***Principles of Christian Apologetics - CA-024***

**The Da Vinci Code**

I received in the mail a list of five new books that Mardel's Christian Bookstore has about The Da Vinci Code, written by Christians. One was Breaking the Da Vinci Code by Darrell Bock. He teaches at Dallas Seminary. Another one was Cracking Da Vinci's Code by James Garlow and Peter Jones. I'm really not familiar with these authors. I do have one book by Peter Jones on Gnosticism. He's somewhat of an expert on Gnosticism. Another one was The Truth behind the Da Vinci Code by Richard Abanes. I'm not familiar at all with him. But he also is attacking The Da Vinci Code from a Christian perspective. The next one is The Da Vinci Deception by Erwin Lutzer. I am familiar with Irwin Lutzer, and many of you are also. He is pastor of Moody Memorial church. He's a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary. We have given away, as a church, a couple of books by Erwin Lutzer. He is the author of How You Can be Sure That You Will Spend Eternity with God; Your Eternal Reward;" and, many more really good solid doctrinal books. Hank Hanegraaff is also a person that many of us are familiar with (The Bible Answer Man), and he has written a book on The Da Vinci Code: The Da Vinci Code: Fact or fiction? So if you want to pursue this subject in greater detail, I will make copies of this, and make them available.

**Gnosticism**

We have seen over the past couple of sessions that the The Da Vinci Code is based on Gnosticism as an underlying philosophy, and we have seen some of the weaknesses in Gnosticism. Someone asked me, "Is Gnosticism still around today as an organized religion?" And the answer is, "Yes, but it's not extensive." I understand that in southwestern Iran, there is a community that calls itself the Gnostic Christian Church. They claim that they can trace their history all the way back to New Testament days. We know, of course, that Gnosticism came into the early church. It was already in existence in New Testament days, and influenced a lot of people. In fact, some of the New Testament epistles have a strong anti-Gnostic thrust. They were written (particularly the epistles of John the apostle) to refute some of the Gnosticism that was creeping into Christianity.

Also, you remember Edgar Cayce. Edgar Cayce was a Methodist Sunday school teacher, and a Bible student who found that he had an unusual talent. He could go into a trance, and communicate with the spirit world. Edgar Cayce thought that he was communicating with good spirits. But as we know, his contact was demonic. So even though you may be a believer, you can be influenced by evil. I don't know whether Edgar Cayce was truly born again or not, but I do know that he was a religious man and claimed to be a Christian. When he was in a trance, he once asked the spirits, "Out of all the religions and denominations, which is closest to the truth." He was told by the spirits that Hinduism is the closest religion to the truth because it teaches reincarnation. This is what Edgar Cayce taught – that you have to keep coming back and coming back. You must be born again, and again, and again in order to work off all this evil karma that you've picked up. He also believed that true Christianity was taught by the Gnostics. But the power structure of the church didn't like Gnosticism, so they suppressed it. So there are two connections to Gnosticism.

I was told by a lady who used to attend Berean Church that, years previously, she had joined an Edgar Cayce study group. She was taught in that study group that very thing – that the true interpretation of the Bible was taught by the ancient Gnostics: You can't really understand the Bible unless you know how the Gnostics interpreted it. Of course, we learned in the last session that Gnosticism teaches that you can't be literal with the Bible. The Bible doesn't really mean what it says. You have to know how to understand these hidden symbols, and find the hidden allegories. So we know that whatever the Bible teaches, then Gnosticism teaches just the opposite, very subtly.

There is also a small group of people in the United States who call themselves the Gnostic Christian Church. You may remember a movie actress named Jane Russell from back in the 1940s and 1950s. Jane Russell was a pioneer in explicit sex in movies. Of course, what Jane Russell did as an actress back in the early 1950s was nowhere near what we see today (I hope we don't see it.), but what is existing in movies today. She was a pioneer to have explicit sex in movies. The unusual thing about this was Jane Russell claimed to be a Christian. I believe she's still living in Hollywood. She doesn't make movies anymore. She has been married something like 7 or 8 times. I understand that at her last wedding, a priest from the Gnostic Christian church was the one who came to her home and married her to her current husband.

