

# Defending Your Faith

**Presenter:** David D. Ireland, Ph.D.

## The Foundation of Apologetics

### 1.0 What is apologetics?

1.1 The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means *to make a reasoned defense; a verbal defense*. Apologetics is largely broken into two parts.

A) **Part 1:** It presents objective reasons and evidence in a logical, systematic manner in defense of the Christian faith.

B) **Part 2:** The reasoned defense is communicated in ways that outsiders/unbelievers /non-adherents of that faith can understand what is being shared because of the logic and logos [Greek word for *word*] used.

**1 Peter 3:15** (*English Standard Version*)—"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a *defense* [apologia] to anyone who asks you for a *reason* [logos] for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." (Italics mine.)

1.2 *Conversational apologetics* is a phrase that takes to heart Peter's charge to the Church.

A) Settle matters in your heart regarding the Lordship of Christ.

1. Know to whom you belong, Jesus Christ—the Savior.

2. To honor Christ as holy means to worship Him from a place of submission and surrender. Christ has become *your* Lord.

B) A settled heart is better prepared to fully serve God and His agenda.

1. You're willing to take the needed time to prepare a good defense.

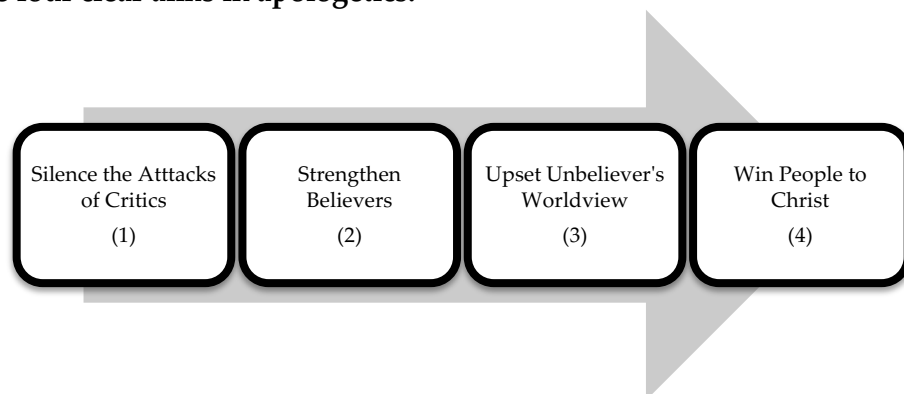
2. You recognize the need to prepare because your faith is so valuable you delight in helping others personally experience it.

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- C) The need to offer a defense of your faith happens organically in unplanned conversations.
1. Spiritual conversations are seldom scheduled. They pop up in the midst of normal human interaction.
  
  2. Peter urged you to *always be prepared* to offer a reasoned defense concerning the hope we have in Christ.
    - i. To be prepared you must be aware of the big philosophical and theological questions that most people ask.
  
    - ii. To be prepared you must have studied answers that are plausible and reasonable to rational people anywhere.
  
    - iii. To be prepared you must convey your reasonable answers in a way that connects with the questioner.
  
  3. Peter was teaching us that good preparation increases the probability of good performance.

## 2.0 There are four clear aims in apologetics.



2.1 **Aim #1:** Apologetics exist to silence the attacks of critics against the gospel.

**John Calvin** said the apologetic task is to “stop the mouths of the obstreperous.”

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**Psalm 11:3**—“When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

- A) The Christian faith is a reasoned faith that can be understood with the head.
    - 1. The faith can be presented with facts, historical data, and a sound moral and philosophical reasoning that follows a clear path of logic.
  
  - B) The Christian faith is presented in a credible manner intellectually in the public square.
    - 1. Paul openly reasoned with the philosophers in the marketplace of Athens by presenting his faith in the same logical arguments they were accustomed to (Acts 17:22-34).
- 2.2 **Aim #2:** To strengthen believers and deepen their walk with Jesus.
- A) The Christian faith is built on your having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
    - 1. Apologetics aims to deepen your belief and intellectual understanding of salvation, your faith, and the Author of your faith—Jesus.
  
