

## **Week Four - Give An Answer: I go to church, so I'll get into heaven, right?**

Readings: Exodus 32:1-14 // Philippians 4:1-9 // Matthew 22:1-14

Series based on 1 Peter 3:15 NIV "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."

### **What is Apologetics?**

Apologetics is worshipping God with our minds as we defend the Christian faith with logic and evidence that may remove barriers to belief.

From Joshua Johnson: What Apologetics IS and is NOT

Apologetics IS: Worshipping God with our minds, defends the Christian faith with logic and evidence, removes barriers to belief (some call pre-evangelism), ...the science and art of Christian persuasion, any reason why a person believes in Jesus, equips believers to engage hard questions they will face in life, ...connecting faith with science, history, philosophy without sacrificing one or the other, bridges faith with experience, gives believers and unbelievers space to ask questions, investigate holistic discipleship.

Apologetics is NOT: saying "I'm sorry," ...arguing or bullying people into faith, ...possessing absolute certainty in all theological beliefs, ...debating with people on a stage, ...eliminating the mysterious or the spiritual, ...about winning, ignoring the heart, the spirit, or experiences, ...a purely mental exercise, providing a bubble that prevents questions of the Christian faith, ...cookie cutter explanations.

Five Reasons We Need to be Equipped for Apologetics (from Joshua Johnson);

1. It is biblical, historical, and Jesus and John Wesley used it.
2. It is part of the holiness journey.
3. It is a multi-purpose tool.
4. It demands integrity. [Questions are not accusations; they are opportunities to respond with gentleness and respect. Both require integrity.]
5. It engages the next generation and changing world.

### **How does Jesus teach us to go about explaining the reasons for what we believe?**

Matthew 10:16 – NASB 16 "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so [a]be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."

The Message: 16 "Stay alert. This is hazardous work I'm assigning you. You're going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don't call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove."

## **Why does Jesus use wedding clothes as the reason the guest is thrown out of the party?**

In ancient times a guest at a rich family's wedding would be required to wear the designated wedding clothes provided by the host. The clothes themselves would be considered part of the decoration for the wedding. To refuse to wear them would be a serious affront to the host. Especially to a royal host. In many parts of the Middle East and Asia this tradition is still practiced. Clothing is part of the wedding itself. Jesus was explaining that the only way to the kingdom of God is by wearing what the King has provided for us. To be clothed in Christ.

The good and the bad people had to set aside their good or bad clothing to be clothed in Christ and in doing this they are submitting themselves to Christ.

We don't know if the guest was good or bad or how he was dressed. Was he wealthy and decided his best outfit was good enough, refusing what was supplied by the King. Maybe he's a very poor criminal who couldn't understand why he was invited in the first place and thought the king obviously has no standards so he's going to be comfortable and wear what he wants and enjoy the free food and music. Both decided to do what they wanted instead of what is expected by the host.

**Today's takeaway:** Everyone is invited to the kingdom of God. There is no criteria for receiving the invitation. This may cause some to decide that must mean there is no criteria for participating in the wedding banquet. Not true. The kingdom is free to all, not a "free for all". This is the heart of the parable today.

Meditations for the Week:

1. We are invited to be part of the congregation of Christ not by our own standards of what that looks like. We are given the instructions about how to follow Christ in the fullness of Scripture with the expectation we will obey God's will, not our own.
2. Those who accept the invitation must accept it for what it actually is; not an invitation to live on your own terms while benefiting from the goodness of the kingdom, but as an invitation to set aside all other allegiances and submit to the kingship of Jesus, clothes in Christ and led by his Spirit in obedience to him.
3. Jesus extends an invitation in John 3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
4. Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
5. Do you ever think about how you're accepting the invitation? Are you grateful to be included, yet lax in obedience to what is expected by accepting the invitation, wanting the benefits of inclusion yet rejecting what God needs from you?
6. What might God be calling you to take on as part of accepting the free invitation to the kingdom? A Bible study? Daily reading of His Word? More prayer?