

Introduction to Apologetics-Part I

Course modeled after Frank Turek and Norman Geisler's *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* curriculum, with additional materials from William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, Hugh Ross, Stephen Meyers, John Lennox, Douglas Groothuis, N.T. Wright, Ravi Zacharias, Andy Bannister, and Rodney Stark.

Course Outline:

- I. The Four Questions Everybody Needs to Ask of Their Belief System
- II. Can You Handle the Truth?
- III. The Big Bang of Science and Theology
- IV. Watchmaker, Watchmaker, Make Me a Watch
- V. The Herd and the Gut
- VI. All We Need is a Miracle
- VII. Can Somebody Give Me a Testimony?
- VIII. Books of Myth or Books of Truth?
- IX. Who is This Jesus Guy?
- X. The One Answer to the Four Questions

Class Objectives

The goal of this class is to take the student from ascertaining that truth is knowable to understanding that God's Word is truth in what it asserts. Through this process, this student will learn how truth points to God's existence, to His design of all things, to His absolute morality, to His use of miracles, to the veracity of the Gospels, to the existence of Jesus, to the humanity and deity of Christ, to Christ's full resurrection, and to the Christian faith in all it claims according to God's Word. Through the ten courses, twelve steps will be taken to reach the goal:

1. Truth about reality is knowable.
2. The opposite of true is false.
3. It is true that the theistic God exists.
4. If God exists, then miracles are possible.
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God.
6. The New Testament is historically reliable.
7. The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God.
8. Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by His fulfillment of prophecies, His sinless life and miraculous deeds, and His prediction and accomplishment of His resurrection.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (and anything opposed to it is false).

Why learn apologetics?

This class is not about developing “gotcha” responses to unbelievers or giving the student answers so they can win every argument. Rather, this class is to teach the student, in the words of Dallas Willard in *The Allure of Gentleness*, “[To use] thinking and reasoning, in reliance on the Holy Spirit, to assist earnest inquirers in relinquishing disbelief and mistrust in God and God’s good purposes for humankind...[and to remove] doubts that hinder their enthusiastic and full participation in the kingdom of the heavens and their discipleship to Christ” (Willard, 9). Hopefully, this class will help shore up the student’s faith so as to give them more confidence to share the Gospel with those who need to hear it. Apologetics is prelude to evangelism. Apologetics removes the barriers, both in the believer and the unbeliever, so as to permit the free and full grasp of the Gospel message.

How do I engage someone with apologetics?

One of the primary things that is repeated over and over when formally studying conversational apologetics is knowing how to listen to another person; or, as Ravi Zacharias puts it, “Listen so as to be able to question the questioner.” Listen to the question that is put to you so you can, as best as you can, determine the primary catalyst to the initial question.

How would you respond to these questions with a question?

1. Why would God allow suffering?

2. Do you really believe the Bible is true?

3. Why do I need God if I am already a good person?

Remember: utilize apologetics to help remove barriers to God. If you are not conscientiously developing a relationship in your conversation with the other person, then apologetics will only alienate the other person further from God. Always try to see the topic from the other person’s perspective; empathize as best as you can.

Never engage in apologetics exclusive of living in Christ. You should never utilize apologetics so as to diminish another person. Rather, your aim should be to show that, though their position or opinion may be flawed, their value as a child of God is priceless. Correct their errors gently and with grace. Redirect their errors to a more fruitful conversational topic.

How would you correct these errors?

1. Why does your God hate gay people?

2. Why do you Christians act so high and mighty and think you have all the answers?

3. If Christians are so right, why did they kill so many people in the Crusades?

The four questions everyone needs to ask of their belief system

Every worldview must give answers to these four questions:

1. Where did we come from (origin)?
2. Why are we here (purpose)?
3. How should we live (morality)?
4. What happens when we die (destiny)?

As we will see throughout this course, the Christian worldview is the only belief system that can give full and substantive answers, which are grounded in truth.

Terms you need to know

Define these terms and utilize the painter/painting analogy:

1. Theist

2. Deist

3. Pantheist

4. Atheist

The three major objections to any religion holding the answers to life's questions

1.

2.

3.

Objections to Christianity

1. Intellectual objections

2. Emotional objections

3. Volitional objections

Is there a singular worldview that guides one to find unity, diversity, and full meaning to life? The Christian worldview provides unity in God, diversity in the unlimited spectrum of His love's display in creation, and full meaning to life through Christ.

The apologetic's passage: 1 Peter 3:14-16

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared **to make a defense** (*apologian*) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

...and another good verse to keep in mind: Matthew 10:16

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Recognize the fallacies!

1. "Slavery is acceptable because the Bible permits it. Doesn't it say, 'Servants, be obedient to your masters?'" _____
2. "You're not a Christian, so you wouldn't understand." _____
3. "My feelings are valid, so therefore you have no right to criticize what I say or do." _____
4. "That's the way we always have done it." _____
5. "It's newer, so it must be better." _____
6. "Science can tell us nothing about God. That proves God doesn't exist." _____
7. "The American people don't want Christianity shoved down their throats." _____

8. "The Bible affirms that it is inerrant." _____
9. "Either you think gay marriage is acceptable or you are a homophobe." _____
10. "Jesus was a simple, Jewish peasant, who did some good things 2,000 years ago." _____
11. "This week's earthquake was obviously meant to punish those people for their great wickedness." _____
12. "Can you believe the number of Catholic priests cited for child abuse? All priests are evil and the Catholic Church should be purged of all of them." _____
13. "Yes, Christians have done some good, but what about the Crusades?" _____
14. "The Bible says it; I believe it; that settles it." _____
15. "Anyone can argue for something you can't see! I believe in the Flying Spaghetti Monster. You call your imaginary friend 'God'; I call mine the 'Flying Spaghetti Monster.'" _____
16. "I may have bankrupted companies, but at least I didn't threaten national security with an unsafe mail server." _____

The Fallacies

1. The Straw Man
2. Tu Quoque (But look what they did!)
3. The Red Herring
4. Reductionism (Sloganeering)
5. Pars pro Toto (The big paintbrush)
6. Hero-Busting
7. The Non Sequitor
8. Circular Reasoning (Catch 22)
9. False Dichotomy
10. The Appeal to Tradition (The Good Old Days)
11. The A Priori Argument (Rationalization)
12. The Affective Fallacy (The Romantic Fallacy)
13. Argument From Silence
14. The Bandwagon
15. Ad Hominem
16. The Appeal to Novelty (The Bad Old Days)