

Lesson Twelve: Humble Apologetics

Remember that we may be the only 'Bible' that someone ever reads!

The Final Summation

We have learned that all people are seeking personal satisfaction – but in reality they are seeking the fulfillment of their Divine mandate from God. They will never rest until they find this reconciliation. We have seen that everyone lives their lives with faith in something.

We have seen that the Biblical Christian Faith is warranted, AND livable. We now understand why Christianity is the Truth and the only means to reconciliation with God. We now know that we need have no fear at all in placing our trust in Christ, and in sharing that faith with others as the Spirit leads.

We have learned that all Christians are required by the Lord to share their faith, and to be prepared to share the reasons for their beliefs.

The questions of technique have been considered, and the message is clear. What we need now is some advice about issues that may arise, and how experienced ministers have handled them. Of utmost importance in the endeavor is a clear realization that the Holy Spirit is in control of this area. He leads, and we serve. He opens doors and provides opportunities, and we prepare and take advantage of them.

Current Event Apologetics

A very convenient and relevant means to relay your beliefs to people (without being too offensive) is in your everyday conversation. Practically everyday there is an issue in the news that gives us an opportunity to relay our beliefs, and discuss the pro's and con's of the various worldviews.

Remember that the Gospel is 'offensive' enough. We shouldn't add to that with our own 'offenses'!

Not only is the study of Biblical application to current events an effective way for preparing to relate the gospel to others, it can strengthen your own faith as you mature your gifts in these turbulent times. In fact, the application of Christianity to modern life is the meaning of personal devotions; this type of study will help both you and your non-believing friends!

Greg Kould (Stand to Reason) warns us of polemical dangers:

"We're right because we have the truth."
"We ought to be kind to those who do not have the truth."
"Many times those who have no argument are belligerent."
"So be careful that we don't come across as having no argument."

A Study in Christian Apologetics – What We Believe & Why

Lesson Twelve: Humble Apologetics

Cogito, Ergo Credo: I Think, Therefore I Believe!

Bringing Up the Subject

John Stackhouse recommends that we keep in mind three different tests of truth as we carry out our discussions. These can help us relate Christianity to the culture.

First, the claim of truth should be *coherent*. Coherence is the 'extent to which the various elements of a hypothesis fit together and confirm each other. The second is *correspondence*—the extent to which the hypothesis fits the data which is in need of explaining. The third is *pragmatic value*, the extent to which the implementation of the hypothesis makes a difference in actuality.

In practice, in a discussion of the issues, one could point out why the Christian view is rational and has warrant for belief, why there is better warrant for the Christian view than for other views, or why the Christian view is the only warranted view to be held.

Tactics for Mounting a Defense (Offense?) (Adapted from Greg Koukl, www.str.org)

Passive Questions – The Christian is usually solely caught in defending his position. This should not be the case! Whoever makes a claim should be able to defend it. We also can challenge their ideas and views and expose the underlying assumptions behind them. “How did you come to that conclusion?” “What do you mean by that?” “Why not believe...?”

Aggressive Questions – Like an attorney, sometimes we should only ask questions that you know the answer to! Never confuse a person's opinion or an assertion for an argument. “How do you know that?” “Why do you believe that?” All questions should drive the person to consider their beliefs, to think about what they believe as well as provoke further thought.

Expose Inconsistency - Examples of inconsistent statements that are quite prevalent today are: “All truth is relative.” “There is no absolute truth.” “It is wrong to judge people.” “You can never know anything for sure.” “You should not force your morality on someone else.”

Agree With Them(!) – Sometimes a person has not considered the logical results of their viewpoint. So, for the sake of argument we can accept their premises and pursue the result of their beliefs to their conclusion. Then the absurdity, inconsistency or un-livability of their position can be revealed (*reductio ad absurdum*). An example of an absurd position and its logical result is 'moral relativism', since moral relativism ultimately results in a sociopathic utopia.

Show Me! – Many times assertions are confused with facts. Simply asking a person to confirm 'facts' that are dubious is certainly fair! Examples of undocumented (and wrong) assertions masquerading as facts are: “Christianity has 'killed' more people than any other religion!” “There are so many translations of the Bible that we can never know what it really says.”

Take A Breath! – Many people will attempt to overwhelm with questions or issues, by interrupting or being hostile. Step back, ask for a moment to answer, then begin again. If the questions keep coming, ask them if they really wanted an answer or not. If it occurs again, keep your pearls (and yourself!) from being trampled. Unfortunately, there are many people who are just interested in arguing, NOT in learning.

A Study in Christian Apologetics – What We Believe & Why

Lesson Twelve: Humble Apologetics

Cogito, Ergo Credo: I Think, Therefore I Believe!

Therapeutic Apologetics

Unbelief comes about either because of a 'reason' or a 'cause'. A 'reason' can be discussed and revealed. They are usually not defensive. A 'cause' causes a person to have incorrect beliefs because of prior psychological issues (evidence will not move them.)

Some examples of causes: Social conditioning against Christianity; Bigotry; Reaction formation (e.g. anti-legalism); Anger against God; Desire to do one's own thing

Apologetics focused on 'causes' should be 'therapeutic'; in other words, it should help with the self deception many people experience. The mature Christian will try to help the person lower their defenses. Many times guilt or shame can cause the repression of knowledge (such as the knowledge of God.)

We should always provide acceptance and love by genuinely listening to their thoughts. Show you care, ask good questions, peel back the layers of their issues. Look for the signals of need and major life events (trials): divorce, sickness or death, worry or stress. Listen, Love, and Lead!

But Watch Out!

If people retreat from you, STOP! Explore other people's beliefs; don't just 'dump' your beliefs on them. We must always be careful about projecting an irrational spirituality. Never shoot from the hip. If you don't know an answer, that's ok—refer them to one of the 'specialists.' Remember we want to heal people, not just 'win arguments'!

What Must We Do?

- Keep informed on the issues of the day.
- Keep informed on the issues within the Church.
- Memorize scripture and pray every day.
- Pray for guidance and compassion for the lost; wisdom and restraint for the redeemed.
- Offer the message; don't demand their adherence.
- Take your responsibility for evangelism seriously.
- Follow your interests—that's where your gifts are.
- Become a 'specialist' in your gift for others to utilize.
- Teach first, preach second.
- Look for the need, and build bridges as Christ's ambassador to your part of the world.
- Meet routinely with other evangelists for support, training, and sharing.
- Listen, Love, and Lead!

Remember that Evangelism is a Process

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

1 Corinthians 3:6

A Study in Christian Apologetics – What We Believe & Why

Lesson Twelve: Humble Apologetics

Cogito, Ergo Credo: I Think, Therefore I Believe!

Thinking Points

What are the biblically relevant issues in the culture today? What is the Christian response to them?

What are your spiritual gifts? How are you maturing them?

How will you use your gifts for the benefit of the Kingdom?

How will you make yourself available to those who may need your spiritual specialty?

Who do you know that is “suffering from seeking?”

“Love is the final apologetic.” Francis Schaeffer

Lesson Summary

We are here for Christ’s purpose

We all have a gift that we must use in building, sustaining, and expanding the Kingdom

Be prepared to discuss the internal and external issues from a Christian perspective

We are here to heal, not condemn

Be aware of the evangelism process, and where you may be in it for this particular person

Listen, Love, and Lead!

Resources For Further Study:

[Humble Apologetics-Defending The Faith Today](#); John Stackhouse Jr. Oxford University Press; 2002

[Conformed To His Image—Biblical and Practical Applications to Spiritual Formation](#); Kenneth Boa; Zondervan