

# CALL TO DUTY

**VOL. 4, ISSUE 2**



## THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

...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

The Pew Research Center stated in an online article that “For decades, measures of religious belonging, behaving and believing had been dropping nationwide.” \* The article also said that the number of Americans that identify with Christianity or another religion is holding steady. This is not necessarily positive as it does not appear that the numbers of Christians are increasing in the United States.



What can we do about this trend?

First, go and make disciples of all the nations, as Jesus instructed us to do (Matt 28:19, NKJV). All the world includes our neighbors, friends and family.



There are two components to making a disciple, according to Jesus. The first is baptism. Jesus is clear about the necessity of baptism for salvation (see also Mark 16:16, John 3:5). The second component of making a disciple is to teach them the things that Jesus commanded. This is not just teaching them the basics but getting into a more detailed study of the bible. Part of that is to teach Christians how to defend their faith.



Peter explains that Christians must “always *be* ready to give a defense (or answer) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you,” (1 Peter 3:15). The Greek word used for defense is *apologia*, which means to give a reasoned or formal defense. In other words, Christians should have a basic understanding and ability to use apologetics to defend their faith.

To do this we must first study the bible deeply. A cursory reading of the bible does not suffice. You must be able to use logic to defend why you believe that a God exists who created the heavens and earth and everything in it in six literal days. You must also use scientific and historical evidence to prove the truth of the bible. There are many resources available to help do this. One of the best is the Apologetics Press website ([apologeticspress.org](http://apologeticspress.org)).

So, Christian, go out there and defend your faith.

\* [Is There a Religious Revival Among Young US Adults? Recent Polls Suggest Stability Since 2020 | Pew Research Center](#)



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is not how God's people studied for the first 1500 years. They knew the Old Testament well, which helped them understand the New Testament!

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## Always Be Ready

“...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...”  
(1 Peter 3:15 NKJV)

I wonder if we ever think about this verse in a military manner. We prepare ourselves to be deployed all over the world. We prepare ourselves for every inspection to ensure we dot every “i” and cross every “t.” We prepare months in advance so that we are ready. Ready to go in a moment’s notice, ready to answer questions, and ready to give the inspectors what they ask for.

Peter wrote to Christians who were living under pressure and scrutiny, so the idea of being prepared at all times is central.

The word translated “defense” is the Greek word *apologia*, which means a reasoned answer or legal defense—like what someone would give in court. That means Peter wasn’t telling Christians merely to say, “*I believe*,” he was telling them to be able to explain why. Just like soldiers prepare for deployments or inspections, Christians should prepare to explain their hope. Preparation includes studying scripture, understanding doctrine, thinking through common questions, and living consistently so our life supports our words.

Sometimes the best defense is honest humility. If we do not know the answer, we can always set up a Bible study. Which strengthens credibility, not weakens it. Some good response can be, “That’s a great question” or “Let me study that and get back to you” or better yet, “Let’s look at what the Bible says together.” That approach lets God’s Word speak. As Paul wrote to Titus in Titus 1:9, “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict those who contradict.” Our life is part of the defense we give. The verse right before and after emphasizes conduct. People usually notice hope before they ask about it. They see peace during hardship, integrity at work, kindness under pressure, and faithfulness in daily life. Then the question comes, “*Why are you like that?*” That’s the moment 1 Peter 3:15 is talking about.

Peter says, “always be ready.” Readiness is both knowledge and character. The full verse also says to do it “with meekness and fear.” So, the preparation is not only intellectual but also spiritual. A Christian defense

should be truthful (based in Scripture), gentle (not argumentative), respectful (honoring the other person), and confident (grounded in hope). Even if someone is debating, the response should still reflect Christ. Just like we prepare ahead of time for our deployments or inspections, our readiness is ongoing, not last-minute. Ways that Christians “prepare daily” include reading Scripture, memorizing key passages, praying for wisdom, studying difficult questions, and practicing explaining the gospel clearly. Just like military members prepare so they’re ready under pressure.

Let us always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.



~~Greg James

Greg James grew up in the Air Force and lived in Utah, Louisiana, and South Dakota before entering the active-duty Air Force in 1991. He transferred to the Reserves as an Air Reserve Technician in 2001. Greg was in air operations with heavy and fighter aircraft deploying to Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan among other deployments and TDY’s. He met and married his wife Tammy while she was active-duty Air Force, and she got out when their son was born. Greg retired from the Air Force Reserves in 2017 after 26 years of total service and graduated from Brown Trail School of preaching in 2016. Greg served as the associate minister for the Greenmount Rd congregation in Belleville, IL and served as the pulpit minister for the Briar congregation in Briar, Texas before relocating to Jackson, Tennessee. They are members of the Crosswinds church of Christ.

