

36 Foundations 106.1 – The Resurrection on Trial, Those Who Do Not Come To The Trial

What to Do When the Person You Love Won't Look at the Evidence

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A reader contacted me after the last article, and their question deserves a dedicated response. So I've decided to write this as a 106.1 addendum to that article. They asked, "What do you do for those who never show up for jury duty?"

They have a family member, someone intelligent by any worldly standard, who refuses to even consider the resurrection. Not unpersuaded by the evidence... unwilling to look at it at all. The relationship is strained, and the small connection they still share gets carefully protected, limited to safe topics, because they're afraid that challenging this person's faith could cost them the only bond they still have. Underneath all of it, years of quiet, faithful prayer, with no visible results... yet.

If you've spent any real time loving someone who won't even show up for the trial, you already know exactly what they are describing.

Article 106 laid out the evidence like a jury trial and asked you to reach a verdict. But a trial only works if the other side shows up. What do you do when they won't? When they won't review a single exhibit, won't hear a single witness, and have already decided the whole case is beneath them?

I want to answer that as best I can, because I think a lot of us are quietly carrying exactly this for someone we love.

It Was Never Your Job to Deliver the Verdict

You are not responsible for convincing anyone.

Read that again. **You are not responsible.**

Jesus told his disciples something specific about this the night before he died. He said that when the Holy Spirit came, the Spirit himself would convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Not you. Not me. The Holy Spirit.

Turning conviction into belief was never your assignment, and that's a genuine relief if you allow it. It belongs to God, and He's considerably better at it than any of us could ever be.

Paul says almost the same thing a different way, writing to a church that had started arguing over which teacher deserved credit for their spiritual growth. Paul told them plainly. He planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth, and neither the planter nor the waterer is anything compared to God, who alone gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

Read that again if you're the one carrying a family member's soul around like it's entirely on your shoulders. The planting and the watering still matter. Paul isn't saying the work is pointless, he's saying the outcome was never actually within your power to produce, no matter how well you do your part. Your role was never to be the one who saves them. Your role is to plant, or water, or maybe just stand there faithfully while somebody else does either, and trust God to do the part only God can do.

That doesn't mean your effort doesn't matter. It means the outcome was never actually in your hands, which is a very different thing.

Protect the Relationship First

If you have no relationship with someone, or a badly damaged one, you have almost no influence over whether they'll ever hear the gospel from you at all. A truth claim landing from a stranger, or from someone who's burned trust with you before, gets filtered out before it even has a chance to be considered. People don't examine evidence from people they've written off.

Protecting the relationship is recognizing that a relationship is the actual road the truth has to travel down to reach someone, not compromise, and not watering down the gospel. If the road is washed out, it doesn't matter how good the vehicle is.

Peter wrote something that aligns well, he told believers to always be ready to give an answer for the hope within them, then added something easy to overlook. Do it with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

Gentleness and respect aren't soft, secondary add-ons to the real work of evangelism. They're the delivery mechanism. A true thing said harshly, or pushed on someone who isn't ready, often does less good than the same true thing held quietly and offered at the right moment, with real patience behind it.

If you're intimidated by someone, or afraid of losing what little relationship you have left, that fear doesn't make you unfaithful, it might actually be pointing you toward wisdom. Sometimes the most faithful thing you can do is simply keep showing up, keep loving them without an agenda attached to every conversation, and let the relationship itself become the evidence that something real is different about you.

A Stone in the Shoe

Faithfulness doesn't always look like a full argument, the way we laid one out in the last article, sometimes it looks much smaller than that.

Think about a stone in someone's shoe. It's small. Nobody notices it from the outside. But it doesn't go away either. It makes itself known every single step, whether the person wants to think about it or not, until eventually, it bothers them enough to stop and deal with it.

That's often what a single honest sentence can do for someone who won't sit down for the full trial. Not the whole case for the resurrection. Not a lecture on manuscript evidence or the minimal facts method. Just one true thing, said with love, at the right moment, small enough that it doesn't trigger their walls, and durable enough that they can't quite walk it off afterward.

Something like mentioning you still pray for them, every day, without conditions attached. Something like refusing to flinch or get defensive when they mock what you believe, and letting your calm become its own quiet question mark in their mind. Something like simply being different, in a way they notice and can't quite explain, over years they're watching whether you know it or not.

You may never see that stone do its work. That's the hardest part in our walk – not always knowing or understanding the outcome. But you don't plant a seed to watch it sprout the same afternoon. You plant it because it's the right thing to plant, and you trust the one who makes things grow.

What This Doesn't Mean

This isn't permission to never say anything true again because it might cost you something. Gentleness isn't the same as never speaking. Protecting a relationship isn't the same as protecting yourself from every uncomfortable conversation. There will be moments, sometimes rare ones, when the door opens and the honest thing needs to be said plainly, even if it's hard.

The goal isn't silence. The goal is wisdom about timing, tone, and what the relationship can actually bear at any given moment, held alongside genuine trust that God is working even when you can't see it and even when you're not the one saying anything at all.

