

Lack of Respect for Scripture's Authority

'Do everything... so that you... shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life...' (Php. 2:14-16)

Creating Evangelism Opportunity

Testifying of Scripture's authority to those who don't acknowledge it may at first seem as fruitless as arguing the third dimension with paper dolls. It is palpably obvious to us, yet unthinkable to others. Scripture itself explains that unbelievers truly are blinded by Satan (2 Co. 4:4), while Christ's followers live by what cannot be seen (2 Co. 5:7). We best show the reality of invisible God with our very lives; we testify powerfully to Scripture's authority simply by *stopping from hiding our faith*. Do others see Christ in us? Or have we exhibited a desire to blend with the world? We certainly are called to speak the truths of the Bible, yet simply living unashamed of the gospel also bears witness – and requires as much bravery! For example:

1. Pause to say grace (even in the work lunchroom, or before beginning a difficult task at work).
2. Shovel your neighbor's sidewalk, too. Even that neighbor who never picks up after his dog.
3. When friends gossip, don't. Walk away if they continue. Even better, gently mention loving others as ourselves, sinners not throwing the first stone, or a time you wished others forgave something you did.
4. When asked, "What did you do last weekend?" dare to deliberately mention something spiritual.

Testifying with unashamed gospel-driven lives won't always lead to serious conversation, yet it does show we really believe what our heavenly Father tells us. And when someone does discuss – or challenge – Scripture's authority, God reminds us to testify **"with gentleness and respect"** (1 Pe. 3:15-16). If we are honest with ourselves, we will easily recall times when as Christians even we, too, have questioned the authority of God's word in thought or action.

In order to discuss Biblical truth fruitfully, it is wise to know if we are speaking with someone who is struggling with scriptural authority as a Christian, or as an unbeliever (Jude 22-23). A person might be unfamiliar with Scripture. He may be struggling with a particular situation/temptation, or may have been spiritually wounded by Christians in the past. Though we won't know the perfect answer for each situation, we *can* always point people to God, as did Jonathan and Naaman's slave girl (1 Sa. 23:16, 2 Ki. 5:3).

After all, God is not only the goal, but also the power (1 Co. 3:6-7) of faith in his unfailing word.

1. When we don't know an answer, acknowledging this demonstrates humility, and also could establish a more permanent connection: "I don't know the answer to that! If you give me your email, I'll look it up and get back to you in a couple of days." Or, "We were talking about ___ the other day; this book helped me a lot with the same issue! You can keep it if you like."
2. When scared to present a hard truth, it can be helpful to simply say so ("I don't mean to sound judgmental"), or to share some of our own similar spiritual struggles.
3. We can always take a few seconds to silently pray, "Lord, I don't know what to say – you promised to help me!" (Ex. 4:11-12, Lk. 21:15) Would God ever yawn, stretch, and say, "You're on your own?"

Different Approaches to Testifying of Scripture's Authority

"Though I am free... I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Co. 9:19-22)

"Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you... a fortified wall of bronze..." (Jer. 15:19-20)

Paul and Jeremiah are not contradicting each other in the above passages. We must build our testimony only on the Rock (Mt. 7:24-25), but we can use various ways to approach the truth of Scripture's authority. Consider three different approaches which *all* bear witness in the face of two common temptations which are:

1. Accepting God's word as authoritative only when we happen to agree with it, and
2. Accepting Jesus as a great moral teacher, but not as the very Son of God.

Logic

1. Is it logical for mortals to sit in judgment of God? Who is probably wrong – the created, or the Creator? (If we believe the creator of car manuals, how much more our own Creator's words?)
2. Jesus himself claimed to be the Son of God. If he was not telling the truth, he either really thought he was (and was therefore insane), or didn't think he was (and was therefore lying). These are our only options: Jesus was God, insane, or a liar. There is *no room* to accept him as merely a wise man. Logically, we should believe the option with the strongest evidence.

History

1. Scholars accept Tacitus' Roman history as authentic, though it exists in only two manuscripts made several hundred years after Tacitus. Scholars also accept Homer's *Iliad* as authentic, though fewer than 650 manuscripts exist, all from over 800 years after he lived. Like these secular books, we have no Bible originals. But the Old Testament has continued in use as the Jewish Bible (Tanakh). And in contrast to our limited copies of Tacitus and Homer, the New Testament exists in over 5,000 Greek manuscripts (about A.D. 150–A.D. 800+), around 9,000 Latin ones, and 10,000 more in other ancient languages: *totaling some 24,000 manuscripts. (data from Strobel's The Case for Christ)* Why do people doubt the Bible's authenticity, yet accept secular books?
2. Post-resurrection history is clear that Jesus' disciples gave up family, community acceptance, their homes, and their lives, because they testified that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is a *marked* change from their fearful behavior after Jesus' arrest. What, other than meeting the risen Jesus, could have caused this change? If Jesus had not risen from death, his earthly influence over them would also have died. If Jesus' body was merely stolen, how does one explain the miracles the apostles performed, and the disciples' willingness to sacrifice this world to proclaim a risen Savior? How does one explain Paul's turnaround from persecutor to apostle? No, the historical evidence shows the believers *believed*.

Scripture itself.

1. God claims authorship of the Bible & expects us to obey it. Dt. 4:1-14, Job 40:1-14, Pr. 3:5-6, Pr. 30:5-6, Ecc. 5:1-2, Da. 9:2, Mt. 5:17, Lk. 24:44 (*Jesus held the entire OT to be God's word*), Jn. 6:60-69, Jn. 10:35, Jn. 16:12-15, 1 Co. 2:13, 2 Ti. 2:13, 2 Ti. 3:16, 2 Pe. 1:16-21, 2 Pe. 3:15-16 & many more.
2. The man Jesus is also truly God. Mt. 1, Mt. 27:50-54, Mk. 9:2-10, Mk. 14:61-62, Lk. 1:30-37, Jn. 1:29-34, Jn. 8:12-59 (*in verses 24, 28, 58 Jesus says he is "I Am," God's "Jahweh" name revealed in Ex. 3:14*), Jn. 20:26-31, Ro. 1:1-4, Ro. 10:9-13 (*verse 13 quotes Joel 2:32, where "LORD" is "Jahweh"*), 1 Co. 15:3-28, 1 Ti. 3:16, Rev. 21:5-7/Rev. 22:13,16 (*Father and Son claim the same names*), & many more.
3. Further, many detailed Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. Such as Ps. 110:1/Mk. 12:35-37 (incarnation), Mic. 5:2-5/Mt. 2:4-6 (birth), Ps. 22 (crucifixion events), and Is. 52:13-53:12 (death, burial, resurrection).

Additional Resources

- www.whatdoesthebiblesay.org
- The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel (Written by an atheist God called to faith. It is weak in presenting Scripture as if not Spirit-inspired – yet still concludes there is overwhelming evidence the Bible is true!)