

Apologetics Course

Lesson One

Apologetics Definition, Tactics & God

- Introduction : What is Apologetics?
- Biblical Basis
- Need to be Theologians
- The new trend of Deconstruction
- Clash of Worldviews (like Cultural Conflicts)
- Truth about Truth
- Tactics
- Arguments for God's existence
- Conclusion & Common Questions
- Workshop

Introduction : What is Apologetics

PEOPLE HAVE QUESTIONS (BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS alike have many questions!)

- How could you believe in the bible - science figured everything out! Evolution is real!
- The Bible is just a bunch of fabricated stories - how could you believe in it?
- There are so many inaccuracies in the Bible - how could we trust it? Name one?
- How can I make science and religion make sense and work together?
- You don't need God - all you need is to speak what you want to the universe and you'll get it right?!

You may have some of your own questions to add to this list. In fact almost everybody shares about the same 20 questions about the faith in their lifetime, and how they acquire answers to these questions affects their relationship to the Christian faith, to Jesus Christ, and to those around them who may hold different world views.

What is this word apologetics? We have heard it being tossed around in academic circles for people who want to defend and promote specific ideas or positions on subject matter. But the term comes straight out of the Bible and it simply is a branch of theology for the defense and the communication of explaining what and why when it comes to faith in Jesus Christ in the Christian context.

Matthew 22:37

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

That implies emotional feelings need to align with the intellect in order to properly align with a souls – you cannot have your heart and mind in conflict over something (especially the truth) – and expect a long term

1 Peter 3:15

"But in your hearts revere 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"

There is a simple command here by the apostle Paul, says that in every season and every circumstance if given the chance be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you why you believe what you believe, but to do this in love with gentleness and respect.

Apologetics Demonstrated Biblically

Major examples of apologetics *demonstrated* (not just commanded) in Scripture, organized by figure and context:

1. Jesus — The Master Apologist

Matthew 12:22–32 | Mark 12:12–37

When the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus exposed the logical error in their charge. He demonstrated how, if their accusation were true, Satan would be divided against himself — "If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (Matt. 12:26). His apologetic strategy was to assume the Pharisees' position and show how it leads to an absurd conclusion.

In Mark 12, Jesus was repeatedly asked tricky questions by opponents. Using logic, reason, and Scripture, he left his critics speechless — an intellectual heavyweight who didn't shy away from reasoned debate.

2. Paul at the Athens Areopagus — Contextual Apologetics

Acts 17:22–34

Paul's approach to the Athenians shows his ability to contextualize his message to his audience. Despite being provoked by a city full of idols, he compliments their quest for spirituality, quotes a familiar saying about Zeus, and uses the words of the Greek poet Aratus in his appeal.

Paul declared: "Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar inscribed: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." He then reasoned from creation and the resurrection, meeting his pagan audience on their own ground before pointing to Christ.

3. Paul in the Synagogues — Scripture-Based Reasoning

Acts 17:2–4; Acts 18:4; Acts 19:8–9

In Thessalonica, Paul spent three Sabbaths in the synagogue reasoning from the Scriptures — "explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise

from the dead" — and demonstrating that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jews, God-fearing Greeks, and many prominent women were persuaded.

In Corinth, every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. Later in Ephesus, he entered the synagogue and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God for three months, then reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus.

4. Apollos — Public Debate from Scripture

Acts 18:27–28

Apollos arrived in Achaia and vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah. This is perhaps one of the clearest New Testament pictures of formal apologetic engagement.

5. Stephen — Salvation-History Apologetics

Acts 6–7

Stephen stands as one of the earliest examples of apologetics in the church. As one of the first believers to publicly defend the faith, he walked through Israel's entire history and boldly proclaimed Jesus as the promised Messiah — doing so with deep conviction even in the face of violent opposition.

6. God Himself in Isaiah — The Divine Invitation to Reason

Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 41:21–23

God's own words in Isaiah — "Come now, let us reason together" — have been taken as a biblical basis for rational, evidence-based engagement with skeptics. Isaiah 41 similarly challenges false gods to present their case and offer proof, modeling a forensic, evidence-demanding posture.

