

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 2, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

A REASON FOR HOPE
A Study in Basic Christian Apologetics

Apologetics vs Evangelism
1 Peter 3:13-17, Colossians 2:1-10, Romans 10:13-15

You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance. – John Wesley

Preach abroad. It is the cooping yourselves up in rooms that has dampened the work of God, which never was and never will be carried out to any purpose without going into the highways and hedges and compelling men and women to come in. - Jonathan Edwards

Could a mariner sit idle if he heard the drowning cry? Could a doctor sit in comfort and just let his patients die? Could a fireman sit idle, let men burn and give no hand? Can you sit at ease in Zion with the world around you damned? – Leonard Ravenhill

'Not called!' did you say? 'Not heard the call,' I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to its pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell, and hear the damned entreat you to go to their father's house and bid their brothers and sisters, and servants and masters not to come there. And then look Christ in the face, whose mercy you have professed to obey, and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world." – Williams Booth

It's a sad fact that the vast majority of people who sit in the pews on Sunday never tell anybody about Christ on Monday. – Dr. David Jeremiah

Our Lord said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." It is evident, then, that a true disciple is a soul-winner. It is possible to sit on the shore discussing the signs of the times when we ought to be driven by the signs of the times to launch out into the deep and let down our nets for a draught. –Vance Havner

Today as never before, Christians are being called upon to give reasons for the hope that is within them. Often in the evangelistic context seekers raise questions about the validity of the gospel message. Removing intellectual objections will not make one a Christian... **that requires a life-changing transformation of heart brought about by the Holy Spirit through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.** But even though knowledge and intellectual activity alone is insufficient to bring another to Christ, it doesn't negate the needs for a person to hear an clear and compelling explanation for the truth claims of Christ. Remember this important passage in Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and the hearing by the word of God." Faith... saving faith comes as we hear the truth claims of Scripture, the good new or gospel truth.

Now, once again, the actual word "apologetics" never actually appears in the Bible. But there is a verse which contains its meaning. It has been our key passage, verse for this study... 1 Peter 3:15, 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.*"

The word "defense" in that important Greek word "*apologia*" and means literally "answer," or "reasonable defense." It does not mean to apologize, nor does it mean just to engage in intellectual dialogue, debate or argument. **It means to provide reasonable answers to honest questions and to do it with humility, respect, and reverence.** The verse thus suggests that the *manner* in which one does apologetics is as important as the words expressed. And Peter tells us in this passage that Christians are to be ready *always* with answers for those who inquire of us concerning our faith. Most Christians have a great deal of study ahead of them before this verse will be a practical reality in their evangelistic efforts.

Another question that often comes up in a discussion about the merits and place of apologetics is, "What is the relationship of the mind to evangelism?" "Does the mind play any part in the process?" "What about the effects of the fall?" "Isn't man dead in trespasses and sins?" "Doesn't the Bible say we are to know nothing among men except Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" "Why do we have to get involved at all in apologetics if the Spirit is the One Who actually brings about the New Birth?"

I think you will agree that today there are many Christians who are firmly convinced that answering the intellectual questions of unbelievers is an ineffectual waste of time. They feel that any involvement of the mind in the gospel interchange smacks too much of human effort and really just dilutes the Spirit's work. But Christianity thrives on intelligence, not ignorance. It was Jesus who said, "Come and see." (John 1:39, etc.). He invites our scrutiny and investigation both before and after conversion. We are to love God with the *mind* as well as the heart and the soul. In fact, the early church was powerful and successful because it out-thought and out-loved the ancient world. How well are we are not doing with that today?

Let's be reminded of why we study apologetics to start with. 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 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 defence" 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 defence 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 defence.
- (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.⁹ For 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 focuses on the third of these reasons. So an important question is how does evangelism relate to apologetics? Are they the same thing? Seemingly they have the same goal... namely, belief in the truthfulness or truth claim of the gospel, the good news. So should apologetics just be enveloped into evangelism? How do we move from pleading with someone to believe to persuading them to overcome their skepticism? Must we be good apologists to be good evangelists? Must we be good evangelists to be good apologists? These are important questions in understanding how evangelism and apologetics interrelate to one another.