So Gnosticism is alive today as an organized religion to some degree, but mostly it influences people (including Christians) by stealth, like it has in The Da Vinci Code. Gnostic ideas are smuggled into books and movies, and people learn to believe Gnosticism without even knowing what it is.

Well, this is a class (we might say) in Christian apologetics. So it's good to refer to our theme (our mandate for Christian apologetics), and to review that from time to time: 1 Peter 3:13-15. Really verse 15 is the verse we zero in on, but a text without its context is usually a pretext. So it's good to take a verse with the verses preceding and coming directly after it. 1 Peter 3:13: "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your hearts, sanctify Christ as Lord, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." We'll refer to this again later.

**Principles of Christian Apologetics**

I want to go over a few principles of Christian apologetics with you here by way of review. This is just some good, sanctified common sense that we need to apply when we are acting as Christian apologists.

**Learn to Listen**

First of all, we need to learn to listen. That's the first principle. Just listen to people. We don't really listen in our society. We Christians are just as bad as the world. We have some justification for this. Why should we sit and listen to someone who is disoriented when we know the truth? That's a good question. The answer is, first of all, you earned the right to be heard by listening. Why should they listen to you? Well, if you've listened to them, then they owe it to you. It's only common courtesy and good ethics. So we need to listen to people, no matter how weird their ideas are, and no matter if we can shoot their ideas down and refute them in a second. If you really want to surprise people, and if you really want to get their attention, just listen. The talent of listening is so uncommon in our society today, that you can really throw people off guard just by listening. Then by listening, you earned the right to be listened to.

Somebody can come up with something un-Christian and off-the-wall, and something that we know the answer to. It's just so easy to just immediately cut loose and start shooting it down. Your kid or your grandkid comes home from school and says, "You know, I have this teacher in college or in high school who says the Bible's not true; that people evolved; and, there is no God." Immediately the natural response is to interrupt and cut them off and say, "Well, we know all that's not true, don't we? So what else happened at school today?" And you've just immediately shut the student up. Do you think they're going to come to you when it's really a problem? Maybe it isn't a problem at this stage, but it must mean something or he wouldn't even have brought it up to you. So be thankful that that young person is talking to you. You know, you can have a lot worse problems than having a teenager who wants to talk. Some people would really envy your having that problem. So it's wise to listen. Ask some questions: "Oh, well, tell me about this. Where does the teacher believe things came from if God didn't create them? How does this teacher express this idea? How do you think this idea could be refuted?" If the talking doesn't continue, ask some questions, but listen. And then understand.

We want to just go right off and start refuting ideas before we even know what the ideas are. So a good plan is: don't refute an idea until you can adequately express the idea. It doesn't really make sense to try to refute something when you're not even sure what you're refuting. So listen and make sure you understand.

I'll tell you something else. Go a step beyond. You may catch yourself thinking, "How could anyone believe that?" If so, don't try to answer it. Don't try to refute it until you can say, "Yes, I see. I see how someone could believe that. I understand that without the indwelling Holy Spirit, and without all the Bible teaching I've had for the last 10 years; 20 years; or, however long you've been a believer. I can see how this idea would be very attractive and make a lot of sense. So you may find yourself thinking, "How could anyone be so dumb; so stupid; and, so ignorant as to believe something like that?" If so, don't even attempt to answer it, but make sure you understand it, and that you could explain exactly what they believe accurately, and then understand how somebody could believe that.

I heard someone say that a believing couple (Christians) had taken their child to a piano recital which was held at a church. Their child was going to be a part of the recital, and they were there with other proud parents in a church building. There were Christians and non-Christians there to hear their children recite. They overheard a conversation. It was a conversation between a man and his daughter. They were unbelievers. Apparently, it was at a Catholic church, or a Lutheran church, or an Episcopal church – somewhere where they had a lot of religious artwork around. And the daughter said, "You know, dad, these Christians are really weird. I don't understand. There are pictures all over the place of a dead guy hanging on a cross. This is really weird. I don't get it." The dad said, "It is. It is weird. Christians are really weird people. I don't get it either."

Now, remember that unbelievers don't get it. So keep that in mind when you're listening to, and when you're relating with unbelievers. They don't get it. They haven't received the enlightenment yet. You may be a very important tool for their enlightenment. So, listen, and understand what they believe. Understand how they can believe that. And remember that they don't get it yet.