  - B) The more you know Christ, the better you can serve Him.
    - 1. The more you know Him, the more you are able to receive from Him.
  
    - 2. The more you know Christ the more you are able to be encouraged by Him.
- 2.3 **Aim #3:** To upset the unbeliever’s worldview and cause them to rethink the Christian faith.
- A) Most unbelievers take pleasure in telling others what they don’t believe.
    - 1. They seldom offer an alternate view to tough questions such as the origin of humanity, etc.
  
    - 2. Putting a wedge in the wheels of their argument forces them to rethink their position or at least reconsider their line of reasoning.

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2.4 **Aim #4:** To win people to Christ by removing their intellectual stumbling blocks.

A) Since our faith is a reasoned faith it appeals to the mind—the head.

1. Through the use of apologetics you can show inconsistencies in the worldview of our secular culture and the errors in other worldviews.
2. The aim of apologetics is to break down the intellectual idols and faulty notions used to erect worldviews that purport to be true.

B) The Christian faith can also be understood with the **heart**.

1. John the Baptist appealed to the emotions of his hearers as he persuaded them to repent—turn from their sin to experience salvation.
2. Many of the thorny questions that apologetics addresses appeal to the heart.
  - i. The question of the existence of God amidst a society where so much evil exists is not merely an intellectual one, it is also an emotional one.
  - ii. Another tough question is the one that asks: How could a good God allow so much pain and suffering?
3. How do modern apologists tackle the question of pain and suffering using arguments that appeal to the head and the heart?

**[Watch brief video excerpts.]**

- i. The apologist presents a biblical argument that appeals to the head then poses a question to the unbeliever. For example: *What does the atheist say to the armless person?*
- ii. The apologist presents a biblical argument that appeals to the heart then poses a question to the believer. For example: *What does the atheist have to say to the armless person? What does the atheist say to the young woman who's going to die of cancer?*

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## 3.0 Use questions in your approach to conversational apologetics.

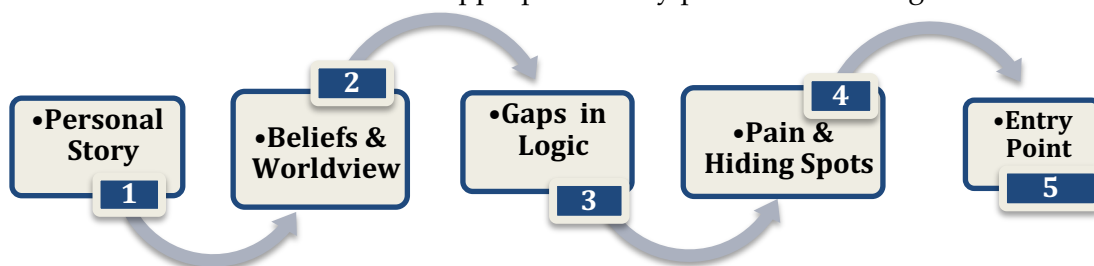
3.1 Questions allow people to reason through their beliefs and/or objections.

A) In the previous clip both apologists posed questions to the atheist community.

1. The question puts the atheists on the defense.
2. The question forces the skeptic to wrestle with the same difficult issues he wants others to tackle.

B) Questions allow you to properly hear what the other person believes or wants to be addressed.

1. The person's reasons for their position are very important. Listen to them.
2. Quick thoughtless answers, though right ones, can push people away. They'll feel that they are not being listened to.
3. As you listen to their question, listen carefully for a few specific things.
  - i. Listen to hear their personal story.
  - ii. Listen to hear their beliefs and worldview.
  - iii. Listen to hear the gaps and discrepancies in their logic.
  - iv. Listen to hear their pain or spiritual hiding places.
  - v. Listen to hear an appropriate entry point to a meaningful conversation.



