

# COMPENDIUM OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS RESOURCES

*Helpful Answers & Valuable Teaching Tools  
for Addressing Life's Most Critical Questions*



*Lines of Evidence • Talking Points • Starter Answers • Simple Definitions • Charts  
Seminars • Illustrations • Conversation Facilitators • Humor • Interactive Exercises*  
**FOR PASTORS | STUDENTS | SEEKERS | BELIEVERS | SUNDAY SCHOOLS | SMALL GROUPS**

*Developed over 31+ Years of Christian Apologetics Ministry on the  
Front Lines of Spiritually Cold New England ... and Beyond*

**Author & Compiler:** *Daryl E. Witmer* ★ **Foreword by** *Randy Newman*



# COMPENDIUM OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS RESOURCES

*Helpful Answers & Valuable Teaching Tools  
for Addressing Life's Largest Questions*

*Daryl E. Witmer*

First published and distributed in January 2024 by the AIIA Institute



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## PUBLISHER

The **AIIA Institute**, aka **AIIA** (for **Areopagus II America**), was incorporated in 1991 and remained operational until 2024 as a national, nonprofit, religious educational organization governed by a 20-member independent Board of Directors. AIIA was described as a contemporary adapted construct of the ancient Athenian Areopagus — a forum that offered Christian commentary and perspective on current worldviews and thoughtforms, promoting understanding and goodwill among those espousing a broad range of beliefs. AIIA’s work was largely based on the principles and approach of the Apostle Paul at the original Areopagus in first century Athens, Greece.

## COVER GRAPHIC

*Paul preaching in the Areopagus* | Painted 1729-1731 by Sir James Thornhill. Oil on canvas.

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## EXCHANGES

The “live exchanges” in this compendium are either actual word-for-word transcripts or adapted composites of conversations that the author has had with countless others over the years. In either case a genuine effort has been made to preserve the basic sense and flow of every exchange.



**STARTER ANSWERS** are intentionally very brief responses that are intended to get one started in the direction of a more complete and thorough response.

**ATTRIBUTIONS, CREDITS, SOURCES** of images and other content, see pages 542-544.

# Dedications

## To AIIA's Board of Directors

At the time this compendium went to press each of the twenty members serving Christ as members of AIIA's board had done so faithfully for years (some from almost the very beginning in 1991). Mary and I could not have hoped for a better more dedicated and supportive board. These folks traveled at their own expense to our meetings. Board officers invested many hours of time and energy in service. All members stayed on top of ministry activities and finances, while granting me the liberty to use my best judgement in day-to-day matters. This board was always willing to offer wise counsel but never micromanaged my work. Over the years they became dear friends. We will greatly miss working, singing, and laughing together at our board meetings each year.

The 20 members of our board at this writing are as follows: **Rick & Cathleen Carver** (GA) | **Steve & Debby Daman** (MA) | **Ryan & Kylie Goding** (ME) | **Peter & Salme Kushkowski** (CT) | **Clair & Charlene Leaman** (PA) | **Jerry & Sharon Leaman** (PA) | **Brandon & Jessica Pustejovsky** (VA) | **Ted & Elinor Shattuck** (TN) | **Vin & Charlene Upham** (NY) — along with **Daryl & Mary Witmer** (ME).

A number of others have also served faithfully as board members for various terms and at critical times since AIIA's inception in 1991. Former board members include **Dave & Gail Buckwalter** (PA) | **Jim & Debbie Clayton** (MI) | **Martin & Lydia Crain** (IL) | **Bob & Roberta Jarvis** (ME) | **Dick & Thelma Millett** (ME) | **Andy & Nancy Spohrer** (PA), and **Gene & Anne Witmer** (PA).

## To Mary L. Hartline

One day early in 1991 I asked **Mary Hartline** if she would be willing to serve as a charter member and the first Secretary-Treasurer of the **AIIA Institute**. After some thought and prayer, she agreed, and then did just that until October 2001, traveling with Mary and me to board meetings in numerous states.

**Mary Lydia Skillin** was born June 29, 1923, in Skowhegan Maine. She attended the Good Will-Hinckley School for underprivileged children — and then went on, years later, to serve as the board secretary for that same school. She gave her life to Jesus Christ in 1957. She was married once, late in life, to **Ralph Hartline**.



Mary attended two of the Maine churches that I served, keeping meticulous records as church clerk. She was quiet, humble, wise, never gossiped, and would almost always put a positive spin on tough circumstances. She was not outspoken, yet stood fiercely, stubbornly, for her convictions when she knew she was right. She prayed faithfully for our family over the years and remained a loyal friend to the end of her life. For many years she lived in a rambling old Maine farmhouse, maintaining it with the help of good friends, **Brad & Lorna Coburn** of Sangerville ME. Mary (my wife) and I are happy to dedicate this work to her.

Mary Hartline died very early on the morning of April 1, 2011, at the age of 87. At her request she was buried without a formal service in a little cemetery in Hinckley, Maine. When her rather simple estate was settled in October 2011 we learned that she had bequeathed \$10,000 to AIIA. **Those funds (with interest) have been used to publish and distribute this compendium.**

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# FOREWORD

**We live in disturbingly wonderful times.** They're **disturbing** because hostility to the Christian faith seems to be growing. They're **wonderful** because people seem to be searching for answers more desperately than ever.

The Apostle Peter's admonition to, "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have," resounds louder than ever. Note his use of the word "hope." That is exactly what people all around us crave. And the gospel offers hope in shackle-breaking, life-changing, sorrow-melting, and culture-transforming ways.

Into this moment, God has raised up Daryl Witmer to stimulate God's people to the love and good deeds of sharing and defending the good news.

I have had the privilege of watching Daryl's steady commitment to provide the church with answers to questions, reasons to believe, and insights to ponder, all with healthy doses of "gentleness and respect."

This volume, a magnum opus from a lifetime of purveying great materials, is more than a compendium. It is a treasure. Even if you don't agree with all of Daryl's conclusions, you'll benefit greatly from his clear explanations of the options and his careful citing of resources for further study. Dig into these riches over and over again.

## **Randy Newman**

Senior Teaching Fellow for Apologetics and Evangelism, The C. S. Lewis Institute  
Author of *Questioning Evangelism* and *Questioning Faith*

*November 2023*



**NOTE:** After serving for over 30 years with Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ), Newman established **Connection Points**, a ministry to help Christians engage people's hearts the way Jesus did. He is a Senior Teaching Fellow for Evangelism and Apologetics at **The C. S. Lewis Institute** in the **Washington, D.C. area**. He has taught at various theological seminaries and colleges and has written numerous books and articles about evangelism and other ways in which our lives intertwine with God's creation. He and his wife Pam live in **Annandale, VA** and are grateful for their children and a growing number of grandchildren. Newman has also hosted **Questions That Matter**, a podcast of the C. S. Lewis Institute. His most recent book, **Questioning Faith**, is scheduled to be released in **February 2024**.

# PREFACE

Does the word **apologetics** turn you off?

Does it sound way too academic and boring?

**Here's why you should read this compendium anyway.**

You are either a professing Christian or you are not a professing Christian.

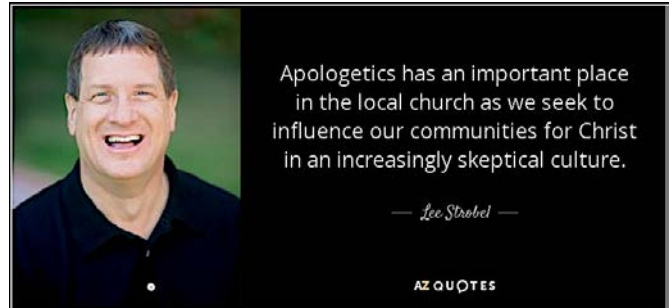
If you **are** a professing Christian, you want to obey Jesus. Jesus has commissioned you to relate the gospel to others in this generation — and to make disciples. Apologetics will help you to do both of those things. Which is why you will want to read this compendium.

If you are **not** a professing Christian, you should be able to explain why not — at least to yourself. You're not intellectually lazy or naive or cowardly, are you? You don't want to build your house on wrong information or weak excuses. This compendium will help you to evaluate the strength of your case for rejecting Christ and the Christian worldview. I double dare you to read it.

**This compendium makes a strong case** for the intellectual credibility of the Christian worldview.

**This compendium should prove particularly useful if you are:**

- a pastor or on the pastoral staff of a church.
- a youth leader in your church.
- a small group leader or participant.
- a Sunday School class teacher.
- a Christian school teacher or administrator.
- a homeschool parent or a student missionary.
- a sincere seeker or student or young person trying to make sense of life and truth.
- a parent wanting to raise children who will survive all of the cynicism and ridicule of our times.



**What will you take away from budgeting a few hours to read this publication?**

**If you are a Christian** you should find yourself more confident about having made the right faith choice, better equipped to help others affirm their faith in Christ, and more grounded in your relationship with Jesus.

**If you are a seeker** you should find what's here to be a valuable guide in your search for truth.

**If you are a skeptic or an agnostic** you should at the very least find what's here provocative. Hopefully—if you consider yourself fair and thoughtful, arriving at conclusions with integrity—you see the value in that. Reading these pages will help you to kick the tires before you buy in.

**Money Back Guarantee.** If all this and more does not happen, we will be happy to refund you triple the amount that you've paid us for this free compendium.

# INTRODUCTION

**Are you an optimist?** Is your optimism well-grounded?

**Are you a pessimist?** Is there an objective basis for your decidedly bleak and dismal view of life?

**Is it possible** that your lack of a sense of self-worth, purpose, and joy in life are all related to skewed assumptions, faulty presuppositions, flawed views about whether or who God is, and no intellectually firm foundation for your attempts at faith and hope?

**This compendium is all about providing solid evidence for hope and meaningful faith in Jesus Christ** — and in the Christian worldview. In the pages of this publication you will discover that a well-based and rational case for faith can be made. You will learn that the hope of Christian believers is not based on just wishful thinking.

**There's a lot of valuable information here.** Much of what is included has never been presented elsewhere in quite the same way that it's presented here.

**I'll be your guide.** You can trust me to introduce you to — or reacquaint you with — this information. Why? Because I've already traveled this road myself. I've been there in the trenches, searching for truth. See *My Personal Journey to Meaningful Faith in Christ* that follows on page 14.

**I've also been there** in terms of **making the case** for faith *to others* who are **skeptical** or **seeking**. And I've been involved in **teaching fellow-believers** how to make the case to skeptics or seekers. So, again, I'm writing from experience. I've personally collected or developed, compiled, and taught most of this material over a period of **32 years** — promoting (not just practicing) Christian apologetics in churches, small groups, youth rallies, and in seminars all over New England.

New England is very possibly the most spiritually cold region in America today. For years, all six New England states have been listed among the top ten least religious states in the nation. **Four of those states**, including Maine where I've been based for nearly 50 years, still do constitute the **top four** least religious states in the country. So we lived, and did what we did, on the **front lines**.

**How long did it take me to write this compendium?** I've been writing it from the time that I personally began to deal with life's big questions myself, in the early 1970s. What formal training or credentials do I have in comparative religious studies? None. Zero. But I have had boots on the ground for five decades now — and especially since 1991 when we first incorporated AIA.

**This material has been drawn from** countless cordial, respectful, first hand conversations with those who have not shared my Christian views — in malls, on the street, on college campuses.

Instead of settling to only read books authored by Christian authors on the subject of **Islam**, we scheduled a *Dialogue Dinner* with a Muslim family at Miller's Restaurant in Bangor in 1992. I learned a whole lot sitting across the table from those folks that evening. I learned more when we visited the Islamic Center in Orono, Maine, in 2012, watching and asking questions for hours.



**I learned a lot about Judaism** when we were hosted at the Beth Israel synagogue in Bangor in 2001—firing questions at Rabbi Fred Nebel for an hour, and later sitting in on their Shabbat service.

**I will never forget the moment** we entered the largest Hindu temple in New England. Our whole group removed their shoes. Thankfully they didn't ask me to remove the wheels from my wheelchair! We made the rounds of all the bright colorful altars, smelled the thick incense, and sat around a large but crowded rectangular table interviewing some of their brilliant, friendly leaders.

**NOTE:** please see **Appendix 5** for an extensive list of Spring Symposiums, Fall Forums, and other events that we organized over the years, engaging first-hand with Buddhists, Mormons, Wiccans, Universalists, Jehovah's Witnesses, evolutionists, ex-Christians, and many others.

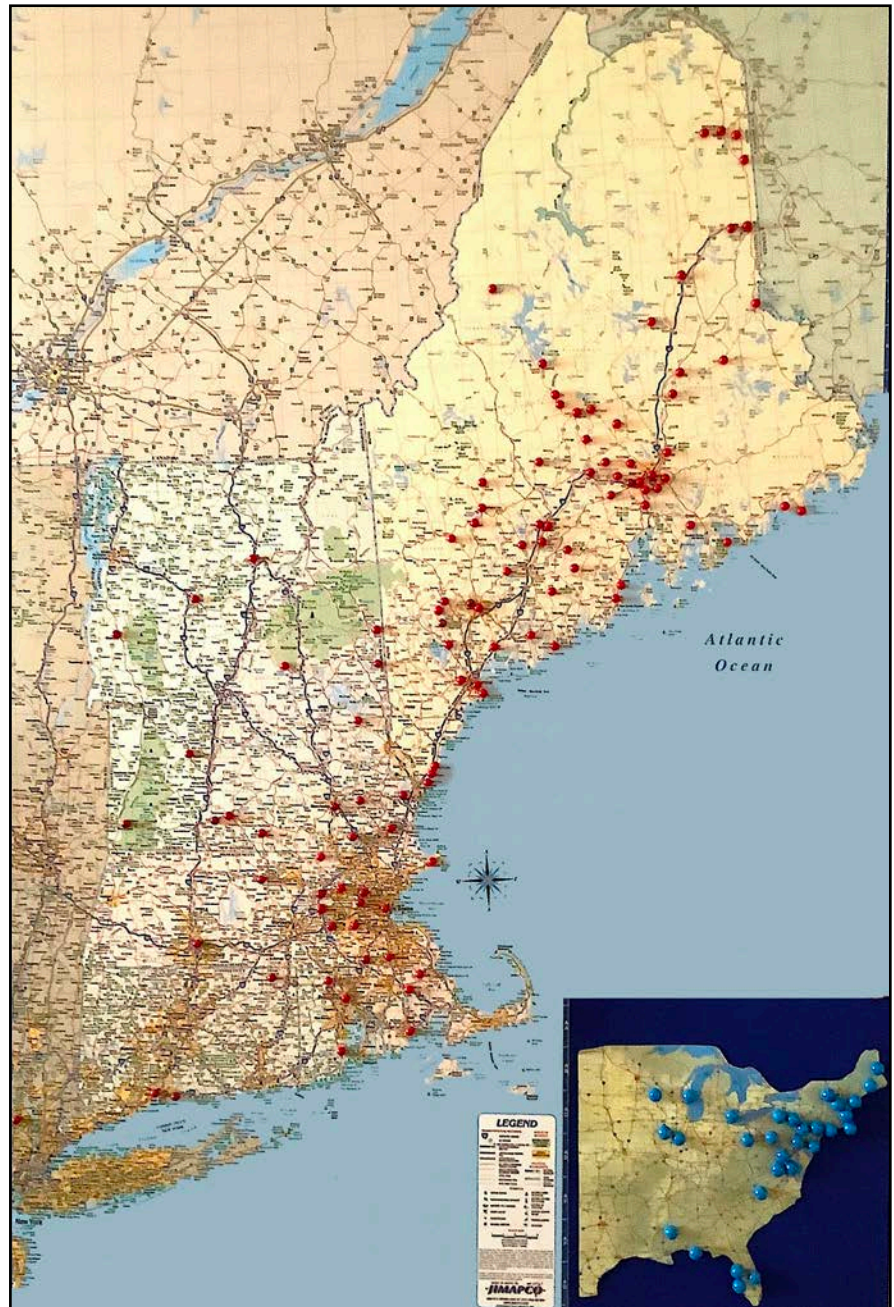
**Much of the teaching material and tools in this compendium** was similarly developed during my 31+ years of speaking, teaching, leading seminars, personal research, and fielding questions from Christians, young and old, in every corner of New England and beyond. The red pins in the map at right mark locations where we've ministered, in some cases returning numerous times. The blue pins mark locations where I've spoken outside of New England.

**Beginning with Section 1 we'll get right to the point. I won't waste your time.**

You should know that this book is designed to make apologetics **understandable to ordinary folks**. It's not **primarily** for scholars. I've tried to put the cookies on the bottom shelf.

**In other words, this material is not meant to be** an advanced course in Christian apologetics. This is not an academic textbook. It's written for a popular audience. I wanted it to be readable and of interest to everyone. **For that reason I've added pull quotes, graphics, and color — spiral-binding it all for easy page-turning and duplication.**

Also, we deal here with only the most basic fundamental issues **essential** to Christian faith. Some apologists include ethical, social, and even political issues under the rubric of apologetics. We have not.



Although we **occasionally** addressed issues such as immigration, abortion, genetic engineering, and the arts in AllA's thoughtletter and seminars over the years, for the most part we have limited the contents here to reflect a more traditional "mere Christianity" brand of Christian apologetics. Please see the **What?** chapter in **Section 1** for more details about the scope of this work, and the range of questions that we've tackled here. So — to sum up, you can think of this compendium as a sort of course (or a teaching manual for a course) in **General Apologetics 101**.

**Two important notes:** 1) The **Live Exchanges** included in this work are often literal, actual, almost verbatim transcripts of my conversations with others. Others are composites of real conversations. 2) Because sermons and seminars were often designed as stand-alone presentations, you can expect to find some duplication of content (quotes, statistic citations, points) among them.

At my side since October 6, 1973, Mary Rachel (Lehman) Witmer has been like a rock. She helps me to get up and dressed in the morning and is available and loving and positive and supportive throughout the day, day after day. We have done this ministry together. She has been everywhere that I have been and complemented the role that God gave me in the most effective way conceivable. My name may appear on the cover as the writer and compiler (or editor), but without Mary this ministry and this compendium would have never happened.

We arrived in Monson, Maine (photo below by **North Woods Aerial**), in September of 1975 — and Monson has been home ever since. Located strategically on the shores of Lake Hebron, Monson is a "trail town" — hosting hundreds of **Appalachian Trail hikers** every year. More recently, **Monson Arts** has drawn artists and art students from all over the world for weeklong workshops and month-long residencies. This has provided me with many wonderful opportunities to converse with folks from all over the world and of almost every conceivable worldview — learning from it all, and intentionally seeking to sow seeds of truth and kindness as, at the same time, I contend for Christian truth and point folks to **Jesus** as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.



**Daryl E Witmer** | Monson, Maine | December 2023



# My Personal Journey

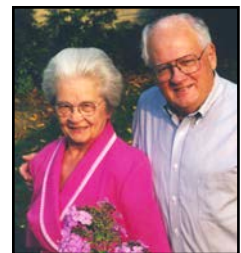
to **MEANINGFUL FAITH** in **CHRIST**  
and a **MINISTRY** in **APOLOGETICS**

by *Daryl E. Witmer*



I was born at a very early age. In **Lancaster, Pennsylvania**. That's where my mother was at the time and it seemed like a good idea to be nearby for the occasion. The date was May 20, 1951.

I was born into a Christian home. My father and his father and his father's father were all strong believers. They lived out their faith consistently. My mother was also genuine and disciplined in her commitment to Jesus Christ. As a young boy, I remember often seeing her reading her Bible and praying early in the morning, even before the sun was up. During my childhood and later I would very often hear her singing hymns of faith around the house.



My folks, Eugene & Anne Witmer. Mother died in 2019. Dad is 96 years of age as of this writing.

There are a number of Christian ministers and church leaders in my lineage, on both sides. So you can see that the roots of my family tree were grounded deep in the soil of Christian faith.

I was raised in the fellowship of a Christ-centered Bible-preaching church located in Paradise, Pennsylvania. We went to Paradise every Sunday! — and even during the week. The congregational singing was especially heavenly — hymns in four-part harmony. I remember the words of those hymns to this day. They were rich in theological truth. They helped me to form an early understanding of God, His attributes, and His purposes for human life.

One day when I was seven years old, walking home from school, I asked Jesus Christ to rule my life and forgive my sins — past, present, and future. I took it on faith that He did just that, instantly. I was baptized and joined the church at the age of 14. Then I got involved in the youth group and eventually served as president of the Paradise Mennonite Youth Fellowship.

I memorized Scripture. I defended my faith and my Christian convictions in the public school system that I attended. During my senior year of high school I campaigned and was elected president of the Student Council. I passed my college exams and my applications to enroll were accepted by Wheaton College in Illinois, and by our denominational college in Virginia.

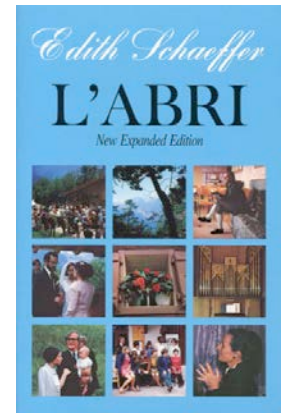
But by this time I had begun to ask a lot of questions. How could I be certain that Christianity was true? What if I had been born in India to Hindu parents? Would I still be a Christian? Who was I, really? Why was the Bible true and not the Book of Mormon or the Quran?

Just short of the completion of my second year in college I decided to put all further formal education on hold. At the time I was dating **Mary Rachel Lehman** from **Johnstown PA**, whom I would later marry. But I suspended even that relationship. Everything in life somehow suddenly seemed secondary to resolving these deeply pressing philosophical and spiritual issues.

For the next two years I traveled extensively. I read continually, often late into the night. I talked to others who had either already experienced, or were currently engaged in, a similar search for truth. At least in cursory fashion I examined Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, objectivism (Rand), immaterialism (Berkeley), and a variety of other philosophies, belief systems, and worldviews.

I was determined to be totally objective in my search and to follow the truth wherever the truth would lead. Beginning with Descartes' foundational axiom *Cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), I attempted to build a unified worldview on the basis of reason alone. Over a period of time, and proceeding entirely on my own, I came to a view that I later discovered was already referred to by philosophers as **radical solipsism**. My pilgrimage for truth had been trying and fearful to begin with, but this concept left me utterly lonely and distressed. Still, unwilling to reject the view on those grounds alone, I pressed on.

In early Fall, 1971, I boarded a 747 flying from New York to Switzerland. Arriving in Geneva, I traveled by train and then by bus to the little mountain village of Huémoz. There I met Os Guinness who, after a careful interview, registered me as a student at the **L'Abri Fellowship**, a study community for those on a quest for truth about the meaning of life. Founded by the late Christian author, thinker, and apologist, **Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer**, L'Abri at that time had already become noted as a shelter for seekers of all ages from all over the world, helping hundreds of people to find a reasonable basis for historic Christian faith. Schaeffer himself was once referred to in a **Time** magazine article as a "missionary to the intellectuals."



My time at L'Abri was fairly brief — less than three weeks long. And it did not yield any instant solution. In fact, after meeting personally with Schaeffer on two occasions, my spirit was in an even greater state of turmoil. He employed an apologetics approach with me that he often widely advocated, known as "taking the roof off" — pressing me to face the frightening implications of living consistently with my own faulty worldview at the time. As a result, I experienced even greater confusion and desperation. Walking alone in a grassy meadow high in the Alps some distance from town, I actually contemplated for a moment whether I wanted to go on with this painful search, or with the journey of life at all, or whether I should end it right then and there.

Looking back, I believe that God sovereignly designed my visit to L'Abri to accomplish a number of purposes. From conversations around the dinner table at Chalet Les Melezes, to cleaning toilets and baling hay as part of my work assignment, to the books and lectures and tapes that I was assigned for my custom-designed study course, important foundations were being established — or actually re-established and reinforced.

The turning point in what was without question the most determinative period of my life came later that same Fall. I was back in the United States and it was a dismal, wet weekend in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. As I lay half-listening to the wind and rain tear at the canvas roof of the camper in which I was traveling, I began to uncover what amounted to a series of critical errors in the reasoning process that had led me down the desperate path of solipsism.

Of course it was not me, on my own, who uncovered these errors. I'm convinced that it was the Spirit of God, by means of some key revelatory thought trains, who introduced these errors and correctives into my mind. I was His project all along, and He was guiding me into all truth (John 16:13) — reviving and reforming me.

This major development opened doors to evidence with which I was, at least in part, already familiar, having grown up in a Christian environment. Now I was able to intelligently build my faith on the propositional truths of Scripture. Within weeks, for the first time in a very long while — or perhaps even ever in my life — I was able to approach the infinite–personal God of the Bible by faith, in confidence, and with intellectual integrity.

I spent the winter of 1972-1973 with wolves in the remote reaches of northern Alberta, Canada — reading, studying, reflecting, and refining the conclusions resulting from my long search for truth. At some point during this period I also began to experience my first sense of a call to ministry. I'm quite certain that this call came from God, but I'm also sure that His call was inextricably linked to a growing desire which He was placing in my heart to share with others the insights gained from my own quest.

Following **our wedding on October 6, 1973**, Mary and I lived in beautiful Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for nearly two years. I worked with my father in the front office of a country inn owned and operated by my folks at that time. I served as director of a church camp, Black Rock Retreat, located in Kirkwood PA, supervising both staff and program throughout the intense (no pun intended), fast-paced, ten-week, 1000-camper, summer season.

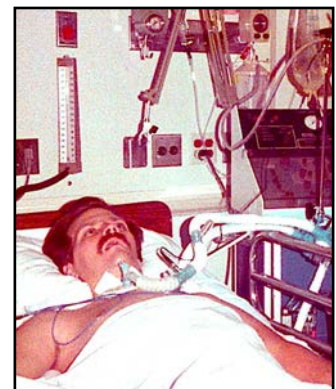
At the same time, thanks to a mentoring relationship with Rev. Herman Glick, a pastor and overseer who believed in me, I began to gain first-hand experience in local church leadership — preaching, visitation, and administration — at a small church in Christiana, Pennsylvania.

Two years later God moved suddenly and miraculously in our lives. Within just months He opened to us a great new door of opportunity. In **the summer of 1975** we were called to serve a three-church rural parish in north central Maine. We settled into the parsonage in September.

For the next eight and a half years I preached three times every Sunday morning. During the week I was even busier, ministering to three growing congregations. Our oldest (twin) sons, **Andrew** and **Stephen**, were born in **1976**, and our third son, **Timothy**, was born in **1979**. With three churches and three sons, our lives were full. [See **family photos** at the end of this article.]

From the beginning of our 30 years of pastoral ministry in Maine, one of our major goals was to see each of the three churches established on their own as a doctrinally sound, self-supporting, local ministry. In 1984 we took a big step in that direction by calling a full-time pastor to serve the largest of the three fellowships, in Sangerville, Maine. An ensuing period of transition went well and we were feeling most encouraged in the work when, once again, our lives were suddenly and dramatically altered by developments with life-changing implications. It was just 13 days before Christmas 1984.

On **December 12, 1984**, overnight, I developed a rare autoimmunological condition known as **Guillain-Barré syndrome** (GBS). Within just hours I was admitted to the largest medical center in our region of the state. By the following day I was almost completely paralyzed in every part of my body — unable to move, swallow, or even breathe on my own. A mechanical respirator pumped air in and out of my lungs day and night — hour after hour — as I lay totally helpless in the Intensive Care Unit. The days turned to weeks and the weeks turned to months. In spite of the continuous presence and loving support of my family during the entire time of my hospital stay, the ordeal took a huge toll on our lives — in so many different ways.





My hospitalization lasted from December, 1984, until August, 1985. But even then the ordeal did not end. In fact, it's hard effects continue to this day. I say this while simultaneously keenly aware that my own physical condition, limitations, level of pain, and challenges do not begin to compare with that of many others who have experienced far worse, including perhaps some of you reading this compendium right now. But in the midst of the battle we're often not so inclined to compare ourselves with others who have it worse. We struggle with our own trials.

The majority of our challenges in life since 1984-1985 have been related to GBS, mainly health and quality of life issues inherent to long-term leg, hand, and finger paralysis. I almost daily miss playing guitar, riding horse, walking in the woods, standing by Mary's side, and looking people straight in the eye while conversing (rather than sitting under a shower of their spit!)

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I have come to recognize the astounding fulfillment of God's promise in **2 Corinthians 12:9** (NASB): "And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'" And then there is also the key assurance of **2 Corinthians 12:9** (ESV): "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

For me the temptation has sometimes been to yield to despair, or to give up. But there has always been this five-fold "way of escape": **1)** God has given me an indescribably supportive life-partner in Mary; **2)** God has given me work that is meaningful and enjoyable; **3)** God has supplied our financial needs (though not always all of our *wants*); **4)** God has placed in our lives many caring faithful friends, including AIIA's Board of Directors; and **5)** God has made available to us the many advantages of modern technology, allowing me to be independent to a great extent, e.g. drive our van safely and reliably to my office each day — even in the dead of harsh Maine winters!

Mary helps me every day in countless ways — emotionally, physically, practically. She has given up many of her own preferences and conveniences in order to stand by me in sickness (not health) and in spite of the fact that things took a turn for the worse (not better) just eleven years after we exchanged vows. She has been faithful and positive through it all, and she has been an indispensable component in all of my ministry.

By January of 1986 I once again began productively serving as pastor of the churches in Abbot and Monson. Five years later, because of continued growth, the Abbot church was also able to call a full-time pastor. We elected to remain with the third church, staying in the town where we'd been living since 1975. But at that point we were faced with the prospect of only half support.

Once again God moved in a remarkable manner, clearing the way for us to launch a new national ministry of **Christian apologetics**. Because apologetics had played such a key role in the way that I had come to meaningful faith, I had long harbored a **great passion** for such work. I believed that the Lord could use me to walk with others seekers along a path similar to mine.

By the Spring of 1991 we had formed a board of directors. We agreed that the primary charter of this new initiative would be to provide simple but intelligent answers to many of the difficult questions about the rational basis for Christian faith. We called the new nonprofit organization the **AIIA Institute** (AIIA for Areopagus II America) and based our work on the principles and approach of the Apostle Paul in his visit to the original Areopagus as recorded in Acts 17.



From the time of its inception in April of 1991, God steadily expanded AIIA's circle of influence. We began with a mailing list of 500 and by 2017 were mailing our bimonthly thoughtletter to well over 10,000 addresses in all 50 states and 35 countries internationally. For many years we hosted a Spring Symposium, a Fall Forum, an annual two-day seminar for college age youth, and a monthly event known as **Faith Matters**, where we reviewed the latest in apologetics resources.

In addition to maintaining AIIA's website, speaking in churches and other venues throughout New England and beyond, and publishing the thoughtletter, we operated a **Resource & Study Center** in Monson that featured an extensive library of apologetics-related texts and audio-visual resources, and that provided a base for all of our administrative work.

Following four years of preparation, in May of 2016, AIIA hosted **WHY JESUS? 2016** — very possibly the largest all-day Christian apologetics conference ever held in America (according to Lee Strobel and others), and certainly the largest ever in northern New England. Nearly 7,000 believers and seekers attended the event from 22 states and four Canadian provinces. With over 50 exhibits and a team of nationally-known speakers, it was an historic occasion and a remarkable rallying point for the Church in our six-state region.



Later in 2016 AIIA hosted a standing-room-only forum on what it means for belief systems to **co-exist**, featuring representatives of Buddhism, Atheism, Islam, Judaism, and evangelical Christianity. This forum was held on the campus of Colby College in Waterville, Maine. It proved to be an enlightening event, and one that afforded Christianity a full seat at the table in a secular academic setting where the Christian worldview is often marginalized — notable in and of itself!

**In June of 2017** we called together 45 vocational Christian apologists, pastors, campus ministry leaders, and other Christian believers with a passion for Christian apologetics. For 24 hours this group convened, uninterrupted, in a large conference room at a Bangor area hotel, putting our heads together on how best to practice and promote apologetics at the local level in our generation. In the late Fall of 2017 we published a white paper detailing the results of that **Think Tank** event. A complimentary copy was sent to over 700 local churches throughout New England and beyond, and a downloadable PDF version of the paper was made available online.

So this is really a story about God's power being manifested through the weakness of just one saved sinner. He took me on as His project — calling me, drawing me, accepting me, saving me, reviving me, reforming me, and renewing me for His own purposes and glory. He's done all of that for the Church, historically. He's done it for me. He'll do it for you. To God be the glory.

*"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;" 2 Corinthians 4:7*

*Daryl E. Witmer* | Monson, Maine | Updated to September, 2023

## NOTES

- **Family** has always been a huge part of my life's journey **and** ministry. If Christianity is the real deal, it needs to work in **all** of life. So I've included the names and photos of my family on the following page. Here we are in real life.
- **For a free copy** of *Passing Showers*, a 48-page booklet with photos that offers an account of some of the spiritual lessons growing out of my 1984-1985 (and ongoing) ordeal with Guillain-Barré syndrome, write to: The Witmers • Next Chapter | PO Box 262, Monson ME 04464.
- **This testimonial** is an adaptation of a piece first published in the Fall 2017 issue of *FIELD*, the official journal of the Gospel Alliance of Maine, and then later edited for publication on AIIA's website in January 2018.



## THE WITMERS

We are often only able to **all** be together every two years or so. This formally-posed photo (above) was taken in July 2021. We're next scheduled to all be together in the Summer of 2024 — too late for a group photo in this compendium. **But here at right are a few more recent family photos. So much growth and change every year!** (Please see also the brief related note on previous page).



### ABOVE PHOTO, LEFT REAR:

**Our son Stephen**, Ph.D. (University of Cambridge, England), has served as Lead Pastor of Pepperell Christian Fellowship since 2008. He has taught as an adjunct for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is co-founder of Small Town Summits. He and **Emma** (who teaches at Lexington Christian Academy in the greater Boston area) were married in April, 2006, and currently live in Pepperell MA with their children, **Samuel, Annie, Henry**.

**ABOVE PHOTO, MIDDLE REAR:** **Our son Timothy** (Registered Maine Guide and Inventory Integrity Specialist for Louisiana Pacific Corporation). He and **Amy** (a registered Occupational Therapist) were married in January, 2005. They live with their sons, **Malachi** and **Logan**, and their daughter, **Kaylee**, just south of Houlton, Maine (Aroostook County).



**ABOVE PHOTO, RIGHT REAR:** **Our son Andrew**, Ph.D. (University of Virginia), tenured professor of American history at James Madison University in Harrisonburg VA since 2010. He and **Maureen** (who works as a specialist in corporate event planning) were married in October, 2007. They live with their daughter, **Katherine**, and sons, **Benjamin** and **John**, in Harrisonburg VA, in the heart of Virginia's beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

**ABOVE FRONT CENTER:** **Daryl & Mary** have lived in **Monson, Maine**, since 1975. After serving as a pastor, and then for 32 years with AIIA, they began full-time work with **Next Chapter** in 2024.





# SECTION 1

## Christian Apologetics

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# WHAT? WHO?

Definitions & Scope

For Whom? By Whom?

The Biblical Basis







# Defining Christian Apologetics

## WHAT APOLOGETICS IS

### Definitions, Components, Methodology

**Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, by Norman L. Geisler:** Apologetics is the discipline that deals with a rational defense of Christian faith. The word apologetics comes from the Greek word *apologia* which means to give a reason or defense.

**Dictionary.com** (Definition 2): *uh-pol-uh-jet-iks*. “Reasoning in defense of any theory or doctrine, typically drawing on a set of established responses to specific criticisms. [Example]: *Capitalist apologetics often claim, quite convincingly, that unrestricted market competition safeguards democracy.*”

**Wikipedia:** Apologetics is the religious discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse. Early Christian writers who defended their beliefs against critics and recommended their faith to outsiders were called Christian apologists.

**Merriam-Webster Dictionary:** *A`pol`o`get`ics*, noun. That branch of theology which defends the Holy Scriptures, and sets forth the evidence of their divine authority.

**My own usual simple definition:** Christian apologetics is the branch of theology concerned with making a convincing case for the intellectual credibility of historic Christian truth.



The English word *apologetics* derives from the ancient Greek term *apologia* (*ἀπολογία*), (pronounced with a hard g.) One reputable source claims that the first known use of *apologetics* was circa 1733. In a first century Greece legal forum, the prosecution would make their case and then the defendant would reply with an *apologia* — or defense, reply, answer, rebuttal. So the term apologetics most certainly has a legal dimension.

**Whenever I am explaining** to someone what apologetics is all about, along with my own simple definition above, I often try to quickly point out that the term itself is not limited to Christianity, as is made clear in the **Dictionary.com** (second definition) above. I say, “You can actually be an apologist for *any* product, idea, entity, person, or **anything** in which you believe and choose to speak up about, endorse or defend. You can be an apologist for the Boston Red Sox, for GMC trucks, for Shakespeare’s poetry, for democracy, or for Domino’s pizza. Over the years I’ve received apologetics material for Mormonism, visits from those doing apologetics as Jehovah’s Witnesses, and have even conversed with apologists for atheism. **But in the majority of occasions when the term apologetics is invoked, it’s in connection with Christian truth.**”

**Apologetics is really pre-evangelism.** (See chart on page 28) It's evangelism in its most basic form. In Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15 Jesus commissions every Christian to be actively involved in the proclamation of the good news about what His death and resurrection accomplishes, i.e. evangelism. And that proclamation often requires clarification, or a clearing away of doubts, objections, and misunderstanding about what Christian faith is all about. That's apologetics!

**Basic general Christian Apologetics** has traditionally limited itself to making the case for the **essentials** of the Christian worldview (see *The Scope of Christian Apologetics* on page 30). By definition, it avoids crossing the line into theological debates within Christendom (that's polemics), and only sparingly tackles social (human rights, gender equality), moral (abortion, homosexual rights), cultural (genetic engineering), and political issues (endorsing party platforms and specific candidates). This is the type of "mere-Christianity" apologetics that the Apostle Paul demonstrated in Athens (Acts 17), and **it is the approach that we take in this compendium.**

**There are two reasons why some Christian apologists,** including myself, are cautious about mixing the defense of essential Christian belief (e.g. Deity of Christ, divinity and reliability of the Bible, suffering and evil) with a defense of the Christian position on social, moral, cultural, and theological issues: **a)** in our role as apologists, we don't need to think that we must speak categorically, or try to be experts, on every theological subject; and **b)** because spending time on non-essential matters may distract, or prematurely deter, a seeker from coming to Christ.

We make an effort to be gracious with all **sincere** seekers who are asking questions, and we should be prepared to **entertain all reasonable questions** pertaining to Christian life and truth. AIIA had two Ministry Associates who specialized in moral and cultural issues, and occasionally ran articles or scheduled conferences on some "non-essential" issues (e.g. abortion, immigration, reproductive bioethics). But we also often tried to direct the exchange back to the matter of **who Jesus is**, convinced that once someone comes into a relationship with Christ and begins to grow spiritually, he or she will no doubt eventually come to adopt a Christian position on such issues *on their own* — as the result of effective discipling more than as the result of apologetics.

**Here is some help in distinguishing between apologetics and other related terms:**

- **Basic General Christian Apologetics:** the presentation of a clear and convincing case for the essential truths of the person and claims of Jesus Christ, the Divinity of the Bible, and so on. In other words, making a solid intellectually credible case for mere historic orthodox Christianity.
- **Evangelism:** reaching out to non-Christians with the gospel, the message of meaning for living, purpose in life, the grounds for salvation and eternal hope in Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:16)
- **Disciplemaking:** teaching believers to obey the commands of Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20)
- **Theology:** the study of the doctrines of Christ and the church.
- **Polemics:** usually involves doctrinal debate and controversial engagement within the Church.

**When we refer to defending Christian truth,** we do not intend to imply that Christians are to do so in a defensive manner. The best **defense** is almost always a gracious non-offensive **offense**. When practicing apologetics in a positive, creative manner, with gentleness and respect, believers are far better able to present the claims of Christ and the Christian worldview as credible.

**The work of apologetics involves** clearing away obstacles to faith for sincere seekers.



## **TWO COMPONENTS** | There are two major components of Christian apologetics:

- a) **Defending** the faith from the attacks and doubts of those **outside** the church. See 1 Peter 3:15
- b) **Contending** for historic orthodoxy in the face of heresy **within** the Church. See Jude 3.

## **DUAL METHODOLOGY** | There are two basic methods of Christian apologetics:

- a) The first is known as **classical apologetics**, or **evidentialism**. This involves citing proofs and evidences that the Christian message is true.
- b) The second is referred to **presuppositional apologetics**. It involves exploring and exposing the assumptions or preconceived ideas behind non-Christian positions, pressing non-believers to confront the **illogic, despair, and impracticality** of living life consistently with their worldview.

Good and godly Christians sometimes differ with one another about which of these two methods of Christian apologetics is the most effective. Likely the wiser option is to employ **both methods**, depending on the particulars of a given situation. (This insight is based on an adapted excerpt from **GotQuestions.org** on apologetics methodology)

## WHAT APOLOGETICS IS NOT

### Limits, Caveats, Qualifications



**Successful apologetics** will always be marked, **not** by how many arguments we win, or whether we can checkmate a skeptic with quick and tricky rejoinders in an intense debate. Rather, successful apologetics is about **winning souls to Jesus Christ**. And that is only likely going to happen if the **Holy Spirit of God** is an integral part of the process, opening the minds of dissatisfied men and women who are struggling with the ugly realities of life, and pointing them to an attractive Savior.

**Good apologetics will always be marked** by kindness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). **People are not likely to care how much we know until they know how much we care.**

**Blaise Pascal once said:** “People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs **not** on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive.”

**Once we as Christians realize** that apologetics is **not** about preaching at skeptics, or pressuring seekers, but rather quietly pointing others to Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and **letting the results up to God**, a great weight will be lifted. Certainly we are to be ready with answers if and when they come. **But we are not likely going to argue anyone into adopting the Christian worldview.** People need to see the attractiveness and love of Christ reflected in us, **and** to sense that there is an intellectually credible (not naive) solid basis for our hope in the face of difficult times. Following is a story that illustrates this whole point particularly well.

**Pastor and author Adrian Rogers** (September 12, 1931 – November 15, 2005) once related the following account of a man by the name of **Ray** who had faithfully tried to witness to a brilliant skeptic by the name of **Ted** over a period of many years, but to no avail. The skeptic always out-argued Ray and turned all of his efforts to mincemeat. Finally one day after the skeptic had masterfully skewered Ray's attempts to witness to him yet again, Ray turned to him, put his hand on his shoulder and said, "Look, Ted, I'm not as good with words as you are. But I know deep in my heart that Jesus loves you, and I love you, and I'm just sorry that I can't convince you of that. But I don't want to argue with you about this, because it isn't getting us anywhere." With that, and a tear in the corner of his eye, he turned away and went home, skipped his dinner, retired to his room, and prayed for the skeptic.

While he was still praying a knock came at the door. It was the skeptic. He said, "Ray, I'm ready to accept Christ as my Savior." Ray said, "But you've always rejected all of my efforts to convince you that Jesus is real and that He loves you." The skeptic said, "Wrong. There is one thing that you said with which I could not argue. You said, 'I love you' — and you said it with a tear in your eye. Ray, there's no way that I could debate that, or out-argue it. And that's why I'm here right now, ready to meet Jesus Christ, if you'll help me." — account paraphrased here from the 6/15/1999 radio program of Adrian Rogers.

**Here is another very important and qualifying point about the value of apologetics**, lest anyone suppose that apologetics alone is going to automatically result in people being saved. *Apologetics on its own is not the answer.* We should no doubt more often just let the Bible speak for itself. There's an apologetics power in God's Word that will often produce more effective results than all of our skilled and polished apologetics techniques.

**Read this commentary** by **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** (1834 – 1892), one of the greatest and most influential preachers and authors of all time.