There is something else we need to remember, and that is that you are who they think you are until you can prove that you're not. Who do they think you are? They think you're some weird Christian. They probably believe what the media have told them about Christians. How are Christians portrayed in the media; in movies; in TV shows; and, in newspapers? They are usually portrayed as ignorant, prejudiced fanatics. So remember that this is probably the way they see you until you can prove that that's not the way you are; that you do have something to say; and, that this is not the way Christians are. This is not fair. In this country, you're supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. But remember, this is not a court of law. People don't operate by these principles when they're not in a court of law.

Dr. Caner is a professor at Criswell Bible College in Dallas. The remarkable thing about Dr. Caner is that he was raised as a Muslim. His father was a Muslim religious leader (a cleric), and he was raised to follow in his father's footsteps. He has a long tradition behind him of Islam. They came to this country. He had been taught all of his life that to be an American meant to be a Christian. If you were an American, you were a Christian, and if you were a Christian, you were an American. And Americans were the most evil people in the world. All they wanted to do was kill Muslims, all the way back to the Crusades. He said he believed this because, during some of the bad times that the United States has gone through with Muslims, back in the 1980s with Khomeini and the hostages, he would go into a convenience store to get a drink. And because of his dress and his appearance and his accent, people would immediately spot him as a Muslim and they would say all kinds of insulting things to him. So he thought that Christianity was bad. Christians were really mean, evil, violent people who only wanted to rid the world of Muslims.

Now, how did he ever become a Christian? Did someone sit down with him and reason, and show him that Muhammad was wrong and Christianity was right; and, that the Quran was wrong, and that the Bible was correct? Well, that came later. But you know what? It came after he had become a Christian. He became a Christian because someone invited him to church. Someone said, "We're having a revival at our church, and we'd like you to come." Well, his English wasn't really good. He thought they were saying, "We want you to have a free Bible." So he thought, "Well, I've never even seen a Bible. All I've read is the Quran. It would be nice to have a free Bible. So he showed up at the revival to get his free Bible, and he heard the gospel, and he believed. But he said what made him open to the gospel was the way people treated him at the church. He said, "I've never been treated like this by fellow Muslims or by people that I thought were Christians." He said, "They treated me with dignity and respect, and even with love and acceptance. They didn't throw me out because I was a Muslim. They treated me as a welcome fellow human being." And he said, "As a result, even with my limited English, I was eager to hear what they had to say. I believed the gospel. I became a Christian."

So remember that unbelievers probably have a really bad image of Christianity. Remember that it's up to you to prove that Christians are not what they may think we are. They will believe that. You're going to be guilty of being the kind of person that they think Christians are supposed to be until you prove that we're not. One way to prove this is just to listen. No matter how bad what they say they believe sounds to you, just patiently listen, and let them get it out. Then as a result, you've earned the right for them to listen to you. And listen and understand what they're saying. Understand how they can believe, "Well, yes, if God hadn't have intervened and enlightened my mind, and I had been taught these ideas since childhood, I would believe the same thing." Understand how someone could believe that?

**Be Completely Honest**

And then, when it's your turn to talk, be completely honest. Don't use questionable techniques. Let me explain. I remember back in the 1960s, there was this paper that was going around that. Nowadays, as common as photocopy machines are, they would be making the rounds a lot more. But they did make the rounds even back in the 1960s. Nowadays it would be on the Internet. And occasionally I hear this from a believer.

They say that back during one of the space programs, the people at NASA found that there was some missing time in the universe. They went through all the computers, and a whole day was missing. In fact, it was a little over a day. So one of the guys at NASA said, "Well, you know, I remember in Sunday school class, I was taught that Joshua prayed that the sun would stand still. So it stood still for about a day." They traced it all the way back. And guess what? That missing 24 hours happened just at the time that the Israelites were having the battle with the Amalekites." However, there were still a few more hours missing. So that didn't explain it.