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## CASE STUDY

Bob received this blunt email that had a pretty aggressive feel with an undertone that was borderline mocking his Christian faith. Beverly was a first time visitor to his millennial LIFE Group and, as usual, he took a fatherly approach to visitors, especially since he was old enough to be their dad. A few days after the meeting her fiery email came where she bluntly asked, “If *your God* is **really so** loving, how could he allow so much pain and suffering in the world?”

Her message didn’t have any niceties or warmth to it. It was just blunt and a tad feisty. That’s how Bob interpreted it, having just walked in the door from a full day’s work. His first thought was to fire back at her. Then he reconsidered; perhaps a good strong theological treatise would enlighten Beverly concerning the benevolent nature of God. He shot that down also. Finally, Bob decided to contact you—a member of his cohort from his class *Defending Your Faith* to get your opinion. What advice do you offer? **Take five minutes in your cohort to discuss.**

1. *What is the best approach with this email? Why?*
2. *How do you know when it’s the right time to offer a bold response of the truth of the gospel?*
3. *How can you tell when your best option is to answer a question with a penetrating question?*

### 3.2 What are seven (7) of the most critical guidelines of conversational apologetics?

#### A) Prayer

1. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom, insight and favor when speaking with the person.
2. Pray that God’s plan for their life will occur and they will sense an urgency to know Christ as Savior.

#### B) Preparation

1. Review some of the standard questions of searching people. Know their objections, sticking points, and concerns.
2. Prepare a few adequate answers that are well rehearsed so they can be clearly communicated in a **reasoned** manner.

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## C) Practice

1. Preparation is one leg of the three-legged stool while practice is the other two legs. To practice means you study and present in a mock format until you arrive at a certain comfort level.
2. Practice allows you to hear yourself and learn how you are coming across. *Are you cocky? Are you matter-of-factly, but devoid of a heart for the person?* These answers will be discovered as you practice with a member of your cohort or a fellow Christian.

## D) Pay Attention

1. Listen to the person to hear their heart.
2. Pay attention to what is being said and not being said. This way you can hear their hurts and pain.
3. Pay attention to the way the person presents their logic to see if it's flawed, disconnected or has gaps in its reasoning.

## E) Pose Questions

1. Ask questions in a non-combative and relational-friendly manner.
2. Questions show you're listening and you also recognize that Christianity may simply offer a reasoned defense but not concrete proof on many issues.
3. Questions reveal that you too are a learner seeking reasonable answers to life's paradoxes.

## F) Politeness Matters

1. Don't interrupt the person as they share. That's discourteous.

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2. Don't argue. Anything that comes across like an attack, an insult, or an impolite dialogue is a turn off to meaningful conversation and a nice exchange of ideology. Avoid it at all cost.

## G) Poor Showing

1. Don't expect perfection. We all make mistakes. You'll make your fair share of them too.
2. A surefire way to improve in the art of conversational apologetics is by recognizing your weaknesses and poor showings. Only perfect people need not grow anymore. Imperfect ones still have room to grow.

## QUESTIONS

## PRAYER TIME

1. Pair up with a member of your cohort and pray that God uses them this week to have at least one spiritual conversation with a non-Christian. Pray also that God will use your newfound knowledge for His glory in the coming weeks and months.
2. Commit to pray for your cohort and the people on the "My Prayer List" daily for the next 10 weeks.



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## **HOMEWORK**

1. Complete reading assignments found in the course syllabus.
2. Review the following prep question for next week's class.

### **Prep Question: Does God Exist?**

The statement, "God exists," is a precisely stated proposition. Thus, it is either true or false. The simple fact is, either God exists or He does not. There is no middle ground. One cannot affirm logically both the existence and nonexistence of God. The atheist boldly states that God does not exist; the theist affirms just as boldly that God does exist; the agnostic laments that there is not enough evidence to make a decision on the matter; and the skeptic doubts that God's existence can be proven with certainty. Who is correct? Does God exist or not?