

War in the Church

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Ephesians 6:12

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Postmodernism is, at its very core, an assault on all truth. And the gospel of Jesus Christ—who is “the way, *the truth*, and the life” (John 14:6, emphasis added)—is a clear enemy of that agenda. No wonder postmodernists have been so determined in recent decades to infiltrate Christ’s church and overthrow His exclusive message and absolute truth claims.

But this is by no means the first time the truth war has intruded into the church. It has happened in every major era of church history. Battles over the truth were raging inside the Christian community even in apostolic times, when the church was just beginning. In fact, the record of Scripture indicates that false teachers in the church immediately became a significant and widespread problem wherever the gospel went.

Virtually all the major epistles in the New Testament address the problem in one way or another. The apostle Paul was constantly engaged in battle against the lies of “false apostles [and] deceitful workers disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). Paul said that was to be expected. It is, after all, one of the favorite strategies of the evil one: “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14–15).

It takes a willful naïveté to deny that such a thing could happen in our time. As a matter of fact, it is happening on a massive scale. Now is not a good time for Christians to flirt with the spirit of the age. We cannot afford to be apathetic about the truth God has put in our trust. It is our duty to guard, proclaim, and pass that truth on to the next generation (1 Timothy 6:20–21). We who love Christ and believe the truth embodied in His teaching must awaken to the reality of the battle that is raging all around us. We must do our part in the ages-old truth war. We are under a sacred obligation to join the battle and contend for the faith.

In one narrow respect, the driving idea behind the Emerging Church movement was correct: The current climate of postmodernism *does* represent a wonderful window of opportunity for the church of Jesus Christ. The arrogant rationalism that dominated the modern era is already in its death throes. Most of the world is caught up in disillusionment and confusion. People are unsure about virtually everything and do not know where to turn for truth.

However, the absolute *worst* strategy for ministering the gospel in a climate like this is for Christians to imitate the uncertainty or echo the cynicism of the postmodern perspective—and in effect drag the Bible and the gospel into it. Instead, we need to affirm *against* the spirit of the age that God has spoken with the utmost clarity, authority, and finality through His Son (Hebrews 1:1–2). And we have the infallible record of that message in Scripture (2 Peter 1:19–21).

Postmodernism is simply the latest expression of worldly unbelief. Its core value—a dubious ambivalence toward truth—is merely skepticism distilled to its pure essence. There is nothing virtuous or genuinely humble about it. It is proud rebellion against divine revelation.

In fact, postmodernism's hesitancy about truth is exactly antithetical to the bold confidence Scripture says is the birthright of every believer (Ephesians 3:12). Such assurance is wrought by the Spirit of God Himself in those who believe (1 Thessalonians 1:5). We need to make the most of that assurance and not fear to confront the world with it.

The gospel message in all its component facts is a clear, definitive, confident, authoritative proclamation that Jesus is Lord, and that He gives eternal and abundant life to all who *believe*. We who truly know Christ and have received that gift of eternal life have also received from Him a clear, definitive commission to deliver the gospel message boldly as His ambassadors. If we are not clear and distinct in our proclamation of the message, we are not being good ambassadors.

But we are not merely ambassadors. We are simultaneously soldiers, commissioned to wage war for the defense and dissemination of the truth in the face of countless onslaughts against it. We are *ambassadors*—with a message of good news for people who walk in a land of darkness and dwell in the land of the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2). And we are *soldiers*—charged with pulling down ideological strongholds and casting down the lies and deception spawned by the forces of evil (2 Corinthians 10:3–5; 2 Timothy 2:3–4).

Notice carefully: Our task as ambassadors is to bring good news to people. Our mission as soldiers is to overthrow false *ideas*.

We must keep those objectives straight; we are not entitled to wage warfare against people or to enter into diplomatic relations with anti-Christian ideas. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12); and our duty as ambassadors does not permit us to compromise or align ourselves with any kind of human philosophies, religious deceit, or any other kind of falsehood (Colossians 2:8).

If those sound like difficult assignments to keep in balance and maintain in proper perspective, it is because they are.

Jude certainly understood this. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write his short epistle to people who were struggling with some of these very same issues. He nevertheless urged them to contend earnestly for the faith against all falsehood, while doing everything possible to deliver souls from destruction: “snatching them out of the fire . . . hating even the garment polluted by the flesh” (Jude 23).

So we are ambassador-soldiers, reaching out to sinners with the truth even as we make every effort to destroy the lies and other forms of evil that hold them in deadly bondage. That is a perfect summary of every Christian's duty in the war for the truth.



Adapted from [The Truth War](#).

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