

The How of Apologetics



Session 2



“Christianity, if false,
is of no importance,
and if true, of infinite importance.

The only thing it cannot be
is moderately important.”

—C.S. Lewis

The Goal: Belief and Faith



The Necessity of Faith



A Major Misconception

There is a common misconception about what it means to have faith, specifically that it is as Richard Dawkins describes, “**belief** in spite of, even perhaps because of, the lack of **evidence.**”

The Necessity of Faith



A Major Misconception

This is largely due to a false dichotomy between **faith** and **reason**, such that it is popular to believe that the more you have of one, the less you will need of the other.

Unfortunately, many Christians speak and act as though this were the case.



*“Now faith is the assurance
of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.”*

Hebrews 11:1

The Necessity of Faith



A Biblical Correction

The Bible describes faith as the **substantial assurance** we have in things we cannot see based on things we can see.

In other words, faith is as much a matter of who or what we **trust** as it is a matter of who or what we **believe**.

The Necessity of Faith



A Universal Application

Everyone has a set of beliefs based on ideas that are ultimately **unprovable** and must be accepted by faith.

For example, the idea that **science** is the only reliable source of knowledge cannot be proven **scientifically**.

“To move from religion to secularism is not so much a loss of faith as a shift into a new set of beliefs and into a new community of faith, one that draws the lines between orthodoxy and heresy in different places.”

-Timothy Keller



The Necessity of Faith



A Universal Application

So, the question is, not so much what you believe, but who or what do you **trust** for what you cannot prove?

The Mechanics of Faith



Over the centuries, Christian theologians have developed a dynamic view of faith broken into three components.



Our Faith:

1. *Noticia*: The **Content** of Faith
2. *Assentia*: The **Assent** of Faith
3. *Fiducia*: The **Commitment** of Faith

Our Ministry:

- The Work of Evangelism
- The Work of **Apologetics**
- The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Status Quo: Our Secular Age



Our Secular Age



Religious belief was once seen as respectable, and unbelief was **unimaginable**. However, we now live in an age when unbelief is expected, and religious belief is **unsustainable**.

This is in large part due to a profound change in **plausibility structures** of our culture.

Plausibility Structures: What?



Plausibility structures are the ideas that we **presuppose**, often without realizing it, through which we filter other ideas as believable or unbelievable.

Two Examples:

- *Science holds a special place in how we come to know things. Scientific findings are more reliable than ideas that are determined by other means.*

Plausibility Structures: What?



Plausibility structures are the ideas that we **presuppose**, often without realizing it, through which we filter other ideas as believable or unbelievable.

Two Examples:

- *The key to finding personal fulfillment is to look inward, discover your true self, and follow your heart.*

Plausibility Structures: What?



Any ideas that conflict with these assumptions are usually filtered out and discarded as **unbelievable**.

Plausibility Structures: How?



In *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*, Sam Chan suggests that plausibility structures come from three main sources:

1. **Evidence** - the facts and data that we observe
2. **Experience** - our personal perspective
3. **Community** - the impact of the perspective of those around us

Plausibility Structures: How?



The interesting thing is, the most influential seems to be **community**. (So, where should our work be?)

The Strategy: Pascal's Suggestion



“Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it might be true. The cure for this is the first to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect. Next make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then how that it is.”

-Blaise Pascal



The Strategy



As Gavin Ortlund outlines in his book *Why God Makes Sense in a World that Doesn't*, our threefold strategy should be to:

- Show Christianity to be **respectable**.
- Show Christianity to be **desirable**.
- Show Christianity to be **true**.

The Strategy



Unfortunately, much of popular apologetics today begins and ends with the last step.

Apologetics is more than the arguments we give; it is the **life** that we **live**.

Next Week:

Worldviews

