

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 27, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

DEFENDING THE FAITH “A Study in Basic Christian Apologetics” *1 Peter 3:13-17*

“¹³ And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” – 1 Peter 3:13-17 NKJV

Do you sometimes find yourself to be somewhat intimidated by the secular culture, which often views the Christian Faith as a blind leap and Christians as simple-minded and shallow, somewhat uneducated and unintellectual. Perhaps you grew up in the faith, but the hard question of the faith that are often raised by objectors to Christianity you find hard to answer, you stumble over them, and those questions often leave you scratching your head. So rather than dealing with the objections and questions raised, you say things like, “Well, they are just atheist, and can’t perceive spiritual things!” kind of dismissing their challenge or your say “Some things you just have to accept by faith and you can’t explain!” as if to justify either laziness and a lack of discipline to study and dig deep enough to answer the objections or to endorse a kind of “blind leap” of faith that must just accept everything with nothing to stand on.

Have you had a nonbeliever or skeptic ask you questions about your faith or even challenge your understanding of spiritual matters? I think all of us have, or will, at one time or another. They raise some pretty good questions about the Christian faith don’t they? Questions like these:

5 Tough Questions for Christians to Answer: *We might call these “5 Tough Question that Christians Often Run From”*

- 1. What evidence is there that God exists? or Is there evidence of the existence of God –**
The is commonly called the “The Problem of the Existence of God” and the objection and argument that will often be asked and raised by the Atheist or even Agnostic. Some skeptics to Christianity or faith may raise this question of the existence of God.
- 2. How can a good a loving God allow suffering to exist? -** Known as "The Problem Of Evil", this issue is considered to be possibly the oldest, most perplexing issue when it comes to 'thinking' about God and His nature or existence. Many questions regarding evil

and God comprise this issue, but all are known under the guise of 'The Problem Of Evil'. The answers to the Problem of Evil are known as 'Theodicy', which literally means "God Justified", (meaning God is justified despite the existence of evil).

3. **How could a good and loving God send someone to hell for eternity?** - "God is love! Therefore God doesn't want anyone to suffer, much less for ETERNITY?! Besides, it seems like incredible overkill - a terrible punishment for all eternity, for something that happened in a short span of time that doesn't compare to eternity! I could never love or respect a being that would condemn someone to such a hideous punishment just because we 'disobeyed', or didn't 'worship' Him properly. How selfish and cruel of God!"
4. **What about people who have never heard of Jesus? Are they lost?** - Christians claim that Jesus is the 'only way' to reconciliation with God. But there must be MANY people who have never heard of Him, either because they lived in a part of the world where they would have had no chance to hear of Him, or they lived in a time that communication was not like it is today. *So are these people 'doomed to Hell' just because they did not have the chance to hear, much less accept, Jesus as Savior and Lord?*
5. **How can Christians claim that Jesus is the only way to God?** - The Objection: How can you claim that Christianity is the only way?! How can you say that someone is wrong? Everyone has the right to decide for themselves what is right or wrong! You're being intolerant and hateful when you say your way is the only way, because *"Everything Is Relative"*.



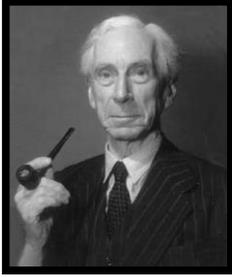
Those are just some of the questions unbelievers are wondering about and asking today. Like it or not America is quickly becoming "post-Christian" nation if not already. Many people these days just don't understand the Christian message and many Christians are afraid to engage in the tough conversations. Many don't know how, or what to say, but to not engage is to lose the battle, to lose our witness and to fail to be the light and salt that God in His word calls us to be.



"Christianity is a religion for losers! What are you a bunch of Jesus Freaks?" – Ted Turner, "National Review"



"Organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers. It tells people to go out and stick their noses in other people's business." – Jesse Ventura, "Playboy"



“There has been every kind of cruelty practiced upon all sorts of people in the name of religion” – Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not A Christian”



“Faith can be very, very dangerous, and deliberately to implant it into the vulnerable mind of a an innocent child is a grievous wrong... Those who wise to base their morality on the Bible have either not read it or not understood it.” – Richard Dawkins, “The God Delusion”



“All religions and all churches equally demented in their belief in divine intervention, divine intercession, or even the existence of the divine in the first place.” - Christopher Hitchens, “Slate”

How do these comments make you feel? _____

Intellectuals such as these and their influence on our culture has left it’s mark. The “New Atheists (so called) are coming out of the closet in a big way! They are brash, loud, brilliant, and very intimidating! Dinesh D’Souza describe them, “The distinguishing element of modern atheism is its intellectual militancy and moral self-confidence.”

