

History's Best Argument - "Love One Another"

Arlie Francis

Disciple Daily

One of the very first books I was given as a new believer was Josh McDowell's, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Truth be known, I have always enjoyed the give-and-take that occurs between two people arguing a point to establish what is true. I guess you could say that I like to debate an issue with other people. That's a polite way of saying I'm prone to argument, and I like to win!

Recently, an apologetics seminar was held in my hometown of San Antonio, Texas. I was surprised at the size and diversity of the audience in attendance. Much information was given about how believers in Messiah Jesus can make an adequate defense of what it is they profess to believe before those that are resistant to the Gospel.

It is extremely important for Christians to know what they believe and why they believe it. Both Paul and Peter have something to say on this matter. Because the gospel is always to be presented to the Jew first, let's start with Peter's instruction.

Writing to a largely Jewish audience, Peter said this:

Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. - 1st Peter 3:13-16

Paul instructed Timothy, the young pastor of the Church at Ephesus:

Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. - 2 Timothy 2:14-15

Put together, these two passages represent a correspondence of ideas we would all do well to remember. There is a correlation between knowledge of the Word and how that is reflected in the actions of a believer. It is the actions of believers that the unbelieving world takes note of first. Once that has happened, the reasons for our behavior can be most effectively used to illustrate the "why" of what it is that they have seen.

All believers should be able to make a presentation of their beliefs in an orderly fashion. But what most of us here probably want more than anything else is to have an argument that is irrefutable. We want a defense that is so solid, it simply cannot be defeated. No way, no how!

The Witness of the Earliest Church

I believe that a case can be made that it was the visible witness of the earliest Church that caused the entire world to take notice of what God was doing in their midst. This happened in a very short period of time. What was the composition of the Body of Messiah at that time? Following the conversion of Cornelius, it was made up of Jews and Gentiles who labored together. It was their unified love for their Jewish Master that was so effective.

On the final night of His life, Yeshua told his disciples what was going to happen to Him and what their future would look like. We all know this passage in John 14-17 as the Upper Room Discourse. Here is one of my favorite portions from this section.

Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." - John 13:33-35

This is the kind of defense for our faith we have been looking for! Francis Schaeffer wrote in *The Great Evangelical Disaster*: “Without true Christians loving one another, Christ says the world cannot be expected to listen, even when we give proper answers. Let us be careful, indeed, to spend a lifetime studying to give honest answers. For years the orthodox, evangelical church has done this very poorly. So it is well to spend time learning to answer the questions of men who are about us. But after we have done our best to communicate to a lost world, still we must never forget that the final apologetic which Jesus gives is the observable love of true Christians for true Christians.”

For Jesus' first disciples, it must have come as quite a shock that their Teacher expected them to love one another so deeply that it would be the very proof of His Messiahship. Let's face it, they were still arguing with each other on the night before He gave Himself as the sacrificed lamb. They had a hard time loving one another even though some of them had actually grown up together. Who knows? Maybe this is why they fought with each other so often. Yet, Jesus expected more, so much more.

Following His resurrection, Jesus' closest friends were told that they were to go out into the entire world and make disciples of all the nations. They must have looked at one

another incredulously. “Did He say we were supposed to go to the Gentiles and share this news with them also?” That’s exactly what He said.

Remembering “*If you love Me, you will keep my commandments,*” they obeyed even though it was very uncomfortable for them. Throughout the Roman Empire they went. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was the most prolific. Paul never forgot that he was a Jew, and that it was to the Jews that the Scriptures had been entrusted. Everywhere he went, his first stop was at the synagogue. Very quickly however, he began to make inroads with the Gentiles of Asia Minor and Europe.

It is undeniable that in those first years of the Church, Jews and Gentiles loved and served the Lord together in common fellowship. So strong was their love for one another that in less than 200 years the power of their love could not be denied, not even by the Roman Empire itself.

Satan’s Attack on Unity

Where was it that Satan first attacked God's plan for HIStory? Genesis three explains that the first battle for the souls of mankind occurred in the union between Adam and Eve. Because of his awareness of this spiritual war in the background, Paul directed the attention of the Ephesians to the most intimate of all relationships, that of husbands and wives.

Have you ever considered how through the earliest Church a community of Jews and Gentiles united together revolutionized the institution of marriage?

Think about the ancient world and it’s perception of the value and importance of women and children. In this area, there was no distinction between Jewish and Gentile men. Of course, this was not God’s intention. It is the result of a corruption in the Garden of Eden. Behind the division there was (and is still) a common enemy.

