



**HOW TO GET APOLOGETICS  
IN YOUR CHURCH**

# INTRODUCTION

By Brian Auten

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During the month of September 2010, Apologetics 315 featured a series of blog posts that respond to the question: "How can I get apologetics in my church?" For many delving into the stimulating world of Christian apologetics, this is a burning question.

The goal of this project is a simple one: to share stories, experiences, and advice that will help Christians to start their own local apologetics initiatives. Whether you be a pastor, youth pastor, teacher, elder, or lay person, this series of short essays could hold the keys you need to get things started in your own local congregation.

The contributors to this project range from lay leaders to pastors, self-taught to formally trained. But they all share something in common: they are Christians who love Jesus, they have a passion to defend the Christian faith, and they

have found an outlet for training and equipping others in the local church. As you read (or listen) you will hear them describe their situations, challenges, and testimonies as they helped initiate small groups, apologetics Sunday school classes, apologetics events, movie nights, and sermons.

Each blog post will also be made available as an MP3 file to be released along with their respective text version. These audio files can be downloaded through each day's blog post, or through the "How to Get Apologetics in Your Church" podcast feed here or in iTunes. At the end of the series, readers may download an ebook version of the collection.

It has been a pleasure working with the contributors to this project. My prayer is that what they share here will spark ideas and ignite groups like theirs. I also pray that their ministries will be blessed and that through them many will be strengthened in their faith, emboldened in their witness, and brought nearer to Christ.

Enjoy.

# AN APOLOGETIC FOR APOLOGETICS: THE NEED FOR AND PURPOSES OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

By Tawa Anderson

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1 Peter 3:15 reads: “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an **answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (NIV) The Greek *apologia* (here translated as ‘answer’) carries courtroom imagery, and conveys the idea of providing evidence, building a case, responding to questions, or defending against attack. Thus, many translations translate it as “defense” (NASB, ESV) instead of “answer”.

Apologetics, or *apologia*, is thus the act of giving a defense, providing an answer, for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Simply put, “Apologetics is the defense and explanation of the Christian faith.”

We find apologetic encounters, examples, and appeals throughout the New Testament –Luke 1:1-4, John 20:19-

29, John 21:24-25, Acts 9:1-19, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. In Acts 17:2-4, Paul ‘reasons’ with the Thessalonians, ‘explaining and proving’ that the Messiah had to ‘suffer and rise from the dead’. His *apologia* ‘persuaded’ many Jews and God-fearing Greeks.

There are two fundamental goals or purposes of apologetics. First, **offensive** (or positive) **apologetics** gives people positive reasons to believe that Christianity is true. It provides historical, evidential, and logical arguments to support the truth of our faith. Second, **defensive** (or negative) **apologetics** gives people reasons not to disbelieve that Christianity is true. It responds to objections or attacks against our faith by providing historical, evidential, and logical arguments to support the truth of our faith. In a sense, defensive apologetics clears away the intellectual brush that obscures the path to faith in Christ. So apologetics either presents reasons *to believe*, or reasons *not to disbelieve*.

Similarly, there are two possible focuses or audiences of apologetics. Apologetics can be either **evangelistic** or **devotional**; that is, it is oriented either to those who are

already Christians, or to those who are not yet Christians.

Combining the *purpose* (offensive/defensive) and *focus* (evangelistic/devotional) of apologetics results in four types of apologetics ministry.

We all have non-Christian friends, some of whom actively oppose the tenets of our faith. **Defensive evangelistic apologetics** responds to their arguments or objections in order to remove intellectual obstacles to faith in Jesus Christ. I call this apologetics to “outspoken opponents”, and it seeks to give non-Christians *reasons not to disbelieve*.

Sadly, when non-Christians raise objections, Christians are often ill-equipped to respond effectively. What impression does the opponent arrive at? “I ask these questions; they don’t answer them. There must not be rational, legitimate responses to the issues that I raise.” Their opposition to Christianity is reinforced. Furthermore, when others witness the inability of Christians to respond to these objections, it makes them question the truth of the faith as well.

Not all non-Christians are actively opposed to our faith.

**Positive evangelistic apologetics** attempts to provide

“seeking skeptics” with *reasons to believe* in Christianity.

We see Paul engage in this type of apologetics throughout his ministry (e.g. [Acts 17:16-34](#), [26:1-32](#)), speaking what is ‘true and reasonable’ in the hope-filled prayer that his audience will “become what I am.” ([Acts 26:19](#)) Recall the apologetic mandate of [1 Peter 3:15](#). Seeking Skeptics *will* ask us why we believe what we believe. How do we know that there is a God? Why do we believe that the Bible is the Word of God? On what basis do we trust the New Testament as a historical record of Jesus’ life? In a modern age, how can we believe in supernatural miracles? How can we be so sure that Jesus believed He was God in the flesh? How do we know that there is such a thing as truth? How do we know that there is objective right and wrong? Seeking Skeptics ask these questions honestly and openly, and desire to hear a response which they can evaluate intellectually. Apologetics to “seeking skeptics” provides reasons that they ought to believe as we believe. Then we pray that the Holy Spirit will empower our words to bring our friend to a knowledge of Himself. The tragedy is that many Christians (ministers and laypeople) are ill-equipped to provide a rational defense for their faith. If we fail to provide those answers, we fail to obey the biblical

apologetic mandate.

While evangelistic apologetics is aimed at those outside the church of Christ, devotional apologetics focuses on Christians. **Defensive devotional apologetics** aims to provide “besieged brothers” with *reasons not to begin disbelieving*. Many Christians feel as if their beliefs are under attack from friends, teachers, and culture at large. They hear others insist that belief in Jesus is irrational, that you have to ‘check your brains at the door’ if you’re a Christian. High school and college students are particularly susceptible to such attacks (and are often therefore specifically targeted for intellectual reprogrammning). Often, Christians who come under theological attack seek answers from their parents or pastors. To the shame of the contemporary church, they sometimes leave empty-handed. My brothers, this should not be. Just as Luke wrote with the intent to give his readers “certainty” that the Gospel they’d been taught is true ([Luke 1:1-4](#)), the task of Christian intellectual leaders is to provide responses to the rational or emotional attacks that are launched against our “besieged brothers”, assuring them of the truth of their faith.



**Offensive devotional apologetics** provides “doubting disciples” with *reasons to continue believing* by demonstrating the truth and rationality of the core historical claims and theological doctrines of biblical Christianity. In my opinion and experience, devotional apologetics (both defensive and offensive) is the most essential and valuable today—confirming Christians in the truth of their faith by responding to doubts and questions that they have. Christians, young and old, have deep and serious questions, or even grave doubts about elements of the Christian faith. Sometimes these doubts arise as a result of external opposition or attack; sometimes they arise from one’s own Scripture reading, philosophical reflection, or life experience.

A friend of mine pastors a little church in rural Georgia. He once asked members of his congregation what kinds of issues they would like him to address in future sermons and Bible studies. They responded with numerous apologetic questions. How old is the earth? What is the difference between the God Christians worship and the gods of other religions? Is God real? Is the story of creation a myth? Is

the Bible really true? Is Jesus a man? Or is he God? My friends tell me that all religions lead to heaven – is that true? If God is a God of love, why would He send people to hell? If God is god, why is there evil? These questions are on the minds of the people in our pews. Sadly, they are frequently ignored or even condemned.

As a pastor and university chaplain, I talked to students who had approached parents or pastors with questions or doubts about their faith. Sometimes they were told: “Why do you ask these questions? Christians shouldn’t ask questions or have doubts like that!” Or: “You don’t need answers to those questions. You just need to have faith in Jesus. Don’t ask, just believe.”

When fellow Christians ask honest, searching, questions about the truthfulness of Christianity, it is not enough to say “don’t ask these questions – just believe!” It is our responsibility to engage questions and provide reasonable, thoughtful answers to them. The apologetic mandate of [1 Peter 3:15](#) does not allow us to avoid or ignore questions.

What happens when we do not give an answer for the hope

we have to those who express doubts or ask tough questions? Numerous studies show that an alarmingly large proportion (60-80%) of children raised in Christian homes walk away from Christianity as students or young adults.

Why? There are multiple causes, but a large part is that many youth are asking honest, genuine questions which are not being met with honest, rational answers. If parents and pastors are unable or unwilling to receive and respond, students will learn to keep doubts or questions to themselves. And one day, they will drift away and leave the church. An active apologetic ministry closes that back door to the church, and ensures that honest questions and doubts are given honest, thoughtful answers.

As Christians, we can not only *know* that our faith is true, but we can *show others* that our faith is true. We can not only *defend* our faith against attacks and objections, but we can *positively* set forth reasons for others to believe in Jesus Christ as well. We can not only present compelling reasons to believe *evangelistically* to those outside the church; we can also present apologetics *devotionally*, giving Christians a strong rational foundation on which to build their faith.

The stakes are high, and the biblical imperative is clear.

Let us love the Lord our God with all our mind, as well as our heart, soul, and strength, always being prepared to give an *answer* to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have.

# WHY APOLOGETICS IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR CHURCH

By Paul D. Adams

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James W. Sire wrote a book titled *Chris Chrisman Goes to College* (IVP, 1993). In it he showed how the fictitious character, Chris Chrisman, grows up in an evangelical home with evangelical parents going to evangelical private school and attending evangelical church. When Chris goes off to secular college it isn't long before his Buddhist roommate and atheist professors challenge his faith. Not being taught to think deeply or critically about Christianity, Chris's commitment was in jeopardy and those he encountered saw little reason to embrace his faith. Sure he had a good idea what the Bible said and what his family, friends, and church believed, but he was not ready for the objections raised by alternative worldviews. Sadly, this could be the story of most in today's evangelical churches.

## TWO ESSENTIAL TASKS, ONE MISSING

## INGREDIENT

All Christian churches are committed to two indispensable tasks taught from the Bible: 1) evangelism and 2) discipleship. How these are defined and the degree of emphasis on each varies. But one thing is clear: Every church calling Jesus Lord and Savior agrees *we must effectively communicate the Gospel message*. And yet to accomplish these two tasks one of the most important ingredients has been ignored. Like a pinch of salt in a recipe, our mindset is that we can either take it or leave it. Sure we occasionally include it, but typically we think of it as an add-on or an accessory not essential to the recipe. *That missing ingredient is the discipline of apologetics.*

This essay will show why apologetics is critically important for an effective ministry in evangelism. A subsequent essay will argue why apologetics is essential for discipleship. This is not a call to implement an 8-week program in your church only to move on to something else. Instead, it's a challenge to radically refocus how your church does evangelism. Rather than viewing apologetics as an intellectual exercise only for the highly educated who can afford to accessorize their faith with debates, studies in

world religions, and lots of hard reading, it's a call to integrate apologetics into your overall philosophy of ministry so you can effectively prepare God's people to engage God's world with God's message for God's glory.

## **THE ROLE OF APOLOGETICS IN EVANGELISM**

If St. Thomas Aquinas's claim rings true that philosophy is the handmaiden to theology, then we could say that apologetics is the handmaiden to evangelism (Mark Mittelberg, "Implementing Apologetics in the Local Church," 1992). In the same way that theology is grounded in a philosophical framework, so too is the Gospel message supported by a solid apologetic ministry. It was only a few decades ago that believers could present the Gospel and assume their nonbelieving neighbor or friend shared a basic Christian worldview, such as belief in God, a commitment to truth, or some notion of sin. Today, however, with the advance of atheism (especially the New Atheism), moral and intellectual relativism, secularism, consumerism, meism, and so forth, a Christian worldview is foreign to most. When it comes to religion, we may be speaking the same language in our culture, but we are using radically different dictionaries. Answers to questions about moral values, the

nature of truth, the meaning and value of human life, or the existence and character of God are not shared with our nonbelieving neighbors, co-workers, friends, or even family members.

As Bill Craig says in his recent book *On Guard*, "the gospel is never heard in isolation. It is always heard against the backdrop of the culture in which you've been born and raised" (p.17). We can no longer simply proclaim the Gospel without first understanding the beliefs and values that shape our audience. Before the Gospel can be heard we must be prepared to respond to objections, answer questions, and value honest doubts about the Christian faith. Apologetics is God's means of bridging this great divide between our culture and the Gospel message.

Peter's mandate undoubtedly applies to every believer: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). Yet most churches fail to realize: *If [1 Peter 3:15](#) applies to every believer, then it equally applies to every church, since church by definition is made up of believers!* In today's cultural climate, failing to integrate apologetics in church



ministry makes all our evangelistic efforts anemic at best. Is there an intentional, consistent practice to think and speak apologetically in your church?

If believers cannot give nonbelievers reliable answers about Christianity, then where will they turn? I would venture to say that most nonbelievers don't talk about religion with believers, not because emotions become intense, but because irrational responses or dismissive attitudes are given by believers! Put differently, if believers offered rational, loving, and thoughtful responses when engaged, then "religion and politics" would cease to be the forbidden fruit of discussions (and it may develop an ethos where politics can be discussed with civility!).

## **FINDING USING COMMON GROUND**

We must demonstrate to nonbelievers that we have common ground and use this common ground to advance discussions. For instance, while we have not arrived at the same answers, we share the same questions. *"Is there a God? If so, how might he communicate with us? Does God require anything from us? What's all this fuss about life after death? Why can't all religions be right so no one is excluded? Does my life really have ultimate value? How can I know my beliefs*

*about religion are true and not just subjective opinions?”*

Although most believers no longer ask these questions (and tragically some never have!), they shout from the rooftops demanding a reply from every human soul. Apologetics is the gateway to finding meaningful, rational answers.

Another area of common ground governing our understanding about religion is that *we share the expectation that all our beliefs are true*. No one in their right mind or stable psyche would purposefully hold a false belief.

Whether or not our beliefs are in fact true, we *think* they're true; otherwise we would not hold them. If I held a belief that was false, I would want to know it. The nonbeliever may not be willing to admit this, but they intuitively embrace the idea that their beliefs are true. This shared expectation is important capital we must cash in when encountering nonbelievers.

Christians must be viewed as a knowledgeable, rational, and reliable source for answers to life's most vexing questions.

The only way for this to occur is if we are honest with ourselves and admit we too have many of the same questions and expect our answers are true. By thinking and

speaking apologetically with nonbelievers, we show that we take seriously 3 things: Honest questions, real doubts, and opposing beliefs.

## VALUING HONEST QUESTIONS

Every human, regardless of belief, is made in God's image. In part, this means we are all wired to think deeply and richly about the most important questions of life. *I cannot think of a more effective tool to open doors or move discussions forward than genuinely showing you care about what others think.* People want to be heard and understood. People need to be heard and understood. Conversely, if Christians wince at a caustic attitude behind a question or dismiss it altogether as nonsense, any opportunity to present the Gospel is at least diminished if not altogether lost. By listening to honest questions and engaging thoughtful comments we not only “love our neighbors as ourselves,” but are sure to see minds opened to the truth claims of Christianity. In effect we're saying “I care about what you think, and though I may not have all the answers, your question is important to me, too.” By valuing honest questions (theirs and ours) we connect with that basic aspect of the human soul made in God's image that seeks

understanding.

## VALUING REAL DOUBTS

Skepticism is an intellectual pandemic these days and doubt is the sweeping disease that infects our culture. People are crippled by any notion of certainty in beliefs and, consequently, reduce all claims of religious truth to mere opinion. And yet doubt can equally be used as a vaccine against skepticism. What I have found is that letting others know it's okay to doubt and to question beliefs shows that I am willing to be corrected where wrong, or challenged to further certainty where right. When opponents see that Christians are serious about truth because we are willing to have our beliefs challenged, then nonbelievers are more likely to return the favor! Doubt can actually be a good thing and is not necessarily opposed to belief or to faith. Let me illustrate.

