

I. Apologetics

- A. I want to start today by talking about something called apologetics.
- B. The idea of apologetics traces back to legal procedures in Ancient Athens. The scene is a courtroom.
- C. The person who was bringing a is the plaintiff, and the person on the other end is called the defendant.
- D. In these ancient procedures, the accusation was called *kategoria*. This is the complaint against the defendant.
- E. The defendant had a right to argue against the accusation. This answer to the complaint was called an *apologia*.
- F. This *apologia* was an effort to speak off or explain away the *kategoria*. It was an effort to clear the defendant of the charge.
- G. These words are used in all kinds of ancient Greek documents, including the famous Apology of Socrates. It doesn't mean he was saying sorry... it means he was making the case for the rightness of his position, and defending it against those who accused him of being wrong.
- H. The idea of apologizing, as in saying you're sorry, didn't come into the mean of this word, for a very long time.
- I. So all of this is in the Bible.
 - 1. *In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternatively accusing [kategoria] or else defending [apologia] them. (Romans 2:15, NASB)*
- J. This is a powerful insight into our human nature. If you have a conscience, it's like having a courtroom in your soul.
 - 1. Sometimes your conscience accuses you, *kategoria*.
 - 2. Sometimes your conscience defends you, *apologia*.
- K. Jesus had to make this kind of defense many times. He had to stand against religious rulers who accused him of false teaching and against political rulers who accused him of starting riots and instigating a revolt against Caesar. Paul, who was an early church planter, leader, and expert in theology, also had to defend himself many times. So did all the apostles.
- L. The apostle Peter, another early church leader, told Christians this:
 - 1. *Always be ready to give a defense [apologia] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear [respect]. (2 Peter 3:15).*
- M. This apologetic activity of Jesus and his apostles didn't end with them. It was part of the mission carried on by the next generations of Christians.
- N. As the early church grew and spread, Christians were persecuted with an insane variety of accusations. They were accused of being cannibals (they ate the blood and body of Jesus). They were accused of being sexually immoral (because they loved one another). They were charged with undermining Caesar and the Roman Empire.
- O. There were a lot of accusations — of *kategoria* — hurled against those early Christians. But those early Christians stood tall with apologetic muscle.
- P. They argued that the Scriptures were a millennium older than Plato, and that all the conceptual overlap was because Plato copied from the Moses. They argued that Jesus fulfilled so many centuries-old prophecies, it was impossible to dismiss the Christian Scriptures as some kind of fairy tale.
- Q. God raised up an army of intellectually mighty and theologically devoted giants of the faith. Origen. Augustine. Tertullian. Irenaeus. Athanasius. Cyprian.
- R. They corrected preconceptions, tore down misconceptions, and built up true conceptions of what Jesus taught, and what the Scriptures had been saying all along.
 - 1. They went toe to toe with the most brilliant philosophers the world has ever known.
 - 2. They made the case for Christ, for Easter, and for eternal life.
 - a) The early Christians proved beyond all reasonable doubt that unassailable intellectual muscle stood as the backbone of the Christian faith.
 - 3. In a stunning reversal, they turned from defense to offense. They stared down the soul-crushing philosophies and religions of the day and raised up the most life-affirming, joy-giving edifice of truth the world has ever known. They had a Savior unlike any other, and for them, it was easy to make their case.
- S. History tells us they turned the world upside down.

II. The Need Today

- A. I stand here today to say we need the world turned upside down again.
- B. Now, as then, we are swimming in a sea of paganism.
 - 1. Now, as then, we are surrounded by the devil's lies.
 - 2. Now, as then, we are light in a deepening darkness.
 - 3. Now, as then, the world hinges on the choices we will make.
 - 4. Now, as then, the church is the last best and only hope of the world.
- C. By our words and by our actions, we are meant to be the living APOLOGIA for the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. How?

1. *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [fleshly] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)*

E. This word carnal is everything.

F. It means “of the flesh...” which means the dark side of the soul, determined to fight against God.

G. The weapons we use are NOT like the weapons the world will use. We have a different arsenal. The world will do anything it takes to silence the voice of Christ, because the world is hypnotized by Satan.

1. Lying? No problem. Treachery? Deceit? Violence? Whatever works.
2. Rioting and destroying another person’s livelihood and dreams? It’s righteous, they say.
3. Silencing the opposition? Misrepresenting their case? Slander? Theft? Bigotry? Prejudice? Getting in someone’s face and screaming at them?
4. Walking out on your contract and oath? Making life harder for someone else just to make a point? Just to get even? Satisfying your carnal need for revenge?
5. Your perverse desire to see another suffer? Rioting, picketing, looting, abuse, disrespect.
6. Living by the sweat of another person’s brow, as justifying it as a “right”?

a) It’s all par for the course for the carnal mind, dominated by the dark side... dominated by the flesh.