We Won't Understand Everything, and That's Fine

There are parts of this I don't fully understand.

Why some hearts stay closed for decades while others turn in an instant. Why prayer sometimes seems to move mountains and other times seems to hit a wall. Why God allows someone we love to walk right past overwhelming evidence without a second glance, when He could, presumably, make it impossible to ignore.

I don't have a tidy answer for any of that, and I've stopped expecting one.

Martin Luther put it this way. "We cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or by the intellect... trust solely in God, and in the influence of His Spirit."

I think that's right, and I'd add my own plain version of it. I don't expect to understand everything I read in Scripture, and I don't think I'm supposed to. How could a finite human

being, with a hundred years or less on this earth, possibly grasp everything about an infinite God who exists outside our time altogether?

God said it plainly through the prophet Isaiah. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

God is being honest about the size of the gap between him and us, not evasive.

I think this matters especially for the situation we’ve been talking about in this whole article. It would be easy to demand a reason. Why hasn’t he opened this person’s eyes yet. Why does my prayer feel like it’s landing nowhere. If I could just understand the mechanism, maybe I could push the right lever.

But that’s not actually faith. That’s just a more sophisticated version of wanting control.

Faith, the kind that actually holds up under years of silence, doesn’t require understanding the whole plan. It requires trusting the character of the one holding it, even, and maybe especially, when the timeline makes no sense to you. **You don’t need to understand why God hasn’t answered yet, to still trust that He’s good, He’s present, and He hasn’t forgotten the person you’re praying for.**

A Word for the Person Who Won’t Come to the Trial

I’ve spent this whole article talking to the person praying for someone else. I want to pause and say something to that someone else, in case they ever read this, or in case you’re the one wondering what to say to them beyond prayer.

My book isn’t only for believers, even though it’s unapologetically written from a Christian perspective. Every human being builds a castle. Walls, storerooms, a moat – whatever form yours takes. That’s not a uniquely religious problem. It’s a human one. Whether you believe in God, don’t believe in God, or haven’t decided yet, you’ve still built something to protect yourself from being hurt again, and that something is very likely also keeping you isolated in ways you don’t fully see.

My honest conviction, the one my whole book is built on, is that you won’t ever fully renovate your castle without Christ. I’m not going to soften that or pretend otherwise here.

But that conviction doesn’t mean there’s nothing for you until you get there.

You can still learn to see your own walls more clearly. You can still recognize the patterns, the ways you protect yourself that end up costing you the very connection you’re trying to preserve. You can still take real, meaningful steps out of isolation and toward health, even before you’re ready to reckon with the resurrection or anything else in this series. That growth is real, even if it isn’t the whole story.

So if you’re the one who won’t come to the trial, I’m not asking you to pretend you believe something you don’t. I’m asking something smaller first. **Look at your own walls. Ask**

whether they're protecting you or imprisoning you. That question doesn't require faith to take seriously, and it might be the first stone in your own shoe.

A Few Practical Places to Start

If you're in this position with someone, here are a few things worth trying, none of them dramatic, all of them sustainable over the long haul.

Ask better questions instead of making better arguments. A question like "what would it actually take to change your mind on this?" often opens more doors than a well-built case ever will, because it invites them to think out loud instead of feeling cornered.

Let your consistency do work your words can't. Keep your word. Show up when you say you will. Handle your own failures honestly instead of pretending you have it all together. People notice character over years far more than they notice arguments in a single conversation.

Pray specifically, not just generally. Instead of only "please save them," try praying for one honest conversation, one moment of curiosity, one crack in the wall this month. Specific prayer tends to keep you watching for the answer instead of losing hope in the meantime.

Resist the urge to argue every time the topic comes up. Not every opening is the right one. Sometimes the wisest thing you can do is let a comment pass without taking the bait, and save your honesty for a moment that isn't a fight.

Find one other person to carry this with you. Whether it's a spouse, a friend, or a small group, don't carry a years-long prayer burden alone. It's too heavy for one person to hold quietly over an extended period of time.

None of these guarantee an outcome. Nothing could. But they're the kind of faithfulness that keeps a relationship alive long enough for God to do what only God can do.

For Further Study

John 16:5-11 records Jesus's full teaching on the Holy Spirit's role in conviction, worth reading in its complete context rather than the single verse alone.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 contains Paul's full argument about planting, watering, and God giving the growth, addressed to a church arguing over whose ministry deserved the credit.

1 Peter 3:13-17 gives the fuller context for "gentleness and respect," written to believers facing real hostility for their faith.

Look at the actual sources. Follow the citations. Be a Berean.

If you're struggling:

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- The Hope Line: <http://thehopeline.com/> Chat with trained professionals for free 24/7.
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

You matter. Whatever weight you're carrying for someone you love who won't yet see the truth – you don't have to carry it alone. Please stay.

William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live In A Castle? Breaking Free From The Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as a fellow traveler and Berean, aiming to examine the Scriptures daily and share his findings.

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