Whether pagan or Jew, the common misperception was that to be the “head of the house”, was to be a ruler of his spouse. Strangely, Adam had failed to provide leadership and protection for Eve, his wife. And yet, ever since that day, men have attempted to demand authority in the home by what they say, rather than what they do.

Prior to Messiah Jesus, wives in Jewish households and in much of the pagan world were not perceived as equals in any way to their husbands. In most households, she was little more than another possession. A man’s wife existed to serve his needs. If for any reason she failed to do so, it was fully proper to put her away, to divorce her.

Strangely, the contemporary implications of Ephesians 5 throughout much of Christendom today reflect a corruption built on Paul's efforts in healing the after effects

of the first dysfunctional marriage. Is it really true that a woman can only find fulfillment and meaning in life through her fulfillment of duty as a wife and mother? On the flip side, what about women who completely abandon their responsibilities in this arena because they think they are missing out on all that men have enjoyed in another?

Yeshua changed all of this. Through the power of the Holy Spirit given at Shavuot, in the ancient world Jews and Gentiles began to provide a revolutionary example of what marriage was intended to be from the very beginning. Women began to be seen as complete equals in every area of life. Men were given the role of “headship”, but only as modeled after Christ’s own loving servant leadership for His own Bride, the Church.

Ephesians 5:25 - 27: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; or no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

How strange it must have been for unbelieving Jews and Gentiles to start seeing in the now unified Body of Messiah men treating their wives in this manner. Can you imagine the conversations that must have occurred in the neighborhoods where believers lived together among the lost?

Not only did this form of loving leadership by the man of the house create previously unexperienced personal benefits, it also had evangelistic implications. This kind of "headship" focused attention on a superior way of life. In Ephesians 5:27, Messiah Jesus is portrayed as giving Himself up for the Church to present her to Himself without stain, wrinkle, or any kind of blemish. What a radical concept! These were truly visible expressions that there is now no distinction between “male and female” in the Body of Messiah. Wives were transformed from being simply another male appendage, to being viewed by their community as having inherent worth of their own. In the home and in the community, she became the primary focus of her husband’s love, a concern that came before all other human relationships!

In a male dominated world, Jewish and Gentile husbands, jointly serving as slaves of their Jewish Master, began living to serve their wives as an expression of their common love for Him! This had never happened before at any time throughout human existence. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God gave Jewish and Gentile husbands a new unified understanding in Messiah about what marriage could look like to the rest of the world. Together, their united example caused many to ask two questions:

Why are they so different?
Could we have that kind of marriage, too?

So, if the world could see the difference Messiah made in the relationship between men and women who are married as an expression of their love for Messiah, could the loving union of Jew and Gentile have the same effect?

This Is Personal!

God has brought into my life an event in the last couple of months that has caused me to think more deeply about what could be the most important argument we could have when sharing the Gospel with anyone, Jewish people included. The events that occurred during the last group I took to Israel have provided a huge paradigm shift in my thinking. This has become very personal to me and I want to tell you why.

By nature, I am private person. There are not many people that I trust enough to call “friend”. I have become even more careful of this in recent years. David Kidron was my friend. He was also the guide I have used in Israel exclusively for many years. Five days before our tour was finished, David had to leave the group because of a rapidly escalating respiratory illness. I was notified by his wife just twelve hours after my group had arrived back home on January 19th that he had been rushed to the hospital, and that he was in a coma following cardiac arrest. He died on January 28, 2013 at 2:30 AM. David is survived by his loving wife Sylvia and also by his adult children; Dalit, Shemi, and Keren.

The son of Jewish parents who fled Poland before World War II broke out, David was born in Siberia. Following the war, the Kidron’s made the decision to go to Israel. While waiting, they lived in a displaced persons camp called Hofgeismar, where his father was the principal of the school.

Teaching was in David’s blood. The place where this found expression was in his vocation. David was a tour guide in Israel for over 35 years. During that time he honed his teaching craft, blessing many with his knowledge of Israel, the Jewish people, and the Bible. He was the personal guide of some of the most prominent names in all of Christendom including Chuck Smith and Charles Swindoll. Our first tour together was in 2001. At that time he was not working much due to the cancellation of tours with the eruption of violence following Ariel Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount. He took my little group just to help pay the bills.

It is clear that God put us together for a number of purposes, one of which was my own continuing education. There was a comfortable give-and-take in our conversations both privately and with my group members. They sensed the camaraderie between us and were drawn to him the same as I had been.

