

Apologetics Seminar

- I. People come to faith in Jesus in many ways.
 - A. Through the teaching, example, and prayer of the church and their parents. (Peter Green)
 - B. Through the love of friends.
 - C. Through a crisis: death of loved one, divorce, criminal conviction (Chuck Colson).
 - D. Through reason. (C. S. Lewis)
 - E. Everyone is converted by the Holy Spirit working through the gospel. These are the different paths that the Holy Spirit uses to do His work of conversion.

- II. Faith and Reason
 - A. Many people, Christians and non-Christians alike, think faith and reason are completely separate.
 - 1. Faith is a feeling, or a conviction without any facts to support it. (Santa Claus)
 - 2. Reason uses objective facts that are always true apart from feelings or convictions.
 - B. In fact, faith and reason cannot be separated.
 - 1. Faith is not a feeling or a wild conviction.
 - 2. Faith is based on objective facts.
 - 3. Reason is influenced by the feelings and convictions of the thinker.
 - C. Everyone who has *faith* has some reason for it.
 - D. Everyone who *thinks* (reasons) has some subjective beliefs (faith) behind his facts.
 - E. Although people come to faith in many ways, reason always plays *some* role in developing their faith.
 - F. For some people, reason is the dominant factor in coming to faith.
 - G. But reason itself never saves anyone.

- III. Nature of Apologetics
 - A. Definition
 - 1. Giving a reason for your faith.
 - 2. From Latin *apologia* - reason.
 - B. Biblical basis for apologetics: 1 Peter 3:15 "...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you..."

- C. Apologetics does not save people.
1. God saves people through the proclamation of the gospel. (Rom. 1:16)
 2. God does not save people through arguments about the faith.
 3. Giving people a reason to believe the gospel is not the same as giving them the gospel.
 4. Accepting the reasonableness of the gospel, the truth of Christian faith, or the reliability of the Bible is not the same as believing the gospel.
 5. People do not believe because they receive answers to their questions about the Bible or Christianity.
 6. They believe because God gives them faith to believe. (John 1:12-13; Phil 1:29)
 7. God does this in the context of hearing the gospel.
 8. Apologetics may help some people hear the gospel.
- D. Apologetics is part of the work of evangelism.
1. It is providing reasonable answers to legitimate questions.
 2. It is demonstrating the unreasonableness of illegitimate questions.
 3. The goal of apologetics is:
 - a. Not to answer all questions.
 - b. Not to show the falsehood of other beliefs.
 - c. Not to prove Christianity.
 - d. But to prepare people to hear the gospel.
 4. Apologetics is cleaning out conversational distractions so that we can focus on the gospel.
 5. The work of evangelism is proclaiming the gospel: the good news that God sent His Son Jesus to die for us so that we might be saved from the death we deserve for our sins.

IV. Persuasion

- A. When you attempt to persuade someone, you provide reasons for the new thought.
1. Mexican politicians are corrupt – because they give special privileges to their friends.
 2. Donald Trump will be a bad president – because his views are crazy.
 3. You should believe in Jesus – because only He can save you from punishment for sin.
 4. We should baptize children – because God welcomes them as part of His church.

- B. The reasons you give are based on assumptions.
 - 1. It is wrong to give your friends special privileges.
 - 2. Donald Trump's views really are crazy.
 - 3. You will be punished for your sins. Jesus is able to save you from that punishment.
 - 4. The church consists of adult believers and their children.

- C. Everyone has different assumptions about life.

- D. People gather in groups based on shared assumptions.
 - 1. Friends of Mexican politicians do not assume they are corrupt.
 - 2. Trump voters assume that Trump's views are good.
 - 3. Believers in Jesus join churches.
 - 4. Paedo-baptists join presbyterian churches.

- E. It is relatively easy to persuade people to change their opinions as long as you both share the same assumptions.
 - 1. ?
 - 2. Differing views on how to promote Donald Trump
 - 3. Differing views on which songs to sing in church
 - 4. Differing views on whether to baptize by sprinkling or pouring.

- F. It is very difficult to persuade people to change their opinions when their assumptions are different.
 - 1. Politicians are good vs corrupt.
 - 2. Donald Trump's views are good vs crazy.
 - 3. Jesus forgives sins vs there is no punishment for sins.
 - 4. God welcomes children into the church vs God only welcomes professing believers into the church.