7. Paul Before Festus and Agrippa — Legal Defense of the Faith

Acts 26

In Paul's trial speech before Festus and Agrippa, he uses the formal Greek term *apologia* — "I make my defense" — making this one of the clearest New Testament uses of the word from which "apologetics" derives. He presents the resurrection of Christ as a public, verifiable fact rather than a hidden event.

8. Creation Itself as Natural Apologetics

Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:20

Psalms 19 opens with the declaration that "the heavens declare the glory of God," while Romans 1 states that God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen through what has been made, leaving all people without excuse. These passages ground apologetics in general revelation itself.

Summary

The Bible doesn't merely *command* apologetics (as in 1 Peter 3:15 and Jude 3) — it *models* it at every level: Jesus using *reductio ad absurdum* against the Pharisees, Paul doing contextual philosophy with Greek pagans, Apollos in formal synagogue debate, Stephen rehearsing redemptive history, and God himself inviting rational dialogue in Isaiah. The entire enterprise is thoroughly biblical.

NEED TO BE GOOD THEOLOGIANS

Acts 17:11

Now the **Berean** Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

This is another one of those passages where it is amazing to see that Paul was commending the believers to check what he was saying, to do their own research and to pursue the truth in the matters that he was quoting for he was referencing passages in the Bible that are accessible to all of us so that we can go see for ourselves what God has said and what God did to fulfill what he promised. This helps our mind match our heart in terms of knowledge.

The Alarming Trend of “Deconstruction”

The deconstruction trend in Christianity is a phenomenon where Christians critically reevaluate their faith, beliefs, and the institutional structures of the church. This is a growing concern and a growing trend online where prominent Christians deconstruct their faith, which usually is a good thing, but end up publicly testifying about leaving the faith because they claim to have examined their beliefs more closely. I believe that these testimonies are full of fallacies and misunderstandings and set dangerous examples for young Christians. Like I mentioned earlier, deconstruction is a vital part of Christian growth because you are supposed to know what you believe and why you believe it. There has to be something more than just blind faith. Here are some key points:

1. What is it? Faith deconstruction is an unraveling of stories and assumptions that form your understanding of God, the universe, and your purpose within it. It's like tearing away the carpeting and knocking out the drywall of your faith to see the bones that lie beneath. This process can be messy, complicated, and hard.
2. Why does it happen? It often occurs when Christians start to question their faith and jettison previously held beliefs, sometimes to the point of no longer identifying as Christians. It's essentially spreading out your messy, tangled pile of beliefs so that you can search for the truth.
3. What's the impact? The results of faith deconstruction can be beautiful, rich, and fruitful. It allows Christians to disentangle from harmful and toxic cultural attitudes that have filtered into the church and embrace a purer biblical faith that better reflects the Gospel of Jesus.
4. Who does it affect? It affects both individuals who are in the midst of faith deconstruction and those around them who want to understand why others are deconstructing Christianity and what it might mean for the church.

Remember, deconstruction doesn't necessarily mean throwing out or reevaluating everything you believe. It's more about seeking truth and authenticity in one's faith journey. But for many they mean to use deconstruction to justify leaving the faith and rejecting Christianity surrounding usually one of these topics that eventually were unresolved in their minds.

1. The validity of the Bible

2. The idea of suffering and evil
3. Exposure to bad theology
4. Failed end-time prophecies (Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian false prophets)
5. Perceived contradictions in the Bible as well as with science.
 1. Noah's Flood! Six evidences
 2. How Could Noah Fit All The Animals In The Ark?
 3. Gospels don't all say the same thing. Therefore are contradictions.
6. Misunderstanding of science, and what we actually truly know.
 1. biology
 2. evolution
 3. archaeology
 2. The number one misunderstanding is we have been fooled to believe that scientists today Completely understand how the universe began life began the mechanisms of DNA and evolution work, but that's farthest from the truth. They still don't have a clue.
7. Emotions prioritized over truth. Truth can be subjective Instead of objective. Truth by definition is objective, but today's culture wants to change truth and make everything about an emotional appeal.
 1. Highlighted in the LGBTQ.

