

FREE Preaching Kit

Sermons & Video Clips

PUREFLIX PRESENTS

THE MOVIE

GOOD'S
DEAD

A man with a brown messenger bag is standing on a blue step ladder, holding a white sign with the word "NOT" written in red. He is positioned in front of a white brick wall where the words "GOOD'S DEAD" are painted in large, black, distressed letters. The man is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans. The scene is viewed from behind him, looking towards the wall.

"WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?"



God's Not Dead: Welcoming Skepticism

Good morning!

Thanks for joining us for our final installment of our three-part series on ***God's Not Dead***, based on a great movie about a college student who must defend his belief in God in his philosophy class. You can see it in theaters on March 21st.

In our first two messages about the film, we talked about ***“Where Is God When Life Falls Apart?”*** and ***“Is Our Faith Blind?”***

In this last message, we're celebrating the role of skepticism about faith—because it is skepticism about what is not true that leads us to a conviction about what is actually true.

Skepticism and doubt are the true friends of faith if they are applied to an honest search for what's true.

So, if you describe yourself as a skeptic, we *warmly* welcome you to the conversation.

No one is in the business of trying to convince anyone of what's not true, but I invite honest minds—skeptical minds—to join me in a pursuit of truth, that is, the harmonization of facts and the attempt to eliminate apparent contradictions.

It can be an exciting journey with profound and, I think, extremely satisfying answers.

And for those of you who do not consider yourselves skeptical about the existence of God and the resurrection of Christ, I've got some things to share with you about ***welcoming skepticism***, too.

Let's first take a quick look at the ***God's Not Dead*** trailer and see how Josh Wheaton responds to his philosophy professor's challenge:

[*God's Not Dead Trailer*](#)

This movie hits on some very important aspects of faith, confronting some difficult questions that can seem almost insurmountable but that we should all embrace.

And yet sometimes we who believe can unintentionally convey the wrong attitude toward skepticism, one that may be judgmental and discourage honest challenges to what we believe. We all need to be open-minded.

Remember, all of us were skeptics, too, and needed convincing proofs. Now let's look at one of greatest skeptics in the New Testament: “Doubting” Thomas the Apostle.

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So

the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe (John 20:24–25 NASB)."

Meet Thomas, also called Didymus (*the twin* in the Greek), one of the greatest questioners of all. A man who had to have proof! We should all respect that.

He is sometimes unfairly chastised because 10 witnesses testify to seeing a risen Jesus, but he will not believe them unless he has solid evidence. He wants to be certain, taking no one's word for it.

But when Jesus appears again and allows Thomas to touch His wounds, He surprisingly does not chastise him for doubting. Skepticism is not only healthy, but also worthwhile.

"Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God! (John 20:27–28 NASB)"

Thomas is a man who must be convinced, an admirable trait. No one wants to "go along with the crowd" and just believe to believe. We all want to be positive and know what's really true, right?

Well, apparently Thomas was sure because he ended up dying for his faith in a risen Jesus, speared to death in India around 70 A.D.

In the film, Josh doesn't give up his life, but we do see what it costs him. We also see some wonderful examples about how to graciously "*give an account.*"

When talking about your faith with skeptics, there are 5 Goals you should always keep in the forefront of your mind. Here's the first:

Goal 1: Our Attitude

"But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5 NASB)."

*"...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...** (1 Peter 3:15 NASB)"*

What are the three things that we're warned we should never discuss in public?

Politics, Sex, and Religion, right?

Well, that may be true to some extent, but the Bible makes it clear that God wants us to discuss our faith, but we need to be wise in how we do that. It comes down to our execution.

As a famous football coach once said when asked about his team's poor play, "*How do you feel about their execution?*" He replied immediately, "*I'm all for it!*"

This is humorous, but we don't want to have that label as a Christian, do we? We want to represent Christ properly to skeptics as equals in a humble search for the big answers to life.

But there is some truth between the lines in that other adage...discussing sensitive topics can lead to an ugly argument if we're not careful. As believers, our goal should be to love the person, not just win an argument with clever points and information.

