

# Defending Your Faith

## *Syllabus*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This 9-lesson course equips you to answer tough questions about the Christian faith without sounding defensive, narrow-minded, illogical, or out of touch. *Defending Your Faith* is presented in a practical and interactive manner to assist you in becoming more caring and skillful in conversational apologetics. The word **apologetics** means *a reasoned defense or answer*. The course will boost your competence and confidence to articulate, defend, and share your faith with friends and family in a loving way.

### PRESENTERS

The principal presenters are Pastor David Ireland, Ph.D.; Pastor Jack Redmond, M.Div., M.Ed.; and professor from Alliance Theological Seminary Dr. Ron Walborn, dean of the seminary. All presenters are seminary graduates and content experts in Christian apologetics.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To analyze, understand, and be able to articulate the arguments for and against historic Christianity in a caring manner.
2. Clearly explain and demonstrate humanity's need for salvation and God's plan for humanity's salvation.
3. Understand and be able to think critically from a biblical and Christian worldview.
4. A student completing this course should possess the ability, desire, and attitude needed to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).
5. Learn verbal, theological, and biblical strategies in order to refute various types of fallacies while developing persuasive arguments in support of the Christian faith.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

1. McDowell, Sean (2016). *A New Kind of Apologist*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers. ISBN-10: 0736966056.
2. Newman, Randy (2017). *Questioning Evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications. ISBN-978-0-8254-4428-9.

## **LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

1. A wonderful learning format is the use of case studies. By setting up real-life experiences, conversations on faith, friendly arguments, etc., these case studies teach you how to provide sound responses in defense of your faith.
2. Defending your faith occurs mostly through informal conversations with family and friends. We will create mock debates and conversations in the classroom around some of the questions that make Christians nervous. You will learn by experience how to connect and convey your points, skillfully.

## **THE COHORT MODEL**

1. We are using a cohort model—a small learning community of six to eight (6-8) people—in order to strengthen your participation and heighten learning outcomes. Your cohort serves as a study group to help you maximize the learning outcomes of this course.
2. Please exchange contact information with members of your cohort so that you can stay abreast of the course should you miss a lesson. Members of your cohort should share notes and handouts, along with anything else you missed during an absence.
3. Each cohort will participate in at least one public debate against another cohort on one of the thorny questions covered in this course. It is critical that you maintain commitment to the weekly reading. To prepare for this debate, your cohort should meet at least once outside of class (or before or after class) to discuss assigned roles and strategy in addressing the debate topic.
4. Through collaboration and social interaction, the cohort model is designed to create a community of learners who will grow intellectually and socially from this experience.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attend all sessions, read both texts, and participate in all group discussions.
2. Complete all homework assignments, which should take no more than 20 minutes per week outside of the reading.
3. Share your faith with one person each week and attempt to use some of your newfound wisdom from the lessons and reading.

- 4. Establish a prayer plan in order to insert yourself into God’s plan for the salvation of the unchurched people in your life. Participate in the corporate prayer time of the class as we invite God’s help in impacting our family and friends for Christ.

**COURSE CONTENT**

*Defending Your Faith* will focus on helping you know how to formulate a reasoned defense to age-old questions Christians are leery of. We will tackle specific questions such as:

- Does God exist?
- Was Jesus more than a man?
- How could a good God allow so much pain and suffering?
- Why trust the Bible? Isn’t it full of myths?
- Why would a loving God send people to hell?
- Why are Christians so close-minded on sexuality?
- Is there life after death?

**APPLYING THE COURSE**

The Christian faith ultimately requires the learner to become an exemplary doer. The followers of Jesus who become powerful disciples have always embraced the evangelistic demands of the gospel. *Defending Your Faith* teaches a conversational approach to apply the lessons. Prayer plays a large part. Each week we’ll pray together for the top four people you’re having spiritual conversations with. To get started, please fill in the names below.