Many years ago one couple in our neighborhood came regularly to our home Bible study. They asked a lot of questions that suggested they were likely not believers. So, I arranged to meet with them privately and, after explaining the Gospel, asked if they had committed themselves to

Jesus as Savior and Lord. Rather than answering they simply asked more questions, like “Why doesn’t God let everyone into heaven, even the atheist who lives a good life? If God is so good, how could he let a young child suffer an untimely death?” They finally admitted that there is so much doubt and so little certainty in religion. So, I asked if on their wedding day they had 100-percent certainty that their marriage was going to work out, or if they had some doubt about it. Of course they answered there was a measure of doubt. Yet because they had more certainty, they committed to being married. I was able to show them that this is exactly how faith works; it does not remove all suspicion, but contains enough certainty to make a commitment.

Tragically, many believers avoid doubt like the plague because they’re taught that it is antithetical to faith. But this could not be further from the truth. Doubt, as Rene Descartes showed, can be the fuel for certainty. Furthermore, when speaking with nonbelievers it’s important to show that not all beliefs are created equally. For example, it is only beliefs that refuse to be falsified by empirical evidence that are 100-percent certain, such as

self-authenticating beliefs (“My brother is not an only child.”) or incorrigible beliefs (“The pain of my headache is excruciating.”). Most of our everyday beliefs are evident to the senses (“The Arizona desert is hot in the summer.”) and lean on evidence for support. While belief in God is rational and can be held without argument or evidence (as Alvin Plantinga has shown), it is neither self-authenticating, incorrigible, nor evident to the senses. Believers, therefore, must demonstrate why it is rational to hold a belief in God, yet allow for some doubt to remain. The basic formula for belief formation is: Trust our basic abilities to reason, seek supporting evidence, and be open to contrary evidence. But, for this formula to be applied equally to believer and nonbeliever alike, we must permit some doubt and not see it as an enemy of faith (for more, see *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “[Reformed Epistemology](#)”).

It’s simply a raw reality that full certainty in religious belief is not easy to come by. But make no mistake: Nonbelievers can tell when you’re fearful of doubt, and, though it’s wrong to reject a message because its messenger is uninformed or unprepared (*ad hominem*), many nonbelievers are left to conclude by our apprehension that

Christianity is a joke!

Granted some believers are handicapped because they've bought into the myth that faith does not require reason whatsoever. But if apologetic thinking is part of a regular Christian diet received from the pulpit, the Sunday School classroom, Bible studies, and home groups, then believers would be better prepared to respond to honest doubts and Christians would not look like a herd of buffoons before nonbelievers. As Nancy Pearcey admonishes "Every time a minister introduces a biblical teaching, he should also instruct the congregation in ways to defend it against the major objections they are likely to encounter. *A religion that avoids the intellectual task and retreats to the therapeutic realm of personal relationships and feelings will not survive in today's spiritual battlefield.*" (*Total Truth*, Crossway, p. 127, emphasis mine).

Finally, in *The Sunnier Side of Doubt* Alister McGrath notes that believers simply cannot comprehend all there is to know about God. Therefore, some doubt necessarily remains and serves to remind us of our human frailty and limitation in understanding (pp. 16-17). When

nonbelievers see the transparency of our intellectual boundaries, then our common humanity demonstrates our shared quest for certainty in beliefs. Acknowledging the role of doubt can go a long way to continued and fruitful discussions with nonbelievers.

## **VALUING OPPOSING BELIEFS**

This is the hardest. It's exceedingly more convenient psychologically and safe intellectually to remain on the sidelines than to engage opposition. But engage we must, and the first rule of engagement is to grant, for the sake of argument only, the truth of an alternative belief. Although most believers find this anathema, it is quintessential to earning the right to be heard. If nonbelievers' opposing beliefs are not valued, then discussions will abruptly end. It's impossible to honestly evaluate alternative beliefs if we have already made up our minds that they're false.

Therefore, we must value opposing religious belief systems by investigating them. In doing so, we show nonbelievers we take seriously the notion of truth in religion. Moreover, we've nothing to lose and everything to gain by assessing opposing beliefs, since it is the nature of a true belief that, if questioned, it can withstand scrutiny and still remain true.



Demonstrating that we value opposing beliefs, however, takes an explicit intellectual humility. Christians must be willing to be shown that we're wrong; even if we're convinced our beliefs are true. Once again, make no mistake: Nonbelievers know if we're feigning humility, since the hypocrisy radar is always on high alert. Sincerely portraying intellectual humility says "If what I believe is wrong, I would want to know it." By displaying intellectual humility, nonbelievers feel safe to let down their guard and become malleable to consider the truth claims of Christianity.

Once, when teaching a mid-week class in my church, I compared Christianity to opposing religious worldviews. Each week I began by asking "What might Christians have in common with..." filling in the opposing religious worldview. When introducing Naturalism (the belief that only nature and the material universe exists), this introductory question was posed and without reservation everyone said Christians have nothing in common with Naturalism. I asked, "Are you sure? Nothing whatsoever?" In concert they responded "No, nothing. They don't

believe in God!” I argued that we do in fact have something in common and we’re standing on it. It’s the material universe! I argued we should start with that and ask some important questions, such as “How did the universe come to be in existence? Has it always been here? Why does it have the features it has?” The Christian worldview may indeed contain all religious truth, but it does not follow that other worldviews possess none. The class got my point, which was not only to find common ground with an opposing belief, but affirm it by asking probing questions about it.

### **NOW THAT YOU KNOW THESE THINGS...**

Jesus said blessing is found in the doing, not in the knowing alone ([John 13:17](#)). Knowing apologetics is necessary for effectively sharing the Gospel message is important as I have illustrated here, but it is not sufficient. We must move beyond *knowing* and move toward *doing* apologetics in Christian ministry in order to show nonbelievers that we value honest questions, real doubts, and opposing beliefs. Failing to integrate apologetic thinking and speaking in your ministry is like trying to study physics without math. Let’s not produce carbon

copies of Chris Chrisman. Instead, let's build warriors for the Gospel message to carry forth the truth claims of Christianity in ways that are engaging, convicting, and convincing.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*

# APOLOGETICS, THE CHURCH, AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE

By Vocab Malone

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As evangelical Christians looking back at the past 2,000 years of church history and then peering forward into the 21st Century, we can see that the many challenges ahead are a combination of both old and new. We must see these challenges as opportunities much in the same way that the Early Church saw martyrdom: as a means to spread the faith. In fact, the Latin Church Father Tertullian once quipped that, *“The blood of Christians is seed.”*

I have no doubt the American Church is in decline; in numbers, in influence, and in general effectiveness. Anyone inclined to agree with the findings of pollsters George Barna or George Gallup, Jr. would agree with this basic assessment. Part of the problem is the cultural shift that has taken place, most notably since the 1960’s. Many observers use the term “Post-Modern” to describe this phenomenon, but I agree with exegete D.A. Carson (and others) who

prefer the term “Post-Christian” because it is more exact.

Choice of terms notwithstanding, the defining characteristic of this cultural attitude is epitomized by phrases such as, “*You have your truth; I have mine*” or “*Do whatever works for you.*” Within this context, I believe the big issue on the table in regards to the historic Christian faith is truth - what is its nature and can it even be known? Therefore, anyone developing a philosophy of ministry for the 21st Century must make the actual truth of Christianity a central priority. One problem here is the culture is becoming increasingly apathetic, ignorant, or even hostile towards traditional Christian belief. Nonetheless, we are mandated to engage them with firm truth and genuine love.

In the vein of Paul before the Athenians in Acts 17, we must attempt to meet our culture on common ground and then take them from that point to the Gospel. At the Areopagus on Mars Hill Paul even quoted the Greeks’ own poets, namely the Stoic Aratus and the polytheist Epimenides, to prove his point.

Before we delve into some specifics on how this thought works itself out in real time, let me mention some possible objections up-and-coming church leaders may have: *“But what if I’m not an apologist, what if I’m just a person who wants to preach and care for the flock?”* or *“Well, I’m going into music ministry so this whole issue doesn’t apply to me.”*

Attitudes like those aforementioned are short-sighted; the cultural equivalent to "sticking one’s head in the sand." My goal here is to convince those folks to think differently about the issue of truth because authentic Christian leadership strives to improve. As we crucify our flesh daily we become more like Christ and can walk in the Spirit. This may sound somewhat obvious or vague but I think it can mean that Christian leaders should take inventory from time to time. The first area to tackle is how we personally - and collectively - can effectively penetrate our culture with the gospel.

There are a variety of creative ideas to employ but the key is to pray up, study up, and then engage people. In one-on-one evangelism, the humble use of apologetics is quite helpful. At the same time, we must not be scared to “fail,”

seemingly “lose” a debate, or say “*I don’t know the answer to that but let me get your e-mail and I will contact you soon.*”

People under 40 especially have lots of questions and misconceptions about the church, Christianity, and Jesus Christ Himself.

I Peter 3:15 tells us to help clear up this confusion:

*“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”*

This verse and others - especially the ones where Christ is modeling these principles - serve as clarion calls for us to engage the culture with compassion, clarity, and dare I even say it - cleverness. Here are some suggestions for how to do this in a local church setting.

In *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, J.P. Moreland offers some great suggestions about how apologetics can function within the context of a worship service:

*Whoever is preaching that morning should ... develop ... a one-page handout to be given to each person entering the sanctuary. The handout should have various exercises designed to prepare people for the theme of the morning. It could lead a brief word study*

*by listing a key word from the sermon text and five or six verses with that word.*

Moreland in particular offers some insight on what apologetics in a sermon may look like and ways we can implement it better. For example, he recommends more of a team approach to the pulpit because *“no one who preaches week after week can do adequate study for a message or deeply process and internalize the sermon topic spiritually.”*

Moreland also mentions better supplemental material accompanying the sermons and even order forms for books that could form a sort of a recommended reading list (i.e., bibliography) based upon the current sermon series . Of course, a healthy church library and/or study center can greatly buttress these efforts. His last idea may be somewhat controversial but I concur nonetheless: *“[F]rom time to time a minister should intentionally pitch a message to the upper one-third of the congregation, intellectually speaking.”* All I can say is, “Hey, Bible nerds need love, too!”

Moreland also believes modern chorus songs are usually better for the devotional/emotional portion of worship, while carefully selected classic hymns are usually better for teaching doctrine. He puts forth the idea that the worship



leader should choose hymns to reinforce certain doctrinal truths. The way to do this effectively is to have said leader take a few minutes to introduce the hymn and what it means so that it will have more meaning (and therefore impact) for those unaccustomed to more traditional songs. This is something we do often at our church and we will sometimes even explain an obscure or archaic word.

Moreland's next proposition is similar in its intent to prepare hearts and minds better for worship:

*If worship is response, then if a service starts with worship, the people of God have not been given something to which to respond. Regularly, we ought to begin our services with a time of teaching followed by congregational testimonies about how God has used the sermon topic in people's lives. Once God's people have their minds filled with truths about God, His Word, and His ways ... then the congregation is prepared to respond in worship.*

The reason behind doing this should be clear by now: to have worshippers engage fully in praising God. A recognition of the mind's role in worship will help us do a better job of stimulating the whole person instead of just the emotions. Art is a great way to do both: one thing we

have done at our church is have poets do deep theological poems in the middle of a worship song or before the sermon.

In Craig A. Loscalzo's book, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ in a Postmodern World*, Pastor Loscalzo defines apologetic preaching as preaching that *"has at its purpose to make a clear defense for the faith using methods that people will not dismiss out of hand as mere sophistry"* and *"by its very nature apologetic preaching requires ministers to reclaim the mantle of theologian for the church."* This means more work for both the preacher and the congregation because they may have to actually think deeply about a sermon (*gasp!*).

The reason I am elaborating on all his points is because I agree 100%. I believe they are natural applications of apologetic preaching, which goes hand-in-hand with the philosophy of ministry we need more of in our churches. All of this follows the admonition in [Colossians 4:5-6](#): *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how*

*you should respond to each person.”*

This is why apologetics in the church is so crucial in this day and age: it clears the ground so there's a clear pathway for the gospel, for people can't truly believe in something if they don't think it's true. Since souls are at stake, shouldn't we take people's questions seriously and study to show ourselves approved so we need not be ashamed ([2 Tim. 2:15](#))? My answer is an unequivocal "YES!"

# TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE

By Peter Grice

[www.thinkchristianity.com](http://www.thinkchristianity.com)

How do I get apologetics in my church? The short answer is... take the scenic route.

Let's face it. Apologetics is out of favour with the church today in many quarters. The situation is no different here in Australia. But churches are nonetheless participating in apologetics without intending to, tacitly responding to reasonable concerns with a subtle message that they do not matter. In this dismissive climate, any attempt to allay sceptical questions is undermined and rendered feeble. The whole enterprise is arguably doing harm to the cause of the gospel.

Yet according to Philippians 1, *the gospel has both a proclamation and a defense, as opposed to a proclamation and A LOUDER PROCLAMATION, STUPID!* The latter is certainly how it seems to those whose questions are met with constant reiteration of what the Bible says, in neglect

of the more basic question of why that is credible. When pressed, many unapologetic Christians respond with a serving of fideistic platitudes that fail to satisfy.

I could go on grumbling about the problems here, and give a pretty impressive analysis of the historical causes and cultural exacerbations. But I won't, and I suggest you make that your resolve too, if you're intending to affect change in your church. Nobody likes a grumbling critic, which remains true even when we are right in our criticisms. We must be patient with others, and find positive ways to overcome the barriers. It is ill-advised to create new ones.

What we did first in our church was to set up a formal ministry called *Think Christianity*. It remains very much independent of our local church, but we have always sought to operate within church ministry structures. The name sends a clear message, but we knew it would play to the stereotype. That was our first hurdle: the fact that apologetics has at times been too cerebral, via the proxy term for this in church circles: "head knowledge." Had we called ourselves *Heads-on-Fire* or *Awesomegetics*, perhaps

*Feelings-for-Faith* or even *Minds-Abandoned*, then obviously we would have gained more traction in those early days.

We finally figured out that the problem is not that Christians completely reject knowledge, or thinking, or apologetics. Instead, it's that many define it as an appendage to faith, and that's how they keep it at arm's length. It's worthwhile, perhaps, for *specialists* who might make some progress with purely "human" efforts. And appropriate, because sceptics are being equally unspiritual.

But it's not nearly as good as a more spiritual approach, such as just praying harder and longer for our sceptical friends. Despite this caveat, our fellow Christians are very charitable, even genuinely happy for us that we're "*into that kind of thing.*"

You can address this stereotype by making the important distinction between generalist and specialist. The fact that there are gifted, specialist evangelists, does not obviate the rest of us from the general responsibility to share the gospel.

Hardly anyone would disagree with that, yet apologetics is really no different. So we can help people to understand that [1 Peter 3:15](#) (as a classic biblical reference for

apologetics), is a clear injunction to all believers generally – not just apologetics-types who are “into” it. The verse has the Greek term “apologia,” as many readers will know.

Faithful believers will respond appropriately once they can better appreciate the biblical mandate. Making the above distinction and emphasizing the generalist role, commends apologetics as a core church pursuit.

I referred at the outset to taking the scenic route. What I mean by that is an indirect, creative, adaptive approach that transcends barriers and constraints. For instance, we must come to terms with making serious, weighty subjects as practical, fun and interesting as possible. If you feel that’s too much compromise, and would rather people rise to your specialist level, perhaps it is you who are undervaluing the biblical call to generalists! Harry Blamires wrote of “*the loneliness of the thinking Christian*,” and I can empathise with the desire to enjoy special interests and high-level conversation with others. However, not everyone is like that. Maybe they can move in that direction, but it takes time. Intelligence is not a virtue, yet it is virtuous to always do our best.

