

Name: _____

Lecture 1 of 12

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

By Dr. Paul R. Shockley

I. Introduction:

- A. The importance of being used by God in your sphere of influence. People are searching for final answers, looking to fill the “void within.”
- B. We are called to be faithful which involves knowing, practicing, and protecting the truth unto His glory and following in His ways, dependent upon the Holy Spirit.
- C. It is a privilege for people like us, who are so frail and finite, to be used by God to lives changed for His glory.
- D. Various types of people you encounter within and outside of the local church:
 - 1. Intellectual doubters;
 - 2. Emotional doubters;
 - 3. Volitional doubters.

II. What is apologetics and why is apologetics necessary:

- A. Apologetics is not “apologizing” for something. Apologetics is simply:
 - 1. Removing obstacles that have been placed between oneself and truth by the world, flesh, and devil. Sometimes people place obstacles in front of them because they want to live the way they want to live (Psychology of Romans 1): Suppression of truth degenerates into substitution of the truth for an idolatrous lie.
 - 2. Creating a viable setting for the gospel to be heard
 - 3. Some people are only one answer away from knowing Jesus Christ.
 - 4. Explaining why we believe what believe.
 - 5. Offering logical arguments, giving empirical evidences, addressing the existential struggles of the soul, and offering an account for divine experiences.
 - 6. Apologetics comes from the Greek word, “apologia,” “speech in defense.”
- B. The threefold need for apologetics:

1. First: The World Needs Apologetics: The gospel is no longer heard in isolation of alternatives.
2. Second: Reason Demands Apologetics: Consider the claims of truth being made today. What truth-claims possess the greatest explanatory power, empirical weightiness, is existentially relevant, viable, workable, and uphold aesthetic and moral properties that are good, honorable, and trustworthy?
3. Third: God Commands that We Do Apologetics:
 - a. 1 Peter 3:15-16a
 - b. 2 Corinthians 10:5
 - c. 1 John 4:1
 - d. Matthew 22:29
 - e. Matthew 5:6-9
 - f. Acts 17:16-17
 - g. Titus 1:9
 - h. Titus 1:13
 - i. Philippians 1:7
 - j. Jude 3

C. Clarifications:

1. Apologetics is not “arguing people” unto salvation. God uses apologetics to demonstrate that we have true truth that truly makes sense of reality. We are called to be faithful in giving reasons why we believe what believe with the disposition of both humility and a clear conscience; we leave the results to God.
2. The gospel is simply placing one’s trust in Jesus Christ, believing that He is God who died on the cross for one’s sins and rose again. The only condition for salvation is faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
3. We are following the example of Jesus Christ and the direct commandments by the apostles Paul and Peter, and Jesus’ half-brother, Jude.
4. Since God created us as rational beings, God expects us to look before we leap. Thus, faith is not contrary to reason. “Faith is the reliance upon that which we have good reason (s) to believe is true and trustworthy.” ~ J. P. Moreland

5. There are two dimensions of belief: *Belief that* and *Belief in*.
 - a. *Belief that*: We give the evidence and rational basis for confidence needed to establish belief in.
 - b. *Belief in* is placing one's trust in God for salvation. "Rational unbelievers want evidence that Jesus is the Son of God before they place their trust in Him." ~ Dr. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 38.

III. Three Ways to Go About Doing Apologetics:

- A. We can appeal to the mind via formal analysis of arguments and evidence.
- B. We can appeal to the heart via existential struggles of the human condition: The search for completeness, meaning, satisfaction, significance, value, purpose, hope, sense of belonging, the need for redemption and to be loved and love in return. It often deals with the reality of incompleteness within.
- C. We can appeal to volition via prescriptive commands, principles, etc.
 1. I contend that we should use all three lest we commit the fallacy of reductionism by focusing only on one aspect of the person to the neglect of the others.
 2. Strive to meet people where they are by taking them where they need to be; address the whole person.

IV. How Should We Then Live?

- A. Know the truth accurately... to the extent that we can give a reasonable presentation. Sometimes people are only one answer away from knowing Jesus Christ.
- B. Practice the truth consistently with gentleness and clear conscience. All people are made in the image of God. There is no such thing as a "little person." Everyone is inherently valuable. Treat them with respect.
- C. Defend the truth vigorously for Satan's counterfeit kingdom seeks to captivate, capture, immobilize and destroy all people.
- D. Communicate the truth competently. Like Jesus and Paul, we should be able to reason with others in truth and love, refute false ideas, demolish arguments, defend and verify the gospel, and recognize and refute false teachers and apostates.
- E. We are called by God to know the truth, practice the truth, and protect the truth. Will you rise up and be faithful in your sphere of influence, proclaiming the gospel

and giving reasons why you believe what you believe that have explanatory power, is empirically evident, and existentially relevant? It is possible. Beseech God right now to make it so but do so with the mindset that you want to glorify Him with all that you are and all that you have.

V. Recommended Sources:

- A. For the beginner: *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be An Atheist* by Norman Geisler & Frank Turek; *Saving Leonardo* by Nancy Pearcey; William Lane Craig, *On Guard*.
- B. For the intermediate: *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell; William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 3rd edition.
- C. For advanced: *Total Truth* by Nancy Pearcey; *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer* by Francis A. Schaeffer; Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for the Christian Faith*.