

“Is Your Church Ready?” by Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, Chapter 6: “Creating an Apologetic Climate in the Home” by Judy Salisbury, Copyright © 2003. Zondervan.

“Creating an Apologetic Climate in the Home” By Judy Salisbury

WHAT'S A PASTOR OR CHURCH LEADER TO THINKETH?

Our postmodern culture has provided us with the greatest opportunity to teach apologetics to our children. Just as it was a small child who recognized that the emperor had no clothes, children will, more than anyone, recognize that moral relativism is stark naked! Listen to children on a playground for five minutes, and what do you hear? That's not fair." No doubt about it, before their consciences have been seared by the culture, children recognize that there is objective truth and a moral law. The *reductio ad absurdum* (reducing to the absurd) approach works great with small children because they immediately spot the contradictions of a worldview that tells them, "Truthfully, there is no truth!"

Many people simply don't know how to spot an opposing worldview, because on the surface it sounds so good. Consider some of the mass "inspirational" e-mails that seem to find their way into our inboxes. If there's flowery language and the word God in it, people (even professing Christians) think it must be good! I sometimes refer to these emailed items in my talks. When I analyze the content point by point, the audience picks up the errors immediately. An important question to ask small children regarding the postmodern worldview is, "Does that make sense?" Children often intuitively know it doesn't.

Here are several suggestions you can use to train the parents in your church to teach apologetics to children:

- Add quality resources to your book-lending library. Perhaps your congregation will commit to purchasing or donating a book on apologetics from a list you can provide. Take advantage of the wealth of apologetic resources available to the Christian community." One of my favorite children's books, which I highly recommend to parents everywhere (and it's useful for Sunday school classes as well), is Dottie and Josh McDowell's *The Topsy-Turvy Kingdom*. This delightful, beautifully illustrated book provides a wonderful springboard for discussion with small children.
- Enhance your media-lending library with lectures by popular apologists and especially debates. While doing housework, making dinner, or commuting to work, parents have an opportunity to equip themselves by listening to tapes or CDs-and guess who will be listening along with them? These days, of course, many families live "over the river and through the woods," and spend hours in their cars each week carpooling children to and fro. When I'm driving with my daughter, I'll often play an audiotape-sometimes stopping the tape to talk about what we've heard. One of our favorites is a debate between the late Dr. Walter Martin and Dr. Dale Miller. I love to listen to Dr. Martin's lectures because I can feel his passion. He had a great sense of humor, spoke on a wide variety of topics, and had the incredible ability to break down heady concepts and put them into plain language. My daughter now asks me to play particular lectures of certain apologists or Bible teachers. *The Case for Christ* on audiotape is one of her top ten favorites. While she

may not understand everything she hears, seeds are being planted, and each time she grasps a little more.

- Remind the parents in your church that not only are our children watching our reaction to the cult member on our doorstep, but they're also watching us during worship, prayer, and the reading of the Word. Our reverence for God, like everything else, is contagious. The passion you exhibit for your Lord is the spark that can ignite the fire in your fellowship.
- Take seriously the Spirit of God dwelling in the children of your flock, no matter how young they are, and encourage their parents to do the same. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). Hindrance can take place when we brush off their questions or when we don't take their questions seriously. Nothing is more frustrating to a child.
- Encourage parents to know God's Word. It may sound simplistic, but what struck me as a new believer, and still does, is just how many professing Christians are biblically illiterate. Many have never read their Bibles from cover to cover, or they dismiss the Old Testament altogether, and as a result they don't really know God. Church leaders can be models by preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God. Also, encourage parents to engage in inductive Bible studies, whether through your church or such groups as Community Bible Study, Bible Study Fellowship, or Precept Ministries." In many cases participants will also learn how to use study tools that will aid them in the area of apologetics.
- Invite speakers to your church who have the ability to put the cookies on the bottom shelf and make them not only fat free but edible. This should include not only male apologists but also women who can teach apologetics to the women in your fellowship in an engaging manner.

IT'S ELEMENTARY

I really like J. P. Moreland's brass-tacks definition of apologetics: "Apologetics is a ministry designed to help unbelievers to overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion and believers to remove doubts that hinder spiritual growth,!" My desire as a parent is that our children would not believe Christianity because my husband and I are Christians, or because we say it is true, or even because the learned apologists, pastors, or church leaders say it is true, but because they know it evidentially, experientially, and intellectually for themselves. Supplying our children with answers to questions when and even before they ask them, or before they are challenged by an unbeliever, will serve them well in seeing this desire come to fruition.

