

Defending the Faith in Society

By Brandon Tejedor

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read through John 4:4–26 paying special attention to the cultural differences between Jesus as a Jewish teacher and the woman as a Samaritan. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What do you think the society of that day would say about Jesus' conversation with the woman? If Jesus were here today, what sorts of persons might some church members not want Him speaking to?

Assignment Two

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were both written by Luke, and both began with an address to a man named Theophilus. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What does Luke reveal about his intentions? What makes his accounts so important in the first century?

Assignment Three

Read Acts 24. Paul's response here is a formal *apologia*, a defense of his actions and beliefs, and is an excellent example of apologetics in action in society. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What seems to have led to Paul's being put on trial? What did Paul's accusers say about his preaching?

Scripture to Memorize

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. 1 Corinthians 9:19

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be better equipped to defend and proclaim their faith in a Christlike manner in any situation.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

It's pretty normal during breaks at work to get together with friends and chat about whatever comes to mind, and beliefs are sometimes a part of that. Imagine that someone you know approaches you with several friends and accuses you of trying to cause trouble by spouting off your religious beliefs. They accuse you of discriminating against people just because they don't share your views. They think you need to be harshly dealt with in order to get you to stop.

How should you respond to them and to anyone else listening?

Conflict

Pastors, business managers, police officers, politicians and leaders of all kinds are consistently taught that conflict is inevitable. No matter what you believe or do in life, you will always be in conflict with someone. We cannot avoid conflict entirely, but by our words and actions we can decrease the damage caused by conflict and increase the benefits gained from lack of conflict.

The Christian story is not without conflict. The Bible begins with a story about how the world was in a state of perfect goodness. Adam and Eve enjoyed an unhindered relationship with one another and with God in a world without sin or shame or suffering.

When the serpent came, a conflict arose between the desire to obey God and the desire for forbidden fruit. When Adam and Eve tasted of the fruit, sin entered the world, and the rest of the Bible is the story of the resulting conflict:

- between sin and righteousness.
- between God's people and those who sought to corrupt them or destroy them.
- between the Lord's faithfulness and people's unfaithfulness.

When Jesus was still a babe, shepherds and wise men desired to worship Him, and a king tried to kill Him. When He began His ministry, performing miraculous works and ministering to the people, He constantly clashed with people over their greed, self-righteousness and sin. The conflict between the Messiah and Jewish leaders reached a point where they eventually had Him crucified.

Jesus faced conflict in response to all He taught and did. People even accused Him of unrighteousness when He healed people with lifelong afflictions.

In the same way, we will face conflict for sharing the gospel and even performing the kindest, most charitable acts. Jesus was aware of this and warned His disciples, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

We face a natural temptation that arises in the face of conflict. The desire is to become greater than the opposition in order to best them or overpower them in some way, but is this how the Bible tells us to respond to conflict? Are we to become more powerful than the opposition in order to build the kingdom? Much of Scripture suggests otherwise.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 19. I am free . . . I have made myself a servant. Paul discussed his rights and freedoms as an apostle. He made clear that though he was free from all, he chose to be a servant to all for the sake of winning more to the gospel.

On Your Own

Do you ever find yourself saying something like, “Hey, you can’t do that. I’ve got my rights.” In the space below, list any areas of life where you tend to demand your rights rather than voluntarily laying them down for the sake of the gospel.

Studying the Passage

Verse 20. not being myself under the Law. Though Paul was a Jew, he considered himself free from Jewish law through Christ. **that I might win.** In spite of that, he still placed himself under the law for the sake of winning those who are also under it.

Verse 22. that I might win the weak. Especially worth noting is his attitude toward the weak. He did not overpower them, but chose to be weak for their sake. He became all things to all men for the sake of winning them over.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** may now share an answer to the following questions: What do you think the society of that day would say about Jesus’s conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4? If Jesus were on earth in the flesh today, what sorts of persons might some church members not want Him speaking to?

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** may now share answers to the following questions: What does Luke reveal about his intentions in writing the books of Luke and Acts? What makes his accounts so important in the first century?

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** may now share answers to the following questions related to Acts 24: What seems to have led to Paul’s being put on trial? What did Paul’s accusers say about his preaching?

Discussion Questions

What are some of the points of conflict today between the Bible and common ways of thinking and living within society? How can you be a faithful witness for Christ in such a society?

On Your Own

In the space below, write a prayer to Jesus. If it expresses your heart, tell Him you choose not to use power, force, or other worldly methods of overcoming obstacles in the culture. Ask Him to fill you with love, self-sacrifice and humility for the sake of the gospel.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Throughout the New Testament we see a constant rejection of power, force, and other worldly methods of overcoming obstacles with the lost. Scripture favors love, self-sacrifice and humility for the sake of the gospel.

There are dozens of ways for a believer to share the gospel or provide rational grounds for believing in God, and as believers we should be familiar with them in order to obey Scripture, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). The purpose of this lesson is not to provide the arguments themselves, but to demonstrate the attitudes and principles that let us use them effectively.

Philippians 2 demonstrates Christ’s attitude toward ministry.

- As the eternal Son, Jesus lacked nothing, yet He became a man for our sake.
- His holiness demanded that He judge sin while His love for us created a desire to see us redeemed.
- In love He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (v. 7).
- Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

All of this Jesus did so that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Our best way to defend our faith in society is by imitation of our Savior. When conflict arises, it’s not our goal to overpower others who don’t believe, but to serve and share the message with love so that those who hear the gospel might freely believe in Jesus, the One who gave His all for us.

Follow up Question

What attitudes toward the lost make it most likely that they will be open to hearing the gospel?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.