

## Interviews with God

•**I ASK:** *'When Is a Home Christian?'*

•**THUS SAITH THE LORD:**

'Therefore shall ye lay up these My words in your heart and in your soul . . . and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.' Deut. 11:18,19.

'Believest on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.' Acts 16:31.

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' Rev. 3:20.

•**TO WHICH I RESPOND:** 'Lord Jesus, I pray that our homes may be places of comfort and of sweet fellowship, but especially do I pray for Thine abiding presence. Be Thou the honoured guest and the constant guide of these earthly dwelling places of ours, and finally receive us into those heavenly mansions which Thou art preparing for Thy faithful followers. Amen.'

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## Genesis 12:1

**GOD CALLS ABRAHAM. — V.1. Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee.**

How would you feel if you had leave your job, sell your house and go to a country you didn't know? That's what happened to 75-year-old Abram and his 65-year-old wife, Sarai.

God gave him a command which imposed upon him a threefold renunciation: Abram was to leave his fatherland, both Haran and Ur of the Chaldees being included in Mesopotamia. He was to forsake the members of his tribe, the other Chaldaic descendants of Shem, all of them now pagan. He was to go forth even from his father's house, that of Terah and his family. The expressions are purposely heaped to indicate that it meant for Abram a complete severing of family ties: leaving everything behind that he had ever held near and dear but his wife, he was to journey, as a stranger, into a land which he did not know.

Why would God do that? Because He has a special future in mind for each him! He told Abram, (Genesis 12:2, 3):

**And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing;  
and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.**

Here are promises of both temporal and spiritual blessings. To the first belongs the fact that Abram's descendants were to be so great in number as to be a great nation. But of far greater importance are the promises that refer to spiritual gifts. For that Abram's name should be great, that the blessing of the Lord should rest upon him, that he should be distinguished so highly among men as to receive the thankful praises and the blessings of men and be shielded against any curse, that in him should be blessed all the families and tribes of the earth, all mankind: all this does not refer to any mere outward wealth which the Lord intended to shower upon Abram.

The blessing rather, as the repetitions and extensions show, chap. 18, 18; 22, 18; 26, 4, indicated that Abram (or Abraham) was to be a source of everlasting spiritual gifts and blessings through his seed, through one descendant in the great and blessed nation which would call him father, namely, through the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Acts 3, 25. 26;

**Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.**

**Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning a way every one of you from his iniquities.**

Gal. 3, 16:

**Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy Seed, which is Christ.**

The prophecy of the Seed of the woman, which had been narrowed down in a general way in the blessing upon Shem, was here given expressly to Abram and to the nation which was to descend from him.

With no hint of resistance, Abram embraced change, trusted God, and reaped the incredible rewards. It's no wonder the Bible calls him the father of faith. To walk with God and fulfil His will you must have a mindset that adapts to change—sometimes costly and uncomfortable change. How do you do it? 'By faith'! (Hebrews 11:8)

Faith in whom? Yourself? Others? No. Faith in the goodness of God through Jesus Christ! When the Lord calls, fear not to follow, remembering 1 Peter 5:7:

**v.7. casting all your care upon Him, for he careth for you.**

In thus bearing the misfortunes, and even the chastisements which fall to their lot, with meekness and patience, the apostle suggests to the Christians: Casting your every care upon Him, for He cares for you. All the cares and worries of this present life, everything that bothers the Christians, in its entirety, and once and for always, they should simply cast upon their heavenly Father, making a recurrence of foolish care and worry impossible. Cp. Ps. 55, 23; Matt. 6, 25-34. If Christians thus, by the prayer of faith, put everything that worries them into the care of their heavenly Father, they will realize and experience the truth of His many promises; they will find out that God takes a personal interest in every one of them, that without His will or permission not a hair of their head will fall to the ground.

Live by the principle: 'Where God guides, He provides.'