Throughout the years, David and I had many serious conversations away from the ears of our group members, not the least of which was about the person of Yeshua. A number of these conversations were initiated by the love that David observed being expressed in tangible ways by the members of my groups. This was a love of believers for each other and also for the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Three events stand out.

Patt Junction Bombing and the Survival of the Jewish People

On the morning of June 18, 2002, at 7:50 A.M., a Palestinian suicide bomber from Bethlehem boarded Egged Line's 32A bus, which had just come from the Gilo neighborhood where David and Sylvia lived. It stopped in Beit Safafa, an adjacent Arab neighborhood of Jerusalem. The bomber exploded himself immediately.

At that very moment, David and I were boarding our own tour bus, preparing for a day in the Negev. Almost immediately I knew something was wrong as David and our driver listened intently to the radio and spoke together in hushed tones of concern. All day long I watched as David attempted to gather news about what had happened at the bus stop just a short walking distance from his home.

Needless to say, the atmosphere on our bus was heavy as both Jewish and Gentile believers grappled to understand the evil nature of the attack. Nineteen people were brutally murdered. Another 74 were severely wounded and hospitalized.

Following dinner that evening, David and I sat on the porch outside his room at the kibbutz where we were spending the night. He said to me, "Arlie, when I go home, I'm going to see flowers on the front porches of people who died today that I knew. Many of those in the hospital are children who were on their way to school. What will I say to those families?"

At this point I had not known David for very long, but I knew enough about him to be able to say, "You know more about the Bible than most people who travel with you, including many pastors. Tragedy can be seen throughout the entire Bible. The only way to explain this kind of heinous crime is to understand the war that exists between God and Satan. This was the act of an age old Satanic evil known as anti-semitism. Satan wants to destroy the Jewish people. The reason for this goes far beyond the physical things of this world. The answers to this problem can only be found in Yeshua, God's only Son, the Jewish Messiah of the whole world. The very act of this evil is evidence of that war and a strong argument for Jewish belief in Messiah Jesus. In spite of all of Satan's attacks on the Jewish people throughout all of history, your people continue to survive."

He was quiet, and so was I.

The next morning, I could hear the discussions of my group members behind me on the bus. “Is there anything that we could do to be a blessing to these people at this terrible time?” David was asked what might be possible. He had no answer. A little while later, the leader of the group asked me, “What about blood, would it be possible for our group members to give blood for those that need it?”

We called Samuel Smadja, who many of you know, and asked if he could make that happen. The morning after we arrived in Jerusalem, nineteen life-givers entered a Magen David center and volunteered to give blood. The donors that day were both Jews and Gentiles whose lives have been redeemed by our Jewish Savior. The technicians in the clinic had all kinds of questions about who we were, and what we were doing there. Each one of us had thought about what we would say should questions come. And they did!

When we were finished, I found David outside near our bus, smoking his pipe. He turned and looked at me and said, “I have never seen anything like that in my life.” I replied, “The only hope for any of us is found in the blood, the blood of Jesus.” What God did through the loving actions of the people on that tour had a significant impact on my friend.

Luke 7:1-10

A centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him; for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.”

The account of this event comes to us from the eyewitness testimony collected by the good doctor Luke. He interviewed Jewish and Gentile believers who provided the information he recorded for us. I am certain that like any good reporter, Luke gathered corroborating testimony from those who had witnessed these events, Jew and Gentile alike.

Roman soldiers swore allegiance to Rome and its gods. Not the least of these was the emperor himself. Who was this man that loved the Jewish people so much that out of his own pocket he funded the building of Capernaum's synagogue, a building whose very foundation may still be seen in Capernaum to this day? Were there others like him? What did it cost them to be admirers and supporters of the mono-theistic faith of the Jews.

One of the primary motivations of Claudius' edict in 49 A.D that all Jews be expelled

from Rome was the influence they were having on the pagan traditions. As previously pagan God-fearers joined the ranks of the new community of Messiah's Jewish followers there was a price to pay. It was harsh, even life threatening. Nero, lit the streets with believers in Messiah. It made no difference whether they were Jews or Gentiles. Their common witness, led many Jews of that day to consider the claims they made together, look into the Scriptures themselves, and join their ranks in defiance of family and state.

Of course there are other examples of this both in the biblical record and also in later history. One of the most notable is that of Corrie ten Boom's family. There is no telling how many Jewish people came to faith in Messiah Jesus as the result of their acts of love towards the Jewish people who were hunted down by the madman's minions.

