

Introduction:

Continuing on our theme of young people and some things they need to know we want to look at the influence of skeptics, understanding them, and how to deal with them.

I) The Influence of Skeptics

A) Defining "skeptic"

1. Its origin is in the Greek skeptikos, meaning inquiring, reflective or one that doubts
2. Religious skepticism generally refers to doubting or questioning something about religion. Although, as noted by Schellenberg the term is sometimes more generally applied to anyone that has a negative view of religion.

B) Jesus had His skeptics

1. His country men were skeptical of His teaching and miracles, *Matthew 13.54-58*
 - a. Not a lack of evidence- Jesus amazed them with His answers.
 - b. Not a lack of miracles for they were amazed at those too.
2. His physical brothers were skeptical, *John 7.3-5*.
 - a. Until after His death and resurrection, *Acts 1.14; Galatians 1.19*
 - b. Whatever reasons for their unbelief was erased by the evidence before them.

3. Nothing Jesus did could or would change some of them, *John 12.34-43*
 - a. A hard heart, prejudice, comes from within. The parable of the sower speaks of those who have no room for the word of God.
4. The most famous skeptic is Thomas, *John 20.24-25*
 - a. He quickly changed his belief when he saw the evidence, *John 20;27-28*.
 - b. The next verse is important for Jesus will not personally appear to us but we have the testimony of those who saw and believed, *John 20.29*

C) We are surrounded by skeptics

1. *I Corinthians 1.20-22* they were different in why they rejected the Gospel but they were the same in their unbelief.
2. Our young people have to deal with skeptics on various levels.
 - a. Their friends, peers, who either question their beliefs and/or actions.
 - b. Teachers who may ridicule religion in general and/or their personal beliefs.
3. Many Christians have "lost their faith" due to peer pressure, or giving in to the path of least resistance, or the temptations of the world. Hence, we have many today engaged in "social sins" or at least seeing nothing wrong with them.

II) Dealing With Skeptics

A) Different kinds of skeptics

1. Those who do so because of their peers, go along with the crowd. *John 12.42*.
 - a. It is popular to be anti-Christian in certain circles.
 - b. It can also be dangerous to expose religious views in those circles.
2. Those who are intellectuals and the evidence just doesn't make sense to them. i.e. the foolishness of the cross. *Acts 26.22-24*
3. Those who are ignorant of the Bible but find it easier or more comforting to not believe.

B) Know what you believe

1. Timothy knew the scriptures from his youth up, *2 Timothy 1.5*
2. But there came a time when he had to be convicted to do what the scriptures teach.
3. Spend time learning and questioning for yourself, *2 Timothy 2.15*.
 - a. This goes back to our original point-a lot of young people know about the Bible but they don't know their Bible.
 - b. How important is Bible study to you? Do you read the text before class? Do you read the lesson if there is a book? Do you think about the lesson before and afterward? *1 Peter 2.2-3*.

4. Be truthful - handling accurately means to be truthful.
 - a. Part of truthfulness is understanding and doing what is the truth.
 - b. The fact is the truth will either set you free (*John 8.32*) or convict you of sin (*John 16.8, 13*). It depends on what you do with it.
5. Always keep things simple, stay on point. Don't get distracted by with ifs, maybes, or emotional arguments. The Bible says what says. *1 Corinthians 2.4*.
6. Look for the major premise in the skeptic's logic and/or argument.
 - a. The resurrection question: *Matthew 22.23-28, 29-32*
 - b. Evolution- something came from nothing; life came from non-living matter.

Conclusion:

Each of us will face skeptics and critics of the Bible but that is ok. Some of us were skeptics at one time. The key is what the skeptic does with the information they receive. How about you this morning? Do you not believe because of a lack of information, sin in your life, a hard heart? Do not be unbelieving but believing, *John 20.27b*.