

Fundamentals of apologetics

1. Biblical base for apologetics

1 Peter 3:15

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope you have.”

2. Three footings for sound faith

Just as only a three-legged stool can stand on any uneven surfaces, faith that can be sustained through difficult times requires three footings:

- 1) Word of God.
- 2) Apologetics.
- 3) Personal experience of God: prayers and life experiences.

3. What is apologetics?

We believe in Christianity, not only because it is good, but also because it is true.

Then what is truth?

Truth is a meta-narrative (knowledge and experience), that explains and corresponds to the reality; both historical and current, and common and personal.

It boils down to which world view best explains the reality.

Apologetics is the study of the truth around our faith.

It is about how to articulate, explain and defend the truth of your faith based on the evidences outside biblical teachings in non-biblical, everyday, common language against atheism, secularism, naturalism, materialism, post modern relativism and liberal Christian theology.

4. What are the benefits of apologetics?

- 1) Helps to deal with your own doubts in faith walk.
- 2) Helps to regulate ups and downs in spiritual temperature, and lead a more consistent spiritual life.
- 3) Helps your children, particularly high school and college student, to deal with spiritual and moral dangers they will face in liberal college campuses.
It is to expose them to the questions and challenges they will be forced to deal in college before hand, and help them to be prepared.
It is a spiritual vaccination they must have before being sent to new liberal environment.
- 4) Helps in defending your faith against militant atheists.
- 5) Helps to guide agnostics and seekers in your personal evangelism.

Prior to the postmodern world, we needed only the offensive weapon for evangelism, the Gospel. However the world we now live is already an enemy occupied territory. When we go into a battle into an enemy territory we need defensive weapons as well as the offensive weapons.

Apologetic insight and knowledge is the essential defensive weapon for evangelism in today's secular world.

5. Reality in most college campuses

A recent research showed that :

- 1) 70% of church going high school students have serious doubt about their faith,
- 2) Less than half of them share their doubts with parents or adults,
- 3) Most of doubts are cultural rather than theological in nature.

(Source: research by Kara Powel and Steven Argue, www.christianmomthoughts.com,

2/28/2019)

A number of surveys confirmed that 70-80% of high school graduates who are raised in Christian homes and churches leave their faith and church within the four years in colleges.

The reason is that they are not educated (either in the church or at home) and equipped to deal with all-out assaults from militant atheists, secular naturalists, and liberal Christians with mockery and ridicules.

In order to defend their faith and to fulfill the commission of the Gospel, we need to teach them the basis of our faith with reasons and evidences outside the scripture and to speak the truth in dual languages: secular language as well as biblical language.

6. Three key categories of issues in apologetics

- 1) Evidences of spiritual, meta-physical realities vs. materialistic, physical realities

Spiritual backdrop of human history and personal life, consciousness outside brain, concept and reality of god, existence of good and evil, spiritual warfare, miracle, life after death, near death experience, heaven and hell, etc.

- 2) Where are we from and where we are going?

Origin of universe: creation vs. static status, the future of universe

Origin of life: creation vs. evolution, the future of life species

Origin of my self; where am I from, what am I doing here, what happens when I die, etc.

- 3) Truth about Jesus and the bible

Trinity in God head, Jesus as the son of God; historical and scientific evidences of his existence, death and resurrection, and the bible as the word of truth inspired by God.

7. Three approaches in apologetics

- 1) Cosmological argument with creation of universe and life
- 2) Teleological argument with intelligent design
- 3) Moral argument with ethics and morality

8. Three categories of tools in the study of apologetics

- 1) Natural science; cosmology, high energy and sub particle physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, medical and brain science
- 2) Philosophy; logics, ethics, psychology, sociology, art
- 3) History; world history, history of civilizations, natural history, anthropology

9. Most common issues and challenges your children will face in liberal college campus

The key question: which world view can best explain the reality and provide the best solution to human and societal problems?

It can be subdivided into the questions of the following six categories.

- 1) Spiritual dimension of current life experience beyond emotion, intelligence and will.
- 2) Issue of eternity; is there any reality beyond the death?
- 3) The origin of the cosmos and the life.
- 4) Is the claim of Christ true?
- 5) Is the bible trustworthy as the word of God?
- 6) Cultural apologetics; Spiritual context of the political and cultural history of the world.

