

## Lecture 3 Supplement: Be Methodical in Doing Apologetics!

In this supplement our goal is three-fold: (1) appreciate the mindset of being strategic in doing apologetics; (2) gain an understanding of the major models of apologetics & (3) introduce you with a summary introduction of the strategic 12-point apologetic method, arguing for biblical Christianity from ground zero. Just like the apostle Paul engaged the Athenians on Mars Hill in Acts 17, you will be presented with a method to engage people where they are and hopefully be used by God to take them where they need to be.

### 1. BE STRATEGIC:

#### A. REVIEW FROM FIRST TWO LECTURES:

1. Know the truth.
2. Protect the truth.
3. The world needs the truth
4. Reason demands the truth.
5. Bible commands that we do defend the truth: 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Cor. 10:5; Jude 3.
6. Everyone possesses a worldview. A worldview is simply a habituated way of knowing and doing. It is the big-picture or sum-total of beliefs that directs one's decisions and behavior.
7. Worldview beliefs are foundational to all other beliefs.
8. Components of a worldview:
  - a. One's view of God
  - b. One's view of reality
  - c. One's view of truth
  - d. One's view of knowledge
  - e. One's view of humanity
  - f. One's view of ethics
  - g. One's view of morality.
9. Worldview beliefs are formed, in part:
  - a. Uncritically
  - b. Informally
  - c. Over time
  - d. Inter-generationally
  - e. Intra-generationally
  - f. Community
  - g. Habits.
10. Therefore, seek to understand a person's worldview in order to best meet them where they are.

#### B. CONSIDER JESUS' METHODOLOGY IN MATTHEW 22:23-33 (Please read this passage):

1. Jesus knew his opponents' **point of view**.
2. Jesus appealed to **common ground**.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In Acts 17:22-31 Paul begins his presentation to the Athens by appealing to natural revelation and to certain true statements of the Athenian poets (Epicurean and Stoic philosophy). These men of Athens had very little knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, the apostle Paul engaged them where they were and took them where they needed to be. The response:

(1) Some mocked, (2) others wanted to hear more, and (3) others believed in Jesus Christ.

By gleaning from Luke's account of Paul's experience with the Athenians on Mars Hill, we recognize that the apostle (1) used a methodology that began where they were; (3) he knew philosophy and was able to use it rightly; (4) he recognized the apologetic value of natural revelation; (5) and he was very observant of his surroundings.

3. Jesus used **laws of logic** to dissect His opponents' argument and refute it powerfully.

**C. TOP 10 REASONS WHY WE SHOULD BE METHODOLOGICAL:**

- 10: God commands us to always be intelligent: Matthew 22:37;
- 9: God commands us to always be prepared: 1 Peter 3:15;
- 8: God commands us to be able to demolish false ideas and deceptive reasoning: 2 Cor. 10:5;
- 7: God commands us to control our tongue because it needlessly damages if not ruins others (James 3:1-12);
- 6: God commands us to edify others with sound doctrine and refute others: Titus 1:9;
- 5: Be an imitator of Paul (Phil. 3:17);
- 4: Be knowledgeable of extra-biblical knowledge and use it both appropriately and biblically in order to share the Gospel (Acts 17:22-31);
- 3: Paul defended and confirmed the gospel: consider...

**"Defend":** This Greek word is *apologia* asserting "speech in defense";  
**"Confirm":** This Greek word (βεβαίωσις) denotes either (1) the process of making known something in such a way as to confirm its truth or (2) the process of causing people to think about something and to accept it as trustworthy.<sup>1</sup>

2: Be qualified to minister from a position of influence:

Scripture shows believers qualified to minister in God's name in situations that required them to have intellectual skills in extra-biblical knowledge. Consider Daniel 1:3-4, 2:12-13, 5:7. In these passages we see Daniel and his friends in a position or status to influence Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, only because they showed "intelligence in every branch of wisdom." The men had studied and learned Babylonian science, geometry, and literature. And because of this, they were prepared to serve when the situation presented itself.

1: Resist Anti-Intellectualism: It is bankrupt and "wrong-headed":<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. 1996, c1989. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). United Bible societies: New York.

<sup>2</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from J. P. Moreland's *Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 53-62; J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2003); Norman Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Wheaton: Baker, 2000).

