

## Ready Defense #1: Introduction to Apologetics July 16, 2017 | Will Galkin | Gospel Grace Church

### Intro:

We are gathered together as a church because we believe that Jesus Christ is God the Son. We believe that Jesus Christ walked this earth 2000 years ago, was crucified and was raised from the dead. We believe that Jesus sits at the right hand of the throne of God and as Lord will judge the World. This is countercultural! Everything about Jesus Christ runs contrary to the naturalism, materialism, individualism and inclusivism of our present age. The faithful Christian should not be surprised by the pushback of the culture but rather expect it. So be prepared as 1 Peter 3:15 exhorts us, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”

### Tentative Schedule

**Week 1** - Introduction to Apologetics

**Week 2** - Apologetics as Proof: Kalam Cosmological Argument

**Week 3** - Apologetics as Proof: Moral Argument

**Week 4** - Apologetics as Defense: Problem of Evil

**Week 5** - Apologetics as Defense: Pluralism and Relativism

**Week 6** - Apologetics as Offense: Worldview Comparison

**Week 7** - Apologetics as Offense: Tactics in Conversation

### Christian Apologetics Defined and Explained

Apologetics doesn't mean that you are apologizing for something. Rather you're giving a defense of what you believe in or think is correct. Everyone does apologetics. Therefore, Christian apologetics is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or subjectively engaging.<sup>1</sup>

#### Other definitions or descriptions of apologetics would include:

- Apologetics is the discipline that deals with a rational defense of Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>
- The ancient and ongoing discipline defending and advocating Christian theism.<sup>3</sup>
- Christian apologetics is simply the presentation of a case for biblical truth, most notably the central truth of Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Douglas Groothuis. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. United States: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011. Pg. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Geisler. *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012. Pg. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Groothuis, Pg. 20.

<sup>4</sup> James Sire. *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006. Pg. 25.

- Christian apologetics lays before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth.<sup>5</sup>

The word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word “apologia.” The word is found eight times in the New Testament (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 7:11; Phil. 1:7, 16; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15). The writers of Scripture use “apologia” to give a rational defense of the gospel specifically in three of those passages.

- **Phil. 1:7** *It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*
- **Phil. 1:16** *The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.*
- **1 Peter 3:15** *But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*

Peter writing from Rome, exhorts the Christians in Asia Minor to endure afflictions and trials (1 Peter 1:6-7, 3:13-17, 2:12-19, 5:9). We don’t know the extent of their trials but, we know in the midst of these hardships the Christians were to love one another (1 Peter 3:8) and not repay evil for evil (v.9). In fact, the Christian’s ability to absorb the assault of unbelievers serves as a foundation to intellectually and experientially engage others with the claims of Christ.

**1 Peter 3:13–18** *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,<sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*

#### **General Observations from 1 Peter:**

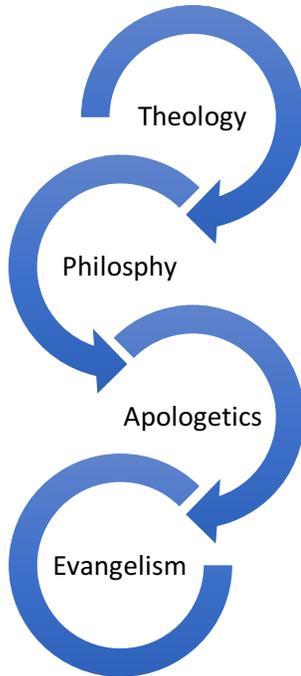
- No matter what opposition the Christian experiences he can have “hope” because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- The expectation for the Christian is that her suffering would not be brought about because of doing evil but rather doing what the Bible would call good.
- Many times, a Christian’s Biblical response to persecutions and trials results in non-Christians asking the Christian about the “hope” that is in him.
- The Christian is to be “*always being prepared to make a defense.*”

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<sup>5</sup> Sire, Pg. 26.