Someone else said, "Well, I remember, you know, King Hezekiah in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah prayed for him and said, 'God said you're going to live. God said he's going to heal you.' And Hezekiah said, 'Well, how do I know you're not just making this up?' And Isaiah said, 'I'll give you a sign.' He said, 'The sundial will go back 10 steps.' So modern science has investigated, and they found that these 10 steps fill in for the missing hours. It was not only 24 hours, but a few more hours. So there you have it: absolute proof that the Bible is totally accurate."

Now, wouldn't this be great if we could show this, and if we could demonstrate this to someone scientifically. I mean if we could get the computer printout and show, "Here is exactly so many hours; so many minutes; and, so many seconds that are missing. Here's the scriptural proof, and here's archaeology to back this up." That would be great. I mean, every seminary and every Bible college in the world would be teaching this. Every Sunday school book would have this in it, because this would be irrefutable scientific proof that the Bible is the truth.

Now, if something seems too good to be true, it usually is. I did some research on this. My first question was, "What if this is true, and I read this – I came across this recently in a legitimate book on Christian apologetics, and the author just alluded to it?" My first question was, "If this is true, it looks like he would have had a whole chapter on this, rather than just a side allusion to it. So I did some research, and I found the person in modern days who resurrected this. It goes back about 150 years, but the person who resurrected it was Jimmy Swaggart. Now, Jimmy Swaggart used it in a sermon, and some skeptics ask him, "Can you document this?" They were not Christians. They said, "If you can prove that this is really the truth, we're going to take a closer look at Christianity. But we don't believe there's a word of truth in it. You've made the statement. The burden of proof is on you." He said, "Well, all you've got to do is just check with NASA. I mean, you know, they were there, and they're the ones who figured it out on their computer." The people said, "Well, no, we want to know, where did you get this information?"

So Jimmy Swaggart, like most big time preachers (he's not really in the big leagues like he was back then), doesn't write his own sermons. He doesn't do his own research. He has a staff of people who research these things. So they finally found one guy who said, "Yes, I remember reading that in a book. Let me see. Where was that?" So he came up with the author of the book who claimed as one of his credentials that he had worked for NASA. So when they tracked this author down, he said, "Well, he didn't actually work for NASA back in the 1960s, but he worked for a company that made parts that they sold to NASA. So he knew that this was true because he had talked to people who had worked at the National Space Agency. So they actually did talk to some people who had worked for NASA back in the 1960s. Everyone said, "No, I've never heard of that before."

First of all, we don't have any computer (and certainly not back in the 1960s) that keeps a record of time: days; weeks; and, months. We don't have any of these big time calendars that go back to the dawn of creation. Nobody has ever had those. When archaeologists date things, they do a lot of guesswork. That is because back in the B.C. time frame, people didn't say, "Let's see now. It's going to be 727 years before Jesus Christ is born. So that would mean that I date this letter January 4th, 720 B.C.," because they had no idea. Some of the Hebrew people knew that the Messiah was coming, but they didn't know when. So they would date things like, "In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar," or whoever the king was – or, "Three years after the great plague," or the great earthquake – something significant that everyone knew about. That's how they would date time. So there has never been a master calendar such that you can check things out back to ancient times. There just never has been. NASA doesn't have one. NASA never did have one. So where did this come from?

Well, my research led me to a book that was written back in the 1880s by a man who had some impressive credentials. He was a professor at one of the Ivy League colleges, and also a retired military officer. So he had some strong credentials. But no matter how brilliant a person is, we all have some blind spots. This man had fallen into some doctrinal deviation. He was into British Israelite-ism. That's the belief that the English speaking people of the world (the people of Britain and the United States – the Anglo-Saxons) are some of the lost tribes of Israel. When I say "lost tribes," there's really no such thing as the "lost tribes." The people of Israel who didn't survive the captivity just intermarried with other people. So they were not lost. They just kind of disappeared. We would say today that they were assimilated. But this myth keeps coming up that somehow the people emigrated from Israel after they were taken captive by the Assyrians or the Babylonians, depending on whether they were the northern kingdom or southern kingdom. Somehow they emigrated to Britain or to the United States. As you know, the Mormons believe that the North American Indians are actually Israelites.

