

BITH600 APOLOGETICS

Introduction

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." 1 Peter 3:15

Peter's words ring true in today's anti-Christian culture. In this course, learners compare biblical, historical, and recent approaches to defending faith in God, Christ, and Scripture. The course emphasizes the apologetics of Peter among Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2), and Paul among the Gentiles in Athens (Acts 17). It compares the still influential approaches of Augustine and Aquinas but focuses primarily on the approaches of six apologists who led in the resurgence of evangelicalism during the last half of the twentieth century.

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

- Explain the nature of apologetics and the need for implementing a ministry based on sound reasoning.
- Sum up relevant biblical teaching and examples of the use of apologetics, comparing and contrasting Peter's approach to Jews and Paul's approach to Gentiles (Jerusalem and Athens).
- Compare and contrast the approaches to defending the faith in Augustine and Aquinas.
- Describe the roots and characteristics of non-Christian belief systems and three basic worldviews that challenged twentieth century apologists.
- Compare and contrast six distinct ways of reasoning in support of evangelical Christian faith with some objectivity and fairness.
- Develop a coherent approach synthesizing the strengths of the six as the base for verifying religious beliefs and living a life faithful to them.
- Mature in the art of communicating the faith to varieties of people from radically different worldviews and their cultural expressions.

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, apologetics can be defined as "the intellectual defense of the truth of the Christian religion, usually considered a branch of theology." It is the systematic argumentation or discourse in defense of a belief system. It is, in essence, the nature of evangelism: giving an answer for those who ask.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. 1 Peter 3:15-16

1. Attitude

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Always humility, as Jesus is recorded as indicating in the book of Matthew. Know what you are talking about, but if you are arrogant or boastful, then you know a lot less than you think you do. The nature of education is this: the more you know, the more you realize how little you know or can ever know. If you become proud and arrogant in your knowledge, then your education has short-circuited and you know nothing. I cannot stress this too much. You will not, in the Spirit, take what you learn in this class and use it to "nuke" the Mormons, JW's or other unredeemed people. This is not a contest. You are not going to battle against flesh and blood. You are trying to rescue flesh and blood. Remember, your goal, always, is to win the lost. Wisdom -- which comes from God -- will teach you how to do that with each person. You'll notice, in reading the Bible, that no two evangelistic presentations are alike.

2. What is to be defended?

The hope that you have. We are not in the business of trying to apologize for the actions of other Christians or ourselves. We are sinners. Admit that and accept the fact of wrongdoing in the course of church history and in the Christian church of today. Yes, the televangelists are scum. Yes, the church is filled with hypocrites. Yes, there is often legalistic self-righteousness, arrogance, boastful pride, power mongering, self-serving. But how is this different from the world at large?

3. Certainly, Christians SHOULD be different. But they aren't, usually.

That is unfortunate and makes the defense of Christianity -- that is, the positive portrayal of Christ all the more difficult. But remember, the central issue must remain Christ. If YOU or I are the issue, then we've messed up already and this verse explains what we need to be doing.

Learn more by purchasing the entire course that covers the following topics:

- Lesson 1 - Mystical Experience
- Lesson 2 - First Cause
- Lesson 3 - Teleological Argument
- Lesson 4 - Moral Argument
- Lesson 5 - Basic Presuppositions
- Lesson 6 - Theological Method
- Lesson 7 - What Is The Value Of Knowledge?
- Lesson 8 - The Trinity
- Lesson 9 - The Genealogy Of Jesus
- Lesson 10 - Specific Objections To Christianity From Critics