If you're going to persuade someone with a different point of view, you first have to communicate effectively. That means contextualising your points; entering their perspective without adopting it as your own. We can accommodate a vocabulary of misconstrued terms by avoiding them altogether. So for example, instead of saying "do apologetics," speak of "answering questions" or "giving reasons." Talk about the importance of "persuading" others and "commending" the Bible as trustworthy. Side-step any negative connotations of "knowledge" by simply referring to "understanding."

With all that in mind, one of the first things *Think Christianity* did in our church was start a discussion group for generalists, as interesting and accessible as we could muster. It ran reasonably well for a couple of years, although interest eroded gradually each year. You can learn from our experience: think twice about running something for an indefinite timeframe. Once people figure out it will always be on, they start attending just whenever they feel like it. That creates increasing unpredictability in the sessions, and things eventually grind to a halt. Those observing from the sidelines see this as confirmation that



apologetics is only for the so-inclined.

Even better than contextualising your terms and concepts, would be to contextualise your whole subject. Associate it with Evangelism (after all, apologetics is a form of pre-evangelism). Or wrap it up in “Worldview.” Actually, apologetics *broadly understood* is akin to worldview *rightly understood*. When we pursue a consistent, reasonable, applied worldview set upon Christian foundations, we are living an apologetic life. With this preparation and ethos, every natural (non-forced) conversation is saturated with apologetic potential.

Combining the two insights of shorter, fixed timeframes and not teaching apologetics in isolation, we created a six-week introductory “*Crash Course in Christian Apologetics and Worldview*.” The latter stage was dedicated to an integrated application dubbed “*Worldview Apologetics*.”

The course was very well received, and represented a bite-sized package that works well in a cell-group environment.

On that note, you may find that your church leaders are more open to apologetics than you’d realised, and that any reticence could have more to do with how your plans fit

existing systems and structure, such as cell-groups. My advice would be to approach those who oversee various ministries, and ask them what kinds of resources and formats they would find practical. Then take your scenic detour as you tailor your offerings, returning with a real *solution*.

I still need to tell you about our biggest project and how it evolved through the lessons we learned along the way.

Perhaps this will help you think outside the box, or maybe what we're offering could assist your own efforts.

We developed a year-long worldview-based course for teenagers, and ran it for several years during Sunday morning sermon times. It went reasonably well, too.

Irregular attendance was a significant challenge, however. In practical terms, it meant that some of our educational structure broke down: with each new session we couldn't build much on previous learning, because most students hadn't attended for several weeks. Our other problem was waning attendance over the course of each year. We attributed this to a vibrant youth ministry, where teenagers would gravitate toward Friday nights and a Sunday evening

church service, with Sunday mornings being reserved, presumably, for leisure or school work. We also wondered whether, had our church leaders promoted the program occasionally, parents would have been more aware and valued it more.

So we took another detour and went to parents directly.

We had developed a Student Journal that extended our material between Sundays, thus transcending some constraints such as limited contact time. We wrote a letter to encourage parents to take an interest in the journal, discuss with their teenager what they were learning each week, and encourage them to keep coming along. Perhaps it helped, but we still experienced a similar irregularity and waning attendance.

The challenges we experienced over the years were teaching us how to work around church barriers and constraints: first in adapting our language and concepts, next by couching the whole subject of apologetics in other contexts that are better-received, and then with adapting our materials and approach to incorporate life between church services.

In our case, we needed to take one final scenic detour before we were ready to return in strength to pursue apologetics in our local church. We began to see the broader potential of what we were offering. After all, aren't local churches part of a larger Christian movement that includes the efforts of Christian education in schools? And what about the potential for online delivery, direct to students? We realised that each area had its strengths and weaknesses. For instance, online delivery suits self-paced learning and facilitates social networks but lacks relational and experiential depth, which is where a typical Youth ministry excels. Also, while churches struggle with limited contact time and sporadic attendance, schools have a captive audience.

We also realised that we had the makings of a fully-fledged high school curriculum, and the desire to have it deployed in a holistic way, enriched with various activities and events. We decided to carve out a niche alongside churches and schools, in partnership with them, combining their strengths with our own and the advantages of internet coordination. We applied for some additional funding and

were able to hire a marketing manager. We ended up with the *TELOS Program*, a maximally flexible, open, extensible public ministry operation. The thrust is full, sustained development of a community of students over the long term, incorporating at least one full year of apologetics study and training.

I'd like to tell you of its explosive success, but we are only just beginning to release details and hit the market with a series of launch events. However we do know that we are better positioned now to succeed with churches, because we have been learning and regrouping, becoming smarter and stronger. Finally, we are enjoying a lot of early interest and excitement, which tells me that the detour is both worthwhile and almost over.

# CULTIVATING A LOCAL CHURCH APOLOGETICS MINISTRY

By Chad Gross

<http://truthbomb.blogspot.com/>

So It Begins. The teachings of Jesus Christ were what initially caused me to start asking questions about who He really was. Not only did I find His teaching to be practical, but I also recognized that His teachings seemed to correspond with the reality I found myself in; however, I also had to acknowledge that this only mattered if His teachings *were* true.

So, as encouraged by a Pastor, I began an investigation into who Jesus claimed to be and whether or not I had any good reasons to believe Him. Admittedly, I was impressed with the wealth of evidence I discovered that supported the reliability of the New Testament documents, the historicity of Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead, and the existence of a theistic God.

Enthusiastically, I began sharing some of this evidence with

fellow Christians and (to my surprise) the majority of them had little knowledge of it! I remember thinking, “How can these people believe that a man came back from the dead without any evidence?” Understandably, the believer possesses experiential evidence, but if that experience does not correlate with available evidence, I believe the authenticity of the experience should be called into question. Further, what about the person who has questions and has not experienced God?

It seemed to me that if we had sound evidence to believe that God existed and that Jesus rose from the dead, we should be fairly excited about it and want to tell others!

### **Is Apologetics a Bad Word?**

Since that time, I have uncovered numerous reasons why more followers of Jesus don't engage in apologetics- 1. Some simply don't see it as important; I believe they are mistaken 2. Many seem to think that apologetics is only for the “intellectual” and doubt their own ability to understand the relevant arguments 3. Some do not want to take the time to study and understand. Apologetics is hard work! 4. Some wrongly think that they only need to live out their

Christian faith and that is enough. However, the Bible tells us otherwise ([1 Peter 3:15](#); [2 Tim. 4:2](#); [Jude 3](#)). [1]

### **You Have to Start Somewhere...**

Regardless of the reasons why many Christians do not engage in apologetics, I decided that apologetics was an important ministry for our church to have because unbelievers (and believers) have good questions and it is my conviction that Christianity affords the best answers.

I began engaging in apologetics myself via the Letters to the Editor in the local paper, book reviews for “hot topic” releases such as *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Secret*, and encouraging others to familiarize themselves with the vast amount of apologetics literature available. Immediately I found that men seemed very interested in evidence for what they believed. Many had been raised in Christian homes (I was not) and had experienced the truth of Christianity, but never had tested its truth claims on an evidential basis. Most welcomed the opportunity to do so.

Once I recognized a hunger for apologetics within our church, I started a ministry called [\*Truthbomb Apologetics\*](#).



The name “Truthbomb” was inspired by Jesus and the manner in which He taught and presented truth.

As Mark Galli writes in his book *Jesus Mean and Wild*:

*Jesus had a tendency of storming in and out of people’s lives, making implicit or explicit demands and, in general, making people feel mighty uncomfortable... This is Jesus the consuming fire, the raging storm, who seems bent on destroying everything in his path, who either shocks people into stupification ([Mark 6:51](#)) or frightens them ([Mark 16:8](#)) so that they run for their lives. This divinity we had thought was under lock and key and confined to the Old Testament. But to find him roaming the pages of the Testament of love and forgiveness- well! And yet there He swirls, a tornado touching down, lifting homes and businesses off their foundations, leaving only bits and pieces of the former life strewn on his path.[1]*

Truth, presented biblically, should never leave those who hear it the same. It should challenge, demand investigation, or even disturb. Our goal became to offer apologetics resources to encourage and challenge both believer and unbeliever.

The following are the steps we have taken to start an

apologetics ministry in my local church:

1. I started a blog entitled *Truthbomb Apologetics* that's main purpose it to provide believers with a vast array of materials to deal with the challenges they face in regard to their faith.
2. My Pastor has allowed me to preach apologetics sermons such as *Jesus: The Intellectual*, *Our Reassurance In and Through our Suffering*, *Have You Lost Your Mind?*, and *Lessons from Lily*. The reaction to these messages has always been positive and believers always appreciate an intelligent presentation of the gospel message.
3. We have invited top apologetic speakers to share at our church. Last year, Greg Koukl shared a message on *Tactics for Defending the Faith* and this coming October, Dr. Frank Turek is coming to share the content of his best selling book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*.
4. I set-up a resource table that offers free literature (details about the discipline of apologetics, answers to common objections), free books, and other resources to encourage believers to think about what they

believe.

5. We offered a book study centered around Dr. Turek's book *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. It was well attended. More on this below...
6. We offered a Sunday School class based on the TrueU: Does God Exist? Video curriculum hosted by Dr. Stephen Meyer. More Sunday School classes are forthcoming.
7. We also offered an apologetics newsletter for the first few months of the ministry, but for different reasons have not continued it. However, future plans include revamping the newsletter and calling it "*The Bomb Shelter*." The newsletter will go out via email and include relevant apologetics articles, videos, commentary, etc.
8. We also started an Apologetics Team that is available to help with the distribution of materials.

### **The Fruit of Apologetics**

I believe the most important reason that the church today needs apologetics is because it works! Consider the following examples:

## *Agnostic Scientist*

A friend of mine, who is a lab biologist working for the government, had been reading the book of Revelation and finding what he called “eerie parallels” in it's events and events happening in our world today. However, he wasn't sure if one could *know* that God existed. He and I began discussing the issue of Intelligent Design via an internet discussion forum. Soon thereafter, we decided to meet for coffee and discuss our beliefs face to face.

His objections to Christianity largely focused on the character of God and why God seemed so “hidden.” After discussing these objections at length with him that evening, I left him with a copy of Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ* and Frank Turek's *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be Atheist* and encouraged him to read them with an open mind.

A few months later we decided to meet for coffee once again and shortly after I sat down he informed me that he had decided to follow Jesus Christ! I was of course excited and remember asking him, “What made you decide to finally take the step of faith?” He replied, “I had no more

objections left. It was the most logical thing I could do.”

He continues to follow Jesus to this day and read apologetics literature.

### *The Engineer that Could*

After being encouraged by his wife, Ron began attending the book study Truthbomb offered based upon Turek's book I *Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. When Ron began attending, he was an agnostic who found the idea of an all loving and all powerful God difficult to believe. Further, he felt he was living a more morally consistent life than many believers he knew so he saw no need for God in his life.

After attending the book study for approximately 5 weeks and participating in various discussions with other believers concerning some of his main objections, I received a phone call from Ron one morning; he had decided to surrender his life to Christ. By Ron's own admission, it was the faithfulness of his wife and the removal of his objections through the book study that allowed him to fully give

himself over to Jesus. Since then, Ron has helped me lead the TrueU Sunday School class and is actively leading his wife and daughter in their spiritual lives. He is truly a new creation. Ron now refers to people who reject God after looking at the evidence “denialists.”

One of the purposes of apologetics is to remove one's intellectual objections to the gospel so that they may deal with the claims of Christ directly. I have witnessed this very thing and seen the discipline of apologetics aid people in surrendering to Him.

### **Advice**

If you are interested in starting an apologetics ministry in your church, I humbly offer the following bits of advice:

1. Seek the support of your Pastor. If your Pastor gets behind what you are trying to accomplish, others will as well. Further, he can offer advice in starting a ministry.
2. Begin discussing apologetic topics with fellow believers. Many times, it's not that people are not interested in apologetics, it's that they don't know much about it.
3. Begin getting apologetics literature into the hands of

fellow believers. Used books or articles are an inexpensive way to start.

4. With the permission of your Pastor and/or Board of Directors, invite an apologetics speaker to your church.
5. Start a blog or website that deals with relevant apologetics topics.
6. Begin a small group at your church and discuss common objections to the faith and answers.

The discipline of apologetics is a worthwhile endeavor that God commanded and that Jesus and the apostles practiced. We should do not less.

Resources:

1. I have addressed a few of the reasons more Christians don't engage in apologetics [here](#).
2. Mark Galli, *Jesus Mean and Wild*, p. 16-17.

# APOLOGETICS FUNCTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

By Carolyn Horne

[www.reasonablefaithmemphis.org](http://www.reasonablefaithmemphis.org)

The idea of having an apologetics function came during a church Dream Team meeting where we were discussing the best way to reach our local community with the love of God and the truth of the Gospel. Many good suggestions were brought forward that involved getting out to community events, baseball games, and into parks nearby. However I had something stirring inside of me that would not go away. What about reaching those who frequent libraries and those in higher education institutions? I sort of envisioned having a seminar at a library and having a much simpler William Lane Craig style debate. Our pastor, James Laymon, was open to such an idea.

I was already on the [Reasonable Faith](#) mailing list, joining shortly after finishing a book report for seminary on *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel. This seminary is the International College of Ministry, planted locally through the chair of the Jacksonville Theological Seminary branch



in Olive Branch, Mississippi and several pastors and Christian educators from Memphis who have a vision to bring along young ministers in this region. That book report changed my life in so many ways.

I have a personal testimony about how the education system can undermine our faith even at the high school level. And, like Lee, have a passion to make sure that those who are susceptible to having their faith undermined are equipped to deal with that eventuality.

It wasn't too long after joining [WLC](#)'s mailing list that there was an invitation to start local RF Chapters. That was a Eureka moment for sure. I contacted my pastors about it and they agreed to host a local Chapter event if I qualified. That meant taking a week's solid vacation from work plus another few long weekends and spending that time working through [Reasonable Faith 3rd Edition](#) and the [Study Guide](#) questions in concentrated fashion. In February, 2010, I qualified to start Reasonable Faith Memphis.

We originally were going to have a weekend event with a local worship arts college, where the students could get

credit, but that did not pan out. My passion and the pastors' passion did not equate to the (lack of) passion on this subject there. So that was disappointing. But we redirected our focus and decided to post notices around the community, on KLOVE, and promote it during Sunday church services leading up to the kickoff event at our church facilities.

I have to say that without my pastors' support at Wellspring Church; it would have been difficult to get off the ground. They prayed for me, gave fatherly and motherly talks to the sheep about the need for apologetics, voiced their support for the event publicly to the congregation during church, and helped in the event planning stage. They also provided the venue for our meetings. I really have to thank them for all they have done and continue to do.

During the planning stage, I also received an email from Daniel Ashworth Jr., who attends Union Avenue Baptist Church in Midtown Memphis (the University of Memphis area). He was also interested in starting a Chapter in Midtown and wanted to join up with me until he was able

to do that. Daniel has experience teaching Apologetics at various local churches he has attended. He also was a great help, and very faithful and passionate about it.

Chris Shannon provided an exhaustive list of Apologetics materials we could use. We decided to start with the basics and show *The Case for Christ/Faith/Creator* series by Lee Strobel. I bought a license for *The Case for Christ* for around 200 viewers from Wing Cinema. They also provide promotional materials with the license, such as posters, church bulletin inserts, tickets, event handouts, and leaders' guides. These were very helpful. I also ordered a 10-pack of the DVD's to give to those who gave a free-will offering.