But anyway, this man had fallen into Anglo Israelite-ism, and he had also taken up some other strange ideas. He wrote a book saying that he could trace every day of history back to creation. Now, here's the interesting thing. His presupposition was that if you start at creation and work your way up, you find the missing day in the day of Joshua. Then for the missing hours, we have to start with modern times (which back then was in the 1800s) and work your way back, and you end up at Hezekiah's time. So I actually found this book at Dallas Theological Seminary. I checked it out, and had to come to the conclusion that to believe this, you had to accept this man's presuppositions, which were not valid to begin with. Then once we accepted an invalid presupposition, then you can talk yourself into believing anything. Anybody can prove anything as long as you accept their presuppositions. But the point is that if this had been true, every Bible student in the world would be rubbing it in the face of the world, showing people that the Bible is absolutely true.

As we know, over the past few months, as we've looked at Christian apologetics, we know there are many convincing proofs that the Bible is the Word of God. But this missing day and these missing hours are not one of them. There are other legends. Let's be very careful to use only things that are verifiable. Let's be very honest and use only the truth.

Another aspect of this is that when we're talking to people, telling them the gospel, let's be careful not to leave the impression that, "If you just become a Christian (if you just accept Christ as Savior), all of your problems are solved. You'll never have another worry." We know better than that. Let's look at the apostle Paul. He had everything going his way until he became a Christian. Then he experienced being in jail; being beaten; being trespassed against and violated in many ways; shipwrecked; and, finally execution. But do you know what? The apostle Paul wouldn't have traded places with anybody. He was in God's plan for his life. He was in God's will, even though it might have meant hardship.

Of course, we have to deal with problems in our day: financial problems; problems in marriage; or, any other kind of problem. We have such a tendency to say, "Brother, what you need is just to become a Christian. Jesus will handle all of these for you." *The purpose of Christianity is not to give people a comfortable living.* Now, it's true that once you become a Christian, you can be content in the face of adversities, and the biggest problem in your life is solved. So you have a foundation to avoid a lot of problems that unbelievers have. If you're a believer, and you're living in fellowship, you're probably not going to have to spend a lot of time down at the courthouse; the jail house; and, so on. If you operate your life on biblical principles, you can avoid a lot of other problems. But don't worry. The forces of evil are going to see to it that there is always adversity. God allows this to build our character.

So let's be honest with people. No, Christianity is not a panacea to make life easy for you. Christianity is a life preserver. It's like if you're on a plane, and the flight attendant comes out and says, "Folks, I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is we're going to crash. The good news is we're crashing in the ocean, and I have a life preserver for everyone." So she starts making the life preservers available. People look at them and say, "I'm not going to put one of those things on. I can't enjoy my flight. I can't lean back in my seat. It gets in the way of the earphones. There's no way I'm not going to put one of those on." Other people say, "Well, I want one. Mark me down for one of those. I'm going to put it on." That's what the gospel is. It gets us out of the penalty of the wrath of God. If you have a happy, prosperous life after you became a Christian, and nothing ever goes wrong in your life, then good. If you have a life full of adversity, and hardship, and end up having to die because you're a believer, then so be it. You're going to the same place. You are not under the wrath of God. You're in God's family. That's what the gospel does. We need to be honest with people about this, and not tell them that Christianity is just what you need to give you a life of happiness and fulfillment in every way on this earth.

Do you know what two really big-sellers have been according to The New York Times review of books in the past few years? The Prayer of Jabez and The Purpose Driven Life. These are not according to Christian book sales. They're the books you buy at Barnes and Noble, or WalMart, or wherever they sell books. They have been selling The Prayer of Jabez and The Purpose Driven Life. For many weeks, each of those was the number one best seller. I'm happy about that. I'm happy that people are reading them. But it also tells me that people are looking, but they're looking for the wrong things: The Prayer of Jabez. I feel like most people who read that are looking to increase their success and prosperity in the world. They say, "Look, I want to be successful and prosperous, and I'll do whatever I have to do. I'll go to church; I'll pray; and, I'll read the Bible if it'll bring me happiness and success and prosperity. You know, I need a purpose for my life. If I can find this by going to church, I'll even do that. I want my life to make sense and I want to be happy." So I think people many times miss the true gospel message because they're looking for something else.