Soul Food: 2 Sam 20:1-22:30, Matt 27:11-26, Ps 140, Prov 18:21-22

**Judging**

**I. No One Believes it is wrong to judge**

**II. Judging Forbidden**

**III. Judging Commanded**

### 3 (continued)

#### Judge with righteous judgment

When a Christian lovingly and graciously presents the gospel to unbelievers, a judgment is made regarding their standing with God. The Bible clearly declares that all men are sinners, have fallen short of the glory of God, and are in need of redemption from their sins (Romans 3:23). This judgment is not made from the opinion of the Christian who is presenting the gospel but rather by what the Bible clearly declares.

**v.23. for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;**

As Christians, we should be living godly lives so that we can first concentrate on our own repentance of sin. Sanctification is a lifelong process of growing every day in holiness. Without this, we have no place in helping another brother or sister. What Christ teaches His believers in Matthew 7 is that if we ourselves are not personally repenting of our sins, we are in no place to tell others how sinful they are acting. But the Bible does tell us to preach the Gospel—and part of the gospel message is that people are sinners in need of salvation.

John 7:24:

- **Context: Jesus healed on Sabbath – condemned by the Jews (John 5, 7:23)**
- **Appearance – “Face” (11:49) – First, superficial opinion of a thing.**
- **Basis – Righteousness (Word – principles of Righteousness)**

**V. 24. Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.**

We often hear claims from Christians that we are not to make judgments about other believers.

Scripture provides many examples of how God’s people fell into error, dating back to (and before) the kings of Israel and Judah. Out of the 39 rulers in Israel and Judah after the time of Solomon, only eight of them (1 Kings 1–2, all from Judah) tried to reverse the evil their predecessors had introduced into the kingdom. Only eight of them saw the depravity around them and tried to do something about it.

However, these godly kings had failures as well. These eight kings have their histories tarnished because they failed to take down the high places (*1 Kings 15:11, 14; 22:43; 2 Kings 12:2–3; 14:3–4; 15:3–4, 34–35*). Upon entering Canaan, the Israelites were commanded to destroy everything, including pagan places of worship on high mountains. Rather than destroy them, the Israelites made them into additional worship centres, contrary to what they had been commanded by God. All Christians have their sinful nature which they must keep under close guard.

It is our duty, as faithful Christians, to defend the truth of the Holy Scriptures.

John 8:31, 32:

**Judging Commanded**

- **Judge Righteous Judgement**
- **Judge When One Is In Sin**
- **If One Is Teaching Truth**

**V. 31. If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed;**

**V. 32. and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

As such, we must guard, warn, and condemn all error. We are often told that we are unloving and that we should not be making judgments about others by pointing out errors.

Some people take offense and say that as believers, we should focus on loving others and not be divisive. We are, however, divisive if we do *not* correct error. Are we working toward the “unity of the faith” (*Ephesians 4:13*), or are we compromising God’s Word by allowing for the world’s “wisdom”? We must establish our foundation in the truth of God’s Word and not our own philosophies, making God the authority over our life. Having the right foundation will help us to know the difference between truth and lies as well as right and wrong. Paul explained the need for truth and the divisive nature of lies in the following passage:

Ephesians 4:

**“v.5. one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.”**

It is then our duty to:

1. Try the Spirits- whether of God:  
1 John 4:1-6:

**V.1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.**

**V.2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God;**

**v.3. and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.**

**V.4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.**

**V.5. They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.**

**V.6. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error.**

2. Reject if they do not bring pure doctrine:

2 John 9-11:

**V.9. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.**

**V.10. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God- speed;**

**v.11. for he that biddeth him God- speed is partaker of his evil deeds.**

Ephesians 4:14–16:

**v.14. that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive;**

**v.15. but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ,**

**v.16. from whom the whole body, fitly joined and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**

Are we acting in love if we allow our fellow brethren to remain in error and even deceive others? Of course not. Loving others requires that we graciously correct them when they fall into error

Matthew 18:

**V. 15. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.**

**V. 16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.**

**V. 17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.**

Galatians 6:1:

A warning against self-exaltation:

**V.1. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**

Those who err do not necessarily know they are in error; they are possibly deceived or ignorant. So we gently and carefully correct the error in regard to teaching, no matter what the situation. After all, this is one of the responsibilities of the church: to teach sound doctrine and correct erroneous teaching

2 Timothy 3:16:

**V.16. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

**v.17. that the man of God may be perfect (fully kitted out, prepared), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**

We have to use discernment (judging between right and wrong) if we are to obey verses like

2 Thessalonians 3:6:

**V.6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition (instruction) which he received of us.**

1 Timothy 6:20:

**V.20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called;**

and Titus 3:9, just to name a few.

