

The What and Why of Apologetics

Session 1



“I believe in Christianity
as I believe that the sun has risen:
not only because I see it,
but because by it
I see everything else.”

—C.S. Lewis



What Is Apologetics?



A Biblical Understanding



The word has no connection to our modern idea of apologizing for something as an expression of **regret**.

The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word "apologia" which means "**a verbal defense**."

A Biblical Understanding



It is used eight times in the New Testament:
Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3;
2 Corinthians 10:5-6; Philippians 1:7;
2 Timothy 4:16, and most famously
in **1 Peter 3:15**.



*“but in your hearts honor
Christ the Lord as holy,
always being prepared
to make a defense
to anyone who asks you
for a reason for the hope that is in you;
yet do it with gentleness and respect,”*

A Biblical Understanding



What do we notice?

- Apologetics starts with God “**sanctified**” in our hearts.
- Apologetics doesn’t start **arguments**, it gives **answers**.
- Apologetics is to be done with **gentleness** and **respect**.

A Biblical Understanding



Though the word *apologia* is only used **eight** times in the New Testament, we see it exemplified by **Jesus**, the **apostles**, and Christians throughout church **history**.

A Comprehensive Definition



Christian apologetics is the personal **discipline**...

- of bearing witness to
 - the **truthfulness** of the Christian worldview in **general** and
 - the **necessity** of the gospel of Jesus Christ in **particular**,

A Comprehensive Definition



Christian apologetics is the personal **discipline**...

- by means of
 - **rational** argumentation
 - and **creative** communication,

A Comprehensive Definition



Christian apologetics is the personal **discipline**...

- with the two-fold goal of
 - removing **obstacles** to belief in anyone who **doubts** and
 - supplying **reasons** for belief to anyone who **asks**,

A Comprehensive Definition



Christian apologetics is the personal **discipline**...

- with careful attention paid to both
 - faithfulness to **God's Word** and
 - consideration of **cultural** and **personal** context.

Practical Applications



Pre-Evangelism

Apologetics **prepares** the way for the message of the gospel—removing obstacles to belief and supplying reasons for belief.

There was a time when religion was **respectable** and the gospel was **familiar**, but we do not live in that world anymore.

Practical Applications



Pre-Evangelism

"The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects as false."

Apologetics is getting people to the gospel as soon as possible. It may be more than that, but it should never be less than that.

Practical Applications



Sanctification

We should not be surprised or ashamed if **we** are the one “who asks you for a reason.”

*“A faith without some **doubts** is like a human body without any antibodies in it...A person’s faith can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection.”*

-Timothy Keller



Practical Applications



Sanctification

We should not be surprised or ashamed if we are the one “who asks you for a reason.”

Apologetics is a powerful tool to produce **confidence** and **maturity** in our apprenticeship to Christ.

Why Do We Do Apologetics?



A Bad Reason



To show that Christians are the best.

Many Christians act as though the best support for our beliefs is how much Christians have done for the world.

Christians have done a lot of **good** in the world, but we have also done a lot of **harm**.

However, this should not **surprise** us since we know that we are sinners in need of God's grace.

A Bad Reason



To show that Christians are the best.

We need to remember:

- The goal is not to win **arguments**; the goal is to win **people**.
- It is not a matter of “**us** vs. **them**.”
It is a matter of truth vs. error.
It is matter of hope vs. hopelessness.

A Not-as-bad Reason



To show that Christianity is the best.

Many Christians act as though the best support we have for our beliefs is that Christianity provides the most **coherent** belief system and the best **explanation** for why things are the way that they are.

A Not-as-bad Reason



To show that Christianity is the best.

Christianity may have the most explanatory power among competing belief systems. However, one may believe this and still not have a **relationship** with God.

“All the ideas of Christianity might be discovered in some other religion, yet there would be in that other religion no Christianity. For Christianity depends, not upon a complex of ideas, but upon the narration of an event.”

-J. Gresham Machen



The Not-so-bad Reason



To show that Christianity is the best.

We need to remember:

- Christianity rests on not something but **someone**.
- The gospel is not just preferable; it is **necessary**.

The Good Reason



The one thing that Christianity has that no other belief system has is **Jesus Christ**.

He is “the beginning and end” of everything
...including our defense of the faith and hope we
have in him!

Next Week:

The How of Apologetics

