

**Defending Truth and Freedom**  
**James 3; John 8:32**

Good morning! On Wednesday, all of America once again is celebrating Independence Day. We all know that it's a very important occasion, a very important celebration. Because freedom is important. No person in his or her right mind would like to give up their freedom. You wouldn't want to let it go. And if it's taken away from you, you would do everything you can to get it back.

We're so blessed here in America because we enjoy our freedom. For example, we can say what we want even against the President. Which is not true in other countries where you get persecuted. I remember a story I read a long time ago about two guys, an American and a Russian. The American said to the Russian, "Here in America we have freedom of speech. You can walk up to President Reagan and tell him, 'You're a jerk!'" "Well, it's the same thing in Russia," the Russian said. "You can walk up to Premier Gorbachev and tell him, 'Reagan is a jerk.'"

Seriously, freedom is a most precious commodity. Much more so for Christians. Before we came to know Christ, we were all imprisoned in sin and death. We were slaves to sin and death. But the coming of Christ in our hearts set us free from these two enemies of our souls. In fact, Jesus had set us free from the greatest enemy of man, Satan himself.

Satan is the biggest liar. The Bible says that he disguises himself as an angel of light. He pretends to be truth when all he is, is all lies and untruth. That's why the Bible says, **"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."** (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

You see, he's very active in trying to trip us up or put us in a trap.

He knows his time is short and he would like to deceive Christians with all his lies and deceptions. He cannot imprison us again because we're already saved but he doesn't want us to enjoy our freedom as much as he can. This way we become ineffective Christians. Worse, he wants us bring disgrace to the name of Jesus if we succumb to his temptations. And the way to do that is to introduce lies. We see that everywhere. He covers lies with more lies to make it look like truth. Joseph Goebbels, one of Hitler's propagandists said, "Repeat a lie often enough and it becomes the truth". Among psychologists something like this known as the "illusion of truth" effect.

This morning, we're on the second part of our series which is entitled "Becoming a Champion". In this series we're talking about how to deal successfully with the challenges and issues that face us in life. Undoubtedly, there are so many things in our world today that can put even a good man down. Like problems in finances, obstacles in relationships, the reality of sin, and a few more. Through this series, I want to share what the Bible says about overcoming all these difficulties. I also want to give practical steps or ways to become victorious and emerge as champions in the end.

Last week, I kicked off this series by repeating what the apostle Paul said to Christians everywhere, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." That's Romans 8:37. Let's recite that verse together. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Say to your neighbor, "You are more than a conqueror because of Jesus."

So, it is Jesus who conquers for us. Amen? And I hope, if you're not a Christian, you'll make Jesus your conqueror, too.

Today I'm going to talk about defending truth and freedom.

You know, the early Christians were under attack. We know that. Not only physically but spiritually as well.

Many false teachers have arisen and started to spread many false doctrines. In fact, in the book of Galatians, Paul started by saying in verse 7, “Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:7) And so he exhorted them to be vigilant and become aware of false teachers.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, therefore, in his letter, urged Christians to defend the truth. He says in Jude verse 3, “I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people.”

Why is it important to know the truth and to defend the truth? Because as Jesus says in John 8:32b, “...the truth will set you free.” Why is it important to stand for something? Because as the saying goes, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.” You see, what you value in life determines how you live your life. If you don’t value anything, your life will be meaningless. If you don’t know what to believe, you’re living without purpose. You will be like what Paul says in Ephesians, “infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.” (Ephesians 4:14b).

In this morning’s message, I’d like to share with you how you can defend truth and freedom. So, get ready with your outlines and pen, and follow along this message. To defend the truth, first, you have to

### 1. Know what you believe

Let’s start by defining truth. What is Truth? Now, I’m not going into the philosophical arguments about absolute truth and relative truth. I’ll leave that to the philosophers. I’ll just state the fact that as Christians, we believe in absolute truth. Amen? And truth is based on what God says in his word, the Bible.

The problem is, many of us are couch potato Christians, meaning, after we became Christians, we thought it was enough to just sit down and do our devotions or listen to music or attend conferences and feel good about our faith. But listen to what Peter says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15) Our worship of God consists also of continually studying his Word, immersing ourselves in it so that we can really become familiar with the truth, as if we could touch it and taste it.