We planned to show *The Case for Christ* on a Friday evening and have break-out groups using the leader's guides afterward. Then Saturday morning we would show the Craig-Hitchens debate 'Does God Exist?', with a Q&A after that. Daniel, our church youth pastors, senior pastors and I led the breakout groups for *The Case for Christ*. I asked Daniel to lead the Q&A after the Craig-Hitchens debate and he did a great job. He has experience teaching at the college level so that was put to good use. People were very engaged in both events, though we saw a different mix

of people at the Friday evening versus the Saturday morning event. We had about 25 people on Friday night and 10 on Saturday morning. It was a bit disappointing that most of the youth only showed up on Friday night. But for those who did attend, I think all agreed hands down on Saturday morning that WLC won the debate and Christopher Hitchens didn't really address any of the points WLC put forward. We handed out some of WLC's popular articles and a transcript of the debate to participants. We also let them know about his website and podcasts. I know many wanted to order the debate DVD themselves after that viewing. It was a real confidence booster to those who attended.

We had our next monthly meeting at UABC, Daniel's Church, and he had the opportunity to invite those in his neighborhood to come. My pastors came, along with one other person from my church, a man from the huge (25,000 member) Bellevue Baptist Church came, and others from UABC. In all, there were about a dozen attendees. We viewed *The Case for Faith*, which is just so powerful my pastors decided to share that over the next two Wednesdays at our own Church. We were just awestruck

by the presentation. I ordered *The Case for Faith* books in three versions: adult, youth and children's and gave those away. Some could give a love offering in return, but I didn't require it. A lady from UABC who deals with children snapped up a children's book. We took a break and spent some time listening to WLC's Defenders 2 podcasts using the outlines he provides on his website. These were received well, but people were beginning to fade after having already viewed The Case for Faith. So after that we agreed to assign the podcasts for private listening. In our culture we are so used to multimedia that if there isn't a video component, it can be hard to maintain people's interest level at an event. This bothers me because I wanted to make the podcasts foundational to our training. I did bring copies of *ON GUARD* to introduce to the people, since they were hot off the press. If people were willing to read that, which compresses a lot of information into a digestible short volume for laymen, then we had an alternative for the podcast presentations at our meetings.

We found we were too busy with other ministry needs to even meet in June, so we had a double feature in July at my church in Millington. We showed *The Case for a Creator*

and *Darwin's Dilemma*, both by Illustra Media. I received permission to show those publicly by sending an email to Illustra. They replied with a viewing agreement for Reasonable Faith Memphis which would pertain to all of their DVD's. There was no fee involved. This time our pastors really pushed the need for apologetics training to parents and youth on two consecutive Sundays. We met at 4 PM, which is dinner hour, so advertised that we would provide food. I ordered pizza, popped some popcorn, brought drinks and fruit. Another lady from the church provided paper plates, etc. So it had the flavor of a movie matinee. I was stunned when we opened the doors. People just poured in. Parents brought their youth. Children and seniors were among the head count. Almost the entire church turned out. They were on the edge of their seats for both presentations, and clapped enthusiastically at the end. When asked if they learned something new, just about everyone raised their hands. I laid out a table with copies of *ON GUARD*, The Case series, WLC's printed articles, *RF 3rd Edition*, and people took advantage of those materials. I was only left with one copy of *ON GUARD*. This fits into our current plan of doing slide show summary presentations of *ON GUARD* in future meetings. People

are interested and able to read and understand the book. So for now instead of the podcasts, we are going with *ON GUARD* plus some visuals.

This month, we plan on showing *Expelled!* with Ben Stein as a follow-up to our introduction to Intelligent Design in July, followed by a slide presentation of the first two chapters of *ON GUARD*. The *Expelled!* license is available from Wing Cinema. Again we will offer dinner fare and meet at 4 PM on a Sunday, which seems to work best for us.

# BEGINNING AN APOLOGETICS CLASS

By Derek Jarrard

[www.twitter.com/derekjarrard](http://www.twitter.com/derekjarrard)

I began an apologetics class at my church almost one year ago. Before the class began, I spent several months (about six) in preparation. These six months leading up to the class consisted of several areas. I hope to shed some light on the preparation process I went through in order to help others beginning a similar ordeal.

The first thing you need to do is decide who your audience will be. Is this a class for new Christians of all ages, high school or middle schoolers, or for those who wish to shore up their faith in order to be a more effective witness? This is important because the content of your class will vary based on who will be listening. Also, the depth of the material will also change. Someone who has been a Christian for many years will be able to go deeper than say a middle school aged student. I have a passion for preparing our youth for the defense of the Christian faith, so I chose to teach high school and middle school students.



Next, you will need to decide on the length of your class. Will it be for one hour each Sunday for a month? An hour and a half? This is important in order to have enough content to fill the allotted time. My class is for an hour and a half on Sunday evenings for three weeks. This gives some fun, icebreaker time at the beginning then about one hour of lecture time, then time at the end for questions.

Lastly, you will need to think about what the content of the class will consist of. Apologetics covers such a wide variety of topics, you will want to narrow your choices in order to provide the most information on what you wish to convey. You may want to really zero in on science and religion and talk about God's existence, astronomy, physics, etc. Or you may want to talk about the historical significance of Biblical events. I chose to do a basic introduction to apologetics and talk about the existence of God, the reliability of the Scriptures, and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

After you have these three things decided, begin to get things on paper and write out an outline of the class and what you will discuss each night. Then, meet with your

pastor or youth director and share with them your vision of the class and seek their affirmation and ideas. Lastly, pray. This goes without saying, but so many people do not seek the Lord's will and blessing. You will see a direct correlation in the success of your class and the amount of time you spend on your knees in conversation with the Lord.

I would like to also suggest a few other things to consider as you prepare for your class. A few weeks before the class begins, you may want to have something in your church bulletin, include something each week in the announcements, and advertised on the church's website. If you have a Facebook page or Twitter account for your church, this is also a good way to get the time and dates for your class in the right people's hands. Anything you can do to get the word out. Also, ask possible attendees to submit questions they would like to see addressed in the class.

If possible, I also highly recommend a solid Power Point presentation to supplement your discussion. Here you can include pictures, quotes, graphs, and a general outline to help your audience follow along. Remember, a picture is

worth a thousand words and it is easier to show them than tell them. Power Point will also assist your class in taking notes. There is usually a lot of material to present and to help drive home a particular point, you can put it on the overhead.

If you are looking to leave a lasting impression on your class, give them something they can keep and refer back to often. A notebook of all the Power Point slides, outlines, and blank pages for notes makes a great keepsake for your students. It is something they can take with them and use when confronted with questions and ministering to others. You will leave a legacy for years to come just by offering this simple tool for them. God will take the seeds you plant and multiply the fruits of His harvest a hundred fold.

One thing you may want to include in your notebook, or just give as a handout, is a list of recommended books, websites, and social media "friends". There is so much misinformation out there it is hard for people to know who and what to believe. Having a list of trusted resources can go a long way to spreading the truth. This is so important as we encourage our students to love the Lord with all their

mind as well as their heart and soul. As the old saying goes, garbage in, garbage out. Let's help them dispense with the garbage and replace it with the truth of our savior, Jesus Christ.

As for the flow of the class, that is really an individual choice. We all have different teaching styles we employ so our outlines will all differ. One thing I would highly encourage you to do though, is make sure to set some time aside for questions at the end of your presentation. Not only will this benefit your students, but it will help you in the future as well. This is where you will find out what issues your class has with defending their faith. You can then use that information when tweaking your presentation for future classes. For example, I found out that our high school students face many questions from their peers about the Trinity. I then went back and made sure I devoted more time on that particular topic in the next class.

Lastly, in each of your presentations make sure to explain that the whole point behind apologetics is to present the Gospel message to unbelievers. It is not a "gotcha" game we play where we win and they lose. Rather, it should be done

"... with gentleness and respect..." ([1 Peter 3:15b](#)) in order to show them the hope that is within us. It is not our calling to win their souls, God does that. But our calling is to proclaim the Gospel message to all, to sow the seeds, and the Holy Spirit to draw them to the Father.

I hope this will be beneficial to anyone who is thinking about starting an apologetics class. In this Post-Modern world we live in where all truth is deemed relative, our churches must be ready to defend the faith like never before. To know what you believe and why you believe it seems fundamental, but that kind of teaching is missing in today's time. Easy-believism, feel good lessons, and pats on the back have replaced the truth of the Bible. May God lead and direct you on this new journey you are taking to help further His kingdom. Grace and peace to you from our Lord, Jesus.

# STARTING A CHURCH APOLOGETICS MINISTRY

By Daniel Hannon

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I am sure that there are many ways to get an apologetics ministry started in your church. There are probably as many ways as there are different personalities and areas of interest in apologetics. And at the risk of sounding like a relativist, I won't say if there is a right or a wrong way to go about it, but I would like to relate to you how it happened for me and my local congregation.

Getting an apologetics ministry started in my church actually began with my own personal journey deeper into the world of defending the faith. A key element that got me moving towards apologetics ministry was having a kindred spirit in my pastor. Here is a man who shares a passion for loving our God with all of our minds; it was my pastor who encouraged me to enroll in [Biola University's Modular MA program in Christian Apologetics](#). Over the course of approximately three years of study in this world-class program, I was instructed by phenomenal professors in

intellectually challenging courses such as “In Defense of the Resurrection,” “Scientific Apologetics,” and “Cultural Apologetics.” This program had a profound impact on my development as an apologist and was central in my desire to introduce apologetics as a more prominent and permanent part of ministry in my local congregation. The credit goes to my pastor for getting the whole thing started.

Initiating and building momentum for this type of ministry I think depends very much on the support of church leadership. In my case, the board of elders and deacons—of which I am a member—is very supportive of the apologetic task, so it was a very easy thing to do. With the wealth of information at my disposal from my time at Biola, choosing a curriculum was also fairly easy. I chose to start in a Sunday school class with Professor Kenneth Samples’ book *Without a Doubt: Answering the 20 Toughest Faith Questions*. This title I thought would be an appropriate introduction to some standard apologetic material and was well-received by the class. I chose to focus on the roughly 18-35 age range, as I saw a real need for apologetic training for students about to enter college and for those a bit older to meet challenges in their workplaces.

As an additional avenue to get started, I also volunteered to lead a small group on the topics of *Tactics in Defending the Faith* and later pro-life apologetics using Scott Klusendorf's book *The Case for Life*. A Sunday school class and small group—well-supported by our church leadership—were just two easy ways to begin using material with which I was already familiar.

The results of this ministry are that it has been very well-received in both the Sunday school format and the small group format. I have learned quite a bit about myself as a teacher as well as the real need for apologetics in the church. Let me relate three other lessons I have learned.

First, know your audience. Though you may have training as an apologist in an academic setting, this teaching will be new to laypeople. For example, though very useful, I would recommend with caution using Samples' book *Without a Doubt* as starting material. The content is wonderful, but I was quite surprised to find this book to be a bit advanced for the layperson. Though as a group we could summarize and work our way through the text, I often found that the arguments presented and the language



used went over the heads of my students.

Second, it is helpful to use material already developed by other apologetics training websites. Why reinvent the wheel when you don't have to? I find myself again and again going back to reputable resources from apologetics groups such as Stand to Reason. Currently, my Sunday school class is studying STR's "Decision Making and the Will of God" and finding it quite useful and informative. Greg Koukl provides detailed notes with each talk which are easily adaptable to Sunday school format.

Third, listen to other apologists as they engage both topics and people in their defense of the faith. Greg Koukl again comes to mind with his "Columbo tactic" and many other tactics which can help you as he says "learn not only what to think, but how to think." Not surprisingly, as your own critical thinking develops, you will find that it is of great benefit to your teaching ministry.

There are several other pieces of advice I would give to those wanting to start or build on an apologetics ministry in their church. First, I think it is critical to get support from the leadership of your church. As I mentioned, my

pastor and the board of elders have been invaluable in promoting apologetics in our local congregation. Second, be a voracious reader. The task of the apologist is never complete, and I have found that the more I read, the more I know, and the more I find that I don't know. So, read, read, read.

Third, stay current. Listen to podcasts of apologetics programs like Issues, Etc., Stand to Reason, Reasonable Faith, or Apologetics 315. These audio resources will be invaluable for providing you with up-to-date information, advice on current challenges for the Christian apologist, and important topics for study in your own church.

Fourth, write down your thoughts, perhaps in a blog. It is amazing how writing down your thoughts and wrestling with them brings clarity. Fifth, a great opportunity for help in your apologetics ministry is through networking on social media like Facebook and Twitter, as well as through the blogosphere. Again, this is a way to keep current on apologetics topics, get advice from more seasoned apologists, discover apologetics conferences and other resources, and find additional topics for study in your church.

Lastly, and very importantly, bathe your apologetics ministry in prayer and always keep it informed by Holy Scripture. An apologetics ministry to the glory of God and through His power should be the goal of every apologist. Do your best and trust Him for the results.

# HOW WE GOT APOLOGETICS IN OUR CHURCH

By Marcus McElhaneý

<http://mmcelhaneý.blogspot.com/>

The key to getting apologetics in a church is to capture the imagination of the congregation and to make it fun. Apologetics is tied inextricably to evangelism. If you can remind your congregation that Jesus commands us to evangelize the world, you can explain that we can use apologetics as a tool to doing just that. We can encourage people to talk to those of other faiths and worldviews but in order to do that you have to be able to articulate what you believe and why you believe it.

Give your congregation the tools they will need to help them to carry out that mission. Teach people to use the internet, books, textual criticism, Biblical exegesis, logic, and most important - prayer. Teach them from the point of view that they may not be able to use all of these resources to engage the culture and the environment they find themselves in, but it is good to have these things in one's tool belt.

Change does not come quickly or easily. Small changes should be done first, especially in congregations that aren't used to apologetics in their services and sermons. Apologetics could start being incorporated into meetings that are already primarily teaching-based, like Sunday school and Bible Study. Lessons can be chosen and designed that expose people in the congregation to apologetics and thinking logically and rationally about their faith.

In our church we changed our Sunday school curriculum a little bit by bringing in how current events and historical events are related to the scriptures our lessons are based on. We also switched out the Sunday school lessons with Powerpoint presentations explaining how Islam is different than Christianity and why. We did a presentation on Jesus' deity and the Trinity. Our church is small but growing, and typically we have about 5 adults in Sunday School.

It's really not hard to prepare such sermons and lessons if you make them a part of your own study. For example, the lesson we did on the Deity of Jesus grew out of the

presentation we did on Islam because denial of the Trinity is fundamental to Islam.

I usually lead the more apologetics-centered Sunday school lessons and my Pastor has taken it upon himself to use apologetics in our Bible Study. He leads the class by asking questions designed to make us think. For example he asked the question “Is it okay for Christians to gamble?”

Questions like these are great because it forces people to think about what they believe and the scriptural basis for holding that belief. Further, it asks us to think about how we live and how it impacts our witness to those who are non-Christian.

Another thing my Pastor has done that is really interesting is that he opens up Bible Study for anyone to ask any question they want. You are free to ask about anything you have heard or have been studying. Many times the questions are apologetic in nature. For example, “Is it okay for a person to be angry with God?” When everyone is satisfied, we usually move on to something Pastor had prepared. This format works for us and we typically have about 9 or 10 Adults.

One important thing to keep in mind that is that your church can engage in apologetics ministries without a lot of money or a large congregation. You don't need to spend a great deal of money on new audio/video equipment. You can project Powerpoint presentations on a wall if you don't have a screen. Computers and projectors are reasonably priced these days. If your church does not have a projector, you can connect your computer to a television or computer monitor.

You can also take advantage of the latest software and technology to share apologetic information. For example Brian Auten's Apologetics 315 blog is an awesome resource for finding books, debates, lectures, and Powerpoint presentations that you can use to teach apologetics and equip your congregation. Many people today have Twitter and Facebook. There are a lot of members from my church on Facebook. You can share a lot of information and lessons right on Facebook. YouTube videos could be made out of sermons and classes and posted on the web and in blogs for everyone in the world to see them. In addition, most people today have smart phones and they can be used

to get apologetics in the palm of people's hands. For example, your congregation could be encouraged to subscribe to the Apologetics 315 podcasts and Alpha and Omega Ministries podcast. There are many, many good ones.

