

Solid Ground

Enhanced

A Foundation for Building Ambassadors

Celebrating 20 Years of Ministry

September/October 2013

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CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH



You don't need to read the headlines or watch the news to know that the Christian worldview is facing assault on multiple fronts. If you're a faithful ambassador for Christ, you're encountering the challenge on a regular basis in your own daily life. I'm sure you're also aware of Jude's exhortation to "contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). It couples well with Peter's admonition to always be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). The two form something like the twin pillars of the apologist's biblical reason for being. I've recently given more thought to Jude's charge in light of the current assault we face, asking what it looks like today to be faithful to his challenge. The answer I found (almost by accident) is remarkably simple and represents the heartbeat of the final letter Paul ever penned, his spiritual last will and testament meant to guide us through perilous times like these.

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You Can Help Stand to Reason



STR's mission has never been more important, and why we remain committed to teaching you and other Christians to think more clearly about our faith and stand with confidence in defense of it both "in and out of season." Advancing this critical mission is only possible through the prayers and financial support of like-minded believers like you. So I'm asking you to stand with us today with a gift of any amount.

Greg Kousser





September 1, 2013

Dear Friend,

You don't need to read the headlines or watch the news to know that the Christian worldview is facing assault on multiple fronts. If you're a faithful ambassador for Christ, you're encountering the challenge on a regular basis in your own daily life.

I'm sure you're also aware of Jude's exhortation to "contend earnestly for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). It couples well with Peter's admonition to always be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). The two form something like the twin pillars of the apologist's biblical reason for being.

I've recently given more thought to Jude's charge in light of the current assault we face, asking what it looks like today to be faithful to his challenge.

The answer I found (almost by accident) is remarkably simple and represents the heartbeat of the final letter Paul ever penned, his spiritual last will and testament meant to guide us through perilous times like these.

In this month's Solid Ground I share what I discovered. Read it carefully and prayerfully. Then read it again. Paul's antidote is for each of us, no matter what our circumstances. I hope it helps to focus your efforts. It certainly has helped focus mine.

This renewed focus is crucial for the days ahead. With turmoil in the world, and unfortunately turmoil in the church, it is essential we fortify our beliefs on the sure foundation established in the Word of God.

That's why our mission has never been more important, and why we remain committed to teaching you and other Christians to think more clearly about our faith and stand with confidence in defense of it both "in and out of season." Advancing this critical mission is only possible through the prayers and financial support of like-minded believers like you. So I'm asking you to stand with us today with a gift of any amount.

I appreciate your partnership. I hope you will be challenged and encouraged as you learn, and that you're strengthened to daily contend for the faith.

For the faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Greg Kousser'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

By Greg Koukl

Three years ago I sat on a short bench in a small stone church on the outskirts of Oxford. In a tiny graveyard outside was a flat tombstone with the name “Clive Staples Lewis” etched into the granite.

The pew my wife and I were sitting in was the same place C.S. Lewis occupied with his brother Warnie every Sunday morning for decades as they worshipped together at [Trinity Church](#).

This man, C.S. Lewis, probably more than anyone else in the 20th century, lived out the admonition of a passage I want you to think about. Here it is:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ([Jude 3](#))



Never before in my lifetime has this verse been more important for Christians to hear, consider, and heed.

Note three elements in this verse that are essential to Jude’s entreaty.

First, Jude makes reference to a specific message with specific content, the “faith once and for all delivered”—the foundation of “[our common salvation](#).” Second is the admonition to “contend earnestly” for that faith—to proclaim it, guard it, and defend it. Finally, Jude reminds us that it had been “delivered” to the saints—passed on from the disciples to the next generation in the church.

Here’s why those three elements of Jude’s admonition are critical for you and me right now. At the beginning of the 21st century we are in the cultural and theological fight of our lives. The attack is coming from many directions, but we are facing serious challenges on two broad fronts. Simply put, we have trouble in the world and trouble in the church.

