

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 17, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A REASON FOR HOPE *A Study in Basic Christian Apologetics*

What Doubt Does?

*1 Peter 3:13-17, Colossians 2:1-10, Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-13,
Luke 1:5-25 & 1:57-66, James 1:5-8*

As discussed in our introduction to our study on basic Christian apologetics, there are a number of reasons that Christian apologetics and the study of apologetics is so important.

3 Important Reasons to Study Christian Apologetics:

1. **Scriptures calls believers to be a “apologist”** (*one who practices apologetics*) – 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.”* The word translated as “defense” is actually the Greek word “apologia” from which we get the word “apologetics” and may also be translated as “give an answer” or “make a defense.” The word is actually used more than 17 times in the New Testament and is always a call for believers or Christians to be ready to give a reason for what they believe.

“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 3:15:

- (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, answer 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. Christians need to be ready with answer when the Spirit prompts one to ask why you believe what you believe, and that really leads us to the next one...

- (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"* Christians have "reason" to believe what they believe. The problem is many Christians don't know why they believe what they believe... they don't know the reason they believe what they believe. This is a problem of not being Biblically grounded and knowing the Word of God. 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. In other words, know why you believe what you believe.
- (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).

2. **An understand of basic Christian apologetics builds our own faith** – This too goes back to our key text for the study and Peter's words in 1 Peter 3:15. Peter says Christians are *"...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..."* As previously stated Christians have "reason" to believe what they believe. Again, the problem is many Christians are not grounded enough in their own faith to really know why they believe what they believe... they don't know the reason they believe what they believe. The Apostle Paul spoke to this very thing in Colossians 2:1-10;

"¹For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."
– Colossians 2:1-10 NKJV

Paul calls the believer to be *"... rooted and built up on Him and established in the faith.."* In other words believer need to be grounded in the truth, to know what they believe and why they believe. Believers need apologetics because it helps them 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, why Jesus had to die, His physical resurrection, or even to tell the difference between justification and sanctification. As believers we need to know not only 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. Without this a believer's life may be marked by double-mindedness, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, easily confused and wavering by the cultural winds of our day, and quickly defeated by his or her inability get his heart, head and mind around the disparaging doubts and nitpicking critics of the faith. Our own doubts may prove somewhat paralyzing and preventative to our faith and growth.

3. **Apologetics aids in reaching others for Christ** – One of the prime reasons for apologetic and the study of apologetic is to equip the Christian believer to evangelize the lost, and in order to that we certainly not only need to know why we believe what we believe but also how to articulate that in a way that the Holy Spirit can use to quicken and awaken the heart of an unbeliever. Quite simply and to the point 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.

These are three of the basic reasons for studying Christian apologetics, and three really good reasons for this study. This study will focus on the second of these reason discussed, and indeed the key behind all three, namely the need for the believer in Christ to know not only what he or she believes but to know why they believe it and now to articulate it in an intelligent and thoughtful manner. Again, even a basic understanding of basic Christian apologetics builds our own faith... help us to grow. It is the bases of us knowing why we believe what we believe. Let me remind you again that Peter tell us that we as believer are to be “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15) As previously stated Christians have “reason” to believe what they believe. When this doesn't happen we stagnate in our faith, stop growing and maturing in our walk with Christ, and indeed set ourselves up for the enemy to seed doubt within us... and often a quick fall may follow. We must... we must know why they believe what they believe and be grounded and growing in our own faith in the Lord.

“In most cults, a majority of the member left a mainline, denominational church. *Perhaps in the church's attempt to explain why its member are leaving and joining cults, brainwashing is seen as an easy way out. My contention is that brainwashing is really not the issue. In most*

cases we would be hard pressed to isolate any element in the methodology of a cult that is not present in some form in mainstream churches. For Christians, the main issues with cults should be theology. Many of us accepted Christ at an early age. We had a child's understanding of Jesus, the Bible and salvation. That is okay for children and new Christians. But many of us older Christians are still babies spiritually. We have not learned to feed ourselves, much less anyone else." Chris Elkins, "Christian Life" (a former Unification Church "Moonie" member)

"Many people involved in cults (today) were raised in Christian churches but were untaught in basic Christian doctrine." Josh McDowell, "Handbook of Today's Religions"

What do you think about these quotes? Do you agree or disagree with the above quotes? Why or why not? Given the above quote and its implications why do you think this maybe the case that most of those joining cults today are coming for mainline Christian denominations?

Key Thought: When we as Christians are not grounded and rooted in the our own faith, it opens the door for doubts.

Christians are overcomers and truly are to live victorious Christian lives every day, but let's be honest, there are many enemies along that way that daily steal our victory and sometimes defeat us causing us to doubt and despair. Cults and false religions may be just one of these. Secularism, a culturally prevailing humanistic worldview, atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, the irreligious, intellectualism, liberal theology and sometime higher education may contribute to a watering down of the faith today and a casting of doubts on the heart and mind of the ungrounded Christian.

The great preacher, **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** said;

"Doubt discovers difficulties which it never solves; it creates hesitancy, despondency, despair. Its progress is the decay of comfort, the death of peace. "Believe!" is the word which speaks life into a man, but doubt nails down his coffin."

