Welcome to The Defense Series. The aim of this series is to help Christians more effectively “make a defense” (1 Pet. 3:15) to those who challenge the teachings and values of New Testament Christianity. My prayer is that the following words will help and embolden you as you stand for Truth.

There is a cliché that Christians often use – “Love the sinner, hate the sin.” Occasionally a non-Christian will respond, “Nowhere in the Bible does it say that!” And suddenly, the non-Christian becomes a theologian.

It is true – the Bible doesn’t say “Love the sinner, hate the sin” verbatim (It is actually a direct quote from Gandhi). But does that mean it isn’t taught in principle?
The Bible does, in fact, teach us to love sinners, while hating their sin.

God hates sin. “For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you” (Psa. 5:4; cf. Prov. 6:16-19). He hates sin because He is holy (cf. Isa. 6:3). Sin is completely contradictory to His Holy & Divine Nature. And as imitators of God (Eph. 5:1), Christians are to hate sin (cf. Psa. 97:10).

Why does God hate the sin of mankind? Because sin separates us from Him (cf. Isa. 59:2). Sin is a death sentence (cf. Rom. 3:23; 6:23). But because God loves mankind, He sent His Son into the world to pay the price for sin (1 John 4:8-9). That’s how passionately God loves us, and that’s how vehemently He hates our sin.

Likewise, Christians are to hate what God hates (i.e. sin), and love what God loves (i.e. our fellow man). The phrase, “Love the sinner, hate the sin,” merely serves as a reminder that we are to love others while at the same time hating the sin they practice.

I can love the thief while hating his theft. I can love the liar while hating his lies. I can love the alcoholic while hating his alcoholism. I can love the adulterer while hating his adultery. I can love the homosexual while hating his homosexuality. I can love the glutton while hating his gluttony.

Christians can never endorse sin, nor can we ever knowingly interact with someone in such a way to give credence to their sin.

No one illustrates this principle better than Jesus. In His ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ Jesus highlighted God’s hatred of sin by deepening its consequences (Matt. 5-7). At the same time, Jesus was accused of fraternizing with sinners (Matt. 9:11). He demonstrated love and compassion (cf. Matt. 9:36) by building relationships with people while telling them to stop sinning (cf. John 5:14; 8:11).

Christians, understand that while this phrase is a Biblical concept, and effectively communicates the essence of God’s view of sin, it is not always the best thing to say in one very important context - when you are talking to someone who ties their sin to their identity. Some alcoholics say, “I was born an alcoholic and will always be one.” Some thieves say, “Theft is how I express who I really am.” Some homosexuals say, “I was born this way. My attraction feels so natural.” To these people, when you say, “Love the sinner, hate the sin,” you are in essence saying, “I love you, but I hate you.”
I’m not saying the phrase “Love the sinner, hate the sin” isn’t a Biblical principle. It is! But when talking to someone who believes their sin is their identity, we should probably say something else (or approach them from a different angle). In all other instances, it is usually appropriate (if said in the right spirit).

Christians have the obligation to tell people they are living in sin. This is not hate. In fact, it is the opposite of hate (Who actually enjoys confronting sin?). While there is sometimes a fine line between the two, we must speak the truth in love while at the same time refusing to support or condone sin.

**Question: what do you think about this phrase?**