

How Good is YOUR DEFENSE? *By Dr. Nick Venditti*



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During the Thanksgiving holiday there was a knock on the door – two women with briefcases and magazines. My first inclination was to not open the door. It was Thanksgiving. I would rather watch a football game than speak to two Jehovah’s Witnesses trying to convince people to become part of their religious group. *They teach a different gospel and a deficient Christ so it is a waste of time,* I thought to myself. But then, what would Jesus do?

For the next half hour we exchanged Scriptures and beliefs. They wanted to convince me that Jesus was God’s first created being. He could not be God since He prayed to God. They cunningly used the Scriptures relating to Christ’s humanity in the Gospels to explain away the other verses that demonstrate Jesus Christ is one hundred percent God and one hundred percent human. Their position is not new; the Church has been fighting this heresy since her early years.

Upon their departure, one of the women said, “I do not agree with you and you did not convince me; however, I must admit that you know the Bible better than 95 percent of the people we talk to.” I wondered to myself how many believers in our churches could talk with people from this religious group and not be overwhelmed by their prepared script and use of Scripture. Sadly, I would dare say very few. This is why INSTE Bible College exists –

to equip believers to know the Bible and the God of the Bible.

In INSTE (Institute of Theology by Extension) we target four global challenges to our Christian faith in this 21st century: urbanization, poverty, secularism, and Islam. The first challenge, urbanization, is illustrated by the fact

that at the beginning of the 20th century only 11 cities worldwide had a million people. Now there are over 300. By 2025, the number of people living in urban areas is projected to double to more than 5 billion.

The number of megacities (cities with at least 8 million inhabitants) rose from just 2 in 1950 (New York and London) to 23 in 1995, with 17 of them in the developing world. By 2015, the number is projected to grow to

36. Twenty-three of these megacities will be located in Asia. Cities are centers of influence, in such areas as government, entertainment, education, trade, health care, industry, information, and warfare. Believers must be there and exercise their ministry of “being salt and light to the world.”

The next challenge is poverty. An estimated 25 percent to 50 percent of urban inhabitants in developing countries live in impoverished slums and squatter

settlements, with little or no access to adequate water, sanitation, or refuse collection. Millions of abandoned children live in the streets, perpetuating the cycle of suffering, crime, and despair.



Nick preached to 30 children, including this young boy, in India. His group also fed the children.



INSTE graduates in the Philippines



Kevin Boyland, a 2006 Level One graduate from First Church of the Open Bible in Waterloo, Iowa, shares from the Word.

One-half of the population of the two-thirds developing world is comprised of children and teenagers.

The Bible is clear that the poor, widows, and orphans are close to the heart of God. The promise of the Year of Jubilee is “good news” to the poor (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:17-21). Apologetics is not just about winning an argument. It is living a life reflecting Jesus and biblical values in word (what we say) and deed (what we do). It begins with conversion to Christ and discipleship. Roger S. Greenway, Professor Emeritus in Missions at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, put it this way: “If we wipe out poverty but neglect to tell the poor the Good News about Jesus Christ, we will have failed in our mission. And if we preach the gospel but ignore the plight of the poor, we are false prophets.”

Secularization is the de-Christianization of society. Secularists generally deny God and miracles, accept evolution as a fact and matter as eternal, exalt human potential, and proclaim there is no absolute truth. Secularism relegates religion to the periphery, to private devotion. Nothing can be further from the truth. God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He uses His people for His purposes. He is not absent from everyday life. Christians need to respond to the claims of a secularized society with biblical alternatives and lifestyles.

The last and perhaps the greatest challenge to the Church in the 21st century is Islam. To face this challenge it is important to know what Muslims believe. Generally speaking, Muslims believe in the supernatural, the virgin birth of Christ, Allah as Creator, heaven and hell, and Jesus as one of many prophets. There are the five pillars of Islam, including the confession of faith: “Allah is God and

Mohammed is His prophet.” They also pray, fast, give alms, and when possible, make a pilgrimage to Mecca during their lifetime. Muslims do not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ or original sin, so there is no need for a Savior. They believe Christ did not die on the cross. Muslims also believe the Bible has been corrupted and understand the Trinity as three gods.

Most important in facing this challenge is to know the Word of God. The best antidote to falsehood is the truth. Presenting apologetics to Muslims has to start with prayer so they will be open to listen. Friendship evangelism is essential whenever possible. Building a relationship is key. Knowing and understanding their belief system is necessary in order to present the Gospel in a coherent fashion.

In conclusion, let us make the words of the Apostle Peter a part of our everyday life: “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” (1 Peter 3:15, NKJV). Our mission in INSTE is to help churches make disciples and develop leaders. Over the years we have had more than 55,000 enrollments in the United States. Internationally, it is more than double that number. Partner with us in your church to train and equip the saints for the works of service. Let us continue to work together in preparing our people to know and live the truth in Jesus Christ. As we continue to live out our lives may we be able to show others in our context the hope of knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. This is the greatest apologetic argument.