- G. Christians and non-Christians have different assumptions about life.
 - 1. Who Jesus is.
 - 2. What sin is.
 - 3. How reliable the Bible is, etc.

- H. Our foundational assumption is different.
 - 1. Christians believe the Bible is God's word.
 - 2. Since we believe the Bible is the foundation of truth, there can be no other foundation.
 - 3. The Bible is our starting point in any discussion.

4. Thus there is no way to “prove” the validity of the Bible, and there is no other basis for discussion.

- I. If Christians and non-Christians disagree on this foundational assumption, it is impossible to prove Christianity.
- J. But remember, the goal of apologetics is not to prove Christianity, but to remove reasonable objections and prepare people to hear the gospel. The Holy Spirit will persuade people to believe in Jesus.

V. Argumentation/Conversation

A. How to argue effectively

- 1. Our starting point is the existence of the true God and the reliability of His word.
- 2. Our goal is to show that the objection to Christianity is not valid.
- 3. Positive argumentation.
 - a. Provide reasonable answers to questions.
 - b. Show that the universe makes sense with our starting point – God and His word.
 - (1) Questions can be answered satisfactorily.
 - (2) We can live consistent with our presuppositions.
 - c. Therefore the starting point must be true – i.e. that God and His word are true.
- 4. Negative argumentation.
 - a. Assume your opponent’s starting point.
 - b. Consider possible answers to questions.
 - c. Show that the universe does not make sense with this starting point.
 - (1) Questions cannot be answered satisfactorily.
 - (2) We cannot live consistent with these presuppositions.
 - d. Therefore the starting point must be false – i.e. that your opponent’s idea must be wrong.
- 5. Therefore, this objection to Christianity is not a valid objection – i.e. this is no reason to reject Christian faith.
- 6. Your hope is that your opponent will begin to give Christianity a fair consideration, and that you can move soon into sharing the gospel.

- B. Example: The problem of evil – How could a good God allow the evil in the world?
1. Conflicting assumptions about:
 - a. Man: inherent goodness, power to change, etc.
 - b. Evil: its nature
 - c. God
 2. Point of contact: we all see and experience evil and its effects because we are all images of God and we all live in the same world
 3. Positive argument
 - a. Man is image of God, thus a free moral agent.
 - b. Man rebelled against God. This freedom is inherent in the image of God.
 - c. Man is damaged by rebellion against God; evil is the result of rebellion; evil is not a substance, but an orientation toward God.
 - d. Man is capable of great good, but prone to great evil.
 - e. God addressed evil by coming as a man to conquer it (etc.).
 4. Negative argument
 - a. Assume that God could destroy evil if He wanted to and had the power to do so.
 - b. Show that evil is not a substance that can be destroyed, but a choice of man.
 - c. Show that choice is inherent in humanness, the image of God; to destroy choice would be to destroy man; no one wants humans to be robots.
 - d. Show that all are evil to some degree, and so God would have to destroy us all.
 - e. Thus reality as we know it and want it to be cannot exist without the possibility of evil.
 5. So although evil in the world is a terrible thing, the best way to explain it is with the Bible.
 6. If the Bible is right about evil, perhaps we should consider whether it might also be right about the gospel.
- C. Other examples: suffering, science, hell, Christian uniqueness.

VI. Topics in Apologetics

A. Authority

1. The source of our most fundamental beliefs.
2. E.g. Why do you believe the Bible?

B. Ethics

1. The study of what is morally right.
2. E.g. How could a just God condemn those who never heard the gospel?

C. Theology

1. The study of the nature of God (narrow definition).
2. The study of Christian doctrine (broad definition).
3. E.g. The trinity doesn't make any sense to me.

D. Epistemology

1. The study of knowledge – how we know what we know.
2. E.g. How can you be sure your beliefs are true?

VII. Reading

A. “The Other Side of the Story”

<https://cdavidgreen.org/other-side-story/>

B. “Dialog with Abdul” <https://cdavidgreen.org/dialog-with-abdul/>

C. *Certainty of the Faith*, Richard Ramsay

D. *Reason for God*, Tim Keller

E. *Every Thought Captive*, Richard Pratt

F. *Popologetics*, Ted Turnau

C. David Green