"There seems to me to have been twice as much done in some ages in **defending** the Bible as in **expounding** it, but if the whole of our strength shall henceforth go to the exposition and spreading of it, we may leave it pretty much to **defend itself**. I do not know whether you see that lion—it is very distinctly before my eyes; a number of persons advance to attack him, while a host of us would defend the grand old monarch, the British Lion, with all our strength. Many suggestions are made and much advice is offered. This weapon is recommended, and the other. **Pardon me if I offer a quiet suggestion. Open the door and let the lion out; he will take care of himself.** Why, they are gone! He no sooner goes forth in his strength than his assailants flee. The way to meet infidelity is to spread the Bible. **The answer to every objection against the Bible is the Bible.**" — from *Speeches at Home and Abroad*, based on Spurgeon's speech at the Annual Meeting of the British & Foreign Bible Society, May 5, 1875.



"A great many learned men are **defending the gospel**; no doubt it is a very proper and right thing to do, yet I always notice that, when there are most books of that kind, it is because **the gospel itself is not being preached**. Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts! There he is in the cage, and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him. Well, I should suggest to them, if they would not object, and feel that it was humbling to them, that **they should kindly stand back, and open the door, and let the lion out!** I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself; and the best "apology" for the gospel is to let the gospel out ... preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let the Lion out, and see who will dare to approach him. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will soon drive away all his adversaries." — from a sermon entitled *Christ and His Co-Workers*, preached by Spurgeon on June 10, 1886.

**Finally, apologetics does not mean apologizing.** The word *apologetics* is only a linguistic cousin to the English term "apologizing." So apologetics is not an apology at all, in the typical western sense of the word. Apologetics is not about being apologetic!



*One day on the streets of Monson, Maine, circa 2006 — an actual conversation.*

**KF:** Hey! Rev. Witmer. You still the pastor of this Monson Community Church?

**DEW:** No, actually since 2004 I've been involved in full time in a ministry of Christian apologetics.

**KF:** What?! You mean that after all these years you're now apologizing for your beliefs?

**DEW:** No, I'm doing just the opposite. I'm helping people to know there's good evidence for it.

**KF:** But I thought you just said that you're doing apologetics. I don't get it.

**DEW:** The word apologetics means to reply or to defend. I'm defending Christian truth.

**KF:** Never heard of that before.

**DEW:** Well, now you have! So what do you personally believe about Christ?

**Sometimes misunderstandings can even lead to unwarranted accusations,** as was evidently the case with a fellow who professed to be a knowledgeable Christian, but who scrawled these words on the *outside* of an envelope that he addressed to me in August of 2004:

*This apologetics doctrine didn't come from Christ's mind. It is an infection traced to the mind of Satan via a henchman. Man, you have a loose wire. Why would one need to act like Peter and deny Christ? Why apologize?*

**Shortly after we launched AIIA in the 1990s** a Christian attorney from Portland, Maine, sent me a letter suggesting that we **not** describe ourselves as an **apologetics ministry** — and that, in fact, *all* Christians should stop using the word **apologetics**. In responding I thanked him for writing, but told him that I figured the word **apologetics** was probably here to stay, like it or not — and that a **better approach** might be to work hard at **educating people** about what it really is and isn't.

**To sum up this section —**

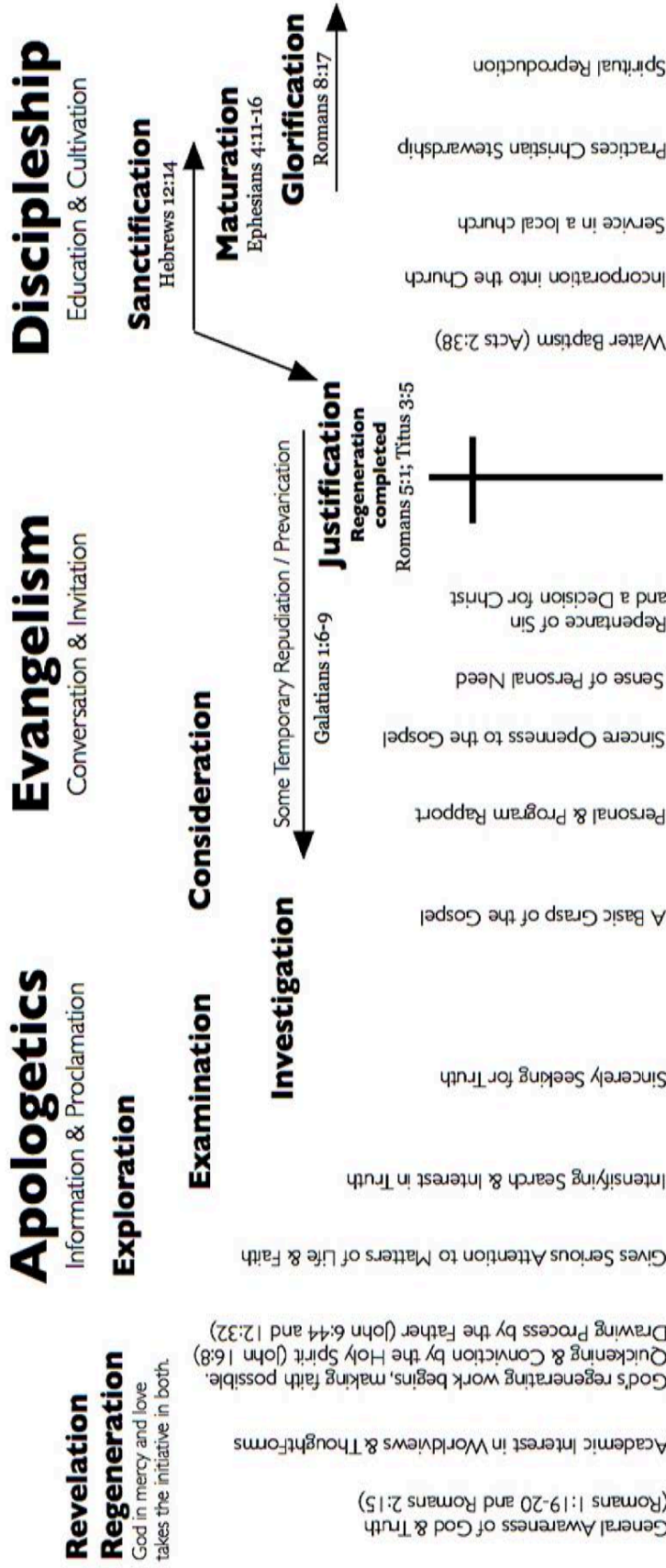
## **CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS . . .**

- ▶ **Is not** about pressuring. **It is** about persuading.
- ▶ **Is not** about being tricky. **It is** about being sincere.
- ▶ **Is not** about my being responsible for results. **It is** about being faithful to speak truth.
- ▶ **Is not** about arguing with those who don't share my views. **It is** about being gentle and respectful.
- ▶ **Is not** about apologizing for Christianity. **It is** about making the case for Christ.
- ▶ **Is not** about proving the Bible to be true. **It is** about letting God's Word prove its own worth.

**HERE'S A TIP:** When I practice apologetics, I often try to ask thoughtful questions, listen carefully, ask if I can **briefly** share my own story, and ask (when it seems appropriate) if I can pray for the person with whom I'm speaking.

# THE GREAT COMMISSION IN PROCESS

The challenge to every Christian believer is to come alongside potential candidates for the Kingdom, listen carefully to them and discover just where they may happen to be along the Life-Continuum outlined below, and then —by the grace of God— gently seek to encourage them along in the Way.



## The Life-Continuum Toward Christian Faith & Commitment

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" —Jesus Christ to His disciples (then and now), Matthew 28:18-20, NASB

Original chart design by Daryl E. Witner, May, 1993, for use with *Areopagus II America (AIIA)* apologetics seminar material. Permission to duplicate, whole or in part, is granted. Modified forms of some concepts previously appearing in a graphic in the book *What's Gone Wrong With the Harvest?* © 1975 Zondervan, Engel & Norton, are incorporate

Revision 7 • February 2023

# Whittling Elephants & Making Disciples



**A** small boy watched as an old man sat whittling wood. Under the hands of the master, the form of an elephant soon began to emerge from what had just moments before been nothing but a rough block of wood. "How'd you do that, mister?" the boy asked, wide-eyed. "With a wink, the old man said, "Easy, son. I just carved away everything that wasn't an elephant."

There is a sense, perhaps, in which obedience to our Lord's Great Commission to make disciples involves nothing more or less than the dedicated effort (in ourselves and with all others who are receptive) to carve away the confusion, error, and obstacles that compromise one experiencing the fullness of Christian life and truth. As that process occurs, a life of maturity and commitment in Christ will inevitably emerge.

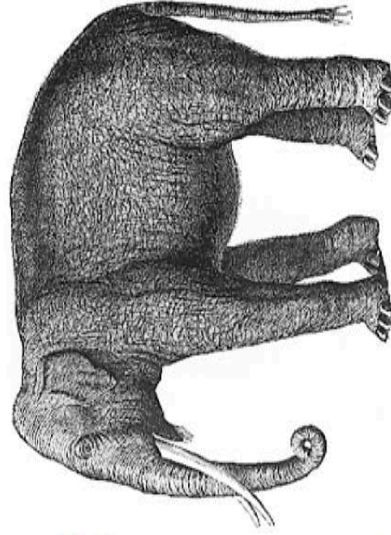
The process will only ever begin, however, if we who are already committed to walk in faithfulness with the Master make a concerted effort to come alongside others and really understand just where they are on the continuum of faith and commitment.

Perhaps some whom we meet will have honest questions about the very credibility of Christianity. The need in such cases is for effective **apologetics**; the call is for an appropriate **proclamation of the gospel**. The Apostle Paul effectively modeled this approach at the ancient Athenian Areopagus (Acts 17:13-34).

On the other hand, an individual may have already resolved any significant intellectual challenges standing in the way of a decision for faith in Christ. In fact, he or she may be very prepared to follow Jesus, and receptive to anyone who is bold and caring enough to extend an invitation. The obvious need in such a case is for a little **evangelistic initiative** on our part; the call is for **persuasion** and **invitation**. Philip the disciple once effectively modeled this approach with the Ethiopian eunuch on a lonely desert road just south of Jerusalem (Acts 8:26-40).

In still other cases, a decision to receive Christ as Savior may have already occurred years earlier, but circumstances, disobedience, or a lack of adequate training have hindered consistent growth and full effectiveness. The need in such a case is for competent **training**; the call is for **cultivation** and **discipling**. Aquila and Priscilla effectively modeled this approach with Apollos at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28).

Ultimately, the goal of the Great Commission is that men and women and boys and girls come to faith in Christ, and that believers be presented mature in Christ, growing in faith and commitment (Ephesians 4:13), loving and enjoying and praising God forever. As noted above, for the Church this is going to involve **proclamation, invitation, and cultivation**. Yet because of the great difference in where people stand in their relationship with the Savior, within these three larger categories, discipling will be much needed, and will involve sensitivity, patience, and commitment over the long term.





# The Scope of Christian Apologetics

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**Christian apologists should be prepared to provide a fairly simple basic response** to a broad range of questions pertaining to Christian faith, life, and truth. These questions may range from the **philosophical** on one end of the scale to matters of **morality** and **ethics**, to questions **bordering on** (but not usually dealing directly with) **theology** and **doctrine** on the other end of the scale. Questions about non-essential doctrine is more in the domain of theologians, pastors, and teachers than it is apologists — although there is inevitable overlap both in terms of the issues (doctrine of the Trinity) and in term of our roles (we are all charged to be apologists).

Not every Christian is expected to be an expert on every apologetics-related subject! We can always say, “I’m not sure but I know where to go for an answer.” Or, “I can’t answer that question right now, but I’ll research it and get back to you soon.” (And then we’d better keep our word!)

Using a medical analogy, I’ve often described myself as a **general practitioner** (a term that now seems to have morphed into **primary care provider**) by which I mean that we are engaged in basic general Christian apologetics (see page 24 of this compendium) at more of an entry-level than advanced academic expert level, prepared to refer to specialist resources when indicated.

**The questions that “primary care” apologists** should be prepared to provide as at least starter answers can be placed within the **scope** of the following **eight categories**, although these eight are somewhat arbitrary.

- 1. GOD:** evidences for the existence and attributes of the God of the Bible.
- 2. BIBLE:** the Divine origin, uniqueness, integrity, authenticity, and reliability of the Christian Scriptures, Old & New Testament — including matters of Biblical criticism, inerrancy, Bible difficulties (texts that are hard to understand) or so-called discrepancies.
- 3. JESUS CHRIST:** defending the claims and identity of Christ, i.e. citing evidence for His Deity.
- 4. SCIENCE & ORIGINS:** includes matters of earth and life origins, the evolution-creation debate, the case and place for intelligent design, and the archaeological validation of Scripture.
- 5. SUFFERING & EVIL:** theodicies; reconciling adversity with an all-loving all-powerful God.
- 6. WORLDVIEWS:** exploring, comparing, and challenging alternate non-Christian faith systems, including major world religions, cults, occult practices, and secular ideologies or thoughtforms.
- 7. EPISTEMOLOGY:** discerning truth, i.e. how we know and how we know we know; establishing solid ground for absolute truth and morals; challenging postmodern assumptions.
- 8. EVERYTHING ELSE:** a catch-all bin that includes questions about miracles, hypocrites, heathen who’ve never heard about Christ, reincarnation, and so on.



# The Who of Christian Apologetics

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## TO WHOM DOES APOLOGETICS APPLY?

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### A COMMISSION FOR EVERY FOLLOWER OF JESUS

**Apologetics is not only intended** for academics, scholars, seminary graduates, and pastors. The Bible charges every Christian to be engaged in persuading others to Christ (Acts 17:1-9), preaching the gospel and making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20) and explaining to those who ask why our hope in Christ is reasonable and well-founded (1 Peter 3:15; and see further on pages 32 and page 33ff regarding the Biblical basis for apologetics.)

Not everyone is called to practice apologetics **full time**, but every follower of Jesus is to be ready **at any time** and **at all times** to engage in this discipline. See further notes on this matter from my lecture/sermon entitled *Interruptions* on page 93ff of this compendium.

**Some Christians may say**, “Well, I’m just not gifted in this way. I’m not good with words.”

Do you remember the story in Exodus 3 and 4 about how God grew annoyed with all of Moses’ excuses about why he wasn’t up to the job that God called him to do? Why would He expect you to do what you can’t do? He wouldn’t. So He’ll give you the words and He’ll make you able. Just wade in. Practice. Learn by doing. You may never be the king of all apologists. But God will multiply your **ability** if you’ll offer Him your **availability**.

## WHO ARE THE MOST NOTED APOLOGISTS?

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### VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS THEN AND NOW

Down through history God has especially gifted some men and women as skilled apologists. Certainly the best known apologist of all time was **Jesus** in citing prophetic evidence to make the case for His claim to be God and the savior of all who would believe in Him (Luke 4:16-21). The **disciples** did the same. The **Apostle Paul** was an especially powerful apologist (Acts 17:16-34).

Many early believers, church fathers (Augustine), reformers (Luther, Calvin), and Christian leaders have defended and contended for Christian truth. No doubt the most widely-note Christian apologist of the 20th century was **C.S. Lewis**, whose writings continue to be influential today.

**Here are the names** of a few of the most noted Christian apologist in this century: **Lee Strobel, Norm Geisler, Gary Habermas, Frank Turek, J. Warner Wallace, John Lennox, Josh & Sean McDowell, Matthew Slick, R.C. Sproul, Natasha Crain, Nancy Pearcey, William Lane Craig.**

**See Section 4, Appendix 7, pages 533-534, for a more complete listing of skilled and reputable Christian apologists and resource ministries in our time.**



# Christian Apologetics: Biblical Basis

There is a very real sense in which **all of Scripture** encourages men and women to **know** what we believe and to **know why we believe it**; to **understand** what life is all about, to **answer** questions (even when raised in our own minds) about why our conclusions and convictions are justified, and to **defend** truth — each of which is what apologetics is all about.

From Genesis 1-3 where God creates humans with the capacity to **think rationally** (knowing enough to obey God's directives), use language (Adam naming the animals), and converse (Adam with God and Eve) — to Deuteronomy 6:5 where we are commanded to love God with all of our **heart and soul** (in other words, our **minds**) — to Matthew 22:37 where we are explicitly told to love the Lord God with all our **minds**, and John 4:24 where we are told to worship God in spirit and in **truth** — to 1 John 4:6 where believers are challenged to be **discerning**, to Revelation where Christ specifically holds His Church accountable for **contending** for truth (Revelation 2:20), as well as in a number of other texts, we are told to be **rational** in our **thinking** about life and **truth**.

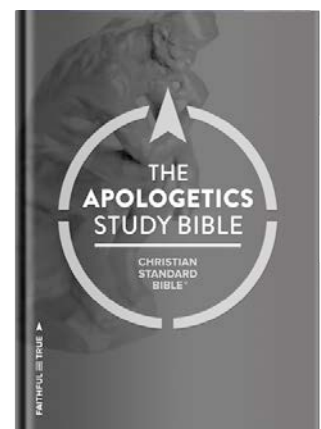
However, **four specific Bible texts** are most frequently cited as specifically advocating for apologetics: **Acts 17:16-34** (Paul on Mar's Hill), **Jude 3** (contending for the faith once delivered), **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** (tearing down strongholds), and — no doubt most significantly — **1 Peter 3:15** (being prepared with an answer when asked about the basis for our hope).

"We must learn from Paul (on Mar's Hill) how to address the pagans of our own day, to engage them in their own frame of reference, to invade their intellectual strongholds. History has proven the wisdom of Paul's strategy. Just up the hill from where Paul spoke stands the Parthenon, which, centuries later, became a Christian church. To this day, on Good Friday, the flag of Greece is lowered to half-mast. Then, on Easter Sunday, it is raised to full staff in honor of the resurrection that Paul boldly proclaimed there so long ago."

— **Charles Colson**, CT column, Fall 1993

Of course in **1 Peter 3:15** (mentioned above) the actual Greek term from which we derive the English word "apologetics" appears: **apologia** — and it is literally translated, "an answer, a reply." The CSB Apologetics Study Bible, © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers) claims that the Greek term **apologia** appears 17 times in noun or verb form in the New Testament, and can be translated "defense" or "vindication" in every case.

Additionally, in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15 Jesus commissions every follower of His to be actively involved in the **proclamation** of the good news about what His death and resurrection accomplishes. That's evangelism. In Acts 19:8 the Apostle Paul models for all believers the **priority** and **practice** of reasoning and **persuading** others of Christian truth, and to faith in Christ.





# THE FOUR LEADING APOLOGETICS-RELATED TEXTS IN SCRIPTURE



Based on my study of Scripture and after working for over three decades as a vocational apologist, I would deem the four leading apologetics-related texts to be:

**1 Peter 3:15**

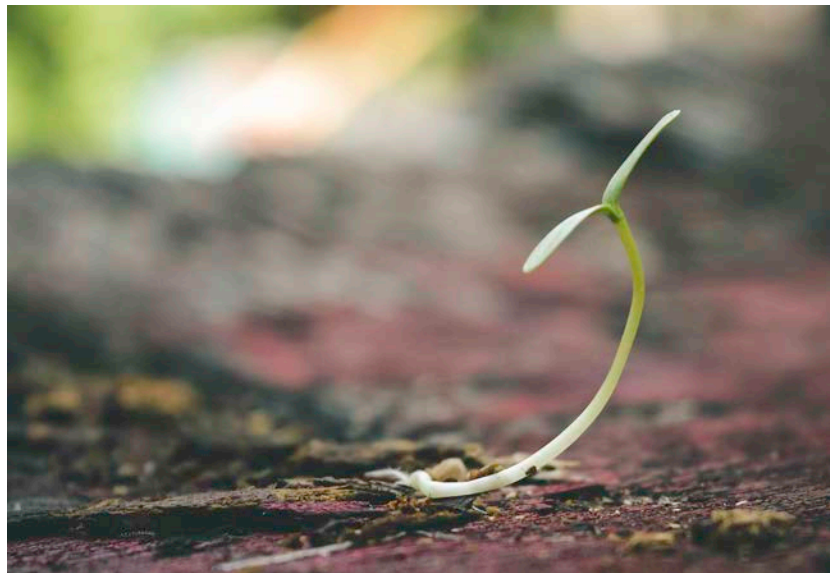
**Jude 3**

**2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

**Acts 17:16-34**

**These four texts**, more than any others, are used as the basis for stressing the critical importance of Christian apologetics — defending and contending for historic Christian truth in our time. In the following pages I'm offering my lecture and sermon notes on three of these four texts, and on the fourth one (Acts 17:16-34) in **Section 1** under **When? Where?**

**Get Ready.  
Get Set.  
Go Talk  
about Hope**



**1 Peter 3:15**

*The following transcript was adapted from a sermon last delivered by Daryl E Witmer on 19 November 2017.*

I've entitled this message and challenge "Get Ready, Get Set, Go Talk About Hope" — and it's based on what is often referred to as the **golden text** of **Christian apologetics** — **1 Peter 3:15**. So let me read this text in the context of verses 13-16 of 1 Peter 3.

**13** Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, **15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; **16** and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Let's begin right at the heart of this text, which is this little phrase right smack dab in the middle of the verse that is translated: "give an **answer**" (KJV, NIV) or "make a **defense**" (NASB, ESV) or "**explain**" (NLT).

When God's Spirit breathed out this little phrase in this part of the verse to the Apostle Peter, Peter — who was writing in Greek — wrote down the word **apologia**, from which we get our English term **apologetics**.

So the word apologetics comes directly from God. We can't ascribe the use of this term to some high-browed scholar. *God* said it. And yet very often today the word apologetics gets a bad rap — for 3 main reasons. **First of all**, it's got a bad case of syllables. **A-pol-o-ge-tics**. Five syllables, to be exact — and everyone knows that any word with five syllables is way too scholarly. So folks just figure that apologetics is for theologians or preachers or seminary students. But, they think, "It's not for me." Yet God's Word says that's not true. Apologetics is for every Christian.

**"Why should we be sorry for our  
faith when the Bible says that we're  
*not* to be ashamed of the gospel?"**

**The second reason** is that **apologetics** sounds very much like **apologizing**. And why should we be sorry for our faith when the Bible says that we're *not* to be ashamed of the gospel? But does apologetics *really* mean apologizing? No. The two words sound a lot alike, but apologetics actually involves *speaking up* for something in which we *do* believe and for which we're not at all sorry. So technically, you can be an apologist for Sweet Frog yogurt, or for Macintosh apples or Macintosh computers, or for Ford Motor Company, or for the Boston Red Sox, or for Buddhism.

**Then there's a third reason** why it seems that apologetics often has a nasty reputation. It's because some people tend to associate the word apologetics with arguing or debating — and they figure that they're not very good at either one, or would even want to be. So why should they care about apologetics?

Yet the truth is — apologetics *doesn't* involve arguing. Look at the very last phrase of this verse. It says that when we *apologia* — when we **give our answers** or **make our defense** for hoping in Jesus, we're to do so **gently** and with **respect**. No arguing. No cocky spirit. No one-upmanship. No holier-than-thou attitude. No pushiness. Just quiet confident yet humble respect.

Some time ago I read a letter to the editor in a local paper which implied that Christians aren't very smart. So I personally called the fellow who wrote the letter and invited him to meet with me. He accepted. I asked him how he had formed his impression of Christians. He told me that when he was in college, his roommate accepted Christ, and then relentlessly badgered him for months with very weak arguments for Christianity. It turned him off.

I don't know if his roommate's life was consistent with his witness, but I do know that when people don't see any difference between a Christian and a non-Christian when it comes to how we Christians live, talk, spend money, what we watch, or what we think is funny — and then we try to talk with them about our faith, it's going to seem phony. Why would they listen to us?

Look at the first phrase of verse 15. **Sanctify Christ as Lord.** If I'm not following Christ as Lord anything that I have to say about Christian hope is going to ring hollow. If television is my god, or sports, or money, or my work, or my hobbies — if any of these things rule my life, my *apologia* is going to be compromised.

My living relationship to Jesus is going to be the most important part of any defense that I'll ever try to make for Christian truth. The most powerful answers that I will ever give to anyone who asks me about the basis for my hope will be the consistency of my life for Christ, and my priority for Christ, and my trust in Christ, and my hope and joy in Christ.

**Have you set Christ apart as Lord in your life, or are you a Christian atheist?** You can only have one Lord. Edward Mote, a very well-loved 19th century Baptist minister, wrote a hymn: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

And Edward Mote did just that. He trusted in Christ alone. He practiced what he preached. He was a great model of hoping in Christ. His congregation loved him so much that they voted to deed the church building to him. But he wouldn't have it. He refused it. Christ alone was Lord in his life, his hope and all he needed.

**"Sometimes the great storms of life roll in on us. Health problems, financial pressure, stress, loneliness, fear. How do you handle fear?"**

The second verse of his hymn says: "When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; in every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand."

Sometimes the great storms of life roll in on us. Health problems, financial pressure, stress, loneliness, discouragement, fear. How do you handle fear?

This first letter from Peter was addressed to Christians living in very fearful conditions. The terrible Roman persecution was ramping up at this point. The reign of the evil Emperor Nero was at hand. You talk about ISIS, Hamas, Putin, terrorism, torture. Peter is writing here to Christians facing very intimidating circumstances. Yet here in verses 14-15 he says: "Don't be troubled, don't be frightened." How is that possible, Peter? Peter says, "By keeping your eyes on Jesus. Realize that **Jesus** is Lord. He is sovereign over all. It's the Lord Christ, not Rome, who's running this show."

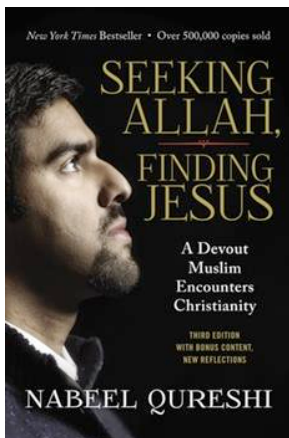
**Hope in Christ.** Our hope must be in Christ. Even in the face of trial, persecution, and death. “The body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever.” — Martin Luther

You know, there are two kinds of hope — blind hope and reasonable hope. If I told you that I’m hoping to make the 2026 Winter Olympic team in figure skating, you’d probably recognize that as a baseless hope. But if I said, “I hope to eat dinner this evening,” you’d see that as a reasonable well-based hope. One kind of hope is just wild wish-upon-a-star *aspiration*. The other kind of hope is confident realistic *expectation*.

I’ve asked many people what they think is going to happen when they die, and they often say something like, “**Well, I’ve tried to do right in this life, so I’m just going to hope for the best.**” That sounds to me like a fairly blind baseless brand of hope. It’s like “I bought a lottery ticket, so I hope to win the lottery.” Or “I got a cold last year, so I hope I’ll never catch another cold again.”

Here in 1 Peter 3:15 when Peter talks about others asking us *Christians* for some account of our hopeful view of life in spite of tough times, he uses a term that literally means “joyful and confident expectation.” Not just wishful thinking. There’s a solid basis for our hope. Our hope is based on a faith that is based on good evidence. And our hope is based on a person. Jesus is our hope. Our hope is in the Lord. “When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand.”

We have the promises of a God for whose existence there is solid evidence. We have a Bible, the supernatural origin and reliability for which there is solid evidence. There is Jesus Himself, whose claims and identity are all grounded in solid evidence. So now we need to get familiar with the evidence. Then when people ask us about our hope we can show them that our hope is well-grounded expectation. Are you able to do that? Are you prepared to give a good answer?



Nabeel Qureshi was born in 1983. He was the oldest son of devout Muslim Pakistani immigrants. He grew up here in America, living and breathing Islam. When he was just minutes old his father whispered the *adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer, into his ear. And Nabeel was brilliant. He recited or read the entire Quran in Arabic at age 5. In his teen years he was a strong proponent of Islam. He lived his faith consistently.

But then when he went to college, he met a Christian young man by the name of **David Wood** who befriended him and talked with him about his own hope in Christ. In August of 2005, at the age of 22, after years of searching, study, and even experiencing supernatural dreams, Nabeel turned in faith to Jesus Christ — *at great cost*.

He became a medical doctor, a nationally-known speaker, and had also pursued a PhD at Oxford University in England. In 2014 Nabeel published a book about his journey from Islam to Christianity called: *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. An amazing book, reviewed by thousands on Amazon with a solid 5-star rating. You should read it. It’ll give you insight into Islam and it will also demonstrate the power of God through effective Christian apologetics. But then, Nabeel developed a fast-moving cancer and died on September 16, 2017, at the age of just 34.

I want to provide you with one final key insight from our text verse. I don’t know whether you’ve noticed this or not, but Peter says here in verse 15 that we’re to be prepared with our answers, or ready with our defense (*apologia*) of faith in Christ, whenever people ask us for — not an answer or a defense (*apologia*) of our faith in Christ — but for an account (*logos*) or word about our hope.

That is, most folks aren't just going to walk up to you and ask you for a formal defense of your Christian faith. But if people happen to notice and be impressed by your joyful hope **in dark and troubled times**, as was the case with these believers that he was addressing, then they very well might ask you to explain that hope. In which case Peter says that you should be prepared to cite good solid evidence for why your hope is well grounded and not just pie-in-the-sky fantasy.

Does anyone ever ask you about your hope? If no one ever asks you about your hope, is it possible that it's because they don't see you looking or acting very hopeful? Does your face reflect hope? Do you smile? Are you optimistic? Do you voice a positive outlook about the times? Or are you just grumbling and whining and fussing about the problems with everyone else today? "Oh, the government is terrible, my health is terrible, the prices are so high, the future is bleak." **Or** perhaps the reason that folks never ask you about your hope is because the subject of your faith and your hope as a Christian never comes up. Have you ever considered bringing it up?

Have *you* ever asked anyone about *their* hope? Everyone needs hope. Everyone relates to the subject of hope. Why don't you try asking someone about their hope this week? Then they might ask you about your hope. Start a conversation about hope. I did that with four Appalachian Trail hikers one day — and the results were encouraging. I had a great opportunity to share my faith.

Ask God to set you up to launch a conversation about hope with someone this week, or later today. "Excuse me, but can I ask — are you hopeful about the future? Why or why not? Do you have hope about what's coming after this life? Why or why not?"

On November 6, 2005, I recall watching the original edition of a segment of **60 Minutes** with **Steve Kroft** interviewing **Tom Brady**, the superstar quarterback of the New England Patriots at that time. In 2005 Brady was just 27 years old and he already had just about everything this world can offer. He knew that and was openly acknowledging it — his fame, his health, his money, his good looks, his success, three Super Bowl rings at the time, one of the world's most beautiful models at his side.



But at one point in the interview Tom Brady sort of screwed up his face and said to Steve Kroft that in spite of all of this he still finds himself thinking, "God, there's gotta be more than this." So Kroft says, "What's the answer?" And Brady says: "I wish I knew. I wish I knew." He repeated it just like that. I still have the video.

Ten years later when Brady was 37 and competing for his fourth Superbowl ring, the New York Times published another interview with Brady who said that he still wasn't sure about his belief system. So listen — if that was true for Tom Brady with all that he had, you can be sure that so many others are also looking for something more — for truth and hope. Someone you're going to meet this week is searching for hope based on solid evidence. Reasonable hope.

So **get ready** with the evidence about why *your* hope *is* realistic. **Get set.** Ask God to set you up. Get ready. Get set. **Go** — talk about hope with someone today. And may God use your initiative to open some heart in a way that makes a difference in their eternity.

# Contending for the Faith Once Delivered



## Jude 3-4

The little 25-verse one-chapter Bible Book of Jude, next-to-last Book in the New Testament, was probably written in or about 67 A.D. Which would be approximately 34 years after Jesus' ascension to heaven. The book was inspired by God's Holy Spirit, written by Jude (one of Jesus' own human brothers), and addressed to the Church. Although it's just a short letter, it packs a powerful punch.

In verses 3 and 4, Jude gets right to the point of why he's writing this letter.

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

In other words Jude, by Divine insight, had come to realize that some “ungodly persons” (see v4b) with evil motives had invaded the Church — literally. He says that these men had *crept* in — that is, they had come in surreptitiously, under the radar, and had even managed to settle right alongside the believers — just sort of blending in and fitting in — and they were, even up to this moment, continuing to operate pretty much undetected, according to verse 12.

Are you familiar with the story of how a squad of ancient Greek soldiers once slipped into the city of Troy unnoticed by hiding themselves inside the infamous Trojan gift horse? In that way they were able to infiltrate the entire city with the deliberate intent of attacking and destroying and capturing Troy.

But these ungodly fellows here in Jude 4 had taken the same idea one step further. They were not only out of the horse and into the city — they were blending into the Church itself. Looking just like the Church. Acting like the Church. Sitting around with the Church. Running with the Church. God's people were under a deliberate spiritual attack and didn't even know it. Because the *modus operandi* of these evil men was to just blend in. Some years ago *al Qaida* terrorist cells tried the same approach right here in America.

So what are the believers to do about this situation? Well, **the operative verse** in this entire Book is clearly verse 3, and the **operative phrase** in verse 3 is clearly the little five-word directive: "contend earnestly for the faith." The Church, Jude says, is to **contend earnestly** for the faith which had once for all been delivered to the saints, but which is now in danger of being compromised by an enemy who has infiltrated the ranks of the saints. This enemy was not without, but within. As someone once said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." In order to preserve the faith, the Church was being warned to do something that is very difficult to do — examine itself and look among its own ranks for enemy agents.



Now sometimes when we read about faith in the Bible, it's referring to trust or belief and commitment. Other times, such as is true in this case, it's a reference to the **doctrine** and to the **truth** which we hold to be biblical and sound. So Jude here is really stating with considerable urgency that the central teaching of Christianity has already been given to the saints of God, and now it's up to the saints to preserve that faith by examining itself and purging itself of an enemy which has come within, but which is not at all in line with the faith and doctrine upon which the Church was founded.



Dr. John Piper, former pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis MN says, "There are truths about God, Christ, man, the Church, and the world which are essential to the life of Christianity. If they are lost or distorted the result will not be merely wrong ideas, but misplaced trust. The inner life of faith is not independent from the doctrinal statement of faith. When doctrine goes bad, so do hearts. There is a body of doctrine which must be preserved."

And every generation of believers down through history, beginning with this generation to whom Jude is writing in the first century, bears some degree of responsibility for preserving the body of God's truth.

Here's something else to keep in mind — Jude is pointing out here in verse 3 that this body of doctrine which must be preserved is a **closed body of doctrine**. That is, the propositional revelation about who God is, and who we are, and how we got here, and what we must do to be saved, and what comes after this life — all of this truth is here in the Scripture. And the canon of Scripture is fixed. It's already been signed, sealed, and delivered — all of it, once and for all, according to verse 3. There will never be any additions. No sequels. No supplements. The truth of God, the doctrine of the Church, and the parameters of the Christian faith have been fixed — once and for all time — right here in the Bible.

What that means is this — any teacher or any spiritual leader or religious figure who comes along and claims to have received some new word from God to add to this faith which has already been delivered to the saints once and for all is clearly in error to the degree that his or her "new truth" goes beyond the original revelation. To that extent he or she is a false prophet, and to be rejected outright. The Church is to test the spirits, discern error, turn away from false teaching, and contend for the faith.

Now the dictionary says that "to contend" means "to **strive in opposition**." It means to "put forth reasons for or against, often excitedly; to argue, to debate, to dispute." The Greek verb actually means to "put up an agonizing struggle."

During my own extended time in the hospital in 1984-1985 I witnessed many patients in physical therapy, struggling against stiffening muscles, paralysis, and depression. **I was one of them!** It's very easy to want to give up at times. Defeat is often lurking right at the door.

Discouragement sneaks in every day. It's a battle, a struggle, to press on. The physical therapists are always saying, "No pain, no gain." We'd get so sick of hearing that little adage. It often seemed much easier to give up and sit down.

**“The Book of Jude charges the Church to keep on putting up a hard struggle against these false forces who have crept in to distort the Gospel.”**

But the Book of Jude charges the Church to keep on **putting up a hard struggle** against these false forces which have crept in to distort and destroy the Gospel. And today that challenge is every bit as critical as it was the day that Jude first presented it. Verses 8 and following use some of the strongest words in the entire New Testament to describe the threat that is posed here. Don't give up! Battle on.

In our post-modern times one of the greatest dangers to the Christian faith is posed by the radical thoughtform known as **relativism**. Relativism claims that all truth and moral values are relative to the individual(s) holding them — that they are not at all absolute. Relativism teaches that no one can know anything for certain — including who we are, how we got here, or even whether we really are here. I recall hearing about how one day, during a lecture by a noted Christian apologist, some fellow stood up near the back of the room and said, "But how can I even be certain that I exist?" The speaker paused for just a moment and then said, "And who, sir, may I say, is asking the question?"



**Richard Keyes**, for many years director of the **L'Abri Fellowship** in **Southborough MA**, said that a true relativist would claim that it was ridiculous for anyone to think of *any* religion as being false — that calling *any* religion false would be like saying that chocolate ice cream is false. Because relativists believe that religion, like ice cream, is just a matter of preference.

This deception has been around for a long while. In the 1990s, Barna polls were indicating that 66% of Americans generally agreed with the idea that there is no such thing as absolute truth. But even before that, in 1987, when Allan Bloom published *The Closing of the American Mind*, he alleged that almost every student entering the university believed that truth was relative.

As early as 1994 there was clear evidence that the Church had begun sucking up that same secular ideology. In their book *Right from Wrong*, Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler stated that over half of our own church youth could not say that an objective standard of truth existed. They said that even if your kid was actively involved in an evangelical church, he or she likely approved the new view that people can define truth in contradictory ways and still all be correct. Truth had become a matter of expediency — even in the Church.

The deception was as contagious as a bad virus. In late June 2008 the Pew Forum, having polled 35,000 Americans, stated that **57% of those who called themselves evangelicals believed that one need not be a Christian in order to inherit eternal life**. Any religion will do just as long as you're sincere about it and as long as it works for you. Never mind what the Bible says, what Jesus said, or what the apostles once taught — this is the new theology of the third millennium.

**You say, "How did this all happen?" Answer: very gradually.** Certain persons and certain philosophies crept in bit by bit. They didn't rush in with six guns blazing. It was rather a slow, subtle, sneaky process. **Marshall McLuhan** once said, "If the temperature of the bath water rises one degree every ten minutes, how will the bather know when to scream?"

Jude wrote his epistle in the first century. Time went on, and there was what became known as the **Middle Ages**. And then there was the **Age of Reason** and the **Machine Age** and the **Modern Age**. Today we're in what is often referred to as the **Postmodern Age**. If the modern age was marked by an emphasis on scientific knowledge and the potential of rational thinking, postmodernism is most typically marked by the rejection of reason. It's marked by anti-logic.

Christian philosopher William Lane Craig says: "Postmodernists typically reject the idea that truth is objective, that reality can be known as it is, and that reality is rational." He tells of the time when he was attending a conference of a mainline denomination here in America. A professor began making statements which he, Craig, considered very misleading. So he stood up and began to question the professor's premise, whereupon the professor looked at him with incredulity and said, "Oh, I'm not claiming that my interpretation is correct. What do you expect me to do? Have a foundation for my belief?" And he wasn't joking — he was serious.

**Some time ago I was invited to lead a seminar** in a public high school in Maine. The vast majority of the teens attending that seminar told me that they felt that truth was relative. Two particular fellows insisted that if a man sincerely thought that  $17 + 17 = 2$ , then the true answer to the question for him was 2. They were altogether serious. I can hardly wait for the day when those two fellows float that view with the dealer from whom they go to purchase their first car.

It really all comes back to the matter of authority. How will we decide, after all, what to believe about any spiritual matter? Will we take a poll? Will we consult the pope? Will we determine what is most popular? Will we seek the prevailing opinion of the day? Will we go with what seems to make the most sense? Or will we — dare we — **look to the Bible as our sole final authority** in all matters of life and truth? *Sola Scriptura*, as the Congregationalists once said. Or *Where Stands It Written?* was the Scandinavian version of that same certain standard.

The Bible says that there *is* an absolute truth which we can know, and which, when we come to know it, will make us free. Jesus Himself said that in John 8:32. In John 14:6 He claimed to **be** the truth. And in John 17:17 He prayed to the Father, "Thy Word is truth."

Acts 4:12 says that "...there is salvation in no one else (but Christ); for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." 1 Timothy 2:5 says that "there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." These are universal truths. The Bible makes it clear that they apply to every person in every town and every tribe in every jungle in every nation of the world — for all time.

**“So—what can you and I do *today* to effectively contend for the faith once delivered to the saints?”**

**Edward Everett Hale** once said, "I am only one but, still, I am one. I cannot do everything but, still, I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."

**What is the something that we can do? Here, very briefly, are three proposals:**

**1. GET BACK TO THE BIBLE AND SOUND DOCTRINE.** Jude 17 says, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ..." We need to recommit to the primacy, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible. If it's true that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, then let's get back to the Word of God. Let's memorize it, teach it, quote it, and live it. Let's familiarize ourselves with the great creeds and our statements of faith. It's always easier to detect the counterfeit if you're familiar with the authentic. And let's not neglect prayer and fellowship, as noted in verses 20-21.

**2. WE MUST CONFRONT ERRONEOUS TRENDS IN THE CHURCH.** We should do so lovingly, as gently as possible, with all civility, and prayerfully — **but also firmly** — **without delay and without compromise.** Jude 22-23 stress the urgency and the passion that must mark our mission. The fatal flames of emerging trends in the Church are burning hot these days. We cannot sit by and we must not bail out. We have to engage in this agonizing struggle, even when it means confronting those whom we love about what is happening. To **contend** means to enter the debate and to be actively engaged.

**3. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE TIMES.** To some extent we have to try to familiarize ourselves with the language of postmodernism or whatever other forms deception may be taking these days. Have you identified the names and organizations that are significantly influencing our culture and even the Church with falsehoods these days? Do you recognize false and evil thoughtforms in our music and in our films and in our culture? We should be talking about things like this with our teenagers. It might help to stem the tide of over 70% of them never coming back to Church once they enter the university.

All of this will require great courage and even sacrifice.

**But if we don't have anything worth dying for, then for what of worth are we living?**

**We're not the first generation to be called to practice the principles of Jude 3.**

On my library shelf is a book called *Fox's Book of Martyrs — A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Deaths of the Early Christian and Protestant Martyrs* — 370 pages of graphically documented cases of contending for the faith once delivered. Real people were persecuted, tortured, and killed because of their stand for truth. Men like Rawlins White from Cardiff who was burned at the stake in Cockmarel with witnesses who claimed that “the fire was so vehement that his legs were consumed before the rest of his body as he tumbled over his chains into the fire.”

Hebrews 12:4 reminds us that **we** have “not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in [our] striving against sin.” Not yet.

Listen carefully. Hear the echo of Jude’s words coming to us down through the corridor of time — **appealing to us that we might contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.**

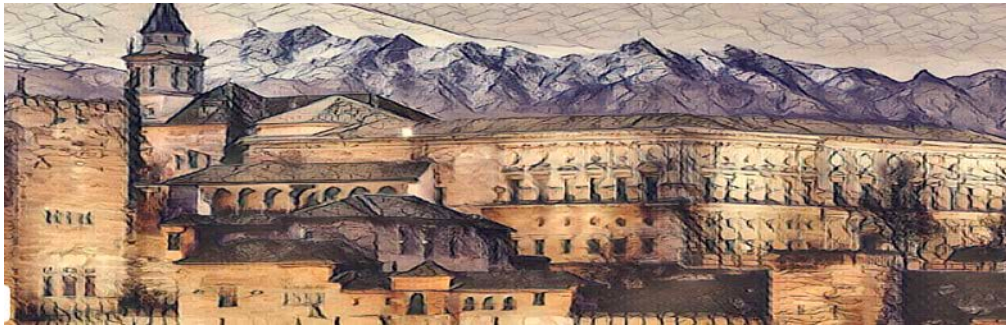
“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)

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*Adapted from a message originally delivered at Rumney Bible Conference on 5 July 2008.*

# DEMOLISHING FORTRESSES

*with apologetics*



# DESTROYING SPECULATIONS

*with apologetics*

# TAKING LOFTY THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

*with apologetics*

One of the most notable truths in the tenth chapter of 2 Corinthians pertains to the sizzling supernatural power that the God of the universe is willing to place in the hands of humble Christians in order to combat even the most entrenched and hostile of all demonic opposition.