The most important thing you can do is pray and expect God to open doors and opportunities to share apologetics with your church and for your church to share with the community.



# GETTING APOLOGETICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

By Ron Pantalena

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This essay briefly covers three main areas: How our apologetics ministry came about, some of things we have done, and some suggestions for starting an apologetics ministry in your church.

I have been blessed to be leading the apologetics ministry in our church since its inception in 2001. I was taking courses from [Southern Evangelical Seminary](#) and realized that the things I was learning needed an outlet in the church. I approached the person who oversaw the ministries at our church with the idea of starting an apologetics ministry. He gave me the names of others who may be interested and we all met to discuss the idea and what our ministry would be about.

Since then our goals and activities have “evolved.” At first I essentially taught through a few apologetics books to the group of 3-4. My intention all along was to ground them to

the point where we could team-teach an adult Sunday School class on apologetics. Some people dropped out for various reasons and others joined but my goal remained to teach apologetics to as many in the church body as possible. When I felt they were ready for the challenge I told them that we were scheduled to teach a class based on the book *Unshakable Foundations* written by Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino. There is a CD available with a PowerPoint presentation for all the chapters for teaching purposes. The course was very well received and we have now taught the course 5 times and will teach it again starting Sept 2010. It is an excellent course as is, but we have made our own changes and have expanded it with classes that we have written ourselves.

Having been troubled for a long time about the statistics regarding students that no longer follow the faith after graduating high school, I approached the Senior High youth pastor about our group teaching a shortened course to the students. He agreed and we have now taught apologetics to the high school students twice. Again, it has been very well received and we have even had former students come up to us after they were in college to tell us

how much better able they were to withstand the attacks posed by professors and other students. By God's grace I believe that apologetics has improved the statistics of students from our church.

Realizing the potential impact *The Da Vinci Code* could have on believers, one of our pastors approached us about conducting a seminar for the church. We agreed but decided to expand the project by doing two seminars; one at our church and one at a neutral location for the public at large. One of the members of our church worked at a local high school and was able to arrange for us to use the auditorium to present the seminar to the community. A local reporter found out and interviewed us for a front-page article which allowed us to present the truth to anyone who read the paper as well as to advertise the seminar. We were also able to do local television interviews that aired as a 5 part miniseries, each part lasting 30 minutes, which gave the same rebuttal that was presented in the seminar.

Since then the apologetics ministry has grown only slightly. We are still tiny compared to most ministries, but that is intentional. We are a teaching ministry and there are

unfortunately not that many who are competent enough in apologetics to teach. This is something we are trying to change but too many Christians are more concerned with the cultural concept of political correctness than with biblical mandates about defending the faith.

One of our more recent activities was to write a new adult course from scratch. We wanted to teach on the cults but wanted to do something different. We decided to make it as challenging as possible for our students so we took various doctrines and presented heretical teaching on them, “supporting” the heretical positions from the Bible, as if we were the cultist. We then forced our students to research the answers before we responded to those positions so that they could intelligently participate in the rebuttal. It was really interesting to see the students progress from weak, shallow initial responses (that we, arguing from the cultist position could easily defeat) to well reasoned rebuttals.

Recently we approached one of our pastors about having a meeting with the entire pastoral staff about how apologetics can be used to address current needs within the congregation. Out of this meeting came several ideas that

will be developed into new classes, intensive teaching seminars, and lessons to be distributed to small group leaders. This sort of cooperation was achieved only because of the recognition by the leaders in our church of the need for apologetics teaching for believers.

One of the most exciting opportunities to come from the meeting was when the Children's Pastor approached us about the possibility of developing an apologetics program geared for 5th graders. Due to the scarcity of material available, this is going to be developed mostly from scratch.

Getting an apologetics ministry started in your church is not easy. There are many obstacles. Here are some thoughts about starting an apologetics ministry in your church:

1. **Most people, including many pastors, don't appreciate the place or need for apologetics.** I have yet to meet someone who is "bent" toward evangelism who truly understands the role of apologetics. On the flip side, every apologist I know understands the need for evangelism. So, be prepared to explain both biblically and logically the need for and uses of apologetics.

2. **Don't try to go it alone.** As best as possible identify others, or at least one other, who shares a passion for apologetics. Start to meet and discuss goals and ideas.

3. **Most pastors are overworked and taking on another task is not possible.** Make sure they realize that you are not asking them to do anything; rather, that you are offering to come along side them. Ask them how you can help them in the area of apologetics. Perhaps you can do the research that they use in a sermon series.

4. **Volunteer to be the chairperson to oversee an apologetics related conference.** There are several good ministries that specialize in visiting churches to teach for a weekend (this can also give your pastor a Sunday off from preaching). In the beginning I oversaw two such conferences at our church. This has the related benefit of pointing out others in your church with a passion for apologetics. Several ministries to consider are: Watchman Fellowship (cults), Probe Ministries (general/youth apologetics), and TEAM. TEAM is a ministry of Southern Evangelical Seminary that sends seminary students to

churches for a weekend to teach on various apologetic topics. As with the other ministries mentioned, you can tailor the topics as desired, but unique to TEAM is that it is free of charge. They ask only for help with housing for the weekend. Southern Evangelical Seminary can be reached at 800-77-TRUTH.

**5. Put an announcement in the church bulletin that you are going to lead a study on an apologetics related book.** The Case for Christ is a great choice and is the first book I taught through when starting our ministry.

One of the original members of our apologetics ministry and I have a great passion to see apologetics ministries in place in churches throughout the country and the world. We conceived of what we call 3E Impact. He has since taken a position at Southern Evangelical Seminary and has launched 3E Impact with the purpose of helping people get apologetics ministries started in their local church. This leads to my final suggestion:

**6. Contact the 3E Impact for help.** They can be reached at [www.3eimpact.org](http://www.3eimpact.org) or by contacting SES. Although God

used me to help plant the seeds for 3E Impact and I wholeheartedly support it, I receive no compensation of any kind. I simply desire to see the church strengthened and believers equipped with a reasoned defense of the faith.



# ACCESSIBLE APOLOGETICS TRAINING IN THE CHURCH

By Mikel Del Rosario

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“How do I get apologetics training into my church?” If you’re reading this, you’re at least interested in considering your role in making this happen. Let me commend you. Christians who ask this question understand the importance of knowing what we believe and why we believe it. Maybe you’re someone who’s devoured incredible apologetics books like William Lane Craig’s *Reasonable Faith* and J.P. Moreland’s *Love your God with All Your Mind*. You’re dying to share everything you learned. But how? You can’t just hand people a stack of books and say, “Here. Read these!” Let’s face it, most Christians don’t know what the word “apologetics” even means. Making apologetics accessible to people who are totally new to this whole thing can seem tough. Where do you begin?

Let me share with you how I worked to get apologetics training off the ground at Bridgeway Christian Church---a

fellowship of about 5,000 people in Rocklin, California. I'll give you a run-down of exactly what I did, the results, the things I learned, and my advice for starting something similar.

## **Here's What I Did**

The first thing I did was explore the possibility of teaching a course to introduce apologetics to our church family by approaching our associate pastor. Turns out, he was in the middle of putting together a discipleship strategy which included launching a series of adult classes. I met him for coffee and talked about how apologetics benefits spiritual formation and fits into our overall discipleship to Jesus.

Before this meeting, I looked at individual apologetics books and considered existing curriculum. I wasn't too excited about what I found. Something was missing. I found studies which covered defending essentials of the faith, but mixed in non-essential views about the age of the earth or the author's political leanings. Many just didn't seem like a good fit for our church. Plus, I was worried that many of the resources I did like would be considered too daunting for people who were brand new to this whole

apologetics thing.

That's when I decided to write my own 9-week curriculum over the life of the course. My goal was to make the class accessible to the average member. I knew this would mean more work for me, but much of it could be pieced together from my previous apologetics teaching and notes from my time in the [M.A. Christian Apologetics Program at Biola University](#). Still, I'd always dreamed of doing this, so I figured, "Why not?"

Our church staff felt extremely stretched by the demands of a growing church, and I think the associate pastor was impressed by the amount of work I put into the proposed course. I also wrote an introduction that explained apologetics in a way that everyone could understand. It fit right in to the existing class offerings and our pastors mentioned the upcoming course from the stage a few times before we began.

### **Here's What Happened**

We didn't have the best Sunday time slot (2:00PM-3:30PM). We didn't have childcare. Or Air conditioning

that worked very well in the midst of a warm season. Although only 15 people signed up, we were surprised to have 46 people show up to the very first class!

We did see the attendance go down over the 10-week stretch. Plus, we had breaks for Mother's Day and Easter throwing people off. But we had new people coming to check out specific topics that interested them. For example, we had a great turn out for our study in defending the historical resurrection of Jesus.

They especially loved the mnemonic devices and Pictionary-style game I used to help people remember the five minimal facts covered in Gary Habermas and Mike Licona's book, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. As a former youth pastor and Jr. High teacher, I knew the value of learning activities in helping people "get" the material. We often broke up into groups and did role-playing exercises, with one person play the role of a critic, and the other people practicing short, well-thought-out responses. This wasn't so much to memorize witty comebacks for common objections to the faith, but more so to take the material and "try it on." To "see how it fits" your

personality so you can feel more comfortable doing things like, “taking the roof off.” Check Greg Koukl’s book, *Tactics*, for an explanation about that one!

## **Here Are the Results**

We got started. Sometimes, this can be the hardest part of the whole thing. We trained about 50 people to defend the faith over the Spring semester, including former Mormons. We introduced new believers to the exciting study of Christian apologetics and exposed more mature believers to some of the best apologetics resources and Christian thinkers alive. Whole new worlds were opening up to people and a few felt the desire to reproduce this training in their existing small groups.

Just as an aside: Our associate pastor also invited me to conduct apologetics training for homeschooling students mid-way through the course. For that event, I was introduced to a number of people who were instrumental in my invitation to present on the Problem of Evil at Bayside Church’s Apologetics Conference Featuring J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig.

After the course, a man wrote me an e-mail, saying, “You did an excellent job and apologetics is a critical area of ministry, and one that I think will grow in importance as the rest of the world increasingly rejects the concepts of absolute truth and morality. It is so refreshing to learn that Christ desires to nourish and utilize all aspects of our being, including our intellect. Keep up the good work!”

### Here’s What I Learned

People want this training. A woman told me that apologetics “is not taught enough in the church and is so important that we are all equipped in the world today.” If we, as leaders, take the time to digest the material for ourselves and then turn around and present it to our brothers and sisters in a way they can understand, people can be drawn closer to the Lord. Material that might have seemed like it was just for geeky, ivory tower “brainacs” came to life and became tangible and practical.

I also learned that, for some, 9 weeks was way too long. They were fascinated by the field, but the *Tactics* book was enough for them to chew on after our weekly sessions. Others thought the course was too short. They loved

*Reasonable Faith* and were hungry for more, scholarly material. Still, others learned the best from our simulations and actually suggested we take this to the streets and talk to total strangers about spiritual things. They were looking for a local apologetics missions trip!

### **Advice**

Get started. I know some of you are perfectionists. I'm one of them. But still, doing one "beta" class is better than sitting at home crafting the perfect lesson that nobody is learning! Take 30 minutes and write up something simple to show to your pastor. Is there a "hot issue" in your community that people need to respond to as believers? Check the local papers for opinion pieces. Talk to your friends and neighbors. You might find a timely subject people already want to study from a Christian worldview.

Don't go it alone. Find others in your area who are interested in making this material accessible and work on it together. This is something I wish I would have done sooner. Helping others gets you connected in the local apologetics scene and opens up new opportunities to learn and serve. The more people I meet, the more I find

apologetics happening in places I don't normally think about. Like in the world of sports. Go figure!

Consider offering shorter courses, targeted to different groups. For example, a 5-week introductory course on the case for faith. Then, offer a 5-week course on defending against philosophical, cultural and religious challenges to the faith. Maybe you can organize that local apologetics mission trip!

## Links

Check out the [text I wrote for our church Web site](#), the syllabus, and introduction crafted for the class.

I've put some of my thoughts on making apologetics accessible on my Web site. Please check out these resources and feel free to drop me a comment. I'd love to hear from you!

[Defend without Getting Defensive](#)

[Argue without Being Argumentative](#)

Example Illustrations

[A Dead Guy's Facebook Page](#)

[Faith, Reason and Lego Indiana Jones](#)

[A Simple Defense of Miracles](#)



# WHAT I LEARNED WHILE TEACHING APOLOGETICS IN CHURCH

By Daniel A. Ashworth

[www.reasonablefaithmemphis.org](http://www.reasonablefaithmemphis.org)

I am very fond of Christian apologetics because it plays such a major role in my personal testimony. Since apologetic arguments and evidences were helpful in leading me to Christ, I immediately began to devour as much of it as possible. I also began to see a need for apologetic teaching in church, to help fellow believers to be secure in their faith with Christ and to equip them to have answers for their evangelism. I have taught apologetics at two very different churches and through it all, believe I have learned much through my experiences. I want to chronicle my journey and my education, in the hopes that others can learn from my experiences.

As many others can probably attest, my experience with introducing apologetic teaching into the church setting has been a somewhat difficult, trial and error and enlightening process. Admittedly, part of the issue was a bit of over-

zealousness on my part, in that I started too heavy, too soon. My first opportunity came when I was asked to teach our Sunday school class for a few weeks at our large church in Orlando, Florida. I started by teaching from the Bible the importance of loving God with one's entire mind, and the Biblical importance of mind renewal. I also taught about how the Bible gives examples of knowing one's surrounding culture in order to engage it, using critical thinking and logical argumentation.

Though the classes started out well, I transitioned into teaching on philosophy and how philosophical ideas filter down to shape and form the popular culture, at this point I nearly lost everyone. It is helpful to realize that, similar to the general public, most people in church have not earned a college degree, let alone specific education in humanities, theology and critical thinking. It helps to break things down in the smallest units possible and explain, explain, explain. It also helps to add stories, personal reflections and life applications to each topic you cover. Any time you use something that remotely smells of jargon, you must define and give a practical example in each instance. Graphics and illustrations help also. If something can be

compared or summarized in a chart, table, diagram or image, then that information can be quickly grasped over delivering it in a long paragraph vocally.

Another self-criticism is in my use of quotes. I have found that if you read a quote, stop and explain what the author is saying in simpler terms, and give the implications of that quote with what you are teaching. If you read out a really long quote, that is probably more appropriate as a class topic in itself- so you have time to read the full quote first, and then re-read it in broken down form and show each point the author is making line-by-line and how it fits in the larger theme of what you are trying to teach. Explicitly pointing out where various authors agree or conflict with the Bible may also be an aid to understanding, especially if you couple the quote with a comparative Bible verse.

At my current church in Memphis, Tennessee, I was asked to substitute for my pastor in the teaching segment for our Wednesday night prayer meeting for a few weeks. This was another teaching moment for me as I tried to apply some of what I listed above, having learned from my experience in Orlando. However, this time, I felt I was covering too

much too fast, and I could have broken the material up and explained things more. Also, it helps to know your audience. I realized the trouble I found myself in when I was teaching on evolution and Christianity, one woman in the group exclaimed "we are here to talk about God's love only; we don't care about animals, science or whatever". I understood where the lady was coming from, and you could not totally fault her for her position - many believers and many churches, especially in the Bible Belt South, have taken their faith for granted and appear to rely more on an emotional faith. They are not used to having to ask and answer tough questions about Christianity. I used that as an opportunity to teach in the next meeting that Christianity and science are not in conflict, and that the early church fathers believed that "all truth is God's truth".