The following passages have been used to try to establish a case for not being intelligent:

**a. Human wisdom is Unbiblical: Distortion of 1 Corinthians 1-2 esp. in quotation of Isaiah 29:14**

In this passage people argue wrongly that since Paul is arguing against the “*wisdom of the world*” & did not come to argue with “*persuasive words of wisdom*” that we are called not to use human reasoning and methodological arguments; they are empty, futile, and pointless... they say Paul is against “*head knowledge*” but is for “*heart knowledge*.”

Why this is a wrong interpretation:

1. Paul contradicts his own practices in Acts and in his explicit well-argued appeal to confirm the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in 1 Cor. 15 using evidences.
2. Why argue intelligently against reason by using reason if reasoning is foolishness?!
3. This passage is a condemnation of false, prideful use of reason...not reason itself.

**b. Knowing Philosophy is Unbiblical: Colossians 2:8:**

1. Some argue falsely that this passage teaches that it is unbiblical to know extra-biblical knowledge such as philosophy.
2. Paul is not arguing against philosophy in general, but not to embrace heresy, using hollow and deceptive philosophy to establish their doctrinal views.
3. Paul used Stoic and Epicurean philosophy in his witness in Acts 17.

**c. The Natural Mind is Dead: Ephesians 2:1-2:**

1. Some argue falsely that since the human intellect of unregenerate is dead, depraved, wicked, and blinded, human reason is irrelevant.
2. This is an extreme theological position because if that is the case:
  - a. How could Adam and Eve even be aware of God’s presence as he enters into the Garden of Eden following their original disobedience?
  - b. Why would Paul use natural theology and philosophy in his witness to non-believers (Acts 17)?
  - c. How could the unregenerate “clearly perceive” and are “without excuse” if they are “*dead*” (Rom. 1)?

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The five most consequential questions in life are:

**Origin:**

Where did we come from?

**Identity:**

Who are we?

**Meaning:**

Why are we here?

**Morality:**

How should we live?

**Destiny?**

Where are we going?

One approach anyone can use when sharing his or her faith is use a present situation revealed in the news (such as 9/11; Iraq War; London Bombings; teen commits suicide; etc) and ask someone the following three questions:

What are we/ where did we come from (**creation**)?

What went wrong with the world (**sin**)?

And what can we do to fix it (**salvation**)?

- d. How can an unbeliever like Cornelius positively respond in Acts 10 to the knowledge he received and yet not be saved until Peter shares the Gospel of Jesus Christ to him?
- e. Being “dead” means being totally separated from God’s presence.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Jesus Christ was methodical in answering questions. Consider Jesus’ interaction with Sadducees. In Matthew 22:23-33 a group of Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead) attempted to ensnare Jesus with an intellectual argument involving a story of a woman who had successively been married to 7 brothers. They asked, “*Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?*” Jesus’ options appeared to be: (1) deny the resurrection; (2) accept polygamy & adultery by affirming her marriage to all 7 in heaven, or (3) unfairly & arbitrarily limit her marriage to 1 brother only.

Jesus response: (1) Knowing their perspective, (2) Jesus appealed to common ground (both parties accept as valid; Exod.3:6; they only considered the Pentateuch as valid instead of using a proof-text they would reject such as Daniel 12:2); (3) competently used laws of logic to dispute the Sadducees argument & refute it powerfully.

**d. “Heart” is more Spiritual than the “Head”: Matthew 18:1-4:**

- 1. Some argue wrongly that having a relationship with God is a matter of the heart, not the head.
- 2. This passage has nothing to do with the intellect. Rather, it is concerned about being self-sufficient and arrogant. Therefore, to be a “child” is to be humble and willing to trust God, not proud, obstinate, stiff-necked, or independently minded.
- 3. The term “heart” can be used to refer to the mind: Romans 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:6; 9:7; Eph. 1:18. Like C. S. Lewis states, “He [Christ] wants a child’s heart, but a grown up’s head.”<sup>3</sup>