If you are a church leader or pastor, you have a wonderful opportunity to help parents fulfill the Great Commission in the lives of their children by passing on the torch that bears the Light of the world. You have a precious opportunity to watch the fruit of Deuteronomy 6 grow into effective witnesses for Jesus Christ as you heed his gracious words and "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

“Is Your Church Ready?” by Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, Chapter 7: “Off to College: Can We Keep Them?” by J. Budziszewski, Copyright © 2003. Zondervan.

**Off to College: Can We Keep Them?
By J. Budziszewski**

College Is War

Christian college teachers who are "out of the closet" about their faith are sought out by Christian students who are wandering the wasteland of the modern campus in search of water. "In lecture today you mentioned that you're a Christian," said one young woman to me after class. "I've never heard that from any other professor, and every day I spend at this university I feel my faith is under attack."

I am as far out of the closet as a Christian teacher can be, in that my academic subject raises faith issues, I write a monthly column in an online magazine for Christian students, I speak on other campuses, and I've written a book about "how to stay Christian in college." For this reason I get not only the usual office visits but also a good deal of mail from struggling college Christians. From that and from the apostasy of my own college years, I've developed a pretty good idea of how their faith gets into trouble.

Pastors and even parents often assume that the war against the faith is waged only in secular schools, so if our young people go to Christian colleges and universities, their life with Christ will be nourished instead of assaulted. This assumption is not merely false, but reckless. To be sure, there are some fine Christian schools. But the worst stories about anti-Christian ideological assault I have heard so far come from nominally Christian colleges that have not remained faithful to their mission. At one denominational college a Bible teacher is said to have begun each semester by hurling a Bible through the window and informing the students that by the end of the course none of them would still consider it the Word of God. He usually had his way.

Let's briefly consider the deficiencies in preparation that make Christian collegians vulnerable to assault. Afterward, and at greater length, I'll take up how pastors and church leaders can correct these deficiencies.

Twelve Reasons Why Collegians Lose Their Faith

Of course there are more than twelve reasons why so many college Christians lose their faith, but twelve is a nice round number that enables me to cover most of the territory economically.

A number of these dozen have to do with sex. That's not a reflection of my own obsessions but of the state of the struggle on campuses today. Perhaps in another age the main tasks of apologetics will have to do with war, with sickness, or with work. In ours they have to do with sex.

Young Believers Think They Can Be Solitary Christians

Many young believers go off to college with what I call the "just you and me, God" view of the Christian life. Separated from their hometown congregation, they think they can worship, pray, study Scripture, and practice the Christian disciplines all by themselves without fellowship with other believers. That's like a soldier thinking he can stay alive and fight just as well when separated from his unit.

They Don't Get the "Big Story" of Revelation

Some of the collegians I meet can quote passages of Scripture to me all day, but knowing them by heart is different from understanding them. Their grasp of revelation ought to be like a novel, with every episode adding to the whole. Instead, it's like a briefcase stuffed with scribbled memoranda: "Meeting Monday," "Call Tom," "Pick up eggs." The proverb "Where there is no vision, the people perish" applies to college students as well.

They Don't Know the Reasons for God's Rules

This deficiency is especially acute with regard to the "hot button" sexual issues that rage on college campuses today. When they are attacked for their beliefs, it's not enough for young Christians to know that God commands abstinence outside of marriage, that he invented marriage for one man and one woman, that he wants marriages to be fruitful--they must be able to explain why. God's rules must be practiced with understanding of and reflection on what the ancient rabbis called "the reasons of the Law."

They Don't Know That behind Every Temptation Is a False Ideology

At college, where gaining knowledge is the name of the game, even temptations gain most of their punch from false ideologies. Take the slogan "Sex is just like everything else; in order to make wise choices about it, you have to experience it." That's more than a "line"; it's a false philosophy. It says that the only way to know anything for sure is personal experience and that the test of experience is how you feel.

They Haven't Learned to Recognize the Desires and Devices of Their Hearts

It's an odd thing about us human beings: Not many of us disbelieve in God and then begin to sin--rather, we get involved in some clinging sin or start wanting to fit in, and then we find excuses to disbelieve in God. For this reason, the best apologetics in the world cannot succeed unless students know how to unmask their own secret motives.

They Think Good Intentions Are Enough to Protect Them from Sin

Like so many of the other stumbling blocks, this one is most prominent in the area of sex. For example, a Christian boy and girl may have every intention of remaining chaste but spend every waking moment alone together. This is an impossible combination.