## The Faith of Martyrs



Evidence suggests that it was sometime before the great fire that burned Rome in 64 AD that Peter penned his first letter. Needing a scapegoat, unparalleled Roman persecution of Christians ensued. Yet, the church grew! How could that be?

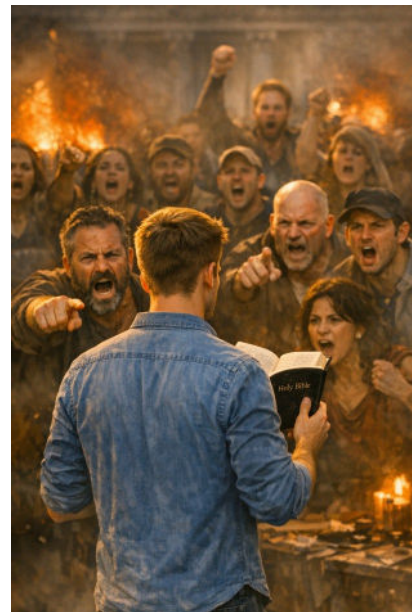
In this letter, Peter devoted considerable attention to the responsibilities of followers of Christ, reminding them that they were a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession to enable them to proclaim the message of Christ (1 Pet 2:9). The conviction of those Christians was so strong that they did not denounce their faith in Jesus as Messiah. Peter says we are to be ready to explain our hope and to do it without pride and in humility and fear.

Whether Peter was given some insight into the persecution soon to come from the murderous and vile emperor Nero or not, his instruction was a clarion call for them to be prepared to defend their faith to those who questioned them. How else could they withstand the persecution that brought martyrdom without being capable of explaining their faith? Their hope, as well as ours, is pinned on our faith in Jesus as the Messiah. In Him we have no fear of death. He is the chief cornerstone, the foundation of the church and our faith. We are saved by this hope, this faith in Jesus as Lord (Rom 8:24) and baptism (1Pet 3:21).

Blamed for the fire that destroyed most of Rome, Peter's letter gave the Christians in the city a path to follow in the face of the most wicked and inhumane torture and death of that day. They, like us, had a hope that is not seen (Rom 8:24-25), cannot be destroyed (Prov 23:18) and is certain because of Jesus' resurrection (1 Pet 1:3). It took that certainty of faith in Jesus as Lord even to the very point of death, that fortified the Christians of Rome at that time. They knew what they believed and why.

This is the legacy of Christ that is ours. His hope was His complete faith in His Father (Luke 22:42). Jesus, fully a man, didn't want to die that horrible death on the cross, but He placed His trust in God's will.

Sometimes we don't see, and sometimes we *can't* see what God has in mind for His good purposes. Even so, our hope is in our complete faith that God sent His Son to die on the cross so that, as His faithful and obedient servants, we might have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This message is what early Christians believed and shared. Our call is to the same faith. For 2000 years Christians have explained that message to family, friends and anyone who would listen. We, too, must stand with them, capable and prepared to tell everyone why we are Christians.



~~Conrad Slate

Conrad Slate enlisted in the Army Reserve while in college and later transferred to the Air National Guard. He went to Officer Training School and completed 31 years of service retiring as a colonel. He served a variety of positions starting as a Military Policeman. He served in the Security Police, in Public Affairs, in NBC warfare training, and a variety of staff positions, retiring as Deputy Chief of Staff for Support Services. He is a member of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, TN where he is active in jail ministry

## Taking A Stand in Everyday Battles

If Satan cannot defeat you in a single, great battle, he will try to wear you down with many smaller ones. Fighting on multiple fronts often leaves one critical area vulnerable. To illustrate, a few years ago, our family visited Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to tour the battlefield. I have always been fascinated by the Battle of Gettysburg. However, the size and scale of the battle were more overwhelming than I had imagined. As a kid, I loved reading about the Battle for Little Round Top on July 2, 1863. Now, here I was, standing atop this little hill, trying to imagine how the battle unfolded. Little Round Top was the Union army's weak left flank. Initially, it was not defended. Only a last-second effort to secure the hill ensured its defense. A single hill, defended at the last second by determined soldiers, prevented the Union army from being outflanked, contributed to victory at the Battle of Gettysburg, and helped change the course of the war.



The Battle of Little Round Top illustrates how vital it is to be prepared to defend every part of our spiritual lives. Even one area left vulnerable to our enemy could lead to defeat and damage to our spiritual well-being. So how can we be ready to defend ourselves when the enemy strikes?