Trouble in the World

Currently, the Christian worldview is facing assault on multiple fronts.

Our story starts, “In the beginning, God,” yet a host of dedicated writers—collectively known as the “[new atheists](#)”¹—have been doing their best to ensure our story never gets off the ground. There are also [attacks on the integrity of our authority base, the Bible](#),² and a myriad of assaults on the historicity of the central player in our drama—Jesus of Nazareth.

In the midst of this academic attack, there is an increasingly pervasive godlessness and a militant relativism in the culture. The 21st century began as an era of radical skepticism, especially in the area of morality and religion. As a result, the moral rulebook is being rewritten. Right has become wrong and wrong right.

In addition, there is an increasing hostility towards those who take Jesus seriously regarding the Great Commission. Jesus said He came, “To seek and to save that which was lost” ([Lk. 19:10](#)), “to give His life as a ransom for many” ([Matt. 20:28](#)), and “to call sinners to repentance” ([Lk. 5:32](#)). That was the way He described His own mission.

Yet when we proclaim this message—Jesus’ central message—we court conflict. Indeed, to be faithful to Jesus’ claim that He is the only Savior is increasingly considered an example of “spreading hate.”



For example, a number of years ago the Southern Baptists planned to evangelize Jews during a [summer outreach in Chicago](#). A consortium of religious groups in that city—including Christian denominations, amazingly—demanded that the Baptists stay home. They warned that evangelism in their city would encourage hate crimes. In fact, a Jewish group claimed it invited “theological hatred.”³

This tendency to see the Gospel as a message of hate gained momentum after 9/11. As workers still dug through the wreckage of World Trade I & II, Thomas Friedman wrote a column in the *New York Times* titled “[The Real War](#)” warning of what he termed “religious totalitarianism”:

If 9/11 was indeed the onset of World War III, we have to understand what this war is about. We’re not fighting to eradicate “terrorism.” Terrorism is just a tool. We’re fighting to defeat an ideology: religious totalitarianism. . . . *a view of the world that my faith must reign supreme and can be affirmed and held passionately only if all others are negated.* That’s bin Ladenism. But unlike Nazism, religious totalitarianism can’t be fought by armies alone. It has to be fought in schools, mosques, churches and synagogues, and can be defeated only with the help of imams, rabbis and priests.⁴ [emphasis added]

He then applauded a rabbi who “...set up his own schools in Israel to compete with fundamentalist Jews, Muslims, and Christians, who used their schools to preach exclusivist religious visions.”⁵

ANY CHURCH COMMITTED TO FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION IS DIRECTLY IN THE CROSSHAIRS OF THE CULTURE WARS.

This same theme keeps popping up everywhere I go: We are the enemy. Last fall on the radio I heard Chris Matthews of “Hardball” fame say the people in America most like the Taliban were the Evangelical Christians.

This puts any church committed to fulfilling the Great Commission directly in the crosshairs of the culture wars.

Trouble in the Church

There’s not only trouble in the world—trouble from the outside—but there is serious trouble on the inside. Sadly, in spite of the plethora of materials available to believers, there is still a profound biblical illiteracy in Christian circles.



In 2005, researchers Christian Smith and Melinda Denton conducted a “National Study of Youth and Religion” and recorded their finding in their book, *Soul Searching: [The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers](#)*. Here’s what they discovered.

First, they learned there is no generation gap with young people when it comes to religion. Teens were not “spiritual seekers,” but rather were at home in church circles with 75% identifying with some form of Christianity.

The second thing they discovered, however, was not comforting. When these same committed Christian teenagers were interviewed one-on-one about the specifics of their convictions, almost none from any religious background could articulate the most basic beliefs of the faith.

Smith and Denton summed up their theology as “moralistic, therapeutic deism.” To these teens, religion was about being nice and enjoying a relationship with a God who mostly wanted them to be happy and feel good about themselves—which was, as it turned out, the very same religious view of their parents.