The majority of the believers in the Corinthian Church had evidently, by the time that this letter was being written, decided to be supportive of the Apostle Paul's ministry. But there were still a dissident few in the church who continued to oppose Paul, and to be very critical of him, and to try to stir up trouble in the church. These folks were in the minority, but they were nevertheless persistent, stubborn, and mean-spirited. In fact, there is some reason to believe that they actually may not have been Christians at all, but rather false prophets and heretics.

In 2 Corinthians 10, 11, 12, and 13 Paul addresses this nasty minority of so-called believers. He answers their charges. He responds to their lies. He vindicates himself and his ministry. But contrary to what meets the eye, and to what many readers notice, this chapter goes well beyond a mere self-vindication by the apostle.

## **“Paul is doing a lot more here than just defending himself.”**

How do we know that? Well, we know that because he tells us that in chapter 12 verse 19, where he says, "All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved."

So Paul's real purpose in defending himself was to build up the believers by warning them of the danger of those opposing him. **Unless the church knew that these critics were wrong, they were not so likely to know that he was right.** And unless they knew that the critics were wrong, they might very well choose to follow them.

Many reputable Bible scholars believe that these Corinthian critics who were picking on Paul were really a form of what was known as Judaizers — a first century sect that taught that even a Christian had to continue to keep the Hebrew law and be a good Jew. They had migrated west from Jerusalem, had infiltrated the church here in Corinth, and were now endangering the very heart of the Gospel message. Paul was literally fighting here, not just for his own reputation, but for the life of the church and the very future of the Christian faith itself.

Here's how he begins this section of his letter —

2 Corinthians 10:1-2: "Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! I ask that when I am present I *need* not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh."

Apparently these critics had accused Paul of just being a big talker — all bark and no bite. Paul very cynically refers to that charge here in verse 1, but then he sets the record straight in verse 2. He indicates that he is, in fact, fully prepared to be just as tough as he needs to be the next time that he pulls into Corinth. But he certainly doesn't want to be that way.

It's also very interesting to note that Paul begins his entire response here in verse 1 — a response that sounds pretty tough at times — by making it clear that what he's about to say is going to be said in "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

Sometimes we tend to confuse meekness with weakness. But the two are not the same. Paul was meek — but he was never weak. Jesus was meek — He was never weak. You and I are called to be meek, but not weak. A person can be humble and gentle and yet stand firmly for the truth.

## “President Abraham Lincoln is a great example of someone who was very gentle, yet very strong.”

God doesn't call us to be wimps. Who is going to be influenced by a wimp? When you see something that's morally right being attacked, stand up and speak out. Be gentle, be courteous, be polite, be civil — but please don't be silent and spineless when evil men are on the offense. Sir Edmund Burke's wise observation is more relevant than ever today: "All that it takes for evil to triumph in the world is for good men to stand by and do nothing."

So in the meekness and gentleness of Christ Paul proceeds to speak very forcefully in verse 3, by defending his character and theology.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the **destruction of fortresses**. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."

Some of Paul's opponents must have accused him of being fleshly, worldly, and carnal, verse 2. So here in verse 3 Paul answers: "Sure, we live in this world — we walk and talk and operate in this world. But when it comes to spiritual warfare, we know whose side we're on. And we certainly are not fighting the devil's system with the devil's devices. We're using God's power to deal with evil in this world."

The term at the end of verse 4 is particularly intriguing — "**the destruction of fortresses.**" A fortress is defined as a fortified place. It's a location where the enemy has built a strong wall or castle, or has dug in and reinforced his defenses. Some of you may have visited Fort Knox near Bucksport, Maine, situated way up high on a hill. It must have been an imposing sight for anyone even thinking of trying to overtake those inside.



Now the word fort is at the root of the word fortress, and the image of a powerful military edifice or fortification is appropriate here. Fortresses even in the first century were high military battlements thrown up as effective defenses.

The devil has his fortresses today. He has his strongholds. He has places where he's dug in and solidly entrenched himself. Of course, before he can ever form a **stronghold** he has to get himself a **foothold**. Which is why Ephesians 4:27 warns us to never allow the devil to gain even a small foothold in our lives. It says that we're to never give the devil even a small opportunity. Don't play around with what you might consider just a minor evil or vice or sin. What's minor today can become major tomorrow and the devil will take a fingerhold in your life and make it a stronghold if he has even half a chance.

But exactly what were these strongholds and demonic fortresses that Paul has in mind in verse 4? No doubt they included false philosophies and ideologies. In the centuries since this letter was written there have been many examples — false religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Wicca. False ideologies such as Marxism, humanism, scientism, and Darwinism or naturalism — the doctrine that nature is all that there is — no God, no other purpose or meaning to life.

**I'm convinced that macro-evolutionary doctrine has become a stronghold of the devil in our time.** Millions of minds are being indoctrinated with the idea that man is nothing more than the product of chemicals randomly forming themselves over vast eons of time in the darkness of an impersonal cosmos.

But even the label of this doctrine — the **theory** of evolution — belies the fact that it is based on **unproven** assumptions. In other words, **speculation**, verse 5.

## **Effective Christian apologetics exposes false thinking and brings the light of God's truth and Word and power to bear on it.**

**Other examples of demonic fortresses** would include cults and occult type organizations and alliances. Mormon and Jehovah Witness theology would be examples of the fortresses referred to here in verse 4. So are racism, wokeism, radical nationalism, runaway conspiracy theories, gender-bending and many other contemporary forms of unbiblical sexuality, as well as (so-called) progressive Christianity.

Demonic fortresses might very well also include destructive habits and vices such as alcoholism and pornography where the devil digs in and establishes a stronghold, holding people captive. Verse 5 refers to the role of **thought** in the devil's strategy to oppose the true knowledge of God.

Another example of a demonic stronghold in our day might be Hollywood CA. I've been to Hollywood. There is a tremendous volume of moral sewage continually pouring out of that place in the form of evil movies and TV programming. Certain reality shows, the secular music industry, and services such as MTV are subjecting a generation of young people to a continual 24-hour-a-day barrage of profane language and egregious immorality.

The rot in our culture is perpetrated by social media and yields secondary ripples of brokenness, such as divorce, despair, emotional breakdowns, suicide, and even some forms of mental illness — which may in some cases be more the result of demonic activity than physiological issues.

Who can bring down such demonic fortresses? None of us, certainly, on our own. **No human weapon.** Not professional therapy, not alcohol, not recreational or medicinal marijuana, not prescription drugs, not non-prescription drugs (cocaine, heroin, fentanyl), not massive government spending or programs or policies, not suicide hotlines or AA. So human weapon.

To destroy such fortresses would require weapons that are divinely powerful. But Paul is stating here in these verses that we as Christian believers have just such weapons at our disposal. In Christ we can tackle even the most powerful of demonic strongholds and speculations, and win. That should give us hope and courage when it seems that we're facing insurmountable odds in our battle against evil.



**Effective Christian apologetics challenges (replies to) lies and defends truth in the power of the Holy Spirit. Apologetics is not a mere human tool for winning debates with misguided people. It's a supernatural weapon for defeating the deceptions of the devil himself.**

In *The Message*, Eugene Peterson renders the heart of this passage in this way. He says, "The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing [our] entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of [a] life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity."

What fortresses has the devil tried to establish in your life, or in the life of your family, your kids, or your neighborhood? What empty phony ungrounded fears and speculations? What lofty things — what proud high-minded widely-touted human initiatives — have been raised up against the knowledge of God, drawing attention from God as the source of all good and the cure for all ill — in the circles in which you move? What false phony misguided thoughts, thinking, and ideas need to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ? What disobedience needs to be punished?

**Effective Christian apologetics is designed to rout the devil out, not just set him back a notch.**

It's time for Christians to take charge — to stand up in the power of Almighty God, using our divinely powerful weapons to oppose and demolish every place Satan has tried, or is currently trying, to dig in, cloud the truth, and oppose the knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ who alone can set us free.

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Adapted from a message delivered at the Monson Community Church on 6 October 2002, as well as in other venues at other times.

# Christian Apologetics in UnChristian Times



The following pages provide **expository notes** and **commentary** on the account of the **Apostle Paul's** visit to **Athens** circa **53 A.D.** as recorded in the Bible Book of **Acts, chapter 17**. This chapter provides incentive and guidance for employing an apologetics approach to speaking the gospel of Jesus Christ to a pagan culture.

Developing **flow questions** based on these notes could be used to make the session **interactive**. A simple **worksheet** follows the notes.

**Please note** that a substantial amount of the material included here is also incorporated into the sermon entitled *A Trusted Old Prescription for An Ailing New Age* (see Section 1, under When? Where?)

# In the Stands or On the Field?

*A Biblical Methodology for Actively Proclaiming the Gospel Today*

**Christianity was never designed as a spectator sport.** Jesus calls His disciples to full involvement in speaking the gospel and making disciples. This is true for every believer. No one is to merely sit **up in the stands**, watching and cheering on the pastor or other leaders as they evangelize and make the case for historic faith. No. Every Christian is to be **down on the field**, engaging those who are not yet believers. And yet that is often not happening. Which leads to two problems. The world is not being evangelized and the Church is not experiencing the fullness of life in Christ.

Perhaps you are familiar with the Navigators **Wheel Illustration** of the balanced Christian life. Today effective **witnessing** and **apologetics** are often the **short spoke** on the wheel, resulting in a bumpy ride for many Christians. In so many cases the input on evangelism that we receive when attending seminars and conferences or reading notes (like this!) is seriously disproportionate to the time we spend actually witnessing. And that's a formula for spiritual stagnation. It also results in problems for society when Christians begin to fall into the minority and increasingly lose their influence in the political and cultural spheres. There's a snowballing effect.

**How can that be changed?** The story of the Apostle Paul's visit and experience and approach in ancient pagan Athens in 50-53 A.D. as recorded in Acts 17:16-34 makes for an excellent case study in how to engage in effective witnessing. In this session we'll be using Acts 17 to outline a Biblically prescribed methodology of effective apologetics technique in a non-Christian culture.

**Have you ever heard it said:** "Some people make things happen, some folks watch things happen, and some people don't even know that anything's happening." Please turn in your Bibles to **Acts 17:1-9** as context for our commentary on 17:16-34 to follow.

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

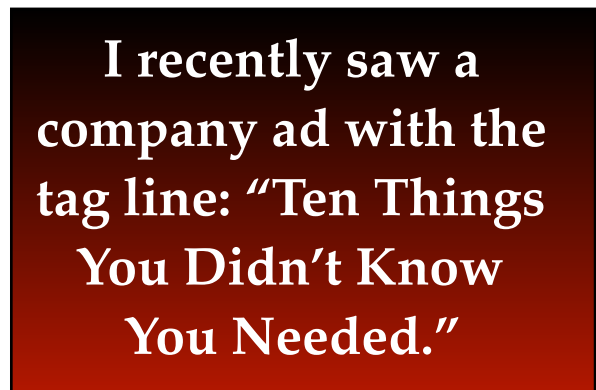
**Verse 2:** "he went to them" The noted campus ministry **Cru** defines this as "taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God." But the initial point here is: **we must go to them.** We must extend ourselves — physically, but also verbally, emotionally, and in terms of our schedule. If we remain in our own safe little ecclesiastical enclaves, or even if we get out but then grumble and fuss like those who do not believe, we ought not be surprised when no one asks us about our hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). If anyone is going to ask about our faith and hope in Christ, they're going to have to notice *our faith and hope*.

**Dr. Howard Hendricks** once said: "I never read a verse in the Bible telling the world to come to church. But there are many places where the Church is commissioned to go to the world."

The word Gospel begins with the letters G-O. Go! We need to get up and go. It's up to us to go to them. **Leith Anderson** in his book, *Dying for Change*, wrote: "If Christians are to become effective in reaching modern pagans, we will need to go to them. In other words, we need to change the starting point of evangelism. We need to start where they are instead of where we are."

**Verse 2:** "as was his custom." We also need to develop a custom — a *habit* — of going to others. Paul made this his norm. As is true with most any other enterprise, the more that we do something, the more effective we will become at it. **Priority and practice makes for proficiency.** And practicing apologetics should be a pattern in our lives, not the rare exception. We should live in the homeland of evangelism instead of just making little forays into it.

**Verse 2:** "reasoning with them from the Scriptures" Notice that Paul didn't run any TV spots. He didn't mount a media campaign or sponsor concerts or appeal with live entertainment. He didn't resort to user-friendly gimmickry. His primary goal was not church growth. It was witnessing for Christ. Paul's focus was on engaging minds with God's truth. This was not just a mindless citing of religious jargon, but a real intellectual exchange. He was here to *persuade* them. He was here to help them know that they **needed** Christ. I recently saw a company ad entitled: "Ten Things You Didn't Know You Needed." Many people sense a void, but they don't know that **what they need is Jesus.**



**I recently saw a  
company ad with the  
tag line: "Ten Things  
You Didn't Know  
You Needed."**

**Verse 3:** "explaining and giving evidence" (NASB); "opening and alleging" (KJV); "proving" (NIV). Are you able to do this? 1 Peter 3:15 says that we ought to always be ready or prepared to give an **answer**, a **reply** (an *apologia*) to everyone who asks us to give an account for our hope. In other words, we are to be apologists, citing a rational basis for faith. So apologetics is pre-evangelism.

**Verse 5:** "set the city in an uproar" Social upheaval and even outright rioting often accompanied Paul's ministry. Bold preaching or standing up for truth will very often inevitably trigger opposition. Are we prepared to take some heat in our witness, or are we going to be content with just half-baked results? Paul had even developed a reputation as a jailbird and a "world class trouble-maker," **verse 6.** Are we more intent on pleasing Christ or maintaining our nice-guy image? The Bible says that "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12) Jesus said "Beware when all men speak well of you." (Luke 6:26)

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

**Verse 13:** "they came there likewise, agitating..." They were good practiced proficient agitators. They should have gotten a job with Maytag. There are always those who will go out of their way to agitate and oppose and complain. A 1992 *Bangor Daily News* article detailed the account of a woman who had actually faked a pregnancy with someone else's urine sample in order to incriminate UMO Professor Terrence Hughes and his wife because of their stand against abortion.

### Continuing with Acts 17:16-19.

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. 17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. 18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbling wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

For a long time I had a hard time accepting my wheelchair, but then I finally got on with Plan B and now, in at least one sense, the "B" has come to stand for Better.

**Verse 16:** "while Paul was waiting" Sometimes we're all put on hold. We're here when we'd rather be there, doing this when we'd rather be doing that. Delays. Maybe it's a health issue, or finances, or adverse circumstances. How do you handle life's detours and delays? It's often our *attitude*, not our *aptitude*, about life's detours, that will determine the *altitude* of our evangelistic initiatives. Because many times it is precisely **when** we get delayed and **where** we get detoured that we'll come upon some unique opportunity to make a significant difference in the world for Jesus.

Paul very much wished to be in Thessalonica at this point (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18, and 3:10). But what did he do? Sit and sulk? No. He got on with Plan B. He got up and went out into the city of Athens. For a long time I had a hard time accepting my wheelchair, but then I finally got on with Plan B and the "B" eventually came to stand for Better. The AIIA Institute grew out of a big detour in my life! So let God set the agenda. Bloom where you're planted. You can't direct the wind, but you can set your sails into the wind and by God's grace make the wind work for you.

**Verse 16:** "his spirit was being provoked" (NASB); "stirred" (KJV); "greatly distressed" (NIV). As Paul walked thru the city and as he looked out over the the Athenian culture, the Bible says that he grew very provoked in his spirit. Which of course was a good thing. "He does not love good who does not hate evil."

But I rather believe that Paul was primarily provoked, not to hate or anger, but to pity. I'm seeing here that he was moved with a great sense of compassion. That his spirit was powerfully stirred by the hopelessness and the emptiness of it all. And that it was this sense of the tremendous need all around him that motivated his evangelism and apologetics on the Greek Areopagus.

In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle mentions three elements that were considered by ancient Greeks as requisite to true persuasiveness: *ethos*—an ethical, believable, motive — serving God, not mammon; *logos*—a logical, factual, objective, propositional truth — in this case, the Word of God; and *pathos* — a sincerely caring, compassionate heart that is genuinely interested in the eternal welfare of another. Out to win souls, not just arguments or debates.

**The Bible says that our defense of the hope that we have in Christ is to be made with gentleness (1 Peter 3:15), not in a harsh, coercive, or arrogant manner.**

**John R. W. Stott** used to say: “Love without truth is too soft, but truth without love is too hard.”

Ephesians 4:15 says that we are to speak the truth **in love**.

If there is going to be any genuine ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit today, and if there is going to be any effective evangelism and dialogue with the secular world about the things of the gospel in our generation, it is absolutely imperative that it all be motivated at its core by a sincere sense of compassion, and out of distress for the hopelessness and the terrible despair all around us. *Perhaps the place to begin is by asking God to stir our compassion — even to the point that we will cry real tears for all those around us who are perishing.*

**Verse 17:** "So..." So what? So what did Paul do about the mess that he saw all around him and his inner stirring of compassion? Verses 17 and following make it clear that the **provocation** in Paul's spirit resulted in a **motivation** for a **proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ**.

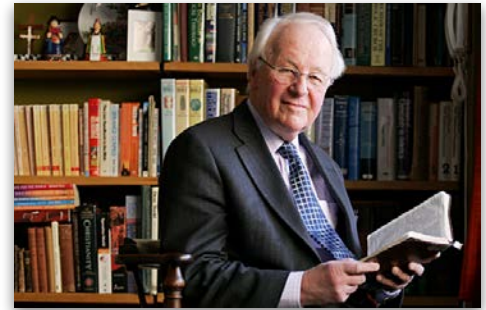
Paul chose to respond to this awful state of gross decadence, symptomized by widespread idolatry, not by preaching against idols, or going on Athenian talk radio to rant about idolatry, and not by proposing an Idolaters Anonymous therapy group. Rather the apostle made his point of **integration** a spontaneous and powerful exchange (with all those with whom he had an audience) on the matter of the claims and the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (**verse 18**).

I want to place some emphasis on the need for all followers of Jesus to be bolder and more specific in our efforts to present Christ, and to persuade men of their need of the gospel of Christ.

One day shortly after Mary and I arrived in Monson in the Fall of 1975 I was sitting on a barstool at the little coffee shop and restaurant downtown. Suddenly the man sitting next to me swung around, looked me right in the eye, and said, “Are you saved?” I replied, “Well, good morning. Let me introduce myself. My name is Daryl Witmer. I’m the new minister here in town and . . .” At that point the man interrupted me and said, “I didn’t ask you what your name is, and I didn’t ask you what you do for a living. I said ‘Are you saved?’”

“At that point the man interrupted me and said, “I didn’t ask you what your name is, and I didn’t ask you what you do for a living. I said, ‘Are you saved?’”

And that was my introduction to **Albert Tompkins**. Albert Tompkins was constantly confronting people about their relationship with Christ — or lack of it. Some folks thought that he came on too strong. But long after he died he was memorialized in the words of a song that became popular with believers in our area — a song that emulated his courage and example of boldly witnessing for Christ. Not a bad resumé to hand to Christ on the day you die!



**A somewhat similar story can be told about Joseph Pensiero.** Joe was not always a Christian. But once he met Christ, the change was radical. He began talking to everyone about Jesus. You couldn't be conversing with Joe for more than 15 minutes when the name of Jesus would come into the conversation. Joe would ask people straight up: "Do you know Jesus?"

Joe would talk to **everyone** — rich or poor, old or young, tall or short, black or white — about Jesus and His love. He would do his best to introduce everyone to the Savior. That turned some people off. Others became defensive. Some Christians thought that Joe's approach was too blunt. But during the years that I knew him, he led many people to Jesus. He lived simply. He was kind and compassionate with those who were down and out. He fed and clothed and opened his home to those in need. He visited those in prison year after year. I would personally rather err on the side of being "too bold" in my witness for Christ than to default on my commission to be His witness, as is the case with so many Christians today.

**The late widely noted international evangelist Luis Palau** once said: "I've been in this country (the United States) since 1961 and I've never been buttonholed by a Christian. I wish someone would try to witness to me. Billy Graham said that in the days of the Jesus People movement he walked down Sunset Strip in Hollywood and in one three-block stretch he was buttonholed three times. It made him weep. It would make me weep."



**I once watched a clip on how a guy got himself into high-end parties** without having been invited. He was a professional party-crasher. With an air of tremendous confidence, he would approach the door where the guards stood checking tickets. He would then rapidly rattle off something like: "Hi, I'm Scott Blake. Phelps asked me to stop by and do a quick check on the venue variables. He told me to just come straight through." And he said all this with such assertiveness that the guards didn't even question him, or ask who Phelps was, or what he meant by "the venue variables." Maybe they didn't want to show their ignorance. Whatever. But he got in. It worked over and over in many different places.

Fortunately, as Christians, we don't need to fake confidence in our role as witnesses for Christ. Jesus assured us that as His witnesses we have been given both the power (Acts 1:8 — *dunamis*) and the authority (Matthew 28:19 — *exousia*) to preach the gospel and make disciples.

**There were no tracts, slick ads, or telemarketing scripts. Paul did what he did spontaneously, just talking from his heart to people about Jesus.**

I want you to notice that the Apostle Paul waded right into the cultural cesspool in which he found himself in Athens, in which place he had no great desire to be, by creatively engaging whoever happened by (**verse 17**) in dialogue. But not in a canned dialogue. There were no tracts, slick ads, or telemarketing scripts. He did what he did spontaneously, just talking from his heart to people about **Jesus, verse 18**.

Please notice also that Paul did not try to reform Athens. He preached Jesus (**verse 18**), because he realized that the only way Athenian culture would ever be socially reformed was if Athenians were spiritually transformed. **And he knew that only Jesus can transform anyone.**

It's very true that, when it comes to decadence in our culture, the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart. And only Jesus can transform the heart. Only Jesus can produce real change from the inside out.

## **When Jesus does the job, He doesn't just put a new suit on the man; He puts a new man in the suit! (2 Corinthians 5:17)**

There is a powerful poem written many years ago by Joseph Malins entitled *An Ambulance Down in the Valley* that tells the story of a town which had long engaged in a very bitter debate about whether the best way to deal with a dangerous cliff high above the city and off of which many people had fallen, and continued to fall, was to put up a fence at the top of the cliff, or to continue to allocate funds to station an ambulance down in the valley below, ready to very efficiently haul those who fell off the cliff to the hospital for care.

The crux of the problem facing America today is really in only one place: the inner spiritual condition of Americans. Again, **the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart**. We must understand the root cause if we're ever going to effect a real cure and not settle for merely treating superficial symptoms.

We have vast numbers of agencies these days which exist exclusively just to fix the problems of our society—hauling people off to our hospitals and rehab centers.

But the only really viable cure for America today, and the Biblical formula for getting this nation or any nation *reformed* is simple: get the citizens of the nation *transformed*. So we need a spiritual reawakening. And for that we need the moving of God's Spirit *plus* a new emphasis on (and the practice of) personal evangelism and effective apologetics.

**But someone might say, "It would take much too long to try to change the world with the gospel. We're dealing with a crisis here. We can't pull our finger out of the dike now!"**

And it's true that going this route may well involve some short-term risk, because it clearly is the longer way around. But it is also true that it is the only route that comes with a guarantee — a societal reform movement that grows out of a genuine Christian response that is just naturally growing out of people with a new heart for Christ.

### **Continuing now with Acts 17:20-31.**

**20** For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." **21** (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

**22** So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. **23** For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.



24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

**Verse 22:** "I observe" Notice that before Paul preached, he had listened—he had observed. Only then could he speak in an intelligent and in an informed manner. His subsequent **proclamation** was based upon the **provocation** of his spirit and the careful **observation** of his audience — who these people were, and the particular worldview to which they subscribed.

**Verse 23:** "I was passing through and examining" The point is reiterated. We too must enter into the world of those whom we would seek to reach with the gospel, trying to understand what people are believing and why — examining the thoughtforms and worldviews of our generation, whether it's a bestseller that's promoting a certain belief, or classic world religion texts such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Pearl of Great Price, or the Koran. We should at least become basically familiar with the views of those who are not Christians.

**Question.** What would you think of a missionary being sent to France without having received any training in the French language? But you see, if we're going to present the Christian faith in an intelligent manner at all, and in a relevant manner to our generation, then we're going to have to understand our generation, and we're going to have to understand the way our generation

thinks. And this, of course, means really doing our homework — studying the language and becoming familiar with the philosophies and convictions of our generation.

If we're going to present the Christian faith in a relevant manner to our generation, then we're going to have to understand the way our generation thinks. And this means becoming familiar with the convictions of our generation.

We must do this because the boundaries that you and I as missionaries must cross these days in order to be compliant with our Lord's Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel are not just geographical boundaries, nor are they perhaps even primarily geographical boundaries any longer. We must realize that times have changed. And today to go into all the world, and to communicate the Gospel to all of the nations of the world, does not necessarily any longer always imply a trip across the ocean.

The fact of the matter is that the **missions boundaries** today are increasingly **ideological**. The mission field today is very often a mission field of the mind — and therefore just as near as any of our next door neighbors or co-workers who espouse some non-Christian religion or some other alternative secular ideology or worldview — an occurrence which is certainly becoming more and more commonplace for all of us.

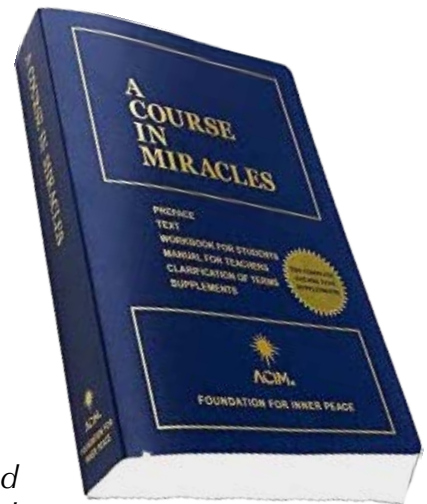
**Someone penned the verse: “You need not cross seas anymore, nor foreign lands explore, to share God’s Word with needy souls — you’ll find them at your door.”**

Today the mission field is all around us. **The Epicureans of Acts 17:18 are the modern humanists and scientific naturalists. The Stoics of Acts 17:18 are the New Agers**, according to Dr. Norman Geisler and David Clark who also wrote, “Today we stand again on Mars Hill.” This is no longer a Judeo-Christian culture where we can assume that our Judeo-Christian language communicates.

What that means is that much of our traditional missionary talk and our standard witnessing jargon, no matter how well intentioned, in many cases is really *not* communicating to the people of our generation. So we really have to look at all of this again in a new way. Because we cannot merely rely on the traditional approaches of the past.

Here’s just one example from the May 18, 1992, issue of Christianity Today magazine and, even though that was 30+ years ago, the principle remains very much relevant:

“More than 800,000 people have bought *A Course in Miracles*. It offers God without guilt, says that love is real and the physical world is illusory, and teaches that inner peace comes from a reoriented view of reality. It claims to be the channeled writings of Jesus. It attempts to translate fundamental Christian concepts into an eastern world view.” Around 1,500 U.S. study groups meet every week to discuss it, and we’d better read up and learn the language of this sector if we ever hope to get our message across to those who are buying into it.



Here, from *A Course in Miracles*, is an excerpt on Jesus Christ:

*"There is no need for help to enter heaven for you have never left. But there is need for help beyond yourself as you are circumscribed by false beliefs of your identity, which God alone established in reality. Helpers are given you in many forms, although upon the alter they are one. Beyond each there is a thought of God, and this will never change. But they have names which differ for a time, for time needs symbols, being itself unreal. Their names are legion, but we will not go beyond the names the course itself employs. God does not help because He knows no need. But He creates all Helpers of His Son while he believes his fantasies are true. Thank God for them for they will lead you home."*

This is quintessential New Age language. But have you ever even heard about this book? It is just one example of many modern-day postmodern belief systems.

So on one hand we must be about the business of really understanding the language of the times in which we live and the issues and the thoughtforms of the day, while on the other hand and at the same time we must also continue to become more and more familiar with the propositional truth of the revelation that we have given by the God of the Bible.

**Martin Luther said:** "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

The trustees of Denver Seminary once concurred with their former president Haddon Robinson's assessment that "America has entered a post-Christian era." From now on the seminary plans to "train future pastors as foreign missionaries assigned to an alien culture."

### **Reading now from Acts 17:32-24**

**32** Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." **33** So Paul went out of their midst.

**34** But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

**Verses 32-34:** Whenever we specifically present Christ and proposition people for Christ, we can expect three responses: a sneer, a stall, or a salvation experience. There will be those who will reject the Gospel. There will those who run from and postpone a decision. And there may be a few who will come to Christ.

If we are not willing to be sneered at by some, we will probably never see much fruit from our witness. If we are not willing to have some stall and postpone and make up even many excuses that are full of nonsense in order to put us off, we will probably never see much fruit from our witness. But if we will be willing to be put off by some and to be put down by others, then we just may, by the grace of God, see a few precious souls come into the Kingdom.

And we ought never underestimate the influence of a few. Edward Kimball led just one boy in his Sunday School class to Christ — but his name was Dwight L. Moody. An 18th Century apprentice shoemaker by the name of John Warr led just one co-worker to Christ — but his name was William Carey. Counselor Frank Chandler led just one camper to Christ — but his name was Luis Palau. Just one young man responded on a particular night to the preaching of Mordecai Ham. His name was Billy Graham.

**Athens, just like America today, was a tough place to win people to Christ. One apologist said: "Some folks are hard on Paul for not being more successful (in Athens), but he won some; and I think we're going to have to settle for [just] a few these days."**

Our commission is to witness, not save. Some of those with whom we share Christ may sneer, some may stall, but a few will be saved. Each individual must make their own choice. This is what we mean when we say "leaving the results to God" as we proposition folks for Jesus Christ.

I will never forget the thrill of leading numerous boys to Jesus during my days as a counselor at Black Rock Retreat, a Christian facility with a summer camp program in Kirkwood, Pennsylvania.



**And I will probably always remember one exchange** that I had when I was serving as chaplain at our local hospital in the Spring of 1992. A man lay dying in bed. He was open to conversation about the state of his soul.

So I asked him what he planned to say when he stood before Christ.

He said, "I suppose that I'll tell him that I was pretty good — or at least not as bad as some."

I asked him, "How good do you figure someone is going to have to be in order to be accepted by a God who is 100% holy and who demands 100% holiness in His presence? 75% good? 92% good? 98% good?"

He said. "I don't know."

I said, "Well, the answer is — there is no 'good enough.' Which is why we need a savior. It's why Jesus came to earth."

He replied, "I never thought about it that way before." The lights went on. He finally understood the gospel.

So I encouraged him to pray right then and there for Jesus to forgive all his sins.

I did not coerce him. He was willing to do so.

I had done my part (sharing the gospel). If he was sincere in his prayer then he had done his part (reaching out by faith for the grace of God). And I knew that Jesus would do His part because He once said: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who **comes** to Me I will certainly not **cast out**." (John 6:37)

**Let's get out of the stands and onto the field. Because the fields "are white for harvest." John 4:35**

## ANNOTATED WORKSHEET

Christian Apologetics in UnChristian Times

# In the Stands or On the Field?

*A Biblical Methodology for Proclaiming the Gospel Today*

*Drawn from the model of the Apostle Paul's ministry in Acts chapter 17*

v2 "he went to them" • *initiation*

v2 "as was his custom" • *cultivation*

v3 "explaining and giving evidence" • *explanation*

v5 "set the city in uproar" • *ramification*

v13 "they came there likewise, agitating..." • *agitation*

v16 "while Paul was waiting" • *immobilization*

v16 "his spirit was being provoked" • *provocation*

v17 "So..." So what? • *motivation*

v18 "he was preaching Jesus" • *proclamation*

• An ounce of prevention... *An Ambulance Down in the Valley*, by Joseph Malins

v22 "I observe" • *observation*

v23 "I was passing through and examining" • *examination*

• The boundaries of missions today are not so much geographical as \_\_\_\_\_.

• The Epicureans of Acts 17 = modern-day \_\_\_\_\_.

• The Stoics of Acts 17 = modern-day \_\_\_\_\_.

vv32-34 "some began to sneer, but others said..." • typical three-fold response

# Answering 25 Common Objections to the Gospel

*A seminar presentation developed by Daryl E. Witmer*

## Introduction

**How to respond to those who object to, or raise questions about, the Gospel of Christ.**

S \_\_\_\_\_

R \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

## Responding to 25 specific objections

1. I'm good enough.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I'm as good as most others.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I'm too big a sinner.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. There are too many hypocrites in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. People would laugh.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I'm just not ready.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. You're making too much over religion.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. I'm not convinced that Christianity is true.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. If God is love, He wouldn't damn people to hell.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. I don't think I could take the persecution.

\_\_\_\_\_

11. I'm not convinced that Jesus is really God.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. There's too much suffering in the world.

\_\_\_\_\_

13. I'm private and don't want to make a big scene.

\_\_\_\_\_

14. I don't want to give up my sins.

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Christianity is too restrictive.

\_\_\_\_\_

16. I don't think I'd be accepted.

\_\_\_\_\_

17. I've tried before and failed.

\_\_\_\_\_

18. I think I've committed the unpardonable sin.

\_\_\_\_\_

19. I've tried before, but I can't find God.

\_\_\_\_\_

20. The Bible has too many contradictions.

\_\_\_\_\_

21. How can I even be sure there is a God?

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Why should I accept the Bible as true?

\_\_\_\_\_

23. There are too many interpretations of the Bible.

\_\_\_\_\_

24. I don't believe the Bible.

\_\_\_\_\_

25. I don't know what to do to be saved.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Answering Objections • Answer Key

### Introductory comments

### How to respond to those sincere in their inquiry or objection to the Gospel.

**Simply**—sound bite generation; dialogue, not monologue; ask questions; if well prepared, no need to ramble.

**Respectfully**—“gentleness and reverence;” not arrogant

**Intelligently**—rationally. Research. God gives us minds. Stress that there are intellectually credible answers!

**Biblically**—Word of God is living and active... Hebrew 4:12. Let God's Word do the work whenever you can.

**Prayerfully**—Holy Spirit must convict.

### Responding to 25 common objections

**1. I'm good enough.** How good do you think you have to be? Romans 3:10 “There is none righteous...”

**2. I'm as good as most others.** What Scripture says that God grades on a curve? Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep”

**3. I'm too big a sinner.** Jesus came to seek and save you. Are you calling Him a failure? Did he save Saul of Tarsus, a murderer? 1 Timothy 1:15 “...Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”

**4. There are too many hypocrites in the church.** Always room for one more. Church not perfect, Savior is. Hebrews 12:2 “Fixing our eyes...” Church is not museum.

**5. People would laugh.** Better people laugh than God judge. John 12:43: “they loved approval of men rather...”

**6. Not ready.** Why not? Would you sign this card, temporarily rejecting Christ? Better get ready. 2 Cor 6:2 “Now is accepted time. Today . . .” Hebrews 3:15 “Don't harden.”

**7. You're making too much over religion.** How much is too much, given the stakes? Is too much possible? Fan vs fanatic. Matthew 16:26 “For what will it profit a man...”

**8. I'm not convinced that Christianity is true.** What would it take to convince you? 2 Thessalonians 2:10 “with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, ...they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

**9. If God is love, he wouldn't damn me or anyone else.** Who says? Whose opinion matters? God Himself says: “Soul that sins will die.” Ezekiel 18:4; John 3:17-18

**10. I don't think that I could take the persecution.** Well, with God all things are possible. Luke 18:27 “things impossible with men are possible with God.” Matthew 5:10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness....” “Rejoice when men revile...”

**11. I'm not convinced that Jesus is really God.** Then who is He? Lord, liar, lunatic, legend, luminary? John 5:18 “For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.” Legend? Not enough time between Christ and first MSS in 80 AD. Many contemporaries still alive.

**12. There's too much suffering in the world.** Who wouldn't agree? Even God would agree. Are you prepared to meet Him when He comes to end it all? Revelation 19-21. Revelation 21:4 “God will wipe away all tears.” World out of order, but... Psalm 96:13 “He is coming...”

**13. I'm private and I don't want to make a big scene.** Every man Christ called to follow Him, He called publicly. Matthew 10:32-33 “who shall confess me before men...”

**14. I don't want to give up my sins.** That's your choice, but... Luke 13:3 “Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Do you want to want to? Philippians 2:13 “It is God who is at work in you to will...”

**15. Christianity is too restrictive.** True freedom without law is an illusion. Psalm 119:45 “And I will walk at liberty, For I seek Thy precepts.”

**16. I don't think I'd be accepted.** What matters here — what you think or what God says? God in Jesus has said, “He who comes to Me I will in no wise...” (John 6:37)

**17. I've tried before and failed.** This time why not let God try? Salvation doesn't result from your performance. It's a gift. Ephesians 2:9-10; Zechariah. 4:6b “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”

**18. I think I've committed the unpardonable sin.** If you really had committed that sin, you wouldn't be worried about it. Ephesians 4:19 “having become callous”

**19. I've tried before, but I can't seem to find God.** Well, guess what? He's found you! Luke 19:10 “Son of Man came to seek and to save...”; Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek Me and find Me when...with all”

**20. There are too many contradictions in the Bible.** Name one that hasn't been resolved. 1 Corinthians 2:14 “Natural man does not accept...cannot understand...”

**21. How can I even be sure that there is a God?** Design. Romans 1:19 Evidence in what has been made.

**22. Why should I accept that the Bible is from God?** Fulfilled prophecy. 2 Peter 1:21 “men...spoke from God.”

**23. There are too many interpretations of the Bible.** Do you refuse to buy soap and cereal just because they come in many varieties? You should know that there's agreement on all essentials. 2 Peter 1:20 “...no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,”

**24. I don't believe the Bible.** What do you think is the Bible's central message? (EE judo technique); That's what I was afraid of . . . you've rejected a Book that you don't really even understand. John 17:17 “Thy Word is truth.” Romans 3:4 “Let God be true...”

**25. I don't know what to do to be saved.** Repent. Confess. Be baptized. Acts 2:38; Romans 10:13 “Whoever will call...” Acts 16:31 “And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.”

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**SOURCES:** A Conversation, by R.G. Lee, Section V of the **Guide to Christian Workers**, Thomas Nelson NAS New Open Bible, Study Edition ©1990. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, A Ready Defense, More Than a Carpenter.

Precarious  
Times

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Perceptive  
Voices

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A Strategy  
for Truth

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A COLLOQUY ON THE PRESSING WARRANT  
FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS  
IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM A.D.

Compiled by Daryl E. Witmer in 1998



*This colloquy was originally developed by Daryl E. Witmer for presentation at an event in Willow Valley, Pennsylvania, on October 16, 1998. It has subsequently been revised and adapted for use in a number of other venues. This version deletes all of the references in previous versions to the AIIA Institute so as to be better suited for the post-AIIA period (2024 and following). We hereby grant permission to reproduce — accurately, in context, and with appropriate credits — this colloquy, or selected excerpts from it, as may be deemed helpful. Public and private presentations of this material are actually encouraged. Consultation with the author may be possible by contacting him directly.*

Revision 11, 2030303.

## **CASTING & HANDOUT** for public productions

In order to stage an effective full-scale presentation of this colloquy **one moderator** and **five readers** should be appointed and **thoroughly rehearsed**. All lines should be read slowly and clearly due to the weight of the content. **Handout outline sheets** (provided at the end of this transcript) can be distributed one per person as the audience arrives, allowing the audience to track along.

## **INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS** to be read by moderator

Our purpose in producing the following presentation might best be described as that of providing a strategy for truth — that God's truth might prevail in our time on the issues that matter most in life. We attempt to do this by providing guidance and answers to the big questions about who we are, why we're here, and what to believe about life. We intend to encourage **a turning away from the trivial and the cynical** to a **focus** on that which is truly and eternally significant.

In that regard, a good thought-provoker here at the outset comes from **C. S. Lewis**. That well-known apologist once said, "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea."

And also, from the inspired Word of God in I Samuel 12:24: "Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

The agency under whose auspices this colloquy was originally developed was the AIIA Institute. AIIA was a national Christian apologetics ministry based in north central Maine. It operated for over 32 years with the primary purpose of persuading people from all walks of life to Christian truth and to Christ who is Truth.

Participating in this production of the colloquy are the following designated readers.... [specify, with names, home town, and perhaps some **very brief** biographical or vocational information].

The event is sponsored by... [specify if any].

A one-page summary note sheet outlining this disquisition has been provided as you came in. We hope that this will allow you to track the progress of the presentation, and enhance the content.

And with these comments, we now present . .

***Precarious Times, Perceptive Voices, A Strategy for Truth: A Colloquy on the Pressing Warrant for Effective Christian Apologetics in a Brand New Millennium.***

### READER-1

Saturday, August 22, 1998, was not a good day for Franc Filipic of eastern Slovenia. In fact, August 22 was evidently the last day of Mr. Filipic's life. At 47 years of age, Franc was a passionate angler, and that last morning when he left home to go fishing he was determined to land a sheatfish, a very large member of the catfish family. But the fish that Franc Filipic actually caught that day was so big that he drowned trying to reel it in. According to the Slovenian state-run news agency, some time after he walked into the lake, he hooked a fish that one of his friends swore was over six feet long. The ensuing battle was vicious, but Franc refused to let go, and eventually the big fish pulled him under. The STA news agency quoted Filipic's unidentified friend as saying that Franc's last words, just before he drowned, were: "Now I've got him!" Unfortunately, the truth of the matter was, the big sheatfish had gotten *him*. Police divers found Filipic's body after a two-day search. The fish was never found.

### READER-2

One of the big questions being asked these days in the midst our great culture war and battle for truth is: "Who's got who, anyway?" Are the good guys winning, or are the forces of evil pulling truth under? Has the Church caught the world or has the world caught the Church? Who is ahead in the press for power and influence? Who is prevailing in this historic tug of war — virtue? morality? freethinking? postmodernism? The ACLU or the Family Research Council? Fox News, the liberal media, Tucker Carlson, or CNN? Relativism? Syncretism? Pantheism? The New World Order, the neo-Nazis, or pro-Hamas sympathizers? Who has a hold on who these days? Is it orthodoxy or Progressive Christianity or the cults? Has ecumenical mania already fatally eroded too many key doctrinal levees? Will deconstructionism ultimately usher in anarchy? "If the foundations are destroyed, what will the righteous do?" Who is influencing who these days? And what comes next — utopia, nirvana, or Armageddon? Who will the inhabitants of our planet most likely turn to next for key spiritual leadership — Lao-Tzu, Allah, Deepak Chopra, the Dalai Lama, Benny Hinn or the Buddha, Jesus Christ or the AntiChrist?

### READER-1

Here we are, ready or not, right in the vortex of this third millennium A.D, and yet so many Christian believers today seem to be so preoccupied with whatever happens to be the latest in a series of national or international crises and the threat which they believe such crises may pose to our extraneous interests, than with how such challenges might prove to be a critical key in unlocking the solution to the *really* big problem facing us.

### READER-2

Now what do you mean by that, [READER-1]? What is the *really* big problem?