Their Understanding of Christian Virtues Is Too Sentimental

Young Christians often confuse friendship with God with a state of their feelings. "I know the Bible says we should avoid doing such and such, but I prayed about it and

felt that it was all right." Anyone who thinks like this is a sitting duck for the adversary, having become fatally vulnerable to attacks that would otherwise be easy to repel.

They Think Faith and Knowledge Are Opposites

Too many college Christians think that when the author of Hebrews said that faith is the "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 KJV), he meant that faith is blind-that no reasons can be given for Christian belief. Because their campus adversaries do give reasons for their beliefs, they feel defenseless.

They Think Jesus Forbids Moral Judgment

Young Christians often are easy targets for the accusation of intolerance, not because they really are intolerant, but because they think they are. Just because they believe and try to follow what Jesus taught about right and wrong, they think they must be violating his instruction not to "judge" (Matthew 7:1).

They Are Too Easily Frightened into Playing Defense

Feeling numerically outnumbered by non-believing students and intellectually outgunned by non-believing professors, Christian students are always replying to their critics, never playing critic themselves.

They Don't Realize That Their Adversaries Have Faith Commitments Too

A single illustration will suffice. When a non-believing biology teacher sneers at the Christian belief of creation by saying that "science" accepts only naturalistic explanations, young Christians usually don't notice that the teacher also lives by faith. He accepts by faith that nature is all there is-and he is so insistent about his faith that he refuses to consider the evidence in nature of intelligent design.

They Don't Know How to Call a Bluff

Young Christians let non-believing teachers and classmates get away with saying all kinds of things that they couldn't possibly believe. Why? They don't realize that their teachers and classmates couldn't possibly believe these things. They don't know how to call a bluff, because they don't know how to recognize one.

What Students in Churches Need to Hear from Church Leadership

Let's take a closer look at what is missing in the preparation of young Christians for the challenges of college life.

What They Need to Hear about Solitary Christianity

It isn't enough to urge young Christians to go to church. They've heard that already, and they've probably had Hebrews 10:25 quoted to them until they're blue in the face: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing." What they really need is the correction of their individualistic ecclesiology.

Don't think these young Christians don't have an ecclesiology just because they've never heard the term! Every Christian has an ecclesiology—a view of what the church is and what it is for. Unfortunately, some of the phrases we use to explain the Christian life to young people convey to them a false ecclesiology. We say to them, for example, that to be a Christian is to have "a personal relationship" with Jesus Christ or to make "a personal commitment" to Jesus Christ. The intention of these phrases is good—it is true that Christianity is not just a set of beliefs but a relationship with the living Lord and Savior, and it is true that it requires not just a belief lodged in the head but a commitment of the will. Unfortunately, the term personal in these phrases gives young people the wrong idea. It produces in them the "just you and me, God" view of Christian life I mentioned earlier.

Scripture never describes our relationship with Jesus Christ as "just you and me." Its emphasis is not on the solitary believer but on the community of faith. We are the "body" of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the "people" of God, the "nation" he has called to holiness (1 Peter 2:9); we are citizens of the commonwealth of heaven (Philippians 3:20), in which we must "carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2). God has always acted through a community. It was not good for Adam to be alone, so God made Eve. Not only Noah but his family was saved. Abraham was called so that from him and Sarah might come a people more numerous than the stars of heaven. On the day of Pentecost, God founded the church. God has made us social beings, and his plan of redemption through Jesus Christ is also social.

Explain these things, then, to the younger members of your flock while they are still teens, and tell them that their true peer group is the fellowship of the saints, the household of God. There is no such thing as a solitary Christian, and if they go into the world alone, they will be swallowed.

What They Need to Hear about the "Big Story" of Revelation

There are two things about revelation that very few students understand, yet both are crucial to their ability to defend their faith on the modern college campus. The first is the reasonableness of revelation; the second is its plot.

Revelation's Reasonableness

Too many people of college age it seems unreasonable that God should have spoken to man—too magical, too weird. Yet, as we read in Isaiah, "my thoughts are not

your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9 RSV). John R.W Stott makes this observation about this passage:

It is ludicrous to suppose that we could ever penetrate into the mind of God. There is no ladder by which our little minds can climb up into His infinite mind. There is no bridge that we can throw across the chasm of infinity. There is no way to reach or to fathom God It is only reasonable to say ... that unless God takes the initiative to disclose what is in His mind, we will never be able to find out."