- When articulating the “hope” of Christianity, the Christian is expected to answer with “gentleness and respect.”

**One of the most basic yet difficult responsibilities of a Christian is to make disciples.** So where does apologetics fit into that mandate? **Christian Apologetics is linked to theology, philosophy and evangelism**



**Christian theology** seeks to systematically and coherently articulate the truth claims of the Bible. Such as but not limited to the doctrine of God, the deity of Christ and the salvation of mankind. **What truth is the apologist defending?**

While apologetics may be considered as a branch of theology it also walks hand-in-hand with philosophy. **Philosophy** can be defined in a simplistic fashion as, “The investigation of significant truth claims through rational analysis.”<sup>6</sup> **How does the apologist defend and share the truth?**

It is possible for someone to know and understand the truth claims of the Bible and still not be a follower of Jesus Christ. **Therefore, the goal of apologetics is not to win arguments but rather to expose what is truth.** Ultimately, Jesus is that truth! (John 14:6, 2 Cor. 4:4-6) Apologetics many times serves as a **pre-evangelism.** **How does the apologist reveal that the truth is Jesus?**

**Application:** Think about some of the many examples given to us in the Bible of people using logical arguments to help expose and explain the truth.

- How can a created idol be greater than the creator? **Jer. 10:1-16**
- A house divided cannot stand. **Matt 12**
- He is the God of the living. **Matt 22**
- Paul speaking to the Areopagus. **Acts 17**

**Restated:** We must earnestly endeavor to know the truth of the biblical worldview and to make it known with integrity to as many people as possible with the best arguments available trusting God to work genuine repentance and faith in the lives of those that hear.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli. Handbook of Christian Apologetics : Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994. Pg 26.

<sup>7</sup> Groothuis, Pg. 44.

## The Value of Christian Apologetics

**Christian apologetics build up the Christian faith.** Christian children grow up hearing the claims of the Bible presented correctly as truth. Yet, as they grow older in the present society they will be confronted by many objections. In addition, they themselves may have questions about the claims Christianity as well. Thankfully, the Christian does not have to be afraid questions about the trustworthiness of Christianity. The Christian can continue to add to his faith, knowledge. This is true of all Christians regardless of their personality, background or giftedness.

**Christian apologetics defend the Christian faith.** Thoughtful Christians that are seeking to engage the culture around them will immediately come into contact with those that do not believe the gospel. The naturalist struggles with the miraculous claims of Christianity. The relativist reacts to the absolutes found in the Bible. The cynic dismisses the notion of God because of the evil in the world. Listening to the soundbites of the critics of Christianity can cause serious distress when the criticisms are heard in isolation. Yet, Christian apologetics help intentional seekers understand life's most important questions as a coherent whole.

For the next six weeks, we will be looking at: **Apologetics as Proof; Apologetics as Defense and Apologetics as Offense.**

### Apologetics as Proof

Under this heading the apologist would seek to link the claims of God as revealed in Scripture with logical and rational argumentation building a cumulative case for Theism. Some of these theistic arguments would be:

- **The Ontological Argument:** The concept of the God implies His existence.
- **The Cosmological Argument:** A cause for the cosmos must be found.
- **The Design Argument:** Cosmic fine tuning displays a creator.
- **The Moral Argument for God:** The presence of law reveals a law giver.
- **The Argument from Religious Experience:** God changes lives.

### Apologetics as Defense

Because of the hope that a Christian has in the character and promises of God he is able to listen to every objection to Christianity. The Christian apologist does not have to respond fearfully when other bring their issues with Christianity to him. Some of these objections to Christianity would be:

- **Religious Pluralism:** Don't all roads lead to God?
- **The Problem of Evil:** How can God be loving and all-powerful and allow evil?
- **The Trustworthiness of the Bible:** The Bible is full of contradictions.
- **The Miraculous Claims of Christianity.**
- **Christianity is the Cause of much Injustice.**
- **Hell:** How could a loving God send people to Hell?
- **Jesus Christ:** The incarnation and resurrection of Jesus is incoherent.