### READER-1

Well, even the fact that we have to *ask* that question at all seems to reveal some of our warped priorities these days, doesn't it? The Church used to just automatically know that the *really* big problem facing us was a **spiritually lost world**, and that our primary mission was the Great Commission — to rescue the perishing. Somehow nowadays we've gotten turned around to the point that we often seem a whole lot more intent on pursuing our own transient interests than we are on rescuing lost souls for eternity. Our focus has become temporal — making it here in this life, a goal with which the latest crisis may run interference. But meanwhile, what we know for certain is that millions on this planet are already lost.

### READER-5

Now, wait. Just a minute, please. How **do** we know that millions are lost for eternity?

### READER-1

Well, for starters, we believe that Jesus is Truth, and therefore *spoke* truth when He said that "*the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction; many are those who enter by it.*" Consider the mass confusion out there today over truth.

#### READER-4

Journalist and news commentator Bill Moyers, *USA Weekend*, 10/11-13/1996: "When I first rode the New York City subway almost 30 years ago, I was impressed by the number of riders reading the Bible in Spanish. Now I am as likely to see someone reading the Koran. Islam is America's fastest growing religion. Muslims now outnumber Episcopalians and Presbyterians, and soon may outnumber Jews. Along with Muslim minarets, Buddhist retreat centers and Hindu temples now dot our religious landscape."

#### READER-3

Woodrow Kroll, in *The Vanishing Ministry*, ©1991 Kregel Publications: *Is America a Mission Field?*: "In 1900, 66% of the American population belonged to Bible-believing churches. [Then it was predicted] that by 2000 only 33% would belong to a church. [**Update:** In 2023 only 25% of evangelical Americans attend a church service every week.] Donald McGavran has estimated that there are 300,000 hard-core pagans in America who are **anti-Christian**. The sending nation, the launching pad for world evangelization, has itself become a vast mission field with a severely weakened operational base."

#### READER-5

According to *UTNE Reader*, July-August 1998, page 45, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions* once listed more than 2,100 religious groups as existing in this nation, a figure that had almost doubled in 20 years. But that number has now climbed to 4,200 different belief systems according to sources quoted by Wikipedia in 2023. There are now 3.5 million Islamic adherents in the United States. There are 1.2 millions Buddhists in America in 2023, and Buddhism is one of the country's fastest growing faiths.

#### READER-2

Dennis McCallum, once senior pastor at Xenos Christian Fellowship in Columbus OH has outlined some of the marks of current, postmodern, relativistic, thinking, in his book *The Death of Truth*: **1)** reality is in the mind of the beholder, **2)** opinion equals truth, and **3)** all worldviews are equally valid.

#### READER-4

Today, approximately three of four Americans (75%) deny that there is any such thing as absolute truth, and **40% of evangelical pastors share that view**, according to the American Worldview Inventory 2022. Way back in 1994 George Barna of Barna Research noted that this trend had gone mainstream. In an NIRR interview dated February, 1994, he said "That's the heart of the problem that we're struggling with."

#### READER-3

Professor Joshua Meyrowitz of the University of New Hampshire School of Communications was quoted in *U.S. News & World Report*, March 8, 1993, as saying of his students, "They tend to have an image-based standard of truth. If I ask, 'What evidence supports your view or contradicts it?' they look at me as if I came from another planet. It's very foreign to them to think in terms of truth, logic, consistency and evidence."

#### READER-1

Christian philosopher, William Lane Craig, quoted in the February 21, 1994, issue of the CIS newsletter, said: "Postmodernists typically reject the idea that truth is objective, that reality can be known as it is, and that reality is rational." One professor at an American Academy of Religion & Society of Biblical Literature conference — a mainline denominational gathering, said in response to Craig's questioning of a premise that he (the professor) had just asserted: "Oh, I'm not claiming that my interpretation is correct. What do you expect me to do? Have a foundation for my belief?" Incredibly, that professor was 100% sincere.

#### READER-5

Over 25 years ago, writing in the February 21, 1998, issue of *World* magazine, Gene Edward Veith talked about a clash between, on one hand, the traditional approach to truth involving facts, evidence, and objective truth, and, on the other hand, a new trend toward what is being called the compartmentalization of life. Veith referred, for instance, to how President Clinton was evidently able to continue functioning in public duty while facing such tremendously embarrassing revelations about his personal life by compartmentalizing his life, a feat which he may have even considered admirable.

#### READER-4

But Veith said that this is actually a mark of postmodernism, where truth is relative, a mere construction, a matter of interpretation, and an exercise of power. Columnist George Will concurred, stating that in a world where language begins to be regarded as a mere social construct, the meaning of all words soon becomes "irreducibly indeterminate." So the issues connected with the Clinton scandal actually went far deeper than many realized. Veith said, "What [shook] Washington was not merely a scandal of sex and politics, but a monumental collision of competing worldviews, our first postmodernist scandal. If truth is relative, then it's impossible to lie. Welcome to the next century where even ordinary American citizens may also, increasingly, be emulating this sort of self-deception. Post-modernism," Veith said, "has already begun its reign, not just in Washington, but in American culture as a whole."

#### READER-2

What follows may, in summary, very likely represent the essence of the creed of our generation, as composed in this slightly edited version of *Creed*, by Steve Turner:

#### READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3

"We believe in Marxfreudanddarwin. We believe everything is okay as long as you don't hurt anyone, to the best of your definition of hurt, and to the best of your knowledge. We believe that taboos are taboo."

#### READER-2, READER-5

"We believe that everything is getting better despite evidence to the contrary. The evidence must be investigated. You can prove anything with evidence."

#### READER-4, READER-3

"We believe that there is something in horoscopes, UFOs, and bent spoons. Jesus was a good man just like Buddha, Mohammed, and ourselves. He was a good moral teacher although we think that his good morals were bad."

#### READER-2, READER-4

"We believe that all religions are basically the same — at least the one that we read was. They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation. We believe that after death comes Nothing, because when you ask the dead what happens, they say Nothing."

#### READER-5, READER-3

"If death is not the end, if the dead have lied, then it's compulsory heaven for all, excepting perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan."

#### READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3

"We believe in Masters & Johnson. What's selected is average. What's average is normal. What's normal is good."

#### READER-2, READER-5

"We believe in total disarmament. We believe there are direct links between warfare and bloodshed. Americans should beat their guns into tractors and the Russians would be sure to follow. We believe that man is essentially good — it's only his behavior that lets him down. This is the fault of society. Society is the fault of conditions. Conditions are the fault of society."

#### READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3

"We believe that each man must find the truth that is right for him. Reality will adapt accordingly. The universe will re-adjust. History will alter. We believe that there is no absolute truth excepting for the truth that there is no absolute truth. We believe in the rejection of creeds."

### READER-1

Well, if that piece actually does represent the thinking of our generation, what are we doing these days to turn things right side up again? What is the Church's strategy for dealing with such gross distortion of truth? What is our game plan for connecting the timeless truth of Jesus Christ with those lost in the muddled maze of postmodernism?

### READER-2

In their book *Apologetics in the New Age: A Christian Critique of Pantheism*, Dr. Norman Geisler and Dr. David K. Clark say: "Christians today stand again on Mars Hill. In the first century Saint Paul debated two groups of Greek philosophers at a place in Athens called Mars Hill. Paul's antagonists were the Epicureans and the Stoics. Like Paul, Christians in the West today are locked in debate with both the Epicureans and the Stoics." The Epicureans are the secular humanists. The Stoics are the New Agers.

### READER-5

Peter Jones, writing in *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*, about how the New Age Movement isn't new, but is actually as old as the ancient heresy of gnosticism: "We stand again on Mars Hill, surrounded by a host of unfamiliar and doubtless unfriendly gods. At some time in the future, perhaps more quickly than we think, true Christianity could well be reduced to a small minority. Christian ministry in the New Age of Aquarius will not be for the fainthearted. Discerning, dedicated leaders are essential for the church in the Age of Aquarius. But not only leaders. At every level, Christians need to understand what is going on and carry that understanding to every corner of life."

### READER-1

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever heard of Ken Wilbur, Sam Harris, Kenneth Wapnick, Neale Donald Walsch, Daniel Dennett, or Marianne Williamson? If you have, you are likely among a minority of Christians acquainted with those names — names which are as familiar to many nonbelievers as the names D. L. Moody, Franklin Graham, and Lee Strobel are to evangelicals. It's actually very small wonder that the Church is missing the mark these days. In essence, we're quite often trying to witness in France without ever having learned to speak French. We often don't even seem to know who's who in France. If we want to introduce New Agers to Jesus, **#1**, we need to know who Jesus is. But **#2**, we also need to know who the New Agers are and how they think. How well *are* we acquainted with even the basic marks of New Age thinking today?

### READER-3

Charles Colson, in *Christianity Today*, Fall, 1993: "We must learn from Paul (on Mars Hill) how to address the pagans of our own day, to engage them in their own frame of reference, to invade their intellectual strongholds. History has proven the wisdom of Paul's strategy."

### READER-4

David Ramsdale, in *Beyond*, Vol 21, No 5: "To most American churchgoers the 'mission field' is some far-off place on another continent, in some jungle somewhere. It's time to change our definition. The mission field greets every one of us whenever we step out of our homes. Once upon a time, America was considered a Christian nation. No longer. Now third-world countries send missionaries to the United States. The mission field is not some place else. It's where you and I live every day. Just look around you."

### READER-2

Jim Reapsome, in *Pulse*, October 8, 1993: "America's religious pluralism is not (an) issue in our mission executive suites, because we are still quite firmly wedded to the notion that missionary work is done 'over there.' Therefore we send our people and our money to evangelize people outside the U.S. Meanwhile, like two trains passing in the night, those people are coming here by the millions. Of course, we ought not to shut down our trains going overseas, but at least we should start a few rolling into the cities and towns across America where God has brought the mission field to us."

#### READER-5

In 1996, Jim Reapsome had also written: "Apologetics seems about as respected in world missions today as my old Mac Plus computer." "Why bother [promoting] missionary apologetics? After all, we're on a roll, aren't we?" "The devil has cleverly worked overtime as an angel of light to create false philosophies and religions." "If we do not attack these intellectual and religious challenges head-on, we will look around one day and wonder what happened to our missionary vision."

#### READER-4

But I have a question for someone. If we get too focused on apologetics and evangelism, what happens to the emphasis that is so needed on pressing social and moral issues?

#### READER-1

C. S. Lewis once said: "He who converts his neighbor has performed the most practical Christian-political act of all."

#### READER-3

Luis Palau was quoted in the March/April 1995 issue of *Discipleship Journal*: "We are no longer using the gospel to change America. The biblical way to transform society is to lead people to Jesus Christ and disciple them, one at a time. Only the gospel deals with the roots."

#### READER-5

Here are a few perceptive insights offered by Martin DeHaan of what was once known as the Radio Bible Class in a column entitled 'Been Thinking About Social Strategy,' *Times of Discovery*, May, 1993: "Our mission is to bring ourselves under the rule of Christ and then to lead as many people as possible to the One who has changed our own hearts. This is not to be critical of those whose conscience has led them to be social advocates. As American citizens we have a God-given opportunity to have a hand in the making of national policy. Let's just remember that our Lord's strategy to save the world was not carried out by reshaping Roman or Jewish law. His strategy was to 'fulfill the law' by His love. His strategy was to risk His own reputation by mixing with, and then dying for, the worst of sinners."

#### READER-4

Here's more from that same quote by Mart DeHaan of RBC Ministries: "If we give most of our energies to our democratic rights, who will be the friend of sinners? Who will call all to Christ? Who will confront religionists who say they believe in God while depending on the law to do what only the Spirit of the Lord can do — change people from within. God will judge America for her national sins. He will judge our nation and all others. But first He will judge His own Church (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:19). He will hold *us* responsible for whether we have been 'blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation' (Philippians 2:15)."

#### READER-2

J. Gresham Machen, who lived from 1881-1937, was quoted in the October 1993 issue of the *FCM Informer*: "There may have been a day when there could be the propagation of Christianity without its defense. But such a day, at any rate, is past. At the present time, when the opponents of the Gospel are almost in control of our churches, the slightest avoidance of the defense of the Gospel is just sheer unfaithfulness to the Lord."

#### READER-1

In February of 1993 Jack Hayford said: "I think we've lived as a protest to our culture in North America more than we realize, and it's not going to work anymore. If there's a change in evangelism, I think that's where it lies. We must recognize that we are called to proclaim, not protest."

#### READER-2

So there's a growing call for the priority of evangelism and apologetics. Most people know that evangelism refers to sharing the gospel with unbelievers. But how should we define apologetics?

## READER-1

The word apologetics comes from the Greek root *apologia*, which simply means "a response." So we try to provide a simple but accurate response to the whole range of difficult questions that are most frequently asked about Christianity — everything from how we know that there even *is* a God to why a good God would ever allow suffering, how we know that the Bible is reliable, why we believe in absolute truth, or what happens to those who have never heard the Gospel.

## READER-5

Hugh Hewitt in his book, *The Embarrassed Believer*, says: "Apologetics makes the difficult accessible. It is the art of using commonplace language and construction to reveal the persuasiveness of the gospel."

## READER-2

Are there any leaders and ministries out there who are specializing and modeling Christian apologetics?

## READER-5

Yes, There is Ligonier Ministries, Ratio Christi on many college campuses, Stand to Reason, and the L'Abri Fellowship. There is Lee Strobel, J. Warner Wallace, Sean McDowell, and Frank Turek — to name just a few. There are some great online websites like GotQuestions.org and Answers in Genesis. In the Northeast, the AIIA Institute has passed the torch on to **Anchor New England** which focuses on apologetics for kids.

## READER-4

Many years ago, in his book *Mixing with the World*, Tony Campolo wrote: "In this pluralistic society, we should always be ready, like Paul, to engage competing philosophers on their own turf." "I believe that if we fail to engage in respectful dialogue with non-Christians, we will only end up preaching to the choir. Actually, I prefer secular audiences when I speak."

## READER-3

David Bartlett, noted missions researcher, is quoted here in the May 1991 issue of *Decision* magazine: "90% of all evangelism is directed at Christians, not at non-Christians. 95% of Christian activity benefits only the Christian world. 99% of all Christian discussion and writing addresses only Christian interests. 99% of the Christian world's income is spent on itself."

## READER-1

In our closing moments, let's try to pull our focus together on the big picture of the times in which we live.

How is it that we have fallen to such a low here in America these days? Culturally, morally, and even linguistically, we seem to have sunken almost below gutter level, increasingly numbed in the process by our many comforts. When society loses ambition, when it misplaces vision, when it compromises its ethics and priorities, it will often also tend toward intellectual laxity. And when thought life atrophies, the door swings wide open to depravity. Adolph Hitler once said, "What luck for rulers that men do not think."

## READER-2

If weather events, international terrorism, bad governmental policies, war, economic disaster, or other unforeseen circumstances really do lead to disaster here in America in the not-so-distant future, perhaps many folks will actually once again begin to pay attention to the things that really matter most in life.

## READER-3

If some of our present props — comfort, ease, and extravagance — were to give way, it seems likely that many folks would then begin to look around with a new urgency for foundations that are sound. At which point Christian apologists like **all of us**, may actually come into our own. People looking for hope are going to begin checking in with those of us who seem to know why they believe what they say they believe. For God's sake, and for the sake of His eternal Kingdom, we'd better be ready before such a time arrives.

### **READER-1**

Of course our motivation isn't just for the survival of America, but for the glory of God and the eternal welfare of the souls of men. And therefore the means to our end is not apologetics itself. The answer is always Jesus, and the agent is always God's Holy Spirit. Apologetics is just one way of the Spirit bringing men and women to Christ through us as we clear away the objections of sincere seekers to faith in God.

### **READER-5**

One Christian apologist said it this way: "The job of the apologist is to clear the bushes to provide a clear view of the cross."

### **READER-2**

An old man was sitting on a bench, carving an elephant from a block of wood. A young boy saw him and asked, "How do you do that, old man?" The old man answered quietly, "I just carve away everything that isn't an elephant, son."

### **READER-1**

The job of the apologist is to come alongside others in the power of Holy the Spirit and work through him to carve away everything that stands in the way of those others committing themselves to a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ. Early in that process there is the need to carve away all of the false assumptions about who God is, who we are, and what our purpose is in being here. That's where apologetics comes into the equation. But not alone. Never alone. The apologist must only ever operate in the power of God's Spirit.

### **READER-4**

John Gerstner once said: "Christ does not need apologists, but He makes Himself dependent on them. They can do nothing without Him. He will do nothing without them."

### **READER-1**

Our mission is always to be carried out with gentleness and reverence. We agree with those inclined to place a greater emphasis on dialogue than on debate, yet never dialogue with a compromised ecumenical agenda. Rather dialogue that clearly recognizes our differences, yet in a civil, polite, and always respectful manner. Given an opportunity, truth and the facts will vindicate themselves. And our intent is to win souls, not arguments.

### **READER-2**

Jude 3-4 says, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

### **READER-3**

1 Peter 3:15 says, "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

### **READER-1**

We want to take this closing moment to thank those who have sponsored this event, and those who have worked to prepare, promote, and coordinate these plans. And we thank our moderator and readers.

### **READER-2**

We want to thank each of you who chose to budget the time to thoughtfully consider the pressing warrant for effective Christian apologetics in our time. This presentation was not designed to be entertaining. There are other venues that offer engaging oratory, stimulating music, and multimedia glitz. Some may have their place — God uses a variety of means to communicate His truth. But what we certainly need are those who, like yourselves, are willing to engage the mind and discipline the thought life on that which counts.

### **READER-1**

May God direct us in all our ways for His glory, until the Day of His coming.



# A STRATEGY FOR TRUTH

## A Colloquy on the Pressing Warrant for Effective Christian Apologetics as America in the Third Millennium

Compiled by Daryl E. Witmer, Executive Director, AIA Institute

The following colloquy was originally compiled for presentation at an event in Willow Valley, Pennsylvania, on October 16, 1998.

**READER-1:** Franc Filipic

**READER-2:** Who's got who?

**READER-1:** Preoccupied with the temporal

**READER-2:** What's the *really* big problem?

**READER-1:** Rescuing lost souls

**READER-5:** Wait just a minute.

**READER-1:** The gate is wide...

**READER-4:** Bill Moyers

**READER-3:** Kroll & McGavran. How many evangelicals attend church weekly?

**READER-5:** 4,200 religious groups in USA in 2023

**READER-2:** *The Death of Truth*

**READER-4:** 40% of evangelical pastors deny any such thing as absolute truth?!

**READER-3:** Joshua Meyrowitz: evidence and logic are foreign concepts?

**READER-1:** William Lane Craig and the professor

**READER-5:** Gene Veith: compartmentalized morality

**READER-4:** Gene Veith: postmodern goes mainstream

**READER-2:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-5:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-4, READER-3:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-4:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-5, READER-3:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-5:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-2, READER-5, READER-4, READER-3:** *Creed*, by Steve Turner

**READER-1:** What is the Church's game plan in today's maze of postmodernism?

**OUTLINE &  
NOTE SHEET**

**READER-2:** Christians stand again on Mars Hill.

**READER-5:** Peter Jones

**READER-1:** Wilbur, Harris, Wapnick, Walsch, Dennett, Williamson

**READER-3:** Charles Colson

**READER-4:** David Ramsdale

**READER-2:** J. Reapsome

**READER-5:** Reapsome and his old Mac Plus computer

**READER-4:** A question for someone.

**READER-1:** C.S. Lewis

**READER-3:** Luis Palau

**READER-5:** Mart DeHaan on evangelism vs social action

**READER-4:** Mart DeHaan on how God will judge the Church

**READER-2:** J. G. Machen

**READER-1:** Jack Hayford

**READER-4:** How do we define apologetics?

**READER-1:** Some of the questions that apologetics addresses

**READER-5:** Hugh Hewitt in *The Embarrassed Believer*

**READER-2:** What ministries and leaders specialize in apologetics?

**READER-5:** Apologetics resources

**READER-4:** Engaging others on their own turf

**READER-3:** David Bartlett: 99% of the Christian world's income is spent on itself.

**READER-1:** How have we fallen to such a low?

**READER-2:** If America faces disaster, what then?

**READER-3:** Will Americans be checking in with apologists like you and me?

**READER-1:** Apologetics, but not just apologetics.

**READER-5:** Clearing the bushes.

**READER-2:** Carving elephants.

**READER-1:** Carving away all the false assumptions.

**READER-4:** John Gerstner

**READER-1:** Doing what we do with **gentleness** and **respect**. We're out to win souls, not arguments.

**READER-2:** Jude 3-4

**READER-3:** I Peter 3:15

**READER-1:** Expressing appreciation.

**READER-2:** Good for you to be willing to engage the mind on the issues in life that matter most!

**READER-1:** To God be the glory.

# Answering the Top 10 Questions of the Faith



## Note to the readers

**On the following pages** you will find an outline and my own personal notes for a workshop that I originally presented at **Congress** — a large Christian gathering in Boston, or in the greater Boston area, hosted annually by the **Evangelistic Association of New England** (later named **Vision New England**) in the 1990s and early 2000s. —*dew*

**The answers provided here** are only intended to serve as **starter answers**, heading the seeker (or believer) in the right direction—toward a more comprehensive response and additional resources. More complete answers to these ten questions are also offered in **Section 2 of this compendium**.

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## Preparation

- Ask for all electronic devices to be switched off.
- Set up workshop in a brightly lit room with the head table away from any doors where folks are coming and going.
- About 15 minutes before the seminar begins, distribute the **Notes & Outline Worksheets** (see page 90), one per person.

## Self introduction by presenter

Cite name, home, credentials, family information, testimony of my journey to faith.

## Introduction to this seminar

Before we move to the actual **Top 10 Questions** I think that it would be important and helpful for me to make the following **seven salient points** about *how* we as Christian believers would best answer *any* questions that come our way regarding our Christian worldview:

### 1. We should attempt to answer such questions *intelligently*.

Even just knowing and conveying to others the fact that there really **are** intelligent answers to such questions out there, whether or not we always happen to know exactly what those answers are off the top of our heads, is critical.

So first, it's important to note that Christianity is altogether **reasonable**. Just because we can't prove Christianity to be true on the basis of reason alone does not imply that we should reject reason, dismiss our minds, or check our brains at the door. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus says that the great commandment is to love the Lord your God with all our heart, and with all our soul, **and with all our mind**. In John 4 He says that we are to worship God in spirit and in *truth*. The Spirit of God guides those who come to Jesus (by faith believing) into all truth (John 16:13).

So we affirm Christian truth by investing our faith *intelligently*, not by jumping **blindly** into the vast repository of worldviews. We recognize that **there is more and better evidence** for Christian faith than for any other faith system in the world. This is important for **all** of us to know, but perhaps for no one group of us more than for our youth. Talk about spiritual survival! Of all generations, the younger generation today has perhaps the most pressing need to know that we are standing on solid rational intellectually credible ground when we affirm the Christian creeds.

1 Peter 3:15 says that, in setting apart Christ as Lord in our hearts, we are always to *be ready* to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us. **Being ready involves making apologetics a priority, engaging our minds, and doing our homework.**

## 2. We should attempt to answer such questions *simply*.

Like it or not, we live in a sound-bite generation, and when it comes to defending the faith, what you can't get out in one breath before the elevator door closes, the flight ends, or lunch break is over, you may never be able to get out at all.

Simple answers would perhaps not always be the best answers if time and space limitations were not a factor — but they are a huge factor today! **And a short answer that will be heard is almost always preferable to a long answer that will not be heard.** Those who warn about being brief to the point of theological compromise have a point. We must never compromise accuracy in our effort to be succinct. **We do not want to dumb down our defense of the faith in order to boil down our defense of the faith.** But otherwise the limitations of time, space, and attention really must be factored in. **So we ought not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.** In fact, better may become best if our goal is to be heard, because faith in Christ only ever comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

**All of this is to say that, as Christians, we probably ought to at least try to be ready with a relevant Scripture and an answer of a dozen words or less to at least the 25 most common questions about whether what we say we believe is credible.**

You can always expand your response as time allows and a sincere seeker remains attentive. But let's start out with a simple word, not a sermon. And allow the inquirer, if he or she is sincere in their inquiry, to absorb and respond to whatever you've said before going on and on. If they are not sincere and are merely playing games, this will rather quickly become apparent. **So think dialogue, not monologue.** And meaningful dialogue usually calls for relative brevity.

Most of Jesus' responses to those who questioned Him in the New Testament were very brief. **Many times He answered a question with a question,** which can also often be very effective. Likewise, the honest admission "I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you" is also appropriate at times — and that's only twelve words long.

**One way or the other, if you really are prepared to give an answer, you can afford to be brief.**

Long rambling responses are often a dead give-away to the fact that someone doesn't know their stuff and is either stalling or avoiding the question. Albert Einstein is once reported to have said, "You don't really understand something unless you can say it in a simple way."

There was a lot to be said for the time when simple but thoughtful answers were studied and memorized by every young person joining the church. And getting back to a **more catechistic approach** might once again assure at least some general working knowledge of the proper responses to the most common objections or questions about the faith.

To use an analogy from the medical world, I really consider myself only a sort of **Primary Care Provider** in the practice of Christian apologetics. So if someone here, or someone I talk to this week, wants to go very far beyond the basics of any of these ten questions that we have before us here today — or in any other area, I'll probably refer them to a specialist, some expert, or a good book on the subject. But at least I've made a connection.

### 3. We should attempt to answer such questions *respectfully*.

Again, 1 Peter 3:15 is categorically clear on this. We are to be ready to give an account "...with gentleness and reverence."

**I once heard Millard Erickson say that for Christians to claim that there is such a thing as absolute truth is not the same as to say that we understand it absolutely.**

**So let's not be cocky.** It's not that we know it all, and it's not that we even know it sufficiently to be able to ever transfer anyone from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. We have our role as apologists, but it'll only ever work in tandem with the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus Christ is alone the author of faith. Dr. John Gerstner once summed up this dynamic combination when he said: "Christ does not need apologists, but He makes Himself dependent on them. They can do nothing without Him. He will do nothing without them." Of course, the *them* is **us**.

### 4. We should attempt to answer such questions *conversationally*.

Whenever possible, we should try to help others to comprehend the consequences of their own godless worldview, and guide them to discover for themselves answers to their own tough questions about matters of faith. We can do this by listening carefully and by asking perceptive questions rather than giving long speeches. We highly recommend Randy David Newman's classic book, **Questioning Evangelism**, and Greg Koukl's books, **Tactics and Street Smarts** (just released in 2023), for inspiration and expert guidance in this technique for engaging others.

### 5. We should attempt to answer such questions *sensitively*.

Always think and act and speak and respond to tough questions with sensitivity and compassion. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." A significant number of those with whom you will be speaking about matters of faith will have personal, emotional, or spiritual issues of some sort. **Be keen to those who have come to wrongly embrace hurtful notions about God, or be suffering some real physical or emotional pain at the moment.** The best answer may at times be just your willingness to listen or to meet someone's practical needs. As the old saying goes, "Many people aren't going to care how much you know until they know how much you care."

### 6. We should attempt to answer such questions *Biblically*.

Hebrews 4:12 says that "The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Note that it's God's Word that is sharper than a sword — not even the best of our sharp, crafty, witty answers. So whenever possible, answer questions by quoting Scripture. Let God's Word do the work. That's why we've included a **Relevant Scripture** category to each of our answers below.

### 7. We should attempt to answer such questions *prayerfully*.

I must always keep in mind that Jesus alone is the author of faith, not apologetics or me as an apologist, regardless of how prepared or adept I may be. Jesus Himself said that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (John 6:44). So while you're giving truthful answers to tough questions about Christianity, be asking God's Spirit to apply that truth to the minds of those with whom you're conversing, and convict them accordingly.

## Finally, here, very briefly, are five other program notes before we move to the questions and answers themselves:

- 1) By “Top Ten” we mean the ten most *commonly asked* questions, not necessarily the ten *most difficult* questions.
- 2) The specific form of the ten questions that we're presenting here is arbitrary. These questions may actually best be described as **examples of questions drawn from the ten categories of questions about the faith most often asked**. This is true because the *exact* wording of any two questions by any two individuals, even on the same subject, is seldom going to be the same.
- 3) The paper that you've received had best be considered more of an outline than a worksheet. Otherwise, if you're an big notetaker, you may be a bit frustrated with the lack of space!
- 4) We're not pretending that the answers that we're providing here are new or unique to us. These answers pretty much represent the **party line response** that's been provided by countless other evangelical apologists and leaders down through the years. For many of you the answers may serve as a helpful review. Others of you may be hearing them for the first time. Either way, this will all hopefully prove beneficial.
- 5) You may wish to know how we arrived at these ten questions, or themes, and determined that they are the top ten.

First, we based that determination on years of our own personal experience in talking with skeptics, seekers, students, and believers about matters of faith.

Beyond that our sources included the following:

- A Gallup Poll commissioned by CBN in 1984 which asked 1500 people nationwide what questions they would most like to ask God. Results were published in a book entitled *Answers*, ©1984 by Nelson. The author is Pat Robertson.
- Thomas Nelson ad in USA Today, late 1980s/1990; *What Are the Top 40 Questions of Life?*
- The chapter "Questions Most Asked About Christianity," Section 4, of *A Ready Defense* by Josh McDowell, ©1990 Here's Life Publishers.
- Response from a survey of our own, this one reaching over 2,000 Christian homes nationwide in June-July 1995. We had a limited response, but this survey required actual written responses to a request for *the most common questions* about Christianity that our readers had encountered at work, play, or just generally around the neighborhood.
- *The Nine Toughest Questions Asked by Non-Believers*—a list compiled by RZIM Ministries.
- A whole variety of other texts, many listed in the recommended reading categories that we'll be providing here, other published sources, and questions that I've personally been asked.

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## Proceed with the Top 10 Questions and Answers

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Then **Entertain Questions, Response, Discussion** as the allows.

## Closing Prayer

## Question #10

# How can I know that there really is a God?

**Category:** God/Existence/

● **Starter Answer:** By considering the order, design, and personality in the universe.

**Alternative Starter Answers:** The Bible says so. Or man's inherent moral sense (moral argument). Or because everything requires an ultimate cause (cosmological argument). Richard Howe uses the boxcar illustration. There cannot be an infinite string of boxcars. Moving boxcars imply an engine. Creation implies that ultimately there is a self-caused, self-existent creator, i.e. God.

**Extended Answer:** There is the argument from mankind's inherent universal moral sense, the sense of fairness and conscience in even the most remote tribes. There is the ontological argument (from being), there is the cosmological argument (cause and effect), i.e. the practical impossibility of personality resulting from the impersonal plus time and chance alone. Francis Schaeffer wrote that no one has ever thought of a way to derive personality from impersonal sources; he cited two lakes in the Alps, noting that the lower never runs into the higher. Science has long since refuted the idea of spontaneous generation. But perhaps the strongest evidence is the teleological argument — design and order in the universe. And even the simplest forms of life — the proteins, enzymes, and amino acids — require RNA and DNA molecules. But you can't have DNA without some protein having been present to make that DNA in the first place. So how was one formed without the other? Additionally, how could random evolutionary processes ever have produced something so complex as either protein or DNA molecules when (if left alone) biological molecules always naturally react in destructive ways? There's also the Law of Entropy, i.e. the tendency toward disorder in a closed thermodynamic system. Of course, this answer only points toward an Intelligent Creator or Designer. It does not define that Designer's nature. But it does answer the question, if we're agreed to use the term God.

**Handy Illustration:** Finding a working Swiss wristwatch on the beach. Who would think, "Amazing. This must be the result of the random actions of sand and water alone over long periods of time?!" One Princeton professor compared the possibility of life resulting by chance to the odds of an unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print factory. Scientist Fred Hoyle: to an operational jumbo jet being assembled by a tornado in a junkyard. Or consider Mt. Rushmore. How absurd to think, "What an extraordinary natural rock formation ... so well adapted to its environment ... actually eroded by the winds and natural forces in the South Dakota Badlands to resemble the images of four of our most famous presidents." —William C Deutsch, writing in *World* magazine, 4/18/94

**Relevant Scripture:** Romans 1:20 *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that (those who suppress the truth) are without excuse."*

**Recommended Resource:** *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis; *When Skeptics Ask*, Norman Geisler



## Question #9

How do you explain the harshness of God in the Old Testament? Why would a gentle and loving God ever mandate the slaughter of innocent babies?

**Category:** God/Character/

● **Starter Answer:** How do you explain the *mercy and patience* of God in both testaments?

**Alternative Starter Answer:** In a fallen world, God may sanction evil to restrain even greater evil.

**Extended Answer:** If God is holy and just, and mankind is sinful and rebellious, why would it not be perfectly understandable and altogether justifiable for God to quickly and completely judge sin wherever and whenever it arises in the world? The real marvel is probably that He is **ever** willing to withhold His righteous judgment — the only explanation being His great mercy. If He was not merciful, to be consistent, even you and I would have to be instantly zapped the moment we would sin. In truth, whenever God tolerated or ordered violent action in the Old Testament, it was in order to restrain evil and to deter some ostensibly greater atrocity. And as for why innocent humans suffered — innocents **often necessarily** pay for the sins of others. Why? Because in this world our lives are inextricably intertwined, and what one man does will, more often than not, in some way effect his neighbor. I may pollute the air, but you'll then breathe that polluted air. If a mother smokes crack, her baby is likely to be born addicted. The only imaginable alternative in the sort of interrelated system that we're in would probably be for God to be continually purging the world by sending a new worldwide flood about every ten minutes.

**Handy Illustration:** Police officers and nations, in order to restrain evil aggression, are prepared to use (even deadly) force.

**Relevant Scripture:** Ezekiel 18:4 "*Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.*" Exodus 34:6-7 "*Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."*

**Recommended Resource:** *Is God a Moral Monster?*, Copan; *The Holiness of God*, Sproul (video)

## Question #8

# How could a God of love damn a sincere and moral individual to hell?

**Category:** God/Nature/

● **Starter Answer:** Actually, people essentially damn themselves by rejecting salvation in Christ.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** There are no moral individuals. We are all sinners by birth.

**Extended Answer:** As Sproul points out, there are no "innocent natives in Africa." Neither are there any truly "moral" people, for all have sinned. (Romans 3:23) And as for sincerity, a person can be sincerely wrong. Ostensibly, Adolf Hitler was very sincere in his warped strategies to improve Germany and purify the human race. But those going to hell have really effectively opted to go there by rejecting God, His truth, His standards, His Son, and His free offer of salvation. So hell is really **self-imposed** misery away from God's holy presence. C.S. Lewis actually talks about hell being locked from the inside, the final depraved choice of a depraved man to avoid God's presence. And the fact that there is no other recourse for the unrepentant is really a significant testimony as to how God honors and protects the volitional nature of humans.

**Handy Illustrations:** If a drowning man refuses to grasp a rope thrown to him by someone on shore, why would anyone fault the person on the shore who threw the rope?

**Relevant Scripture:** John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Romans 2:5: *"But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"*

**Recommended Resource:** *Who Made God?*, Norman Geisler (co-author)

## Question #7

# What about all the hypocrisy and fighting in the Church?

**Category:** Miscellaneous/Hypocrisy/

● **Starter Answer:** An objective judgment of Christianity should be based on a perfect Christ, not on imperfect Christians.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** Hypocrisy probably marks all of us to some extent, doesn't it?

**Extended Answer:** Granted, there is much hypocrisy and there are many imposters, improprieties, and shenanigans in the Church today. *But an objective consideration of Christianity ought to rest on Jesus Christ Himself who is perfect, not on His often flawed followers. The savior is without fault. Some day His Church will be.* Dr. Billy Graham has written, "Let God judge other people. Face your own need of His forgiveness..."

**Handy Illustration:** You've heard the stories about people finding weird things in their salads or hamburgers at fast food franchises and even high end restaurants. Have you stopped going to your favorite restaurant as a result of hearing such accounts? You've heard of Frank Abagnale who once practiced as a fake doctor. Have you stopped going to all doctors? Next time there's a recall on autos, do you suppose you'll buy a horse and buggy? John Warwick Montgomery is quoted as having once quipped: "If Albert Einstein were arrested for shoplifting, would that make  $E=mc^2$  wrong?"

**Relevant Scripture:** Hebrews 12:2: *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."* Matthew 7:3-5 *"And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*

**Recommended Resource:** *Reason to Believe*, R. C. Sproul

## Question #6

How can we reconcile prevailing scientific opinion on the subject of origins with what the Bible seems to say? Are the *National Geographic*, National Science Foundation, and the Smithsonian Institute all just plain wrong about evolution?

**Category:** Science/Origins/

● **Starter Answer:** You don't. Biblical creationism *cannot* be reconciled with naturalism.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** You distinguish between empirical science and historical science.

**Extended Answer:** Naturalism is a worldview that teaches that nature is all that there is. It is a view that denies the existence of any God and stands in direct contradiction to the clear biblical assertion that God created all that is. Naturalism is the popular prevailing philosophy of our age. Many scientists accept it as their starting point. But it is actually a religious and philosophical assumption — a presupposition — not a scientifically proven reality. We must distinguish here between **empirical science** and **historical science**. And as regards the current popularity of this view, we must remember that truth is not up for a vote. Prevailing views come and go. Naturalism is a philosophical theory, not an established scientific fact. Malcolm Muggeridge wrote: "I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially to the extent to which it has been applied, will be one of the greatest jokes in the history books of the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity it has."

**Handy Illustration:** Are liver and eggs good or bad for humans? Science has repeatedly revised its position on many things. Science is an ongoing process of discovery. Austrian physician Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865) warned about contagious puerperal fever years before *Louis Pasteur* documented the idea of infectious bacteria in 1858, and *Joseph Lister* developed antiseptics to reduce infection in 1865. Semmelweis lapsed into insanity, died at 47, as right as he could be while the entire scientific community at that time ridiculed him.

**Relevant Scripture:** Genesis 1:1,27 "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*"; John 1:3 "*All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*"; Colossians 1:16-17 "*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.*" • Romans 3:4 "*...let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.*"

**Recommended Resource:** *The Battle for the Beginning*, John McArthur; *Darwin on Trial and Reason in the Balance*, Phillip Johnson; *Darwin's Black Box*, Michael Behe

## Question #5

# How do you know that the Bible isn't just the work of men?

**Category:** Bible/Divine/

● **Starter Answer:** Fulfilled prophecy.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** Jesus Christ recognized scripture to be God's Word.

**Extended Answer:** This is without a doubt the most basic of all questions. Almost every other question feeds back to this one. Here are the five leading evidences that the Scripture is divine in origin: **1) Fulfilled prophecy.** Over 2,000 specific detailed definite prophecies have already been fulfilled. This is a stupendous claim which no other religion or holy book can come anywhere near making. Examples include Isaiah 52-53, Micah 5.2; Psalm 22:16ff. **2) The Bible's thematic congruency,** or the **unity** of its message, i.e. 40 authors writing in three languages over a period of 1500 years from three separate continents, **3) Archaeological evidence,** e.g. the account of Jericho's walls falling. **4) The Bible's survival** in spite of attack, i.e. the Frenchman Voltaire once predicted that within 100 years the Bible would be gone. Fifty years after his death, however, men were printing Bibles on the very press that he once owned — and distributing them from his own former house! **5) Jesus Himself** referred to the entire Old Testament by individual books and by sections (Law & Prophets) as being of Divine origin—Matthew 22:29, 43, 24:15, 5:18; Luke 16:16, 17:27; John 10:35. So this **brings the very character of Jesus to bear on the matter.**

**Handy Illustration:** Professor Peter Stoner: the chance of any one man fulfilling even eight of the prophecies fulfilled by Christ is 1 in 10 to 17th. That number of silver dollars would cover the face of Texas two feet deep. Stir all those coins and mark just one of them, then blindfold a man and send him out in any direction. The odds of Jesus fulfilling **only eight** (of the scores of) prophecies about Him are the same odds that this man would pick up the marked coin on his first attempt.

**Relevant Scripture:** 2 Peter 1:19 *"And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.";* Isaiah 46:9-10 *"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'"*

**Recommended Resource:** *Why 66?*, Brian Edwards; *When Skeptics Ask*, Geisler

## Question #4

# What about all the contradictions and errors in the Bible?

**Category:** Bible/Reliability/

● **Starter Answer:** Every one of them has been examined and credibly resolved.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** Would you please cite a few examples?

**Extended Answer:** 1) Scholars have already thoroughly examined and provided reasonable explanations for every single alleged manuscript discrepancy. And because the canon of Scripture is fixed, there will be no new alleged issues of this sort popping up tomorrow — or ever. 2) We only affirm that the manuscripts (MSS) are without error *in the original autographs* — never that all of the copies of the MSS are flawless. But of the 180,000–200,000 so-called problem areas in the copies, the vast majority are only slight variations or grammatical issues, only a very few involve the sense of the passage, and none whatsoever involve basic doctrines.

In regard to the **alternate starter** answer above — challenging a skeptic in this way often exposes the wide misconception that there are so many problems with the Bible when that, in fact, is just not the case.

**Handy Illustration:** 2 Samuel 21:19 indicates that Elhanan, not David, killed Goliath. If the words “the brother of” precede “Goliath” in some particular Bible version, those words are probably in italics, indicating that they did not appear in the best available manuscript(s). However, the clear correlative evidence is that they **should** have been included. See 1 Samuel 17:49-50 which says that **David** killed Goliath, and 1 Chronicles 20:5 which says that Elhanan killed **Lahmi**, the brother of Goliath, not Goliath himself. So the problem is easily resolved and we are left to assume that the original inspired manuscript made the actual truth clear, but that a scribe must have been working too late and made a mistake here. This is a scribal error, not a documented error in the original autograph.

**Relevant Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* Matthew 5:18 *"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."*

**Recommended Resource:** *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Archer; *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, by Norman Geisler.

## Question #3

# What happens to those who have never even heard about Jesus Christ?

**Category:** Miscellaneous/Heathen/

● **Starter Answer:** It depends — on what they've done about what they **have** heard and seen.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** They're probably lost.

**Extended Answer:** No one is ever condemned for what he hasn't heard, but rather for what they **haven't done** about what they **have heard**. Any man ever condemned is morally guilty before God. So God would be just in condemning all men. But in His mercy, He has very possibly arranged for all those who have sincerely sought to know and obey Him, as they understand Him through general revelation and conscience, to receive and act on a special revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. It may also be possible that God will apply the blood of Christ to those who are not able to comprehend their own sinful state (e.g. very young children, mentally challenged), as well as to those who have sincerely sought after God by acting according to the dictates of their conscience and by responding to God as they have known Him through general revelation, but have never heard about Jesus. This is, however, a most unlikely occurrence — which serves to underscore the great urgency of the Church's missionary effort.

**Handy Illustration:** Cornelius in Acts 10:30-35

**Relevant Scripture:** Romans 1:18-21 *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."*; Romans 2:13-16 *"for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."*; Acts 10:35: *"but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him."*; and also: **"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" Genesis 18:5, ESV**

**Recommended Resource:** *Answers to Skeptics*, C. Campbell; *Defending Your Faith*, Dan Story

## Question #2

# How can you say that Christianity alone is true among all the world religions?

**Category:** Worldviews/Exclusivity/

● **Starter Answer:** Simple logic. Christianity as well as all religions, are exclusive by definition.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Extended Answer:** Christian exclusivity flies right in the face of postmodern doctrine: relativism, diversity, the new tolerance, and political correctness. But truth is truth regardless of how offensive it may be. And no one can remain neutral in relation to Christ anyway. So that's not an option. In Matthew 12:30 Jesus says that those who are not with Him are against Him." Neither can you have it both ways, for if everything is true, then nothing is true and truth clearly loses its meaning. It is also worth noting that **no true relativist can ever live consistently with his professed worldview**. Even the postmodern relativist holds that other views are misguided, so he excludes them. **All religious views are exclusivist in this sense**. So are mathematicians ( $2+2=4$ ), historians, geographers all exclusivist. One can only live (think, speak, function) consistently in this world if some things are true and their opposite is false. If the traffic light is red, it's not also green. When you enter the intersection, there is either traffic coming or there is not.