**V.9. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the Law; for they are unprofitable and vain.**

**V.10. A man that is an heretic (who chooses to be different), after the first and second admonition reject,**

**v.11. knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.**

(Beck verse 11):

**“...because you know such a man is set in his wrong way and is a sinner who condemns himself.”**

We need to be careful in this approach, however, as we are all fallible human beings who can make mistakes in judgment. We should find out the whole story and not base our judgment on appearances. Jesus stated, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Notice the Lord’s command to judge. But before we make that judgment, we must make sure we are judging righteously from God’s Word and not relying on our own opinion.

It’s also important when discussing such difficult issues to explain, as a Christian, why we take the stand we do. For instance, when asked about same-sex marriage, we can explain that Christians should build their thinking on the Bible, and therefore we should go to God’s Word to see what He clearly instructs us. Then we use His Word to make a judgment about the issue. We can also acknowledge that if someone does not believe that God’s Word is the foundation for their worldview, then we can understand why they disagree. So, we have two different starting points (or foundations), and thus two different worldviews that conflict and therefore make judgments of each other.

But in every instance, we as Christians must stress that all sin can be forgiven in the work of Christ on the Cross.

We make judgments on various teachings and ideas every day, including our own. The biblical mentality of making judgments applies to any situation where a person is openly committing an error against God and His Word—whether that person is living in sin, such as adultery or homosexual behaviour, or compromising God’s Word and causing others to stumble and doubt His Word. We even make judgments of our children’s actions as we

work to help them see their sinful condition before God, and point them to the Gospel, in order that they might be saved and grow in obedience to God and His Word.

The key is making righteous judgments so that we can point people to the Gospel. God's Word gives us a clear standard to abide by, and the Holy Spirit guides us in what is right, wrong, true, and false. In order to make judgments righteously, we should be striving to live righteously and allowing the Word of God to be our foundation in every area of our thinking.

### **Conclusion: Biblical Perspective of "Judge Not"**

Those people who call for tolerance and quote "judge not" out of context are not using sound thinking. Their call for tolerance is impossible because as Christians, we are called to judge righteously, and judging between right and wrong is something we do every day—and it should be a part of biblical discernment in every believer's thinking. But it is God's Word that makes the judgment on morality and truth, not our own opinions or theories.

What's the purpose of judging error in a biblical manner? The church is to be built on the foundation of Christ and the authority of His Word (*Ephesians 2:20*)—and that means believers should examine their own lives regularly and also lovingly

challenge Christian brothers and sisters who are in error or unrepentantly commit sin. To do this, believers must be bold for Christ, but they also have to be humble, loving, and kind. Keep these things in mind as you strive daily to maintain unity in the truth of Christ

John 17:20–26:

**V. 20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word,**

**V. 21. that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.**

**V. 22. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one:**

**V. 23. I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.**

**V. 24. Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.**

**V. 25. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.**

**V. 26. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them.**

## **Christians Should Never Offend Anyone**

### **Clearing Up Misconceptions**

(Based on an article by Jeremy Ham on January 25, 2011 from <https://answersingenesis.org/>)

*Do Christians need to avoid offending anyone? What does Paul mean when he says to "give no offense in anything"?*

### **Clearing Up Misconceptions**

Over time, many beliefs with little to no Biblical basis have crept into common Christian thinking. In this current world, offending someone seems rather easy. We probably have all offended or hurt someone's feelings, whether it was intentional or not. Is the belief that Christians should never offend anyone a biblical guideline? This supposed guideline could be a result of ideas like the following:

- We need to avoid offending our weaker brother.
- We should not offend non-Christians because we might lose the opportunity to witness.
- Paul stated that we should never offend anyone: "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed" (2 Corinthians 6:3).

