



THE BEREA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Doing Good Better

“But my lack of preparation wasn’t just because I was a teenager. The Christian culture in which I grew up also played a role. The most important issues in the evangelical world of my youth were personal conversion (was I saved?) and personal piety (did I live like a Christian?). To be clear, I think these two issues are very important, and I am tremendously grateful to have grown up in churches that did not ignore them (in our current day, many churches need a renewed focus on them). But generally speaking, my theological training stopped there. There was very limited instruction on the Christian worldview—what we believe and why we believe it—and virtually no instruction on how to respond to non-Christian thinking.

~ Michael J. Kruger, *Surviving Religion 101: Letters to a Christian Student on Keeping the Faith in College* (Crossway, 2021), 18

God Is Wise Enough

“A God wise enough to rule the universe is wise enough to watch over his son Job, *regardless* of how things seem at the bleakest moments. A God wise enough to create me and the world I live in is wise enough to watch out for me.” ~ Philip Yancey, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 84

A Call to Arms

David Anguish

The battle lines have been drawn . . . Many Christians have fallen into the trap of proclaiming “Peace! Peace!” where there is no peace. Hiding their eyes from the pressing issues of the day, they believe that resistance in the prevailing culture is useless. At the same time, other Christians have been too quick to declare war, mistaking battlefield casualties as enemies rather than victims.¹

So reads the heading and first paragraph of the cover summary of Peter Kreeft’s book, *How To Win the Culture War*. Kreeft, longtime professor of philosophy at Boston College, wrote his 120-page book as “a rousing call to arms,” urging believers to actively participate in the war in which we are engaged. He emphasized five action steps.

First, we must recognize we are at war. To say this is to echo Paul who wrote, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh” (2 Cor 10.3).

Second, we must understand the nature of the war. It is, first, a war of ideas, as Paul went on to elaborate:

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10.4-5).

But, while a formidable challenge to be taken seriously, Paul did not see the “arguments” to which he alluded as the fundamental problem. Elsewhere, he said we must contend with the crafty, deceitful “schemes”² of the devil, enacted by “the rulers, . . . the authorities, . . . the cosmic powers over this present darkness, . . . the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6.11-12). Though disarmed by and subjected to Christ (Col 2.15; 1 Pet 3.22), the threat they pose remains.

Third, we must identify and resist the enemy’s strategies and tactics (upon which Kreeft elaborated).³

Fourth, we must remain confident we are on the winning side. Kreeft pointed to three reasons for bold assurance:

- Truth is stronger than falsehood, light stronger than darkness.

Idols? Us?

“In Ezekiel 14:3, God says about the elders of Israel, ‘These men have set up their idols in their hearts.’ Like us, the elders must have responded to this charge, ‘Idols? What idols? I don’t see any idols.’ God was saying that the human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.” ~ Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (Dutton, 2009), xiv

From Suffering to Glory

“The message that suffering must precede glory remains scandalous even today for many people, including professing Christians. To be sure, God does not call all his followers to suffer equally or in the same way. But those who stress only the availability of physical and material blessings through Christ in this age, or who promise freedom from persecution as a reward for Christian maturity, completely invert Jesus’ teaching here [Matt 16.24-28] and risk finding themselves excluded from his kingdom.” ~ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew, The New American Commentary* (Broadman Press, 1992), 262

Dying Disciples

“Death to self is not so much a prerequisite of discipleship to Jesus as a continuing characteristic of it.” ~ D. A. Carson, *Matthew Chapters 13 through 28*, paperback edition (Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) 379

- Love is stronger than hate, and we fight because we love God and man while our enemy does not.
- Jesus is Lord, the Christ who is King, and therefore the one who has armed us with what Kreeft terms the “world’s most unconquerable weapon”—his blood.

Fifth, we must know what is needed to win the war. While some may find Kreeft’s identification self-evident, we should focus on it because it is easy to take for granted: what’s needed is an army of saints, Jesus-disciples, who will never surrender.

What is the fundamental qualification to participate in this army? Unreserved commitment to God’s will. More specifically, Kreeft observed, “the answer is a matter of public record. God has told us, in ten words. His commandments.”⁴

But merely knowing what is needed is not enough. We must do what we know. Yes, we need to take stock of our situation, its causes, and the better course to be followed. But it’s possible to be so concerned with analysis that we never actually do what we need to do. To follow that course is to concede the field to the enemy.

Is the task daunting? Most assuredly. But before we allow that reality to overwhelm us, let’s recall the kind of culture the first disciples encountered, their comparatively insignificant place in it, and the historical reality that they *did* permeate and change it. With that memory in mind, we will, perhaps, be more encouraged by a statement Kreeft made elsewhere:

Times of crisis like ours are not evening times, times for going to bed, but morning times, times to rise up and grab our weapons. The battle cry has sounded. The fateful day of decision has dawned. The joy of good battle should be upon us.⁵

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Notes

¹ Peter Kreeft, *How To Win the Culture War: A Christian Battle Plan for a Society in Crisis* (InterVarsity Press, 2002).

² “Schemes” translates *methodeia* (μεθοδεία), “crafty scheming with the intent to deceive” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2d [Accordance electronic ed., version 4.4. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989], 760.)

³ For an alternate discussion of strategies, readers may be interested in Kreeft’s 2011 lecture at Franciscan University of Steubenville, also entitled, “How To Win the Culture War: A Christian Battle Plan for a Society in Crisis.” Watch it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm08x8YiuXk>. His remarks are presented from the Catholic perspective he shared with the university where he spoke, but that does not obscure his perceptive insights on the broader culture war.

⁴ Kreeft, *Culture War*, 108-109.

⁵ Peter Kreeft, *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1990), 8.

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