**Handy Illustration:**  $A \neq \text{non-A}$ . Schaeffer tells of the Hindu at Cambridge who once held that there was no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty, until someone held a pot of boiling water over his head and asked if he still believed that to be true. Schaeffer says that at that point he quietly got up and (sadly) walked out into the night.

**Relevant Scripture:** Acts 4:12 *"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."* 1 Timothy 2:5 *"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* John 14:6 *"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."* John 10:1 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.";* 2 Timothy 3:12 *"And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."* Luke 6:26: *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets."*

**Recommended Resource:** *A Ready Defense*, McDowell; *Christ Among Other Gods*, Lutzer



## Question #1

If God is all good and all powerful, why is there evil and suffering in the world? Why the Holocaust? Where is God as kids suffer in hospital wards and are mangled in war?

**Category:** Suffering & Evil/Nature of God/

● **Starter Answer:** The world is temporarily out of order.

**Alternative Starter Answer:** God routinely uses evil to bring a greater good, and to receive greater glory, than would evidently otherwise be possible.

**Extended Answer:** When God created the world He called it very good. One day He will restore the world to being very good again. But meanwhile, things have gone badly askew. Why? Because God also ordained the reality of evil. The reasons cited in Scripture for suffering and evil seem to include: **a)** the judgment of God for disobedience, e.g. Sodom and Gomorrah; **b)** the precarious nature of the fallen world in which we live, e.g. Tower of Siloam falling; **c)** to provide occasion for the greater glory of God, e.g. Job, Lazarus, the man born blind, crucifixion of Jesus; and **d)** to refine and discipline believers. God seems pleased to allow temporary suffering in order that more souls will be saved from eternal torment. **Another alternate response** is based on God's challenge to Job, where He in effect tells Job that it is pointless (or even inappropriate) to question His ways. Our problem with suffering today often results from anthropocentrism. Lewis points out in his *God in the Dock* essay that we figure that, **if God has some good reason for doing this or that**, we'll be happy to hear Him out and perhaps even give Him a pass. But ancient man would have never even considered putting God on trial in the first place. **Another concern in connection with this question** involves the importance of being sensitive to the present life circumstances of the inquirer. If someone is asking this question in the midst of a personal crisis, the best answer of all may be no answer at all, but rather just a sympathetic ear. One man who had lost his daughter through tragic circumstances later told his pastor, "I wouldn't have understood why at the time, even if someone had explained it to me." Because we often do not know the whole story, being very sensitive in our response to those who are asking this question is usually a good idea.

**Handy Illustration:** Someone submitting to surgery. Vin Upham agreeing to stem cell transplant.

**Relevant Scripture:** 2 Peter 3:7-9 *"But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*; Job 38 - 40:1-4: *"Then the Lord said to Job, 'Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.' Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth.'"*

**Recommended Resource:** *If God Is Good*, Randy Alcorn; *Disappointment with God*, Yancey

# Answering the Top Ten Questions of the Faith

Seven salient tips on how Christians should respond to questions from sincere seekers about their Christian worldview:

- **Intelligently:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Simply:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Respectfully:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Conversationally:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Sensitively:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Biblically:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Prayerfully:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Question #10:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #5:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #9:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #4:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #8:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #3:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #7:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #2:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #6:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

## Question #1:

Starter Answer:  
Extended Answer:  
Handy Illustration:  
Relevant Scripture:  
Recommended Resources:

# SECTION 1

## Christian Apologetics

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# WHEN? WHERE?

Timing & Place





# INTENTIONS



# UPDTIONS

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## God as Appointment Secretary

Based on Acts 8:25-35

Adapted from a message prepared by Daryl E. Witmer and delivered  
in numerous New England churches between 1998 and 2020.

The next time that you encounter some unexpected interruption in your life or schedule — if you're a Christian — you really ought to start quickly looking around for an amazing opportunity to talk with someone about Jesus. Because it's very possible that God has set you up, and has set someone else up, with an appointment that might change that person's eternal destiny.

Let me challenge you here with this message entitled *Interruptions* — based on a text in the 8th chapter of Acts, verses 25-35. Here is Acts chapter 8, beginning at verse 25, NASB.

“So, when they [Philip, Peter, and John] had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, ‘Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: ‘He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.’ The eunuch answered Philip and said, ‘Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.”

And a bit later this Ethiopian man was wonderfully saved and baptized, so this story has a happy ending. But how did it all come about?

**The eternal salvation of this Ethiopian** came about in large measure because God had pre-arranged this amazing appointment, and because Philip was sufficiently tuned in to God's Spirit, and flexible and cooperative enough to keep the appointment.

Someone once said that God is not so much interested in our *ability* as He is in our *availability*. Just how okay are you with God setting your agenda in life? For that matter, what is your agenda in life? Is it about you and your own selfish conveniences, or is it about glorifying God, going to heaven, enjoying the journey, and taking as many people with you as possible along the way?

**One very underestimated component of all effective evangelism and apologetics to the glory of God is the matter of what role we're going to allow the Spirit of God to play in *when* we do our evangelism and apologetics.**

We often give a great deal of attention to *why* apologetics is important, and to *how* we ought to share the gospel — books and programs and seminars on what techniques and approaches seem to have worked well in some place at some time. **But when it comes to *when* and *where* we proclaim Christ (in person or online) — probably not so much.** We're often rather just inclined to go ahead and make our own plans. **But to the extent that we set our own agenda in our defense of the faith and our proclamation of the gospel, I would suggest to you that the fruit of our apologetics and evangelism is likely to be compromised.**

Look again with me at verse 26 where this angel from God tells Philip to “get up and go south.” This happens all of a sudden, very unexpectedly, no doubt very **inconveniently**. It involves a change of plans for Philip. **This is an interruption**. Yet verse 27 says that Philip “arose and went” — obediently and immediately. The angel says, “Get up and go,” so Philip “got up and went” — just like that.

**What if Philip had first reached for his day planner** or iCal app and said, “You know what? I'm afraid I have a scheduling conflict here, Mr. Angel. I don't think this is going to work right now. Can we reschedule this?”

Philip had just had a full day, verse 5. He had expended a great deal of energy, verse 12 says. And now he was headed home, back to Jerusalem, verse 25. He was ready for a break. He would be happy to sit down, take off his sandals, eat some dinner, catch up on his email (well, maybe just mail), and relax a little bit. And *that* is precisely when the angel of God checks in with this scheduling change. So what does he do? Groan? No — he gets up and goes.

Later, when God's Spirit prompts him to go join the chariot, verse 29, Philip doesn't just *walk* up — he *runs* up, verse 30. No wonder **Philip** gets results.

## How do you feel about getting interrupted?

If interruptions are hard for you to handle, perhaps the next time one occurs, it might be helpful for you to think that this just might be the means by which the Holy Spirit of God is sovereignly setting you up for an appointment with some candidate for heaven.

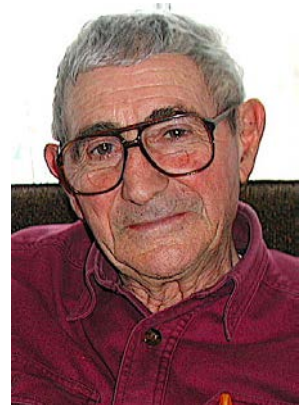
It really helped me some years ago to read something that a perceptive church leader had said — and I'm paraphrasing a bit here — but essentially he said . . .

**"I [often] struggled in my early years to carry out my ministry in spite of the interruptions — until one day God showed me that the interruptions were my ministry."**

That really connects with me.

I had a friend by the name of Joe Pensiero. Jesus Joe. He died in 2015, but when he was alive he loved to fish — for fish and for men. He had a great compassion for souls — and the spiritual gift of evangelism.

**One day in 1993 Joe was headed down I-95** when his car broke down. Rather than to get upset, he asked God to show him some opportunity in it. He flagged down some help, got a ride from four hippies, and within an hour had shared a witness for Christ with all four of them — *plus* the mechanic to whom they took his car for repair. Heaven will reveal the results.



On another occasion Joe had been working all day. He told me that he was tired and hungry and ready to crash. That's when the Cruz family knocked on his door. It was an interruption, and at first Joe told me that he struggled with his attitude. But then he regained perspective and welcomed them in, shared some clothing and food, and then presented the gospel to them. Before they left that night every single member of that family, including the children, had knelt down in a circle on a hard wooden floor and given their lives to Christ.

We're talking about allowing God to set our agenda. We're talking about being **flexible** and **surrendered** when it comes to **when** and **where** we share Jesus, and engage with people about the things that matter most in life.

## We're talking about coming to think of our interruptions and disruptions as **Divinely-arranged gospel appointments.**

You know, when an ambulance driver or a fireman or a police officer signs in for the day, they willingly surrender themselves to interruptions. They don't resent interruptions. They don't think of interruptions as an inconvenience. Interruptions are the very reason that they exist in their role as first responders.

Can you begin to think about your life and your day and your schedule in that way? Can you think, "Well, this is my regular day job and here's when I normally eat and sleep and shop for groceries and watch TV. But my higher calling in life is to point people to Jesus. So I'm willing to be ready at any moment to set all of **this** aside for all of **that**. And you begin to think of yourself as being **on call** — 24/7 — as a minister of Christ. You're on assignment with the Spirit of God. That's the way that Philip must have reckoned it, which is why he didn't get upset when he got interrupted. He just got up and went and started preaching Jesus, verse 35.



In his book *Unlikely Converts*, **Randy David Newman** tells the true story of how he had once just landed, totally exhausted, after a long flight from L.A. to Washington D.C. It was about 2:00 in the morning when the Uber driver picked him up — and he was desperately hoping that the driver was not feeling chatty. But he was. So he asked Newman what had taken him out to L.A. Newman says he felt like saying: "A plane." But he answered more politely and then, within the next few minutes, it became very clear that this was shaping up to be an amazing opportunity to witness for Christ. So he says that he quickly prayed a silent prayer of confession: "Lord, forgive me for caring more about my comfort than Your glory. Help me to proclaim the gospel to this man." And he did.

**Did you know that as Christians we can even sometimes become so involved in doing what we think is such great spiritual work for God that we actually become insensitive to God's Spirit Himself, who may be moving us to another priority.**

In the same book, Newman tells another story about a woman who was so busy one day handing out gospel [tracts] on a college campus that when a girl finally came along and took one, sat down, read it, was moved by what she'd read, and came back to talk things over with the lady handing out these [tracts] — that the lady actually told this girl that she couldn't talk right then because she had all these other gospel [tracts] to hand out! True story.



**God-arranged gospel appointments are often bound to involve interruptions.** Think about it. Getting two people together in order for one to hear the gospel at a convenient time and place, when he or she is going to be in a receptive mood, would be no small feat. You'd have to coordinate two separate schedules. **The Spirit of God** had to get Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch together. And He wanted the Ethiopian to be in a good receptive frame of mind. So guess whose schedule got interrupted. But Philip was surrendered — which made it work. That's good, but even so, only God was able to arrange all of the variables and logistics of a meeting like that.

**Charles Spurgeon once observed that God in His sovereignty directs the dance of every particle of dust in a sunbeam and the fall of every single leaf from a poplar tree. He is the great coordinator, the great orchestrator, the blessed controller of every detail. Will we balk when He interrupts our plans to arrange for the salvation of some lost soul?**

Sometimes the interruptions may be minor. The phone rings just as you're going out the door. You're delayed by heavy traffic. Other times the interruptions and disruptions may be major. You miss a big meeting. You're in a car crash. You end up in the hospital in a neck brace. Are you willing to look for an opportunity to talk with some third shift nurse about Jesus?

The plans of Paul and Silas were seriously interrupted when they were arrested for preaching Jesus and thrown into prison. But Acts 16:25 says: "Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, **and the prisoners were listening to them.**" Get that!

**There is this amazing dramatic account** of Dawn Robinson leading her co-worker to Christ amidst the falling debris and the choking dust of the fallen Twin Towers of the World Trade Center on the morning of **9/11/2001**. Dawn was willing to share Christ in circumstances that He had arranged, but which were inconvenient for her, to say the least.

**Are we going to defend Christian faith when it suits us, or when it suits God and others?**

Are we going to share the gospel when it's convenient for us, or when God in His sovereign wisdom opens a door? Is God your co-pilot or is He your *pilot*? Are you making appointments for Him, or is He making them for you?

In a certain sense there may be one person in the White House with even more influence than the President himself — **the president's appointment secretary**. The appointment secretary determines with whom the president is going to meet, and when and where. **Andrew Card** was the Chief of Staff for President George W. Bush. He used to tell even the cabinet members, "You need to see the president, you'll see the president. You just *wanna* see the president? You won't." He held the keys to the Oval Office. **Is God your Chief of Staff, your appointment secretary?**

Some divine appointments are only ever going to be scheduled once. They can't be postponed. We're either going to make them or miss them forever.

**I'll never forget a certain Tuesday afternoon** in June of 1991. I was on my way home from town. I was tired and hot and I still had work to do at my desk. It was our twins' birthday. I wanted to get home. But then I saw this old fellow sitting on a chair in front of my neighbor's house. It suddenly occurred to me that maybe I should stop and talk to this man about his soul. However, very unfortunately, I checked my watch, suppressed the urge, and went on home. I never got another chance. **That man died shortly thereafter.** It still haunts me.

**D. L. Moody once said that perhaps his greatest mistake** in life occurred on October 8, 1871. He'd just preached a message entitled *What Will You Do With Jesus?* Then he told his audience that he would give them one week to consider that question before extending the invitation. But less than 24 hours later the entire city of Chicago lay in ashes as a result of the great Chicago fire. Hundreds of people died. Moody said, "I have never since dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation."

**Divine appointments are meant to be kept, not postponed. God knows exactly whose hearts He has prepared to receive the gospel. He knows where they are. He knows when they'll be ready.**

**There's an old spiritual that goes:** "I'm gonna move when the Spirit says move. I'm gonna move when the Spirit says move. When the Spirit says move, I'm gonna move, O Lord. I'm gonna move when Your Spirit says move. "

And at times the Spirit of God is going to move when it's inconvenient for you. But **Dave Branon** of Our Daily Bread Ministries says: "God can use inconveniences in our lives if we look at them as divine appointments."

How will you know if some interruption is actually a Holy-Spirit-orchestrated opportunity to defend your faith and share the gospel, or not? Well, if you're in any doubt, better assume that it **is**. The Bible says that the fields are white for harvest. Jesus Himself linked the work of the Holy Spirit with our call to be His witnesses. Acts 1:8. Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Apostle Paul encourages all of us as believers to walk by the Spirit. We are not to quench the Spirit. We are to be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit is given to us as a guide. We should practice His presence and train ourselves to tune in to His guidance every day. Be sensitive to His inner prompting to witness for Christ. Assume by default that He's setting you up to do that.

As I was preparing this very message the telephone rang, **interrupting** my work. I thought, "Well, I better practice what I'm preaching and not get annoyed." So during the call at one point the caller told me that he thinks life is just a big pain and then you die. That's my cue, my opening, to share the gospel. **Make your interruptions your basis for ministry this week.**

**"O God, would You please move us to be more sensitive and surrendered, to get our priorities straight, to acknowledge You in all our ways instead of leaning on our on understanding and plans. Then we know that You will make our paths straight and lives count for the eternal salvation of others, and thus for Your glory, and thus for our joy. Amen."**

# A Trusted Old Prescription for an Ailing New Age



**Based on the account Paul's visit to Athens in Acts 17:16-34**

Adapted from a message delivered in scores of New England churches, and beyond, between 1991 and 2017.

I'd like to direct your attention now to the 17th chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. And the last part of Acts 17 provides us with a great model of Christian apologetics and evangelism in action in the midst of a non-Christian culture. And of course apologetics has nothing to do with apologizing. Christian apologetics is the branch of theology that has to do with defending, and contending for, and making a rational case for, historic Christian truth.

And every one of us as Christians ought to be prepared to make a compelling case for our faith — to our neighbors, to sincere skeptics, to our own children, and even to ourselves. We need to know why we believe what we say we believe.

Can you explain why Christianity makes sense? To obey the Great Commission at this point in history no longer necessarily involves a trip across the ocean as it once may have, because the mission field today is increasingly ideological in nature. Today the mission field is as near as the individual or family who espouse some non-Christian religion or worldview.

Many times it's precisely when we get delayed that God will grant us some opportunity to make a significant difference for His glory.

**Now I want to stop and say something important right here at the outset.** After 32+ years of doing apologetics full time, I'm more convinced than ever that there is a good and a reasonable answer to every sincere thoughtful question that's ever been raised about Christian faith. I've never heard a question about Christian belief to which some qualified well-credentialed person hasn't provided a fully rational credible answer. And that's probably important for you to hear me say. As Christians, the onus is on us as believers to discover what these answers are, and to help folks — young people and older — to find answers to every question that is sincerely raised.

Now as we begin to examine our text, please note with me three key phrases drawn from this inspired account of Paul's ministry in Athens.

**#1. And particularly in terms of when and where we do our apologetics and evangelism. Verse 16 says, "While Paul was waiting..."** That is, while he was on hold or being held up. If Paul himself had been writing this he might have said "while I was stuck" there in the city of Athens. It was not Paul's intent, nor was it his desire, to be in Athens at this point. Being in Athens was a big interruption — an annoying detour around the plans that Paul had made. He even described it later as being a direct result of a Satanic attempt to thwart him from traveling to where he really wanted to be, which was Thessalonica. Thessalonica for Paul was Plan A. Athens was Plan B.

Sometimes God draws a straight path with a crooked line. How will you deal with the detours of life? How will you think about the delays?

But this great sermon in Athens, this powerful ministry at the Athenian Areopagus, and the salvation of Dionysius and Damaris and likely others — all of it grew directly out of this detour that was thrown into Paul's life, and from his own conscious decision to accept that over which he had no control, and to depend on God for grace to get on with Plan B.

The Scripture says: "While Paul was waiting..." You know, there are so many times when we're forced to wait, when we have to be here but we'd rather be there, when God puts us on some long circuitous route when we had already mapped out a shortcut. He may require us to travel east in order to go West. Have you ever had to do that? **In Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, Route 11 South goes north for a bit.** Sometimes God draws a straight path with a crooked line. How will you deal with the detours of life? **How will you think about the delays?**

Here in Maine perhaps it's fitting to use a more nautical metaphor in the form of this verse: "One ship drives east and another drives west, with the self-same winds that blow. It's the set of the sail and not the gale that determines the way that we go." Can you set your sail to go God's way?

To operate in the power of the Holy Spirit really means to come to that place in our lives where we will actually begin to **see the detour as the main route.** In Maine all of our roads are Maine roads, and if we really believe Romans 8:28, then we're going to joyfully submit, not stubbornly resist, when it becomes clear that God has us on some route other than the one we'd mapped out. Set your sail into the winds of the Spirit of God. Recognize the detour as God-directed.

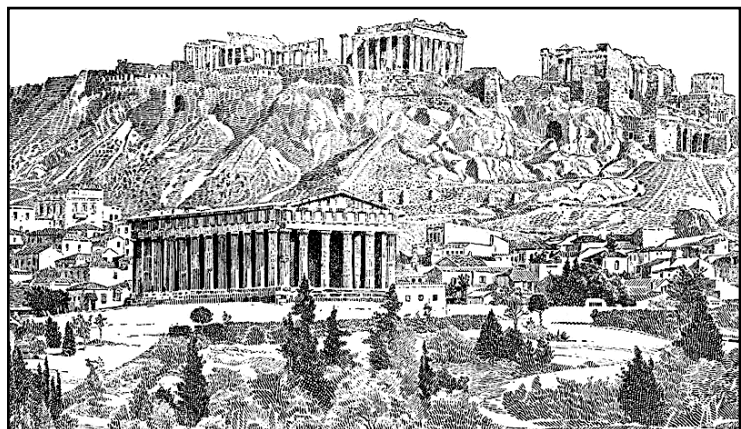
The ministry of the AIIA Institute which I directed for more than three decades is in many ways the result of a detour that for me began in the early morning hours of December 12, 1984. That was the moment my ordeal with Guillain-Barré syndrome began. I was in Intensive Care for five months and in the hospital for eight months. It was an awful battle and for a long time I refused to accept what I couldn't change. But by the grace of God and with the support of my wife, family, medical staff, and churches, my attitude slowly changed. Some of that journey is detailed in a 48-page booklet that I wrote entitled *Passing Showers*.

But that was then and this is now. I've mentioned it in order to illustrate the fact that many times it's precisely when we get delayed that God will grant us some opportunity to make a significant difference for His glory. That's what happened to Paul here in Athens.

Will you accept circumstances that God has arranged for you in order to do the work that He has for you to do? Perhaps you're reading these words in the middle of a long frustrating delay. Your plans are on hold. Why don't you consider this message a word from God to you through me. **Wait on the Lord.** *But wait productively.* Get up. Walk around. Bloom where you're planted.

**#2. says that Paul's "spirit was being provoked within Him . . ." (verse 16) (NASB) • KJV: "stirred" • NIV: "greatly distressed."**

As Paul walked thru the city and surveyed the Athenian culture, the Bible says that he grew very **provoked in his spirit.** Which of course was a good thing. He does not love good who does not hate evil. But I rather think that Paul was provoked, perhaps not primarily to anger, but in compassion, his spirit powerfully stirred by the hopelessness and the emptiness of it all. And it was this sense of the tremendous spiritual need around him that motivated his ministry. His proclamation (referred to in verses 19 and 23) grew directly out of this provocation in his spirit (verse 16).



If there is going to be any genuine ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit today it is so critical that it be **motivated at its core by a sincere sense of compassion for those around us who are caught in hopelessness and despair**. The world will always easily know it if our ministry is contrived or canned or motivated by anything other than a heart that is genuinely provoked and stirred within us by the emptiness that we see in the eyes and lives of those around us.

Fanny Crosby once penned lyrics that today seem foreign: "Rescue the perishing, *care* for the dying, snatch them in *pity* from death and the grave; *weep* over the erring one, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus the mighty to save." **May God move us to once again genuinely care and pity and cry and weep over the erring one**. Are we truly horrified by the reality and eternity of hell, and that many people all around us are opting for that destiny?

**Finally, you will notice in 17:17, 18, 22ff** that Paul's overwhelming sense of the need in the city of Athens, and his spirit which was being provoked by the despair and emptiness of this almost totally pagan culture marked by so many idols finally resulted—in what? **His provocation resulted in a motivation for a proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**3) The last phrase of verse 18 says that Paul "was preaching Jesus and the resurrection."** The Epicureans were there. They were like today's humanists. The Stoics were there. They were comparable to modern-day New Agers. Immorality and idolatry was rampant. So what does Paul do? Does it say that he started preaching against idols? Does it say that he tried to organize an Idolaters Anonymous therapy group? Does it say that he started passing out tracts or inviting people to church? No. It says that the Apostle **began to talk to people about Jesus**. Verse 18: "He was preaching Jesus."

This is so simple — and **powerful**. Because that's what it all comes down to. **The name of Jesus**. The Person of Jesus. Jesus alone is the answer to the idolatry of this age, and the immorality, and the emptiness, and the greed, and the vain quest for lasting pleasure. The answer isn't in a pill or a drug or in government or politics or money or fame or power or sports or entertainment or technology. **The deepest problems of the human soul are spiritual**. Whether it's loneliness or guilt or fear or panic or depression or anger or bitterness or boredom, the answer is always **Jesus**. Knowing Jesus. Living each day with Jesus. Paul pointed people to Jesus. So must we.

Now I want you to notice also that Paul's message was also based upon a careful **observation** of these people and their belief system, verse 23. In other words, before he preached, he listened and he observed, verse 22, and he examined v23, and he even quoted some of their poets, v28.

**I'm afraid that too often today we are attempting to talk to people about Christ before we even listen to them and attempt to really understand where they are and what they believe.**

Does the text say that the Apostle started preaching against idols? Does it say that he organized an Idolaters Anonymous therapy group? Does it say that he started passing out tracts or inviting people to church? No. It just says that he began to talk to people about Jesus.

**Lee Strobel tells the story** of how he was once passing a woman when he heard her say what he thought was, "What's a deist?" So he whirled around and answered her question, then proceeded to powerfully refute deism. Her mouth was just hanging open. Strobel then said to his associate, "Is this of God or what!? Here's this confused seeker being misled into a false worldview, she asks this just as I am passing by, and I get to share the gospel." His friend said, "Lee — she didn't say, "What's a deist? She's hispanic and she just said, "Buenos Dias."

**The same sort of thing once happened to a friend of mine.** A person with whom he was speaking identified himself as Wiccan. But my friend wasn't familiar with that religion and thought that he must have said that he was wicked. So he offered to lead him to Christ who alone could forgive his wickedness! Before we speak we need to listen, understand the beliefs of those with whom we're speaking, sense their hurts, and their background, and their spiritual presuppositions.

If you're going to be a missionary in Russia you study the Russian language. If you're going to share Christ with Baha'is or Jehovah's Witnesses or New Agers, you need to take the time to become familiar with their holy book, and their beliefs, and their culture.

We once had neighbors move into a house across the street from us when we were living in the Parsonage and I was a minister at the Monson Community Church. At some point my neighbor told me about a new-age-themed book that he was reading entitled *The Celestine Prophecy*. He seemed to identify with its message. When I told him I had also just read the book, he appeared to be quite surprised. I suppose he thought that I only ever read the Bible. I told him I had read the book to be better informed about what those who didn't share my views believed. He seemed impressed and more open to what I later had to say about Christ. In fact, he and his wife came to know Christ and are still today walking faithfully with Him, standing boldly for His truth.

So Paul preached Jesus in Athens. He didn't try to reform Athens politically or socially. His emphasis was proclamation, not protest. **He knew that at the heart of the problem there was a problem of the heart.** 2600 years ago Jeremiah the prophet corroborated with that diagnosis when he said, "*The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" Anything less than a genuine spiritual transformation is going to miss the mark today. Advocating for anything less than the gospel of Christ for America would be like recommending a bandaid to a guy who needs a triple bypass. So often we end up just treating symptoms.

A best-loved classic poem by Joseph Malins is entitled *An Ambulance Down in the Valley*. It tells the story of how people were often accidentally falling off a cliff near a small town. So instead of building a fence at the top of the cliff, the townspeople voted to pay for an ambulance which they stationed down in the valley at the base of the cliff. For a long while they seemed perfectly content to think that their ambulance was doing such a superb job — getting people to the hospital so efficiently. But one day things changed. Someone began to realize that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. You can read the entire poem at the end of this message.

Today we have so many agencies which exist exclusively just to fix the problems of society. We've got Suicide Hotlines, Drug Prevention Centers, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and Citizen Alert newsletters.

The way to see  
America **morally**  
**reformed** is really  
very simple —  
Americans must  
be **spiritually**  
**transformed.**

We've got AA for alcoholics, OA for overeaters, GA for gamblers, PA for abusive parents, and this vast plethora of social, governmental, and even church-related agencies (e.g. The Christian Civic League here in Maine) who are out there just to plug leaks, stem havoc, and try to repair damage.

Please do not misunderstand — there is not a one of these groups that are necessarily unnecessary. In fact, I'd be far more concerned for America without some of those entities doing what they do. But by definition, none of them are really even **intended** to try to treat the **source** of the problem.

**The way to see America morally reformed is really very simple: Americans must be spiritually transformed.** Paul understood that principle in Athens, in Corinth, and in Rome when he wrote in Romans 12:2, "*Be ye transformed...*", not "*Be ye reformed.*" Because he knew that people must be spiritually regenerated in the image of Christ. And there's only One who can do that, because **Jesus Christ doesn't just put a new suit of clothes on a man; He puts a new man in suit.**

America needs a spiritual reawakening. So we need to preach Jesus. We need to point folks to Christ. **Luis Palau tells the remarkable story** of how he once led a young communist secretary in Ecuador, South America, to Jesus Christ. She in turn led the Communist Party leader himself to Christ. And as a result, eventually, **the entire communist Ecuadorian revolution fizzled.**

Palau says: "A University professor once challenged me: '...how can you go to country after country, where people have so many economic and social problems, and just preach Christ? Can't you do something more practical for them?' Palau replied, "There isn't a better way to help them. Evangelism is the most effective social action because it deals with the root of the problem, not with the symptoms alone. The gospel can change society because it can change individuals, who then begin to change their families, who then begin to change their neighborhoods. A quiet revolution occurs."

A closing word of caution. Whenever we present Christ, we should expect one of three responses, verses 32-34. There are going to be those who will **sneer**, those who will **stall**, and a few who may decide to **follow Christ**. If we are willing to be put off by some and put down by others, then we may, by the grace of God, see a few precious souls come into the Kingdom.

And we ought never underestimate the influence of those few who come. It only ever takes a faithful few to make a major difference.

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Kingdom.



# A FENCE OR AN AMBULANCE?

A beloved  
*classic poem*

by Joseph Malins

1895 • *Public Domain*



Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed, though to walk near its crest was so pleasant;  
But over its terrible edge there had slipped a duke and full many a peasant.  
So the people said something would have to be done, but their projects did not at all tally;  
Some said, "Put a fence around the edge of the cliff," some, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day, for it spread through the neighboring city;  
A fence may be useful or not, it is true, but each heart became brimful of pity,  
For those who slipped over that dangerous cliff; and the dwellers in highway and alley  
Gave pounds or gave pence, not to put up a fence, but an ambulance down in the valley.

"For the cliff is all right, if you're careful," they said, "and if folks even slip and are dropping,  
It isn't the slipping that hurts them so much, as the shock down below when they're stopping."  
So day after day, as these mishaps occurred, quick forth would these rescuers sally  
To pick up the victims who fell off the cliff, with their ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked: "It's a marvel to me, that people give far more attention,  
To repairing results than to stopping the cause, when they'd much better aim at prevention.  
Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he, "Come, neighbors and friends, let us rally;  
If the cliff we will fence we might almost dispense with the ambulance down in the valley."

"Oh, he's a fanatic," the others rejoined, "Dispense with the ambulance? Never!  
He'd dispense with all charities, too, if he could; No! No! We'll support them forever.  
Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall? And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?  
Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence, while the ambulance works in the valley?"

But a sensible few, who are practical too, will not bear with such nonsense much longer;  
They believe that prevention is better than cure, and their party will soon be the stronger.  
Encourage them then, with your purse, voice, and pen, and while other philanthropists dally,  
They will scorn all pretense and put up a stout fence on the cliff that hangs over the valley.

Better guide well the young than reclaim them when old, for the voice of true wisdom is calling,  
"To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best to prevent other people from falling."  
Better close up the source of temptation and crime than deliver from dungeon or galley;  
Better put up a fence round the top of the cliff than an ambulance down in the valley.



# SECTION 1

## Christian Apologetics

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# WHY?

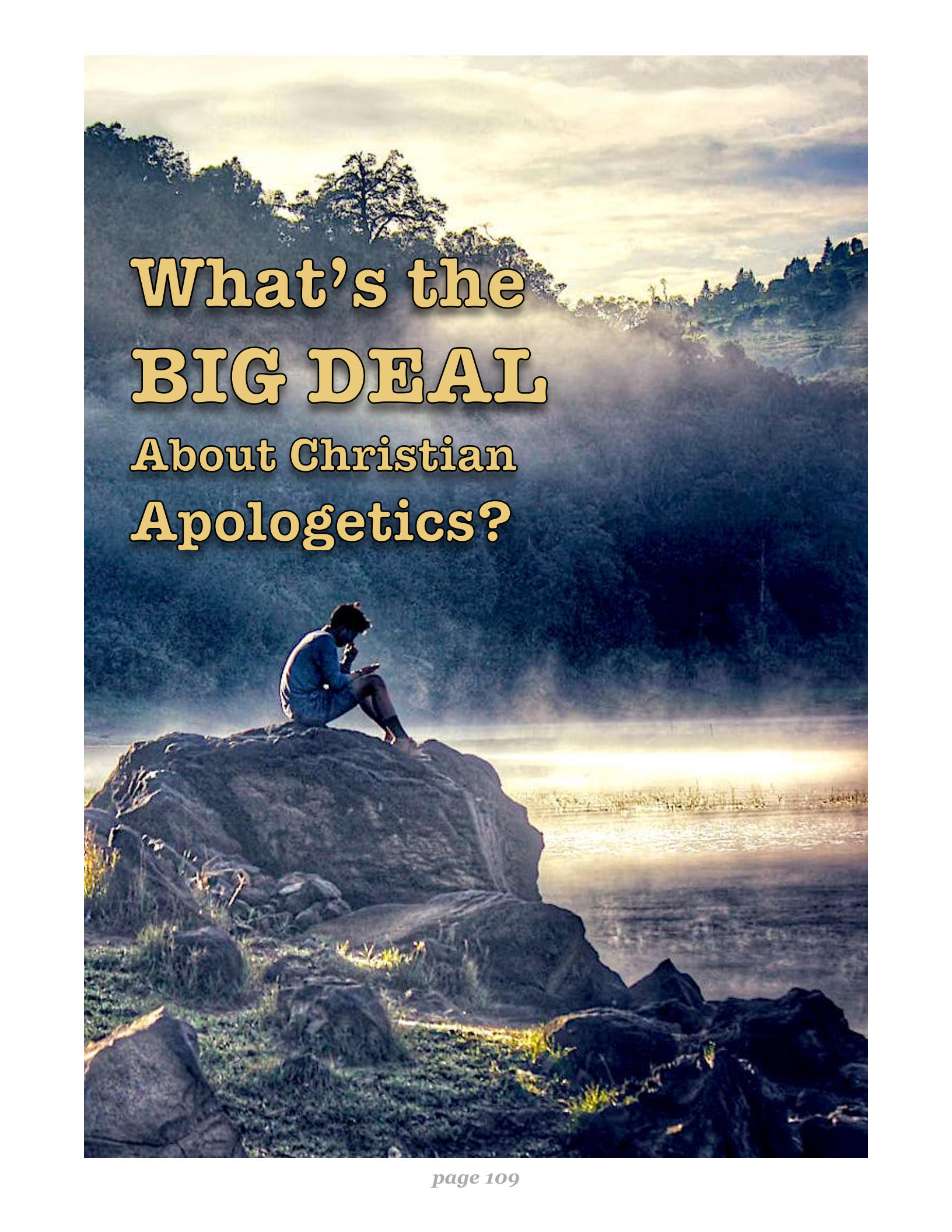
What's the Big Deal?

Where's the Warrant?

Six+ Purposes





A person is sitting on a large rock by a lake at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and reflecting on the water. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and some clouds. The background shows a forested hillside. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**What's the  
BIG DEAL  
About Christian  
Apologetics?**

# Why is apologetics such a big deal?

Because God-sourced, God-inspired, God-directed Christian apologetics . . .

## 1. CREATES CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO CONVERSION

The effective use of apologetics can break down intellectual barriers and obstacles for the honest seeker. In the providence of God it might be said that apologetics 'enhances the chances' of an individual coming to Christ. But of course with God, there's no such thing as chance, particularly when it pertains to Divine election. So **Alister McGrath's** explanation is preferable. He says: "Apologetics creates a climate favorable to faith; it does not create faith." "Apologetics is not a set of techniques for winning people to Christ. It is not a set of argumentative templates designed to win debates. It is a willingness to work with God in helping people discover and turn to His glory."



**Apologetics is really the most basic form of evangelism** (pre-evangelism if you will), because the gospel often begins with the very basics of metaphysical truth, e.g. the demonstration of God's existence through nature, conscience, and **rational thought** (which can involve entry level apologetics). Then comes propositional revelation, and finally moving on to matters of essential doctrine (apologetics is involved here, too), discernment (apologetics again!), and distinctive doctrines (theology).

**Apologetics begins** with wherever one may be in their formulation of a unified system of truth, i.e. worldview. It begins at the beginning, which for many folks is not "Are you saved?" but rather "Do you know who you are, or even *that* you are?" The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer wrote: "We must never forget that the first part of the Gospel is not 'accept Christ as Savior', but 'God is there.'"

**R. C. Sproul says:** "The heart cannot trust what the mind does not affirm."



**Josh McDowell** (photo at right) **has put it in a slightly different way:** "The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects."

In other words, there can be intellectual assent without trust but no real trust without intellectual assent. Effective apologetics offers help in removing intellectual barriers to faith; moving people through compassionate persuasion along the "faith continuum" (see page 28) toward a more informed commitment to Jesus Christ.

In **What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?** © 1975 Zondervan, Engel and Norton say: "The responsibility of the Christian communicator is to approach people where they are in terms of their spiritual position and, through an appropriate combination of message and media, to cause them to progress in their decision process toward initial commitment and subsequent growth. The goal, in short, is to bring about demonstrable and measurable change in people with respect to their response to the gospel."

In his book, *Hard Case Witnessing*, James R. Spencer offers **Spencer's Two Generalized Laws** for reaching secularists, cultists, and occultists: **1)** We need apologetics only if we are dealing with hard cases; **2)** If they are over 18, they are all hard cases.

And I've met plenty of kids who are not yet 18, but very sharp and also a challenge to persuade!

The more questions that an individual has about the credibility of Christian truth, the more apologetics becomes a necessary component of our evangelism. Not every one needs such answers to the same extent, but every thinking person will need at least some measure of apologetics in order to make an intelligent decision for Christ.

**One of the ways in which God uses apologetics** to create conditions more favorable to conversion is by effectively addressing the growing confusion in this world over matters of faith and truth.

**According to numerous research organizations there are now over 4,000 religions, belief systems, cults, sects, and ideologies in the world.** With the advent of the internet many more people (particularly young people) have been directly confronted with this smorgasbord of worldviews than ever before. Therefore confusion over spiritual matters — *Who is right? Is anyone right? Can anyone be more right than another?* — is also increasing. It's not that there is any significantly less interest in spirituality today. It's that there is a whole lot more confusion over spirituality. How can anyone know what to believe anymore? Christian apologetics provides a comprehensive and persuasive response to that question.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Apologetics on its own is never enough to draw a person to Christ.** "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty" [Zechariah 4:6] We must work in tandem with the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ alone is the author of faith. Those who forget that and become too confident in the power of tricky techniques and slick one-line rejoinders to those voicing skepticism are mistaken and presumptuous in their attempts to persuade unbelievers.

Yet having acknowledged that, we must never swing so far in the other direction as to minimize the fact that we really are called to persuade men of Christian truth by appealing to their *minds*, not just their hearts. The Greek term for heart (*kardia*), according to W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament words, means the core of "man's entire mental and moral activity, both rational and emotional elements."

In combination with the Spirit of God, effective apologetics can enhance the process whereby an individual comes to faith.



**John Gerstner summed up this dynamic combination very astutely when he said:  
"Christ does not need apologists, but  
He makes Himself dependent on them.  
They can do nothing without Him.  
He will do nothing without them."**

## **2. DETERS ANTI-CHRISTIAN AGGRESSION**

John Calvin once said that effective apologetics serves to "stop the mouths of the obstreperous (noisy, unruly in resisting)." R. C. Sproul says: "(It) can restrain unbelievers from an unbridled assault against the faith. Apologetics provides an atmosphere in which the unbeliever must guard his tongue against accusing Christianity of being intellectually foolish."

A noted apologist once said: “Another frequent reaction at these (secular) university open forums is . . . the silence of the so-called anti-theistic ‘big guns’ when they are given a chance to voice their questions. In fact, at the State University of New York I was thanked from a most unexpected source. Sitting in the front row each night was the Muslim *Imam*, head of the Islamic community in Albany. Seeing him there attired in his regalia was enough to make me think twice before each utterance. After the lecture and a protracted silence from any opposing voices, the *Imam* came to me and said, ‘Thank you for silencing those who speak nonsense.’ As complimentary as he was, he too was remarkably silent the next night when I dealt with the cross and the resurrection.”

**Dr. Robert Morey once related a true story** about a certain professor at a prestigious school in New York City who was constantly mocking and attacking Christian students — during class time — for their Christian beliefs. Under pressure from these students, he finally accepted a challenge to debate Morey, but walked out half way through the exchange when he began to lose the debate badly. Robert Morey said: “The professor later refused my offer (to a debate on agnosticism), but at least he stopped hassling the students for the rest of the semester.”

## Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. — C.S. Lewis

**C.S. Lewis:** “If all the world were Christian it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now — not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground — would be to throw down our weapons and betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”

**One day when our sons were in high school** their science teacher sent them home with an article that had been published in the September 1991 issue of *The Science Teacher*, entitled “Letter to a Creationist.” It referred to creationists (particularly creationists who accepted a straightforward reading on the Genesis account of creation) as: “bad, boring, divisive, regrettable extremists, impervious to reason.” It said that this position was “intellectually destructive.”

I read the article and was personally offended by it. So I made an appointment with the teacher and politely but firmly explained that this article described me and everything that I taught my family and church. I asked him for an opportunity to come to class and present another view of creation that was also scientific but compatible with the Bible. He said he didn’t think that the school board would allow that. I pointed to the article and said, “Would the school board approve of your distributing this article?” He said that he wasn’t sure. So he proposed an alternative idea — that I address the morning Bible Club and he would attend. He also said that he would encourage his class to attend! I accepted.

On April 3, 1992, I spoke for 30 minutes, presenting a scientific case for creation. The teacher listened but made no comment. But the students were very interested and asked for more information. I invited them to our home the following weekend. We hardly had room to accommodate all those who came. They asked for more. So I organized a youth rally and invited a gifted speaker to address the subject. Over 130 students attended. Then we organized a huge creation-evolution debate at the University of Maine. Two thousand people came out.



The debate was also broadcast on the local Christian radio station. The creationist was very polite and humble. He was also well-prepared. His arguments seemed to win the day. The professor who presented the case for naturalistic evolution left quickly that evening and rebuffed my proposal for a followup debate, or even an invitation to speak further on a personal basis.

A few years later when our youngest son attended the same high school science class with the same teacher, the presentation on evolutionary theory seemed less aggressive. And no article from *The Science Teacher* was ever distributed!

The point is — a courteous and courageous articulate voice for Christian truth today will often serve to (at the very least) **deter hostile attacks on Christian faith.**

### 3. PRESERVES ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN TRUTH

Effective God-inspired apologetics can serve to expose error and guard the Church against heresy.

**1 John 4:1-3 says this:**

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because **many false prophets have gone out into the world.** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

**Jude 3–4 says this:**

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.** For **certain persons have crept in unnoticed,** those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who **turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”**

**Test the spirits.** Be discerning. Watch out for false prophets. Contend for the faith. **Preserve the gospel and the truth of who Jesus really is.** *That’s the mission of apologetics.*

**R. C. Sproul** says that "apologetics as a special science was born out of a Divine mandate to respond to the false charges being leveled against the early church."

**So think of apologetics** (alongside polemics) **as a sort of maintenance program** for the foundational truths of Christianity through the ages. Examples: defending the doctrine of the Trinity is a vital role for the apologist when dealing with cultists. Even controversies within the Body of Christ may have a valuable upside, deterring over-innovation in restating orthodox truth.

**Please see further on purpose #3 and Jude 3-4, on pages 39-44 of this compendium.**

## 4. PROMOTES POSITIVE CULTURAL VALUES

With ongoing abortion here in America, homosexual and transgender activists boldly promoting their agenda, and traditional values in general being mowed down in almost unprecedented proportion these days, someone might ask, "What's the *practical value* of an apologetics ministry anyway? Apologetics seems a very long way from the battlefield. Is apologetics really the best place to invest our time, energy, attention, and stewardship dollars?"

