

September-October 2018

Dear Defender of God's Truth,

The church is facing a major crisis! J. Warner Wallace, Senior Fellow at the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, recently published a disturbing article: "Young Christians are Leaving the Church—Here's Why" (www.foxnews.com/opinion/young-christians-are-leaving-the-church-heres-why). He reported on the latest Pew Research Center survey which found that a growing group in the U.S. is the "religious nones," those who subscribe to "nothing in particular" when it comes to religious affiliation. Most are ex-Christians and under age 35. The number of young people leaving the church is staggering. For example, a LifeWay Research Study (2007) found that 70% of Christian youth will abandon their faith while in college (<http://coldcasechristianity.com/2018/are-young-people-really-leaving-christianity>). The Pew survey did not investigate the reason why young people are leaving the church, but Wallace believes he knows why.

The answer lies in [a prior, 2016 Pew Research Center survey](#) which allowed respondents to answer in their own words. In this study, most "nones" said they no longer *identified* with a religious group because they no longer *believed it was true*. When asked *why* they didn't believe, many said their views about God had "evolved" and some reported having a "crisis of faith." Their specific explanations included the following statements:

"Learning about evolution when I went away to college"

"Religion is the opiate of the people"

"Rational thought makes religion go out the window"

"Lack of any sort of scientific or specific evidence of a creator"

"I just realized somewhere along the line that I didn't really believe it"

"I'm doing a lot more learning, studying and kind of making decisions myself rather than listening to someone else."

The data from this 2016 study may explain why ex-Christians "question a lot of religious teaching," as reported in the 2018 study. The teaching they question seems to be about *the existence of God*, and this is consistent with the explanations offered by ex-Christians [in a variety of other recent studies](#). When Christians walk away from the faith, more often than not, it's due to some form of *intellectual skepticism*. Ex-Christians often describe religious beliefs as innately [blind or unreasonable](#).

But that doesn't accurately reflect [the rich, evidential history of Christianity](#). The psalmist appealed to the design and fine-tuning of the universe to demonstrate the existence of God (Psalm 19:1). Jesus appealed to both eyewitness testimony (John 16:8) and the indirect evidence of his miracles (John 10:38) to argue for the authority of his statements. The disciples identified themselves as eyewitnesses and appealed to their observations of the Resurrection to make the case for the Deity of Jesus (Acts 4:33).

Ex-Christians often *leave the Church* because they don't think anyone *in the Church* can answer their questions or [make a case](#). It's time for believers to [accept their responsibility](#) to explain *what* Christianity proposes and [why these propositions are true](#), especially when interacting with young people who have legitimate questions. Rather than embracing a blind or unreasonable faith, Christians must develop an informed, [forensic faith](#) that can stand up in the marketplace of ideas.

We know why young Christians are leaving. Now it's time to give them a reason to stay.

At the center of this crisis of faith is the fact that young people have lost their confidence in the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God. In our institutions of higher learning Christian beliefs are challenged, particularly the authority of the Bible. Sadly, churches have not prepared our youth to withstand these attacks. As Wallace pointed out, we have answers for the questions young people have, and for the opposition they will face in college, the workplace, the media, or elsewhere. Tragically, however, they are not given those answers while attending church and Sunday School in their early years. They are lacking a strong foundation for their Christianity when they go out into the world on their own. Evangelical leaders seem oblivious to this problem; apologetics rarely finds a place in Sunday School curricula, youth groups or the pulpit.

ABR is hard at work solving the so-called "problems" opponents raise when they maintain that archaeological findings disprove the Bible. We are unmasking the faulty and biased interpretations college professors and others use to supposedly debunk the Bible. The ABR website contains a wealth of apologetic information answering critics and supporting the truth of Scripture. Creationist and other apologetic organizations provide similar information. The problem is, there is a disconnect between the vast amount of apologetic information available and the teaching young people receive in our churches and para-church youth organizations. Those working with Christian youth need to wake up to this crisis and provide young Christians with a strong foundation for their faith that will prepare them for the onslaught they will encounter in our secular-humanist, anti-Christian society.

An important project that ABR is currently engaged in is producing a final report on our now-completed Kh. el-Maqatir excavation. We hope to produce three volumes: one on the Bronze Age, a second on the Late Hellenistic-Early Roman and Byzantine Periods and a third on the rich assemblage of coins recovered from the site. My part is to write up the Middle Bronze III-Later Bronze I fortress, the fortress attacked by the Israelites as described in Joshua 7-8. Professor Boyd Seevers of the University of Northwestern, Saint Paul MN, is documenting the Iron Age remains. Volume two is being undertaken by Scott Stripling and his able staff. Volume three will be written by Israeli coin expert Yoav Farhi of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

The dig is completed and now we are engaged in the most important phase of the Kh. el-Maqatir project—documenting our finds. Your continued prayers and financial support are greatly needed as we bring our work on the "Ai problem" across the finish line. Once our findings are published, critics will no longer be able to use Ai as evidence against the Bible. Thank you for standing with us.

Upholding the truth of God's word,



"Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."
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