**Focus on the Main Issues**

This brings us to the third point, and that is that when you're doing Christian apologetics, focus on the true issues – on the main issues. The person you're talking to (or the persons) will try to get you off on every rabbit trail. This is one of Satan's devices. When you start getting close to the gospel, just notice how many other side issues come up. Some of the side issues may be very important and very legitimate, but try to get back to the gospel. Creation and evolution are important. They are important. But do you know what? It doesn't affect someone's eternal destiny. If they can get you off of the gospel, and get you talking about creation and evolution, then that's OK with the demonic world. In the eyes of the demonic world, as long as you're not bringing the gospel to them, and as long as you're not bringing them back to the main focus, whatever it is, it's OK, just to get you off on a rabbit trail.

Do you remember O.J. Simpson's trial a few years ago? They were really getting down to the issue of guilt or innocence. Someone said, "Well, O.J. Simpson is a black man, and the Los Angeles Police Department never has liked black people." So the following weeks were devoted to the Los Angeles Police Department, proving that they didn't have anything against black people. The lawyers were able to shift from the question of O.J. Simpson's guilt or innocence, and put the Los Angeles Police Department on trial as to whether they were prejudiced against minorities or not. The result was that, evidence aside, O.J. Simpson was proved to be innocent. So we might want to say, "Well, for the sake of argument, just suppose that evolution is true. Just suppose that theistic evolution is true – just for the sake of argument, let's just assume that's true. But it still doesn't get you off the hook. People are still sinners. Man is still a sinner. What are you going to do with the person of Jesus Christ?"

So you may want to say, "Well, for the sake of argument, just assume that is true. But let's get back to the main focus. Let's get to the issue. And the issue is very personal. Always try to keep it personal. People always want to keep it theoretical, vague, and, intellectual. You should always keep bringing it back to the personal level, because that's what it is. Ultimately, it's a personal relationship between persons, and between the individual believer and God, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I love a particular true story: A seminary student was once asked to go provide the preaching services at a country church. The Sunday that he went, he met a man who was retired, and for many years, he had been one of the leaders of the church. He was a very dedicated, mature Christian. So the seminary student was visiting with him and he said, "Tell me about how you became a Christian." He said that years ago, he had been a mail carrier in Dallas, and he was assigned a route in East Dallas near Dallas Theological Seminary. He found that there was a bench in the shade, and it was a good place to eat his lunch. So he would sit and have his lunch and it just happened, during the time that he would take his lunch break, that the seminary choir (which was all men back man, in the 1940) would be singing. He would enjoy listening to those strong voices singing while he would have his lunch in the shade.

One day, this gentleman came over to him and said, "Hi. May I join you? It's kind of hot today, isn't it? So you have found a cool place. My name is Lewis Sperry Chafer. I work in this building over there." He struck up a conversation with him, and they visited for a while, and Dr. Chafer sensed that this man was not a believer. And so he said, "Hey, I'd love to introduce you to someone. Would you like to meet a friend of mine?" And the mail carrier said, "Yes, I certainly would." So Lewis Sperry Chafer introduced him to the Lord Jesus Christ. He pulled out his New Testament and led him to the Lord. He did it not through arguing; not through debating; and, not through convincing him of the rationality of Christianity, although sometimes these things may be important. But he did it through introducing one person to another. So that's a good principle to remember. Keep it on a personal level.

Let me go through something with you real quickly. In John 4:2, the greatest of Christian apologists, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave us a great example of how Jesus kept someone on track, and didn't let side issues distract Him: "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water." Now, first of all, Jesus broke through several barriers, including the barrier of gender. Jewish men didn't even talk to Jewish women unless it was a wife or mother. They just didn't do that, especially not in public. So He broke through the barrier of gender.

And Jewish people kept away from Samaritans. And if they ever did see a Samaritan, they didn't talk to them. About the worst thing you could do was to talk to a Samaritan. In the first place, they were a different race. The Samaritans, as you know, were the descendants of Jewish people who had married Assyrians and other Middle Eastern people, so they weren't even Jews. So He broke through the racial barrier.