Let me answer by sharing with you the response to a question once posed by a university professor to international evangelist Luis Palau. "How can you go to country after country, where people have so many economic and social problems, and just preach Christ?" the man asked. "Can't you do something more practical for them?" Palau replied, "There isn't a better way to help them. The people of this world create the problems of this world. If we can lead them to Christ, we will create a climate for other positive, practical changes to take place. **Evangelism is the most effective social action because it deals with the root of the problem, not with the symptoms alone.** The gospel can change society because it can change individuals, who then begin to change their families, who then begin to change their neighborhoods. A quiet revolution occurs."

Palau goes on to relate the remarkable story of how he once led a young communist secretary in Ecuador (South America) to Jesus Christ, and how she, in turn, led the Communist Party leader himself to Christ. As an almost direct result, a planned communist rally, and ultimately the entire communist Ecuadorian revolution, fizzled.

Did you know that slavery was finally abolished in Great Britain only after a group of men converted to Christ under the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield — and, having been influenced by William Wilberforce, began to move outward from their faith into society?

The apologetics-evangelistic approach may seem like the longer way around initially, but it is the only route that comes with a guarantee: a societal reform movement that grows out of a genuine Christian response that is just naturally growing out of people with a new heart for Christ.

Economists sometimes refer to trickle-down economics. We need to consider the concept of trickle-down truth. This is what much of Francis Schaeffer's writings demonstrated — the inevitable effect of philosophy on the arts, culture, morals, and every other strata of society.

**T.A. Green**, in "Faith in Science," referred to how "the academic community's interpretation of facts inevitably finds its way into the intellectual food chain and affects our young."

**C. S. Lewis** is quoted as having once said: "The most significant political action that any Christian can take . . . is to convert his neighbor."

The Great Commission to all Christian believers is to proclaim (preach, persuade), not protest.

## 5. STEMS INDIFFERENCE (APATHEISM) AND ATTRITION IN THE CHURCH

Numerous studies have shown that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of NONES i.e. those registering "None of the above" (or No religion) when asked about their religious affiliation, here in America. In 2008, in New England, the average percentage of NONES (24%) out-ranked the national percentage (15% or 30 million, which was an all-time high and a percentage which at the time had nearly doubled since 1990); VT = 34%; NH = 29%; CT = 14%; MA = 22%;

RI = 19%; ME = 25%; NY = 14%; Catholics = 32% and Protestants = 30%; based on 54,000 people polled in 2008. See more recent figures regarding church attrition later in this section.

- **Religion-Is-An-Important-Part-of-My-Daily-Life** numbers were lower in New England than anywhere in USA, based on a survey of 350,000 individuals in 2008.

- **The six New England states were among the Top Ten Least Religious States, and The Top Four Least Religious states in America are now all New England states!** VT = 42%; NH = 46%; MA = 48%; ME = 48%; CT = 55%; RI = 53%.

**Trends toward spiritual indifference (apathy) and attrition is especially troubling among youth:**

- A 2007 LifeWay Research study revealed that more than two-thirds (66%) of young adults attending a Protestant church in high school will stop attending church regularly for at least a year between 18 and 22.
- Rainer Research estimated that 70% of young people leave the church by age 22.
- Barna Group says 80 percent leave the church by age 30. (*Christianity Today*, 9/2009)
- **The Great Dechurching** and **Exvangelical** movements. See [Washington Post, 9/15/2023](#).
- See other more recent statistical documentation on **page 118** of this compendium.

**There is no need to worry about the *ultimate survival* of the Church** because Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. But we ought to be concerned about the current *state and influence* of the Church. Analysts have already concluded that evangelical influence in American culture has peaked and is now on the wane.

**Why does that matter?** Because increased pressure on, and persecution of, Christians always results from a decreased presence and influence of the Christian Church. And to some extent, what else can we realistically expect if we really advocate democracy and not theocracy? The less Christians in America, the greater the percentage of non-Christians, the more liberal our cultural values. If we expect our judges to rule fairly and by law, and if legislators who make the laws are acting in accord with the will of their constituents, what else can we expect? It's a downhill spiral.

We've seen examples of this process in our own region many times over the years. A successful lawsuit granted prison inmates the right to observe Satanism; transgender rights and other woke policies have made much headway in our school systems. A public prayer at the beginning of our local town meeting — a 150+ year-old tradition — was ended when just two residents went to the ACLU which threatened an expensive lawsuit against the town unless the policy changed.

**Bottom line** — a new emphasis on apologetics and evangelism — making the case for Christian faith intellectually and practically, in word and deed — is the only likely way of bringing new life to the Church and reducing such dismal statistics. But sadly, too often Christians are so focused on fighting and funding the next big battle over this or that social issue that no one ever gets around to actually sharing Christ and making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

## 6. FORTIFY CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE

**No Christian — regardless of how sincere and mature and grounded in the faith — is immune to spiritual attack, times of pressure, dryness, trial, and/or doubts.** Some of the greatest men and women of faith in history have been subject to dark nights of confusion and struggle, e.g. John the Baptist, Martin Luther, D.L. Moody — just to name a few — all endured conflict and spiritual battles in regard to their faith in Christ.

**One of the most powerful antidotes to doubt** and a great faith and confidence builder is familiarity with the great historic body of knowledge and intellectually credible responses to tough questions about Christian truth.

**How many times have I personally drawn confidence** in my spiritual convictions over the years by listening to Lee Strobel, reading Norman Geisler, or even just perusing AIIA's apologetics resource library where great scholars and learned men and women through the years have provided reasonable answers to every conceivable question that can ever be asked about the Christian faith — **in other words, from effective Christian apologetics.**

In *The Embarrassed Believer*, ©1998 Word, pages 59-60, Hugh Hewitt says, "The game of 'Stump the Christian' has been around for two millennia. Nonbelievers love it and do not hesitate to challenge the orthodox even if they would never dream of asking a Buddhist for evidence of karma. And that's a large part of the explanation for the embarrassment that dogs many Christians. Many, many Christians don't have the answers to the questions posed in the game of 'Stump the Christian.' **The answers exist.** They have been developed by the greatest minds in human history. God has revealed Himself in Scripture, and great apologists from Paul forward have argued the case for Christ. **But unless those answers are known, they are of no help.** Which is why the dumbing down of Christian belief has produced embarrassed believers by the millions."

**Apologetics establishes solid ground for confidence** in our witness, it assists the Church in responding to difficult questions, and it even serves to just remind the Church that **there really are good answers** to every honest question.

What is it that happens when we send our 18-year-olds off to the university without having heard a sound Christian apologetic for the reliability of the Bible? Very often it is that young person who becomes completely overwhelmed by the attacks on the doctrines which have been too mindlessly affirmed in our safe circles of Christian fellowship.

And so they really haven't been helped. They do *not* know how to respond. Because they've never heard a credible response to such questions. On the contrary, for 18 years we have often actually tried to spare them and shelter them from such questions. And in the process, we have totally neglected to equip them to even **survive**, much less be an effective witness of Christian truth. The statistics (cited previously) are dismal.

For a number of years AIIA sponsored an event called **DEFENDERS**. Each May we met with youth at all stages of their Christian walk. Some were doubting it all. I like to believe that we made a difference in some of their lives.

**Whether for young or old, effective apologetics is like a vitamin pill for the spirit and the soul and the mind.** It provides an intellectual boost in knowing *that* God is, *who* God is, and how to *live for God!*

Someone once astutely observed that almost every problem that a person may have in life can be traced back in one way or another to faulty theology — to some mistaken concept about the reality or the nature of God.

We have at times been amazed to discover that it is apologetics, of all things, that serves to draw out personal trauma or hurt based on some misunderstanding about Christian truth *if* — and this is a big *if* — we are listening and sensitive. For instance:

- Some folks who angrily deny the existence of God and are bitter about life, it turns out, don't really understand the Biblical concept of God or forgiveness; they may have had a poor relationship with their father. One 14-year-old had written a whole essay on why he was an atheist. But when we met with him, he began to reveal how he had been bullied and was even seriously suicidal.
- Sometimes those who showed up for our seminars on suffering and evil simply needed a compassionate sympathetic ear a whole lot more than they needed a seminar — due to some personal trauma or loss in their life. We must always try to be keen to the story behind the story.

Apologetics isn't merely an exercise of applying logic in a mechanical way, cornering people in their wrong thinking with practiced answers, as if we were playing a game of chess. Our real mission is to win souls, not arguments.

## Where is the Warrant for Christian apologetics today?

### 1. THE WARRANT IS IN SCRIPTURE



*In correspondence with a Christian circa 1993*

**SB:** Why focus on such an academic approach? Is apologetics really all that important?

**DEW:** I believe it is.

**SB:** Why?

**DEW:** Because God says that apologetics is needed and important.

**SB:** Where does He say that?

**DEW:** In the Bible. 1 Peter 3:15 says that Christians are to be prepared with an *apologia*?

**SB:** What's an *apologia*?

**DEW:** It's the word from which we get **apologetics**.

**SB:** Anywhere else or only in that one isolated verse.?

**DEW:** Jude 3-4 and Acts 17 also emphasize the importance of defending Christian truth.

### 2. THE WARRANT IS IN SOCIETY AND IN US

In an excellent article entitled **Why Believers Should Know How to Defend the Christian Faith**, published in the November–December 2022 issue of *Zion's Fire*, author Dr. Michael Weis lists four **Reasons to Engage in Apologetics**: **1.** Scripture commands it. **2.** The culture demands it. **3.** Bad theology requires it. **4.** Our minds need it.

### 3. THE WARRANT IS IN STATISTICS

The statistics on Christian belief and life in America are absolutely dismal these days.

- ▶ The Pew Research Center predicted in September 2022 that **Christians might make up a minority of Americans by 2070**. The study reported that “since the 1990s, large numbers of Americans have left Christianity to join the growing ranks of U.S. adults who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or ‘nothing in particular.’”
- ▶ Dr. George Barna, Director of Research for the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University released a report in May of 2022 (the American Worldview Inventory 2022) showing that **just 37% of Christian pastors have a biblical worldview**. The same report indicated “that barely **one-half of the pastors of evangelical churches (51%) have a biblical worldview**.” See further at this link: [https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AWVI2022\\_Release\\_06\\_Digital.pdf](https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/AWVI2022_Release_06_Digital.pdf)
- ▶ Nashville-based Lifeway Research revealed that in 2019 **4,500** Protestant churches closed down. See further at this link: <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/05/25/protestant-church-closures-outpace-openings-in-u-s/>
- ▶ Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center says that: “Church planting is slowing, and the number of closures is growing.”
- ▶ GRID, an online publication based in Washington, DC (since acquired by TheMessenger.com), published a detailed and disturbing article in December of 2022 stating that “a mass exodus from Christianity is underway in America.” The article said that while the number of Americans who celebrate Christmas as a cultural holiday is going strong, there has been a shocking rise in the number of people ditching Christianity — what sociologists call “nonverts.”
- ▶ The GRID article also made it clear that “the largest percentage of those losing their religion are young adults “around 30 and under.” “It’s a kind of ‘cultural whiplash’ from religion to secularism that’s hit the United States much faster than it has other parts of the world, said theology and sociology professor Stephen Bullivant.”
- ▶ Stephen Bullivant himself just published (December 2022) a book entitled “Nonverts: The Making of Ex-Christian America.” He has stated that “the largest demographic of nonverts, younger adults, will raise their children as ‘nones’ — people from nonreligious families. And while a tiny percentage of nonverts return to religion, nones rarely embrace religion at any point in their lives.”
- ▶ Bullivant attributes the current trend to be the result, at least in part, of the increasing influence of the internet which “gave folks access to communities of people also questioning their faith.”
- ▶ Lifeway Research reported that in 2019 **3000** churches opened; **4500** churches closed.

**So a warrant has clearly been issued** by Scripture, by statistics, by society (culture) and even by our own minds (which need the assurance that comes from knowing that the evidence is on the side of the Christian worldview), for an intellectually respected and credible defense of the faith.

# Christian Apologetics 101

## WORKSHEET

*Designed to provide a basic outline of the material covered thus far in this compendium.*

### Introduction

1. CREATE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Definitions

2. DETER \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Scope

1. G \_\_\_\_\_

3. PRESERVE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. B \_\_\_\_\_

4. PROMOTE \_\_\_\_\_

3. J \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. S \_\_\_\_\_

5. STEM \_\_\_\_\_

5. W \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. S \_\_\_\_\_ & E \_\_\_\_\_

6. FORTIFY \_\_\_\_\_

7. E \_\_\_\_\_ & M \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. E \_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

### Biblical Basis

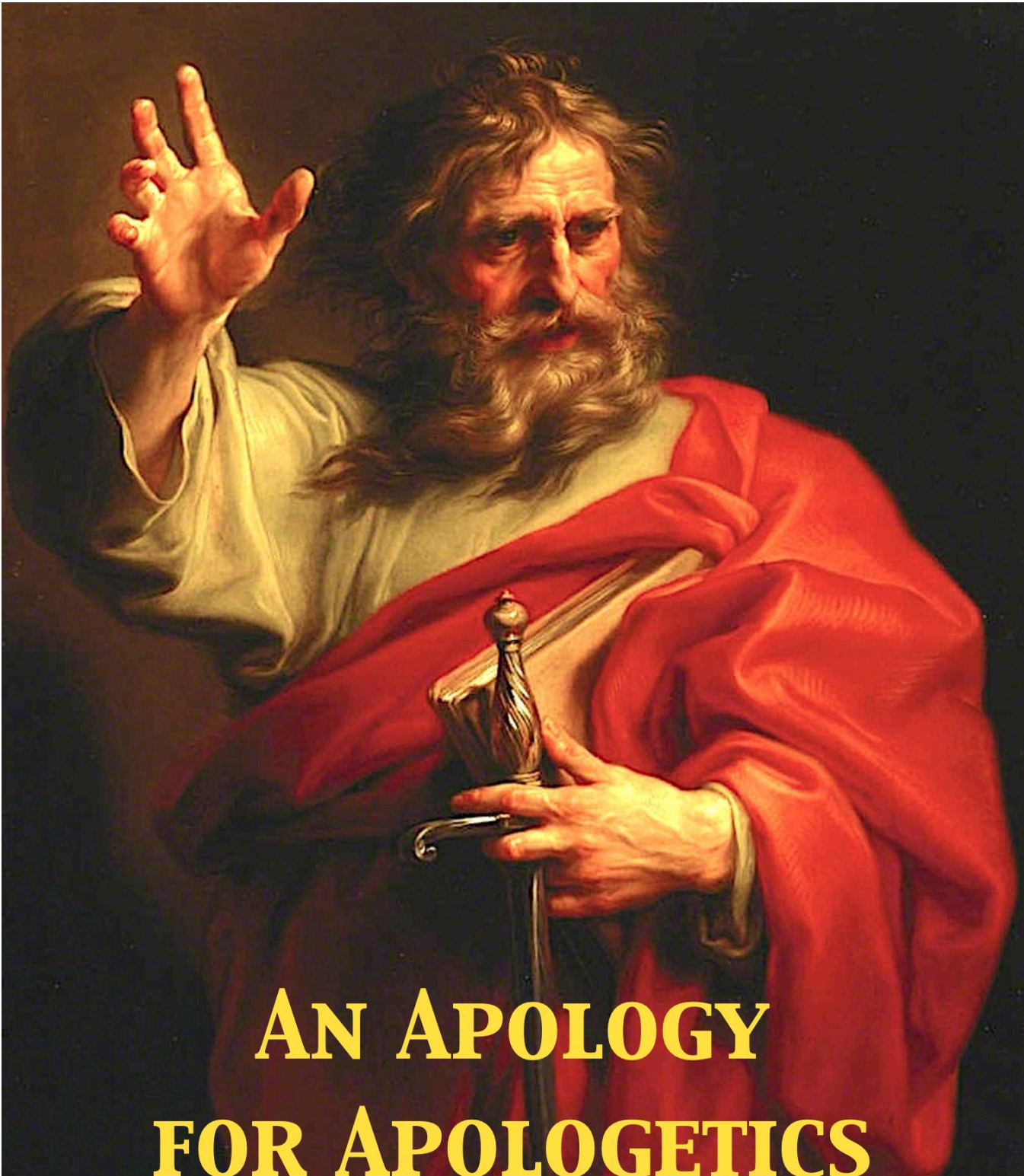
### Warrant & Purpose

*God-sourced, God-inspired, God-directed Christian apologetics can . . .*

### Review







**AN APOLOGY  
FOR APOLOGETICS**

**R.C. Sproul**

---

RIGHT NOW COUNTS FOREVER

The term apologetics has its origin in the Greek word *apologia* meaning "a reply." It is not to be confused with a hat-in-hand expression of remorse for having done something wrong. The role of the apologist is not to say, "I'm sorry for being a Christian."

Apologetics as a special science was born out of a combination of a divine mandate and the pressing need to respond to false charges leveled against the early church. God requires that we be prepared to give a "reason for the hope that is within us" (1 Peter 3:15). In this regard the apologist echoes the work of the apostles who did not ask people to respond to Christ in blind faith. For example, Peter said, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). The apostolic testimony to Christ was buttressed both by rational argument and empirical evidence.

The early church apologists, such as Justin Martyr, gave "replies" (usually addressed to the Roman emperor) to clarify and defend the faith against false charges. It was reported, for example, that the emerging sect of Christians was seditious, irrational, and cannibalistic (meeting in secret to eat somebody's body and blood). Justin replied by clarifying the Christian position on civil obedience, philosophy, and the Lord's Supper.

At first the stress on apologetics was defensive. It replied to objections and misrepresentations used against Christian truth claims. Later it developed into a more pro-active science in seeking to develop a full-orbed Christian philosophy in which the truth claims of Christianity were set forth in a reasoned intellectual system of thought.

In our day it is becoming increasingly necessary to provide an apology for apologetics. In many quarters the reasoned defense of Christianity is considered at best a waste of time and at worst a degeneration into a sub-Christian or even anti-Christian elevation of reason over faith.

Ours is an age of unprecedented fideism in which it is thought virtuous to believe without reason or even against reason. Karl Barth, for example, insisted that to embrace contradictions is a mark of Christian maturity.

Reformed theology has a firm conviction that only God can convert the sinner. No amount of rational argument, cogent evidence, or forceful persuasion can change the heart of the unbeliever unless that sinner is first regenerated by God the Holy Spirit. Armed with this conviction some in the Reformed camp conclude that rational apologetics is either an exercise in futility or positively harmful.

As one thoroughly convinced of Reformed theology, I am in total agreement with the thesis that apologetics alone cannot convert the sinner. But I do not further conclude that apologetics is therefore unnecessary.



**As one thoroughly convinced of Reformed theology, I am in total agreement with the thesis that apologetics alone cannot convert the sinner. But I do not further conclude that apologetics is therefore unnecessary.**

**— Dr. R.C. Sproul (1939-2017)**

There are several vital tasks left for apologetics to perform. I will provide here a brief list:

**(1) Pre-evangelism.** In defining the essence of saving faith the Reformers distinguished among three elements: (a) content or data of faith (*notitia*); (b) objective truth of the content (*assensus*); (c) personal trust or reliance on the truth (*fiducia*). The third, *fiducia*, can only be wrought by the operation of the Holy Spirit via regeneration. The first two are assisted by apologetics. The heart cannot trust what the mind does not affirm. There can be assent (*assensus*) without trust (*fiducia*) but not trust (*fiducia*) without assent (*assensus*).

**(2) Restrain evil.** Calvin argued that one value of apologetics was to "stop the mouths of the obstreperous." Here apologetics, though not able to convert the infidel, can restrain the unbeliever from unbridled assault against the faith. Apologetics provides an atmosphere in which the unbeliever must guard his tongue against accusing Christianity of being intellectually foolish.

**(3) Support believers.** Converted Christians can become so easily intimidated by intellectual critique that they lose their boldness to proclaim the Gospel. They are also vulnerable to being assailed by doubts. For example, as a college student I listened to learned professors who ridiculed Christianity. At that time I read Cornelius Van Til's remarkable critique of opposing world views to Christianity. Though I did not embrace Van Til's method of pro-active support of Christianity, I was greatly aided by his critique of opposing philosophers.

**(4) Commonplace benefits.** Closely related to (2) is the benefit to culture derived when Christianity enjoys a status of intellectual credibility. When the faith is relegated to a reservation of personal religion or piety based solely on sentiment, it has difficulty informing the institutions that shape culture. Where Christian truth is established with credibility, it has a salutary effect on culture.

The apologetic task is difficult, complex, and never-ending. Yet it is the mandate of God to us.

The responsibility is ours; its success is God's.

---

**Dr. R.C. Sproul** was chairman of Ligonier Ministries and professor of systematic theology at the Orlando campus of Reformed Theological Seminary for many years. He died in December 2017 at the age of 78.

**NOTE:** This article first appeared on pages 4-5 of the May 1991 issue of *Tabletalk* magazine. It is reprinted and included in this compendium with special permission from Ligonier Ministries (421 Ligonier Ct. Sanford, FL 32771), but remains copyrighted by Ligonier and is subject to Ligonier's own copyright restrictions. So it ought not be reproduced without independent permission from Ligonier.



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION'S



**New**

**Urgent Item**

*Considering the Critical Place for  
Apologetics in Christian Education  
in the Third Millennium*

A Workshop and an Open & Unrehearsed  
Exchange facilitated by Daryl E. Witmer

## Personal Intro

## Ministry Intro

## Seminar Intro

- Distribute Worksheets
- *I've developed a 3-part outline to facilitate our consideration of today's subject: 1) Delineating the Problem; 2) Documenting the Urgency, and 3) Detailing the Solution. So let's get right to it.*

## I. Delineating the Problem

**Most famous anti-Christian character in America then:** *Madalyn Murray O'Hair (atheism)*

**Most infamous anti-Christian characters in America today:** *Bart Ehrman, R. Dawkins, Sam Harris*

**Leading thought systems then:** *atheism and secular humanism (believing in nothing)*

**Leading thought systems today:** *syncretism, wokeism, relativism, pluralism (believing in everything)*

**Response to those proclaiming the Gospel then:** *"Prove it."*

**Response to those proclaiming the Gospel today:** *"So what?" "Who cares?" "Who are you to claim that you alone have truth?"*

**Leading Christian put-down buzzword then:** *"Religious nut!"*

**Leading Christian put-down buzzword today:** *"Whatever."*

**What tolerance meant then:** *living peaceably with opposing views and practices*

**What tolerance means today:** *endorsing all views and practices as inherently valid and true*

**Key question being asked about Christianity then:** *Is it true? (Rationalism: objective truth assumed)*

**Key questions being asked about Christianity now:** *How will it meet my needs and get me ahead? Does it feel good? (Selfish hedonism and pragmatism, Progressivism, Social approval)*

**Literature threatening to a Christian worldview then:** *Passover Plot, Book of Mormon, Playboy*

**Literature threatening to a Christian worldview today:** *Misquoting Jesus, Love Wins, social trends*

**Pop music artists threatening to a Christian worldview then:** *Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead*

**Pop music artists threatening to a Christian worldview today:** *Lennon, Slayer, XTC, Nine Inch Nails*

**Growing ideology then:** *modernism (grounded in Enlightenment, scientific discovery, rationalism)*

**Growing ideology today:** *postmodernism (grounded in Marxism), relativism, wokeism, universalism*

**Dangerous influential thinkers then:** *Friedrich Nietzsche — "God is dead."*

**Dangerous influential thinkers today:** *Foucault, Derrida, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Robin DiAngelo, Tony Jones, Rob Bell — deconstructionism, cultural conditioning, so-called Progressive Christianity*

Let me emphasize that the most concerning influences when it comes to anti-Christian values and truth as we move further into this third millennium may no longer primarily be atheism, secular humanism, theological liberalism, or even the tradition cults like Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses — as dangerous and as threatening as each of these thought systems and quasi-religious cultic-type views may continue to be.

The primary threat to us, and to our Christian young people, students, and children today has assumed a form that, in some cases, is far less obvious and far more devious. Today the primary enemies of truth are taking a more aggressive but also more subversive approach. In many cases — especially in church circles— they are "flying in under the radar" (see Jude 4).

**Four of the most threatening opponents of historic Christianity today are:**

- **Postmodernism** and **monistic pluralistic belief**, with all of their attendant ideological offspring — philosophical thoughtforms such as relativism, syncretism, pantheism, panentheism, naturalism, and even deism — in other words, New Age (old Eastern) thoughtforms. The proponents of these ideologies are the gurus of a "spirituality" antithetical to true Christian faith.

- **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.** Here is an excerpt from an article in 2005 by **Al Mohler**:

"When Christian Smith and his fellow researchers with the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took a close look at the religious beliefs held by American teenagers, they found that the faith held and described by most adolescents came down to something the researchers identified as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." As described by Smith and his team, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism consists of beliefs like these: **1.** "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth." **2.** "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions." **3.** "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself." **4.** "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem." **5.** "Good people go to heaven when they die."

- Blatant **Satanism** and an obsession with demons is also on the rise. See "Satan is Getting Hot as Hell in American Pop Culture" in the March 28 2023 issue of **Newsweek** magazine. Sample excerpt: "In November, 2021, Pew Research reported that 62 percent of American adults believe in Hell, up from 58 percent in 2014, and pop culture appears to be taking full advantage of the curiosity that surrounds Hell and its inhabitants. The Devil is front and center in movies, TV shows, podcasts and even children's books. There are Satan After School Clubs, while the proliferating Satanist groups have their own political divisions."

**Here is a sampling of the sort of syncretistic, pluralistic, gospel that is being peddled today in the world in which we live, and in which our children are growing up:**

- *SPIRIT OF CHANGE* newspaper, which boasts a readership of 200,000 here in New England alone. Consider also *Earth Star* magazine. Both typify a marked trend toward Eastern mysticism and syncretistic religion.

- **NEWSWEEK** magazine, December 14, 1998 (cover story), actress Nicole Kidman:  
"Scientology is not my life. I've found a mishmash of many things. There's a little Buddhism, a little Scientology. I was raised a Catholic and a big part of me is still a Catholic girl."

Four of the most threatening opponents of historic Christianity today are Postmodernism, Monistic Pluralism, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, and blatant Satanism.

- LIFE magazine, December 1998, author Frank McCourt in *When You Think of God, What Do You See?* (cover story and feature article): "So I wrote a book and when I go around the country talking about it people ask me if I'm still a Catholic. Well...in a way I am. I drop in to churches. I talk to St. Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila, my favorites. I light candles for people's intentions. But I don't confine myself to the faith of my fathers anymore. All the religions are spread before me, a great spiritual smorgasbord, and I'll help myself, thank you."
- UTNE READER, July-August 1998, page 45, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions* currently lists more than 2100 religious groups existing in this nation, a figure that has almost doubled in 20 years. There are now 3.5 million Islamic adherents in the United States. There are 750,000 Buddhists in America today, and Buddhism is "the country's fastest growing faith."

## **"We hold these relativistic moral assertions to be relativistically true. They work for me; see if they work for you."**

- From a transcript of a December 10, 1998, opening statement by Republican **Rep. Bob Inglis** of NC, who served as a member of the House Judiciary Committee. This statement was offered in response to testimony of possible impeachable offenses by U.S. President Bill Clinton: "It seems to me that what we're witnessing here is a conflict, a clash between two very different views. One view is that there is absolute truth. The other view is that everything is relative. This is not new. This is not a new debate in this country. And it's actually been going on quite awhile. [President Clinton] is the perfect embodiment of everything being relative. He is the epitome of someone who says there is no truth. Everything is relative. And that's the big conflict here. [Thomas Jefferson] said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Now, let me rewrite that in the way that the White House spin machine would write it. "We hold these relativistic moral assertions to be relativistically true. They work for me; see if they work for you." That's the way the White House spin machine would rewrite the preamble to the *Declaration of Independence*. But I, for one, hope that we reassert here at the end of this millennium and the beginning of the next that truth matters . . . That I believe, is the real question behind this."
- The estimated number of *A Course in Miracles* study groups in America today ranges between 1200 and 2200, many of them (according to Probe Ministries) actually meeting in churches and S.S. classes. *A Course in Miracles* defines sin as "the belief in the reality of our separation from God..." In other words, sin is only wrong or unhelpful thinking. *A Course in Miracles* defines salvation as "...the undoing of the separation; we are 'saved' from our belief in the reality of sin and guilt through the change of mind that forgiveness and the miracle bring about."
- Many best-sellers marketed in the past 50 years have propagated out-and-out syncretistic monism — books like *The Celestine Prophecy* (Redman), *A Return to Love* (Williamson), *How to Know God* (Chopra), *Embraced by the Light* (Eadie), and *Conversations with God* (Walsch).
- Scholastic book club has targeted Christian schools and Christian parents with a new "Inspiring Words" catalog of books designed to "inspire and build faith." Included among the offerings ... in prime position on the cover of one catalog was *Conversations with God for Teens* (Walsch).
- According to world-renowned author and spiritual leader Deepak Chopra, "God is not a person or a thing but rather a process." Anyone can engage in this process: "...it isn't a matter of faith, religious teaching, innate goodness, luck or some other mysterious factor," Chopra explains.



## II. Documenting the urgency

According to a 1991 Barna poll, 66% of Americans agreed that there was no such thing as absolute truth, and 69% of those polled in 1992 stated that there are no moral absolutes. In **2021** Barna indicated that **a majority of the U.S. population** (between 54% and 75%) claimed that “all truth is relative.” Allan Bloom in his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, says that almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative.

But what about in the Church? According to a Barna Research Group poll, four of 10 people who call themselves evangelicals in America today say that they do not believe that there is any such thing as absolute truth. "That's the heart of the problem that we're struggling with," said George Barna in an NIRR interview dated February, 1994. "It's pretty frightening."

In their book *Right from Wrong*, published by Word in 1994, Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler stated that 57% of our (churched) young people cannot say that an objective standard of truth exists. They say that even if your children are actively involved in church, they're likely to approve the view that people may define truth in contradictory ways and still be correct. Truth has become a matter of opinion, and morality has been replaced by individual preference.

Do you ever scan the morning newspaper stories and immediately begin to feel completely, absolutely, altogether out of step, out of sync, and out of touch with the world in which you're living? Do you sometimes feel totally baffled about where all of these wacky liberal scandalous permissive ideas are coming from in our nation? Do you ever feel like a minority, a relic, a totally-outnumbered social misfit, a square peg in a round hole?

Peter Jones, writing in *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*: "We stand again on Mars Hill, surrounded by a host of unfamiliar and doubtless unfriendly gods. At some time in the future, perhaps more quickly than we think, true Christianity could well be reduced to a small minority. Christian ministry in the New Age of Aquarius will not be for the fainthearted. Discerning, dedicated leaders are essential for the church in the Age of Aquarius. But not only leaders. At every level, Christians need to understand what is going on and carry that understanding to every corner of life."

Someone once pointed out to me that the narrow way which leads to life isn't at all like it's frequently pictured — off by itself somewhere winding up through the peaceful, beautiful mountain hills and valleys. It is rather right up the middle of the broad way that leads to destruction, only going in the exact opposite direction.

### **Why is addressing this problem and these issues so urgent?**

The disease of postmodern and relativistic thinking is not just somewhere out there in secular society anymore. It's in the Church.

Christian bookstores are being pressed to stock books by authors who are out-and-out New Age in their thinking. Christians very often don't even recognize New Age thought when they read it in places like *Embraced by the Light* or *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Churches and Sunday School classes are, in some cases, actually using *A Course in Miracles* as curriculum!

Junior High kids are being conditioned with the idea that Christian evangelism is an exercise in intolerance. That it was exceedingly arrogant and exclusivist of Christian missionaries to try converting native Americans. One example was an article titled: "Pressure against the Southern Baptist Convention targeting Chicago-area Muslims."

Chapter 28 of Charles Colson's *How Now Shall We Live* provides a number of examples of how New Age thinking is invading the classroom, right down to the pre-school level.



**George Barna**, in his book *Generation Next*, notes that there is a significant drop-off rate in church attendance once young people complete high school. He says, "Millions of kids will graduate from high school and never be pursued again by a church until later in their adult years." He says that between the ages of 18 and 25 youth are in the most spiritually vulnerable period of their lives.

**Josh McDowell's** book, *Right from Wrong*, provides a great deal of hard data about what implications postmodern, relativistic thinking is having on our youth in the area of morality, emotional stability, church attendance, and depth of conviction about, or relationship with, Jesus Christ.

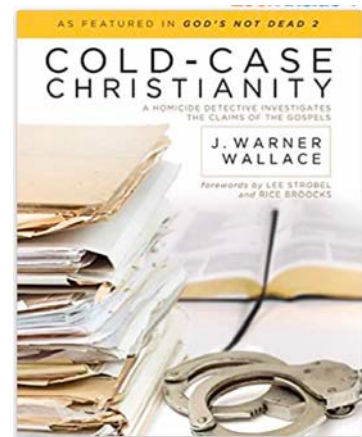
What happens when we send our 18-year-olds off to a secular university without ever having heard a sound Christian apologetic for the faith? Very often it means that that young man or woman becomes completely overwhelmed by the vicious attacks and peer pressure out there, and before long joins the ranks of the casualties of the faith.

Several studies lend support to informal estimates that 5-10 million Americans have been at least transiently involved with cultic groups.

### III. Detailing the solution

So how do we as Christians train, educate, and disciple this generation, and the next, to maintain the historic exclusivist claims of Christianity in a manner that is not abrasive, but kind, gentle, and respectful manner as possible, i.e. 1 Peter 3:15?

- ✓ **Understand** and **expose** the times. **Read** widely (Acts 17 approach). Beware. Speak up.
- ✓ **Implement** an apologetics-based **curriculum** in your local church — McDowell's *Right from Wrong*, *Don't Check Your Brains*; study guide to Alisa Childers' book, *Another Gospel?* And other apologetics material such as *Cold Case Christianity* by J. Warner Wallace.
- ✓ **Encourage** the discovery, development, deployment, and appreciation of the spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:10) and ministry of **discernment** (1 John 4:-6) in your local church .
- ✓ **Employ** an apologetic-type **catechism** in your classes.
- ✓ **Promote** apologetics **resources** in your church library, on your website, and in your classes.
- ✓ **Sponsor** and support more apologetics **seminars** and speakers in your church or region.
- ✓ **Engage** the culture with Church-sponsored **Roundtables**, Debates, and Dialogue Dinners.



✓ **Revise** evangelistic **methodology**. The Gospel must begin with a clarification of terminology, not an invitation to receive Christ. Instead of **only** using the old Evangelism Explosion format and questions, e.g. "If you were to die tonight and God was to ask you why He should let you into His heaven, what would you say?" we might **also** begin by asking if we could share our story (in postmodern lingo, our meta-narrative). Evangelizing may often involve more of a process than one quick conversation. Postmoderns will respond well to a sincere consistent demonstration of love, both to them and among believers in a community of faith. A greater emphasis must be placed on relationships, not programs.

**In sum, the solution** is without a doubt to be found in a new emphasis on Christian apologetics being applied in both missions — that is, directly to skeptics, New Agers, cultists, and agnostics — **and** in Christian Education, that is, in our own community of faith, beginning with our youth.

### **Further Questions and Exchange**

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- Why is it important that we pour more resources into an emphasis on how to shore up the foundations of truth?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word apologetics?
- Name some ways in which apologetics has helped to correct skepticism and preserve the foundations of truth in your own experience.

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION'S NEW URGENT ITEM

*Considering the Critical Place for Apologetics in Christian Education in the Third Millennium*

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**WORKSHEET** for an Open and Unrehearsed Exchange | Facilitated by Daryl E. Witmer  
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## Introductions

### I. Delineating the problem

Within just a lifetime, since the 1950s and 60s, there has occurred a tremendous shift in the consensus of thought, and in the predominant worldview, marking many of the most influential cultural forces here in the West. The question is — how tuned in are we as Christian leaders, parents, and educators to these changes, and the resulting dangers? Are we really and truly aware of where the fires are burning today? Here are some specific examples:

Most famous anti-Christian character in America then:

Most infamous anti-Christian characters in America today:

Leading thought systems then:

Leading thought systems today:

Response to those proclaiming the Gospel then:

Response to those proclaiming the Gospel today:

Leading Christian-putdown buzzword then:

Leading Christian-putdown buzzword today:

What tolerance meant then:

What tolerance means today:

Growing ideology then:

Growing ideology today:

Three dangerous opponents of the Christian worldview today are the proponents and forces of:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### II. Documenting the urgency

In 2021 a \_\_\_\_\_ of the U.S. population claimed not to believe in absolute truth.

In their book *Right from Wrong*, Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler state that \_\_\_\_\_ of our (churched) young people cannot say that an objective standard of truth exists. Truth has become a matter of \_\_\_\_\_, and morality has been replaced by \_\_\_\_\_.

Kids are being conditioned with the idea that Christian evangelism is an exercise in \_\_\_\_\_.

George Barna, in his book *Generation Next*, notes that there is a significant drop-off rate in church attendance once young people complete \_\_\_\_\_.

What happens when we send our 18-year-olds off to a secular university without a sound Christian apologetic?

### III. Detailing the solution

So how do we as Christians train, educate, and disciple this generation, and the next, to maintain the historic exclusivist claims of Christianity in a manner that is not abrasive, but kind, gentle, and respectful manner as possible, i.e. I Peter 3:15?

- Understand and Expose \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Implement \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Encourage \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Employ \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Promote \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Engage \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Revise \_\_\_\_\_

**In sum, the solution is** without a doubt to be found in a new emphasis on Christian apologetics — applied in both missions, that is, directly to the skeptics, New Agers, cultists, and agnostics, and in Christian Education, that is, in our own community of faith, beginning with our youth.

### Further Questions and Exchange

- Why is it important that we pour more resources into an emphasis on how to shore up the foundations of truth?
- What comes to mind when you hear the word apologetics?
- Name some ways in which apologetics has helped to correct skepticism and preserve the foundations of truth in your own experience.



# SECTION 1

## Christian Apologetics

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# HOW?

Taking the Initiative

Taking Inventory

Educating

Living the Hope

Teaching, **Promoting**, and  
**Practicing** Christian Apologetics







# HOW SHALL BELIEVERS GO ABOUT PROMOTING AND PRACTICING CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS?

Here are four simple guidelines:

## 1. Educate believers.

We include an **Apologetics Primer** on page 139 that can easily be used for this purpose in your local church or at a workshop organized by churches in your region. Other tools are also included.

## 2. Take the initiative by going to nonbelievers *where they are*. The Gospel begins with G-O.

My friend and fellow vocational Christian apologist, **Bill Honsberger** of Haven Ministries, based in Aurora CO, is a great example of “going to them.” Here’s an excerpt from his February 2023 newsletter projecting his schedule for Spring — Fall 2023.

March 9 – 15 • Hindu Temple, Scientology headquarters — Florida  
March 17 – 19 • Paganicon — Minneapolis, Minnesota  
March 18 • BodyMindSpirit Fair — Denver CO  
March 23 • Holistic Fair — Loveland CO  
April 6-12 • American Atheist Convention — Phoenix, Arizona  
April 22 • BMS Celebration — Colorado Springs CO  
June 5-6 • International Conference on Cults, Sects, and New Religions  
August • Burning Man — Nevada  
April 14-18 • Parliament of World Religions — Chicago, Illinois  
September 10-11 • Whole Expo — Durango CO

Bill mixes it up and speaks one-on-one with many people at these events. He’s truly on the front lines and in the trenches of the spiritual battles that rage all across pagan America these days.

You may not be prepared to take the initiative at that level but you are certainly able to do so in conversations that you have with your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family members.

I typically launch a conversation on some non-religious subject and then look for a way (while silently praying for a good opportunity) to segue into subjects that matter. Maybe I’ll say, “Do you attend a church in the town in which you live?” Or “What helps you get through the day?” Or “What makes life worthwhile for you?” When I’m out on the streets of Monson I sometimes tell folks that I’m taking an informal poll (which I am) and then ask them, “Do you believe in heaven and hell?” Or “What do you believe comes after this life?”



**DW:** Where is home for you? What’s your trail name?

**HS:** I go by HopScotch. And I live in New York City.

**DW:** What will you do when you’ve completed the AT?

**HS:** I plan to hike the Pacific Coast Trail.

**DW:** Wow, that’s ambitious. Then what?

**HS:** I hope to continue studying physics. Maybe teach.

**DW:** Do you ever give any thought to preparing for what comes after this life?

**HS:** Not really. I don’t think a lot about that.

**DW:** Do you believe that you will go on living after this life?

**HS:** I don’t know. I’m Jewish, not Christian.

**DW:** Did you know that there are Jews who follow Jesus? You should check out Jews for Jesus.

**HS:** Maybe so. But right now I have to go. I have a lunch date set for 12:30 PM.

### 3. Listen carefully to nonbelievers. Learn their worldview “language” and ask them questions on what they currently believe about life and truth.

In Athens the Apostle Paul examined the objects of worship and read the poets of the Athenians (Acts 17). He observed their city, exchanged with them for weeks, and studied their culture.

How about you? Do you understand the times (1 Chronicles 12:32)? Can you cite the core beliefs of Islam, Buddhism, New Age spirituality, so-called Progressive Christianity, and Wicca?

**Respected Christian apologist Mike Licona** provided a specific instance of how this can work in an interview with Sean McDowell that was published in *Apologetics for a New Generation* © 2009. Harvest House. “Many North Americans are either **modernists** or **postmodernists**. The former place an emphasis on **logic, evidence, and truth** whereas the latter are more concerned with **pragmatism, fairness, and even contrarianism**. The former say, ‘You should believe X because it is true for three logical reasons.’ The latter say, ‘We all find different truths along differing routes. Can’t we all just get along?’ Our approach to modernists must differ from how we approach postmodernists. To the former we must be prepared to provide evidence from science, history, and philosophy for why the Christian message provides ultimate truth about God. The latter best connect through **stories** to which they can relate their **personal experience** rather than **bullet-point logic**.”



**NOTE**

Following in this section are an **Apologetics Survey** and a **Worldview Inventory** which will reveal the degree to which you are familiar with the views of those in our generation with whom you and others in your church intend to share the gospel.

### 4. Proclaim God’s truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, gently and respectfully, at all costs, as God’s Spirit leads — and then leave the results of your efforts with God.



Here are some wise words from **Mark Farnham, PhD** (professor at Lancaster Bible College in Lancaster PA), excerpted from the February 1, 2023, issue of **EQUIP**, his online apologetics newsletter. See further at [www.apologeticsforthechurch.org](http://www.apologeticsforthechurch.org).

“People are won to the gospel when they understand with their minds, are convicted in their hearts, and respond to the gracious call of the gospel. Peter explains that we are most effective when we present the gospel with a gentle and respectful demeanor. Our peaceful approach does not mean that we won’t be firm at times or even push back against poor arguments. Still, we should speak and act in a way that is humble, approachable, and winsome. Unfortunately, argumentative people are often drawn to apologetics because they see it as a way to defeat others and prove their greater intelligence. Our goal, however, should not be to argue with or shame the non-Christian but rather to help him see the light of truth. Gentleness speaks to our tone of voice, our understanding of God’s love for the person, and our refusal to be aggressive or antagonistic.”

# CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

## A PRACTICAL PRIMER

### WORKSHEET

Revised to April 2023

#### 1. ONE definition of Christian apologetics

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. TWO major components of apologetics

D \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. THREE key Bible texts on apologetics

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. FOUR noted vocational Christian apologists

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. FIVE potential benefits of Godly apologetics

Can remove \_\_\_\_\_

Can deter \_\_\_\_\_

Can preserve \_\_\_\_\_

Can stem \_\_\_\_\_

Can engender \_\_\_\_\_

#### 6. SIX super Christian apologetics resources

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 7. SEVEN simple answers to 7 tough questions

God doesn't exist! \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was just a good man. \_\_\_\_\_

Didn't just men write the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

How reliable is the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

If God is good, why evil? \_\_\_\_\_

Isn't evolution scientific? \_\_\_\_\_

All truth is relative. \_\_\_\_\_

#### 8. EIGHT great ways to promote apologetics

Small group study \_\_\_\_\_

Stock libraries & give gifts \_\_\_\_\_

Plan a retreat \_\_\_\_\_

Assign questions \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor youth \_\_\_\_\_

Use social media \_\_\_\_\_

Stage a drama \_\_\_\_\_

Support apologists with \$\$ and prayer \_\_\_\_\_

# CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

## A PRACTICAL PRIMER WORKSHOP LEADER'S GUIDE

### 1. ONE brief definition of Christian apologetics Branch of theology that has to do with making a reasonable case for historic Christianity.

