

Apologetics “Starting a fire”

Introduction to Apologetics, Making a Case for God, Jesus, the Bible and
Christianity

Lesson One-What is Truth

Apologetics is the branch of theology that offers a rational defense for the truthfulness of the divine origin and the authority of Christianity. In the classic sense of the word, “apologetics” derives its meaning from the Greek word, “apologia”, which means “defense.”

A judicial term, it describes the way a lawyer deliberately and rationally presents a verbal defense of a particular claim or, more precisely, apologetics is to “speak away” (apo= away, from; logia=speech, word) the charge brought against an individual (Acts 25:16; 19:33; 22:1; 1Cor.9:3; 2Cor.7:11; 1Pt. 3:15; Phil.1:7, 16; 2Tim.4:16).

“Apologetics is the rational defense of Christianity. It gives positive reasons for belief in God, Christ, and the Bible while removing obstacles to faith by answering false objections.”

–Gardner

DISCIPLES CALL TO ENGAGE IN APOLOGETICS

Peter commands it. 1Pt. 3:15

Paul exemplified it.

Acts 24:10; 25:8; Acts 17:22-23-31;

Acts 18:4; 9:26-30; 19:8-18; 28:17-31;

Titus 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:17-25; 1 Cor. 2:1-5

Jesus exemplified it. John 5

Disciples are called to follow that pattern. 2Tim.2:2; 2Cor. 10:3-5

Apologetics and Evangelism

Barna contends that only 9% of “born-again” Christians have a Biblical worldview.

The knowledge gap between seekers and an accurate depiction of God, Jesus, and the Bible is increasing on a regular basis.

People are becoming even more Biblically ignorant.

People are increasingly growing in misconceptions about God.

People are growing in skepticism about Jesus and the nature of salvation.

Biblical ignorance and skepticism are combined with a void in morality. (The Moral Compass is broken!)

Jesus masterfully engaged His world and contended with the distorted and dysfunctional worldviews around Him.

He made an appeal for the theistic worldview, offering hope for the hopeless and a solution to the sickness (sin) of mankind.

Old Testament Apologetics/The Apologetics of Jesus

1. Appeal to testimony
2. Appeal to miracles
3. Appeal to his resurrection
4. Appeal to prophecy
5. Use of reasoning
6. Refutation of false views
7. The evidence of his life

- Lynn Gardner, Commending and Defending Christian Faith

Let the evidence speak for itself

“Anyone who makes a truth claim—to say nothing about a claim to absolute truth (John 14:6)—must provide evidence for that claim. Jesus does exactly that, and in so doing, he provides a pattern for apologetics that is of great value to the contemporary defender of the Christian faith.”

“Jesus is an evidentialist, not a fideist, in that he believes in the use of evidence to convince others of the truth of his claims.”- Norman L. Geisler

&Patrick Zukeran

The Greatest arguments made for God are the ones made by God.

Not only do we acknowledge that this world serves as general/natural revelation about the existence of God, but it provokes the questions that all men/women living are either directly or indirectly asking:

Origin: Where did we come from?

Identity: Who am I?

Meaning: Why am I here?

Morality: What is wrong with this place?

Destiny: What happens next? Where am I going?

Those basic questions are crying out for an answer and we (Christians) argue that the answer is best given by God. But we aren't contending for just any definition of God. Different worldviews have a different understanding of God.

Pantheism- Pantheism is the belief that God is all and all is God. This belief extends beyond polytheism (belief in multiple gods) and states that every person, plant, animal, living and non-living thing, is part of the One. This perspective is held by a variety of religious belief systems.

Atheism- disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God or gods.

Naturalism- the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted.

Deism- belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. The term is used chiefly of an intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that accepted the existence of a creator on the basis of reason but rejected belief in a supernatural deity who interacts with humankind.

Theism- belief in the existence of a god or gods, especially belief in one god as creator of the universe, intervening in it and sustaining a personal relation to his creatures.

How would you describe the God that you believe best answers the questions for one's existence and destiny?

Everyone believes in something. The question is, “Do you have a true belief?” This is where we begin!

Truth, what is it?

Think of a scenario in which an accident or an incident occurs

Even if there is heated debate about the episode itself. i.e., One claims that this is right, another claims the opposite. Someone remarks about the failure of the other to do such and such.

What we can know for sure is that the event actually occurred, and “often the subsequent descriptions are accurate—meaning they match up with reality.”

That’s what truth is—a belief, a description, or story that matches the way things truly are.

Truth is truth regardless of one’s perspective.

Truth is truth despite our biases and limitations to seeing truth. Objectivity is possible.

Things are true, regardless of one’s perspective.

Something can be true even if no one **knows** it.

