

INTRODUCTION

QUESTION: Have you ever encountered anyone who has asked questions like this ... Why do you believe in someone you cannot see, touch or hear? Or who dismisses Christianity as mere superstition? If so, when? How did you respond?

QUESTION: How do you feel when someone challenges or makes fun of you Christian beliefs?

Tonight we are going to begin a series on *apologetics*.

What is apologetics?

Apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia* (used 9x in NT) which literally means “a reasoned defense” ... like those used in a court of law. It involves making a case for the truth of the Christian faith. It is an attempt to give answers to persons who ask questions about or object to Christianity. An apologist presents various evidences to defend his/her faith.

Thus, the title of this series: “*Defending The Faith.*”

Apologetics is something we do every day ... giving reasons or evidences for why we believe something to be true.

Apologetics has positive and negative sides ... *positive = why Christianity is true* ... *negative = tearing down objections*.

Positive use seen in **Acts 1:3 (NKJV)** ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Positive use by Jesus in **Luke 24:38-43 (NKJV)** ³⁸ And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³ And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

God did positive apologetics by giving evidence of His existence ... **Romans 1:18-20 (NKJV)** ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Negative apologetics evaluates reasons offered against Christianity and exposes their weaknesses ... i.e. tears down and dismantles ideas that are given to discredit Christianity.

Important to do this by refutation and not condemnation ... don't get involved in tearing down anyone ... simply give reasons for why you think the claims are false. Don't raise your tone of voice or get angry.

A Biblical command to engage in the negative side of apologetics is **2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV)** ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

QUESTION: What kind of apologetics is being used in Exodus 4:1-5?

Why apologetics?

1. The Bible Commands us to do apologetics

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

Jude 3 (NKJV) ³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Philippians 1:7 (NKJV) ⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Philippians 1:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NKJV) ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

Titus 1:9 (NKJV) ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

2. God used apologetics

- God gave Moses evidence that He was speaking through him (Ex. 4:1-9)
- God raised Jesus from the dead to prove He is the Son of God (Rom. 1:4; John 2:18-22)
- God used apologetics through Elijah as he proved that God was more powerful than Baal (1 Kings 18:37-39)

3. Jesus used apologetics

- Gave evidence of His resurrection to His disciples by showing His pierced hands and feet (Luke 24:39-40)
- Jesus showed Himself alive after His resurrection by many “infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3)
- Jesus said that He would rise from the dead to give evidence to the Jews that He had authority to cleanse the temple (John 2:18-21)
- Jesus provided evidence that He had the authority and power to forgive sin by physically healing a crippled man (Mark 2:8-11)
- He gave evidence to Thomas that He was indeed alive (John 20:26-29)
- Peter said Jesus was confirmed by God through the miracles that He had done in the presence of witnesses (Acts 2:22)
- Jesus pointed to His miracles as proof to those who were sent by John the Baptist to ask if Jesus really was the Christ (Matt. 11:5)

4. Paul used apologetics

- Proved to the Jews in Damascus that Jesus was the Christ ... **Acts 9:22 (NKJV)** ²² But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.
- His custom was to enter the synagogues to demonstrate and persuade Jews to believe in Christ ... **Acts 17:2-4 (NKJV)** ² Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” ⁴ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.
- Paul gave reasons to believe in Christ to the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:22-34)
- Paul gave evidence through various signs that he was an apostle ... **2 Corinthians 12:12 (NKJV)** ¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.
- Paul gave a defense of his ministry before an angry crowd in Jerusalem ... **Acts 22:1 (NKJV)** ¹ “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.”

5. It is unreasonable to believe without evidence

Reasons are crucial when trying to decide what to believe ... if not supported with good reasons, then it is an “unreasonable belief.”

Would we put our trust in an airplane if we didn't have good reason to believe that it can take you to your destination?

None of us became Christians because it was unreasonable.

Many people see no reason to believe in Christianity ... this is where apologetics can make a difference.

Even our surrender to Christ is based on good reason ... **Romans 12:1 (NKJV)** ¹ *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

6. Unbelievers have legitimate doubts and questions

We should view honest questions as opportunities to share good reasons why we trust in Christ.

Because Christianity is true, the evidence will always be on our side ... the answers are there ... only a matter of finding them.

Good answers are not given to make ourselves look good ... but to create understanding which allows them to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Good answers remove one more obstacle that stands in their way of receiving Christ.

Lee Strobel has lost count of the number of people who have come to Christ through his books ...

QUESTIONS: *Have you ever been asked questions about truth, God, evil, the Bible, science, Christ or salvation? If so, what kinds of questions?*

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUTH

1. Isn't truth relative?
2. Is absolute truth intolerant?
3. Is it really possible to know the truth about absolute reality?

QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

1. How do you know that God exists?
2. If everything needs a cause, then who caused God? ... Who made God?
3. How can a good God send people to hell?
4. There are many ways to God ... different religions are just different ways to relate to God ... right?

QUESTIONS ABOUT EVIL

1. Where did evil come from?
2. Why does God allow evil?
3. Did God create evil?
4. Why doesn't God stop evil?
5. If God is good, then why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?
6. What about floods, tornadoes, cancer, AIDS, etc.?

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

1. How do you know the Bible came from God?
2. Who wrote the Bible? Wasn't it just written by men?
3. Why can the Bible be trusted? How do you know that it is reliable?
4. Hasn't archaeology disproved the Bible?
5. How was it put together?
6. What about contradictions in the Bible?
7. Are the copies of the Bible reliable?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCIENCE

1. Where did the universe come from?
2. Hasn't science proved the Bible wrong?
3. Hasn't science proved that we have evolved?

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRIST

1. Are the records of His life reliable?
2. Did Jesus really perform miracles?
3. How can Jesus be both God and man?
4. Is there any proof that Jesus really died and rose from the dead?

QUESTIONS ABOUT SALVATION

1. Why do "decent" people go to hell?
2. Why does anyone go to hell?
3. What about people who have never heard?

Two very good reasons why we should give answers to unbelievers:

1. The Bible commands us to "**be ready**" to give an answer "**always**" (1 Peter 3:15-16)
2. Unbelievers have good questions and we have good answers ... **Colossians 4:5-6 (NKJV)** ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

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7. It strengthens believers

The benefits of apologetics to Christians is huge ... there are at least three:

First, knowing why and what you believe will make you more confident in sharing the Gospel with others.

People who lack training in apologetics are often afraid to share their faith or speak out for Christ out of fear that someone might ask them a question. Training in apologetics will help to make you a bolder witness for Christ.

Second, apologetics can also help us keep the faith in times of doubt and struggle ... times that we all have ... bolsters and strengthens our faith.

Third, apologetics can help keep people, especially youth, from abandoning their faith.

Ken Ham documents in his book, *Already Gone*, that young people are leaving the church because their doubts and questions were not answered ...

We need to train our kids for war ... we need to help them put on the "**belt of truth**" that we talked about this morning.

Training them in apologetics is no guarantee, but it helps tremendously.

Some have even been brought back from the brink of abandoning their faith by reading an apologetics book or watching a debate.

Not just youth ... but any believer ... especially new believers ... surrounded by co-workers, etc. ... who have very different worldviews ... sometimes challenge us ...

Fourth, the study of apologetics is going to make you a deeper and more interesting person.

American culture is so appallingly superficial ... fixated on celebrities, entertainment, sports and self-indulgence. Studying apologetics is going to take you beyond all that to life's deepest questions ... questions about the existence and nature of God ... the origin of the universe ... the source of moral values ... the problem of suffering and evil ... etc.

You will become more thoughtful and well-rounded ... learning how to think logically and analyze what other people are saying. Instead of saying, "This is how I **FEEL** about it ... it's my opinion" you be able to say, "This is what I **THINK** about it, and here are my reasons."

8. It is "salt and light" in our collapsing culture

There is a tremendous struggle for the soul of America raging right now ... not just political, but spiritually as well ... we live in a post-Christian America.

Ken Ham addressed this in this State of the Nation address entitled "*The Collapse of Christian America*" ...

Many today are speaking out against Christianity ...

- Cast doubt on God's existence
- Cast doubt on Christ's resurrection
- Cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the Bible

Secularists are bent on eliminating "religion" from the public square. People like Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens want to exterminate religious belief altogether.

Belief in a generic "god" is still there, but belief in Jesus Christ is politically incorrect.

Increasingly Christians are perceived and portrayed as goofy curiosities to be gawked at ... increasingly Christians are looked on as dangerous ... not to be allowed in positions of influence.

Why cultural consideration important? Because the Gospel is never heard in isolation. A culture that is sympathetic to the Christian faith will be open to the Gospel in a way that a person brought up in a secular culture will not.

ILL: To see the influence of culture on your thinking ... imagine a Hindu devotee of Hare Krishna movement with shaved head and saffron robe approached you at the airport inviting you to become a follower of Krishna ... versus the same offer to someone in Delhi, India. It might strike you as bizarre, but not to someone raised in a Hindu culture.

If America's slide into secularism continues, then what awaits us tomorrow is already evident today in Europe. Western Europe has become so secularized that it's hard for the Gospel to even get a fair hearing. Missionaries labor for years to win even a handful of converts.