But the picture gets worse.

In September of 2009, I was a guest at [an interfaith dialog in Los Angeles](#) with Roman Catholic priest Gregory Coiro before a large Jewish audience on Rosh Hashanah.

When asked why Jesus was the only way of salvation, I offered a lucid account of the Gospel. Father Coiro then affirmed the importance of Jesus, but assured the audience that their honest and sincere pursuit of Judaism counted as saving faith in God’s eyes. These Jews were safe, beneficiaries of the cross even though they rejected Jesus.



Surprisingly, large numbers of Protestants agree. God doesn't really care what faith you follow since they all teach basically the same life lessons. In the midst of this theological confusion, Christians of all stripes are falling away from the truth en masse, becoming [casualties of a culture that celebrates pluralism](#).

CHRISTIANS OF ALL STRIPES ARE FALLING AWAY...BECOMING CASUALTIES OF A CULTURE THAT CELEBRATES PLURALISM.

With trouble in the world and trouble in the church, what do we do to fulfill Jude's exhortation? Paul's last letter gives the answer.

Paul's Swan Song

If you visit Rome and take the right tour, you will be shown an ancient cistern northwest of the city. Originally meant to hold water, it later served as a dungeon. [Mamertine Prison](#) is a circular, low-ceilinged, underground room of rock where prisoners were lowered in on a rope.

I've seen pictures of the dank, dismal interior. Against one wall there is a low, protruding rock shelf of sorts. It's the only flat place in the cell, the only surface someone could write on. This is likely the very spot—this small ledge of rock—where the apostle Paul wrote his spiritual last will and testament. We know it as 2 Timothy.



Of all the New Testament books, 2 Timothy is my favorite. It was Paul's final message, his swan song, the last thing he ever wrote. It is clear, uncomplicated, and to the point, speaking forcefully and practically to the challenges of the 21st century.

2 Timothy gives the answer to our question about guarding the Gospel, because that is the book's theme, found explicitly in [1:14](#): "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." Paul's message is absolutely vital to each one of us today because he tells us exactly what it looks like in any century to contend earnestly for the faith.

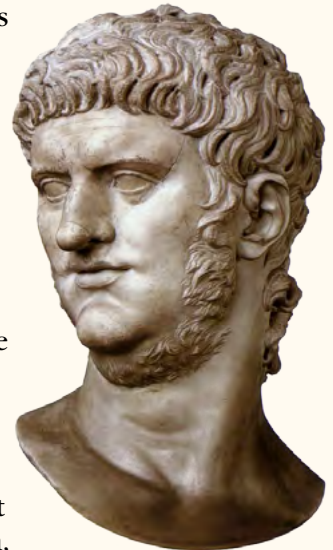
You see, the early church was also facing trouble on two fronts.

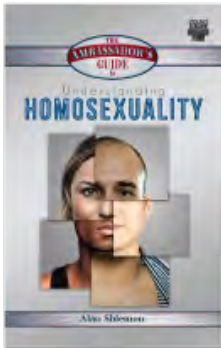
There was trouble for Christians in the world. They were under tremendous attack in that culture. In A.D. 64, a fire broke out in Rome that raged for six days and seven nights, totally destroying a great part of the city. Emperor Nero falsely charged the Christians and punished them with "the most exquisite tortures," as the historian, [Tacitus, records in his Annals](#):

They were covered with the hides of wild beasts and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and, when day declined, burned to serve for nocturnal lights. Nero offered his own gardens for that spectacle.⁶

In the midst of this extreme physical persecution of the church, Paul warned of a pervasive godlessness coming in the culture:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. ([2 Tim. 3:1-4](#))





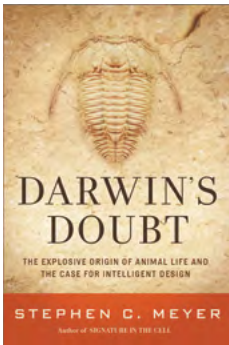
The Ambassador's Guide to Understanding Homosexuality

Alan Shlemon, 64 pages (BK379) \$6.95 *NEW*

Until the last few decades, homosexuality was never celebrated as natural, moral, or healthy. But times have changed. Now Christians find themselves in a fight they did not choose—facing overwhelming odds and fierce opposition—with a culture demanding we abandon the Bible on homosexuality and instead “celebrate diversity.”