This is "the reasonableness of revelation."

Revelation's Plot

Although young Christians know "Bible stories," they often fail to realize that the Bible as a whole is a single great story-the true story, with extensive commentary, of God's dealings with humankind. College-age Christians need to hear from you that, like any story, the Bible contains characters, conflict, development, a turning point, a resolution, and an end. In this way they'll become equipped to see it as a whole.

Who are the characters? God, the people who come to know him, and the people who persist in rejecting him. What is the conflict? That although God designed us for fellowship with him, we have rebelled against him beyond our power of returning and have broken ourselves beyond our power of repair. What is the development? That time after time he reaches out to us, that time after time we rebel again, but that he promises us a Rescuer who will be able to change our hearts. What is the turning point? That he visits us himself as a man of flesh and blood, accepting a criminal's death on the cross in order to take the burden of our rebellion and brokenness upon himself. What is the resolution? That by trusting this God-man as our sin bearer, we may be forgiven and begin to be transformed. And what is the end? That one day in heaven, the community of his people will be perfectly and permanently united with him, as a bride is united with her husband.

This story is the basis of all stories, the one and only context in which our own lives and struggles can make sense. Through sin we have tried to write ourselves out of God's story; through Jesus we can be written back in by him. This is what young Christians need to hear.

What They Need to Hear about the Reasons for God's Rules

A young person who is wondering whether the rules really come from God needs more than Scripture texts. He isn't asking, "Does the Bible teach this rule?" but "Why is this rule good?" In our age the question doesn't often arise about robbery (except by government), torture (except by abortion), or forsaking idols (except the self). It does arise about sex. Paradoxically, to understand the prohibitions regarding sex one has to understand why sex is good, and this is something most Christian students

have never heard. Christianity takes a higher view of sex than any other religion. It's why it also has the strictest rules about it. Anything so important has to be handled carefully.

How can you explain this to younger Christians?' They need to learn that the first good is procreation, which means more than making babies. It also means raising children in the love and fear of God. You can make them without a marital commitment, but you can't raise them that way. The commitment must also be permanent, because the knowledge that your procreative partnership will continue into the then and there affects its quality in the here and now. Besides, once grown, the kids will have kids, and the kids' kids will need their parents' parents too. This is a matter of shattering importance. Every child is an image of God who will one day be older than the stars are today.

College-age Christians need to learn that the second great good is union. In marriage, sexual union takes each spouse out of the self for the sake of the other. Solitary sex can't achieve this; it keeps you locked in self. Homosexual sex can't achieve this; it directs you, narcissistically, to a mirror image of your self. Neither can casual sex achieve this; it endlessly joins and severs, joins and severs. Imagine what it would be like to repeatedly tear off and reattach your arm. There would come a day when no earthly surgery would suffice; the unitive power of your body would be lost. It is the same if you repeatedly tear off and reattach your various sexual partners. Eventually they all seem like strangers, and you just don't feel anything. You have destroyed your capacity for intimacy.

And teach them that the third great good is mystery. This good is realized only when the spouses belong to Christ, for they become a living emblem of his sacrificial love for the church and of the church's adoring response. Paul is so awed that he calls matrimony one of God's secrets: "This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). The little humiliations and the mutual sacrifices of the husband and wife are a training for the heavenly union between Christ and his church; the awe of their wedding night and the ecstasy of their embraces, a parable of it.

What They Need to Hear about the False Ideologies Lurking behind Temptations

There are two ways to armor young Christians against ideological seduction. The first way is to anticipate and answer the ideologies they are most likely to meet. For example, I commented earlier that the slogan "Sex is just like everything else; in order to make wise choices about it, you have to experience it" expresses a philosophy of knowledge. Once they spot this philosophy, you can put it in the witness box and start cross-examining it. Is it really true that the only way to know anything for sure is personal experience? Are there any cases where personal experience works against knowledge? (How about suicide and drug addiction?) And is it really true that the test of experience is how you feel? Haven't you ever felt good about something that turned out to be bad?

You will never be able to anticipate and answer every single ideological seduction, so an even better way to armor young Christians is to teach them to spot them

on their own. To give them practice, throw them "lines." After each line ask, "What philosophy lies behind this line?" Let them conduct the cross-examination on their own. Encourage them to develop discernment, that spiritual and intellectual sense of smell that tells them "something is rotten here."

