" will be offensive or silly to "*some*" but to **ALL** who are unregenerate and hell bound. We must remember, unless the lost are enlightened by the drawing power of the Holy Ghost they will not come to Jesus. Why then, should we be surprised when the true gospel message is met with opposition?

You are wrong to assume that we are deliberately trying to make Christ offensive. Christ is already offensive to the sinner (Rom 8:7). I assure you, our motive is to do the will of God. We do not enjoy or otherwise glory in being hated. We recognize that simply because a man is hated does not irrefutably prove that he is endorsed of God. On the other hand, we know that if a man is not hated this most assuredly proves that he is not of God, because the Bible says...

Luke 6:26 *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

2 Tim. 3:12 *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

COMPLAINT #17 "I THINK YOU ARE TURNING PEOPLE OFF TO CHRISTIANITY."

COMPLAINT #18 "WE DON'T CARE TO DISCUSS RELIGION WITH YOU BECAUSE IT OF NO USE, WE CAN NEVER WIN AN ARGUMENT WITH YOU."

Proverbs 25:9 *Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another...*

Christians are not trying to "win" arguments with others. Nor are they interested in out debating anyone. Christians are after the truth. Christians are interested in obtaining the mind of Christ. Christians desire to know the truth. And they are willing to allow "iron to sharpen iron" to discover it. Those who dogmatically hold to truth are often accused of being "divisive." However, in actuality, the divisive folks are those who refuse to come to God's Holy book and prove their doctrine because they thereby reveal they are separated from Christ.

COMPLAINT #19 "WE WILL NO LONGER DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH YOU AS IT IS SIMPLY TURNING INTO AN ARGUMENT. JESUS WOULD NEVER ARGUE WITH ANYONE AS IT IS A SIN TO DEBATE."

Proverbs 25:9 *Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another...*

John 7:40-43 *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. [41] Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? 42Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? 43So there was a division among the people because of him.*

Acts 17:2 *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,*
Acts 17:17 *Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.*

COMPLAINT #20 "SATAN QUOTES THE BIBLE TOO!"

This is generally a last ditch effort to cover Biblical illiteracy. When they no longer

COMPLAINT #21 "ARE YOUR METHODS BRINGING IN NEW CONVERTS? WHY ISN'T YOUR CHURCH GROWING?"

We certainly desire for souls to be saved and are grieved that many are not. However, we cannot change the gospel to accommodate the spiritual appetite of this wayward generation. The Bible teaches that the last days will be like the days of *Lot* and the days of *Noah* (Luke 17:26-30). A brief study of the life and times of *Lot* and *Noah* reveal that they were men who lived in a generation marked by sin, rebellion, and God's judgment. Very few souls were delivered in their days (in Noah's case - eight souls, in Lot's - three). The prophet *Jeremiah* offers us another Biblical example of a man who was spiritual yet his ministry was utterly

rejected by his generation. *Remember, he preached 70 years with no convert.* Jesus, the most anointed preacher ever to preach the gospel, was murdered for His message (John 7:7)! Would we dare say that these ministries [along with many, many other examples in the Bible] were unspiritual because they were rejected and hated? I think not. Hence, to say that "*souls being saved*" is a sure sign or indicator of spirituality is Biblically unwarranted. Men are moral free agents, meaning they have the ability to resist God in all of His beauty, power, holiness, and love. Therefore, men, by virtue of their free will, may choose to utterly reject the most spiritual of testimonies.

It is not our desire to excuse ourselves, we certainly want God to correct anything among us that hinders souls from being saved. However, could it be that people are just not interested in serving the real Biblical Jesus in this hour? In conclusion, we suggest that new converts, or the lack thereof, neither validate nor condemn the spirituality of an individual or church. However, if you believe this, allow me to turn this question around to you, "When is the last time you won someone to Jesus?" and, "How many in the past five years?"

Incidentally, if you really want to deal with numbers as a validation for ministry then let's look at a realistic comparison. *Woodville* is only a town with a total population of 2000 people. Wilkinson county and Amite Count combined only have roughly 20,000 people. Hence, we only have a potential pool of 2000 people to draw from in Woodville and 20,000 people to draw from in our community at large. We have a church attendance of approximately 30 (all who are faithful to services, committed to ministry, and faithfully give of their time and finances). Therefore, we have approximately 1.5% of the total population of Woodville and 0.15% of the population of Wilkinson/Amite counties. If we proportionately applied this same rule to a church in a city with the population of 1,000,000 (like New Orleans) their attendance would have to be, all things being equal, 15,000 to garner 1.5% of the population (remember, to be totally equal these 15,000 must be people who rarely, if ever, miss a church service or prayer meeting and who faithfully tithe) or 1500 people to gain 0.15% of Orleans Parish. In a city of 4,000,000 a church would have to have a congregation of 60,000 to do as well as we're doing in Woodville or 6000 (0.15%) to do as well as we are in our surrounding counties. A city of 500,000 a church needs 7500 people. So forth, and so on...In perspective, our attendance is really not that bad.

Footnotes:

1. *Who Will Rise Up*, by Jed Smock.
2. *Who Will Rise Up*, by Jed Smock.
3. *Powerful & Prayerful Pulpits*, by E.M. Bounds.