CLASH OF WORLDVIEWS

- **Christian Worldview:** This centers around the belief in one God who created the universe and humanity. God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and humans are created in God's image but are inherently sinful. The Bible is seen as God's revelation to humanity, providing a moral compass and the path to salvation. Life has meaning and purpose within God's grand plan.
- **Non-Christian Worldview:** This encompasses a wide range of beliefs that don't rely on a God. Some may believe in a higher power but not a personal God. Existence may be seen as a product of chance or natural processes, with no inherent purpose. Meaning and morality may be derived from reason, experience, or fulfilling human potential.

Feature	Christian Worldview	Non-Christian Worldview
Origin of Universe	Created by God	Naturalistic explanations (Big Bang, etc.)
Humanity's Place	Created by God, with inherent purpose	Product of nature, no meaning
Source of Morality	God's will and teachings	Experience, or social constructs (Social, Cultural)
Meaning in Life	Fulfilling God's plan for humanity	Self-determined or based on fulfilling human potential

The Truth About Truth

1. Absolute Truth:

- **Definition:** Absolute truth refers to statements or propositions that are universally and unconditionally true, regardless of context, perspective, or individual beliefs.
- **Characteristics:**
 - Immutable: Absolute truths do not change over time or across different situations.
 - Independent: They exist independently of human opinions or cultural norms.
 - Objective: They are not influenced by personal feelings or biases.
- **Examples:**
 - Mathematical truths (e.g., $2 + 2 = 4$).
 - Logical principles (e.g., the law of non-contradiction).
 - Fundamental scientific laws (e.g., the law of gravity).

2. Relative Truth: (Sounds like an Opinion doesn't it?!)

- **Definition:** Relative truth refers to statements that are context-dependent and can vary based on circumstances, perspectives, or cultural norms.
- **Characteristics:**
 - Subjective: Relative truths are influenced by individual viewpoints.
 - Situational: They may change based on context (time, place, culture).
 - Pragmatic: Useful for practical decision-making but not universally binding.
- **Examples:**
 - Personal preferences (e.g., "I like chocolate ice cream").
 - Cultural norms (e.g., appropriate behavior in different societies).
 - Moral judgments (e.g., what is considered ethical varies across cultures).

Absolute truth is fixed and universal, while **relative truth** is context-dependent and subject to interpretation. Both play essential roles in our understanding of reality and how we navigate the complexities of life. As Christians we believe in the existence of absolute truth and that morality stems from that absolute truth as revealed in God through Jesus Christ. **Relative truth is basically an opinion**, but too many people today confuse truth with opinions without realizing that there is a greater truth that defines what truth means. Truth by itself is already absolute in its definition but culture today tries to use the same word as a substitute for opinion.

Beliefs in Opinions vs Truth

1. Contrary beliefs are possible, but contrary truths are not possible.
2. You can believe everything is true, but everything can't be true.
3. Objective truth can't be denied without being affirmed.

All Truth is Absolute
Something that is true is true
for All Persons
at All Times
in All Places

TACTICS — Greg Koukl

The Big Idea: *Never make a statement when a question will do the job.*

Koukl's Tactics teaches Christians to engage spiritual conversations not with debate-style arguments, but with carefully chosen questions that clarify, probe, and guide — all while remaining gracious and calm.

The goal is modest: leave a stone in someone's shoe — something they can't easily ignore. You plant. God gives the growth. (1 Cor. 3:6)

"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders... Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt." — Colossians 4:5–6

SCENARIO TO CONSIDER: Read this and then ask: "What would you say?"

You're at a family dinner. A cousin who left the faith in college says — in front of everyone:

"Honestly, I just can't believe anymore. Science has basically disproved God. The Bible is full of contradictions. And religion just causes wars anyway."

He's not hostile — just matter-of-fact. Everyone is listening. What do you do?

That instinct to defend everything at once is exactly what we're going to replace today with something far more effective — _____."

The Three Skills of an Ambassador

Koukl frames every Christian as an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Ambassadors need:

- Content — know the message (what you believe)
- Character — embody Christ's demeanor; if you get angry, you've already lost
- Wisdom — an artful method for using what you know under pressure ← this is what Tactics teaches

The Columbo Tactic: Three Questions

Named after Lt. Columbo, the TV detective who solved every case by asking innocent questions. The master rule: the person asking questions steers the conversation — without appearing aggressive.