What They Need to Hear about the Desires and Devices of Their Hearts

Jeremiah remarks, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Unfortunately, this is also true of Christians. Our old fallen nature continues to compete with the Christ-life that is taking shape in us; we may "put to death" our fallen nature, as Paul exhorts (Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5), but even then it twitches with galvanic life. Until heaven, when our sanctification is complete, we will be prone to self-deception.

A young woman once asked me for a letter of recommendation to a theological seminary. I asked her why she wanted to enter seminary. She told me she was desperate to hold on to her faith but drowning in unanswered questions; she hoped that in seminary she would find the answers. Yet when I glanced at her application form, I found that she had chosen perhaps the most way-out seminary in the country, a den of disbelief. Through conversation I learned that in her last year of university she had avoided taking courses from believing professors (who were rare enough in any case), instead seeking professors notorious for their enmity to faith. Moreover, when I asked her what her unanswered questions were, they turned out to be fairly simple.

"I think you are mistaken about your motives for going to seminary," I told her. "You're behaving not like someone who wants answers but like someone who wants to avoid them. Could it be that you're seeking reasons to lose your faith—that you're manufacturing a dramatic crisis—so that you can lose your faith and say afterward, 'I couldn't help it'?"

My experience is that no college student loses her faith unless at some level she wants to; the slip lies not in the intellect but in the will. This may imply that it's easy to hold on to faith. Not so: The difficulty lies in recognizing what we really want, because we really do not want to recognize it. College students need to learn that we sinners cannot fully trust our own perceptions; all of us must pray as David did:

Who can discern his errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then will I be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.
Psalm 19:12-13

What They Need to Hear about the Limits of Good Intentions

I've already explained one limit of good intentions—they may not be as good as we think. Even when they really are good, however, they are not enough. By way of example, I mentioned earlier the absurdity of a Christian boy and girl having every intention of remaining chaste but spending every waking moment alone together. The problem here is not just that they have no sense of their own weaknesses (which is pride), but that in a sense, they are setting themselves against God's design for human sexuality (which is presumption). Being alone with the beloved is supposed to be arousing; that's how God made us. Aloneness is what one seeks with one's spouse; it is a precursor to intercourse. To be alone with the beloved but trying not to be aroused is like turning on a powerful rocket motor and saying "Don't lift off."

What usually happens next is that the boy and girl try to deal with the resulting temptations by praying together about them. I can't think of a faster way to wind up in bed, for now they are combining the sexual drive with the spiritual drive, and their rocket has shifted from chemical propulsion to warp drive." By now, of course, their good intentions have turned bad, because they have committed a particularly attractive sin and may find it difficult to repent. It's at this time that faith begins to seem "unreal," and the best apologetics in the world may do no good.

This cautionary tale shows why even knowing the reasons for God's rules is not enough (see pages 110-11). College students also need a generous dose of godly common sense--what God in the book of Proverbs calls wisdom.

What They Need to Hear to Avoid Sentimental Misunderstandings for Christian Virtue

My generation bears most of the blame for sentimentalizing Christianity. "When I read in Mark how Jesus cursed the fig tree, I feel much closer to him," said one woman in a Bible study group. "Jesus is a sinner, just like me!" No argument could convince her that she had drastically misinterpreted the passage. "Feelings are neither right nor wrong," runs the misleading mantra, "they just are."

Among college students, sentimentalism has run amuck. Consider faith, for instance. Because young Christians confuse faith with warm feelings toward God, when their feelings are running cool, they think they must be having a crisis of faith. Soon it becomes a real crisis of faith; like those who refuse to believe what they cannot see, they refuse to believe what they cannot feel.

Or consider hope. Because young Christians confuse hope with feelings of optimism, when they hear theories that presume that humans can somehow fix their problems and "save themselves," they think they should go along. Hope then becomes complacency about the course of this present broken world—or a utopian idolatry of the "human spirit."

Consider finally the greatest spiritual virtue, namely, love. Because young Christians confuse love with trying to enter into their neighbors' feelings, when people

who espouse disordered ways of life express feelings of pain and anger, they "feel" they ought to take their side. It may never occur to them that the pain might be self-inflicted, or that the anger might be a way to avoid the real issue. This helps explain why the gay rights movement can be such a source of anguish for young Christians.