Something can be true even if no one **admits** it.

Something can be true even if no one **agrees** with what it is.

Something can be true even if no one **follows** it.

Something can be true even if **no one but God grasps it fully**.

The Bible denies a subjective, relativistic posture towards truth and it advocates objective justification.

An **objective justification** is that which provides compelling objective reasons to believe something or to not believe.

A **subjective justification** occurs when you have a true belief about a thing but lack knowledge. One lacks knowledge in this case because of how knowledge is gained.

Knowledge only occurs when objective justification is necessarily provided. Without objective justification, there is no knowledge, even if a person believes a thing and even if one has a true belief.

Knowledge involves

Belief, that is

True, and has

Warrant (justification) for being believed. Judeo-Christian Scripture advocates for beliefs that are true and warrant being believed, not out of fideism, but that are rationally sound and evidentially supported.

Jer. 17:9 Jer. 10:23 Prov. 14:12; 16:25 Prov. 28:26 Luke 1:1-4 Mt. 22:37 Lk. 10:27 Is. 1:18 Lk. 24:13-45 1 Pt. 3:15 Acts 17:31 Acts 2:22-42

What is truth? Truth is the giving or disseminating of information as it actually is.

Truth can be defined as “that which corresponds to its object” or “that which corresponds to reality” or “that which describes an actual state of affairs.”

Truth is **NOT** relative, but absolute.

If a thing is true, it’s true for all people at all times, in all places.

Truth claims (all of them) are absolute, exclusive, and as Jesus would say, narrow.

All truths/truth claims exclude their opposites. This is inclusive of religious truths.

Truth is discovered, not invented.

Truth is transcultural

Truth is unchanging, no matter what you believe about it, or how you feel about it.

Truth is not contingent upon the bearer of it.

One can have contrary beliefs, but not contrary truths. In like consideration, one can believe everything is true, but we cannot make everything

one’s evidence for their belief is either true or false, but not both, nor is it subjectively true for them, but false for another.

James Sire asks the question, “why do people believe what they believe?” His results determined that the answers fit into at least four categories on a regular basis.

There are 1. SOCIOLOGICAL, 2.PSYCHOLOGICAL, 3.RELIGIOUS, and 4.PHILOSOPHICAL reasons.

SOCIOLOGICAL reasons include: parents, friends, society, culture, ideologies

PSYCHOLOGICAL reasons include: comfort, peace of mind, meaning, purpose, hope, identity

RELIGIOUS reasons include: Scripture, Pastor; Priest/Preacher, Guru, Rabbi, Imam, church, custom, ethnicity

PHILOSOPHICAL reasons include: consistency, coherence, completeness (best explanation of all the evidence)

“A good reason to believe something comes out of exposing inadequate justifications for beliefs.”

When the path has been cleared for a seeker of truth to find adequate justification, then the most consistent and best explanation is able to find a lodging place. In short, a teaching is believable and trustworthy when and only when it is anchored to the truth, “corresponds to its object”.

“Many beliefs that people hold today are not supported by evidence, but only by subjective preferences of those holding them. As Pascal said, people almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof, but on the basis of what they find attractive. But truth is not a subjective matter of taste—it’s an objective matter of fact.” (Geisler, Turek pg. 54)

It should be remembered that finding truth FIRST demands denying subjective preferences in order to gain objective facts.

Note: no amount of evidence will convince a person of the truth of opposition. In cases like that, the evidence is not the problem, the person is.

SECOND, the ability to see the legitimacy of evidence is determined by how truth is known. In considering a good reason to believe something, we noted the philosophical reasons.

Logical- The study of right reason or valid inferences and the attending fallacies, formal and informal.

Evidence- justified truth claims

Science- observation and use of the inductive process-Scripture

The process of discovering truth begins with the self-evident laws of logic.

The Law of Non-Contradiction is a self-evident first principle of thought that says contradictory claims cannot both be true at the same *time* in the same *sense*.

Either the theists are right—God exists—or the atheist are right—God doesn’t exist. ☒Both cannot be correct.

The Law of the Excluded Middle tells us that something either is or is not.

God exists or He does not.

Either Jesus rose from the dead or He did not. There are no third alternatives.

Evidence and Reason

Evidences and reason are combined to assist in our drawing general conclusions from specific observations.

Logic allows us to make deduction. Observation of evidence allows us to use induction, therefore we include the science of the inductive process. Much of what we know is known by induction.

Deduction: the process of lining up premises in an argument and arriving at a valid conclusion

Induction: the process of discovering whether premises are true.

Observation, induction, and deduction work together in arguments presented for a case either for or against God.

An argument then, is valid because of deduction, and we know it's true because the premises are true. We know the premises are true because they are verified through observation and induction.