Then there was a religious barrier. The Samaritans claimed to believe in the one true God, but they also worshiped the idols that their Assyrian ancestors had told them to worship. So, yes, they worshipped the God of the Jews, but they also added some other gods, too. So they were pagans. The Jewish people just didn't have anything to do with gentile pagans. So He broke through the barriers of race, gender and religion.

And he said, "Give me a drink." He asked her for a favor, didn't he? Boy, that's really something to ask someone that you're not even supposed to be talking to, to do a favor for you. "For His disciples had gone into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, would ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria,' for Jews had no dealings with Samaritans." So she's trying to get him into a discussion about race: "Why is it you're a Jew, and I'm a Samaritan, and you actually had the nerve to talk to me? Explain that."

Notice Jesus' answer in verse 10: "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that's saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." He could have given her a long lecture about how all people are equal, and He doesn't believe in all this stuff about prejudice and all that, but He got right down to what the real issue is. He said, "If you only knew who I am, you'd be asking me for some water." He kept it personal.

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob? He gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." So she's trying to get him off again. She probably doesn't know what she's doing, but she's trying to keep it all theoretical; all vague; and, non-personal: "Well, what is this living water, and how are you going to get it? You don't even have a bucket. You know, Jacob was our ancestor." She is throwing herself into the conversation, saying that, at least, she's part Jewish. She probably thought that would get a good discussion going with Him.

But then Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again." Notice that He brings it right back. What is the issue? The issue is living water – salvation. How do you get salvation? From Him. It all depends on who and what He is. So He leads her to that, and He says, "Go call your husband." She said, "I have no husband." Then He really makes it personal. She falls under conviction of her sins. She says, "I see that you are a prophet," but she still doesn't give up. Verse 20: "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain. But you Jews say that Jerusalem is a place to worship." Well, notice how Jesus handled this. She wanted to get Him into a big discussion about: "Who's correct, anyway – the Samaritans or the Jews? Do you have to go worship in Jerusalem, or can you worship on this temple?"

And Jesus just kind of touches on the fact that the Jews have the right place, but He doesn't dwell on it. He says, "The day is coming when people will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." So the woman tries to get him off again: "Well, that's OK. When the Messiah comes, we'll all know what the truth is, because he'll lead us to the truth." This is what Jesus wanted to hear: "When the Messiah comes." She was probably thinking that He would get off into some speculation about when the Messiah would come and how they would recognize the Messiah. But He said in verse 26, "I, who speak to you, am He." And He led her to turn life, and stayed several days with the Samaritans, and a revival broke out.

So people are always going to try to get you off on a rabbit trail. Just bring their focus right back, no matter how many questions they bring up. Believe me, when you answer one question, they'll bring up another. When you answer another, they'll bring up another. Notice our text in 1 Peter 3:15: It doesn't say, "Be ready to give anybody an answer about anything. Always be ready to correlate Scripture with the questions people are asking." You're not obligated to do that.

Let me give you an example. You know now that archaeologists used to believe that there was no such people as the Hittites. I say "archaeologists" – there were believing archaeologists who believed the Bible, but there were many who said, "There is no proof that there has ever been a people called the Hittites." So the Hittites were just a myth that the Bible writers wrote about. You can read this yourself if you find an old edition of Britannica Encyclopedia, and look up Hittites. But then in the early 1920s, archaeologists discovered a vast Hittite empire in the Middle East. So they had to rewrite their encyclopedias. So you can tell people that. Somebody might say, "Well, just look at the Hittites. The Bible talks about Hittites. There were no such people as the Hittites." You can set them straight because you have that information.

Now, what did Christians back in the early part of the century (100 years ago) do when people threw that at them? There was no proof that there had ever been a Hittite race. So Christians would just have to say, "I don't know. I can't explain that. The Bible talks about Hittites, so I believe they were there. And I believe that someday probably they will find the archaeological evidence, but I just can't explain it now. I can't prove to you that there were Hittites. This is a matter of faith.

You're learning to answer a lot of questions, but no matter how many questions you answer, they have more questions. But do you know what? This is basically for people who are Christians. The questions that we learn to answer strengthen our faith. We say, "Yes, there are answers to these questions, and we may not know all of them, but we know a few." The unbelieving world will sometimes ask you a question that you can answer. You should praise the Lord when that happens.