Looking back, I could have also responded with the fact that more teenagers and those in their 20s are falling from the faith now more than ever, in many instances because we have stopped trying to answer their tough questions and instead tell them in a well-intentioned way to "just have faith". I would have also connected this with our neighborhood where our church is located, a neighborhood

where more young and creative people are moving in, a neighborhood that is gentrifying and becoming more bohemian and "hipster". These people outside the church we are trying to reach are going to want a more reasonable and rational explanation for why we believe Christ is truth, and that is what we as apologists are trying to provide. This event notwithstanding, these talks were received much better than my prior attempt in Orlando.

For the last several weeks, I have been teaching Sunday school at my church. This is also serving to be a great learning opportunity. In these sessions we go through Bible books at our own pace and study them in an expository and systematic way. Though the class is explicitly and almost exclusively focused on the Bible itself, I do find little opportunities to work in apologetic material here and there, without usurping the purpose of the class. In certain instances, I may find an occasion to teach the harmony of the Gospels, explain what may appear to be differences in the peripheral details between two or more Gospel accounts, give background on the beliefs of different historic people groups in the Bible or even explain why Jesus answered most questions with counter-questions

and show why these are important examples for our evangelism. This opportunity is turning out to be a great and rewarding experience for me.

I have learned the best way to introduce apologetics into a church is in small bits and pieces with general audiences, just as I have explained with my Sunday school example. Moreover, apologetics-specific studies are probably best reserved for Sunday evenings, Wednesday nights and/or weekday early mornings, where the attendance is elective as opposed to having the normal "captive" audience on Sunday mornings. That way, the people who come to learn are really the ones who want to be there, and who are truly interested in the material being covered. For these specific audiences, I have filled in for Wednesday night studies in Orlando and in Memphis administered The Truth Project (produced by Focus on the Family) and provided assistance to Carolyn Horne in setting up, administering and publicizing the monthly meetings in the Reasonable Faith Memphis Chapter with success.

In the future, I plan to continue teaching Sunday school, working with Reasonable Faith and running more sessions

of *The Truth Project* and other studies like Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?* book and DVD study and Ravi Zacharias International Ministries' Foundations in Apologetics for my church. I am also interested in earning certifications through Reasonable Faith and the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for teaching apologetics. A long range goal of mine is to go back to school for doctoral study in Philosophy and Theology.

Teaching apologetics in church can be a tough assignment, and is often met with some level of resistance. If this is really your passion, you will need to remain patient and try your best to simplify and explain things, and most importantly, constantly reaffirm why apologetics is necessary in the first place. It is easy to criticize the average believer or the church itself as being anti-intellectual and points made regarding this issue are often valid. However, as Christians we are called to be humble, patient servants to our brethren no matter what the circumstances. Just as we should exercise forbearance with nonbelievers, weak believers or those with whom we disagree, we also should approach introducing apologetics into church settings in

the same way. Studying God should be a humbling experience, not a prideful exercise, because we are trying to know an infinite God after all. I believe this servant's heart attitude may go further than much I have written above.



# FORMING A LOCAL CHURCH APOLOGETICS SOCIETY

By Adrian Urias

<http://noumenalsociety.blogspot.com/>

As an evangelical college student, I've seen a demand for an education in apologetics, not merely for me and my Christian comrades, but for the sake of the lost that we evangelize to as well. Unfortunately, this demand can often be underrated, pushed back at the end of the minister's "to-do" list, and the prejudice of it being a "heady" thing while the church deals with "heartly" things can do some damage. Yet when the validity of this realization comes too late, someone may have already walked away from God and the church. But, we can take heart, since materials, lessons, and aid of all sorts is readily available, and most of them even for free, and meeting the demand can be done with minimal effort.

The apologetics group in my church was started by bringing the demand to light to my minister. Because evangelism is a very central part of my church's identity, I

had some of the other members of my church talk to my minister about a recent experience they had while sharing their faith on their college campus, where they were stumped, even scared, when they came across a skeptic. The skeptic might dismiss the Christian student by citing the popular *Zeitgeist*, or by accusing us of starting countless wars, being so “anti-this” and “anti-that,” and the Christian is left speechless, searching their brains for scripture verses to counter their claims, only to realize that its for these exact reasons they won’t even begin to listen to the Word. What’s a poor Christian undergraduate to do?

Basic economics tell us that successful people find a demand and supply it, and I applied the same principle for my church’s group. Because of the popularity of the short film *Zeitgeist*, demand was present, so we looked at some in depth answers like how some of the other “messianic figures” are not in fact parallels with Jesus, and we covered how we can easily communicate this in conversation.

But meeting demand is simply not all that is needed. To keep the members coming back, I needed to provide more services. We answered some of our basic questions (you can

only talk about *Zeitgeist* for so long) but those were limited, and soon enough, we ran out of material, and thus, demand began to slip away. So attendance began to dwindle.

Bill Craig, in his fantabulous book *Reasonable Faith*, makes a distinction between positive and negative apologetics. I realized that our first segment dealt with negative apologetics, just “defending the faith” and not examining the faith our condemnatory skeptics held. So progress was made when I came up with a curriculum which included Natural Theology, Natural Atheology, Cults, and Popular Culture in order to not only know that what we believe is founded on solid ground, but to help others realize that their beliefs are built on sand. I guess you could say that this change was one of being more outwardly focused. This raised attendance and, to my surprise, highly raised enthusiasm.

With a new demand in place, I had to learn how to supply it. So I tried to make it more fun and personal. We organized fundraisers to help pay to go to conferences, and though we reached our goal perhaps 50% of the time, the

time and energy spent together created some very strong bonds. For example, in a previous fundraiser, we got together to make cookies and ceviche. Something about making food together really reminds us of how much a family we are supposed to be under Christ.

To further supply this enthusiasm, it was helpful to make names (like Hitchens, Craig, Harris, and other people with a lot of visibility) familiar, to give them something of a celebrity. At the beginning of our group meetings, a conversation would sound like, “So did you see the interview Hitchens did with Anderson Cooper?” “I sure did.” “Ok, lets pray for him now...” Then we would pray, and it kept the energy of the group up. If someone like Craig would come to our area and give a lecture, the group would get excited, and they would jump up and down, and say something, “Oh, we have to go! We have to go! How much money do we have to raise?!” It would seem as if Bono or some other famous personality was coming to town. Promoting names like that can be very helpful in keeping interest, and once the group is excited and they actually get to go see lectures from people like that, a good and distinguished memory results, and they associate it

with the apologetics group. Then, of course, they'll come back for more.

Another lesson I've learned leading an entire group is firm leadership. Because the group is composed entirely of undergraduates, immaturity may be problematic sometimes. I've had to learn to really lead the conversation, shrewdly but innocently, and remind them of the real issue at hand, or else they won't learn anything, and if they don't learn anything, then I haven't taught anything, and if none of that has happened, then the purpose of having an apologetics group is diminished.

As a leader of an apologetics group, the testing of my patience helped reveal my heart to me. [Proverbs 18:2](#) reads, "A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions." I realized that if I was leading a group like this, I had to do it for the right reasons, namely because I loved the lost, and I want to make their transition to Christ as smooth as possible. I admit, at first, I was leading off of my own strength and that led to disaster when my patience would be tested. I would just throw up my hands, and say 'I give up!' Apologists can have a

notorious, though probably deserved, reputation of having problems with humility. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If you are leading a group like this, you have to be in it because you really love people, not because you want to show yourself off. If that happens, then nobody will come to the meetings anymore. As the saying goes, “No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

But regardless of the some of the irritations, it’s a very delightful experience and I recommend to everybody who has a passion, or maybe even just a small flame for it, to start something similar. The following is my advice, and may God bless your efforts.

**Get a whiteboard.** This could be one of the make it or break it factors. You can get a 20x30 inch whiteboard at Wal-Mart for about \$20. It’s a wonderful resource, and it keeps the group on track and it makes it clear what the issue is, and gives it a familiar classroom feel.

**Give books away.** This can be very cheap. There are \$1 books stores popping up everywhere, and if you browse

through the religion sections, you can always find Strobel, C.S. Lewis, and medieval philosophers, and if you give one away say once every other week, it keeps members coming back, and they can't complain that materials cost too much money.

**Be active.** Feel free to take the group on “field trips” to a conference, or to a museum for an apologetics scavenger hunt. It creates bonds, creates memories, and builds up family.

**Be a leader.** This means preparing lessons in advance, doing research, and controlling large groups. As a college student, this may not be easy, but it is crucial. Without you giving direction, the group won't learn. Be strong, but be gentle, and don't comprise either one.

**Be evangelistic.** This isn't just about learning, it's about saving souls. It reminds the entire group that apologetics isn't just for fun (which can often be easily equivocated as “unnecessary”), but has real life application, and perhaps eternal consequences.

# LEADING APOLOGETICS IN SMALL GROUPS

By Mark Tabladillo

[www.marktab.org/nexus](http://www.marktab.org/nexus)

In my contribution today, I aim to talk about making apologetics come to life in your local area through small group leadership. Apologetics 315 reaches a worldwide audience, and though my story focuses on the southeastern United States, I will draw lessons for all my sisters and brothers around the world. I start with my story, and move to the main apologetics question of this series.

## My Story

God called me to faith in 1985, but not without causing me to wonder about certain apologetic issues. I specifically researched the validity and reliability of the Bible, a topic which to my knowledge was not important to any of my family or friends at that time. Educationally I earned a doctorate from Georgia Institute of Technology, and today I serve as a part-time faculty member at the University of Phoenix. Those of us who have intellectual skills can and should find a way to express that leadership through



apologetics.

I currently live in the Atlanta area, and have been a member of North Point Community Church (“North Point”, pastored by Andy Stanley) since 1997. In those days, the church did not have a regular meeting time or even property. I saw this church grow into what sociological researchers call a megachurch (widely defined as having at least 2,000 people in regular weekly attendance).

### **Apologetics at North Point Community Church**

I believe Pastor Andy Stanley has a heart for apologetics. One year he invited Professors Norman Geisler and Frank Turek for a one-day workshop on apologetics. The church bookstores offer apologetics books. North Point is like many similar American churches that produce monocultural experiences for a multicultural audience. The North Point worship format influences all the spinoff ministries: heavy use of technology and lighting, video and music.

As members, we were encouraged to form small groups, and I have been in five different groups since 1997, most of

which I was leading. Probably hundreds if not thousands of people have simultaneously been in small groups. As group leaders, we were always permitted to choose curriculum. I preferred material which had more bible exposition than group analysis by untrained psychologists. I appreciate authentic psychoanalysis from Cloud and Townsend, but I believe Christianity for the next generation needs a much more thorough model of Christian psychology that connects with God's missional purpose.

Like many American megachurches, North Point follows a largely self-service model. Anyone could obtain apologetics resources from the bookstore and use them in the small groups program. Observation and experience with other small group leaders told me that people would drift toward themes from the main messages, and therefore toward relational studies and psychology. I believe God wanted me to seek out more challenging material, and I decided to use primarily video.

I worked with restrictions too. North Point strongly believes that I – a single male – should only be using these

small groups to meet with other single males. In recent years, they have relaxed that restriction to allow men only to meet (or women can meet with women). I have had several single and married women who wanted to join my groups after hearing about our curriculum, but I told them North Point clearly said no. Thus, my story is based on working with men (other American megachurches do not have these restrictions). If you have ever been frustrated in a megachurch, take heart: in eternity, we will either be celebrating or laughing at the rules and regulations.

### **His Philosophical Foundation: Ideas Lead to Action**

As taught by the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* class, I believe God's mission was outlined in Genesis 12, that God wants to reach all people groups. Americans live in many multicultural communities, and the things we learn empower us and inform us to connect spiritually with relationships God brings our way.

My groups mainly met weekly at my home, which was a good place for viewing video since I own a computer projector. We used, for example, Ravi Zacharias' series of questions and answers on DVD – I would play the

question, our group would provide our answers, and then we would hear what Ravi's answer was to those questions. I also used video material from (in no particular order) Norman Geisler, Francis Schaeffer, C.S. Lewis, Billy Graham, Lee Strobel, Eric Holmberg, Timothy George, Ray Vander Laan, G.K. Chesterton, and Malcolm Muggeridge. We also covered comparative religion studies produced by Christians, videos on Christian history, Christian biographies, stories on missions, studies of science and faith (intelligent design – I am a scientist), and sometimes other material (such as a secular documentary on the Muslim Hajj). One night we saw a recorded discussion from the cable show Larry King Live where John MacArthur was the token Christian and other panelists offered their opinions. I know that all this material would not encompass what you might categorize as apologetics, but much of it fits most people's definitions. Presented in an intentional missional context, all good material can provide an effective apologetic (defense).

We did not just do video and interactive discussion. We also went through Romans and Mark because they spoke to some group needs. Straight biblical exegesis for the type of

people attracted to megachurches requires a combination of individual commitment of all group members and a certain level of basic biblical literacy. Videos produced by or about apologists typically speak to a relevant cultural issue and I always look for those actionable points.

## **Results**

Achieving long-term results depends mostly on effective small group leadership techniques (many I do not mention). My group members were all voluntarily attending, and we would interactively discuss relevance. We might drop a series, see one over again, or stretch a discussion over weeks. People in my group can recognize the names and faces of people we repeatedly saw in video.

Studying different branches of what I consider orthodox Christianity I believe reinforced perceptions we might hear from the media about what Christianity is or is not. Apologetics can provide the historical and doctrinal accuracy as demonstrated by events and facts which are irrefutable. One of my long-time group attendees said that the collective material helped him to realize that spiritual ideas have cultural consequences.

## Advice for Leading Apologetics in Small Groups

1. **Go at the speed of life.** It is not important to finish a section or video clip on a particular night. Unlike the glare of production lights which limit Andy Stanley's time, small groups can afford to move at the speed of life. Listen to the Holy Spirit through the group needs and interactive dynamics. I use Ecclesiastes 3 to inform me that the Holy Spirit can lead us to a number of different moods, even in the same meeting. The Holy Spirit wants to guide groups to draw close to Him, because He is Life.

2. **Be prepared.** I was always looking ahead for good material, to make sure our curriculum pipeline was full. Some small percentage of the time, a group member would have a good or compelling suggestion. In our case, I ended up doing most of the topical suggestions, and often stimulated by a discussion or event which happened. A prepared leader already has not just viewed or read the material, but had a chance to meditate on what it means. I always had notes, sometimes only mental ones, other times written when my points were more complex. When

previewing think about who is in the group, and consider what they might find relevant too. I own several study bibles, and I recommend that American group leaders should own one.

**3. Think missional.** As I commented earlier, I do not believe we learn just to learn, or to excel in some eternal version of Bible trivia. People who are intellectual sometimes get stimulated by storing away knowledge which may never be used toward Kingdom purposes. The context of God's mission provides a direct use case not just for apologetics but also for why the church exists, why marriage is, and why families and communities are. The Holy Spirit wants us to move, and put our learning into action. I end with a phrase I repeat: We do not have a Church of God with a Mission in the world; we have a God of Mission with a Church in the world.

Be assured that wherever the Holy Spirit leads you, is where He wants you to be, and He knew all along. Take comfort in His care, and allow Him to motivate and refresh your heart for the leadership job He has for you.

## References

For more on the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement program (offered worldwide) – see <http://perspectives.org> – I have been a facilitator for this class, and helped edit the fourth edition curriculum and exams.

For video resources – many apologists produce and distribute video from their websites. Consider using free video from YouTube and similar video sources. I often purchased DVDs from online retailers like amazon.com or christianbooks.com.