Someone has said of evangelism and apologetics that they are “two sides of the same coin.” This common metaphor describes two ideas so intimately related that we can't separate them despite their apparent distinctions. Evangelism and apologetics are two separate concepts linked in a very intimate way—so intimate that we are unlikely to employ one without the other.

2 Definitions for Distinction:

- 1. Evangelism – Evangelism derives from the Greek word euangelion, which is often translated “good news.” The good news is the gospel of Jesus Christ—that He created us, died to pay the penalty for our sins, and made restoration between us and God possible. Evangelism is the act of sharing that good news (Matthew 28:19–20 and Mark 16:15). It does not take place unless we declare the person and work of Christ with words (though our behavior should complement our verbal witness).**
- 2. Apologetics - Apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, which doesn't mean “to apologize” (as in our modern usage) but rather “to give a defense or reason.” Apologetics, as commanded in 1 Peter 3:15, only happens when we offer a defense for the salvation that we have in Christ.**

Evangelism is not simply moral living, and apologetics is not simply defending a scientific model. Both of these activities must be centered on proclaiming Christ, who He is and what He has done, to fulfill the biblical commands.

As Christians evangelize, questions naturally arise about other related details, requiring apologetics. For example, Peter says that Creation, the Curse, and the Flood are important reasons for our confidence in God's salvation (2 Peter 3:1–12). How can we really share the hope of Christ without explaining the reason for that hope?

Likewise, if we defend a position merely for the sake of argument, apart from a gospel-oriented purpose, we've missed the point of apologetics. Offering the hope of Christ and defending that

hope are truly two sides of the same coin. Let's explore the questions of how these two, evangelism and apologetics, relate to one another. A place to begin may be to distinguish the differences and objections that some raise to their relationship

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVANGELISM

There can be little doubt that the believer is called to share his or her faith with others... those who do not know and have not heard. We know of the great commission in Scripture that our Lord, Jesus Christ, has entrusted us with. The mandate of Scripture is clear. Christians are called to evangelize a lost world and quite frankly if we are not doing that we are living in disobedience to our own faith and will never experience the fullness of life that Christ desires to pour into our lives. There is no greater joy than seeing another person to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and knowing that we had a hand in bringing that one to Christ. Despite this fact statistics are alarming in this area:

2 Alarming Statistics:

1. **90% of church people (professing believers) have never lead even one person to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ** – *“More than 90% of church people have never had the joy of leading even one person to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Walter Bleeker, “Leading A Person to Christ”*
2. **1 out of 4 non –Christians in this country is ready to make a commitment to Jesus Christ if someone would just explain the gospel to them-** *“One out of every four non –Christians in this country is read to make a commitment to Jesus Christ. One-fourth of the people out there would come to Christ if someone would just explain the gospel to them. This is more than 30 million people.” – Dr. Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ*

Those statistics are alarming to say the least. We know we are called to tell others about Christ, to be soul-winners (a term that scares us to death), but most of us claim we don't know how, we don't know enough, we are intimidated by the process, we are afraid of ridicule or rejection or closed doors. These may be legitimate concerns, but noting that a good grounding in our faith, a building and growing in our own faith couldn't help. Let's look at a passage of Scripture that calls us to it:

“¹³ For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” ¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” – Romans 10:13-18

“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

What These Biblical Passages Tell Us About the Importance of Evangelism:

1. **Only those who call on Jesus by faith to save them are saved -**
2. **Those who need to call on Jesus for salvation cannot do so unless someone tells them about Him -**
3. **Fear must not prevent us from sharing what we know about Him –**
4. **We must be ready to share the hope of Jesus in order for others to come to know Him -**

II. OBJECTIONS TO USING APOLOGETICS FOR EVANGELISM

The Biblical mandate for using apologetics in evangelism is found in 1 Peter 3:15... our key passage, *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.”* As Peter teaches, we should be prepared to provide intellectual justification for the good story of Jesus Christ as we share it with those who do not know him. Such a practice involves giving positive reasons to believe the Christian worldview and removing intellectual barriers to it... proclaiming and showing the truth claim of Jesus and God’s Word.

