



*Defending
the Faith in Your
Community –
Every Day*

By

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Ask a Christian to “defend the faith” and you get a variety of reactions. “Why does the ‘faith’ need defending? God can take care of Himself.” “How do I do that?” “I don’t want to do that!” “Are you serious? I wouldn’t know how.” “Isn’t that for professionals?” “Me? I’m not one of those ‘apologists.’ I’m just a Christian.”

Whatever your reaction, the fact is that every Christian can and should “defend the faith” in their community “every day.” Here’s an example from something you may have experienced.

When the officer in charge calls a group of soldiers to attention, then to a ready position, the officer expects everyone to move at the command. The command to attention and ready is not just for captains or majors or colonels or generals. It is for everyone preparing for the field of battle – from the new recruit to the oldest soldier.

When a martial arts instructor calls the class to attention, then to a ready position, it is not just for the Black Belts to obey the command. It is for everyone from the new White Belt student to the highest ranking Black Belt. Being ready for battle or self defense is for everyone.

We have a saying in martial arts that you can be attacked “anywhere, anytime, by anyone.” That’s why the first lessons in martial arts deal with the importance of being ready to defend.

Here’s how that applies to **defending the faith in your community.**

Defining Terms

“defend” – guard and protect with words and actions; stand up for what you believe; help other people understand what you believe, why you believe it, and why they should believe it through informed answers based on reason

“the faith” – vital beliefs based on truth

“in your community” – your sphere of influence ... family, friends, neighbors, school and work mates, people who serve you in the community, fellow Christians

“every day” – every 24-hour day you are alive

The Apostle Peter wrote to a group of Jewish believers who had gone through some hard times for believing that Jesus was Israel’s promised Messiah. They were moms and dads, boys and girls, grandparents, working people, regular folks – “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” (1 Peter 1:1-2) To this group of “pilgrims,” Peter told them “defend the faith.”

“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be

troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” 1 Peter 3:13-17

The words “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” in the Greek are *hetoimoi aei pros apologian panti to aitounti humas logon peri tes en humin elpidos*.

“be ready” – *hetoimoi* means to be prepared. In a Christian martial arts class, after bowing to God and demonstrating respect to each other in class, we move to a “ready” position call *yoi* (Japanese) or *joon bee* (Korean). The idea in the original languages is being ready, focused, and engaged at all times. Being “ready” is the way a true martial artist lives. It’s not something we do just for class or when the teacher is watching. We are to always “be ready” to defend ourselves or others who may need our help. The same is true for Christians. We are to be “ready” at all times. It is not something we do just for Bible study class or worship time with other believers. We are to be *hetoimoi* at all times.

“to give a defense” – *aei pros apologian* means to give an answer. The Greek legal system included a person who brought a charge against another person and the people who acted as jurors and would vote for or against the one charged. The person who brought the charge or accusation

came ready to give a *kategoria*. That was the list of charges or accusations. The person who answered the charges against him came ready to give an *apologia*. That was the spoken defense the accused would give to the list of charges or accusations.

“to everyone” – *panti to* means every person. Someone trained in self defense is not selective about who they defend themselves against. We are ready to defend against “everyone” who would try to harm us or others. The same is true for Christians. We are ready to give a defense against every person who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us.

“a reason for the hope that is in you” – *logon* or *logos* is translated here as “reason.” It also translates as “word.” The ancient Greek idea of *logos* was that it was a plea, opinion, reason, word, expectation, account. The ancient philosopher Heraclitus used *logos* for a principle of knowledge and order. Jesus Christ is called the eternal *Logos* (see John 1:1-18). The word “hope” is *elpidos*. It is “a confident expectation based on what is certain.” The hope of a Christian is based on the certainty of what God has declared in His Holy Word.

Why would people ask a Christian about the “hope” that is in them? In the case of the “pilgrims” Peter wrote to centuries ago, they were undergoing intense persecution – the kind of persecution that would lead people of lesser faith in their “faith” to give in and say and do whatever the persecutors wanted. Peter, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, called on these persecuted believers to be ready at all times to answer the charges

brought against them – charges that were based on “the hope” that was in them.

If you are reading this today and are under intense persecution for the hope of Christ in you, you know what Peter is talking about. However, the majority of you reading this today are not under intense persecution. You and I live, at least for now, under little if any real persecution for our faith in Christ. So, does this mean we don't need to give anyone an answer until we are under intense persecution? No, we should not wait. We should take advantage of the freedom we have in our world to share reasonable answers for everyone who has questions about Jesus Christ.

Take a piece of paper and make three columns:

Person	Question	Answer
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Write the name of all the people you have contact with on any regular basis. Then, write the questions they have asked about the hope that is in you. Then, pray about the answer(s) you will share with them. This is an important part of your ministry strategy.

It is helpful to see the names of the people God has brought into your life. It may be parents, grandparents, children, friends, neighbors, people at work or school, or people you talk with regularly during the week (e.g. postal workers, store clerks, service people). Having the names of people in your

lives written on a piece of paper helps from their getting lost in the busyness of our lives.

It is also helpful to write their questions next to their names because it reminds us of their spiritual need. How we think about people every day is how we'll treat them every day. If we think about their spiritual needs, we'll address their spiritual needs every time we talk with them. Remember that every person is a "spiritual" being. They are more than physical beings with physical needs only. They are also spiritual with spiritual needs. They have questions, we have answers.

If you see someone with a physical need, what do you do? You help them. If you see someone with a spiritual need, what do you do? You help them. People need answers to spiritual questions even as they need answers to physical questions.

Something to keep in mind is that we are not the only people with answers to spiritual questions. If we don't have good answers to the spiritual questions of people in our lives, someone else may answer their questions with wrong answers. We need to be ready with the right answer to every question that every person asks every day. Sound like a big task? It is.

What should you do if you want to learn how to defend yourself against bullies or armed attackers? Find a good teacher who can train you in **self defense**. What should you do if you want to learn how to give an answer for the hope that is in you? Find a good teacher who can train you in **faith defense**.

Just like trained martial arts instructors, trained apologists stand ready to help you through their books, articles, blogs, podcasts, videos, and speaking. Find some good teachers and get some good answers.

Be ready!

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