Sometimes you just have to say, "I don't know. That's an interesting question. I'm sure there's an answer for it somewhere. But let me steer you to the real issue. The issue is not whether Hittites existed or not. The issue is what do you believe about Jesus Christ?" The unsaved world is in a stupor. People don't want to face the fact that they're going to die, and they're not ready to die, because they don't know what lies beyond. They have a strong fear that there really is a God who is absolutely holy and righteous. And they're going to have to answer to Him, and they don't even want to think about it. So they're in a stupor. They use drugs and entertainment and everything else to keep them from facing that. As a Christian evangelist and apologist, it's our job to keep bringing them to that truth, and to keep confronting them with it.

In John 1:40: "One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah,' and he brought him to Jesus." He probably didn't go through all the reasons that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah because he probably didn't know them yet. He didn't know this until later, after Jesus had been crucified, and raised from the dead, and came back and spent 40 days with the apostles. He brought his brother, and gave him a personal introduction to Jesus.

In John 14:6, when Jesus called people to follow them, He didn't say, "Come with me and I will give you answers to all the questions that you're asking. Come to me and I will give you a consistent world view in which everything will fit." This may come, but Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." His usual invitation to people was, "Come and follow Me." That's what we need to do. We need to invite people to say, "Yes" to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you a good way that you might want to handle some of these attempts to get you unfocused, and to divert attention away from the gospel. Maybe they'll ask you a question or raise an objection. You might say, "If I answer this for you, will you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior?" And see what the answer is. If they say, "Yes, that's the one thing that I need to know the answer to before I can believe in Christ as Savior," then you may know the answer, or you can find the answer. But don't expect that to happen. Usually they'll say, "Well, no, this is just one of the things I've been wondering about. The point I'm making is that you don't have all the answers, and you could study Christian apologetics for the next 40 years and you still wouldn't have all the answers. God doesn't require you to have all the answers. He commands you to be willing to give an answer for what? For the hope that is in you – a reason for the hope that is in you, and to do it with meekness; with fear; and, with deep respect – to treat people with dignity and respect.

And remember that Christianity doesn't rise or fall with your ability as a Christian apologist. Some people are very gifted in that area, and other people are not. Other people can only say, "I can't give you all the archeological, scientific, historical proof. But I can say with the man who was born blind, 'I once was blind, but now I see.'" You can tell them that you have a personal relationship with the God of the universe, because of who and what His Son was and is. And they can have that personal relationship also.

Then the last point I want to bring up to you here is that when you're dealing with unbelievers, you're going to have these obstacles of their world view. It may be a religion they've been brought up in. It may be Roman Catholicism, or Islam, or some other religion. Or it may be a world view as an agnostic or something else. And you've got a choice. When you come to that world view, you can either destroy it; you can go right through it; or, you can go around it. The normal response is to destroy it. You think, "Oh boy, this person is a Muslim. I know enough that I know that Islam is a fraud. The Quran is not true. Muhammad was not a true prophet." And you just can't wait to destroy it. You know what? A lot of times you just turn people off, and you make an enemy for the gospel.

Whatever God the Holy Spirit leads you to do is right. I can't tell you what is always the right way to go about it. There may be a time when you just need to blow the Quran off the map. But normally (generally), it's best to go around it. You're dealing with the Muslim, and he says, "Well, OK, what about it? Was Muhammad a true prophet of God or not?" The temptation is just to say all the bad things you know about Muhammad that are the truth, but usually it's best to go around it, because that's not the issue. It's usually best to say, "Well, let's talk about Muhammad another time. Right now, let's talk about Jesus Christ. If you can get the person to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, then that's what the issue is. That's the focus – their relationship with God through Jesus.

Now, how are they ever going to know anything about Jesus? Through the Bible. One thing kept coming up at the Gideon's convention the last couple of days, and that is that if you can just get people in the Word, you don't need to do anything else. God the Holy Spirit takes care of everything. You just make the Bible available, and encourage people to get into the Word. That's how they're going to learn about Jesus – through the Word of God. Do you know somebody who has a problem with the Bible? Do you know what you need to encourage them to do? Read the Bible. Read the Bible with an open mind. Get into the Word of God.

Leon Adkins, 2003

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