The use of Christian apologetics in evangelism was first employed by none other than Jesus and the apostles. Jesus appealed to fulfilled prophecy, miracles, and his resurrection to back up his own radical personal claims (Luke 24:25-27; John 14:11; Matt. 12:38-42). The apostles appealed to evidences such as these in their witnessing as well (Acts 17:2-4; 2 Corin. 10:5; John 20:31). The use of apologetics by the apostles is best seen in the Book of Acts, which contains no less than 39 difference passages in Scripture where the first evangelists provided intellectual support for the claims they made about Jesus. Yet despite this biblical support for apologetics, there are four reasons often given by Christians why it should not be used in evangelism. These objections are considered and answered below.

4 Objections Given to Using Apologetics in Evangelizing:

1. **Objection #1: “Apologetics leads to quarreling”** - The worry here is that dialogue over the truthfulness of Christianity cannot be had without it leading to anger and conflict. But Paul in 2 Timothy 2:24 says that this can be done, when he states, *“²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient”* And in our key passage in 1 Peter 3:15, Peter says that apologetics should be done with “gentleness and respect.” Thus, it need not lead to quarreling, arguing or divisive attacks. As a matter of fact, apologetics must never be this!
2. **Objection #2: “Trust in the Holy Spirit, not arguments; no one can be argued into the kingdom”** - This objection has an element of truth to it, as no one is saved by a rational presentation of the gospel. But this misunderstands the role of apologetics, which is a method of evangelism and thus a potential means by which the Holy Spirit draws a person to God. In these terms, no one is saved by a John Piper sermon, or a Billy Graham sermon, or a Matt Chandler sermon, or a Buddy Johnson sermon, the sharing of one’s personal Christian testimony, but these can likewise be used by the

Holy Spirit to bring a person to God. The same is true of a rational presentation of the gospel.

3. **Objection #3: “Apologetics isn’t very effective”** - This statement is doubtful, as most of the evangelism which began the Christian movement involved apologetics. But suppose that it is true that only a minority are saved through apologetics. Even then we are not excused from the mandate to use it, as every person is precious to God. Moreover, only a minority being saved through apologetics is nothing new in terms of evangelistic history. Any form of evangelism will have mixed results: some will mock, others will disbelieve or simply be curious, and perhaps a minority will believe (Acts 17:32-34). We should expect no different with our use of apologetics, but that minority is still worth striving for.
4. **Objection #4: “People’s so-called intellectual objections are really smokescreens guarding heart issues”** - Here the reasoning is that we should not waste our time answering the intellectual objections but instead address the deeper heart issue lurking behind them (e.g., not wanting to believe). But this is precisely why apologetics, conceived of as the removing of intellectual barriers, is useful. It is through the removing of the smokescreen that people can see what is really going on; when all of their intellectual objections are answered, then their heart issue – which they may not themselves see – will be exposed and the gospel can speak to it. Or maybe God has already opened them up to seek him, but they just had some genuine worries that they want us to help them with. That seems possible to me as well (Acts 17:11). Either way, using apologetics in our evangelism remains both biblical and loving.

III. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN APOLOGETICS AND EVANGELISM

So we speak in terms of apologetics and evangelism being “two sides to the same coin,” distinct yet similar, useful to each other... what is the differences? What distinguishes them. Let me give you 4 differences that may help us to also understand how they complement one another and work together.