The late Walter Martin, former president of the Christian Research Institute once said, “The average Jehovah’s Witness can turn the average Christian into a doctrinal pretzel in under five minutes.” I found that out to be true. I was an altar boy in church. I was awarded “Altar Boy of the Year” in our parish church for two consecutive years. I was in high school, about 15 years old. Then, I encountered Felix, a Jehovah’s Witness, who was good with his Bible. I thought I was good with the Bible, too. I was a model Altar Boy after all. But every time we met and talked about our beliefs and exchanged arguments about our beliefs, I always turned into a pretzel. My mind and tongue just contorted and twisted. My being an Altar Boy was no match for Felix, the average Jehovah’s Witness kid. In the end, he convinced me that he had the better arguments and so I became one of them.

Folks, my point is, we can easily become preys to people of other religions if we are not prepared. I’ve read and know some Christians, even pastors, who became involved in a cult because they were not prepared.

The interesting thing is what some of us do when we see a Jehovah’s Witness or Mormon or Muslim come our way? We hide or run away or say “I’m busy”. We excuse ourselves because we don’t know how to answer when they ask us about our faith. The Bible says, “...correct those who oppose the word.” (Titus 1:9). Also, “...be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage.” (2 Tim. 4:2)

Now, let's have a refresher. Let me talk about some of the fundamental truths that we believe God says in his Word.

First, we believe that the Bible is inerrant and infallible in its original transcript, meaning, it is without any errors whatsoever. It will not mislead you. It is the trustworthy basis for doctrine, morals, life principles, and even science.

We believe that there are three persons in one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We believe that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. That he was crucified, died, and rose again on the third day. We believe that he died for our sins and that our salvation is based on what he has done for us and not on anything we have done, we do, or what we will do.

We believe that God created the first man and woman as perfect human beings and that they disobeyed God in paradise. As a result, death and imperfection entered the world.

We believe, nevertheless, that those who receive Jesus in their heart as Lord and Savior has eternal life and will go to heaven when they die. Those who don't believe in Jesus will go to a fiery hell and there suffer eternal torment.

We believe in eternal security, that is, those who are saved will never lose their salvation. We also believe in baptism by immersion and that it will not save but it is a public declaration of one's faith in Jesus.

We believe that Jesus is fully God and fully man. We believe also that the Holy Spirit is a person.

We believe that God commanded the first man and woman to populate the earth and, therefore, we believe that marriage is solely for a man and a woman.

We believe that Jesus will come again and will establish a new heaven and a new earth.

Folks, those are our core beliefs. And I hope that's really what you believe.

Now, of course, we are surrounded by other religions and other faiths that don't believe in what we believe. Let me distribute this material that compares our beliefs with their beliefs.

This is just a few pages from this book I got from Rose Publishing. If you want to get the full picture, you can get this from Amazon at just about \$17. And there's a whole lot more you can learn from this book.

Now, why am I sharing this with you? It is because if you're not aware of what others believe you can easily get sucked into their system. Which is what happened to me years ago. I became a Jehovah's Witness because I thought what they taught were more logical and made more sense. The truth is I wasn't just familiar with the Bible. So, later on after comparing their beliefs with what the Bible really teaches, I was enlightened. That's why it's so important to read your Bible. Study it. Become familiar with it. The only way you can know counterfeit is when you are so familiar with the real.

It's like when you don't want to be deceived by a person, you have to know the real person. You have to look beyond the façade or first impression. Looks can be deceiving as they say. For example, you'll find some deceitful persons in auto shops. I have never seen any honest mechanic in my life. I'm not saying there are no good ones. It's just that I've been burned many times before. One time I took my car for an oil change and afterwards my car's steering wheel started to shimmy. The guy denied it was his fault and only after I threatened to refer him to an attorney that he fixed my car. He just tried to trick me.

If you want to defend the truth, first, you have to know what you believe. Second, you have to

## **2. Know the Answers to Some Tough Questions**

Now, some people will ask you questions that are not really doctrinal in nature. They ask deep questions about life.