What the younger members of your congregation need to hear is that the spiritual virtues are not feelings but deep-seated dispositions of the mind and will. Faith means continuing to believe and trust the promises of God, even when the feelings of trust have faltered; God uses the cool seasons of our feelings to exercise us, like a muscle. Hope means fixing our eyes on heaven even when the feelings of confidence have waned; now we see as in a mirror, darkly, but then we shall see face to face (see I Corinthians 13:12). Love means acting for the true good of other persons, even when their hearts desire what poisons their souls and they can only hear the words of love as hate.

Sentiment is shifting sand. You can have warm feelings toward God without faith, you can have feelings of optimism without hope, and you can have feelings of sympathy without love. Our God is not sand; he's a Rock.

What They Need to Hear about the Relation between Faith and Knowledge

If secular college teachers mention faith at all, they treat it as the opposite of knowledge; they think it means believing things without having any reasons. From this point of view it seems that faith hinders the search for truth; it gets in the way of reasoning. Too many of our college students assume this to be true.

People who say they rely not on faith but on reasoning alone haven't carefully considered what reasoning is. Reasoning itself depends on faith. How could this be? Easy. Suppose you tried to prove, not by faith but by reason alone, that reason works. You couldn't do it. The only way to show that reasoning works would be to reason about it. But in that case you'd be assuming ahead of time what you set out to prove-- the reliability of reason. Circular arguments prove nothing. How then do we know that reasoning works? We take it on trust. On faith.

This argument is not the same as saying that no good reasons can be given for reasoning. Many good reasons can be given for reasoning and for other important things as well. We should heed them. The point is that having good reasons does not remove the necessity of trust. Augustine understood this point well; he said, "I believe in order to know." If you don't believe something, you will never understand anything.

An example most students understand comes from relational knowledge. I know many things about my wife that I never could have learned unless I trusted her enough to make an irrevocable commitment to her-to enter into the relationship of matrimony. Matrimony, then, is a high-rolling faith commitment. To be sure, before I leaped I had good reasons to think there was solid ground on the other side. But I couldn't see it; not even a hundred good reasons could have made it other than a leap. Only by trusting her could I know that my trust had been justified.

Why leap at all? Why trust in anything? The option of not trusting is not available. To refuse to leap is to take on trust that you will be all right if you just remain where you are-and that, too, is a leap. The difference is not between leaping and not leaping, but between a leap that knows itself to be a leap and a leap that pretends it is not a leap.

What They Need to Hear about Moral Judgment

"How dare you judge my opinion?" By expressing that belief you're judging me."
"What hypocrites you Christians are. Jesus told you not to be judgmental, but you judge more than anyone does."

It is ridiculously easy to explode these fallacies. When Jesus said, "Do not judge," he didn't mean we were not to judge opinions as true or false (for he did that all the time), that we were not to judge behavior (he did that, too), or even that we were not to make judgments of character (remember what he said about the Pharisees). What he meant was that we are not to preempt God's final judgment at the end of history, when the saved will be separated from the damned; we are not to treat anyone as outside the circle of God's love. Paul puts the point in these words: "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Corinthians 4:5 RSV). Jesus models it. His final words to the woman caught in adultery were "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). He did not condemn her, yet he obviously "judged" that she had sinned.

If these fallacies are so easy to explode, then what gives them their grip on our young people? Have they never heard the distinction expressed in the slogan "Hate the sin but love the sinner"? They have. Then what is the problem? The problem is the false ideology of "identity politics," which refuses to allow the distinction between sin and sinner in the first place. Consider, for example, gay activists. They make their sexual feelings and behavior the very basis of who they are. If a young Christian says to an activist, "I'm not condemning you but loving you--I am trying to say that what you do is killing you," they reply, "Your love is meaningless. I am what I do. By judging what I do, you are condemning me."

To enable student believers to keep their heads in such confrontations, you must add two elements to their preparation. First, for the guarding of their understanding, they need to know that no human being has the liberty to make up his or her own identity. God has defined our identity already-and not just by words (though his words are power). He has given to every human being an identity by creation (see Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6), and he has given to each believer yet a deeper identity by redemption.' Second, for the guarding of their hearts, they need to distinguish their love for their neighbor from their understandable desire to have this love welcomed by the neighbor. There is never a guarantee that true love will be recognized as true love by the beloved (see Matthew 5:11-12). We must please God, not people (see Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).

What They Need to Hear about Offense and Defense

It's true that college Christians are outnumbered by their non-believing classmates, but "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). When Christians have no need to fear violent persecution, as in this part of the world, some begin to expect the world to be a friend. Then they slip into seeking the world's approval instead of God's. When a classmate or coworker rolls his or her eyes, they go hollow.