The goal of our instruction is love, as we see in the father's reaction in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:20 (NASB). "*So he got up and came to his father. **But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.***"

If you do not have that same desperate compassion, scanning that road every day as the father did, longing for his son's return, you don't really get what Jesus was conveying here about God's love for others.

It's critical that we are being gentle, filled with the Holy Spirit, and manifesting His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control, etc. when discussing our faith.

No one likes a know-it-all, and it's critical that we are gracious in sharing the gospel...especially when we may have to tactfully point out biblical differences about God.

If our goal is to be right, to win the debate, or show how much we know, then we've already lost the person. We don't want to win "the battle" over a minor point regarding evolution or creation and lose "the war" to love them. So remember...

- **The goal of our instruction is love.**

In the film, one of the loudest critics is Professor Radisson. He is vehemently opposing Josh, but Josh does a good job of restraining his emotions and stays pretty even-keeled. We discover later on that the professor has some deep pain that's driving his anti-God crusade.

And that can be a pretty typical scenario in a hurting and broken world. A lot of people have some toxic waste from their past that is bubbling near the surface. We need to be sensitive to their unseen hurts and compassionate like the prodigal's father.

There may be an alcoholic parent in their past, a tragic death, or some other personal injury or abuse, maybe even from a church. If we knew their pain, we'd probably be more compassionate with how they arrived at this point in their life.

Darwin himself is thought to have turned away from belief in God because of the death of his 10-year old daughter. Remember it's not an "us vs. them" situation. We are all on the same side, mutual captives trying to help others see evidence of His love and grace.

Be careful to lovingly answer their questions as Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:25 (NASB), "...**with gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth..."

So remember...

- **Sometimes more antagonism means more pain, so more compassion is needed.**

Let's look at a scene from *God's Not Dead* where Willie and his wife graciously take some pretty snide remarks and still manage to love Amy.

[Film Clip 18:03 to 20:52 \(Willie's Ambush\)](#)

Did you notice that there was no condescension toward Amy? No superiority in their answers? No self-righteous indignation at her remarks? This is a good example of how to interact with someone who doesn't understand, without returning evil for evil.

Goal 2: Share the truth, not clever arguments

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16 NASB)."

This is precisely the advice that Reverend Dave texts to Josh when he accepts Professor Radisson's challenge to defend God's existence. We don't have to know every answer or analogy, but we do need to know the truth...the gospel.

It's not about being clever with facts, dates, and figures. It's okay to know some answers to hard topical questions about origin theories or the pygmies in Africa, but your goal should be to love them...and the most loving you can do is to humbly share the gospel.

As Paul says in Romans, this is God's power for salvation. The Bible is a weapon—the Sword of the Spirit—and you should be skilled with communicating its truths to your fellow man.

Look at Ephesians 6:17 NASB: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

It makes no real difference if someone doesn't believe in the Bible, either. It's still a sharp weapon, and like a scalpel it can cut down to their innermost being:

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12 NASB).”

Think about pointing a loaded gun at someone and they say, *“I don't believe it's loaded.”* What they believe about the gun makes no difference. It can still affect them. Share the verses with them, and if possible have them read it out loud after you show them the verse. God's Word is powerful.

And as it says in Ephesians, this isn't just a debate or a discussion. Eternal destinies are on the line.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12 NASB).”

So remember...

- **This is a spiritual battle, not a battle of wits.**

Goal 3: Be Humble

“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE (1 Peter 5:5 NASB).”

“Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1b NASB).”

Remember that we are just one beggar sharing a piece of bread with another beggar...you have nothing to boast about because it is all grace that God saved you from your sins. Remember what Paul told the Corinthians (NIV): *“...Knowledge puffs up while love builds up.”*

It's okay to admit that you don't know an answer to a question, too. You're human, and you don't have to be a theologian to lovingly help others understand His love for them.

People will respect your humility to say that you don't know everything. When Professor Radisson challenges Josh with new information about Stephen Hawking's theories, Josh says, *“I don't know...but that doesn't change my faith in God.”*

That's brilliant! Don't think you have to know everything to share the gospel or defend what you believe.