What is Spurgeon saying? _____

And I might add that doubt defeats and disillusiones the lives of many professing believer and keep them from enjoying the full benefits of their faith and the victorious Christian life that Christ died to give them. This is why Christian apologetics is so important in the life of a believer. It is being grounded in your faith and knowing why you believe what you believe.

But not only that, our ultimate enemy, the devil will use our doubt to cast doubt in the minds of many who would perhaps come to Christ, but all they see in our doubts instead.

Dr. John MacArthur says, “Every temptation, directly or indirectly, is the temptation to doubt and distrust God.”

How do we find victory over doubt? What is the key in building a Christian life that is not flat-lined in doubt, but rises above the doubt? When life gets hard, and doubt assails us, what are we to do? Let’s take a look and find the victory that Jesus came to give us over doubt.

I. DOUBT EXPOSED

Doubt is an experience common to all people. Even those with faith in God struggle with doubt on occasion and say with the man in **Mark 9:24**, ***“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”*** Some people are hindered greatly by doubt; some see it as a springboard to life; and others see it as an obstacle to be overcome. The Bible has something to say about the cause of doubt and provides examples of people who struggled with it, but before we get into that let’s expose the world’s way of looking at doubt a bit.

2 Worldly Understandings of Doubt:

1. **Classical Humanist Thought** – Classical humanism says that doubt, while uncomfortable, is absolutely essential for life. Famous Philosopher, **René Descartes** said, ***“If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.”*** What’s wrong with that do you think?
2. **Pagan Religious Thought** - This is similar to what the founder of *Buddhism* who said, ***“Doubt everything. Find your own light.”*** What do you think is wrong with this idea?

Observation: *If we take their advice, we would have to doubt what they said, which seems rather contradictory. Instead of taking the advice of skeptics and false teachers, we will see what the Bible has to say.*

II. DOUBT DEFINED

So what, exactly, is doubt? How do we define it? Let’s get a better understanding of what we are talking about by exploring some definitions of doubt.

4 Good Definitions of Doubt:

1. **Webster’s Dictionary** – “An uncertainty of belief or opinion that often interferes with decision-making.”
2. **Acrostic Definition** –

D – Did God really say that?

O – Or maybe He didn’t.

U – Unless I see it, I wont...

B – Believe it! I’m thus...

T – Tempting God rather than trusting Him!

3. **Quote Definition** - "Doubt and unbelief are two sides to the same coin. It means to waver in opinion or judgment; to question; to deem uncertain; to distrust. It is a lack of belief or faith in God and His provision." - Harriet Bond
4. **Word Study Definition – Dubious, to give rise to uncertainty, to be unsettled or unsure.** We get our English word doubt (which originally was "daut") from the Latin "dubitare or dubius... from which we get our other English word "dubious." The English word "dubious" may give us a good understanding of the word "doubt." The word "dubios" means "to give rise to uncertainty, to be unsettled or unsure."

III. DOUBT EXPLAINED (Various Scripture)

The very first expression of doubt in the Bible is in Genesis 3, when Satan tempted Eve. Let's look at it and see what it teaches us about the enemy of doubt (Genesis 2:15-17 & 3:1-13). God had given a clear command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and had specified the consequence of disobedience. Satan introduced doubt into Eve's mind when he asked, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" He wanted her to lack confidence in God's command. When she affirmed God's command, including the consequences, Satan replied with a denial, which is a stronger statement of doubt, "You will not surely die." Doubt is a tool of Satan to make us lack confidence in God's Word and consider His judgment unlikely.

GENESIS 2:15-17 & GENESIS 3:1-13

3 Things Doubt Does According to the Garden Account:

1. **Doubt gives rise to the enemies ability to mislead and deceive us** – Genesis 3:1 says, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Do you see it? Satan placed a questioning doubt in the woman's mind and was thereby able to craftily mislead and deceive her.
2. **Doubt causes us to question God and His goodness** – Again Genesis 3:1 says, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Here the Enemy raises a doubt about God and His intentions to keep Adam and Eve from something God, and it works. Notice what Eve says in verses 2-3, "²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" I don't know if you noticed it by she buys into doubt about God's goodness. She says He will kill us if we eat from that tree. In verses 4-5 the Devil goes on to say, questioning God's goodness, "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
3. **Doubt causes us to miss out on God blessing and promises** – Not only was the relationship between God and Adam and Eve (man) broken (see vs. 8), but they were banished from the place of God's blessing and provision... the garden. Verse 23 says, "So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."

Observation: Lest anyone doubt, doubt has devastating effects on the life of a child of God. It opens the door for a whole host of missed blessings and opportunities, and cripples our relationship with God.

Lest we think that we can lay all of the blame on Satan, the Bible clearly holds us accountable for our own doubts.