The Apostle Paul reminds us that as believers that we have been given everything we need to answer these objections, to pull down these arguments, to defeat “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” Listen to it in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, ⁴“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”

Despite growing up in the faith, facing challenges and hard questions such as these, we may slowly begin to accept the secularist premise that we have to 'shut off our brain' as we go to church. God’s Word, Scripture, call us to just the opposite... again, we have been given everything we need to give a good answer to the skeptics, the intellectual objectors, the Atheist, the Agnostic, the doubters, the questioners. Instead of withdrawing or giving up this

study on basic Christian Apologetics called, “Defending the Faith,” will prove not only helpful for your personal growth and depth as a believer, but will enable to you be ready with a good answer to those who come against the faith. First of all what do we mean by “apologetics?” What is apologetics?

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS?

A Basis Definition of Apologetics – *Apologetics may be simply defined as the defense of the Christian faith.*

The simplicity of this definition, however, masks the complexity of the problem of defining apologetics. It turns out that a diversity of approaches has been taken to defining the meaning, scope, and purpose of apologetics. Apologetics is the work of convincing people to change their views." Therefore, Christian apologetics is that branch of Christian Theology that deals with answering any and all critics who oppose or question the revelation of God in Christ and the Bible. It can include studying such subjects as Biblical manuscript transmission, philosophy, biology, mathematics, evolution, and logic. But it can also consist of simply giving an answer to a question about Jesus or a Bible passage. The latter case is by far the most common, and you don't have to read a ton of books to do that.

A Deeper Understanding of Apologetics - *The word, "apologetics," comes from the Greek word, "apologia" (pronounced "ap-ol-og-ee'-ah"). It's literal means "a verbal defense."*

Originally this word, “apologia,” was used of a speech of defense or an answer given in reply. In ancient Athens it referred to a defense made in the courtroom as part of the normal judicial procedure. After the accusation, the defendant was allowed to refute the charges with a defense or reply (*apologia*). The accused would attempt to “speak away” (*apo*—away, *logia*—speech) the accusation. The classic example of such an *apologia* was Socrates’ defense against the charge of preaching strange gods, a defense retold by his most famous pupil, Plato, in a dialogue called *The Apology* (in Greek, *hē apologia*).

A Biblical Understanding of Apologetics - The Greek word “apologia” is used at least 17 times in the New Testament in verb or noun form. It is a much used Biblical word and was usually used in making a defense of oneself or the faith. The much use of this word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit certainly supports the important place that “apologetics” should have for the believer.

We will be looking at many of these Biblical citing throughout this study, however our key text for this study is the verse/passage that is perhaps most commonly associated with Christian apologetics, 1 Peter 3:13-17

*“¹³ And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always **be ready** to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct*

in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” – 1 Peter 3:13-17 NKJV

Truths About Apologetics from 1 Peter 3:17:

1. **Be ready** - First, notice that God wants us to **“be ready”** (v.15). Ambassadors of Jesus Christ should be to **“be ready”** to give answers. We may never run across someone who asks tough questions about our faith, but we should still be ready to respond if someone does. To be ready requires some study and preparation ahead of time doesn't it?
2. **Give a defense** - Second, notice it says, that we are to, **“always be ready to give a defense.”** The Greek word there for "defense" is the word “apologia” which simply means, “to give reason or a defense” It is from this Greek word that that we get our English word “apologetics.” To be skilled in apologetics is to be able to give a defense of the Christian faith to someone who asks, or to someone who challenges your beliefs.
3. **Have a reason** - Notice next that it says we are **“...always [to] be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”** There are good reasons why a person should believe that God exists, that the Bible is trustworthy, that Jesus rose from the dead, etc. The Christian ambassador should be familiar with these reasons and be able to articulate them to those who have questions.
4. **Share hope** – Apologetics is not negative, derogatory, or degrading to the belief system of others, but always holds out the “hope” of the Christian message.” It is the hope that you have because of these truths that you have experienced and know, that you share your defense.
5. **Show meekness and fear** - There is a spirit with which Christian apologetics is to be exhibited and carried out. Peter says with “meekness” (strength under control) and “fear” (holy reverence for God).