Unfortunately, as with most controversial issues, misunderstanding abounds on this topic. And as good ambassadors, we want to provide solid, reliable information. But we also want to give insight, too—an awareness of how to maneuver with tactical wisdom and with grace.

Homosexuality is among the most emotionally-charged—and hotly debated—topics you will encounter. The Ambassador's Guide to Understanding Homosexuality will equip you to be both thoughtful and considerate as a Christian ambassador in the face of opposing views



Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design

Stephen C. Meyer, 498 pages (BK379) \$24.95 *NEW*

When Charles Darwin finished *The Origin of Species*, he thought that he had explained every clue, but one. Though his theory could explain many facts, Darwin knew that there was a significant event in the history of life that his theory did not explain. During this event, the “Cambrian explosion,” many animals suddenly appeared in the fossil record without apparent ancestors in earlier layers of rock.

In *Darwin's Doubt*, Stephen C. Meyer tells the story of the mystery surrounding this explosion of animal life—a mystery that has intensified, not only because the expected ancestors of these animals have not been found, but because scientists have learned more about what it takes to construct an animal. During the last half century, biologists have come to appreciate the central importance of biological information—stored in DNA and elsewhere in cells—to building animal forms.

Expanding on the compelling case he presented in his last book, *Signature in the Cell*, Meyer argues that the origin of this information, as well as other mysterious features of the Cambrian event, are best explained by intelligent design, rather than purely undirected evolutionary processes.



Weathering the Storms: Staying on Course in the Christian Life

Gregory Kouss,

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Challenges, trials, and turbulence are a normal part of the Christian experience. It is part of being human and living in this fallen world. In order to continue to make a difference in this world for Christ, it is important to stay on the right path during these difficult times and to be aware of the faulty teachings in our midst when we are weak.

Greg recounts some tough moments he has faced in his life as a follower of Christ and encourages you to weather storms that will inevitably blow your way. This is an encouraging, yet vigorous, set of teaching.

Included in this set:

Clarifying Confused Christianity, How to Keep from Becoming Spiritually Weird (2 CDs), No Pixie Dust: Truths of Spiritual Growth





Timothy would also be facing trouble in the church:

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

[\(2 Tim. 4:3-4\)](#)

Paul's Simple Solution

What is Paul's answer to Timothy's challenge, which is the same challenge we face? It's refreshingly simple and the heart of it can be captured in three words: "You, however, continue..." (3:14).

Paul does not tell Timothy to [look forward to any new movements of the Spirit](#), any fresh word from God, or any insider's spiritual fad. He points not to the future, but rather to the past. "Timothy, don't look forward," he says. "Look backward." Here is the full citation, part of which I'm sure is familiar to you:

You, however, *continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of*, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the *sacred writings* which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

Then Paul amps it up another notch. At the beginning of chapter four he challenges Timothy with the most sober language he can muster:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing

and His Kingdom: *Preach the Word*. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. Be sober in all things. Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (4:1-2, 5)

Simply put, Paul tells Timothy to guard the Gospel by *continuing* in the truth *already* revealed. In other words, when all else fails, read—and follow—the directions.

But that is not enough.

Passing the Baton

I want you to notice something about 2 Timothy. Paul wrote his final letter to a person, not a group.

He passed the baton of the Gospel to a faithful individual, a young man named Timothy, and then told him to do the same: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Note the four generations in this passage: Paul, Timothy, faithful disciples, and "others"—the baton being handed down from one individual person to the next. Paul knew it would not be enough for any Christian to *continue* in the truth. It also needed to be *handed down*. Indeed, guarding the Gospel is not complete until it has been passed on effectively.