**e. Being Ignorant is Being Spiritual: Isaiah 55:9; 1 Cor. 8:1:**

- 1. It has been wrongly interpreted that since “*God’s ways and thoughts are higher than ours*” and “*knowledge puffs people up and makes them arrogant*” (1 Cor. 8:1), we should not do apologetics or even think critically.
- 2. The fact is that God’s thoughts are higher than ours simply means that we will never be able to comprehend or grasp exhaustively God’s motives, purposes or providential guidance in the world. But we need to ask ourselves the following question: *Who in his “right mind” could have ever thought could gain such a thing?!* Rather, to admit this, however, says absolutely nothing about whether or not we should try to love and serve God intelligently.
- 3. Regarding the issue that arrogance comes from knowledge, we need to remember two things: (a) Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 8:1 is not against knowledge *per se*, but against a certain attitude toward it. The proper response to his warning is *humility*, not ignorance; (b) I’ve known unknowledgeable people who were arrogant, proud, and defensive esp. in their attempt to cover up their lack of knowledge. In fact, I’ve observed that that for everyone who is “*proud*” of their knowledge, education, and critical thinking skills, there are just as many people who are “*proud*” of their ignorance; they think that makes them “*more spiritual*.” Arrogance is not possessed solely by people who have developed their methodological abilities to engage thinking people.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943; rev. ed. 1952), 75.

Arrogance is a sin anyone can commit, no matter the amount of knowledge or education that is acquired.

## 2. Overview of 9 Distinct Types of Apologetics:

### A. Classical:

A prominent strategy in the history of the church methodologically, this approach to apologetics begins by using natural theology in order to establish theism and then by addressing the historical evidences that support Christianity.

1<sup>st</sup> Step: Point to Cosmos, Nature (intelligent design), Objective Morality using First Principles of Logic which is part of metaphysical reality God created:

2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Establish God's existence;

3<sup>rd</sup> Step: Show Claims of Christianity

### B. Evidential Method:

This method takes a *broad range* of historical evidences or data as the starting point and in this way argues for theism and Christianity *simultaneously*.

1<sup>st</sup> Step: Archeological, Historical, Manuscript Evidence, etc.;

2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Show Claims of Christianity (establishes God's existence)

### C. Historical Method:

Often called "resurrection apologetics"- this method takes historical evidence as the basis for demonstrating the truth of Christianity with the specific *starting point* being the historicity of the New Testament documents. This approach then moves to the use of the miracles of Christ, particularly, the resurrection, in order to demonstrate that Christ is God. The conclusion becomes that if one agrees that Jesus is the Son of God then what He affirms is true (the truth of Scripture in terms of form and content).

1<sup>st</sup> Step: Historical Manuscript Evidence using minimal facts approach.

2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Documented Historical Use of Miracles (esp. Resurrection) in order to demonstrate Jesus Christ is God;

3<sup>rd</sup> Step: Jesus as God affirms Scripture (both form and content).

### D. Relational Method:

Introduce people to the idea of having a love relationship with Jesus Christ. The starting point is the realization that Jesus is the embodiment of truth (moving from "what" to "who") and then support the fact that Jesus Christ is God by offering evidential, historical, and logical evidences (liar, lunatic, or God). This view counters postmodern teachings that all viewpoints or beliefs are equally valid in view of God, truth, and reality.

## DID YOU KNOW?

People know they are sinners. In fact, non-believers don't want to acknowledge what is right; they suppress & later try to substitute what they already know to be true (Romans 1). In fact, there are 5 witnesses that *continually* reveal that God exists, truth is knowable, & that there is basic right from wrong:

**Witness # 1:  
God's Handiwork in creation** (e.g., intelligent design; DNA; strong anthropic principle; natural beauty)

**Witness # 2:  
Conscience** (e.g. gratitude, regret; remorse, justice, marriage fidelity)

**Witness # 3:  
God-ward longings** (spiritual vacuum; universal desire to worship something; biological + spiritual beings)

**Witness # 4:  
Human Design** (biological harmony; complementary gender for reproduction);

**Witness # 5:  
Consequences:** (We reap what we sow; pursuing sin leads to scarring, further emptiness, ruin, & death; pursuing God leads to life, fulfillment, & purpose).

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- 1<sup>st</sup> Step: Personal Love Relationship with Jesus Christ;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Jesus Christ is God (evidential; historical; logical evidences);
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Step: Conclude that Jesus is the way, truth, and life.

### E. Experiential Method:

This internal approach appeals to Christian experience as the starting point for the truth of theism and/or Christianity. Divided into four major subtypes: (a) general religious experience, (b) special religious experience, (c) Christian mystical experience, (d) existential experiences, this method is commonly and powerfully used in discussing conversion experiences, "a changed life", and in testimonies how God worked in some area of life, circumstance, or situation: "*I want what you have!*"

- 1<sup>st</sup> Step: Divine Experience for God (Theism) or Jesus Christ, who is God.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: "I want what you have!"

