

JANUARY BIBLE STUDY – 2024

Apologetics for a Contemporary Age

What is Christian Apologetics?

The word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means, “a verbal defense.” While it is used eight times in the New Testament¹, it is most commonly associated with 1 Pet 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.”

Consider the following definitions for Christian apologetics:

“The study and practice of giving answers for the reasonableness and truth of the Christian faith.” – Ken Ham, *Answers in Genesis*

“Apologetics is that branch of Christian theology which is devoted to providing a rational justification for Christianity’s truth claims.” – William Lane Craig

“That branch of theology having to do with the defense and communication of Christianity.” – Francis Schaeffer

What’s the difference between apologetics and simply taking a moral stance?

What questions have you heard (or thought) about Christianity that you believe require a reasoned defense?

Why Should We Engage in Apologetics?

1. We’re seeking to obey the commands of Scripture (1 Pet 3:15)
2. We’re seeking to know God in a deeper way (Matt 22:37–40)
3. We’re seeking to make God known throughout the world (Acts 1:8)

¹ Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 10:5–6; Phil 1:7; 2 Tim 4:16, and 1 Pet 3:15.

How Should We Engage in Apologetics?

Be critical – If you're going to engage in apologetics, you have to think. It is not enough to memorize information. Unless you can think properly, the way you use that information will most likely come across as rehearsed and without power.

Be respectful – Don't be a jerk. Listen to what is being said to you and respond appropriately. Don't interrupt. Your goal is not to win an argument, but the person. You can disagree with someone and still be respectful toward them.

Be compassionate – Recognize what you're asking a person to do. Important decisions should not be rushed, so walk carefully through the process.

Be purposeful – Always have an idea of where you are going in the conversation. Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked by peripheral matters.

Be mindful – Don't forget why you're in the conversation in the first place. Apologetics should always be used as part of evangelism, not just to prove how smart you are.

Be patient – If the person doesn't accept your point of view immediately, that's okay. Continue the conversation and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Which aspect of engaging in apologetics do you find to be the most difficult?

APPLIED APOLOGETICS (Practical considerations)

1, DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS

a. Teach—Model—Supervise—Release

b. Sent as a team—two by two

*Look for God-given opportunities to learn by doing.

2. APPROACH TO GOD AND OTHERS

a. 1 Pet. 3:15-16

Honor God as Holy

Be prepared to share the hope you have

Do so gently, with respect, and a clear conscience

b. Eph. 4:15

Speak

Truth

In love

3. METHOD (Questions)

Mk 10:18—Why do you call me good?

Luke 6:46—Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?

Luke 10:26—What's in the law? How do you read it?

4. RECOGNITION

2 Cor. 5:19—We have a ministry of reconciliation (authority to speak)

Jn. 16:8—Holy Spirit convicts.

Jn. 12:32—Jesus draws when “lifted up”.

THEOLOGY GOD'S UNCHANGING CHARACTER	DOCTRINE GOD'S PURPOSES/ACTS IN THE WORLD	BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES APPLICATION	ISSUES	WORLD PRINCIPLES	WORLD'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE WORLD	WORLD'S UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S CHARACTER
Incorporeal	Revelation	Love Neighbor	Family	Take/Hold	Unknown	Unknown
Self Existing	God speaks	Honor Parents	Parents	Ends Justifies Means	Judge/Punish Good/Bad	Not Loving Not Powerful
Atemporal	Incarnation	Respect Authority	Spouse	Don't get caught	Irrelevant	Evil
Eternal	Mission	Give Generously	Children	More is Better	Maintains a Natural World	Just but Vengeful
Omnipotent	Service	Love Wife	Friends	Preserve	Max my Happiness	Loving and Lax
Omnipresent	Salvation	Wives Submit	Buy/Spend	Appearances	Self-Actualization	Grades on Curve
Omniscient	Regeneration	Don't Frustrate Kids	Make a Living	Resist Authority	Meets all my needs	Irrelevant
Loving	Sanctification	Provide for Family	Marriage	Faith is Personal	He is there to serve	Silent
Just	Glorification	Be Content	Entertainment	Look Out for Self	He is there to protect	Creator Sustainer
Holy (Sinless)	Prayer	Share Faith	Church Relationships	We decide right or wrong	He is there to protect	Loves Beauty Designer
Merciful	Priesthood of Believers	No debt (but to love)		My happiness		Moral Judge
Gracious	Ecclesiology	Do Good Works		Relationships to meet my needs		
Trinity	Communion	Confess Sin	Meaning	Stand Alone		
	Baptism	Read Word	Morally	Be Strong		
	Gifts/Body	Be Sexually Pure	Purpose	Might makes right		
	Heaven/Hell	Treat Employee Fairly	Origin / Destiny	Eye for an Eye		
		Be Honest		Give the minimum to get the max		
				Freedom has no bounds		
← Ultimate Of Reality →						

Lesson 1

Apologetics

Pre-Modern—Truth is Revealed

Modern—Truth is Discovered

Post-Modern—Truth is Constructed

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IS LOVE—INTO A CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalogue, Janes Sire, IVP 1976.
ISBN0-87784-772-X

1. WORLDVIEW. A worldview is a set of presuppositions or assumptions which we hold, consciously or subconsciously, about the basic makeup of our world.

A worldview will address:

The ultimate nature of reality—the really real
The nature/purpose of humanity
Existence beyond death
The nature, content, and foundation of morality
The meaning of life/history

Origin—Meaning—Destiny

^
Morality
^
Law

2. CHRISTIAN THEISM

God is infinite/personal, transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good.
God created out of nothing with a uniformity of cause and effect in an open system
Man was created in God's image and has his limited attributes
God communicates with humanity
Humanity was created good but fell and can be redeemed through the work of Christ
Death is the gateway to life with God or eternal separation
Ethics is transcendent and rooted in God's character
History is linear and moving toward the completion of God's purposes

3. DEISM

God is the first cause who created and left to run itself—not immanent, personal, sovereign.
Universe determined by cause/effect in a closed system. No miracles.
Man is part of the cosmic machine.
The world is in its normal state—no fall.
Ethics is confined to what can be discovered from the created order.
History is linear because of creation but going nowhere special.

4.a. NATURALISM

Matter exists eternally and is all there is.
Universe exists in a closed system of cause and effect.
Humans are complex machines—the personal results from chemical/physical properties.
Death is extinction.
History is linear but without a purpose, meaning, destination.
Ethics related to humanity only. (consensus, emotion, will to power)

4.b. NIHILISM

Humanity is at the will of impersonal cosmic forces

Nothing communicates outside the system—can't know what is real/true/beautiful/moral

The "is"/"ought" distinction is lost

Loss of meaning results in despair

5. EXISTENTIALISM

(Atheistic)

Universe is composed only of matter/energy—no God—cause and effect in a closed system—ethics related only to humanity—history is linear but going nowhere.

Existence precedes essence—humans make themselves who they are.

Humanity is "free" as to its nature and destiny.

The organized, objective world stands against humanity without meaning—absurd

Against the absurdity, humanity creates its own subjective value.

(Theistic)

Whether God exists is a tough question not by reason but by a "leap" of faith.

The personal/subjective is what is valued (experience).

Knowledge is subjective and truth is paradoxical.

History as a record of events is uncertain/unimportant but as a myth/example very important.