I wonder. If Jewish people who do not believe today could see the whole Body of Messiah, consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers living and loving together now like they did in the 1st Century, would they make the same statement David Kidron made?

"I have never seen anything like that in my life!"

You Wouldn't See That Among My People!

If you've been with Chosen People Ministries for a while, you may know that the travel agency I owned at one time handled your corporate travel. Through Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Mitch Glaser was introduced to Horizon Tours and Travel. A number of you here today first came to my attention because we handled your travel.

If you are one of those people you might remember Jackie Mundahl. Jackie was a travel agent that worked for me. Since then, Jackie has been called home to the Lord. She fought a rather extensive battle with breast cancer. At one time she had been in remission. It was during this period that Jackie's family gave her a trip to Israel with a group that I was going to lead for Christmas.

Leading up to the trip, from all appearances, Jackie was in good health. However, on the day we left she arrived at the airport in a wheelchair. We were assured that Jackie was in good shape, and that this was the result of a slightly twisted ankle. I don't doubt that that was true. But something else was going on as well. Her cancer was back.

Progressively, during the course of our trip, Jackie's condition worsened. Not wanting her to miss anything, several of the men on our trip carried her from the bus to locations that they could get her to on our itinerary. Eventually we secured a wheelchair for her use. She was in a lot of pain and heavily medicated. There were a number of doctors and pharmacists on that trip. A little more than halfway into the tour, it was clear that Jackie

would not be able to complete it. We called her son back here in United States and asked him to come and get her.

There was one thing that Jackie wanted more than anything else out of this trip. She wanted to be baptized in the Jordan River. On the day that her son arrived, Jackie did not travel with the group. She stayed in her hotel room. We arrived at the baptism site late in the day. Several of the men went with our bus driver to retrieve Jackie and bring her to meet us. When she arrived the site was closing down. However, they allowed us to proceed.

After all the baptisms had been completed, Jackie was rolled in her wheelchair into the Jordan River. It was at that moment that Jackie became totally lucid. This had not happened for several days. I saw her looking up over the top of the crowd. She gave her testimony about how she came to faith and how the Lord had transformed her life. Jackie was lifted out of her chair and helped to stand. She was lowered into the water and raised again. Even the people who worked at the location were riveted by what was happening.

I looked up to where Jackie was looking. It was there that David was looking down, intently watching himself. He was wiping his eyes. I knew that he too had been deeply touched. As we made our way to the bus, David held back and I stayed with him. He stopped and looked at me in the eyes and said, "You would never see that among my people. The way that you all have taken care of that old woman is incredible." The next day, Jackie's son took her home. By the time we got back, she had been called home to glory.

There are countless stories of the heroism of Jewish people bearing the burdens of their kinsman throughout the horrors of Hitler's death camps. However, at least in the eyes of of this one Jewish man, the sacrificial love that was shown in that group of believers had an impact on my friend.

I find it interesting that behind the scenes of this story, God orchestrated the events of recent history through some of your lives to introduce Jackie Mundahl to the mandate for Jewish evangelism in the Church. The longer she worked with some of you, the more committed to that cause she became. That is why she went to Israel with me. That is where God used her in David's life. Some of you played a role in this, and never knew about it. So, I want to thank you.

But just imagine with me for a moment what would happen if Jewish and Gentile believers began to build the common witness of the earliest Church today. I wonder what would happen if we truly collaborated together, sweeping aside the petty things of the past, taking another hard look at what the Scriptures have to say about this matter and

acted like the “one new man” Paul introduced us to.

Your Kids Are Real Christians

This argument of love that has been demonstrated over and over again throughout ancient history finds extensions in the history of our own lives. Let me just share one final story about my friend.

This January when my group took David back to his apartment in Gilo, his condition had worsened so much that he could not walk up the three flights of stairs to get to his apartment. The building that he lived in has a number of orthodox residents. Stopping every few steps to catch his breath, some of those residents had to make their way around him in the stairwell to go up or come down. Occasionally a sideways glance would be made at him and us. But mostly they went by without saying a word. They all saw us!

The young ladies of my group had gone up to David’s apartment to be with Sylvia while the men stayed in the stairwell with David. He simply could not make it upstairs on his own. Then something straight out of the Bible happened.

Mark 2:1-5

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

In the same way that the paralytic’s friends let him down through the roof, a number of the young man in my group picked David up and carried him up the stairs to his apartment. This was no easy task. Because this excited David, his breathing became erratic. My friends would put him down, allow him to catch his breath, and then pick him up and begin again. It wasn’t very far, but it took almost 45 minutes to get David into his apartment and settled.

