

reasons for apologetics

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

John 16:7–11; 1 Peter 3:14, 15, 20–25

BUILDUP THEME



BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

God expects us to prepare to defend and share our faith.

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 3:15

Many people have wrong beliefs about God, the Bible, Jesus, and the origins of the world. Some have dedicated their lives to defending their wrong beliefs and attacking Christianity. They sometimes sound convincing. This course will help you know how to respond to such attacks and how to defend Christianity.

1. What wrong beliefs did you hold as a child?

2. What, if anything, did you do to defend your wrong beliefs?

3. What eventually caused you to recognize and accept the truth?

Bible Study

Defining Apologetics

The word “apologetics” has nothing to do with apologizing or admitting wrongdoing. It means the opposite in a sense. “Apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia*, meaning to “speak away.” The word was used in ancient court rooms to describe the answer a defendant gave in response to an accusation. The defendant claimed he was innocent of charges of wrongdoing and spoke on his behalf to prove his innocence before a judge.

Christian apologetics, then, is generally a defense of the Christian faith. All believers should be working to become good defenders of their faith. It is our duty and not something to be left to intellectuals or scholars. Peter made clear that apologetics is for all believers.

Apologetics Guideline: Share Christ

Peter wrote to a group of believers who faced persecution or at least the possibility of suffering at the hands of unbelievers. He wanted the believers to know that suffering for being godly brings blessings (1 Peter 3:14). The blessing for suffering as a righteous person comes in the form of deep joy. That’s what “blessed” means. That joy comes from God and is not normal. People normally get angry or sad when enduring suffering.

4. Read 1 Peter 3:14, 15. What forms of suffering might you endure for being righteous? Which ones have you endured?

Peter, quoting Isaiah 8:12, told his audience not to be afraid of the possibility of suffering for Christ’s sake. Instead, they were to put their focus on Christ (1 Peter 3:15). Believers are to make Christ the Lord over their hearts. Our “hearts” are where we make decisions that affect our thoughts, actions, and direction in life. To sanctify the Lord in one’s heart means to treat Him as holy, or set apart, from everyone else. Jesus is to be the most important Person in our lives. We should take our cues from Christ rather than living in response to threats from unbelievers. When we do, we will gladly share Christ with the lost.

Apologetics Guideline: Share Confidently

When believers set Christ up as the most important Person in their lives, they need to be ready to talk about their relationship with Him. Peter commands believers to be ready to give a defense, or to speak to the validity of Christianity (1 Peter 3:15). Peter means to be ready to “speak away” the attacks on Christianity and to present truths that validate their faith. He also means to be bold and confident in defending the faith.

5. Some believers set themselves up as the most important person in their lives. How do you think they will respond to ridicule for their faith?

6. Read Mark 14:66–72. On the night Jesus was arrested and tried, whom do you think Peter had set up as the most important person in his heart?

Peter spoke from experience when he wrote 1 Peter 3:15. He had learned the importance of making Christ holy, or first, in his life. After his miserable failure and after Christ’s death and resurrection, he successfully faced many threats, choosing to give an answer for the hope that was in him instead of cowering in fear. Christ’s example impacted his life (1 Peter 2:21–25). In the end, Peter died as a martyr, just as Christ had predicted (John 21:18, 19).

7. Read John 21:18, 19. What do you think Peter concluded about his life as he was being carried away to be martyred for his faith? Did he consider himself blessed? Was he glad he had defended his faith in the face of threats?

Apologetics Guideline: Share Hope

Once Peter committed to live for Christ, he lived with certainty that Christ will prevail and that all of God's promises will come true. All believers share Peter's eternal hope. And when we cling to our hope in the face of persecution or ridicule (1 Peter 3:15), we present a strong argument for the validity of God, Christ, and the Bible. Believers who live full of hope in God will stand out in a world of uncertainty and despondency.