One can be an apologist for Domino's Pizza or the NE Patriots; Apple once used "evangelists."

**Three major myths:** that an apologist has to  
**a)** apologize, **b)** debate, **c)** be a scholar

### 2. TWO major components of apologetics

**Defend:** responding to those outside the Church: **a)** hard core skeptics, **b)** sincere seekers  
**Contend:** fight to preserve orthodoxy in Church

### 3. THREE key Bible texts on apologetics

**1 Peter 3:15** — golden text of Christian apologetics

**Jude 3-4** — charge to contend/battle for historic orthodox revealed Christian truth

**Acts 17:16-34** — apologetics in action

### 4. FOUR noted vocational Christian apologists

C. S. Lewis, Lee Strobel, Josh/ Sean McDowell, Paul Copan, Greg Koukl, Norm Geisler; William Lane Craig; John Ankerberg; Hanegraaff (Bible Answer Man); Matt Slick, Francis Schaeffer, Sproul, Ron Rhodes, Frank Turek, Peter Kreeft

### 5. FIVE potential benefits of Godly apologetics

**Can remove barriers to faith with evidence, lessening confusion and indifference:** 3000+ worldviews and over 19% not affiliated today.

**Can deter aggression:** New Atheism, anti-Christian bias of academia, media, films, TV.,

**Can preserve doctrinal purity:** watchdog against too much creativity in presenting age-old truths in relevant way, crossing the line..

**Can stem attrition:** 70%+ youth leaving church and adults deserting; ex-Christian websites.

**Can engender confidence:** fortify believers; vitamin pill

### 6. SIX super Christian apologetics resources

**BOOKS:** Mere Christianity (Lewis); Know Why You Believe (Little); Big Book of Bible Difficulties (Geisler); The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (McDowell); The Reason for God (Keller)

**INTERNET:** gotquestions.org, AiG (largest in world; see website); Greg Koukl on YouTube.

**PAMPHLETS & CHARTS:** Rose Publishing

**DVDs:** Lee Strobel set: Case for Christ/Faith/Creator, Why 66? B.Edwards; Illustra / Randolph

**CONFERENCES, STUDY CENTERS, SPEAKERS**  
Southern Evangelical Seminary; L'Abri

**CURRICULUM:** Strobel; Ligonier, AiG for all ages; DYF (Bird), Cold Case Christianity (JWW)

**7. SEVEN simple sample answers to tough Qs**  
**God doesn't exist!** How can you be certain? Do you have universal knowledge?

**Jesus was just a good man.** Jesus claimed to be God (John 5:18). Are chronic or pathological liars moral men? C.S. Lewis (poached egg)

**Didn't just men write Bible?** How do you explain prophecy? The Bible's unity?

**How reliable is the Bible?** How do you test the reliability of any ancient literature? Internal, External, MSS (number and proximity). Chart.

**If God is good why evil?** What is good? 9/11; Is it good for police to shoot hostage-taker? Is it good for a man to cut a baby with a knife? Was it good that Jesus died? Is it good that there is evil? (Sproul). Temporarily Out of Order.

**Isn't evolution scientific?** What kind of science — historical or empirical? Is science really just philosophy and faith at times?

**All truth is relative.** Is that statement itself relative?

### 8. EIGHT great ways to promote apologetics

**Small group study:** SS, midweek, neighborhood

**Stock personal/church libraries;** support with \$

**Plan a retreat:** senior saints, men's, couples

**Assign questions:** who learns most? students?

**Sponsor youth:** Summit, WV Academy

**Social Media:** Like/share links: FB, Twitter.

**Stage a drama:** Dramatized Apologetics

**Support apologists with \$\$ and prayer:** ANE!

# Apologetics Survey

Prepared & conducted by Daryl E Witmer

Please check only one box per category.

## 1. Gender

- Male
- Female

## 2. Age

- 12 or under
- 13-19
- 20-39
- 40 or over

## 3. Church Attendance

- regular
- sometimes
- not at all

## 4. Religion

- No religion
- Evangelical Christian
- Non-Christian religion: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Today' Date \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

7. City & State (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Vocation (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

9. The word apologetics means

- "to be sorry for"
- "to reply or answer"
- "to win a debate with superior logic"

10. Holiest city of the Islamic faith

- Jerusalem
- Mecca
- Medina
- Damascus
- Teheran

11. Which term is *not* associated with the study of earth origins and the development of life?

- Big Bang Theory
- Punctuated Equilibrium
- Biorhythms
- Catastrophism
- Darwinism

Assign the letter corresponding to one of the following faith systems to the personalities listed below. Use each letter only one time.

a) New Age, b) Buddhism, c) Jehovah's Witness, d) Mormon, e) evangelical, f) Scientology, g) New Atheism, h) Christian Science, i) Baha'i

- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ Sam Harris
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_ Deepak Chopra
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_ Joseph Smith
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_ Siddhartha Gautama
- 16. \_\_\_\_\_ Charles Taze Russell
- 17. \_\_\_\_\_ L. Ron Hubbard
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_ John Piper
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_ Baha'u'llah
- 20. \_\_\_\_\_ Mary Baker Eddy

21. How did Adam & Eve have grandchildren if Cain and Abel had no one to marry? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Christianity has its roots in which religion?

- Anglican
- Shinto
- Roman Catholicism
- Judaism
- Protestantism
- Gnosticism
- Southern Baptist
- Babylonianism

23. Sikhism is primarily based in what country?

\_\_\_\_\_

24. Name of the Hindu Scriptures.

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Cite one evidence of the Bible's Divine origin.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Pick the word most closely associated with...**

26. Theodicy

- study;  certainty;  Divinity;  suffering

27. Teleological

- telescope;  design;  logic;  technology

28. Deity

- Jefferson;  God;  Mythology;  Angelic

29. Agnostic

- riddle;  uncommitted;  acrostic;  ignorant

30. Relativism

- magnetism;  worldview;  Einstein;  close

**The following are opinion questions; please use the “uncertain” box as little as possible.**

31. Do you believe in absolute truth, that what is true is true universally; that an assertion and its opposite cannot both be true at the same time?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

32. Do you believe that God used (macro) evolutionary processes to create world?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

33. Do you believe that God created the world in six 24-hour (solar) days?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

34. Is receiving Christ the only way to Heaven?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

35. Is there a literal hell that will last forever?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

36. Do you believe that the Bible is without any error in the original manuscripts?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

37. Can Christianity be scientifically proven?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

38. Since so many awful things happen in the world (cancer, AIDS, child abuse, war), do you believe that God’s power and ability to correct these things may be limited?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

39. Have you ever led anyone to faith in Christ?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

40. Do you feel able to intelligently answer most questions that you are asked about Christianity?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

41. Those never hearing of Christ will be damned.

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

42. Do you believe that dinosaurs actually existed?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

43. Do you believe that Noah’s flood was global?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

44. Jesus actually did walk on water.

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

45. Do you understand *and* can you defend the doctrine of the Trinity to your own satisfaction?

- Yes
- No

46. Copyist errors exist in some Biblical MSS

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

47. Have you ever read a book by Lee Strobel?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

48. Do you know any non-Christians *personally*?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

49. Are you certain that you’ll get into Heaven?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

50. Are you glad to be finished this survey?

- Yes
- No
- Uncertain

# Apologetics Survey

Prepared by Daryl E Witmer

## ANSWER KEY

9. The word apologetics means

- "to be sorry for"
- "to reply or answer" • correct: Greek=*apologia*
- "to win a debate with superior logic"

**1 Peter 3:14-17: 14)** *But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, 15) but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16) and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17) For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.*

10. Holiest city of the Islamic faith

- Jerusalem • *claimed visit, Night Journey (Isra)*
- Mecca** • *born here in 570 AD — correct*
- Medina • *Mohammed died here in 632 AD*
- Damascus
- Teheran • *capital of Iran*

**ISLAM:** *In 2010 1.6 billion (23.4%) of world's 7.2 billion vs. evangelical Christians 4.1%; tie by 2050?*

**FIVE PILLARS:** *Fasting (Ramadan), pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), prayers (Salah), almsgiving (Zakat), and the profession (Shahada): "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet."*

11. Which term is *not* associated with the study of earth origins and the development of life?

- Big Bang Theory
- Punctuated Equilibrium • *Stephen Jay Gould*
- Biorhythms** • *recurring physiological cycles*
- Catastrophism
- Darwinism

*Cite evidence: design, empirical vs historical*

a) New Age, b) Buddhism, c) Jehovah's Witness, d) Mormon, e) evangelical, f) Scientology, g) New Atheism, h) Christian Science, i) Baha'i

- 12. \_\_\_\_\_ Sam Harris • '67; *neuroscientist, author Four horsemen: Dennett, Dawkins, Hitchens*
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_ Deepak Chopra • *Indian-born M.D.*
- 14. \_\_\_\_\_ Joseph Smith • *1805-1844; vision 1827 >15 million world; BOM: Lehi, Laman, Nephi*
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_ Siddhartha Gautama • *circa 563 BCE*
- 16. \_\_\_\_\_ Charles Taze Russell • *born 1852*
- 17. \_\_\_\_\_ L. Ron Hubbard • *3/1911 — 1/1986*
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_ John Piper • *theologian, desiringgod.org*
- 19. \_\_\_\_\_ Baha'u'llah • *born 1817; Baha'i founder*
- 20. \_\_\_\_\_ Mary Baker Eddy

21. How did Adam & Eve have grandchildren if Cain and Abel had no one to marry? Where did Cain get his wife? *Land of Nod! • Read "...[Adam] had other sons and daughters." Genesis 5:7*

22. Christianity has its roots in which religion?

- Anglican
- Shinto
- Roman Catholicism
- Judaism**
- Protestantism
- Gnosticism
- Southern Baptist
- Babylonianism

23. Sikhism mostly based in what country?: *India 9th largest world religion. Scripture: Guru Granth Sahib • Stress truth, oppose castes. God: unknowable.*

24. Name of the Hindu Scriptures: *Vedas*

25. Cite one evidence of the Bible's Divine origin *Fulfilled prophecy and thematic congruency (unity)*

**Pick the word most closely associated with...**

26. Theodicy

- study;  certainty;  Divinity;  **suffering**

27. Teleological

- telescope;  **design**;  logic;  technology

28. Deity

- Jefferson;  **God**;  Mythology;  Angelic

29. Agnostic

- riddle;  **uncommitted**;  Acrostic;  **ignorant**

30. Relativism

- magnetism;  **worldview**;  Einstein;  close

# WORLDVIEW INVENTORY

Prepared by Daryl E Witmer

Rev. 2304028

Please check only one box per item in item #s 1-4

## 1. Gender

- Male
- Female

## 2. Age

- 12 or under
- 13-19
- 20-39
- 40 or over

## 3. Church Attendance

- weekly
- sometimes
- not at all

## 4. Religion

- Evangelical Christian
- Other religion: \_\_\_\_\_
- Uncertain

5. Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

7. City & State (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

8. The word *worldview* derives from the German term *weltanschauung* and refers to the framework through which a person views interprets \_\_\_\_\_.

9. A worldview has no direct bearing on one's:

- personal ethics
- religious beliefs
- cosmology
- dreams
- genome

10. Which is *not* a major religious worldview?

- Pantheism
- Deism
- Polytheism
- Marxism, CRT, wokeism
- Atheism
- Panentheism
- Finite Godism
- Theism

11. Which of the three major faith families listed below includes a belief system, or a group of adherents, *not* actually part of, or a derivative of, that family of faith?

- Eastern:** Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers
- Secularist:** Gnostics, Atheists, Naturalists
- Abrahamic:** Christianity, Judaism, Islam

12. Which of the following *opposes* absolute truth?

- Absolutist Oppositional Analysis (AOA)
- Conceptual progression
- Heisenberg's uncertainty principle
- Postmodernism
- Metabolism

Assign the letter of the sacred text corresponding to the appropriate religion listed in #s 13-20.

a) Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures;  
b) Hadith; c) Vedas; d) Doctrine & Covenants;  
e) Torah; f) Dianetics; g) Tripitaka; h) Tao Te Ching

- 13. \_\_\_ Mormonism
- 14. \_\_\_ Hinduism
- 15. \_\_\_ Christian Science
- 16. \_\_\_ Scientology
- 17. \_\_\_ Buddhism
- 18. \_\_\_ Daoism
- 19. \_\_\_ Islam
- 20. \_\_\_ Judaism

21. What do humanism, materialism, and naturalism all have in common? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Who is *not* associated with an Eastern view?

- Eckhart Tolle
- Marianne Williamson
- Oprah Winfrey
- Deepak Chopra
- Kitab-i-Aqdas
- Sri Ravi Shankar

23. A viable belief system must submit to at least three tests: logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevancy.

- T
- F
- Neither true or false

24. Which is *not* relevant to any worldview?

- Who am I?
- What follows death?
- Where is the nearest McDonald's?
- What is reality?
- What is moral?

25. The \_\_\_\_\_ worldview is exclusivist, warns of a real hell, *and* cannot be empirically proven.

Pick the term most closely associated with...

26. Syncretism

- symbolic view
- fused faith
- man-made

27. Unity School of Christianity

- Christ-spirit
- seminary
- Sun Myung Moon

28. *Sola scriptura*

- Luther
- Opera
- single biblical MSS
- Pope

29. Name the religions associated with at least four of these icons.



30. The Prophet

- 8-Fold Path
- 5 Pillars
- 10 Commandments
- Nietzsche



# Worldview Inventory Answer Key

Prepared by Daryl E Witmer

**READ Acts 17:16-34.** What does Paul do *before* he preaches his famous sermon here on Mar's Hill?

**Hint:** check verses 23 and 28. He studies the culture, examines the objects of worship in Athens, and quotes (having *read*) their poets. **The point is:** Tune in before you speak out. Get informed.

8. The word *worldview* derives from the German term *weltanschauung* and refers to the framework through which a person views or interprets **the world**, or **reality**.

9. A worldview has no direct bearing on one's:

- personal ethics — *determined by basis for morality & values*
- religious beliefs — *more specific expression of worldview*
- cosmology — *study & view of history & function of universe*
- dreams — *Hindu would not dream of eating a hamburger*
- genome — *set of chromosomes in a living organism*

Geisler & Watkins: "What is it that everyone has, no one can live without, every important decision in life is made with, and yet most people do not even know they have it?"

**A worldview.** It is what makes a world of difference in how you view your life in the world. It is the framework through which you see and the basis on which you decide. A world view is not put on the bed stand at night. One even dreams within the framework of his worldview."

10. Which is *not* a major religious worldview?

- Pantheism: *God is all*
- Atheism: *no God exists*
- Deism: *God not involved*
- Panentheism: *God-Mind in all*
- Polytheism: *finite gods*
- Finite Godism: *weak, limited*
- Marxism, CRT, wokeism
- Theism: *infinite personal separate political social ideologies, movements*

11. Which of the three major families of faith listed below includes the name of a belief system or group of adherents *not* actually part of, or a derivative of, that family of faith?

- Eastern:** Hindu, Buddhist, New Age, Wiccan, Paganism
- Secularist:** *Gnostics (dualistic belief), Atheists, Naturalists*
- Abrahamic:** Christianity, Judaism, Islam

12. Which one of the following *opposes* absolute truth?

- Absolutist Oppositional Analysis (AOA) — *made up term*
- Conceptual progressionism — *another made up term*
- Heisenberg's uncertainty principle — *quantum physics*
- Postmodernism

Dwight Oswald says: "Modernism was the era prior to the mid-20th century that supported concept of absolute truth, objective reasoning, and rational thinking. Postmodernism is a reaction to modernism. Claims that truth for each person is based on their own personal perspective and experiences, which are shaped by culture and history. So it denies objective universal truth and emphasizes that which is experiential, mystical, and individual. All things for the postmodernist are relative. Truth for one is not necessarily truth for another. Postmodernism is marked by the rejection of reason, e.g. synthesis, anti-logic. Spawned anti-jokes: *What's green and has wheels? Grass. I was joking re: the wheels.*

- Metabolism — *chemical processes inside living organism*

Assign the letter of the sacred text which corresponds to the appropriate religion listed in #s 13-20.

- a) Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures;
- b) Hadith; c) Vedas; d) Doctrine & Covenants;
- e) Torah; f) Dianetics; g) Tripitaka; h) Tao Te Ching

13. **d** Mormonism

14. **c** Hinduism

15. **a** Christian Science

16. **f** Scientology • 8 M

17. **g** Buddhism • *Buddha's sayings*

18. **h** Daoism • *founded by Lao-Tzu*

19. **b** Islam • *sayings of Mohammed*

20. **e** Judaism • *first 5 Hebrew books*

21. What do humanism, materialism, paganism, and naturalism all have in common?

**All are atheistic; no God, only chemicals.**

22. Who is *not* associated with an Eastern worldviews?

- Eckhart Tolle: *New Age*
- Deepak Chopra: *Indian MD*
- Marianne Williamson
- Kitab-i-Aqdas: *Baha'i bible*
- Oprah Winfrey
- Sri Ravi Shankar *Indian guru*

*Baha'i was founded by The Bab on October 20 1819. Baha'i is an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam. Baha'ism numbers over six million adherents worldwide. It is headquartered in Haifa, Israel, but has presence in over 230 countries and territories.*

23. Any viable belief system must submit to at least three tests: logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevancy.

- T
- F
- Neither true or false

24. Which question is *not* relevant to any worldview?

- Who am I?
- What is reality?
- What follows death?
- What is moral?
- Where is the nearest McDonald's?

25. The **Christian** worldview is exclusivist, warns of a real hell, and cannot be empirically proven.

*Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him..."*

**Pick the term or name most closely associated with...**

26. Syncretism

- symbolic view
  - fused faith
  - man-made
- Smorgasbord of world religions; patched together like a quilt.*

27. Unity School of Christianity

- Christ-spirit
  - seminary
  - Sun Myung Moon
- Founded by Charles Fillmore in 1889. Christ-spirit = principle of the spiritual Christ (Gnostic), and God is defined as a force or energy, not a personal being. Daily Word, Wee Wisdom.*

28. *Sola scriptura*

- Luther
- Opera
- single biblical MSS
- Pope

One of 5 Reformation solas (*sola Christus, soli deo gloria*)

29. Name the religions associated with at least four of these icons. *Clockwise:* Christianity, Islam, Sikhism (5th largest religion), Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism



30. The Prophet

- 8-Fold Path
- 5 Pillars: Mohammed
- 10 Commandments
- Nietzsche — nihilism

*Fasting (Ramadan), pilgrimage to Mecca, prayers, almsgiving, and the profession (Shahada): "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." 1.9 billion — almost 1 in five people.*

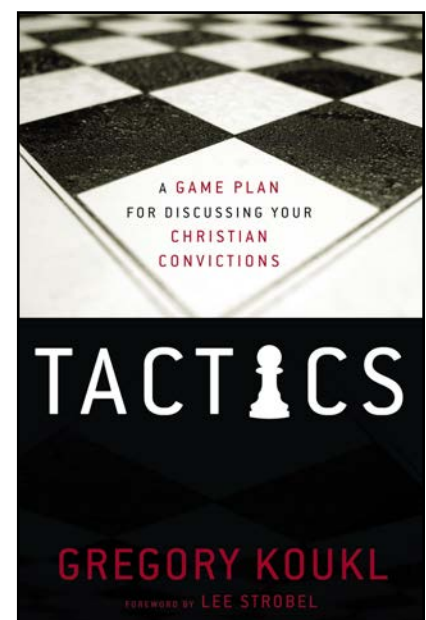
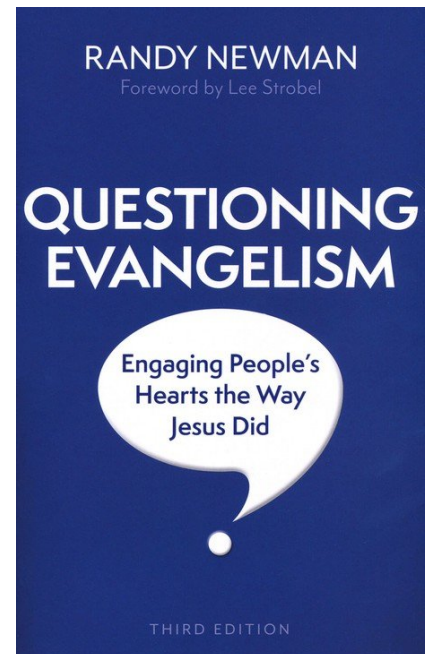
# TACTICAL APOLOGETICS

**Tactical apologetics** involves answering questions *with* questions that encourage people to discover their own truth — rather than to spiel forth canned lines. This particular approach is based on principles advocated by **Randy David Newman** in his best-selling *Questioning Evangelism*, and by **Greg Koukl** in his classic book *Tactics*.

Newman points out, for example, that Jews (including Jesus) have long since tended to answer questions with questions, such as is illustrated in this humorous little exchange: **“How are you today?”** “Compared to who?” **“How’s the family?”** “Who wants to know?” **“How about lunch out today?”** “How could I refuse?” **“Well, then, how about if I pick you up at Noon? Will you be ready on time?”** “Have I ever been on time?” **“Why did I bother to ask?”** “How should I know?” **“Listen, why do you always answer my questions with questions?”** “Why not?” **“There you go — another question!”** “What if no one ever asked any questions?” **“How can I answer that?”** “How should I know?”

This technique is also sometimes referred to as Rabbinical Dialogue or the Socratic Method, i.e. Socrates. And it can work with evangelism and apologetics. ***Questioning Evangelism*** (Third Edition), ***Engaging People’s Hearts the Way Jesus Did***. © Kregel Publications (January 2023). The Amazon reviews says: “A perennial best-seller, this third edition includes both revisions of current chapters, such as an expanded discussion on LGBTQ+ issues and the debate on transgenderism, and new chapters that ponder issues such as science and suffering.”

And the tenth anniversary edition of Greg Koukl’s ***Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions***, © 2019 Zondervan, 288 pages, is a long-tested and proven tool for practicing apologetics in a feasible and productive manner. As of April 2023 this book had received a solid 5-gold-star Amazon rating by 3,782 reviewers! Rick Carver was very good at teaching this approach at many of our AIIA seminars throughout New England over the years — always with great success. Those in attendance found it interesting and helpful. We’d highly recommend this resource.

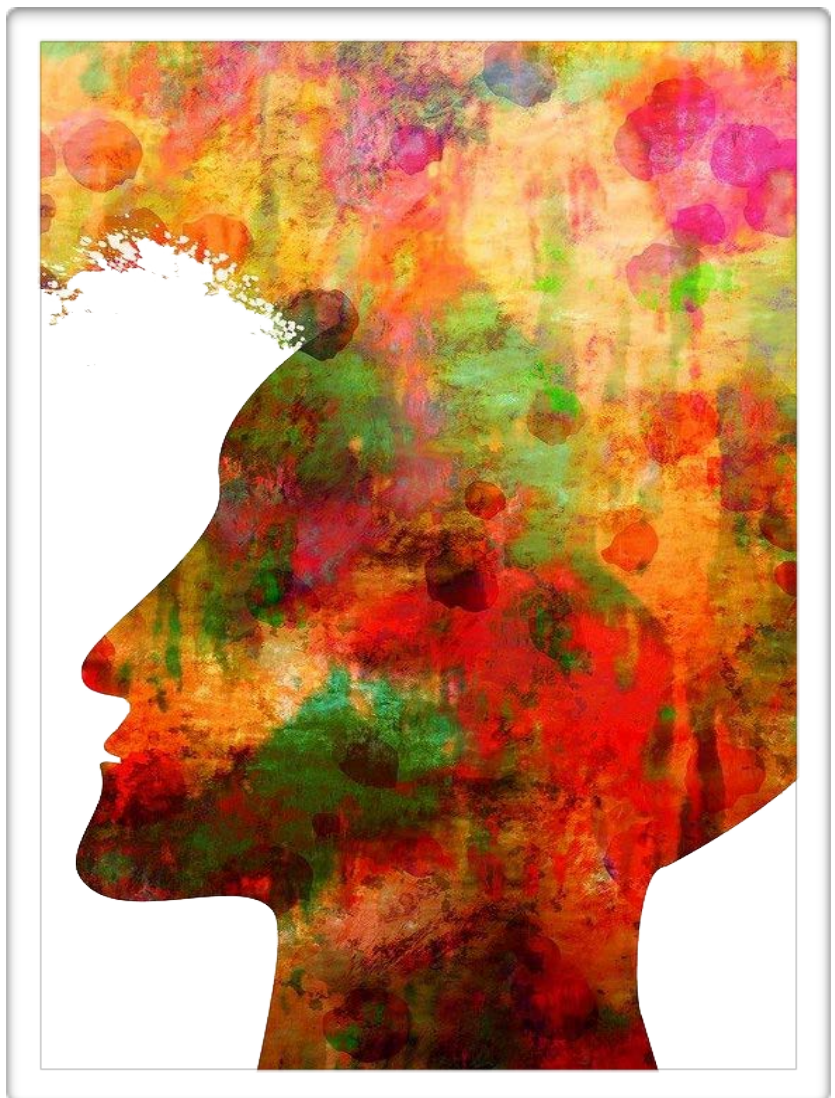


# MISSION FIELD OF THE MIND

## The Increasingly Critical Case for Christian Apologetics in Our Time

**Workshop Notes**  
developed by  
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*With ideology replacing geography as the primary defining ground of where the gospel most needs to be shared, the implications for evangelism and pre-evangelism in this third millennium are considerable. Here's how to maintain a relevant and strategic witness for Jesus Christ in the days ahead.*



## Distribute . . .

- Great Commission Continuum Charts (see page 28)
- Workshop worksheet/outlines

## Introductions . . .

- to workshop leader
- to sponsoring ministry
- to workshop outline (as follows)

## Workshop intro...

The content of this workshop and your worksheet are based on a seven-point outline that uses seven one-syllable questions as correspondent tags for the seven subtopics that we'll be examining — What, Who, Where, Why, How, Which, and When — each of which and all of which I'll be elaborating on as we proceed, rather than taking time to do so twice.

So — seven questions, seven points, then your questions, a few answers, and we're done.

And I should mention that because so much of the material that we're covering is very complex, I would prefer that you hold any really difficult questions until after I leave — which means that we'll probably be able to conclude even earlier.

With that, if you're ready, let's get underway with question and defining point #1, which is:

## Q#1 — WHAT?

**What is this workshop about anyway? What are we really here to talk about?**

Probably **the simplest answer to that question is**, "We're here to talk about the **Great Commission**." We're here to talk about obeying, and encouraging obedience to, the marching orders issued to us by our Commander-in-Chief — the Lord Jesus Christ — 1,924+ years ago in such a text as Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**Without that Great Commission of our Lord it's not very difficult to realize that there would be no mission, no missionaries, and no mission field — of the mind, or of any other sort.**

But the fact is, we **do** have a commission, and we **do** have a great "charge to keep" —in the words of that grand old **Charles Wesley** hymn: "A charge to keep have I, a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky."



The entire process of "fitting souls for the sky," which we commonly refer to as Christian discipling — that is, **teaching** others not just what Christ has commanded, but to actually *observe* whatsoever things Christ has commanded — is a process which begins with our attempt to creatively **influence** and **persuade** other individuals to the Person of Christ Himself.

It's a very fascinating thing to do a word study on the term "persuade" in the New Testament, and to note that this was really the Apostle Paul's chief vocation in life — to win men and influence people to commit their lives to Jesus of Nazareth as Almighty God incarnate and as savior of all who will choose to believe.

But the point here is, just as the work of discipling begins with the challenge of persuasion, so the Great Commission, which is precisely that — to go into all of the world and make disciples — necessarily begins with evangelism, or pre-evangelism, which is precisely where effective Christian apologetics comes into the picture.

All of this is presented in the form of a graph for your visual benefit on the handout chart entitled "The Great Commission in Process" which you hopefully received upon arrival.

### **Present and review the Great Commission continuum chart.**

So to sum up our answer to the question "What?"— this workshop is really, primarily, about effectively practicing the incipient phases of the Great Commission. And in the context of this generation, our primary intent in this workshop is to set out what we believe is an increasingly critical case for the practice of Christian apologetics by all believers to all men and women in this new millennium.

Yes — we would say that doing so is critical for the sake of our culture.

Chuck Colson in his book *How Now Shall We Live?* writes: "If our culture is to be transformed, it will happen from the bottom up — from ordinary believers practicing apologetics over the backyard fence or around the barbecue grill."



We would say that it's also critical for the sake of the Church.

My friend Bob Pardon, who has faithfully served for years as Director of the **New England Institute for Religious Research** (NEIRR) based in Lakeville MA says: "Large segments of the Church of Jesus Christ are increasingly swimming against a riptide of growing subjectivism, and if the Church does not make a concerted effort to counter those currents with a Biblically trained laity it is in danger of being swept away." He then referred to the infamous 'Attleboro MA cult' as a warning of what can happen when there is an absence or neglect of sound, determined Biblical teaching and doctrine."

**But our ultimate motivation for evangelizing and engaging in the work of persuading others to Christ goes even beyond transforming the culture and defending truth, to the eternal salvation of men and women and, for that matter, beyond even the salvation of men and women to the eternal glory of our Lord, which should hopefully always be at the root of all else that drives us.**

## Q#2 — WHO?

**To whom is this workshop primarily addressed? That is, to whom does the Great Commission primarily apply, and to whom are those to whom it does apply to go?**

Again, the Scripture in such places as Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 is explicit — Jesus' charge to make future disciples was directed to *all* of His disciples — then and now.

It was expected of everyone choosing to follow Jesus that they follow Him publicly, and then go on to be a public witness for Him, for the truth which He taught, and for the values He espoused. To be a public witness for Christ was never intended to be an elective — it was, and still is, an arrant charge. **These were marching orders for every soldier of the cross, of every conceivable rank and file.**

Today, perhaps more than at any other time in history, it is vital that we come back to this, and underscore it. Because over time there has evolved in the Church an unBiblical distinction between the clergy and the laity, the pastor and the people, the "professional missionary" and the so-called "regular" home-based witness.

**Ephesians chapter 4:1-2 inverts that false distinction by declaring that the pastors and the teachers and the preachers in a local church are actually to be equippers of the saints, because it is the saints themselves who are to do the work of the ministry.**

So instead of this huge congregational crowd sitting up in the stands cheering on a few key leaders, pastors, and missionaries who are running around down there on the playing field, often burned out from trying to carry the full weight of the Great Commission themselves, it's the leadership of the Church who are to be up in the stands cheering on the rest of **the people of God who are down there on the playing field** of real life, sharing Christ in the trenches, and persuading folks from every walk of life to follow Him.

**We are *all* to be apologists! And we might rightly consider every individual whom we ever meet as a potential candidate for the Kingdom.**

In other words, we are *all* to be making disciples. We are *all* to be evangelizing. We are *all* to be persuading. **We are *all* to be apologists!** Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8, and 1 Peter 3:15 are all fully applicable to **every** believer — in fact, now more than ever — for reasons which will hopefully become even more clear as we proceed.



**Hugh Hewitt** in *The Embarrassed Christian* says this: "Theology was not intended for the seminaries [exclusively]. Apologetics certainly wasn't. Both were intended for all believers. Their fall into desuetude is so complete that the recapturing of theology and apologetics [will] require a major effort."

So once again, it's the whole gospel through the whole Church for the whole world. **Every individual who does believe** is to go to **every individual who might believe**. And while we should always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading us to particular people at particular times, we might rightly consider every individual whom we ever meet as a potential candidate for the Kingdom — for God is, after all, not willing that any should perish and may well have elected to salvation the individual with whom you'll be talking later today.

The circle to whom we reach out, therefore, is very wide. It really includes all men and women and boys and girls. But out of that larger circle we may choose to target several smaller circles, depending on the gifts, training, and background which we or our church can bring to the task. Three specific groups seem to merit particular priority in our day:

**1. Our Youth.** Unless our children know the answers to some of the tough questions that are being posed in regard to Christian faith these days, or at least know that such answers exist, they're very likely going to very quickly wilt the moment that they leave home base. In May of 2016 Barna Research revealed that three-quarters of Millennials (74%) now agree strongly or somewhat with the statement, "Whatever is right for your life or works best for you is the only truth you can know."

**2. Academia.** The so-called intellectual elite. The intelligentsia. The thought-makers and the trend-setters of society, quite often found on our university and college campuses. **The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer**, whom *Time* magazine once called "a missionary to the intellectuals" demonstrated repeatedly and effectively the inevitable effect of philosophy on the arts, on culture, on morals, and on every other strata of society. If the financial wizards of the world are able to recognize the reality of what they call trickle-down economics, we ought not to have a difficult time noting the reality of trickle-down truth. **T.A. Green** once referred to how "the academic community's interpretation of facts inevitably finds its way into the intellectual food chain, effecting our young and — I presume— all of the rest of us as well, sooner or later."

**3. The Media** — from the news industry to Hollywood. We very often grumble a great deal about the effect of Hollywood and the liberal media on us, while we are simultaneously doing almost nothing to influence them. **Michael Medved** once said, "Most movie-makers assume a patronizing attitude toward religiously committed people because they know so few of them personally. A 1982 survey . . . showed that only 4% attend church or synagogue regularly, vs. 20%-40% [of the general populace]." **John Leo** of *U.S. News & World Report*, noted years ago that "...so few editors and reporters seem to [even] know anybody who is anti-abortion..." Richard Harwood corroborated with those remarks: "Journalists," he said, "...don't [even] know anybody who is part of the anti-abortion movement."



**Going into all the world (Acts 1:8) should include our reaching out to develop personal friendships with those in the media and film industry whose work does not always suit us very well.**

### Q#3 — WHY?

**Why is the subject of this workshop so relevant right now, in this third millennium? Why is the mission field of the mind such a critical issue today?**

This really brings us to the heart of our concerns today.

People have always come to faith in different ways. Some have come as the result of a major crisis in life, some in response to an emotional appeal, some through a more intellectual approach, and still others — perhaps most others — simply through the influence of parents, family tradition, and culture.

In the past 75 years there has been a marked and growing change in this latter category — that is, in the demographic of those who would typically have come to faith through the influence of family and culture.

There used to be a certain homogeneity of faiths and worldviews directly correspondent to almost any given geographic locale, anywhere in the world, and there were clearly a few locations, particularly here in the West, where a predominately Christian consensus seems to have played a fairly major role in the propagation of the Christian faith. A lot of folks seem to have been moved by God's Spirit to faith in Christ at least in part through the prevailing, and assumedly defensible, worldview of their fathers and forefathers and forefathers before them.

But that scenario is changing at breakneck speed, and has really already changed. Instead of an homogeneity of Christian faith here in the West, we are finding a marked diversity of belief in even some of the most unexpected and remote corners of what would formerly have been considered “Christian turf” or the “Bible belts.” Even in our own rather isolated little region of north central Maine, for instance, without much effort and within a 100-mile radius, you can find many varied faiths — from Baha'ism to Jehovah Witnesses to Universalism to Wiccan belief to Islam to Spiritualism.

**When I was a teenager, my home church in the Bible-belt of Lancaster County Pennsylvania, had a huge map of the world on the wall with a caption underneath it that read, "The field is the world. Go ye."**

In other words, the mission field was out there or over there somewhere, because this was home base, home base was predominately Christian, and the world out there or over there was not. And that was a fairly accurate assessment at the time. You could match geography and ideology almost always one-for-one, anywhere in the world. **No longer.**

**Today, when it comes to defining the mission field, nonChristian ideology is not as correspondent with geography as it once was.** The implications for evangelism and pre-evangelism are considerable. We'll see why in just a bit. But first, let me try to make this point a little more forcibly by way of illustration.



America is a classic example of what we're talking about here. Fifty years ago, when it came to missions, America was clearly the sending nation. Missionaries were people who were recruited here, trained here, consecrated here, and sent from here — all to serve somewhere "over there." Missionaries always went "over there" somewhere. To repeat — such is no longer the case.



In an article entitled *Is America a Mission Field?*, **Woodrow Kroll** has written: "The sending nation, the launching pad for world evangelization, has itself become a vast mission field with a severely weakened operational base."

Seminary professor **George Hunter** has publicly stated that America has become "the largest mission field in the western hemisphere." The whole map of the Christian world has substantially changed, he says, noting that Uganda now has a higher percentage of professing Christians than America.

In his work, *The Growth of Non-Christian Religions 1900-2000*, **Justin Long** states: "From 1900-2000 Christianity has never once exceeded the global population growth rate. Islam, on the other hand, outpaced world population growth handily. Hindus are clearly also outpacing the population growth rate."

**Bill Sullivan**, with the Church of the Nazarene, said this in July of 2000: "We have seen America go from over 200 years of a basically Christian culture to a post-modern culture that rejects the foundational principles of Christianity. What was once a 'Christian nation' has become significantly non-Christian and even anti-Christian. Now other nations are sending missionaries to America and are challenging our understanding of the term 'mission field.' We [had] always thought that the mission field was 'over there.'"

Some time ago the trustees of Denver Seminary concurred that America has entered a post-Christian era, and that from now on they would "train future pastors as foreign missionaries assigned to an alien culture."

Why is this workshop particularly relevant at this particular time? Why is the effective application of apologetics so much more critical here in America today? In short, it's because times have changed so radically. **No longer can you equate the mission field with some particular language, nation, or location** here, there, or anywhere in the world.

To say that the mission field is in this location to a greater degree than another location, or that the mission field is represented by one nation to a greater extent than another nation, is no longer always realistic.

**The mission field today is probably most accurately defined as the mind and intellect of every individual who is not yet a Christian — no more, no less.**

## Q#4 — WHERE?

### Where do we go to practice Christian apologetics?

If the mission field is no longer always, necessarily, primarily determined by geography, e.g. "deepest darkest Africa," the jungles of Ecuador — **then to whom shall we go?**

The first way of answering this question may be to simply say, "Wherever God calls us to be an apologist at any given time." The account of Philip's totally unplanned but very effective apologetics ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, and the conversion of Dionysius and Damaris through Paul's apologetics witness at the Athenian Areopagus in Acts 17 (where Paul incidentally had absolutely no desire to be at the time), both underscore the vital importance of allowing God to be our appointment secretary when it comes to practicing apologetics. It's not so much where or when I plan to do this that really matters. **The itinerary and the agenda must ultimately be left to the Spirit of God.**

But another way of answering this question is to say, "Well, we need to go to the **minds** of men and women." Because that's the only certain place where we'll consistently find a mission field every time these days. Whether it's the mind of a neighbor, a co-worker, a public official, a member of the media, or someone in our social club, an African tenant, a communist, a Jamaican, a tribesman from Papua New Guinea, someone who speaks Nepali, Taiwanese Mandarin, or Swahili — **we must go to the mind of the unbeliever.**

And of course the **mind** of the unbeliever is always wherever **the unbeliever** happens to be at the time, which is not necessarily where **we** may happen to be, or had planned to be, or would even want to be. The one thing that is quite certain is that the effective apologist is going to have to extend himself or herself somewhere beyond the convenience zone. As you know, the Gospel begins with g-o, "Go."

**Let me reiterate the thesis of this workshop — that "to go" to the mission field no longer necessarily implies significant geographic, transcultural, international travel. The mission field of the mind is often remarkably nearby.**

**Missiologist James Reapsome** once wrote in his mission newsletter *Pulse*: "America's religious pluralism is not (an) issue in our mission executive suites, because we are still quite firmly wedded to the notion that missionary work is done 'over there.' Therefore we send our people and our money to evangelize people outside the U.S. **Meanwhile, like two trains passing in the night, those people are coming here by the millions. Of course, we ought not to shut down our trains going overseas, but at least we should start a few rolling into the cities and towns across America where God has brought the mission field to us.**"



A study some years ago by the Barna Research Group showed that, on any given Sunday, **hundreds of thousands of adults who are atheists or agnostics attend Christian churches right here in America.** On a typical weekend, about 2% of atheists and agnostics attend Christian church services. On Easter Sunday 1999, 12% of that segment — about a million and a half adults — attended a Christian church service. Atheists and agnostics often have a dormant interest in faith, as evidenced by the three out of ten who say “religious faith is very important” in their life today. Barna says, “The challenge is to make the Christian faith relevant, practical and comprehensible to **them.**”

In short, **the mission field of the mind** exists just as certainly here in America today as it ever has in some other nation or culture overseas — which is precisely what we mean when we say that America has now also become a critical mission field — an observation being made with increased emphasis today by many who should know.

An editorial in *Moody* magazine some time ago said this:

**"We must take the Gospel into all the world, including the pluralistic world of modern America."**

A number of years ago, a headline in *The Beacon*, at the time a major publication of the **Evangelical Free Church of America**, read: "The Mission Field Comes Home: Foreign Missionaries Returning to Home Field."

**David Ramsdale** once wrote in *Beyond*, "To most American churchgoers the 'mission field' is some far-off place on another continent, in some jungle somewhere. It's time to change our definition. The mission field greets every one of us whenever we step out of our homes. Once upon a time, America was considered a Christian nation. No longer. Now third-world countries send missionaries to the United States. The mission field is not some place else. It's where you and I live every day. Just look around you."

Many non-Christian faiths have long since come to recognize significant potential for themselves in such a view. Before ever coming to America himself, Sun Myung Moon had sent what he called missionaries, or New Pilgrims, to this nation.

In an article some years ago in *Missiology* magazine, **Wilbert Shenk** wrote: "...missionary religions have been winning adherents beyond their traditional cultural homelands. Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims no longer hesitate to engage in missionary witness worldwide, especially in the West."



Consider the long-term influence of teachers from the East on the minds of Americans. According to Barna, in 1999, 11% of Americans now believe that God is represented by a state of higher consciousness. Missiologists and mission agencies now concur that the mission field of the mind is alive and well today, right here in America.

Statistics have convincingly documented that assessment for years now. Did you know that even more than a decade ago approximately 80% of Americans, or 195 million, were unchurched? . . . that **about 80% of American churches had plateaued or were declining in number?** that, according to Gallup, North America was the third largest mission field in the world, following China and India? that North America was the only continent where Christianity was not growing in numbers? that for every new church that is planted in the USA these days, many others close their doors? Those statistics have only grown worse.

## Q#5 — HOW?

### Exactly how do we go about fulfilling our commission?

#### 1. Listen.

Based on the example of Paul's ministry in Athens, which is detailed in Acts 17:16ff, we must first stop to listen and learn the language of the culture. You could never be a good missionary to France without first learning French. Notice how Paul observed, examined, and quoted the Athenians before he ever opened his mouth to preach Christ.

From *Evangelism & the Postmodern Student*, an article handed to me many years ago by **Doug Palmeter** of CCCI (now Cru) in Orono, Maine: "Christians must be the best listeners. Christians need to help form and mold the discourse on campus. They need to be asking questions such as . . . What do you mean? How do you know? Why do you think this is true? So what? How does this affect your life? Can you really live as if this is true?"

#### 2. Respect.

According to 1 Peter 3:15 we are to be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in us to all of those who ask, but we are to do this gently and with respect. We are to do this with a great deal of respect. Again, from *Evangelism & the Postmodern Student*: "Christians, do you really care? Do I want to be like you? Is your evangelism simply **proclamational**, or is it **incarnational**?" Why should anyone care how much we know until they know how much we care?