<b>MY PRAYER LIST</b>	
<i>Over 9 Weeks I Will Pray Daily for This List of Family &amp; Friends</i>	
<b>FAMILY &amp; FRIENDS</b>	
1	
2	
3	
4	
<p><i>“He who wins souls is wise.”</i></p> <p><i>- Proverbs 11:30</i></p>	

## OUR GROUND RULES

This course purposely addresses some of the deepest and most challenging questions that people from all backgrounds seek to answer. Our aim is to provide a learning community where people can be vulnerable in their search and comfortable to share personal opinions in a **safe** atmosphere. We expect our learning community to include a range of people—from those who have been practicing the Christian faith for decades, to those who are investigating the claims of Christianity for the first time. With this in mind, here are a few guidelines to foster the highest level of communication and learning:

1. The power of this knowledge should be used to build up both people and relationships. Do not use course materials to harm any relationships. Our goal is not to “be right” but to share wisdom and truth in a loving manner.
2. If you have a fragile relationship with someone searching for real answers to tough spiritual questions, don’t try to force conversations or push course materials on them. Simply allow these conversations to occur naturally with you or other trusted friends.
3. This course encourages meaningful conversations and spirited debates that occur most effectively in an environment of mutual respect and civility. Please do not mock, ridicule, or speak negatively against another group or person of a different faith or worldview.
4. We will not force you to draw the same conclusions we have. Your relationship with God is personal and cannot be reached by force, manipulation, or group pressure.

## STRATEGIC APPROACH

You will be taught how to use the following fourfold strategy to share Christ with the people on your prayer list. At this stage, simply give thought to this strategic approach to conversational apologetics and evangelism.

1. **CONNECT with**—To effectively connect with others you must first **listen** to them. Understand their heart, objections to the Christian faith, and their sticking points.
2. **PRAY for**—In **prayer**, ask God for opportunities to have spiritual conversations with your friend. Invite the Lord to remove their stumbling blocks and bring them to Christ.
3. **REASON with**—Sharing your faith is most effective when you **reason** with the other person. They get a chance to ask questions and discover answers that they can call *their* own.
4. **INVITE to**—To offer your friend an accelerated approach to drawing closer to God, consider inviting them to a weekend service. For this course, take advantage of **Easter** and use it as a major opportunity to invite your four people.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. Geisler, David & Geisler, Norman (2014). Conversational Evangelism. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers. ISBN-10: 0736950834.
2. Geisler, Norman; Howe, Thomas (1992). When Critics Ask. Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications. ISBN-0-89693-698-8.
3. Hick, John; Pinnock, Clark H., [et al.] (1996). Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. ISBN-978-0-310-21276-8.
4. Keller, Timothy (2016). The Reason for God. New York, NY: Penguin Books. ISBN-978-1-59448-349-3.
5. Kraft, Peter & Taceli, Ronald K. (1994). Handbook of Christian Apologetics. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. ISBN-0-8308-1774-2.
6. Lewis, C. S. (1952). Mere Christianity. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing. ISBN-0-02-086830-8.
7. McGrath, Alister E. (1993). Intellectuals Don't Need God. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. ISBN-0-310-59091-4.
8. Mittleberg, Mark (2010). The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. ISBN-978-1-4143-151-1.
9. Morris, Henry (1988). The God Who is Real: A Creationist Approach to Evangelism and Missions. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. ISBN-0-8010-6233-0.
10. Sproul, R. C. (1978). Reason to Believe. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. ISBN-0-310-44911-1.
11. Stroebel, Lee (1998). The Case for Christ. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. ISBN-0-310-20930-7.
12. Stroebel, Lee (2000). The Case for Faith. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House. ISBN-0-310-23469-7.
13. Zacharias, Ravi (2000). Jesus Among Other Gods. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers. ISBN-0-8499-1437-X.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

*A 9-Week Course to Help You Answer Tough Questions About Your Faith*

FOCUS OF LESSON		READING & STUDY
1	Foundations to Apologetics	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 1 & 2 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapters 1 & 3
2	Does God Exist?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapter 3 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapters 4 & 5
3	How Could a Good God Allow So Much Pain & Suffering?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 4, 5, 10 & 11 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapter 6
4	How Could a Loving God Send People to Hell?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 12 & 13 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapters 11 & 12
5	Can the Bible be Trusted?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 16, 17 & 18 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapter 7
6	Is Jesus Really the Only Way?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapter 19 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapters 8 & 9
7	Why Are Christians So Closed-minded About Sex?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 24 & 25 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Chapter 13
8	Don't All Religions Lead to the Same God?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 26 & 27 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Complete Reading
9	What About Those Who've Never Heard the Gospel?	<i>A New Kind of Apologist</i> , Chapters 19 & 23 <i>Questioning Evangelism</i> , Complete Reading

**ENJOY THE COURSE!**