### F. Presuppositional Method (worldview presupposition):

Presuppositionalism presupposes the truth of explicitly Christian theism as the starting point and then argues transcendently that all meaning and thought presuppose the Triune God of the Bible. Direct attempts to persuade nonbelievers are counterproductive because they are not regenerated; there is no neutral ground between the believer and nonbeliever where Christianity can be defended. Rather, the gospel is to be presupposed rather than defended. Though the major fathers of presuppositionalism such as Gordon Clark and Cornelius Van Til, differed in their view of first principle of logic, they saw no use for either the classical arguments for God's existence or for traditional usage of historical evidences as a witness to nonbelievers. Nevertheless, some later presuppositionalists came to disagree with Van Til, especially, on this issue.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Step: Remember there is no neutral ground between you & non-believer.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Present the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Step: You may undercut their presuppositions. However, it is futile to use classical or evidential arguments because of the effects of sin upon the mind of the unsaved.

### G. Cumulative Case Method:

Commonly called the cumulative case method, this informal approach is a strategy of probability. This approach seeks to show that Christianity provides the best explanation of a broad range of data (holistic approach) in terms of probability. This is helpful especially in view of those who are pluralists.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Step: Combine various arguments together (e.g., cosmological,

- teleological, moral, historical record of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ; experiential testimony):
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: For example, ask “*In light of the evidence given, what is more probable to believe...Christianity or Atheism?*”

#### **H. Cultural Method:**

This approach, pioneered by Francis A. Schaeffer, uses a presuppositional foundation that argues that only biblical Christianity posits a foundation that is strong enough to support sinful society and produce God-given values, meaning, and significance since He is here and not silent (God is both infinite and personal). Other worldviews/cultures cannot adequately nor consistently handle the sinfulness of humanity, the intrinsic value of creation (including humanity), and the nature of the external world or even produce or generate values that correspond to how things actually are (designed).

- 1<sup>st</sup> Step: Adopt opposing worldview or presupposition and press pressure upon it to determine its livability, viability, etc.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Step: Demonstrate the factualness of Christianity which does correspond to how things actually are.

#### **I. Reformed Epistemological Method:**

This approach offered by Dr. Alvin Plantinga maintains that positive arguments for Christianity or for theism are not necessary for holding belief in God. Belief in God is *properly basic* and therefore rational to maintain without having to offer any evidence or argument. Arguments can be offered, but apologetically, the focus is usually centered on rebutting or undercutting objectives to theism and Christianity.

### **3. TWELVE-STEP METHOD FOR DOING APOLOGETICS:**

Finally, I encourage you to gain a rich understanding of these twelve steps developed by Dr. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek. Memorize them and you will be better equipped in both removing obstacles that are blinding people from trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation and giving a reasonable defense why you believe what you believe.<sup>4</sup>

- Step 1: Truth about reality is knowable (undeniable).  
Step 2: The opposite of true is false.  
Step 3: It is true that the theistic God exists.  
Step 4: If God exists, then miracles are possible.  
Step 5: Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God  
Step 6: The New Testament is historically reliable.  
Step 7: The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God.  
Step 8: Jesus' claim to be God was miraculously confirmed by:

<sup>4</sup> Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2004).

- His fulfillment of many prophecies about Himself;
- His sinless and miraculous life;
- His prediction & accomplishment of His resurrection.

- Step 9: Therefore, Jesus is God.  
Step 10: Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.  
Step 11: Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God.  
Step 12: Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God (and anything opposed to it is false).

**Goals to keep in mind:**

1. **Know yourself:**
  - Spiritually (Gal. 5:16-18; 5:22; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 1:9)
  - Mentally (1 Peter 3:15);
  - Physically (e.g., are you tired, dirty, breath fresh, etc?).
2. **Know your surroundings:**
  - *Who* are the people you will be addressing?
  - Are you familiar with your surroundings?
  - Are you knowledgeable of their traditions, beliefs, etc.
3. **Know the 12-Steps!  
Be methodological.**

**“How do you define truth?”**

As a university student hosting an evangelistic crusade in the spring of 1994 I was asked by a notorious leading atheist in an East Texas community (before a large audience) if I would please define truth. Now that is a great question...one of which I was totally unprepared. The next day I met with my pastor and we put together the following comprehensive definition:

*Truth is that which corresponds to reality, identifies things as they actually are, can never fail, diminish, change, or be extinguished, must be able to be expressed in logical propositions [t + t = t], and is sourced in the God of the Bible who is the Author of all truth.*

**Memorize a comprehensive definition for truth...you will be glad you did!**