3 Difference Between Apologetics and Evangelism:

1. **Difference 1:** *Evangelism = telling other the gospel*
 Apologetics = defencing the truth of the Christian faith
2. **Difference 2:** *Apologetics = addresses everything from the existence of God to the reliability of the Old and New Testaments.*
 Evangelism = the telling one specific message... the good news about Jesus Christ and what He has done for sinners.
3. **Difference 3:** *Apologetics = usually involves some level of intellectual sophistication and can involve the logical arguments, historical debates, philosophical discussions, interpretive disputes, and more.*
 NOTE: never be ashamed or afraid to say “I’m not sure how to answer that, let me get back to you!”

Evangelism = is simply the telling other the message about Jesus Christ and is something every Christian, even a brand new Christian should be able to do

Common Link: *Even with these differences the two can be closely linked. Apologetic conversations can lead to good opportunities to share the gospel. And evangelistic conversations will often lead to apologetics when non-Christians respond with questions or criticisms that require a reasoned response. So, while Christians shouldn't let apologetics distract us from sharing the gospel, we should also work to ready ourselves to answer anyone who asks us about the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15)*

IV. WHY AND HOW APOLOGETICS HELPS EVANGELISM

Apologetics and evangelism are related even though there are differences and others may fear the use of apologetics with evangelism because of the ill-perceived divisive nature of it. When needed, apologetics is a means by which the way is both prepared and protected so that the message of the gospel can properly be presented. Apologetics is like the soldier who battles to protect the messenger who has the gospel to deliver. When a Christian is evangelizing and a person in a crowd asks challenging questions, it is appropriate to answer with “meekness and fear”... unless the person is intending only to be a distraction. Nevertheless, the evangelist should know the basics of apologetics which include knowledge of doctrinal questions, issues of morality, truth, other religions, etc. being deeply grounded and rooted in his or her own faith. He or she doesn't need to have exhaustive knowledge, but he should have at least some answers. Apologetics is important-when needed.

There is a saying that the heart will not accept what the mind rejects. Though the preaching of the gospel is indeed powerful (Romans 1:16), the truth is that sometimes answering difficult questions and exposing the errors of antagonists can provide a means to more effectively presenting the gospel.

Three Relevant Benefits of Apologetics in Evangelism:

- 1. The practice of apologetics adds credibility to the speaker** – Credibility and believability is raised when a person is persuaded through their own grounding in the truth of the words they are sharing... this enable us to share from the heart what we have experienced and the backed up truth of it.
- 2. The practice of apologetics helps provide the right to speak the gospel to the crowd** - In other words, it helps the listeners better receive what the one sharing their faith is saying because their minds aren't turned away by the perceived incompetence or lack of knowledge in what they are saying.
- 3. The practice of apologetics quiets the objectors** – An time we can remove the obstacles and objections to one receive Christ it is a good thing. Sharing the good news with a person who is lost is not a “fleshly” endeavor, but a spiritual endeavor, and a believer can be sure that the enemy (the devil) is quickly elevating the objections and skepticism as excuses to what you are sharing. We must be ready to give an answer!

I have an analogy that I use to demonstrate the relationship between apologetics and evangelism. Consider the world to be a field full of holes, rocks, and crevices with all sorts of obstructions such as thorns, thistles, traps, and false paths. In the center of this field is a garden that is enclosed within a high stone wall that has only a single door. The job of the apologist is to help unbelievers navigate through the dangers and pitfalls of the field in order to bring the person to the Garden's Door so that an encounter with God might occur. Therefore, apologetics can be vitally important by making a way for the gospel message to be preached.

Finally, the role of apologetics is to be subservient to the preaching of the gospel. In other words, it is the practice of preparing the listener to be more able to receive the truth of God's Word in the presentation of the saving gospel of Christ. Apologetics is not the power of God to salvation. The gospel is (Rom. 1:16).

In fact, apologetics without presenting the gospel has less value because if you silence a person, God may be vindicated and even glorified, but it doesn't mean the person is saved. The gospel is what saves, and apologetics is the servant of the gospel message.