A Piece of My Mind

Listen to Greg talk about this edition of *Solid Ground*.

[or subscribe for later](#)



When I became a follower of Christ at UCLA in 1973, I was a loud, opinionated, obnoxious, long-haired hippie. Now, 39 years later, I am no longer a long-haired hippie. I'm also not nearly as obnoxious as I used to be. I owe that transformation largely to one man: [Craig Englert](#).

For two years—at great risk to life and limb—Craig took me under his wing. I've had other mentors since then, but I know with certainty that without Craig I would not be in the position I'm in today.

Craig Englert and others who followed him in my life were not content to guard the truth. They needed to entrust it to others—even me, as unlikely as it seemed at the time—in order for the Gospel to go forward. They passed the baton to me, as Paul had done with Timothy. Indeed, they were passing the *same baton* Paul passed to Timothy that was then passed down for two thousand years—from one, to another, to another until it was mine to carry.

...WE ACCUMULATE FOR OURSELVES TEACHERS IN ACCORDANCE TO OUR OWN DESIRES, AND TURN AWAY OUR EARS FROM THE TRUTH, AND TURN ASIDE TO MYTHS.

In the summer Olympics of 2008 in Beijing, American runners suffered a humiliating defeat in the 4 X 100 relays. In the anchor leg, Darvis Patton handed the baton to Tyson Gay, but Gay never got it. In the middle of the handoff, they dropped the baton.

Tyson Gay was our best sprinter. We had the fastest team. It didn't matter. They dropped the baton, so we lost the race. In fact, we never even finished that race.

Paul told Timothy, "If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules" (2:5). Timothy, Paul said, you cannot drop the baton.

And we cannot drop the baton, either. If we do, we lose.

No Surprises

So how do we guard the Gospel? Two ways. First, we continue in the things already delivered to us. Second, we pass the baton. Those are the rules.

ENTRUST THESE TO FAITHFUL MEN WHO WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO



If we disregard Paul's solution, we should not be surprised when we remain children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming ([Eph. 4:14](#)).

If we don't guard the Gospel, we should not be surprised when we are taken captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ ([Col. 2:8](#)).

If we don't pass the baton, we should not be surprised when we will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have our ears tickled, we accumulate for ourselves teachers in accordance to our own desires, and turn away our ears from the truth, and turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

I asked Father Coiro at that meeting on Rosh Hashanah if there were any New Testament evidence for the assurances he offered our Jewish audience. He cited Jesus' comment, "For he who is not against us is for us" ([Mk. 9:40](#)). The Jews in our company, he pointed out, were not against Jesus. They must then, by default, be for Him, the priest reasoned.



Yet Jesus also said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters” ([Matt. 12:30](#)). So what do we make of this apparent contradiction in Jesus’ teaching? Check the context. When we do, we discover that Jesus was referring to entirely different groups.

In the first case, Jesus was speaking of those who had been performing miracles in His name, but were not part of His core group of disciples—Christians, in other words, not unbelieving Jews. In the second case, Jesus was speaking to Jews who had rejected his Messianic claim.

The question for us, then, is, *What kind of group were Father Coiro and I talking to at our event?* People who were working miracles in the name of Jesus, or people who were rejecting Jesus’ messianic claim? Father Coiro had applied the wrong passage to our Jewish listeners.

When Jesus was speaking to a group like we had been that day, He said, “Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” ([Jn. 8:24](#)). When Peter was speaking to a group like we had been that day, he said, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” ([Acts 4:12](#)). When Paul was writing about a group like we had been speaking to that day he wrote:

I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. ([Rom. 10:2-4](#))

Finishing the Race

The key to contending for the faith—to surviving the spiritual onslaught of the 21st century—is to guard the Gospel. The key to that is found in two simple phrases. One, “Continue in the things you have learned.” Back to the basics. Back to the Word as it has been entrusted to us. And two, entrust it to faithful disciples who will be able to teach others also.