# APOLOGETICS MOVIE NIGHT

By Nathan Harmony

<http://tinyurl.com/apologeticsmovienight>

Apologetics was the means by which God solidified my faith in Christ. I grew up in a Christian home, and in my early twenties I started having questions that caused me to doubt my faith in Christianity. My school teachers and my friends presented me with numerous reasons not to believe in Christianity, but never once had I been exposed to a solid case in favor of it. I eventually gave up on the hope that good answers were out there. Yet, I did not like the thought of giving up on Christianity all together. I didn't know very much at the time, but I understood that letting go of my faith in God involved letting go of my ultimate foundation for meaning, purpose, values, duty, and hope in this life. Yet, at the same time, I wanted to be intellectually honest with myself and be willing to follow the evidence. Neither my parents nor my church had very satisfying answers for me, and so I struggled with these questions for years.

Finally one day, by the grace and providence of God, I stumbled upon some apologetics websites, which led me to more and more apologetics material. I was never much of a reader, so I bought all the videos that I could find. The material presented in these videos completely destroyed my strongholds and demolished every argument that exalted itself against my knowledge of God. It was extremely helpful, and I can't begin to explain how valuable it was for me. It helped to lay a solid foundation for a deep intellectually satisfying trust in the glorious Gospel of Christ.

Once I had access to solid resources, I became obsessed with learning as much as I could about apologetics, and I began to develop quite an arsenal of apologetics videos on just about every topic you could think of. It got to the point where I knew way more about why I believed that the Bible was true than I did about the Bible itself. So to fix that problem, I decided to go to Bible College. At Bible College, my church history teacher took me under his wing and disciplined me. He was very good at encouraging and empowering people to get involved in what they were gifted in and passionate about. He recognized my love for

apologetics and knew about all of the videos that I had accumulated over the years. He came up with the idea of starting an apologetics video ministry and asked me to lead the group at his church. It was a great experience for me. I realized that it wasn't very hard to do, and I didn't need to be an expert in order to pull it off. I ended up moving to a different campus of my school, and I put together another apologetics video ministry with the students at that campus.

After Bible College I moved to Santa Barbara, CA, and a few years later I had made a number of friends who were fairly new believers. They would often come to me with their questions, and every time I would tell them about a great video that I had on their particular issue, and that they needed to see it. Eventually we set a day and time for them to come over every week and watch a video. Since I have enough apologetics videos to watch one every week for several years, we decided to keep doing it. We named it "Apologetics Movie Night."

I eventually joined the world of [Facebook and made a group page for it](#). I started inviting people via Facebook,

and what was once a little thing with my buddies has grown organically into a semi-formal ministry. We have been meeting every week for over a year and a half now (since January 2009), and there's a core group of about 15 people that attend. The format is simple. We pray, I introduce the main points of the video and why they are important to understand, we watch the video, then I reinforce the main points, and answer any questions that people have. The cool thing about using videos is that I don't have to be an expert on a subject in order to be able to cover it. I can bring the world's greatest experts right into my living room. Apologetics is such a vast field. There is so much good material out there, and since people are constantly making more lectures and documentaries, I doubt that I will ever run out of new videos to watch.

One of my favorite Bible expositors recently moved to Santa Barbara, so my wife and I just started going to his church. The church that I used to attend doesn't facilitate smaller specific-focus sub-ministries, but they did give the congregation their blessing to get together on our own if we wanted. So, as of right now, Apologetics Movie Night is not officially part of any church, but the pastor who runs

the evangelism ministry at my new church has mentioned that he would like to somehow incorporate it into their evangelism ministry (which is something I could use prayer for). I recognize that it is important to be under the authority of and to be accountable to the leadership of the church, and that this ministry would greatly benefit from the wisdom, resources, momentum, and prayer support that comes from being under their authority. The hard part is getting people to recognize the importance of an apologetics ministry.

If you want to make an impact with apologetics, the most important apologetic argument you will need to know how to make is the argument that apologetics is important for the church. Apologetics is a vital task for the body of Christ. God is glorified by it, the church is edified by it, and the kingdom of God is advanced by the means of it. Unfortunately, however, many Christians just don't see it that way. If you endeavor to get an apologetics ministry started in your church, don't be surprised if you encounter opposition to that idea. This can be frustrating, especially if apologetics is something you are gifted in and are passionate about. I think it's important to understand why

people tend to have an aversion toward it.

### **Here are seven reasons that I have come up with:**

1. It is common for Christians to mistakenly view faith as being something that substitutes for a lack of knowledge. This view of faith makes apologetics hostile to faith, because apologetics seeks to fill the very void that they think should be filled by faith. ([2 Peter 1:5](#))
2. Apologetics is primarily a project of the mind, and it is common for Christians to see it as something that distracts us from our primary objective, loving God with all of our heart. They fail to recognize that the greatest commandment also involves loving God with all of our mind. ([Matthew 22:37](#), [John 4:23](#))
3. Personality also plays a big role. Apologists are often the kind of people who love to hash things out in debate. It's fun for them. While other people have a real hard time with confrontation. So when worldviews collide, and truth confronts error, it can be extremely uncomfortable for the non-confrontational personality, who just wants

resolution. Discussions about ultimate truth or religion have a tendency to be intense, technical, drawn out conversations, which often don't end in resolution. This is something they want nothing to do with. ([2 Timothy 4:1-5](#))

4. Apologetics involves argumentation, and it is common for Christians to equivocate a rational dispute as being quarrelsome. They fail to recognize that contending for the faith is both prescribed and described frequently in scripture. ([Jude 3](#), [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](#), [Acts 18:27-28](#), [Acts 9:29](#), [Titus 1:9-11](#))

5. Unfortunately, Christian apologists can often be quarrelsome, and this makes people think that that is what apologetics is all about. ([2 Timothy 2:24-27](#))

6. Apologetics inspires confidence and it increases knowledge, this can easily translate into pride, which turns people off to apologetics. ([1 Corinthians 8:1](#))

7. Apologetics has been very much neglected, due to the fact that it has been grossly misunderstood. When you

demonstrate that apologetics is a practical necessity for the church and show that it is prescribed in scripture, this will at the same time expose an area of deficiency in the lives of many seasoned believers. Some may feel threatened and oppose apologetics, because they don't understand it, nor do they want to. ([Proverbs 9:8-9](#)).

Despite any opposition you may encounter, make no mistake, there remains a great number of people who are interested in this kind of ministry! It is vital that people have access to good answers, especially the younger generation, whose faith is constantly being assaulted. The fact of the matter is that apologetics is simply about being loving enough to take other people's questions seriously, and it is a basic fundamental feature of discipleship. This kind of ministry is simply something that needs to exist. If you have a few friends who are interested in apologetics, it's not hard get your hands on some good material and get a group started. I have been very blessed by hosting Apologetics Movie Night, and I know that the people who come every week have been too.



# APOLOGETICS IN THE HOUSE CHURCH

By Wes Widner

[www.reasonstand.org](http://www.reasonstand.org)

They have been called many things, small church, simple church, organic church, home church, but they all generally refer to the same thing. A small gathering of believers who decide to freely meet and share life together as fellow believers in Christ Jesus.

Some home churches meet in homes while others meet in public places like coffee shops, parks, and even office buildings (with appropriate permission of course). Regardless of the details, there are a few defining characteristics of a home church. And some of these characteristics mesh nicely with small or cell groups favored by many churches today, so much of what I'm about to describe applies equally as well to small and cell groups that may or may not be under the umbrella of a larger organization.

One of the defining characteristics of a home church is it's

size. By virtue of the venue, home churches generally don't get to be bigger than 20-30 people. Because of this, apologetically minded individuals are presented with both unique opportunities as well as unique challenges.

Because of this, large programs and events are generally not accepted well in home churches. Instead, apologetics needs to be disseminated in a more organic fashion. What that means is that in practice, teaching apologetics to a group of believers in a small group ends up looking a lot like one on one discipleship. The advantage to this approach is that specific issues can be covered in depth.

To illustrate; In our home church we recently covered the topic of homosexuality which, for some in our group, was not merely a topic but a real issue affecting their immediate family. To address the issue we outlined a couple of lessons and encouraged everyone to bring material they found to be helpful in dealing with the subject. The result was two lessons tailor-made to address the specific issues faced by the members personally affected by the topic, while the rest of us were able to acquire new knowledge of the subject, knowledge which included not only the Biblical

understanding of the subject, but answers to the surrounding scientific, ethical, logical, and cultural issues as well. Those of us who had no immediate need to use the information we were acquiring were able to listen and help think of possible ways to apply our knowledge of the subject in regards to the other members who were facing the issue.

Another characteristic of a home church is the meeting format. With no clergy hierarchy, home churches follow what is commonly called an open participatory style of meeting wherein members are free to interact on the subject at hand.

The challenge this presents to an apologist is that often long lectures that are needed for complex and detailed topics are often not a very good fit for the home church or small group environment. The presenter is often faced with the problem of being interrupted before fully presenting an argument or even before fully outlining the problem that needs to be addressed. To overcome this, I've found that recommending and encouraging members to consume and digest supplemental material such as books, lectures and

debates (in audio or video form), articles, and blog posts to be very helpful. Having prepared beforehand, members are more likely to participate in the discussion and also more likely to explore a topic in greater depth than they otherwise may.

However this format can also be a great blessing since, in smaller groups, asking questions comes naturally. The more questions people ask, the more we are able to explore aspects of a topic or subject that might have otherwise been left unexplored. More questions and a free flowing dialog also encourage participants to invest themselves more into a topic than they otherwise may if their role was limited to a passive participant.

Encouraging others to prepare for meetings beforehand also has the added benefit of forming good habits in terms of seeking and consuming good, spiritually enriching information. In my experience this also tends to have somewhat of a ripple effect wherein members who have learned to hunt for and consume good information either outside of or in preparation for a meeting also edify others by sharing it with them. To this end, I've found the

internet in general, social media in particular, and helpful aggregate blogs (like [apologetics315.com](http://apologetics315.com)) to be invaluable when helping others develop a life-long love of learning.

If small groups provide a good setting for discipleship and one on one apologetical training, one major disadvantage of practicing apologetics in the home church/small group would have to be the opposite. That is, its lack of a wide audience.

This can be a problem because if we remain secluded in our small groups we, as gifted apologists, run the risk of not employing the gifts we've been given as widely as we could or should.

Because of this, we need to intentionally pursue avenues to widely disseminate the knowledge and skills we are acquiring. To help with this, I have found that joining with para-church ministries can be a valuable source of opportunities to speak and edify others outside your small group. I've also found that getting to know other home church/small group leaders and members can be a great way to gain opportunities to speak with others outside of your

normal group.

In conclusion, I've found the home church to be a fertile place to train others in apologetics in a small, one on one setting. Through smaller groups, strong minds and hearts can be forged that can then go out into the world and have a real and noticeable impact for the Kingdom of God.

# APOLOGETICS IN A RURAL SETTING

By Shelby Cade

<http://flatlandapologetics.blogspot.com/>

The Christian worldview is under attack today and the need for Christian apologists to rise up in the Church is crucial. It seems that every year, those skeptical of Christianity are on the attack with a greater frequency. Unfortunately, many Christians are unprepared for those who would attack Christianity. According to Peter we are commanded to be ready to give a defense ([1 Peter 3:15](#)). This does not mean that individual Christians should know all the answers, but we need to prepare for the attacks leveled toward Christianity. A major part of apologetics revolves around study ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)) and staying relevant to the cultural issues that counter Christianity. If one is going to be prepared, then study and having knowledge of God's word is of the utmost importance.

What are some approaches to doing apologetics in the Church and why engage in apologetics in the first place? I will tackle the second question first. First, it has already

been stated that apologetics is necessary in order to give a defense against those who would promote a different worldview ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)). A second good reason for doing apologetics is the edification of God's people. Ultimately, we are interested in truth, and apologetics not only builds the body of Christ, but also provides confidence to the person engaged in apologetic ministry. The third and final reason we do apologetics is to lead others to Christ. We should never be so consumed with winning an argument that we miss the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. Apologetics is not undertaken for selfish reasons, but ultimately to present Christ to a lost and dying world (see [Acts 17:16-34](#)).

I'm sure there are many approaches to making apologetics available in the church. I will share some of the ways I have brought apologetics not only to the local body, but also to the community. I live in a rural farming community and have found that apologetics needs to be tailored to the needs of my community. In other words, some of the issues in a rural community will play a little bit differently than they might in an urban area. Having said this, I must add that many apologetic issues cut across cultural differences



and are helpful for all to share and think about.

The first technique I incorporated was to ask challenging questions. Those who would call Christianity into question constantly bombard us in today's culture. I have found that challenging and relevant questions have drawn interest into a wide variety of apologetic subjects. When individuals in the church see the need for apologetics and understand that the Christian has solid answers, the launching pad for starting apologetics is established within the local church.

One of the specific ways I have addressed meeting the need for apologetics within the church is simply by starting Bible studies on a variety of subjects. For example, I have led studies on world religions, and have addressed or touched on a variety of different subjects. I have also tried to keep up with current cultural apologetic issues (abortion, homosexual marriage, orthodox Christianity, Darwinian evolution, relativism) in order to work them into lessons. Some of the lessons or Bible studies being taught may not specifically center on a current apologetic issue, but with the present skepticism in our society, apologetics can always

be worked in.

There are many resources for conducting studies on apologetic issues. One of the best ways to start an apologetic study is simply to gather information on a certain topic and create your own curriculum. Many Internet sources can be utilized, and the best part is most are free. I have led studies in which the class receives both a handout summary of the subject at hand, and a separate sheet to fill in the answers to various questions. There are books that could be utilized, many with questions in the back. Videos are also useful for apologetic ministry. [Lee Strobel's \*Faith Under Fire\*](#) series and Ben Stein's video [\*Expelled\*](#) are both excellent resources. Many apologetic videos have curriculum that accompanies the video. One video series that has received high reviews is [\*The Truth Project\*](#). This particular series, and its curriculum, addresses many relevant issues of our day. There are multiple other avenues for bringing apologetic lessons into the local church, including MP3's and CD's, which can be listened to and discussed.

One of the methods by which I share apologetics, with not

only the church but also the community and beyond, is through writing. Serving in a rural community has afforded me the opportunity to write weekly apologetic articles (*[Just Thinking Apologetics](#)*) in the local paper. I initially thought this approach would have little effect in our small community, but was surprised to see that even in a small town, people crave answers for challenges to the Christian worldview. Individuals from various denominations - even some whom are not Christian - come to me with questions.

A blog titled *[Flatland Apologetics](#)* is my second form of writing that extends apologetics to the church and beyond. I encourage the church to check out not only my blog, but also others to gain answers to those who question Christianity. Starting an apologetic blog also encouraged me in God's truth, having to do more intensive study, and provided confidence in the truthfulness of the Christian worldview as well. Anyone can start a blog and if one is interested in apologetics, this is a great outlet to challenge and dialogue with those who don't know the Lord.

Preparing apologetic talks is just another tool for reaching out to the church and others who would be interested. I

have developed a series of 13 [PowerPoint presentations](#) that can be shared with anyone. The talks center on relevant topics that frequently confront the Church, such as, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” and “Did the Universe Come into Being by Accident?” Not only have I shared in the local church, but I’ve had the opportunity to share across denominational lines. One word of caution for those who present and teach - keep it relevant and short. I always need to realize that many do not share the same passion as I for apologetics, so my talks should be tailored to the audience I’m addressing. There is nothing worse than presenting a long-winded talk that flies right over the audience’s head. If you present an apologetic talk, make sure it has content designed to catch the eye and the ear.

Encouraging others within the church to take classes on-line, or through a local university, is just another way to bring apologetics into the church. Many courses are offered on-line, either free, or through a particular university. Many community colleges offer World Religion or Philosophy classes that can be taken to sharpen one’s perspective. It seems that many in the Church are sheltered, leaving them vulnerable to those who would question

Christianity. If the Church is going to have answers, it is important to know “where the other side is coming from.”

The last approach, which I hope to take to the future, is to organize an apologetic conference or debate. Many large churches have done this and it is beneficial for God’s people to see that the Christian apologist has effective answers to those who are skeptical of Christianity. After all, we are fighting for, and defending, truth when presenting the Christian worldview.