Question	What It Does	Use When You Hear...
"What do you mean by that?"	Gathers information. Forces precision. Prevents you from arguing against a caricature. Shows genuine curiosity.	<i>Any vague or loaded claim: "The Bible is myths." "Religion causes harm."</i>
"How did you come to that conclusion?"	Reverses the burden of proof. Forces them to provide reasons, not just assertions. Reveals if there's a real argument.	<i>Any unsupported claim: "Jesus never claimed to be God." "Science disproves religion."</i>
Follow-up questions that make a point	Surfaces flaws in their view through questions. You guide without lecturing. They feel the tension, not your argument.	<i>Once you know their position and see an internal problem.</i>

A quick example — Columbo 1 & 2 in action

SCIENCE HAS DISPROVED GOD

Cousin: Science has basically disproved God.

You: *What do you mean by 'disproved'? Do you mean a logical contradiction, or just that God seems unnecessary?*

Cousin: I guess... science explains everything without needing God.

You: *Interesting. So the claim is more that God seems unnecessary — how did you come to that conclusion? Is 'unnecessary for explaining nature' the same as 'doesn't exist'?*

A quick example — Columbo 3 (making a point through questions)

MORALITY WITHOUT GOD

Cousin: There's no objective right or wrong. Morality is just whatever society decides.

You: *Do you think the Holocaust was genuinely wrong — or just something our culture happens to disapprove of?*

Cousin: Obviously it was wrong.

You: *I agree. But on your view, a society that approved it did nothing objectively wrong. Does that conclusion feel right to you?*

Bonus: The Suicide tactic — when a claim defeats itself

Claim: "There is no truth."

→ **Response:** *"Is that statement true?"*

Claim: "You can't know anything for certain."

→ **Response:** *"Are you certain about that?"*

Claim: "Never impose your values on others."

→ **Response:** *"Isn't that a value you're imposing on me?"*

LAB — Pair Role-Play + Group Debrief

Find a partner. One person plays the skeptic, one plays the Christian. Your only goal: ask one of the three Columbo questions naturally — do not give a speech. After both scenarios, debrief as a full group.

LAB A: BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

Skeptic says: *"I can't trust the Bible. It's full of contradictions — it's basically just ancient mythology."*

Your move: Use Columbo 1: clarify what they mean by 'contradiction,' then Columbo 2: ask how they arrived at that conclusion. Don't defend the Bible yet. Just ask.

LAB B: ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO GOD

Skeptic says: *"All religions basically teach the same thing. Every path leads to God in the end."*

Your move: Use Columbo 1: 'What do you mean by that — do you mean the ethics are similar, or the actual truth claims?' Then Columbo 3 if ready: 'Christianity claims Jesus is the only path. Islam denies Jesus is God. Buddhism denies a personal God altogether. How can claims that directly contradict each other all be true?'

Debrief Questions — Full Group (5 min)

- What was the hardest part of staying in question mode instead of launching into an explanation?
- Did staying curious actually change the tone of the conversation? How?
- Which of the three questions felt most natural? Which felt awkward?

ASSIGNMENT

This week: In one real conversation, use only Columbo Question 1.

Don't try to answer anything. Don't defend the faith. Just ask: "What do you mean by that?" — and listen.

Bring one sentence back next time: what happened?

The Ambassador's Creed

Ready	Alert to opportunities to represent Christ (1 Peter 3:15)
Patient	Listen first, then gently engage
Reasonable	Present facts and evidence, not bare assertions
Tactical	Use techniques that fit the situation
Humble	Don't press beyond your evidence — you are fallible
Pleasant	Grace and kindness in every exchange (Colossians 4:6)
Dependent	God's work, not ours, produces spiritual fruit (1 Corinthians 3:6–7)

Quick-Reference Card (cut out & keep)

Tactic	The Question	Use When
Columbo 1	<i>"What do you mean by that?"</i>	Any vague or loaded claim
Columbo 2	<i>"How did you come to that conclusion?"</i>	Any unsupported assertion
Columbo 3	<i>Follow-up questions that surface flaws</i>	Once you know their position
Suicide	<i>"Is that statement itself true?"</i>	Self-refuting claims
Roof Off	<i>"If that's true, what follows?"</i>	Views with unlivable implications

"Without God's work, nothing else works."