What Apologetics is Not?

1. **Not the art of getting really good at saying, “I’m sorry”! over and over.**
2. **Not the art of intellectually forcing unbelievers into submission holds MMA style.**
3. **Not arguing about how many angels can stand on a pin.**
4. **Not shaving your head and looking cool.**

Why should we do apologetics?

1. **The Bible commands us to -** *1 Peter 3:15, “But 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,” (NASB).* The importance of humility: *1 Corinthians 8:1, “. . . Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.” The importance of love: 1 Corinthians 13. Jude 3, “I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” Jude 22, “And have mercy on some, who are doubting.”* Apologetics is to be coupled with mercy and love.
2. **Jesus did apologetics** - Jesus gave evidence for His claims. His fulfillment of prophecy (Mk. 14:61-62, Lk. 24:44-45). His Miracles Resurrection: Prediction (Jn. 2:19-21, cf. Mt. 12:39-40) and Accomplishment (1 Cor. 15, Lk. 24:26-27). Healings (Mt. 11:2-5). Corrected false interpretations of Scripture (Mt. 4:1-11).

3. **Paul did apologetics** – Greeks at Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-34) Quotes pagan poets Aratus and Epimenides. Jews in the Synagogues (Acts 17:1-3) False teachers within the Church (Galatians, 1 Corinthians, etc.) Paul's mission Phil. 1:7--"the defense and confirmation of the gospel." Phil. 1:16--"I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." Paul's criteria for ordaining elders Titus 1:9, "Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict," (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24).
4. **The church did apologetics** – The Early Church with the Apostles The Apostle Paul: Galatians and 1 Corinthians The Apostle John: 1, 2, and 3rd John The Early Church after the Apostles Apologists: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, etc. Heresies: Gnosticism, Arianism, etc.
5. **Apologetics help Christians** –

5 Ways Apologetics Help Christians:

- (1) **To better know their faith and share it more effectively.**
- (2) **To answer peoples' real questions which hinder them from accepting the Gospel.**
- (3) **To have influence in the public square (education, media, etc.).**
- (4) **To prevent doctrinal apostasy in the Church.**
- (5) **To answer the false claims of cults and religions**

WHY DO WE NEED CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS?

There are several reasons why we need apologetics.

Eight Reasons Why We Need Apologetics:

1. **We are commanded to in Scripture** - The first and most obvious is that we are commanded to defend the faith: 1 Peter 3:15 says, *"but 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."*
2. **It helps Christian to know their faith** - Second, we need apologetics because it helps Christians know their faith. This is something that is sadly lacking among many believers today. Most don't know much about their faith, let alone be able to describe the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, His physical resurrection, or even to tell the difference between justification and sanctification. As believers we know to not only know what we believe, but why we believe it and how to support that claim. Apologetics helps to define and defend what the truth of the gospel is.
3. **The important task of evangelism** - Third, apologetics is an attempt to keep people out of Hell. God takes sin very seriously, and He will punish those who have rebelled against Him and are not covered in the blood of Christ. As Christians, we should be motivated to present the truth of salvation in Jesus. We should not sit idly by and ignore the dilemma of the unbeliever. We need to tell them that sin is real because God is real and that breaking God's law has a consequence. Since we have all sinned, we cannot keep God's law perfectly. Also, we cannot undo the offense to an infinitely holy God because we are not infinite or holy. The only thing left for us is to fall under the judgment of God. But God has provided a way for us to escape that judgment. That is why God became man in Jesus. He claimed to be God (John

8:24, 58, compare with Exodus 3:14). Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). By trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, we will be spared from the rightful judgment of God upon the sinner. Salvation is not found in Buddhism, Islam, relativism, or in one's self. It is only found in Jesus. We need to not only defend God's Word and truth but also present the gospel to all people, so they can escape the judgment to come.