These are people who are searching for answers because they are confused. Perhaps, they're even looking for God. You can be the best conduit of God's grace...if you have the answers at your fingertips. I'm not saying you have to know every answer to every question out there. I'm saying you just study and become familiar with some truly perplexing questions about life.

I remember years ago, I was going to Australia for a vacation. It was the year 2000. I was on a plane and the guy who was sitting beside me was from Atlanta. I decided I would strike a conversation with this guy. So, we chit-chatted for a few minutes until our conversation drifted to the question of God's existence. I found out he didn't believe in God because of a devastating cyclone that hit Bangladesh some years back which killed thousands of people. He asked if there was a God and if he was good, why would he let thousands of people, including children, die innocently? How would you answer that question?

I told him that if God were not caring then I don't also believe in a God like that. I continued and said that we live in an imperfect world where there would always be natural disasters. But I told him that everything in this world is temporary and someday everything will be perfect again. Then, I told him how God would accomplish this. And I introduced him to Jesus and what Jesus has done for us.

Let me share with you a few of the frequently asked questions about life. Sooner or later, you will encounter people asking these questions and it'll be good to respond with an answer that may turn their hearts toward Jesus.

The questions you're going to read are from real people. The answers are from Billy Graham and you can find them at [billygraham.org](http://billygraham.org). Those on the slides are not full answers. You can go to [billygraham.org/answer](http://billygraham.org/answer) for a full treatment of the question. Another site where you can find good biblical answers is [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org).

Now, in case you don't know the answer to their question, just let them know that they're asking a good question to which you don't have a good answer at the moment but will get back to them. And make sure you get back to them.

Q: Does the Bible say anything about life on other planets?

A: No, the Bible doesn't say anything about the possibility of life on other planets.

Its main concern is with human life on this planet, including our problems and our future. This doesn't mean life can't exist on other planets, for it well might; the Bible simply doesn't tell us.

But the Bible does tell us two very important truths that I hope you'll remember. First, it reminds us that everything in the universe—absolutely everything—owes its existence to God. Personally, I'm overwhelmed by what astronomers and other scientists have discovered about space during my lifetime—countless galaxies, incredible distances, phenomena we can barely understand. Yet nothing is as profound as those first words of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). God is that great!

Q: My husband and I argue about everything. Is divorce the only answer?

A: One reason I wanted to reprint your email is because it points to a common problem in troubled marriages: a failure to face the real reason why the marriage is in difficulty. Unless a husband and wife face honestly their real problems and work together to resolve them, the deeper issues still remain and the marriage will still be in trouble.

Is divorce the only solution? No, it isn't, and my prayer is that you will explore every other solution before you go down that road. God gave marriage to us, and He knows not only the joy it can bring us, but the anguish and hardship that inevitably come when the bond of marriage is broken. This is why I urge both you and your husband to humbly ask God to give you the wisdom and patience you need to look at your lives through His eyes.

Q: Are homosexuals born that way?

A: Many homosexuals hold to the belief that they were born that way, and there are some researchers who suggest, on the basis of several recent studies, that there may be a genetic predisposition toward homosexuality in some people.

However, even those who argue this believe that certain environmental factors would also have to be present for the tendency to develop. In any case, other scientists have challenged these studies, and there is presently no generally accepted scientific evidence that the homosexual inclination is inborn. Also, in a broken world, the discovery of a genetic link would not prove that such a condition was God's intent.

It must be emphasized that even if a biological predisposition to homosexuality in some people exists, it would not change God's opposition to the behavior. Neither would it change the fact that through the transforming power of Jesus Christ freedom from sinful behavior is always available.

Q: My cousin had very serious emotional problems most of her life, and finally they overwhelmed her and she committed suicide. I firmly believe she was a Christian, but did she lose her salvation by doing this? Is suicide the unpardonable sin?

A: Suicide is always a tragedy—but in itself it is not the unpardonable sin. The only sin God cannot pardon is the sin of rejecting Him. God knew your cousin's heart, and He also knows that mental illness sometimes clouds a person's judgment so much that they aren't fully responsible for their actions.

Q: My Sunday School Class Doesn't Listen. Should I Quit Teaching?

A: Let me ask you a question: Is a 5-year-old child too young to learn not to cross a busy street, or too young to be taught not to touch a hot stove?