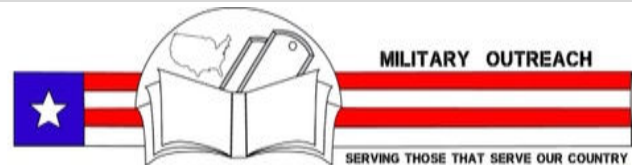
First, we must remember that the Christian life is a spiritual battle. Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians in chapter six that, "...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). For this reason, we need to be diligent in every part of our lives, not giving Satan a foothold. Second, we must recognize that our strength to fight comes from the Lord, not from ourselves. Just as the author of Psalm 73 reminds us, "*My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever*" (73:28). Finally, we must persevere through the trials of our battle until the end. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is our example. He writes, "*For consider Him who endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not loose*

*heart*" (Hebrews 12:3).

Joshua Chamberlain and his men from the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine took a stand on a hot summer day that could have changed the course of our nation's history. Spiritually, sometimes the most important place you can be is simply where God told you to stand firm. In these everyday battles, God often does His best work when we are at our limits. Ultimately, victory belongs to those who refuse to quit one moment longer than everyone else. May we be determined not to give the enemy an open door to outmaneuver us, and let us remember we have a Captain fighting alongside us, who guarantees our final victory!

~~Mike Green

Mike Green currently serves as the Dean of Students at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Knoxville, TN. He has spent the last two decades serving the church in various capacities to include church planting, preaching and youth ministry. Mike holds a B.B.S degree in Bible and an M.A in New Testament. Prior to entering ministry full-time Mike served five-years as a U.S. Army Ranger with the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment. He and his wife Natalie have been married twenty-four years and have six children. They are members of the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville.



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## Be Ready to Make a Defense

**1 Peter 3:15 ...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... (NASU)**

In the Bible, the book of First Peter is like reading a special military manual on one topic or another. For example, the US military (including all branches of the services) had manuals on everything from enlistment to discharge. If I recall correctly, these manuals covered everything from how to live in times of peace to how to die in times of war, dependent on what was going on during each of our times of service. Since it took so long to read through some of them, it seemed like one's draft or enlistment was over before one could ever finish reading some of them.

Still, from all the books of the Bible, this is not even close to reality from what was written in the above paragraph. Using 1 Peter 3:15 as the example, it takes minutes to read the verse, somewhat longer to understand it, and a lifetime to practice what it says. Even though serving in God's heavenly armed forces, with the Bible as your weapon, is a little bit like serving in the United States' earthly armed forces, with the rifle as your weapon, there are a lot of vast differences between them.

Earthly weapons mostly exist too temporarily protect and/or take physical life for whatever various reasons, but the heavenly weapon of the Bible exists to eternally save spiritual souls. Thus, the Bible requires reading, understanding, and continual practice to do its God-given job. If people fail to do what the Bible says, then they may be eternally lost in the bottomless pit of hell, where Satan and his cohorts will be forever more.

Therein, all of the God-inspired Bible writers like Peter reveal in their respective writings how God's people are to make purposeful use of this most powerful of all weapons- the Bible. They are to continually read, understand, and use the Bible over all else. Living the Bible in their physical and temporal lives will bring them home to their spiritual and eternal lives in heaven with God forever more. Anything less is useless.

In closing, Peter also wrote in the following verses as shown below...

**1 Peter 3:16 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.**

**1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. (NASU)**

Thus, it is always better to suffer for doing what is right with God rather than doing what is wrong with Him.

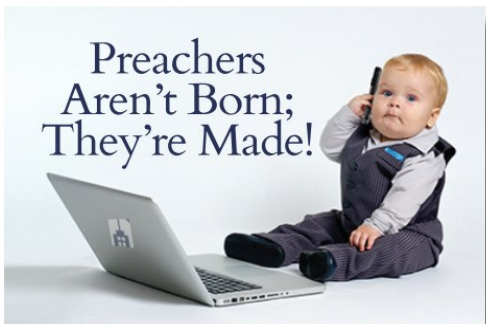
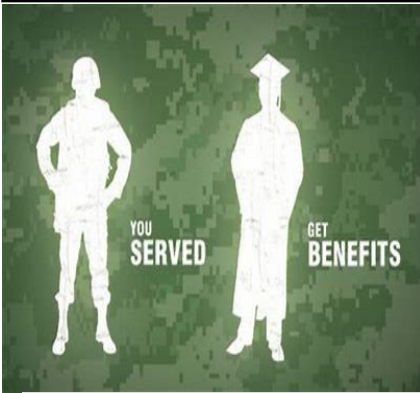
As the old saying goes, "*Hell is hot and eternity is long!*" It is all a matter of choice.