That’s it. Guard the Gospel by continuing in the truth already revealed, then pass the baton. Proclaim the

truth faithfully, guard it diligently, and pass it on carefully. That is how we contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. That is how we guard the Gospel Paul entrusted to Timothy, now entrusted to us.

And not until we do that can we say what Paul said at the end of his magnificent letter: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”⁷

Endnotes

1. Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great—How Religion Poisons Everything*; Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*; Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*; and Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*.
2. E.g., authors like Bart Ehrman with his best seller, *Misquoting Jesus*.
3. Jeffery L. Sheler, “Unwelcome Prayers,” U.S. News & World Report, 9/20/99.
4. Thomas Friedman, “The Real War,” New York Times, November, 27, 2001.
5. Ibid.
6. Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 44.
7. 2 Tim. 4:6.

Putting This Solid Ground into Action

- Remember to “continue in the things you have learned.” Hold fast to the Word as it has been entrusted to us. Proclaim the truth faithfully, and guard it diligently.
- Keep in mind that standing for truth puts you in the crosshairs of the culture wars.
- Don’t forget to pass the baton. Carefully entrust the message of the Gospel to faithful disciples who will be able to teach others.

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We've only just begun and there is much more we want to share with you and others.

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Greg Koukl

September

6-7 Solid Ground Tactics Conference, Milwaukee, WI [Contact](#)

14-15 SALT Conference, First Baptist Church, Monroe, LA [Contact](#)

18 European Leadership Forum webinar 10 a.m. Topic: Credo [Contact](#)

20-21 Living Oaks Community Church, Newbury Park, CA Friday 6:30 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

27-29 Woodland Hills Church, Asheville, NC [Contact](#)

October

3 New Dawn Pregnancy Center fundraising dinner, Minoqua, WI [Contact](#)

5-6 Evangelical Free Church, Tulare, CA [Contact](#)

11-12 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Birmingham, AL [Contact](#)

20 Grace Community Church, Sandy, UT [Contact](#)

25-26 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Laguna Hills, CA [Contact](#)



Brett Kunkle

September

4 Grace Fellowship Church, Costa Mesa, CA Time: 6:30-8:30pm Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

7-8 Praise Church, Beaumont, TX Time: Saturday 10am, Sunday 10, 11:30am & 6pm Topics: "Who's Waiting for Your Kids" [Contact](#)

11, 18 Grace Fellowship Church, Costa Mesa, CA Time: 6:30-8:30pm Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

20-21 Ridge Baptist Church, Charleston, SC Topics: "Why I Am a Christian", "Is One Way the Only Way?", "Why Should I Trust the Bible?", "Doubting Your Doubts" [Contact](#)

22-24 Village Baptist Church, Fayetteville, NC Time: TBD Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

25 Grace Fellowship Church, Costa Mesa, CA Time: 6:30-8:30pm Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

29 Voyagers Bible Church, Irvine, CA Time: 10:45am-12pm Topics: "Why I Am Not an Evolutionist" [Contact](#)

October

2 Voyagers Bible Church, Irvine, CA Time: 6:45-8:15pm Topics: "Mormonism 101" [Contact](#)

10 Briarwood Christian School, Birmingham, AL Time: TBD Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

11-12 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Birmingham, AL [Contact](#)

25-26 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Laguna Hills, CA [Contact](#)



Alan Shlemon

September

8, 15 Bel Air Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, CA, Time: TBD Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

28-29 New Life Anglican Church, Petoskey, MI Topics: TBD [Contact](#)

October

11-12 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Birmingham, AL [Contact](#)

18 Oregon Right to Life, Portland, OR Time: TBD Topic: TBD [Contact](#)

25-26 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Laguna Hills, CA [Contact](#)