8. What might hope look like in a believer's life?

9. What practices cause a believer to become filled with hope?

10. Has anyone ever asked you about the hope in you? What were the circumstances? What did you say?

The darker and more hopeless the world becomes, the greater the opportunity believers have to shine the hope of Christ. We must be intentional in conveying our hope to the world through our words and actions.

Apologetics Guideline: Share Meekly and Respectfully

The hope-filled believer should also be meek and respectful—meek toward others and respectful toward God (1 Peter 3:15). Believers represent Christ to the world, so they should not be heartless or aggressive in defending their faith and hope in Christ. Unbelievers aren't the believer's enemies to be silenced; they are the believer's mission field to be won. Heartless and aggressive defense of the faith ruins Christ's testimony. Believers must meekly serve unbelievers, caring for their lost souls as they present to them their case for God, Christ, and the Bible.

11. What might motivate a person to be heartless and aggressive in defending Christianity?

To fear God is to respect His place of authority in our lives and trust His perfect wisdom in directing our lives. He commands us to give an answer for the hope that is in us, and He tells us to do it with meekness. Our fear of God will motivate us to obey God in the manner He directs.

12. Read 1 Peter 2:20–25. How did Christ show meekness and fear as He faced the cross?

Peter pointed to Jesus as the believer's example of suffering for doing good. He also noted that Jesus' suffering makes our righteous obedience to God possible. So Jesus gives us an example of meekness and then enables our meekness.

Apologetics Purpose: Provide Evidence of Christianity

Historically, apologists have recognized four main reasons for apologetics. Each of them will be evident throughout this course. The first reason is that apologetics validates Christian belief, setting forth positive evidence for Christianity. It communicates that Christianity is reasonable and worth accepting. Paul, for example, appealed to creation as evidence of God's existence (Rom. 1:20).

Providing evidence of Christianity includes a careful examination of scientific and philosophical evidence. The apologist presents the Christian worldview alongside opposing worldviews to show the validity of Christianity. If Christianity is all it claims to be, then facts should align with its claims.

13. What facts would you set forth as evidence that Christianity is a valid belief system?

Apologetics Purpose: Defend Attacks on Christianity

Apologetics also deals with attacks unbelievers lob at Christianity. For instance, unbelievers will attack the Bible as being full of errors and ultimately unreliable. Apologetics gives answers to those attacks. The answers clear away obstacles that keep unbelievers from considering Christ. The answers also dispel arguments that Christianity is unreasonable.

14. What about Christianity might seem unreasonable to unbelievers?

15. Read 2 Peter 1:20, 21. What arguments against Christianity did Peter address in this passage?

Apologetics Purpose: Refute Opposition Arguments

Unbelievers hold a variety of views that are opposed to Christianity. They, like Christians, give their defense of their views, listing what they consider to be irrefutable evidence. Evolutionists, for example, teach that they have clear evidence for the evolutionary origin of all living things.

16. How is “evidence” for evolution presented in public schools, secular museums, and on secular websites?

Generations of unbelievers who have gone through public schools believe evolution is a fact rather than a theory. They see the world, including themselves, as a byproduct of random chance rather than part of God’s plan. Apologetics examines the “evidence” for evolution and other systems of belief to expose them as unreasonable and even impossible.

Apologetics Purpose: Persuade Unbelievers to Trust Christ

No one can make someone believe in Christ through carefully crafted arguments. But the Holy Spirit can use the Biblical truth shared during an apologetic defense to draw the unbeliever to God.

17. Read John 16:7–11. What is the Holy Spirit's role in the life of an unbeliever?

Believers must make God's Word an integral part of their apologetics because the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to help unbelievers understand their need for salvation (Heb. 4:12).

Application

18. This course will answer the following questions. How prepared do you think you are to answer them?

- What is truth?
- How do we know God exists?
- Why is Christ's resurrection important?
- Why is Christ's resurrection certain?
- Is the New Testament reliable?
- Did Jesus claim to be God?
- How old is the earth?
- Why does evil exist?

19. Which of the questions have unbelievers asked you? How did you respond?

20. Pray that you will put Christ first in your life and that God will build your confidence in giving a reason for the hope in you.