~~Tom Wright

Tom Wright served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War Era. Following his military discharge, Tom graduated college and worked in Design Engineering for over two decades. In his middle forties, he left secular work and entered fulltime ministry. He holds degrees of Bachelor of Theology, Master of Biblical Studies, and Doctor of Ministry. Tom has spent about the past twenty-five years serving God as an evangelist, preacher, and teacher. He and his wife Carla live in the Colorado Springs area and worship with the Calhan church of Christ.

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Romans 10:14



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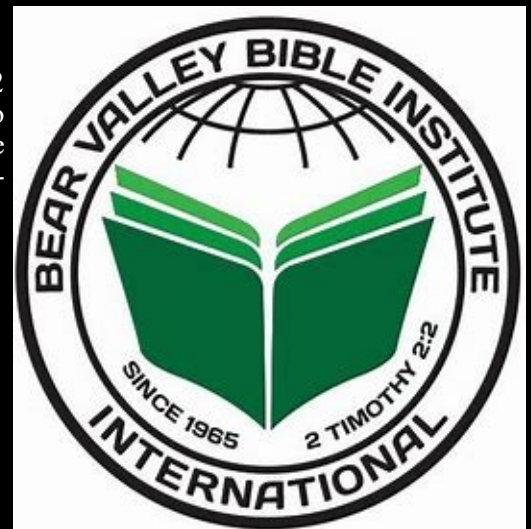
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# THE LIGHTER SIDE





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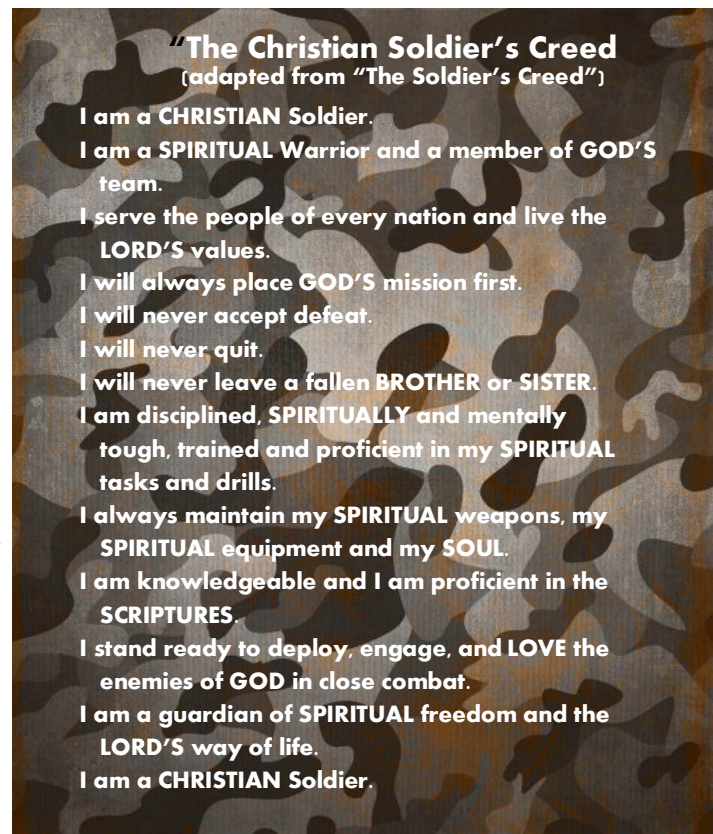
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### **GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN FOR YOU**

**HEAR** the word of God: Romans 10:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Revelation 2:7; 22:18-19

**BELIEVE** in Jesus as Savior of world: John 3:16; 14:6; 14:23

**REPENT** of your sins: Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21,22; 3:3, 19

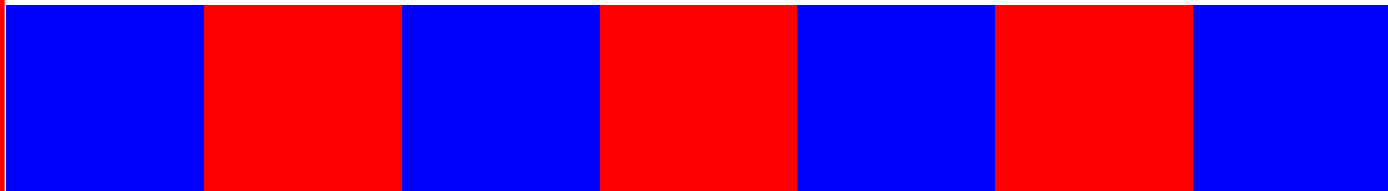
**CONFESS** Jesus before others: Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-11

**BE IMMERSED** into Christ for forgiveness of your sins: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; 22:16; Romans 6:3-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22

**CONTINUE** to live faithful to God until you die or Christ comes again: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Revelation 2:10

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AFFIX STAMP



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**(BASE 2 BASE, HEART 2 HEART)**

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