J. Warner Wallace

September

4 Santa Fe Christian School, Solana Beach, CA Time: 9:30am Topic: "Cold Case Christianity" [Contact](#)

8-10 Living Word Free Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD Topic: TBD [Contact](#)

15 Voyagers Bible Church, Irvine, CA Time: 10:45am Topic: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

18 Voyagers Bible Church, Irvine, CA Time: 6:45pm Topic: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

21-22 Lemont Calvary Church, Lemont, IL Topic: "Cold Case Christianity" [Contact](#)

23-27 Ratio Christi, Wilmington, NC Topic: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

October

3 First Presbyterian Church, Kingwood, TX Time: 7pm Topic: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

4-5 Prepare the Way, Portland, OR Time: TBD Topic: TBD [Contact](#)

11-12 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Birmingham, AL [Contact](#)

13 Fullness Christian Fellowship, Vestavia, AL Time: 10am Topics: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

20 North Metro Church, Marietta, GA Time: 9:30 & 11:15am Topic: "Cold Case Reliability of the Gospels" [Contact](#)

25-26 STR reTHINK Apologetics Conference, Laguna Hills, CA [Contact](#)

To get information about inviting an STR speaker to your church, email Dawnielle@str.org for Alan, Brett or Jim, or Melinda@str.org for Greg.





Back-to-School Survival Guide

By Scott Klussendorf

Tomorrow is back-to-school day for most students, and that means getting our kids ready for classes. I'm not talking about hitting the school supplies section at Office Depot or the clothing sale at Robinson's-May. I mean preparing them intellectually to persuasively defend their Christian views on unfriendly turf.

Parents, you may want to grab pen and paper, because in a moment I'm going to give you a "Back to School Survival Guide" with four key points of knowledge your kids should know before they leave high school.

What brought this on was a conversation I had recently with a new youth pastor. He knew I had been one ten years ago and he asked a pointed question: "As a former youth pastor, if you had it to do over, what would you do differently?"

I shot back immediately, "Teach kids to think."

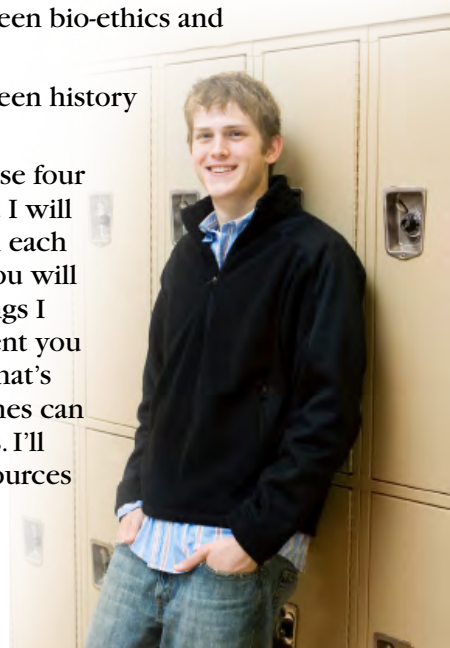
Why the emphatic response? It was not because I had a bad experience as a youth pastor, but because the teaching philosophy so prevalent at the time placed little value on the life of the mind. True, there was a healthy focus on relationships, group building, entertainment, practical tips on dating, self-esteem,

etc. But the so-called experts who trained youth pastors in the 1980s, though well-intentioned, said little about training kids to think. So, here goes. If I had it to do over again, my purpose statement as a youth pastor would be "to build young Christian thinkers for a public defense of the faith." I would concentrate my teaching on four key areas:

- The relationship between philosophy and Christian faith
- The relationship between science and Christian faith
- The relationship between bio-ethics and Christian faith
- The relationship between history and Christian faith

I'm not going to cover these four areas exhaustively today, but I will give a couple of points from each that are essential. Many of you will no doubt think of other things I have left out, and in a moment you can give me your take on what's missing and how our churches can do more to prepare our kids. I'll also suggest a couple of resources for each of the four areas.

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