LUKE 1:5-25 & LUKE 1:57-66

Take your Bible and go to the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, and I want you to notice with me the story of the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5ff). When Zechariah was visited by the angel of the Lord and told that he would have a son (Luke 1:11-17), he doubted the word given to him. He logically assumed that he and his wife were too old to have children, and in response to his doubt, the angel said he would be mute until the day God's promise was fulfilled (Luke 1:18-20). Zechariah doubted God's ability to overcome natural obstacles – many people today share the same doubt. Any time we allow human reason to overshadow faith in God, sinful doubt is the result.

3 Things Doubt Does According to the John the Baptist Account:

1. **Doubt blinds our eyes us to the possibilities of what God can do** – Did you notice in the story that although God revealed what he was going to do through Zechariah and Elizabeth, Zechariah couldn't see it? Verse 7 tells us that Elizabeth was barren and well advanced in years... way past her child bearing years. Notice verses 11-18, *"¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.^[a] ¹⁶ Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."* In other words, "God, I can't see this happening! It's just too impossible!" Remember nothing is impossible with God.
2. **Doubt closes our ears to the voice of God in our life** – Essentially, Zechariah's doubt said, "I can't even hear this! This voice can't be real!"
3. **Doubt silences our mouths as a witness for God to our world** – Literally, Zechariah's mouth was silenced for the entire pregnancy of this child. For 9 months, he didn't get to bear witness for God, which remember was his job!

JAMES 1:5-8

Contrary to the humanistic view that doubt is essential to life, the Bible says that doubt is a destroyer of life. I want you to turn with me to James 1:5-8. James tells us that when we ask God for wisdom, we are to ask in faith, without doubt. If we doubt God's ability

to respond to our request, what would be the point of asking in the first place? God says that if we doubt while we ask, we will not receive anything from Him, because we are unstable. *“He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind”* (James 1:6).

“⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

–James 1:5-8 (NIV)

3 Things Doubt Does According to James, the Half-Brother of Jesus:

1. **Doubt cuts off the flow of God’s generous and gracious blessing to our lives –** Verse 5 reminds us that God give generously to all who ask, even without finding fault. That speaks of grace. But according to verses 6-7, doubt interferes with that generous and gracious flow. *“⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;”*
2. **Doubt causes us not to be able to see things clearly –** Think about what James is saying in verse 6 when he says, *“⁶ But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”* Think about what happens when someone is blown around, jostled, tossed about, spun around and around in a boat in the middle of the sea. He or she become disoriented, confused, and unable to see where they are going. That is the certain effects of doubt on the life of a believer. It causes us to lose our bearings.
3. **Doubt creates an uncertainty and unsteadiness in our daily walk and life –** Verse 8 says of this doubt filled one, *“...he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”*

IV. DOUBT DEFEATED

So the question is how do we defeat “doubt” in our lives and find victory in the Jesus... the victory He came to give us. Let me give you, in conclusion some sure-fired remedies for doubt, each of these really point directly to the need of apologetics and Peter’s admission in 1 Peter 3:15 that as believers we must be, *“...always being ready to make a defense (to give an answer to, to give a reason) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...”*

Sure-fired Remedies for Doubt:

1. **Be Grounded in the Word of God (Romans 10:17) –** Remember that faith is the remedy for doubt. Well where does faith come from? Here it is in **Romans 10:17** *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Know what you believe and why you believe it based on God’s Word.* God gave us the Bible as a testimony of His works in the past, so we will have a reason to trust Him in the present. **Psalm 77:11** says, *“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago”* In order for us to have faith in God, we must study to know what He has said. Once we have an understanding of what God has

done in the past, what He has promised us for the present, and what we can expect from Him in the future, we are able to act in faith instead of doubt.

2. **Be Tightly Bound (tied) to the Body of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-25)** – Listen to Hebrews 10:19-25, ¹⁹ *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,* ²⁰ *by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,* ²¹ *and having a High Priest over the house of God,* ²² *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.* ²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,* ²⁵ *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”* We have to deal with any doubt and unbelief; and we do this by surround ourselves with people of like faith... other believes who are in the struggle with us, growing in the faith in the body, rubbing elbows with fellow Christians who are wrestling truth and holding one another accountable. We have to shut off the road to unbelief, by taking care what you hear and watch, who you trust, and whose voice you listen too.
3. **Be Faithfully Practicing the Christian Disciplines of Prayer and Fasting (Mark 9:17-29)** – There is a story told in Mark 9:17-29 that helps us to understand the place of prayer and fasting in the life of a child of God, especially when doubt prohibits from being all that God has called us to be. Listen to it, ¹⁷ *Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.* ¹⁸ *And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”* ¹⁹ *He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.”* ²⁰ *Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.* ²¹ *So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”* ²² *And he said, “From childhood.* ²³ *And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”* ²⁴ *Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.* ²⁵ *Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”* ²⁶ *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!”* ²⁷ *Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.”* ²⁸ *But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.* ²⁹ *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”* ³⁰ *So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”* We can have enough faith, but it’s the unbelief... doubt that will negate your faith. Jesus rebuked His disciples when they could not cast out the dumb spirit out of the boy, and said that it was because of their unbelief, and He tells them that “prayer and fasting drives out unbelief”... doubt. We must be a people of much prayer and the lost art of fasting to deal successfully with the doubts that are sure to flood our life.