The most overarching question they will wrestle with is whether they can survive and/ win in the real world, the competitive schools and market places, by living God's way (vs. the secular world's way)?

They will continue to search, living a restless life until they find the answer.

Apologetics, along with the scripture, is a tool to help them find the answer to this question: God's way is not only the better way, but also the only way to have a successful and satisfying life in schools and market places as well as the assurance of blessing in the life to come.

10. Strategy to prepare your children for atheistic, liberal college campus.

Apologetics is a hard and huge subject difficult to get hands around. Therefore it is important to divide it into workable segments, as shown in 9), and focus on one or a few subjects at a time until you get your own holistic understanding of the subject.

Both parents and your children need to study the positions of both sides of each issue and come to the answer based on the most preponderant evidences and arguments, combined your own personal experiences.

- 1) Provide safe environment for your children to ask questions and express doubt about spiritual matters, Christian faith and church life.
 - Doubt is a good thing. It means that they are starting to think independently and critically.
 - Do not scold or make negative remarks.
 - Teach the difference between questions, doubts and unbelief.
 - Take it as an opportunity for them to open up, and for parents to probe what is really going on in their heart.
 - Start open conversation about their spiritual issues.
 - Be honest with your own (adult) spiritual issues.
 - Commit to studying and working through it together.
 - Strive to work through question openly and honestly, but accept that no one has all the answers and some questions are not answerable.

- 2) Learn yourself and educate your children on specific issues listed on 9) with books, web site, YouTube and formal courses offered at the church.

- 3) Expose them to atheism, naturalism, materialism, secularism, post-modern relativism and liberal theology while they are with you. Learn their evidences and argument, and prepare to deal with them in secular language.
 - You can do it easily by watching debates between Christians and atheists in YouTube.
 - Watch it with your children whenever possible.
 - Learn the evidences and logics they deploy.
 - Find the fallacies and holes in their evidences and logics.
 - Learn from the attitude and posture of the two opposing camps.
 - Teach them to think critically and make sound judgment.
 - Teach them how to articulate and debate with evidences and logic.
 - Make your own notes for easy review in the future.

11. Selected book resources

Natasha Crain, "Keeping your kids on God's side: 40 conversations to help them build a lasting faith"

Rick Cornish, "Five minute apologist"

Rice Brooks, "God is not dead."

Norman Geisler and Peter Bocchino, "Unshakable foundations"

Lee Strobel, "Case for a creator", "Case for Christ", "Case for the real Jesus", "Case for faith"

CS Lewis, "Mere Christianity"

Dinesh D'Souza, "What's so great about Christianity?", "Life after death"

Eben Alexander, "Proof of heaven"

Josh McDowell, "The new verdict that demands a verdict"
Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, "How now shall we live?"

12. Internet resources

www.crossexamined.org (Frank Turek)
www.ratiochristi.org (College campus apologetics)
www.Reasonablefaith.org (William Lane Craig)
www.risenjesus.com (Mike Licona)
www.reasons.org (Reasons to believe, Hugh Ross)
www.theareopagus.org (Jefrey Breshears)
www.focusonthefamily.com (James Dobson)
www.prageru.com (Dennis Prager)
www.rzim.org (Ravi Zacharias)
www.christianmomthoughts.com (Natasha Crain)
MyungHyun Kim (김명현) video series on Youtube (in Korean)

13. Learning from debates in Youtube.

Type in "the great god debate" or the name of the debaters.

Names of debaters, Christians and atheists, worth watching

Christians

Dinesh D'Souza
Tim Keller
Frank Turek
Ravi Zacharias
William Craig Lane
Hugh Ross
Francis Collins
Ben Carson
John Lennox
Alister McGrath
Lee Strobel
Gary Habermas
Peter Kreeft
Mickael Licona
RC Sproul
Albert Mohler
Richard Howe
Gary Habermas
Stephen C Meyer
Dennis Prager

Atheists

Richard Dawkins
Christopher Hitchens (dead)
Michael Shermer
Dan Barker
Bart Ehrman
Sam Harris
Daniel Dennett