David was in pretty bad shape when we got into his apartment. We wanted him to go to the hospital immediately, but he refused. He had an oxygen machine and Sylvia hooked him up immediately. After about 15 minutes he began to calm down. He looked around the room and with tears in his eyes he said, “You kids are real Christians.” He looked at me and said, “I can’t believe the way you have put up with me on this trip, and others. You are an angel.” I don’t know what got into me. Without thinking I replied,

“David, I’m not an angel. That’s another kind of sentient being that God created. But, if you really knew me before I came to faith in Jesus, you wouldn’t be saying that now. Just like these young people, I am not naturally this way. We are only like this because of what Yeshua has done in our lives. That is what we want for you too.” Lots of tears were running down both of our faces as we hugged each other. My group gathered around David and prayed for him during what I thought might be the last time I would ever see him.

Two nights later I returned to David’s home for dinner and a serious conversation. We talked about all the things that David had seen during our time together on various trips. I asked him to think about how those things came to be, about how God orchestrated the events of our lives and those who preceeded us to allow him to see these things happen.

I shared the gospel one last time. He acknowledge that God must have brought Sylvia, who is also a believer, me, and others into his life for a reason. However, he would not say that he believed.

As you know, for a Jewish person to make a profession of faith in Yeshua is a huge step. It is particularly difficult for Holocaust survivors and their children. David expressed concern for how this might affect his children. Frequently, Jewish people who come to believe in Messiah Jesus are ostracized, even abandoned by their own family. Many of you have personally experienced this. Some you are seen as “meshumedim”, traitors to your own people. The rabbis have spread the lie that Jews who believe in “that man” are no longer Jews. David struggled with these issue as well, speaking openly of them during our final minutes together.

And yet, as I was going out the door, I heard him say... “Arlie, don’t give up on me yet!”

In the earliest days of the Church, Jew and Gentile labored together in the cause of Jewish evangelism. But it didn’t take long for that to cease. How did it go so wrong so quickly? Until the Bridegroom returns to take His Bride home, Satan remains as the prince of this world. He has much to lose. And so, Satan has continued to send out His minions to pick up the Gospel seed before it has a chance to take root.

What’s his strategy? He continues to ask the question that he asked Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. “Did God really say?” That method still seems to be pretty effective. Even in the Church, the one place where the activity of the liar should be clearly seen, those who identify themselves believers seem to have forgotten what God said.

Paul, the quintessential Jew, whose life was given away in reaching out to both Jews and Gentiles, provides perhaps the best example of a life submitted to the empowering and

transformational presence of God through the Holy Spirit. As a Pharisee, Paul grew up steeped in the ideology of the separation of Jew and Gentile from one another in all realms of life. And then, he met Messiah!

The book of Ephesians, written by Paul to a community in Asia Minor consisting of both Jewish and Gentile believers, is neatly divided into two sections. Chapters one through three are a theological treatise. Chapters four through six provide practical implications of what that theology worked out in real life should look like. It is all about love!

Because we frequently lose sight of the spiritual warfare that is constantly going on, Paul reminds us what is really happening behind the scenes. This spiritual war can be seen in the physical world. What is it that Satan wants to attack more than anything else? Paul clearly states that Satan's objective is to destroy the unity that God wants to create in the Body of Messiah. All of his energies are directed towards shattering that unity. Disruption, dissension, and division are his most powerful weapons.

Isn't it crazy that today as the people of God attempt to serve Him, they appear to be more fractured and splintered than ever? Races, denominations, interpretations, cultures, lifestyles, music preferences, and more are all evident each week as Christendom splits up to go separate directions according to the ways they worship, ways that are most comfortable for each group. Since when is it all about our comfort?

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

How is the greatest apologetic working for us? Does the world look at us today and recognize professing believers in Messiah Jesus as being His disciples because of our visible love for one another? Is our love so radical that people are forced to take notice?

I get the sense from the Bible itself that the earliest believers expressed this kind of love that must be recognized. Jews and Gentiles, people who had so little in common, found ways to express their deep love for one another in such a sacrificial way that unbelievers were forced to consider the claims of Christ. His love in them, for them, and through them was the most powerful argument in the earliest days of the Church. It was an argument that won many Jewish people to faith.

Could it happen again?

Arlie Francis
Afrancis@discipledaily.org