The resistance strategy here is not to exhort young people to resist peer pressure; it can't be done, and it doesn't need to be done. It can't be, because all people care what their "reference group" thinks of them. It doesn't need to be, because peer pressure is good--if it's the right kind of pressure from the right kind of peers! Our reference group must be our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's also true that college Christians are intellectually outgunned by their non-believing professors. If they already knew everything their professors knew and had developed all the skills their professors had developed, they wouldn't be in school. But they have two great advantages, the importance of which they hardly recognize. One is that the pre-suppositions that underlie the anti-Christian worldviews of their professors aren't true; they do not correspond to reality. The other is that their adversaries are self-deceived. The defense of deep untruth is so difficult that defenders are driven time and time again to say things so preposterous that even they cannot really believe them. The key is to call their bluff.

Just how young Davids can take on such Goliaths will be explored in the next two sections. Above all, however, they need to be reminded that the best defense of faith--make that the only defense of faith--is a good (though humble) offense. One way for pastors and church leaders to get this point across is to have their collegians list the items that Paul includes in the "armor of God" (Ephesians 6:10-18):

- the belt of truth
- the breastplate of righteousness
- the footguards of readiness to spread the gospel
- the shield of faith
- the helmet of salvation
- the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God
- and prayer (which seems to lace the rest together)

Now ask them this question: What part of the body is left unprotected? Answer: No armor is mentioned for the back. All of it is for the front. The meaning is obvious. God does not intend his people ever to turn their backs to the adversary. He intends us to advance when we can and stand when we must but to never retreat.

The same point is made in John Bunyan's classic allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*, when Christian, the hero of the story, meets a foe far stronger than himself. But now in

this Valley of Humiliation poor Christian was hard put to it; for he had gone but a little way before he espied a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him; his name is Apollyon. Then did Christian begin to be afraid, and to cast in his mind whether to go back or to stand his ground. But he considered again that he had no armor for his back; and therefore thought that to turn the back to him might give him the greater advantage with ease to pierce him with his darts.

Therefore he resolved to venture and stand his ground; for, thought he, had I no more in mine eye than the saving of my life, it would be the best way to stand."

What They Need to Hear about the Faith Commitments of Their Adversaries

No one has the option of not having faith; the only real issue is whether to have faith in this or in that. Therefore, when young Christians hear from their teachers or classmates that faith has no place in the life of the mind, pastors should remind them of the faith commitments of those who say these things.

In the humanities, for example, many of their teachers will be post-modernists. Postmodernists pride themselves on their "suspicion of meta-narratives," their conviction that no one gets the Big Story right (the story about who we are, where we came from, why we are here, and so forth). Of course, postmodernists always make a tacit exception for their own Big Story, the story that no one gets the Big Story right. What they really mean, then, is that no one else gets the Big Story right. How can they justify the exception? If no one else gets the Big Story right, how can they get it right? The answer is that they don't justify the exception; rarely do they even admit to it. The tacit exception rests on a tacit faith that all people are boobs but themselves. In fact, this is just the kind of faith they mock, because they cannot give a reason for it. That's why the exception is tacit.

The faith commitment of postmodernists is not particularly difficult for students to spot. Many students do spot it. But they think, "This can't be right. It's just too silly. There must be more to postmodernism than this. I must have misunderstood the teacher." No, they understood the teacher perfectly. It is too silly.

In the sciences we more often find a different faith commitment, namely, the conviction that nature-material nature-is all there is. Christians would call this a belief in creation without a creator. Philosophers call it naturalism, or materialism. Confronted with the mounting scientific evidence of intelligent design," naturalists do not reply with counterevidence; they simply rule the evidence out of order. It cannot count as evidence, they say, because science considers only naturalistic explanations. Did you think that science was following the evidence wherever it might lead? How silly of you, they think. As Richard Lewontin of Harvard has written:

Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure

to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.

This is quite an impressive list of "in spite of's." The naturalistic faith commitment is just as easy to spot as the postmodernist faith commitment and just as unreasonable: You cannot give a reason for something if its only foundation is refusing to consider all the evidence. Not all faith is blind, but naturalistic faith is blind-blind hostility to the possibility of God.

What They Need to Hear about Calling Bluffs

Every successful calling of an intellectual bluff has two parts—an unmasking and a follow-through. Here's an example. The bluffer says, "Morality is all relative anyway. How do we even know that murder is wrong?" You ask, "Are you at this moment in any actual doubt about murder being wrong?" He replies, "Well, no." Now that you've unmasked him, you say, "Good. Then let's talk about something you really are in doubt about." That's the follow-through.