The example of Paul in the midst of difficulties: V.3. **Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed;**

(Paul here sets forth his own example, partly in vindication of his own conduct, partly with the intention of stimulating emulation. He conducts himself so that he gives no one an occasion for stumbling, since any deliberate act of that kind would have reacted upon the Gospel. He could not indeed hinder the self-righteous and self-conceited from taking offense at the Word of the Cross and blaspheming both the office and its ministers, 1 Cor. 4, 12. 13. But he made use of the most untiring vigilance in doctrine and life, lest some one should find a reason for censuring him; he took heed to himself in the most scrupulous manner, lest on his account some one should stumble and fall). After close examination, we will not only find the guideline of never offending anyone to be unbiblical, but we will also find the supposed biblical ideas used to support it are unbiblical. Taking Scripture out of context to support an idea can be very easy to do, and so we must carefully examine all ideas with Scripture.

If we are defending and living the truth of God's Word, is it possible to always avoid offending a weaker brother or a non-Christian, and should that be our focus? This article explains why never offending anyone is not a biblical guideline.

## What Does It Mean to Offend Someone?

Before discussing the belief that we should never offend anyone, we need to define what we mean by "offend." If we offend someone, we did something that causes a person to get upset or hurt. While true, this definition is vague and does not give any principles on how to avoid offending someone. The best way to understand the definition of this word is to look at some examples.

One common example from Scripture of an offense is the eating of food that had been sacrificed to idols. Paul wrote the following: (1 Corinthians 8:6-9)

**v. 6. but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him.**

The weak in faith defile their conscience: **V. 7. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.**

**V. 8. But meat commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.**

Based on Scripture, we need to be wary of becoming a stumbling block to others (see also *Luke 17:1-4*).

On offenses: **V. 1. Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come; but woe unto him through whom they come!**

**V. 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea than that he should offend one of these little ones.**

Concerning forgiveness: **V. 3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.**

**V. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.**

Another way to offend is by getting non-Christians angry not only at us but also at Christianity. For example, imagine driving and unintentionally cutting a non-Christian off in traffic. The person cut off would probably get angry. Furthermore, if the car had a Christian bumper sticker, the person might

also get mad at Christianity. As Christians, we need to strive to have the utmost integrity in all areas, including driving (*Titus 2:7*).

**v.7. in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,**

### What About 2 Corinthians 6:3?

Some have pointed to *2 Corinthians 6:3* to justify the belief that we should never offend anyone. Paul wrote, "We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed." In other words, Paul said he would not offend anybody in anything, right?

Well, the word translated "offense" is *προσκοπήν* (*proskopen*), and it refers to an obstacle, difficulty, or stumbling block (the same word is used in *1 Corinthians 10:32*). This is perfectly consistent with Paul's earlier statement to the Corinthians, which warned about becoming a stumbling block to others (*1 Corinthians 8:9*).

**A warning against the reckless use of Christian liberty:** V. 9. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak.

### Are There Instances Where Offending Someone Is Okay?

When we read Scripture about not being a stumbling block to your weaker brother or about having the utmost integrity, we must be careful not to extrapolate unscriptural ideas. A closer look at Scripture reveals that if we follow and proclaim the truth of Scripture, we will inevitably offend people!

**IF WE FOLLOW AND PROCLAIM THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE, WE WILL INEVITABLY OFFEND PEOPLE!**

In *Galatians 5:11*, Paul stated that he was being persecuted for not preaching circumcision. Instead of preaching circumcision, he was preaching the Cross, which was an offense to those who still held to the law of circumcision. The Greek word translated "offense" in this verse is *σκάνδαλον* (*skandalon*), a noun referring to that which causes offense and arouses opposition.

Sadly, even today some people hold to laws rather than the saving knowledge of the Cross. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples. To accomplish that goal, we need to spread the word about Jesus, and we will inevitably run into people that are offended by this message (*1 Corinthians 1:18, 23*).