If the Gospel is to be heard as an intellectually viable option for thinking men and women, then it's vital that we as Christians try to shape American culture in such a way that Christianity cannot be dismissed as mere superstition. This is where apologetics come in.

It is not that people will become Christians because of arguments and evidence, but that they will help create a culture in which Christian belief is a reasonable thing ... to create an environment in which people will be open to the Gospel.

ILL: The Creation Museum is having that kind of impact.

The Limits Of Apologetics

Apologetics can't make anyone a Christian. However, it can help clear the way by removing obstacles that hinder saving faith.

ILL: Just as a plow clears away snow so cars can pass unhindered, so apologetics clears away questions and doubts so the Gospel can shine through.

It can only bring the horse to water ... the horse is the one who has to decide to drink ... likewise, apologetics can show an unbeliever that Jesus is the water of life, but the decision to drink is theirs.

The Holy Spirit ultimately has the role of convicting of sin, righteousness and the judgment.

Faith in Christ can only be achieved through a personal response apologetics and the work of the Holy Spirit.

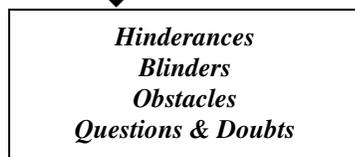
<i>Faith that God exists</i>	<i>Faith in God</i>
Area of apologetics	Area of evangelism
Address the mind	Address the will
Uses reasons and evidence	Requires the Holy Spirit
Comes before faith <i>in</i> ...	Comes after faith <i>that</i> ...
Points the person to Jesus	Places trust <i>in</i> Jesus

The Proper Role Of Apologetics

Gospel Message (Rom. 1:18)



Apologetics (2 Cor. 10:4-5)



Unbelievers ... **2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NIV)** ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

The Apologetics Pyramid

The apologetics pyramid helps us build faith from the ground up ... two reasons for such a pyramid:

1. As a person moves up the various levels, he/she is moving into an ever-narrower web of beliefs
2. Just as with a pyramid, the bottom levels serve as the foundation for those above ... when you reach the peak you have a secure foundation on which to stand

Need to understand where people are at in the pyramid in order to build belief.

What is the foundational layer?

TRUTH

A crucial starting point in dialogue is to begin on common ground.

People must see that truth is not relative, but absolute.

Logic goes hand with truth ...

The most fundamental law of logic/reality is the law of noncontradiction ... the question of whether two contradictory claims can both be true is forever silenced ... many different religious viewpoints cannot all be right.

Establishing this is especially important in this postmodern age.

Next questions ... what is truth?

WORLDVIEWS

In order to build toward belief in Christ we need to discern AND understand their worldview.

Five major worldviews:

1. **Theism** (belief in God as an infinite personal Creator ... Judaism, Islam and Christianity)
2. **Deism** (God exists as infinite personal Creator, but is not active in it ... no miracles ... God is distant from it)
3. **Polytheism** (many finite gods exist in the universe ... Romans Egyptians and Greeks ... Mormons, Hindus and withces ... active in world to bring either healing or harm Each has its own sphere of influence ... Hinduism has millions of gods responsible for certain events like war, creation, preservation, etc.)
4. **Pantheism** (belief that everything is god ... god is the universe ... Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian Science, New Age)
5. **Atheism** (God does not exist anywhere in the universe ... this universe is "all there is")

Two less common worldviews:

1. **Panentheism** (God is in the universe ... finite world his body ... like the Force in Starwars)
2. **Finite Godism** (much like Deism ... created world, but lacks power to sustain it ... constant struggle with his creation to overcome moral rebellion ... sometimes adopted by Christians)

Fall into three basic categories:

1. Theism
2. Polytheism
3. Atheism

Everyone has one of these worldviews.

THEISM

Demonstrate that theism is more reasonable to believe than the other worldviews.

Use powerful arguments for the existence of God ...

1. The first-cause proof ... God must be the first cause
2. The design proof
3. The moral proof

REVELATION

Next question ... which of the theistic options is true?

There is an impressive abundance of evidence for the reliability and inspiration of the Bible ... the Bible clearly emerges as the most reasonable (and true) revelation from God.

RESURRECTION

Demonstrate it is more reasonable to believe in Jesus' resurrection than not.

GOSPEL

Peak of the pyramid ... Romans 1:16-17 ...

CONCLUSION

In this series we'll be learning how to systematically and rationally lead people to see that Christianity is true ... work up the pyramid to build belief.

Memorize this pyramid.

We'll be addressing questions as they relate to each level in the pyramid.

What questions would you put where?