4. **To preserve a proper view of Christ and His church** - Fourth, we need apologetics to counter the bad image that Christianity has received in the media and in culture. Televangelists and their scandals--both sexually and monetarily--are a disgrace to Christianity. The Catholic church hasn't helped with its scandals involving priests. On top of that, the media is very biased against Christianity, and you will see negative opinions of Christianity promoted everywhere.
5. **To answer false teaching and apostasy** - Fifth, we need apologetics because there is a constant threat of apostasy in the visible Christian church. Such is the case with the Metropolitan Community Church denomination, which openly advocates the support of homosexuality in violation of Scripture (Rom. 1:18-32). Also, as of 2002, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is in risk of apostasy by entertaining the idea of accepting homosexual relationships into church. "The United Church of Christ set up a \$500,000 scholarship fund for gay and lesbian seminarians Friday and urged wider acceptance of homosexuals by other denominations," (United Church Makes Gay Scholarship, CLEVELAND, June 16, 2000, AP Online via COMTEX). Or "The supreme court of the United Methodist Church was asked Thursday to reconsider the denomination's ban on gay clergy," (*Church court of United Methodists asked to decide on gay clergy ban*, NASHVILLE, Tennessee, Oct. 25, 2001, AP WorldStream via COMTEX). Such examples are demonstrations of the incredible need for defending Biblical truth within those churches that claim to be Christian.
6. **To refute and identify false religions and cults** - Sixth, another reason we need apologetics is that of the many false teachings out there. Mormonism teaches that God used to be a man on another world, and he brought one of his goddess wives with him to this world and that they produce spirit offspring that are born into human babies and that you have the potential of becoming a god of your own world. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that there is no Trinity and that Jesus is Michael the Archangel, there is no Hell and that only 144,000 people will go to Heaven. Atheism denies God's existence, openly attacks Christianity, and is gaining ground in public life and schools. Islam teaches that Jesus was not God in flesh and that Jesus did not rise from the dead and that He did not atone for our sins. It also teaches that salvation is partly based on one's works and partly based on Allah's grace. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is the angel Gabriel (Surah 2:97, 16:102) and that Jinn are unseen beings created (51:56) from fire (15:27, 55:15) and that Muhammed was greater than Jesus. Even within the Christian church, there are false teachings. We can see that from both within the Christian church and outside of it, false teachings are bombarding believers (and non-believers) all over the world.
7. **Give and answer to the immoral drift of our culture** - Seventh, the rise of immorality in America is a threat not only to society but also to Christianity. This is a serious issue because an immoral society cannot last long. The Barna Research group statistics show that 64% of adults and 83% of teenagers said that moral truth depends on the situation that you are in. Nineteen percent (19%) of the adult population believes that "the whole idea of sin is outdated." Fifty-one percent (51%) believe that "if a person is generally good, or does enough good, he will earn a place in Heaven." When a society's morals fail, the society fails.

Just look at history and think of Ancient Rome, Ancient Greece, or present-day Enron, Watergate, and White House interns. Immorality seeps down into all areas of our culture. Consider this: In the *New York Times*, online, of May 12, 2002, in the article, "With Games of Havoc, Men Will Be Boys," the author, Warren St. John, interviews some players of what he says is a very popular video game. One young man says, "What I like to do is get in the car and drive around and do drive-by shootings. You can haul someone out of their car and beat on them and steal their money and their car. It's kind of amusing that you have that ability." . . . A publicist from Long Island says that the game's allure comes down to "just going on killing sprees." Not all video games are violent, but the fact that it is so popular and that the youth are being trained up by them is very disturbing. I am not advocating a theocratic socio-political rule administered by stern Christians wearing black-and-white outfits and tall hats. But these kinds of social trends are disturbing, and they reflect a moral decline in America where what is good is called evil and what is evil is called good. God tells us in Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." We cannot ignore God's Word without a consequence.

- 8. Refute the teaching and indoctrination of irreligious thought especially in higher education (but sometimes and in some please in public schools) -** The eighth reason we need apologetics is that schools are not friendly to Christianity. My own experience in non-Christian schools was a strong awakening to the unprovoked hostility that exists in school where the philosophy teachers, history teacher, and even the art teacher all took shots at Christianity. Don Feder in the *Conservative Chronicle* in his article of Sept. 22, 1993, titled, "Fighting Censorship, PAW Does it Its Way," said that in some junior high libraries, book titles included *The Joy of Gay Sex* and *How to Make Love to a Single Woman*. There is an impressions series for grades one to six which promote the New Age and the occult and a controversial drug education program called Quest, which tells students that they alone can decide whether or not it's OK to use drugs as well as texts that direct students to fantasize about suicide, attack religion, and undermine family authority. Following is an email I received that represents the hostility of secular schools.

he fact is that Christianity is under attack in the world, and we need to fight the good fight of the faith without shrinking back. We need apologetics to give rational, intelligent, and relevant explanations of Christian viability to the critics and the prejudiced who would seek to undermine the teachings of our Lord Jesus. If there was ever a time that apologetics is needed, it is now.