No, of course not—and neither is a 5-year-old too young to learn about God. That doesn't mean they can understand everything there is to know about God or

Jesus—but they can learn something, and God has given you the privilege of teaching it to them. Because they see the wonders of the world around them, for example, they can understand something of God’s power. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them” (Matthew 19:14). Not everyone is able to teach young children, I know—but don’t quit unless you know it’s God’s will, and that someone else can take your place. Seeds don’t bear fruit in a day, and neither do the “seeds” of God’s Word planted in the hearts of our children. But in time they do.

Q: Why is abortion such a big issue for Christians?

A: The spiritual condition of man is at the root of the abortion issue. Until man’s spiritual condition is changed by the power of Jesus Christ, we will not find a full solution to this problem. It is sin that produces the problem of most unwanted pregnancies, as well as all the other disorders which plague the human race.

Life is sacred, and we must seek to protect all human life: the unborn, the child, the adult, and the aged. Several Bible passages tell of the sacredness of life and speak to the subject of abortion.

Q: What happens to those who have never heard about Jesus?

A: All people are accountable to God whether or not they have “heard about Him.” The Bible tells us that God has clearly revealed Himself in nature (Romans 1:20) and in the hearts of people (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The problem is that the human race is sinful; we all reject this knowledge of God and rebel against Him (Romans 1:21-23). If it were not for God’s grace, we would be given over to the sinful desires of our hearts, allowing us to discover how useless and miserable life is apart from Him. He does this for those who continually reject Him (Romans 1:24-32).

Those are just a sampling. There’s a lot more for us to know and understand.

Finally, to be able to defend truth, you have to

3. Know the enemy.

I'd like to paraphrase what a Chinese philosopher once said: "To win the battle you must know yourself and know the enemy." We've already tackled the first part, know yourself. Now, we're going to tackle the second part, know the enemy.

Our enemy, of course, is the Devil. Jesus says he is a liar since the beginning. One day he confronted some Jews who opposed him and told them, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

The reason he lies is because his mission is to destroy people's lives. Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." (John 10:10a) Our mission then as followers of Jesus is to expose the enemy's lies. Our mission is to speak truth to people so they can be set free. People need to hear the truth, to know the truth.

Jesus has given us our marching orders. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20) It is incumbent then upon us to spread the good news of Jesus wherever we go so that his will prevails in this wicked and crooked generation. A generation that has thrown away what is true and enduring and substituted it with the false and temporary. Lives are at stake. A lot of people are in bondage to sin and death. We need to shine the light of truth upon their lives.

We can do this through simple means. We don't even have to force the issue. What I mean is that by simply practicing friendship evangelism we can penetrate hearts that are hard and cold through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Let me give you an example. Yesterday, the 3M Ministry of this church went out on a mission. 3M stands for Mighty Men on a Mission. There were 10 of us from this church and one from Canada. We went to a firing range in Gore, Virginia, which is northwest of Winchester, about 2 hours from here. Why did we do that? We wanted to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. No, it's something more than that. Actually, we wanted to establish a friendly relation with Ren, the husband of Ate Nhor. Kuya Alex learned that Ren is a gun enthusiast and that once a year, he brings his family and friends to a firing range for some shooting practice. So, Kuya Alex mentioned that we would like to join them which they were just happy to oblige to. So, 10 of us left early in the morning to be with them even though some of us don't have an experience like myself and Kuya July. They all had fun with their shooting practice while Kuya July and I had fun watching the World Cup in the van. But it was a sacrifice. The rest of the men were exposed to the heat of the sun while Kuya July and I had to endure the constant freezing of his smartphone due to a weak signal. And Kuya July even got stung by a bee on his right ear when he went out momentarily to answer the call of nature. Later on, when we went home, we were worried that he would suffer a side effect. We will know later. In fairness to Kuya July, actually we did some practice shooting also until early afternoon.

My point is, to point people to Jesus, sometimes you would go to great lengths, both literally and figuratively. You would even go the extra mile for a noble cause, even get stung by a bee. It was basically a men's outing with the purpose of hopefully breaking down the defenses of Ren and even his children so that they, too, can know the truth and be set free.

Friends, we are fighting a battle, we are defending truth, we are setting people free with the help of God. Amen!