Here's another. The bluffer says, "Nobody knows any truth." You reply, "If you really believed that, you wouldn't say it." He replies, "Why not?" You answer, "Because then you wouldn't know if it was true!" Now that you've unmasked him, you follow through. "So let me ask you: What do you get out of pretending to think that nobody knows any truth?"

Sometimes the unmasking and the follow-through can be combined. For instance, the bluffer might say, "Okay, so you caught me saying something that has no meaning. So what? I don't need truth, and I don't need meaning." You reply, "I don't believe you, because we both know that the longing for truth and meaning is deeply set in every intellect, yours as well as mine. The real question, then, is this: What are you so desperate to have that you're willing to give up even meaning to get it?"

Young Christians rarely succeed in calling their adversaries' bluffs. Anyone may miss an opportunity, but the problem lies deeper than this, namely, they don't know how. The reason they don't know how to call a bluff is that they don't know how to spot one in the first place. To spot it, they would have to know that the bluffer was saying something he or she couldn't really mean. To do that (unless they were mind readers), they would have to know that there are certain things that everyone really knows. With rare exceptions, college-age Christians don't know that there are certain things that everyone really knows. You need to tell them.

The theological term for "what everyone really knows" is general revelation. General revelation is what God has revealed not directly, through the Bible, but indirectly, apart from it. This is not an antibiblical doctrine; the Bible itself says that God has not left himself without a witness among the nonbelievers. In fact, he has left himself at least six witnesses among them, and young Christians need to learn how to appeal to each one of them.

The witness of conscience is "written on the heart" (Romans 2:15), and although it can be suppressed (see Romans 1: 18), it can never be erased. The witness of Godward longing whispers to every person that his or her idols can never save but that there is an Unknown God who can (see Acts 17:22-32). The witness of God's handiwork proclaims the glory of the Creator through his creation-not only in the heavens (see Psalm 19:1-6; 104; Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20), but in his images, namely, ourselves (see Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; Psalm 139:13-14). The witness of the harvest is that every sin is linked with consequences; whatever we sow, we reap (see Proverbs 1:31; Jeremiah 17:10; Hosea 10:12; Galatians 6:7). The witness of practical order emerges from our observations and labors in the natural world God has made. For example, a wise farmer knows that certain ways of doing things cooperate with the natural order, while others "go against the grain" and fail (see Isaiah 28:23-29). Finally, the witness of our design is the witness of practical order applied to ourselves, for some of God's intentions are reflected in the "blueprint" of our physical, intellectual, and emotional nature-either in the general nature men and women share or in the special nature he has given each. 12 These matters bear long reflection.

General revelation is paradoxical because on the one hand nonbelievers know it, but on the other they try to convince themselves that they don't know it. They are self-deceived. By understanding what the Bible teaches about general revelation, we achieve a strategic advantage: we know what they know better than they know what they know. That's why even a college-age Christian can learn to call their bluffs.

Then Can We Keep Them?

They are off to college. Can we keep them? Yes! Loyalty to Jesus Christ is attacked in every time and in every land; it is not for nothing that the early church fathers spoke of the church militant. Yet God has carried his people through every tribulation, and the gates of hell have not prevailed.

Just as the art of physical battle changes from age to age, so does the art of spiritual battle. We are going through another transformation. Infantry are no match for iron chariots, nor iron chariots for jet planes. In the same way, the apologetical weapons and catechetical armor that served young Christians during the Enlightenment must be re-forged to meet the challenges of post-modernity. Their pastors and church leaders must show them how to use these tools.

It is probably true that pastors today must be more self-conscious about these matters than in former days. It was once believed that the culture was Christian. Today the nominal church itself is a mission field. Pastors in their own countries and congregations must often be like ambassadors to strange lands.

Yet was the culture ever really Christian? Perhaps not. Perhaps in former days its assaults and temptations were merely harder to recognize because they sounded Christian. Today, by contrast, they are obvious. That's not bad; an attack that can be seen can be more easily repelled. We can keep our college-age people. Not by our wit but by the grace of God we can keep them. It was he who gave our young people their minds, and it is he who can transform them and claim them as his own. He kept a people for himself through wars and famines, through invasions and inundations, through exiles and persecutions. He kept their souls beneath the swords of their pagan emperors-and if only we serve him faithfully, he will keep our college students beneath the sneers of their teachers.