## Apologetics as Offense

The apologist is not just to be defensive. He is to take the truth about God and clearly articulate that the Christian worldview is the best way to have a coherent understanding of the universe. In addition, apologetics should lean into explicit evangelism. The goal of apologetics is not some generic spirituality or some religious externalism. The goal is the conversion of the lost through the repentance of their sin and their faith in Jesus Christ alone. A Christian worldview best explains the following things:

- **Evil:** Sin and selfishness choices of mankind.
- **Justice:** There will judgment measured out by the Creator of all.
- **Hope:** What is the purpose of life?
- **Love and Kindness:** Why should we be kind and care for others?
- **Morality:** How can there be objective moral standards?

## The Limits of Apologetics

Apologetics is not an end to itself. It is merely a theological discipline that seeks to connect the truth of God with people. Because apologetics is done through people to people there are limitations to what can be ultimately accomplished. Some of this is because culture is not static but constantly changing. The arguments that were helpful yesterday may not be as productive today. In addition, ways of thinking and manifestations of sinfulness change throughout the ages as well. The church must be constantly working at clearly communicating the unchanging truth of God. That is why the apologist must be reminded:

### Intellectual knowledge does not equal spiritual power.

We are to study hard! We are to pray harder! Who is it that opens hearts and changes lives?

**2 Corinthians 4:4–6** *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*<sup>5</sup> *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*<sup>6</sup> *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

- It is God who opens hearts – Acts 16:14.
- It is God who opens minds – Luke 24:45.
- It is God who grants wisdom – James 1:5.
- It is God who causes His word to work – 2 Thess. 3:1.

### Intellectual agreement is not a faith commitment.

Just somebody is convinced to forsake atheism does not mean that they have been set free in Christ. Even the demons believe—and shudder! In addition, some have left false religions to become ardent atheists. The apologist cannot induce faith, conversion or regeneration. Knowing this ought to produce a humble disposition. Graciousness and kindness come out of one that is dependent on the spirit of God. (Gal. 5:22-25)

### Intellectual understanding does not bind the ways of God

Ultimately God is not dependent on any of us to do what He desires to do. Therefore, we should never think that somehow because of our intellectual understanding of logical arguments that God is bound to do what we demand. The Westminster Confession Faith says it this way, "God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure." We see this all the time in the realm of medicine. The doctor uses his tools and prescribes his medicines only for the patient to be cured by some other mysterious means. Conversion stories also give testimony of this. On one side of the equation we have the miraculous and spontaneous conversion of the apostle Paul. On the other side, we see the Ethiopian eunuch wrestling with the passage from Isaiah. There is no slam-dunk argument, silver-bullet reason or one-size-fits-all argument that the apologist can use with all peoples in all situations. Salvation is of the Lord.

### Reminder:

Christian apologetics lays before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Sire, Pg. 26.

## Resources and Tools:

### Acts 17:11

*Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

**1 Thessalonians 5:21** *But test everything; hold fast what is good.*

**1 John 4:1** *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

### Apologetic Websites:

**Apologetics 315** is a very helpful and well-maintained site to find all things apologetic. Lots of sermon, video and article links can be found on here. <http://www.apologetics315.com/>

### Introduction to Apologetics

Sire, James. *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006.

Geisler, Norman L. *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012.

Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. United States: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011.

Kreeft, Peter, and Ronald K. Tacelli. *Handbook of Christian Apologetics : Hundreds of Answers to Crucial Questions*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994.

### Apologetic Studies for Seekers

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

Sire, James W. *Beginning with God: a basic introduction to the Christian faith*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Keller, Timothy. *The reason for God: belief in an age of skepticism*. New York: Penguin, 2016.

### **Apologetic Help in Engaging Others**

Koukl, Gregory. *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing your Christian Convictions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.

Wilson, Douglas. *Persuasions: a dream of reason meeting unbelief*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007.