— Greg Koukl

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

There are several arguments that have been put forth to support the existence of God. Let's explore some of the most prominent ones:

1. Cosmological Argument:

- This argument posits that everything that exists must have a cause. Since the universe exists, it must also have a cause.
- Nothing can cause itself, so the universe cannot be the cause of its own existence.
- Therefore, something outside the universe (a transcendent cause) must have caused the universe to come into existence¹.

2. Teleological Argument (Argument from Design):

- This argument suggests that the complexity and order observed in the natural world imply a purpose or design.
- For example, the intricate design of living organisms, the fine-tuning of physical constants, and the complexity of biological systems all point to an intelligent creator.
- Advocates of this argument often compare the universe to a well-designed watch, implying the existence of a skilled watchmaker (i.e., God).

3. Moral Argument:

- The moral argument asserts that objective moral values and duties exist, and their existence requires a moral lawgiver.
- If there are objective moral standards (such as "murder is wrong" or "helping others is good"), then there must be a transcendent source for these moral principles.
- Many proponents of this argument believe that God provides the foundation for moral values and obligations.

4. Ontological Argument:

- The ontological argument is a philosophical argument that seeks to prove God's existence based on the concept of God.
- It begins with the definition of God as the greatest conceivable being.
- If God exists only in our minds (as an idea), then a greater being—one that exists both in our minds and in reality—could be conceived.
- Therefore, God must exist in reality to be the greatest conceivable being.

5. Argument from Religious Experience:

- Some people claim to have had direct experiences of God or the divine.
- These religious experiences can be powerful and transformative, leading individuals to believe in God's existence.

- While subjective, proponents argue that these experiences provide evidence for God.

6. Pascal's Wager:

- Blaise Pascal proposed that belief in God is a rational choice, even if the existence of God cannot be proven.
- According to Pascal, if you believe in God and live a virtuous life, you have everything to gain (eternal reward) and nothing to lose (if God doesn't exist).
- Conversely, if you don't believe in God and live a sinful life, you risk eternal punishment if God does exist.

Remember that these arguments are not universally accepted, and there are counterarguments and critiques for each. All these arguments as a whole continue to build a tremendously important and convincing the case that God of the Bible who created the universe exists.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, apologetics needs to be something that is pursued by every believer without them even fully understanding that it is apologetics that they are engaging in. Anytime you struggle and try to give somebody an answer and reason why you have put your hope in Jesus Christ you are engaging in some level of apologetics.

1. Isn't the bible full of myths and fairy tales?
2. Can I make it to heaven by just being "good enough"?
3. Science has all the answers—why do we need God?
4. Evolution proves that we were not created by a divine being, right?
5. The bible is full of contradictions, why should we trust it?
6. What if I have doubts?
7. Can Science and Christianity co-exist?
8. Why would a good God allow evil to exist?
9. Why would a good God allow suffering to exist?
10. Why would God command the death of so many people in the Bible (e.g., the Canaanites)?
11. Why does God remain so "hidden?"
12. Why does the "Old Testament God" seem different than the "New Testament God?"
13. Should I run my life based on feelings or on facts?

14. What are key similarities and differences between the world's major religions (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism)?

15. Is Christianity a less intelligent worldview than atheism? Why or why not?

You can spend hours and days weeks months and years studying all that you think you need to know about defending the faith but there is just way too much information for any one person to consume and we must each need to weigh the evidence that we have been given to fully understand how to communicate the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ as we have experienced it and as we have understood it to the best of our ability to a world that is lost without this truth. Every believer is a theologian, everyone is an apologist, and everyone is an evangelist, and everyone is a priest, and everyone is a disciple maker.

Workshop

1. Learn to articulate at least 2 or 3 of these arguments from this lesson.
2. Find out where your own questions are and begin to pursue answers.
3. ASSIGNMENT :
 1. Use the Jesus/Columbo Tactic: Ask the first question only!
4. Go with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

OTHER RESOURCES

1. Cross Examined Ministry (Dr. Frank Turek)
2. Cold Case Christianity (Dr. James Warner Wallace)
3. Answers in Genesis
4. Genesis Apologetics
5. Lee Strobel (Case for Christ, Case for Faith, Case for a Creator, Case for an Afterlife) books.
6. Evidence that Demands a Verdict (Josh McDowell)