Just because we don't have all the answers, doesn't mean we don't have enough answers to plot a course, to make a choice. You can also use those opportunities of not knowing to promise to get them an answer, and then get back with them later on.

It's okay not to know every answer. Just humbly share what you do know.

So just remember...

- **You don't have to have all the answers.**

This is not to say that you shouldn't have *some* answers, because they do exist. There are lots of apologetic books and websites out there to help you with these questions.

So you should have an idea of what you believe—and why you believe it—on some basic topics like creation/evolution, the Bible, eschatology, the resurrection, etc.

For instance, many famous scientists were also believers (Newton, Kepler, Pascal, Bacon, Pasteur, Kelvin, Marconi, Maxwell, Carver, Fleming, Hertz, and Von Braun, to name a few). Having a tidbit like that in your back pocket can turn a few science-heads who think science and faith are incompatible.

You can be both a brilliant scientist and still recognize intelligent design when you see it. These scientists did, and they were geniuses!

And sometimes “the answer” isn't what's needed anyway. Sometimes what's needed is empathy. Real life has real hardships that just require *real* compassion and honesty.

“I don't know why your grandparents were killed in that car crash last year, or where they are today, but I know that God loved them and gave Himself up for them.”

We see this very clearly in ***God's Not Dead*** when Amy meets The Newsboys backstage. I don't want to spoil it for you, but trust me. Sometimes folks just need to know that you care.

And finally, pray for wisdom as you're interacting with someone. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart to see what the real need is in their life so you can demonstrate genuine concern.

So remember...

- **You should have some answers...a defense for the hope that is in you.**

Goal 4: Be Winsome

*“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The **harvest** is plentiful but the workers are few (Matthew 9:37 NIV).’”*

*“And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the **harvest** of the earth is ripe (Revelation 14:15 NASB).’”*

Sometimes we get so excited about our salvation as new believers that we lose all sense of tact and want to tell everyone how wonderful it is, shoving it down their throats, as it were.

This zeal is refreshing, but it must be accompanied with the knowledge that not everyone is ready to believe, so don’t tug on “green” fruit. Look for opportunities to talk about your faith, but know when to move on when someone isn’t open to your enthusiasm.

In the film, we see several examples of the different stages of a person’s spiritual journey in the various characters, and it’s important for us to recognize them.

- Ayisha’s father—Some people are not interested in the gospel at all and are even violently opposed to it.
- Professor Radisson—Some are not open and just want to argue, to contest truth no matter what proofs are presented.
- Amy—Some are content with their life, as she seemed to be when dismissing Willie’s invitation to church: *“No thanks. I’m good.”*
- Martin Yip—Some are honestly searching for the truth about God, even someone from a communist country who knows nothing of Jesus Christ.

We need to have discernment and respect for each person’s place in their spiritual journey, combined with a genuine love for them no matter what.

Goal 5: Intercede For Them

*“Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, **the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.** This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who*

hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matthew 13:18-23 NASB)."

When someone first hears the gospel, there are a number of things that can happen. Initially, their heart may be tender, like a bruise that is responsive to the slightest touch, but over time if nothing is done about it, the heart can become callous and hardened.

Once you have shared the gospel with someone, remember to pray that the seed would take root and grow in their heart. This is another way to show God's love to them: by praying for them.

Ask yourself if there is anyone else praying for them. If not you, then who will?

Specifically you can pray that:

- The Holy Spirit would convict them of their need for forgiveness.
- They would be reminded of the truth of the gospel in little ways.
- You could develop a friendship with them and ask for divine appointments.
- Other Christians would come into their lives and show them God's love, too.

In closing, let's consider this quote by C.S. Lewis from *The Weight of Glory*:

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

So let's remember that Jesus Christ loves the whole world and "...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4 NASB)."

We are all in need...we are all prisoners. It's just that some captives have escaped and are now trying to help show their fellow prisoners the way out, too.

And winning an argument is not as important as winning a friend.

Be in the Spirit as you discuss your faith and answer hard questions about the gospel with humility and gentleness, seeking to win them and not just a debate.

Remember, the goal of our instruction is love.

Let's pray.