

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics is not an apology, but rather the defense of the orthodox Christian faith. This course will provide an introduction to the tools (evidential and philosophical) which will equip you to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (1Peter 3:15). As Christians we need to be prepared to not only defend the faith, but to go out and *contend* for the faith. Christianity is *provable*. Here's how.

Class Overview

Introduction: what is apologetics, why use it, what its limitations are, scriptural references, introduction to logic and philosophy
Proving the existence of God (creation, etc.)
Proving the authenticity of the Bible
Proving the claims of Jesus
Conclusion, where to go from here

We must first prove God's existence, and then prove the Bible is divinely inspired, before we can prove Jesus was the Christ and fully God.

Recommended beginning resources (comments are mine):

When Skeptics Ask . Norman Geisler (the best introduction I've found)
Mere Christianity . C.S. Lewis (excellent beginning to the logic used in apologetics)
Know What You Believe . Paul Little (the definitive list - what is orthodox Christianity)
Know Why You Believe . Paul Little (companion . why you believe what you believe)

What is apologetics? A defense . It is the reason Christians believe what they believe. We are not called to blind faith, but rather faith in evidence. As Blaise Pascal put it, "God has given evidence sufficiently clear for those with open hearts, but sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts are closed."

"Because scrutiny is about the One who is Truth, scrutiny will not harm it," Paul Little.

Apologetics has limitations. There are truths that can't be proven (or hardly even guessed at). The Trinity, for example. And as Pascal noted above, those with hard hearts will choose not to believe the truth no matter how convincing (or correct) your argument.

Why use apologetics:

"so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9)

"be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage . with great patience and careful instruction." (2Timothy 4:2-5)

"Always be prepared to give an answer [*apologia*] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." (1Peter 3:15)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (Jude 3)

Christianity is the most provable religion/solution/alternative out there. You can prove Christianity beyond a reasonable doubt, to those who will listen. It is easy to fall into the trap of believing that apologetics is the tool to defeat all false ideas (and then that you can do so), but it is not. It must be used with love in the role of teaching and witnessing.

The role of apologetics in the Great Commission

The New Testament is full of apologetics. Peter and Paul used reasoning and Biblical proofs to persuade their audiences that Jesus was the Christ. In one regard they had an easier job than we do. Their audiences already believed that God was God and that the Bible was the inspired word of God. They only had to prove the deity of Jesus.

Today we usually have to prove all three.

Types of unbelievers – the role of the Holy Spirit in witnessing

Doubters . those who don't believe because they haven't been exposed to the truth (open hearts).

Those under denial . They won't believe even when they see incontrovertible truth (hard hearts). Who do unbelievers refuse to believe . the facts or the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of unbelievers, revealing Truth to them. Some will not believe *your* facts and you will need to back them up. Others will not believe (more of a denial) because they do not believe the witness of the Holy Spirit.

New Testament Examples of Apologetics

In Acts 17 we find Paul in Athens preaching to the Jews and Greeks. He didn't walk in and start speaking extemporaneously. He obviously did some research into his audience and found several key facts: an altar inscribed "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD", and the poetry of Epimenides ("In him we live and move and have our being") and Aratus ("We are his offspring"). The altar referred to the curing of a plague (by an unknown god) some time previously. A flock of sheep were taken to the top of a grassy hill and if some sheep did not eat, that was a sign from the unknown god that he would remove the plague if they slaughtered those sheep. Paul used these references they were familiar with to introduce the Gospel in terms they could understand, and along the way introduce them to "the unknown God".

Paul . Acts 17:2,17, 24-31, 18:4, Romans 1:20

Peter . Acts 2:22, 25-32

Apollos . Acts 18:27-28

Jesus . Luke 24-27, Matthew 22:23-46, John 14:11

so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. Ephesians 4:12-15