Apologetic issues confront us daily, whether it’s in the news or at the office. Never before has apologetics been so necessary in America as it is now. If any Christian has a desire to start apologetic work in the church, he or she can find almost unlimited resources to do so. Having the heart and passion to bring apologetics to the local body is the first step.

The Apostle Peter said, *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”* It is the last part that all of us need to concentrate on.

Apologetics must be done with the heart of lost in mind. Apologetics is crucial for today, but not at the expense of turning someone away from the good news by simply trying to win an argument. There are many avenues for starting apologetics in the local body; all that is needed is the desire and passion to get started.

# HOW TO START A REASONABLE FAITH CHAPTER

By Brian Auten

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Have you ever asked yourself the question, "How can I get apologetics in my church?" Maybe you've found that apologetics has strengthened your faith, helped you in leading others to Christ, and has given rational answers to the secular challenges of our culture. Yet as you look around, you wonder why more churches aren't actively incorporating apologetics teaching within their ministry. Surely there is some way of getting apologetics into your church. If this has been your experience, then perhaps starting a [Reasonable Faith Chapter](#) is a good way for you to put your passion into practice.

This short essay will outline the typical steps involved in getting a Reasonable Faith Chapter up and running.

## What's a Reasonable Faith Chapter?

A Reasonable Faith Chapter is simply a study group focusing on the rational defense of classical Christianity.

Reasonable Faith Chapters are the result of an initiative by Christian theologian and philosopher William Lane Craig ([www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org)) to help equip believers to be able to give a confident defense of their faith.

Chapters can be small, medium, or large groups of people who want to explore important issues about Christianity more deeply. Through the use of apologetics materials and tools (books studies, DVDs, lectures, etc.), each group has the freedom and flexibility to develop programs suited to their local needs and interests. A group meets at least once a month.

Chapters can be based in churches, or non-church-based. Both are encouraged. However, the steps outlined below reflect a church-based group.

### **How Do I Start a Chapter?**

There are a few steps involved in getting started. Although no particular credentials are required to start a group, there is an application process involved to ensure that the chapter leader is adequately equipped for the task.



First, one should check out the [Reasonable Faith Chapters website](#).

Four steps are described:

1. Complete and submit the [application](#). The application asks for your name and contact info.
2. In the chapter application, affirm your belief in the theological distinctives.
3. Provide a narrative of how you came to faith in Christ and describe your spiritual walk today.
4. Submit thorough answers to the [Study Guide questions](#) for [Reasonable Faith 3rd Ed.](#)

This initial application process is not a difficult task. But the study required in completing the Reasonable Faith Study Guide does take time and a good deal of study.

### Study Required

The Study Guide is based upon the book by William Lane Craig, [Reasonable Faith](#). This is Dr. Craig's signature apologetics text, covering a rich amount of material. Perhaps the description of the book from the Study Guide website will provide the best overview of what the reader

and potential Chapter Director can expect:

*Each chapter systematically and carefully positions each main apologetic issue within its historical development and then interacts with formidable contemporary scholars on relevant topics. Each chapter ends with a closing reflection, intended to show the real-life applicability of what has been discussed. All chapters provide a resourceful list of cited and recommended sources for further study.*

*Given the immense diversity of topics, questions, and concerns in Christian apologetics, immaturity of leadership is not an option. It is paramount that a reliable guide, a wise influencer in the arena of apologetic ideas, and an experienced trainer, leads us. William Lane Craig is exactly that author to lead other hearts and minds. The arguments in Reasonable Faith have been tried, tested and found to work because they are sound; they have been honed in rigorous debate, peer-reviewed and critiqued in scholarly publications, and refined by the precision and calmness of a seasoned philosopher.*

*Craig's approach of "positive apologetics" gives careful attention to crucial questions and concerns, including: the relationship of faith and reason, the existence of God, the problems of historical knowledge and miracles,*

*the personal claims of Christ, and the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. Craig shows that there is good and convincing reason to believe Christianity is true.*

The amount of time it takes to complete the reading along with completing the study guide questions will vary from person to person. But rest assured, it will be a rewarding investment. Once you submit your study guide answers via email, [Chris Shannon](#) (the RF Initiative Director) will assist you by going through your study guide to see if you have mastered the material. Depending on your answers, you may have revisions to do.

### **Casting the Vision**

Before, during, or after this application process, you will need to cast the vision for this group to those who will be involved in it. This includes pastors, elders, church members, and the like. It is imperative to have the full support of your local church leadership if you want your group to be in order, successful, and well-supported.

Speak to your pastor and/or elders. Express your interest in issues defending the faith and your desire to see the local body adequately equipped. If they are not already familiar

with the work of William Lane Craig, it may be helpful to introduce your pastor or leaders with some of his materials in advance. Your current relationship with your pastor as well as the leadership structures within your local church will play the main role in assessing what the best approach is in casting your vision for the Chapter.

In my case (Reasonable Faith Belfast), I presented the idea to our main pastor and he was open to the idea. He suggested I also present this to some of the elders for their input. They were also excited about the idea, and it seemed to be perfect timing with some of the goals they were already working toward.

In our case, we agreed on a preliminary 6-session trial. We thought this would be a wise approach for a few reasons. First, if you put an indefinite time frame on a recurring meeting, people will drop out too easily, as momentum is lost. You need to have a clear outline or goal. Second, if the initial angle we took did not work well, it would allow us to stop and reassess our approach. Finally, we realized that summer would be coming and many people would be away on holidays during that time. Some seasons don't work well

for recurring small group meetings.

## **Getting the Word Out**

The next step is to let the congregation know what the plan is. There are a number of ways to do this, but here are a few that worked for RF Belfast.

First, we put an announcement in the bulletin describing the group. We didn't call it a "chapter." We called it the Reasonable Faith Group. The word group is easily understood. The word "chapter" is not clear. We also did not include the word "apologetics" anywhere. This is another word that people either don't understand or they misunderstand. All that can be avoided by simply talking about "is Christianity rational?" - "Can we know God exists?" - "How do you respond to the tough questions?" - "Has science buried God?" - and the like.

I made an announcement in church using a powerpoint that included three quotes from Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Bart Ehrman. I presented their views and then asked questions like, "Are they right? How do you respond to that? Are there good answers?" I then

briefly talked about the fact that we do have good answers and we must be equipped in these important issues. Then I told them about the Reasonable Faith Group.

Response was good, with people signing up at the back of the church at the end of the service. Emails were gleaned as well in order to remind people of the upcoming meetings.

### **What Does it Look Like?**

If you have been reading the "How to Get Apologetics in Your Church" series, then you already have an idea of what a group like this looks like. But each group will look different and does have the freedom to create a format that is the most conducive for group study and teaching.

At Reasonable Faith Belfast, we meet in a medium-sized room with chairs and sofas. The powerpoint projector points toward the far wall and is used for outlining the topic for the evening. Tea and coffee are outside the room. There is dialogue, questions and answers, and teaching. Video clips ([Case for Christ](#), [Case for a Creator](#), [Case for Faith](#), [Privileged Planet](#), etc.) are used to introduce or illustrate certain points. Whatever apologetic topic we are

studying, we use scripture as our foundation and aim to keep Christ at the center.

Our meetings are every two weeks, meeting on Monday evenings from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. We have a ten to fifteen minute tea break in the middle to chat and stretch our legs.

Our first 6-session group was well-received. After the summer break we resumed for another 6-session series. Our first series covered a wide overview of apologetics topics, including arguments for the existence of God, the reliability of the New Testament, the resurrection, and some hard questions. We have also tried to keep the practical aspects of "how this plays out in real life" at the forefront. This means always bringing the theoretical back to practical application in soul-winning or evangelistic encounters with friends and family.

This second series, we are working through William Lane Craig's newer *On Guard* book, which is well-suited for group study. We have also incorporated videos to augment the material and will also be conducting a skype conference call with Dr. Craig for question and answer on some of the

tougher issues.

## Moving Forward

Although there are other means of starting apologetics groups within the church, I have found that being under the "umbrella" of William Lane Craig's ministry initiative has been a very good thing. For one, it provided initiative for me to start something that I may not have done "on my own" at the time. Second, it provided a sort of template that I could follow. The combination of the small group idea along with the study material and application process allowed me to take tangible steps in the right direction. Finally, having a community of other Reasonable Faith Chapter directors [popping up all over the globe](#) with the same passion and goal is a real encouragement. To know others are tackling the same challenges and enjoying the same victories gives me added motivation.

If you have read through (or listened to) this short essay and you think this is something you should do, then here is my encouragement to you: move forward and take the first step. Be prayerful, be wise, but take action -- and may God bless your efforts as you advance His kingdom.



# PREACHING TO THE CHOIR? INTENTIONALLY APOLOGETIC SERMONS

By Tawa Anderson

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*Do you have the privilege and awe-full responsibility of preaching to the gathered people of God on Sunday mornings?*

Whether you preach every Sunday, most weeks, or occasionally, the burden you carry is immense. You are called to bring God's Word to the people in the pew. You are commissioned to exhort and encourage, convict and comfort, pressure and empower. In many ways, the role of the preacher is to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted."

But let me ask you – **who precisely are you preaching to on Sunday mornings?**

Who sits in your pews? As you study God's Word, and craft a message, who do you envision hearing and

responding to the words you speak? Many theologians insist, quite correctly, that Sunday morning worship exists for the edification and growth of Christians – the gathered saints of God. Every congregation is diverse in many ways – age, ethnicity, socio-economic status. But ideally, our congregations ought also to be spiritually diverse – filled with not only Christians, but also atheists, agnostics, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, skeptics, or other assorted non-Christians. Whether they come reluctantly with a believing spouse, are dragged by their Christian parents, come willingly with Christian neighbors or friends, or even seek out the church in the midst of spiritual turmoil, my prayer is always that there would be *some* present who are not yet followers of Jesus Christ. Even the theologians who insist that worship is *only* for Christians *must* agree, since they generally assert that evangelistic appeals are an integral part of Christian worship and preaching. If worship is only for Christians, why bother inviting non-existent non-Christians to respond positively to the Gospel proclamation?

**What are such skeptics going to hear when you expisit the Word of God?** How is your message going to impact the hardened skeptic? On the one hand, unless the Holy Spirit illuminates the skeptic's heart and mind, it does not matter what you say – it will have no impact. But, on the other hand, this is no excuse for eschewing the hard work of biblical exegesis and contextualization. When Paul ascended Mars Hill to share the Gospel with the Athenian elite (Acts 17), he framed the good news of Christ's atoning death and bodily resurrection in terms and contexts comprehensible to their pagan worldview and background – even quoting Greek poets instead of Old Testament texts to introduce their need to know the one true God. The message and the truth did not change, but the way Paul presented it changed in accordance with his audience.

**Can you reach all of the people all of the time?** My dad always reminded me that “you can please some of the people some of the time, but you can't please all the people

all of the time.” Similarly, in crafting a sermon and preparing to present God’s Word to our congregation, you cannot reach all of the people all of the time. The Apostle Paul sought to be all things to all people so that in all possible ways he might save some (1 Corinthians 9). But he didn’t try to be all things to all people *at the same time*. Rather, to the Jews he became like a Jew, in order to reach them; to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile, in order to reach them. Our message must be contextualized in order to reach the particular audience that we have. Unless you preach exclusively at the local Humanist chapter, you can’t make every sermon a purely apologetic appeal to skeptics to embrace the reasonability of our faith. Still, that’s no reason to never preach with skeptics in mind!

**Are you preaching to the choir?** It would have been far easier for the apostle Paul to craft his sermons always with Bible-believing Jews in mind. They shared his monotheistic worldview (God as the Almighty and All-just Creator), his trust in the authority of the biblical text, and

his expectation for a Messiah. But Paul didn't – instead, he preached his apologetic message differently when addressing Gentiles. Have you ever considered how a skeptic or atheist or member of a different religion would respond to the sermon that you are about to preach, or just preached?

A key element to incorporating apologetics into your preaching ministry is to consciously engage non-believers in the pew. This does not come naturally or easily. It is far easier to preach to the choir – to craft and develop your sermon with the thoughts, challenges, needs, and troubles of the faithful gathered saints in mind. As in most spiritual things, however, the easy way is not the way to maturity and Godliness. Broad is the road and easy the path that leads to preaching to the choir (and missing the skeptic); small is the gate and narrow the road that reaches the seeking skeptics in your congregation.

**Have you walked a mile in the skeptic's shoes?** While

preaching to reach the skeptic as well as the saved is neither easy nor comfortable, it is relatively simple. Put yourself in his place. Ask yourself – if I had a \_\_\_ worldview (fill in the blank accordingly – naturalistic, Mormon, Muslim, agnostic, atheistic, New Age, post-modern), what questions would this passage/text/topic raise? What doubts about Christianity would I have that directly impinge upon this message?

For example, imagine that Easter is approaching, and you plan to preach on the grand resurrection narratives of 1 Corinthians 15. You could simply affirm the glorious truth that Jesus is indeed raised from the dead, and that death is conquered and contains no power over us. That in itself is a powerful sermon, and needs preaching. But I would suggest that Easter Sunday is one of two times throughout the year that you are quite likely to have a large number of non-believers amongst your congregation. If you put yourself in their shoes and consider how they might respond to the resurrection narratives, then there are

numerous questions which you could consider addressing. How do we know that Jesus truly rose from the dead? What are the historical evidences that support our resurrection faith? In a post-Enlightenment world, how can we affirm that God raised a dead man to new life? Are such miracles possible? Or are they ruled out by a scientific, mechanistic worldview? Was Paul's resurrection encounter the same as the other apostles', or qualitatively different? On what basis do we trust the eyewitness accounts of the resurrection? If you preach through 1 Corinthians 15, proclaiming the wonderful good news that Jesus is raised from the dead and that we have glorious assurance of our own victory over death through his, then I suggest that skeptics amongst your congregation are going to be profoundly unpersuaded and even disaffected.

Obviously you cannot address all of these questions in one (or even a series) of sermons; furthermore, you would be remiss in your duties to *only* address apologetic questions about the historicity of the resurrection, and never draw

any implications from it. Nonetheless, if the Easter season comes and goes and you *never address any of the skeptical issues*, I would argue that you have missed the boat. The seeking skeptics in your congregation have not been given any tangible reason to believe the truth of the resurrection that you so confidently presuppose. Furthermore, any doubting disciples or besieged brothers in the church are not given reasons for the hope that they still (but more tentatively) hold. Remember (see my earlier article ‘An Apologetic for Apologetics’) that apologetics is not only for non-Christians; it also helps to confirm the truth of the faith for those within the body of Christ who have serious questions or doubts. The questions I mentioned above are not random questions – they are on the hearts and minds of people in the pew, Christian and non-Christian alike. The questions are raised by their own reading, reflection, and philosophizing; they are also forced upon them by the anti-Christian arguments of other authors, teachers, and friends.



Bottom line: the questions are there, and if they are never addressed from the pulpit, then questioners will eventually assume that there are no (good) answers to the questions.

And again, note that Paul does not hesitate to supply such reasons to his audience. In 1 Corinthians 15, he *begins* with a presentation of evidence for the resurrection – a creedal summary of what happened to Jesus, and a list of eyewitnesses of the risen Christ, including himself. If Paul eagerly shares evidence and reasons for the Corinthians to believe that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, why would we avoid doing the same?

So, my brothers and fellow preachers, I urge you, in view of God's mercy and grace, to walk a mile in the moccasins of the seeking skeptics, doubting disciples, and besieged believers in your pews. Consider the questions that they would raise, and seek to address them. Rather than preaching to the choir, intentionally incorporate apologetics into your sermons.

## **RESOURCES**

See [www.apologetics315.com](http://www.apologetics315.com)