**V. 18. For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.**

**v. 23. but we preach Christ Crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness,**

**v. 24. but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.**

**V. 25. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

When Jesus spoke with the Pharisees, He was more concerned with the truth than their feelings. Jesus spoke the truth, which often aggravated the Pharisees because it conflicted with their beliefs. At one point, the disciples even came to Jesus and told Him the Pharisees were offended by what He had been saying (*Matthew 15:12*). Jesus answered that the Pharisees' failure to see the truth right in front of them would be their downfall. Jesus continued to spread the truth, even when it offended people.

This Psalm gives insight into the hearts of atheists by stating that "they are in great fear, for God is with the generation of the righteous."

**V. 5. There were they in great fear,** (namely, at the time when the thunder of Jehovah's wrath hurls them down, they cringe and cower in terror when His judgment approaches); **for God is in the generation of the righteous,** (He protects and governs His children and brings about their complete

victory over their enemies. The attitude of the unbelievers at such a time is the same as that of the Egyptians when the Lord troubled them, Ex. 14, 24, 25).

Why would they be afraid if they believe there is no God? In reality, they do not want to acknowledge God and be accountable to Him for all their deeds. For the Christian not to offend atheists, they would have to base their faith on man's word rather than God's Word. Obviously, this would require us to compromise our Christian beliefs.

Someone once said he was offended and his feelings deeply hurt when his doctor gently told him that he had leukemia. Was it unloving of the doctor to announce this offensive news? Not at all! This was the most loving thing the oncologist could have done for him so that he would not only recognize what was wrong with him but he could also seek a cure. If the doctor remained silent because he was afraid of offending him, then he would have died. In the same way, we must never remain silent for fear of offending the unbeliever when we have an opportunity to share the only truth that can save them from an eternity apart from God.

In all of these instances, the truth is what offended people. Paul taught in *Ephesians 6:14* that a Christian's foundation is the truth of God. Therefore, Christians will offend certain people if they are living by God's truth.

## Conclusion

As Christians, we need to have the utmost integrity in all areas and be careful not to be a stumbling block to a fellow Christian. We should make every effort to live at peace with others (*Romans 12:18*).

**If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**

We must live by the truth of God's Word, and those people who are living contrary to the truth often take offence at the faith of a Christian. Non-Christians may be offended as well. After all, the message of the gospel declares that they are sinners who need to repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ. In a sense, we need to offend unbelievers in order to witness to them!

Although we cannot keep people from getting offended, we should make sure that it is the truth that offends rather than our attitude, actions, or approach. We must follow biblical principles in all areas. At times, offending is wrong, and at other times, it is necessary. As we spread the truth of God's Word, we should do so in love, humility, and boldness, making sure we are living by the truth.



## Prov. 26:4-5. Answering fools' folly

by [David Catchpoole](#)

<https://creation.com/answering-fools-folly>

“For many Christians today, it might seem that the Bible uses quite harsh language to describe certain of their friends and loved ones—those who don’t believe in God. It calls them ‘fools’:

‘**The fool**, (the spiritually worthless, the madman in things pertaining to his soul's salvation), **hath said in his heart, There is no God**’. (A person who denies the existence of God is truly foolish, filled with madness; he denies the evidences of his own senses, he deliberately silences the voice of his own conscience). Ps. 14:1 (also Ps.53:1)

“Similarly in Rom. 1:18–32, people who deny God as Creator—despite ubiquitous evidence (evidence found everywhere) of His handiwork<sup>1</sup>—no matter how ‘wise’ they (or others) might think they are, actually thereby “become fools”, and their “foolish hearts” are darkened.

“But this doesn’t mean we are to love them any less. On the contrary, we are to “have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire” (Jude 22–23a, paraphrased by author, TJW). We are to “be ready always to give an answer” to those who question us about our faith, and to do this with “meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

**“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”**

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’—Psalm 14:1.