(1) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

(a) They are proving a fallen and unregenerate nature.

b) For the weapons of our warfare are NOT CARNAL, NOT OF THE FLESH, but mighty in God.

III. High Intensity Summer

- A. In March of 2020, our government shut down everything in our society, including churches. At that point, none of us knew what was happening, or how serious this would be.
- B. Pathway jumped online in the most effective and powerful ways we could do.
- C. In May of 2020, our President called for churches to reopen, with some guidelines for distancing and sterilization. We made our plans. Shortly after that, our Governor issued additional limitations, including a cap on how many could go to church.
- D. Our team sat in a room all day, and adapted our existing plans to make new ones with these new limitations in place. It was insanely complex, and yet our staff rose to the occasion.
- E. The next day, this would be Wednesday, May 27, 2020, I was not settled in my spirit. Though we had made a plan, and though it was feasible, it didn’t seem right to me.
- F. I told Margi and I told some of our staff, I needed to get alone with God. For me that meant a long solitary road trip, no radio, just me and God connected by His Spirit and prayer.
- G. As I drove, and prayed, bit by bit, a new plan began to form in my heart. Questions began to take shape.
 1. What good was it to reopen our buildings to people if our hearts were closed to God?
 2. What good was it to meet together physically, if we were still carnal spiritually? If we were lukewarm, or prayer-less, or marginally holy and just going through the motions.
- H. God convicted me that day.
 1. We might satisfy the church, we might satisfy some carnal desires, we might satisfy our own holy impulses to gather and learn God’s Word... but what does it mean? It didn’t make sense to me to go through all these government mandated gyrations just to open the doors for worship on suppressants.
 2. And most importantly what will the world see? Where is our APOLOGIA, a faith that turned the world upside down?
- I. God gave birth to a new plan, that we began to call our *High Intensity Summer*.
- J. Today marks 13 weeks since that began. One quarter of a year. And I wanted to bring you up to speed with what has happened, and then let you know what’s coming next.
- K. If anybody asks, What did your church do during the summer of COVID-19? Tell them it was intense.
- L. Tell them we did four things.

IV. Consecration

- A. The real place of worship is not a building. The real place of worship is the human heart. They might keep us from our buildings, but they cannot touch our hearts.
 1. And it begins right here, in our hearts, the real worship center of Redding, California.

- a) *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1, NAS95)*
 2. Instead of being upset about what we don't have, why not lean into what we do have.
 3. Let's be the remnant. Let's be the nucleus of revival. Let's lay a foundation of consecration.
 - a) Consecration is dedication on your part to allow and welcome Christ, doing in you what he committed to do the day he saved you.
 - b) Consecration is you allowing God to empower you to be what you have become.
 4. In that car ride, I came up with a number. I can't say for sure it was from God, but I think so. But all I know was it felt impossible.
 5. When I came back from that ride, the first impossible goal I had in mind was that God would give us 500 men and women and students — believers in Jesus — who prayed a prayer of consecration, and said, By God's power, I intend to live a life of Grace-Powered Holiness.
 - a) The goal was 500 people. Do you think we met it?
 - b) The actual number is... 505!
 - (1) And I think that's worthy of some celebration. Let's glorify God and give him all the praise.
 6. Because a consecrated Christian is a mighty weapon in the hands of God. Consecration is one of the weapons of our warfare. It is mighty through God. It is an APOLOGIA no one can defeat.
 7. The second weapon of our warfare is prayer.
- B. *Prayer Walking*
1. As I drove down Interstate 5, driving by a whole bunch of nothing, another idea began to form in my mind.
 2. What if we began to pray, and to really pray, for our community.
 - a) Prayer is one of the mightiest weapons in the arsenal of God, for the warfare of the church.
 - b) *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.... praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints (Ephesians 6:11, 18, NKJV).*
 3. There's a type of prayer called prayer walking. It isn't weird. It's basically what it says. You take a walk, and pray for families as you walk by their homes. Pray for schools. Pray for business. Pray for our city on location.
 4. I have an author friend who has written a book on Prayer Walking. Her name is Janet McHenry. So I pulled off to the side of the Interstate, found her on Facebook, and sent her a private message. Hi Janet. Will you do a prayer walking seminar for our church? Here's my number, if you're interested call me.
 5. A few minutes later we were talking. And a few weeks later, Janet was doing live online training for our prayer walkers.
 6. I set a goal, I believe by the Spirit of God, that we would have 200 prayer walkers. I thought it was pretty ridiculous, actually. Did we meet that goal?
 - a) *Total prayer walkers: 273... thank you.*
 - (1) We give God all the credit and all the honor and praise.
 7. I also set, again by God's guidance, an even more ridiculous goal... that we would pray on location for 50,000 homes in Shasta County, pretty much the whole county.
 8. This one, I knew we would never reach.
 - a) I can stand here today and tell you, that by the grace of God, we, you, our church, has prayed on location for 52,854 homes.
 - (1) Let's give God the glory.
 9. Can you imagine the angels moving in? Can you imagine the demons running scared? Can you picture the power of God by the Spirit of God softening hard hearts, opening blind eyes, and preparing people all across this region to hear and believe the saving gospel of a Savior crucified and risen again?
 - a) The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God.
- C. *Serving*
1. The third weapon of our warfare is service — sacrificial generosity of our time, talents, and treasures in the name of Jesus Christ.
 - a) *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:18)*
 2. As I drove down the highway, I asked God how could we be the church without necessarily meeting inside a church building?
 3. And a gentle whisper came into my spirit that said, Go out and serve your community in the name of Jesus more than ever before. We're always doing this, but why not boost it up this summer? Be a self-giving defense of the faith that nobody can argue with.