“Now, I confess that for my first 12 years as a Christian (i.e. since I abandoned atheism and professed in my mid-20s that I would henceforth follow Jesus), I don’t think I *ever* “gave an answer” to *anyone*—even when I was ridiculed by certain of my atheist friends for ‘having become religious’.

“But all that changed after I attended a creation seminar in 1997. Suddenly I could see that the Bible provides believers with a powerful explanatory framework to enable them to give an answer to the questions and challenges from atheists and other non-Christians.

“Instead of my self-consciously cringing internally whenever someone asked about my faith, **my one-on-one conversations with non-believers became *fun and exciting***—not least because of the potential eternal benefits for them! I’d like to recount here one such conversation, not just because it was tremendously encouraging and memorable for me, but also because in hindsight I can see I unwittingly brought into play a number of scriptural injunctions relating to evangelism, including ones that atheists wrongly say are contradictory: Proverbs 26:4 and 5.

“**V. 4. Answer not a fool according to his folly,** (by putting oneself on a level with him in speech and actions), **lest thou also be like unto him,** (be placed in the same class with him by decent and intelligent people).

“**V. 5. Answer a fool according to his folly,** (a sharp and decisive answer being framed to meet foolish remarks), **lest he be wise in his own conceit,** (filled with the notion that he really possesses wisdom).

“The conversation extended unbroken for more than three hours during a commercial airline flight from the northern Australian city of Darwin to Brisbane on the east coast.

### From Darwin to ... Christ?

Little did Rebecca realize that when she boarded the plane to Brisbane, she would not only be leaving Darwin *city*, but perhaps also *Darwinism*.

The young lady seated next to me, with classic Northern Territorian forwardness, introduced herself.

“Rebecca was aged about 15 years and was clearly extremely intelligent, having placed highly in national science competitions. So it wasn’t long before we were discussing ‘science and religion’ issues. She was upfront about her atheist views, believing evolution, and was aghast to learn of my conversion from atheism to biblical Christianity (6,000-year-old universe and all that) ‘despite’ my having a Ph.D. (Yet another demonstration that the mere *existence* of Bible-believing Ph.D. scientists is confronting to atheists!)

“Suddenly I could see that the Bible provides believers with a powerful explanatory framework to enable them to give an answer ...

“During our wide-ranging discussion, Rebecca spoke of her desire to study veterinary science, so as to be equipped to fulfil her Jane-Goodall-like passion for nursing endangered primate species such as the gorilla and gibbon back to health.

“I said, “Wait a minute. In an evolutionary survival-of-the-fittest world they’re our competitors! Why should we squander resources on looking after animals of no use to us and which cannot possibly compete with man, and are going to die anyway? Not only does it make no sense, but you’re a traitor to your own species!”

“Rebecca paled, and leaning back dejectedly, said, “When I boarded this flight, I knew who I was, I knew exactly what to think, but now ... I’m not so sure any more about what to believe—and on top of that, you’ve now taken away my reason for living ...”

“I replied, “Whoa right there! Time out! What I just put to you was according to *your* view of origins, not mine. I believe the Bible’s account of origins. Your desire to care for sick animals is completely illogical within an evolutionary framework, but is *absolutely* consistent with what the Bible says—that God has given man dominion over the creation [Genesis 1:28]. So it makes complete

sense that God would put into your heart a passion for looking after His sick and hurting creatures in this cursed and fallen world.”

“Clearly that hit home, for Rebecca then said, “I want to hear more.”

“The commercial airlines flight from Darwin to Brisbane takes four hours, thus providing *plenty* of time and opportunity for *meaningful in-flight conversation!*

“And so our conversation continued. I ‘gave an answer’ to her increasingly intense questions about life, the universe and everything.

“At the end of the flight, as the plane taxied to a halt, I said as nonchalantly as I could, “Well, I don’t suppose you’ve converted to Christianity yet?”

“Rebecca looked straight back at me, and answered softly, yet firmly, “I am very, very close.”

“As you might imagine, Rebecca’s closing comment and her undertaking (insistence!) that she would buy her own Bible to read it for herself, left me invigorated.