4. So we did. We organized dozens of tangible projects, in schools, in homes, in veterans homes. Food pantries, helping out down in Paradise.
5. We had hundreds of people from our church step up.
6. The goal God gave me that day was to serve *5,000 people* in the name of Jesus.
 - a) I can tell you today, that God used 250 volunteers to go out and serve *7,791 people* in our community as the hands and feet of Jesus.
7. We celebrate this great work of God.
8. But there was another part of this service goal. God put a desire in my heart that we would go all the way around the world. I didn't know any details, but I was asking God if we could raise money for sex trafficking ministry somewhere in the world. I didn't know where, but God worked it out beautifully.
9. I didn't know it, but our own Alliance of Church has a ministry in Thailand working with students, including sex-trafficked teenagers... and among those... a large number of teenagers who are sex trafficked and who also are deaf...
10. I asked God for *\$50,000 above and beyond our regular offerings*.
11. Like I said, that was only five weekends ago. And I can tell you today that in 5 weekends, you have given... *\$54,115.10 for this project*, AND that our regular offerings have gone up. When you trust God, he trusts you.
 - a) Imagine a deaf girl in Thailand whose whole life is changed because you gave.
 - b) Imagine a deaf young man who hears about the Lord, and is freed from sexual slavery, because you reached into your pocket, and made yourself and your money a mighty weapon of warfare for the name of Jesus Christ.
12. If anybody ever asks you what your church did during the lockdown, tell them our church was never locked down, and by the grace of God we made a name, not for ourselves, but for our precious Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Through *consecration*, through *prayer*, through *serving*, and through *giving* in amazing and mighty ways for the glory of our king.
 - a) But none of that is enough. None of that makes the way of salvation crystal clear.
 - b) That is why the pinnacle of our High Intensity Summer — and the pinnacle of our APOLOGIA... is...

D. *Evangelizing*

1. The world fires off many accusations against of faith in Jesus Christ these days. Intolerant. Illogical. Hypocritical. One of many options. Unverified. Unproven. Untrue.
2. They say we are irrelevant at best, and dangerous at worst.
3. *Christianity is a statement, which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, is of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.* ~C.S. Lewis
4. In the coming weeks, we are going to argue that case. And YOU are critical in this...
 - a) No matter how long or short you've been a Christian. Rookie. Veteran. Skeptic. Still on the fence. No difference. It's time for you to step up.
5. We have spent the entire summer setting the stage for our answer to these accusations — for our APOLOGIA.
6. If you think our summer was something, just wait for Fall.
 - a) Paul said, *"I am set for the defense of the gospel"* (Philippians 1:17). So are we.
7. It's time for evangelism infused with apologetics.
8. We have done the work. The fields are ripe, ready for harvest.
9. Now, on this day of fasting and prayer, would you join me in calling on the Lord of the Harvest for both workers, and for souls to join the family of faith.
10. All September will be setting up the apologetics outreach to come in October, and the plans we have will take your breath away.