“After disembarking, as I mentally replayed our conversation, I became aware that I had unwittingly applied the advice of both Proverbs 26:4 and 26:5:

“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.”—Proverbs 26:4

“Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.”—Proverbs 26:5

“Some sceptics like to mock these verses as being ‘contradictory’, as if the author was stupid enough to put genuinely contradictory sentences together, although it was obviously *intentional*.<sup>6</sup>

“When telling Rebecca she was a ‘traitor’ to her own species, it was right in line with verse 5—I had seized an opportunity (Colossians 4:5–6) to expose the folly of the evolutionary paradigm. And once Rebecca had got that point (“you’ve now taken away my reason for living”), my hasty correction and supplanting of that folly with the wisdom that comes from God’s Word was right in line with verse 4.

“‘I want to hear more’—Rebecca, upon being shown that her desire to care for sick animals is God-given.

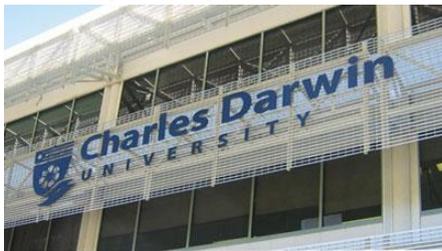
And look at the result—an avowed atheist evolutionist at the start of the flight had dramatically shifted ground during the course of a single conversation. She had gone from shock at my believing the Bible, to saying “I want to hear more”—a nice example of what can be achieved by adopting the Apostle Paul’s strategy when addressing Greek-thinkers of *going back to origins*. “We want to hear you again on this subject”—Acts 17:16–34.”

“Notice the importance of applying *both* verse 4 *and* verse 5. It would not have been enough if I had merely made my ‘traitor’ remark. That would have limited me to arguing *without* the Bible—in which case I would have sadly been just like the one I was arguing with! Unfortunately, many Christians erroneously think they can argue against evolution (or other issues like gay ‘marriage’ or abortion) using *only* the evolutionists’ own presuppositions. In other words, tacitly agreeing to the evolutionists’ terms of the debate: “Keep the Bible out of it!”

“No, instead we have to show others that logical thinking is only possible when built on the Bible. So, when it comes to applying these two verses from Proverbs 26, it’s a case of *both/and*, not *either/or*. They are not contradictory instructions, but complementary.

### Scripture—a great guide to evangelism!

“It’s hard to escape from the commemoration of the name of Charles Darwin if you live in the capital city of Australia’s Northern Territory. Formerly known as Palmerston, it was



renamed Darwin in 1911. (When visiting its harbour in 1839, the captain of the *Beagle* had named the region ‘Port Darwin’ in honour of his former shipmate.) And the Northern Territory University was also renamed, in 2003, to Charles Darwin University. One of the newer parks with views of Darwin is called Charles Darwin National Park. Even the private sector has joined the fad,

with a new luxury high-rise tower dubbed the Evolution Building.

“In talking one-on-one with Rebecca, I had opportunity to speak to her personal hopes and ambitions, knowing that God cares about these: (Psalm 37:4, 1 Peter 5:7). Her desire to nurse sick animals was a *good* thing, which had come from God (1 Timothy 4:4). But as long as she entertained evolutionary ideas of origins, her thinking would be illogically “divided

against itself”, “unable to stand”, i.e. unsustainable. I invited her to choose instead to “cling to the good” (Romans 12:9).

“Was I disappointed she hadn’t yet gone as far as receiving Christ? Well ... that would’ve been great, but the Scriptures remind us that none of us works alone (1 Corinthians 3:6), and that prayer is crucial (Acts 26:29, Romans 10:1). We can have the satisfaction of knowing that God knows His sheep (John 6:44), and our labours in these matters are not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

“Certainly, I had the satisfaction of seeing with my own eyes someone who, in boarding that plane to Brisbane, left Darwin behind—not just the city, but hopefully also the ideas of the man after whom it was named. I pray that many others, too, will leave evolutionary ideas behind and instead embrace Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).”