#### 3. Contend for orthodoxy.

According to Jude 3 we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered. According to Titus 2:1 **we are to speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine**. The early Church (see Acts 2:42) gave what appears to have been a conspicuous priority to the Apostles' doctrine. Like a football player racing with the ball toward the wrong end of the field, many churches today may tout a full schedule, be active, growing, receiving much attention and many accolades, and even demonstrating many other characteristics of a healthy church — yet still incur the rebuke of Christ if the doctrine is unsound. **See Revelation 2:19-20.**

#### 4. Engage secular minds.

We must find creative ways to engage the minds of our generation. Minds that are so often numb with television and video images, with rap, with illogical postmodern nonsense, with cheap commercials, with Hollywood drivel, with talk shows by the dozen, and with lots of other forms of noise, noise, noise. In a world where so many bodies are fit but so many minds are fat, we must help people to think again.

**Erwin W. Lutzer**, in his book, *Christ Among Other gods*, says:



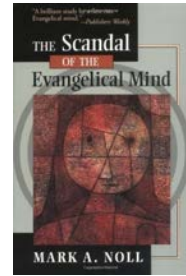
**"We cannot concede the ideological war to a Babel of conflicting voices. We must press the claims of Biblical Christianity. We must encourage people to investigate Christ's claims and ask hard questions."**

## 5. Encourage Christian thought.

We must also encourage believers to think, and that includes our young people.

**Dr. Robert Morey** says that at a certain Bible College where he once took classes he was actually encouraged to pray that God would take away his questioning mind and give him a believing heart. How awful.

**Charles Malik** says: "The greatest danger besetting American evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism." Have you ever read **Mark Noll's** landmark text, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*?



One noted apologist put it this way: "We don't realize how the world has sapped our ability to think. We move impulsively and more by feeling, desire, and ambition. The simple art of working an argument out from premise to conclusion has been lost. And unless we in the Church go back and teach our junior highers, for example, to think again, we will lose them before they are in senior high. They may be cultural Christians, but they will not have a true allegiance of mind to a belief."

**In Matthew 22:37 Jesus tells His followers,  
"You shall love the Lord your God with all  
your heart, soul, and *mind*."**

## 6. Understand the times.

We must understand the times and the trends of the times in which we live, as per 1 Chronicles 12:32. We must understand the monistic and syncretistic thoughtforms that are all around us today. We must be familiar with the thinking of those whose works are influencing our culture, and we must be wise to the subtleties of their misuse of Christian terminology. We must be able to explain what **Neale Donald Walsh** means when he talks about salvation, what **Deepak Chopra** means when he refers to God, what *A Course in Miracles* means when it mentions sin, what so-called **progressive Christians** mean by the term "holiness," and on whose authority **Sarah Young** literally quotes the words of God when He supposedly "speaks" to her. We should become more familiar with the names and publications of those perpetrating false doctrine.

## 7. Emphasize apologetics.

We must encourage a new emphasis on apologetics **for every believer** — in our churches and in our homes. We can do this by scheduling seminars, conferences, and speakers able to address subjects of an apologetics nature. We must bring more apologetic resources before our people, into our church libraries, and to our pulpits.

Jim Reapsome, in a 1996 issue of *Pulse*, wrote: "Apologetics seems about as respected in world missions today as my old Mac Plus computer." "The devil has cleverly worked overtime as an angel of light to create false philosophies and religions." "If we do not attack these intellectual and religious challenges head-on, we will look around one day and wonder what happened to our missionary vision."

## 8. Use technology creatively.

We must use every technological tool at our disposal today — from websites and smart phones to social media of every sort — in an effort to creatively and effectively communicate God's truth to a deceived world.

## 9. Dialogue.

We must seek direct contact and dialogue with members of the media, filmmakers, academics, and other cultural shakers and movers of our day. Dialogue Dinners and Roundtables have a great deal of potential to build communication and relationships.

Tony Campolo said this many years ago: "In this pluralistic society, we should always be ready, like Paul, to engage competing philosophers on their own turf." "I believe that if we fail to engage in respectful dialogue with non-Christians, we will only end up 'preaching to the choir' Actually, I prefer secular audiences when I speak."

According to the December 12, 2000, issue of *Religion Today*, a Swiss theologian had very effectively presented the truth of Christ to New Agers. Daniel Hari, 35, took the gospel to those in Western Europe's post-Christian society. New Agers are looking for God, but in all the wrong places, Hari said. Their beliefs are generally drawn from eastern faiths, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, and include tapping into a 'higher power' for physical healing and direction in life. Adherents number in the millions, and the market for New Age books, seminars, and talismans — such as crystals — has skyrocketed in the past decade. Hari designed a short course to introduce Christian concepts to New Agers. The course, entitled "Jesus of Nazareth in the Current New Age" attracted such people because it is presented in the terminology of the New Age rather than traditional Christian lingo. Topics included "Astonishing Experiences with the Higher Consciousness," "Healing with Jesus Energy," and "Jesus as Spiritual Master and Healer." Using New Age language and concepts was crucial to getting people to listen, Hari said. He also held those classes at New Age fairs where thousands of people gather every year, and he said that he hoped to bring the classes to the United States.

For many years now the AIA Institute ran ads in an almost exclusively New Age publication, *Spirit of Change* — distributed without charge in New England, and with a readership of approximately 200,000 at the time. We experienced some encouraging results, and we viewed it as just one more way to open doors between the truth of Christ and those who may not happen to encounter that truth in any other way.

## 10. Rethink the mission field.

We must forever get beyond the thinking that missions is only for "professional missionaries" who are going to some place "over there." We must realize that the mission field of the mind is **every**where that there are minds.



David McKenna, former president of Asbury Seminary, once said,

"The present situation in America requires that every church must be a mission station, and every Christian a missionary."

## 11. Pray for — and *simultaneously* press — all who are not espousing Christian truth.

We must fervently pray for, and unceasingly intercede on behalf of, those espousing non-Christian worldviews, **while at the same time pressing them** on the inadequacy of their worldviews. We must press them gently but firmly on whether their worldview can be lived out consistently, practically, and profitably in terms of character and quality of life.

For instance, we should press atheists to justify their position in light of all the lessons learned from the 70-year atheistic experiment and subsequent fall of the former USSR.

We should press those espousing Eastern worldviews on the practical social ramifications of monism and syncretism and polytheism in places like India and Bangladesh. How has Shintoism affected the suicide rate in Japan? Where is the evidence that non-Christian worldviews actually *work*?

### Who or what has changed human lives for the better?

Herb Vander Lugt once shared the following story: "Many years ago the head of a rescue mission in London accepted the challenge to debate a well-known skeptic, but with this condition — he said that he would bring with him 100 people who would tell how believing in Jesus had changed their lives for the better. He invited his opponent to counter with witnesses to the benefits of unbelief. On the appointed day the believer came with his 100. The skeptic never showed up."

## Q#6 — WHICH?

**Which resources are most practical and helpful in getting on with this initiative?**

Please refer to **Appendix 7** on **page 529** of this compendium for a list of leading apologetics resources. Many apologetics-related websites list great resources, e.g. Anchor New England.



## Q#7 — WHEN?

**When do we apply this? What's the timeframe here?**

In John 9:4 Jesus said, "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."

The New Testament uniformly engenders a sense of urgency when it comes to the matter of evangelistic missions. Paul wrote to the Romans (13:11), "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand."

Ephesians 5:15-16 "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil."

And in the next-to-last verse of the Bible (Revelation 22:20), Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."

**So our answer to any question about when a Christian believer should begin practicing apologetics is: "Yesterday, if not sooner!"**

## CONCLUSION

Within literally minutes of finishing my preparation of the notes for this workshop my eye caught the words to this prayer-poem, entitled *The Here and Now*, by **Sheila DePenning**.

Oh, use me, Lord, in Your great mission field.  
All that I am and have to You I yield.  
Just show to me the place that I must go  
The fullness of Your purposes to know.

And then His words came gently to my heart:  
"Dear child of Mine, when do you plan to start  
To heed My call to tell all men of Me?  
Where I have placed you now? Can you not see?"

Somehow it seemed much easier to say,  
"I'll serve You there, however far away."  
But God, in love and grace, would show me how  
He wants to use me here, and use me now!

The folks that work beside me every day,  
The friends I walk and talk with on the way,  
The souls I daily find myself so near,  
Oh, may His perfect love cast out My fear.

The task is hard, I have no strength of my own.  
But He has promised that I am not alone.  
"Oh, Lord, give grace these challenges to meet.  
Your mission field is ripened at my feet."



## DIALOGUE

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**SB:** What about you, Daryl? What practical meaning does this topic have for you?

**DW:** For years the **mission field of the mind** has *literally* been outside my front door.

**SB:** What do you mean?

**DW:** I mean that hikers and artists have walked right past AIIA's Study Center *daily*.

**SB:** And — what?

**DW:** Everyone has a worldview. So I ask people what they believe and we talk.

After hearing what they believe I am better able to introduce them to Jesus!

**SB:** You address people's thoughts and views. And you don't travel overseas to do so.

**DW:** Exactly. The mission field is more defined by ideology than geography nowadays.



# MISSION FIELD OF THE MIND

The Increasingly Critical Case for Christian Apologetics in Our Time

**Workshop Notes & Worksheet** • Developed by Daryl E. Witmer

*With ideology rapidly replacing geography as the defining ground of missions, the implications for evangelism and pre-evangelism in the new millennium are considerable. Here's how to maintain a relevant and strategic witness for Jesus Christ in the days ahead.*

## Introductions

### Q#1 — WHAT?

What is this workshop all about anyway?  
What are we really talking about here?

- G \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_.
- T \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_, P \_\_\_\_\_.
- Review **Great Commission** continuum chart
- Apologetics — critical for culture, for the Church, for the glory of God.

### Q#2 — WHO?

To whom is this workshop primarily addressed, and to whom are those to whom it is addressed to go?

- All — every soldier of the cross.
- Not an elective.
- Ephesians \_\_\_\_\_.
- We are *all* to be apologists.
- Matthew \_\_\_\_\_, Acts \_\_\_\_\_, and 1 Peter \_\_\_\_\_ are applicable \_\_\_\_\_.
- The circle to whom we reach out includes all men. But there are three groups that seem to merit special priority:

Our Y \_\_\_\_\_,

A \_\_\_\_\_,

The M \_\_\_\_\_.

### Q#3 — WHY?

Why is the subject of this workshop so relevant right now, in this third millennium? Why is the mission field of the mind such a critical issue today?

- No longer can we so simply and easily equate the mission field with \_\_\_\_\_.
- The mission field today is probably most accurately defined as the \_\_\_\_\_.

### Q#4 — WHERE?

Where do we practice Christian apologetics?

- Answer — wherever God calls us at any given time. See Acts 8 and Acts 17. The itinerary and agenda must be left to Him.
- We need to go to the minds of people. The **mission field of the mind** exists just as certainly here in America today as it ever has in any nation or culture overseas.
- Approximately \_\_\_\_% of American churches have plateaued or are in decline.
- Gallup: "North America is the \_\_\_\_\_ largest mission field in the world, following \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."
- For every new church planted in the USA these days, more churches close their doors.
- No one county in America has a greater % of churched persons today than it did a decade ago.

**Q#5 — HOW?**

**Exactly how do we fulfill our commission?**

- 1. L\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2. R\_\_\_\_\_.
- 3. C\_\_\_\_\_.
- 4. E\_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. E\_\_\_\_\_.
- 6. U\_\_\_\_\_.
- 7. E\_\_\_\_\_.
- 8. U\_\_\_\_\_.
- 9. D\_\_\_\_\_.
- 10. R\_\_\_\_\_.
- 11. P\_\_\_\_\_.

**Q#6 — WHICH?**

**Which resources are likely to be most helpful in getting on with this initiative?**

Consult online websites such as that of Anchor New England, the Lancaster Bible College Library site, the Sean McDowell website, or check out the **Compendium of Apologetics Resources** by Daryl E Witmer.

**Q#7 — WHEN?**

**When do we apply this? What's the timeframe here?**

The New Testament uniformly engenders

\_\_\_\_\_

John \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 13:11

Ephesians \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 22:\_\_\_\_\_.

The best time for a Christian believer to begin practicing apologetics is:

\_\_\_\_\_

# Encouraging Kids to Think Intelligently About the Faith

*Christian Apologetics for the Elementary Years*



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**A Seminar for Parents & Christian Educators**

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*Developed by Daryl E. Witmer*

**Distribute:** worksheets, *Fences of Love* letter

## Icebreaker

Read from *Children's Letters to God*

## Introduction to presenter

### Introduction to seminar

- Primarily directed to parents, homeschoolers, Christian educators, Sunday School teachers.
- Certainly it's important to teach children *what* to believe. But what about teaching them *why* what they believe is true? Are younger kids really ready for that? Isn't explaining and defending the Christian faith better left to teens and adults? This workshop answers such questions *and* offers practical help to Christian educators, homeschoolers, and parents about how to proceed."
- This seminar is outlined in five sets of five.

## **FIVE SPECIFIC REASONS why it is important that kids think intelligently about the faith.**

1. So that they will begin to glorify God early on in life by loving and enjoying Him with all their *minds*, i.e. Mark 12:30 "and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." **John Piper** says: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

Jesus is *the Truth* (John 14:6) and it was Him who once said, "...Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Jesus Himself, the Bible says, at a very age, "kept increasing in **wisdom** and stature, and in favor with God and men." Luke 2:51-52



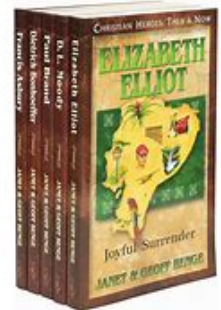
2. So that from the beginning of life they will begin to "own" (not just inherit) the faith for themselves (Romans 14:22), finding security in knowing that it's not just okay but even commendable to ask thoughtful questions about the faith, and that there really are good answers out there — answers to even the toughest questions. This in turn should serve to minimize the casualty and attrition rate of young people leaving the Church when facing opposition to the Christian faith begin — beginning even in elementary school, and through. Think of it as an inoculation.
3. So that they will be able to more effectively present and defend their Christian faith to other children (1 Peter 3:15), i.e. to equip them for effective Christian witness. The same principle that is true for adults also applies to children even if at a simpler level.
4. In order to lay a basis in childhood from which they will then later *continue* to effectively contend (take a stand) for the preservation and purity of the faith once delivered (Jude 3). Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:14-15): "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." An important base, direction, and momentum is to be established in childhood.

5. Encouraging kids to think intelligently about matters of faith will serve to preserve morality and prevent **truth decay** over time (Matthew 5:13). The Church has too often been behind the curve in challenging the minds of our **youth** with spiritual **truth**. It's never too early to start. **Vladimir Lenin** once said: "Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted." Former Soviet leader **Nikita Khrushchev** used to complain about the "babushka problem" that thwarted the USSR's efforts to indoctrinate its youth with anti-religious propaganda. He was referring to the faithful moral influence of the all the grandmothers (babushkas) who would counter the Communist Party's attempts to indoctrinate the kids during the day when the kids would return home every night.

Encouraging kids to think intelligently about matters of faith will serve to preserve morals and prevent **truth decay** here in America (Matthew 5:13).

### FIVE PRACTICAL TIPS for encouraging kids to think intelligently about the faith.

1. **Curtail (or better, get rid of)** the television, video games, and electronic devices. You've got to clear the ground before planting a crop. Does such an approach sound too radical? Well, many attempts to simply, judiciously, limit these things have failed. Radical ends require radical means.
2. **Read widely to children.** Tap into a **broad range** of intellectually-stimulating material, beginning early on, e.g. classic literature, Pilgrim's Progress, Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, J. R. R. Tolkien; history, Little House on the Prairie, biographies, poetry, pictorial Bibles, Bible Story books, and even the Readers Digest. Expose kids to various musical genres, including classical, the Boston Pops, folk, etc. Listen critically with them, and discuss movies and news sources (e.g. Public Broadcasting, National Geographic) whose values and slant may not necessarily always be in line with the Christian worldview. Create your own story-time hour. If a publisher is reputable, well reviewed, and their products supervised, certain CDs and mp3s and podcasts may be appropriate. There are some excellent Christian story CDs available, e.g. Focus on the Family, **YWAM Christian Heroes** series.
3. **Provoke thought in young minds.** Prepare provocative dinnertime topics (age 5 on): evolution, capitalism, defining beauty, infinite divisibility, and more. The Family **Talking Point** card set can be helpful with this. Offer incentives for memorizing Scripture, or writing about some real-life experience, or critiquing or writing a letter on an assigned topic.
4. **Inculcate in children the importance of asking questions of others.** Teach them how to throw the conversational ball back and forth. Promote research on their part. I remember once engaging with my first grade teacher about why wind is always air but air is not always wind. I was on the wrong side of the debate, but the point is — she allowed (and even encouraged) me to engage on the matter. I had a Sunday School teacher who asked probing questions. I also recall **Art Linkletter**, a TV personality who listened to kids speak their minds on his TV show. Often those little ones would say some pretty outrageous things. But Linkletter never cracked a smile. He looked those kids in the eye and took them seriously. So they opened up to him.



5. **Pray fervently to God for your kids. Pray for them to:** a) develop wholesome friendships, 2) develop godly desires, c) be spared evil and be protected by God in all of life.

**The general idea here is** to create a disciplined yet happy environment (at home and at school) conducive to thought in general and a thinking faith in particular.

No doubt the single most significant factor in encouraging children to think intelligently about their faith is the **authenticity** of those guiding them in their own walk with Jesus. **Kids can smell hypocrisy ten miles off.**

No doubt the single most **significant** factor in encouraging children to think intelligently about their faith is **the authenticity of those guiding them** in their own walk with Jesus.

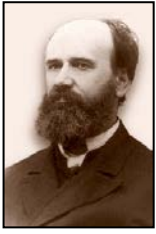
### **FIVE SIMPLE HELPFUL ANSWERS to questions kids might ask about the faith.**

1. **Who created God?** No one. *Then how'd He get here?* He was always here. God never had a beginning, like you and me. *I can't understand how that can be.* God's beginning is like a circle that has no end and no beginning. Can you tell me where a circle starts? **Psalm 90:1-2**
2. **How do we know the Bible is true?** It is from God. God doesn't lie. Also, the Bible itself claims to be true, and what it says has never been proven wrong. What it has predicted has always come true (which is not true of other religious books). **Micah 5:2**
3. **Will my pet go to heaven when it dies?** God doesn't tell us what happens to pets that die. He tells us that people live forever. But He created animals, He cares about them, and He very well might allow them in heaven for us to enjoy. We know that there will be horses in heaven (Revelation 19:11-4), so why not dogs and cats and hamsters?! But roaches?! **Genesis 1:25-27**
4. **Why does God give us so many rules?** To protect us from getting into trouble, and to keep trouble from getting into us. Also to teach us to seek His forgiveness when we break His rules. See *Fences of Love* letter on **page 171**. **Galatians 3:23-24**
5. **What if I told a lie and didn't know it was a lie? Would it still be a lie?** No. A lie is stating what you *know* to be false. But saying something false, even if you *don't* know it is false, can cause great damage. That's why it's so important to check facts. **Exodus 23:1; Proverbs 11:9-13**

### **FIVE INTERESTING EXAMPLES of kids who learned to think intelligently about the faith.**

**JESUS:** (Luke 2:40, 46) "And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in **wisdom**; and the grace of God was upon Him." "And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions." Let's pray and work for **well-rounded growth** in our young charges — physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.



2. **EUNICE:** Eunice was once Lois' kid. She loved Jesus. And Lois became a vital link between her mother Lois and her son, Timothy. **What would Timothy have ever been if it wasn't for Eunice,** under the influence of her mother, Lois, having first learned to think intelligently about the Christian faith? See 2 Timothy 1:5 (The Message): "...your honest faith — and what a rich faith it is, handed down from your grandmother Lois to your mother Eunice, and now to you!"
3. **ALBERT BENJAMIN SIMPSON (1843-1919):** son of a Scottish Calvinist deacon, was raised strictly, faked reading the Bible as a boy to avoid his father's spanking, but learned to love books. One day he discovered a book in his minister's library that "opened my eyes." He was converted on January 19, 1861, at the age of 17. A.B. Simpson went on to found the Christian & Missionary Alliance church. 
4. **MY YOUNG FRIEND BILLY:** grew up in a home where Christian faith was not professed, but rode his bike all alone to attend the church I served. He sat through the service and eventually came to receive Jesus as his savior. He served in the army in Iraq. Then he came home, got married, had a daughter, and has been active in missions and church work ever since — in local churches from Tennessee to Florida to Texas.
5. **FRANKLIN GRAHAM:** son of the famous international evangelist Billy Graham. Went through a period of rebellion (read *Rebel with a Cause*), but in large part due to the faithful influence of his mother and the authenticity of his father's faith, came back to his faith and has served as an evangelist ever since, as well as president of Samaritan's Purse, a large Christian charity that meets the needs of thousands experiencing physical calamity around the world.

What each of the **five individuals** in this **diverse sampling** have **in common** was the care and guidance of either **a parent** or **someone else** in their lives who encouraged them to ***begin thinking intelligently about the faith*** at an early age.

#### **FIVE GREAT RESOURCES for encouraging kids to think intelligently about the faith.**

1. **ONLINE: Kid Explorers:** the children's section of ChristianAnswers.net website; Eden Communications, Mesa AZ; great, doctrinally sound, safe web site featuring games, reviews, on-line coloring books, Q&A section, and lots more. Go to: <http://ChristianAnswers.Net/kids/home.html> • Other online resources for preteens and elementary students are listed on **Ratio Christi's website** at: <https://ratiochristi.org/blog/apologetics-resources-for-elementary-students/>
2. **BOOKS:** Here are a few of the many options to use with kids or to better equip parents and Christian educators: **801 Questions Children Ask About God** (Focus on the Family) • **Keeping Your Kids on God's Side** (Natasha Crain) • **Mama Bear Apologetics** (Hillary Ferrer) • **The Case for Christ for Kids** (Strobel) • **Cold Case Christianity for Kids** (Wallace).

3. **MAGAZINES, VIDEOS, PUZZLES:** Alpha Omega Institute website, Kids section. Explore many years of great newsletters for kids. <https://www.discovercreation.org/articles/kids-articles/> • Answers in Genesis website, Kids Answers section: <https://answersingenesis.org/kids/videos/>
4. **CURRICULUM FOR KIDS:** offering everything from DVBS to SS and homeschool material.  
**Answers in Genesis:** <https://answersingenesis.org/education/>  
**Deep Roots:** <https://www.deeprootsbible.com>  
**Anchor New England:** <https://www.anchornewengland.org>  
**Foundation Worldview on apologetics for early childhood (ages 4-8):**  
<https://foundationworldview.com/curriculum/early-childhood-worldview>



5. **TRAINING FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH KIDS:**

- Mama Bear Apologetics podcasts — <https://mamabearapologetics.com/listen/>
- Natasha Crain podcasts — <https://natashacrain.com/podcast/>
- Foundation Worldview webinars — <https://foundationworldview.com/webinars>



Questions & Answers • Response • Discussion

Closing Prayer

Dismissal



# Encouraging Kids to Think Intelligently About the Faith

*Apologetics for the Elementary Years* | **WORKSHEET** | Developed by Daryl E. Witmer

**Receive:** Worksheet and *Fences of Love* handout

Introductions

## 5 SPECIFIC REASONS why it is important that kids think intelligently about the faith.

1. So that they will begin to glorify, love, and enjoy God with \_\_\_\_\_ (Mark 12:30).
2. So that they will \_\_\_\_ and not just \_\_\_\_\_ the Christian faith for themselves (Romans 14:22).
3. So that they will be able to \_\_\_\_\_ their faith to \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Peter 3:15).
4. In order to lay a basis from which they will decide to \_\_\_\_\_ for the faith (Jude 3).
5. In order to preserve \_\_\_\_\_ prevent \_\_\_\_\_ over time (Matthew 5:13).

## 5 PRACTICAL TIPS for encouraging kids to think intelligently about the faith.

1. Get \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Read \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Provoke \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Inculcate \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Pray \_\_\_\_\_.

*Perhaps the single most significant factor in encouraging children to think intelligently about their faith is \_\_\_\_\_.*

## 5 HELPFUL ANSWERS to questions that kids might ask about the faith.

1. Who created God?
2. How do we know the Bible is true?
3. Will my pet go to heaven when it dies?

4. Why does God give us so many rules?
5. Would it be a lie if I said something that wasn't true *but didn't know that it wasn't true?*

## 5 INTERESTING EXAMPLES of kids who learned to think intelligently about the faith.

1. J \_\_\_\_\_.
2. E \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Albert \_\_\_\_\_.
4. My friend Billy \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Franklin Graham \_\_\_\_\_.

## 5 GREAT RESOURCES for encouraging kids to think intelligently about the faith.

1. **ONLINE:** Ratio Christi website • **Kid Explorers** at <http://ChristianAnswers.Net/kids/home.html>
2. **BOOKS:** 801 Questions Children Ask About God • Keeping Your Kids On God's Side (Crain) The Case for Christ for Kids (Strobel)
3. **MAGAZINES, VIDEOS, PUZZLES:** Alpha Omega Institute: <https://www.discovercreation.org/articles/kids-articles/> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/kids/videos>
4. **CURRICULUM FOR KIDS (SS, DVBS, more):** **Deep Roots** <https://www.deeprootsbible.com> See also at **Answers in Genesis** [http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/curriculum\\_info.asp](http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/curriculum_info.asp) • Anchor New England
5. **TRAINING FOR ADULTS TRAINING KIDS:** <https://mamabearapologetics.com/listen/> <https://foundationworldview.com/webinars> <https://www.anchornewengland.org>

Discussion • Questions & Answers  
Closing Prayer and Dismissal

## ICEBREAKER

# Children's Letters to God

From various public domain sources, including [bible.org](http://bible.org)

**Dear God,** If You watch me in church Sunday, I'll show You my new shoes.  
—**Mickey D**

**Dear God,** Did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident? —**Norma**

**Dear God,** Who draws the lines around the countries? —**Nan**

**Dear God,** Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't You just keep the ones You have now alive? —**Jane**

**Dear God,** I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that okay? —**Neil**

**Dear God,** What does it mean that You are a Jealous God? I thought You had everything. —**Jane**

**Dear God,** Did you really mean "Do unto others as they do unto you"? Because if you did, then I'm going to fix my brother! —**Darla**

**Dear God,** Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy. —**Joyce**

**Dear God,** It rained for our whole vacation and is my father mad! He said some things about You that people are not supposed to say, but I hope You will not hurt him anyway. —**Your friend** (but I am not going to tell You who I am.)

**Dear God,** Why is Sunday School on Sunday? I thought it was supposed to be our day of rest. —**Tom**

**Dear God,** Please send me a pony. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up. —**Bruce**

**Dear God,** My brother is a rat. You should give him a tail. Ha ha. —**Danny**

**Dear God,** Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother. —**Larry**

**Dear God,** I want to be just like my Daddy when I get big, but not with so much hair all over. —**Sam**

**Dear God,** I think the stapler is one of your goodest inventions. —  
**Ruth M.**

**Dear God,** I bet it is very hard for You to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it. —**Nancy**

**Dear God,** I would like to live 900 years like the guy in the Bible.  
Love, **Chris**

**Dear God,** We read Thomas Edison made light. But in school they said You did it. So I bet he stoled your idea. Sincerely, **Donna**



# Fences of Love



## A personal letter about **RULES** from Pastor Daryl ... to my young friend Lana.

Many years ago when I was serving as the pastor of the church she attended, a young girl — maybe age 12 or so — wrote me a letter asking why God has so many rules for people. She also wrote:

“And my parents also have so many rules. It seems so unfair because a lot of my friends’ parents let them do whatever they want to do. Doesn’t God want people to be happy and free and enjoy life?! Why should God and my parents have all these rules?”

On the next page is my answer to Lana.



**Dear Lana,**

When I was growing up, my family lived on the edge of my grandfather's farm. The farm provided pasture for about twenty-five cows. Each summer my brother and I would help my grandfather make sure that all his fences were working. **The fences kept the cows from getting at the corn in the field next to the meadow.**

Many times I would see the cows looking over the fence at the corn. That beautiful new corn must have looked very good to them. If cows could think, I'm sure that they would have been thinking, "Why does the old farmer always put up this fence? This fence spoils our fun. Without a fence we could go over there and eat all the corn that we'd want. We'd have a great time."

One day something very bad happened. The cows got out of their fence. They went straight into the corn-field. They ate corn, and more corn, and more corn. They ate so much corn they got sick and bloated.

Finally my grandfather saw what had happened. He called for me to help him chase the cows back into the pasture. Some of the cows were so full of corn that they got very very sick. My grandfather was even afraid that one or two cows might die that night from all the green corn with which they had gorged themselves.

If cows could think, that day they would have finally understood why my grandfather put up fences each year. It was because he wanted his cows to remain healthy — not because he wanted to spoil their fun.

Sometimes when I was a boy I wished that my parents didn't have so many rules. I remember saying to them one time, "Why does this family always have to have so many stinking rules? A lot of my friends don't have all the stupid rules this family has!"

But now I can understand that all the rules my parents had for me were like the fences that my grandfather had for his cows. Good parents always have rules for their children. They don't have rules to spoil their fun. They have rules to keep their kids safe and healthy.

What if there were no rules about how much candy a kid could eat? That kid might eat so much candy they'd get sick. What if parents let their kids go anywhere? Some parents do. They don't have many good rules for their kids. And guess what? Some of those kids have gotten into big trouble. Some have gotten into very dangerous situations. But their parents didn't even know about it. They weren't watching. They weren't around. They didn't care enough about their kids — and so there were no rules.

Rules are usually there to keep us healthy and safe. Bedtime rules, no-fighting rules, rules about helping around the house, rules about who you can play with, rules at the table (**manners**)— there are so many rules. **But rules are almost always there because somebody loves us.** Good rules make our better lives.

Did you ever think about how even your parents have to obey rules? There are rules about how fast they can drive, rules about where they can park a car, rules about how much tax they have to pay, rules about not disturbing the peace in their neighborhood, rules about how to take care of pets, and many other rules.

God gave rules to **all** people. He gave ten major rules. One of those major rules was that people are not to steal. Another rule was that people are not to tell a lie. **Telling a lie is an especially serious wrong.**

The **ten major rules** that God gave are known as the **Ten Commandments**. They're all listed in the Bible. And God's rules were given in love — to help people be safe and happy, and to help people know that they need God's forgiveness in Jesus, because no one has ever been able to keep all of the rules all of the time.

The next time that you feel like you're trapped by too many rules, try to remember what happened to the cows on my grandfather's farm. They broke through the fence. They broke the rules. And they got sick. Good and reasonable rules are often there because somebody loves you.

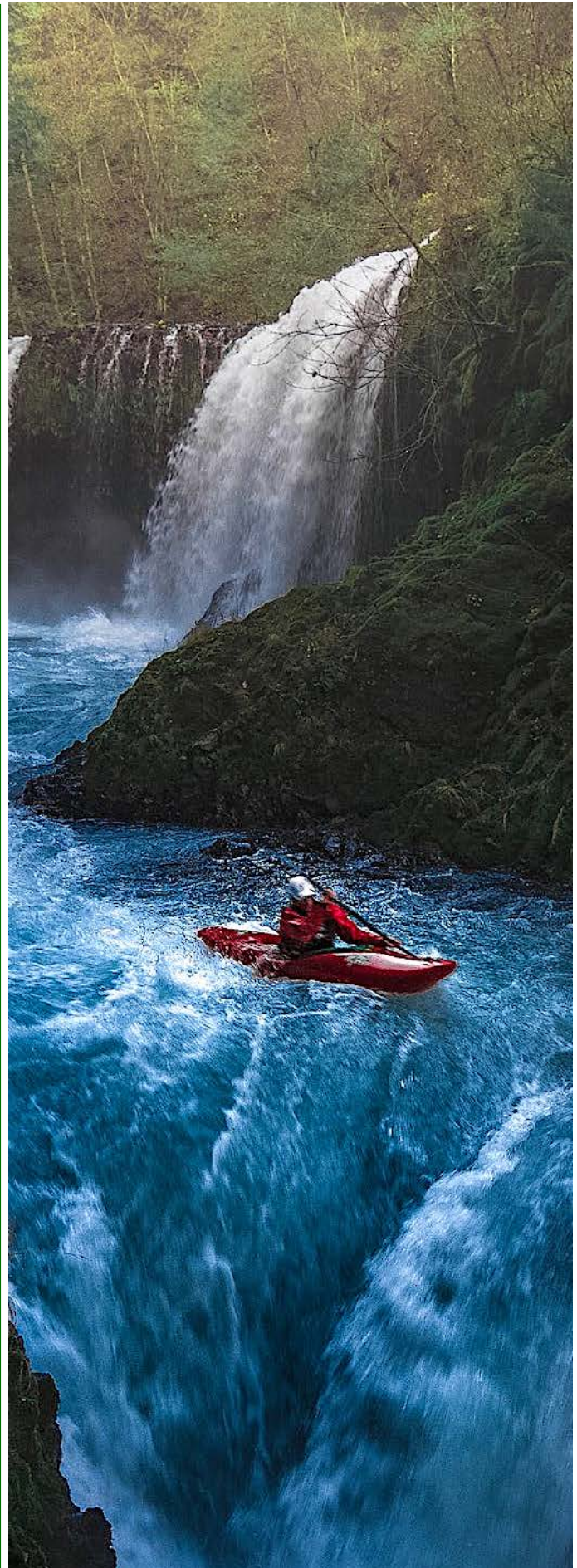
**Your friend,**

*Pastor Daryl*

# SURVIVAL TRAINING FOR TEENS

Equipping  
our youth  
to maintain  
**spiritual  
vitality**  
in the  
secular  
wilderness

A Seminar  
for Parents  
& Christian  
Educators



## INTRODUCTIONS

—**to seminar participants:** Name, home town, church. Why are you attending this seminar?

—**to seminar leader:** Name, background, real-life credentials as a current or past parent of teens.

—**to sponsoring agency**

—**to this seminar:** The following material is drawn from three sources: **a)** God’s Word in Deuteronomy 6:20-25, 7:1-26, and a variety of other texts; **b)** my personal experience as a parent, and **3)** the wise counsel of Godly individuals. I’m prepared to present you with nine principles here that I’m convinced are each critical, relative to the challenge of training our youth to not only survive but thrive, spiritually, in today’s pluralistic, postmodern, secular world.

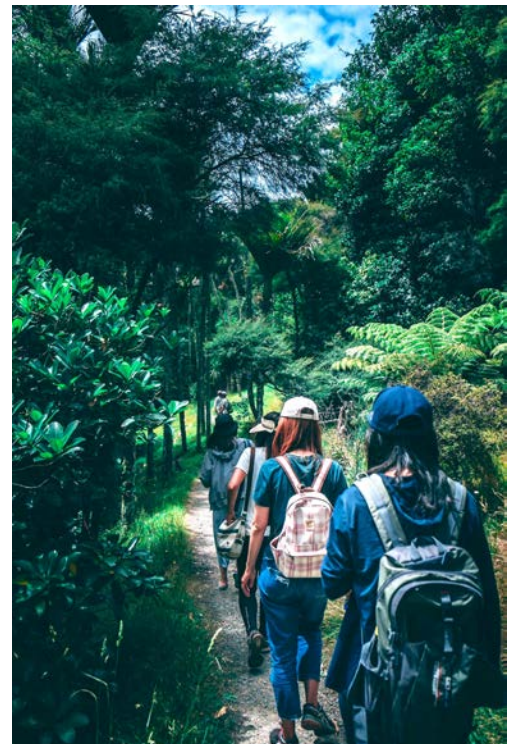
## PRINCIPLES

### 1. Salvation

- **Share** your testimony about how, where, and when **you** came to Christ.
- **Introduce** and **invite** youth to receive Jesus as Savior. **Surviving the wilderness of secularism** is only certain if they **come to know the Guide**. I personally read a book to our three sons when they were very young (*Winky: Lost in the Rockies*, by Ken Anderson) that told the story of a young boy accepting Christ. Then I asked them if they would like to do the same. All three did (our youngest son at a separate time). That book may not be age-appropriate for teens but the idea is to **invite** your kids to **come to Christ** — whether by means of a book, CD, DVD, or Christian youth camp. There are many exciting stories about noted Christian leaders (e.g. D.L. Moody) coming to Christ at the **invitation** of their Sunday School teacher. Underscoring the importance of public baptism and profession of faith should be incorporated in this invitation.
- **Emphasize** the importance of actually **repenting** of sin and praying to **receive** Jesus as Savior.
- **Impose** church attendance until at least Grade 10 (if at all possible), then phase down the requirement with creative incentives to continue regular attendance through high school.
- Read Deuteronomy 6:21

### 2. Discipleship

- **Turn off** the TV and e-devices and **turn on** helpful resources, i.e. quality Christian books, CDs, videos, Christian teen gatherings, conferences, or alliances (such as **Young Life** in high school), conversations, and speakers. This policy should be **imposed** in the early teen years and strongly **encouraged** in older teens.
- **Develop a balance** between creative incentive (weekly allowance, TV and e-device time) and imposed standards to bring about healthy priorities when it comes to how teens in our homes or churches spend time, and to what they give attention. By the late teenage years (16-19) this balance must increasingly lean toward granting more and more independence.
- **Invest effort** in making dinner conversations productive. Plan topics ahead of time. Ask provocative thoughtful questions. The **Talking Points** (Family Edition) card set is a great resource now available for this purpose. Of course, this all assumes that there are shared family mealtimes.



- **Arrange** for teens to benefit from a more formal one-on-one discipling relationship with either yourself or a mature reputable older individual in your church or circle of acquaintances.
- **Understand** that our youth do not always so much need to know what all of the answers **are** (when it comes to challenging Christian issues and the charges made by skeptics), as they need some solid assurance that there actually **are reasonable answers** out there — and where to go to look for and discover them.
- Read Deuteronomy 7:4

### 3. Expectations

- **Set the bar high.** Communicate lofty noble spiritual expectations of teens *from early on*. Reading the biographies of noted Christian missionaries and leaders and speaking highly of those who have served Christ at great sacrifice will go a long way in this direction. Such resources are available from YWAM (<https://www.ywampublishing.com>), Focus on the Family, other Christian ministries, and at <https://www.christianbook.com>
- **Give teens a reputation to live up to** *from early on*. There's nothing wrong with encouraging some self-fulfilling prophecy. Eric Berne once wrote a book entitled *What Do You Say* about script theory — that a child will play out the script that adults write for them in their earliest years. For instance, kids referred to (even jokingly) as “what a little devil” may actually live that out as a reality. My high school Guidance Counselor signed my yearbook: “To our future M.D.” because I was aspiring to go into medicine at that time. In the end I didn't become a doctor but I never failed to be encouraged by her confidence in me. My grandmother had me preach her a sermon when I was probably only five or six years old, then told me that I was “a great preacher.” **I did become a preacher** (and I hope — in the eyes of God, at least — a great and faithful one). But the point here is to let teens know that you believe they will think rightly, act wisely, and do well — making a real difference for the glory of God — in their lives.
- **Offer consistent and appropriate** (not overblown) affirmation for any and all of their wise choices in recognizing and standing up for absolute truth, morals, faith, and reason.
- **Emphasize the honor** of being part of the solution in this world — rather than being part of the problem — and of making the world a better place.
- Deuteronomy 6:23

### 4. Authenticity

- **Understand the absolutely critical necessity of authenticity** (vs hypocrisy) in your own spiritual life — of living consistently before your teens in the privacy of your home, inner rooms, and personal walk of faith. I remember seeing my mother reading her Bible before the sun came up on dark Winter mornings before school. That left a deep impression on me, as did seeing my parents both on their knees praying when I passed by their bedroom on occasion.
- **Know that a worldview** is often very likely as much caught as it is taught.
- **Realize that kids can spot phoniness** ten miles off. Be genuine in your walk with Christ.
- Is **Jesus** real in your life? Remember that we're not promoting religion, but relationship.
- Read from Deuteronomy 7:6

Reading the biographies of noted Christian missionaries and leaders and speaking highly of those who have served Christ at great sacrifice will go a long way toward communicating lofty noble spiritual expectations in teens.



## 5. Encouragement

- **Come alongside a young person** and ask thoughtful questions. Listen carefully to what they have to say (or not say!), and about how they're feeling. Teen suicide is on the rise and it is not always so easy to detect the markers leading to it. But listening carefully is always important and can potentially make a big difference at times when your teen is down and not feeling so good about himself or herself.
- **Encourage thinking, questioning minds.** Many young people learn best by questioning. *Honest questioning ought never be discouraged.* Dr. Robert Morey says that at a Bible College he once attended, he was actually encouraged to pray that "God would take away his questioning mind and give him a believing heart." How tragic. We must guide curiosity, not quench it.
- Ephesians 6:14 says, "Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with *truth*..." We have the truth, so we have nothing from which to run. The truth will set us free when confronting error.
- **Attempt** to provide simple, intelligent, relevant answers to every question that a teen asks.

## 6. Exposure

- **Attempt to instill** in any youth that may be in your charge an understanding of the secular mind. Churches, Christian schools, and homes should be promoting the importance of this principle. *Understanding the times* is a phrase drawn from 1 Chronicles 12:32, which refers to certain men of Issachar "who understood the times" and had a "knowledge of what Israel should do..."
- **Our walk in this world must be informed.** We cannot simply "hole up" in our safe little church communities. We should rather seek to know what the world believes and how best to respond to it. This will require, at least to some extent, exposure to the world of nonbelievers and how they think. I had a Sunday school teacher who once took our class on a "field trip" (with parents' permission, of course) to a Roman Catholic Church service. We then discussed what we had seen and heard during class the following week. What an eye-opener for me, having always only ever attended my small Mennonite church.
- **Of course, there must be some limits to this exposure.** We don't have to remove the cover on a sewer to know that it stinks. But teens really do need some degree of exposure to secularism if they are going to stand up to secularism. The key here is **controlled** and **supervised** exposure, not unbridled participation in secularism. The Christian publication (magazine and online) *World* (<https://wng.org>) has for many years modeled this balance quite effectively with their book and movie reviews and the culture section of their magazine and website.

Teens need some degree of exposure to secularism if they are ever going to stand up to secularism. The key here is **controlled** and **supervised** exposure.

## 7. Engagement

**We need to engage nonbelievers.** Not to be best friends with them (James 4:4) or to altogether avoid them (Acts 1:8). We should be infiltrating secularism, not totally isolating ourselves from it. Although we are not to be *of* the world, we are called to be *in* the world, and to go *to* the world, and to dialogue *with* the world about the Gospel of Christ. This will never happen if we are isolated. One downside of the Christian school movement is isolationism, which can breed naiveté. When I was a teen I attended a public high school while many of my teenage church friends attended a Christian high school. As a Christian I was challenged by one teacher to represent the Christian side on certain matters when debating in my Problems of



Democracy class. I was put on the spot! I also avoided drinking at high school parties and deferred from some forms of dance. All of this was awkward at the time, but I believe that it better equipped me (and more effectively equipped me than many of my friends who attended a Christian school) to take an informed and tough stand when I found myself in secular company later in life. Of course today the public school environment entails issues and pressures not even imaginable sixty years ago. So I understand that having teens attend a public school system today *may* not be wise or feasible. Nevertheless, the principles here are worth considering.

- **Encourage your youth** to be appropriately assertive in taking the initiative to advance Christian thinking and values. The best defense is often a good offense.
- **A great discipling ministry** years ago taught kids to **respectfully** ask their evolutionary science teachers in the public school four questions: **1)** What do you mean by that?, **2)** How do you know that to be true?, **3)** What difference does it make, **4)** What happens if it's wrong?
- **Our ultimate goal with teens** is not just that they *survive*, but actually *thrive* as effective witnesses for Christ in a secular world. Romans 8:37 says, "But in all these things we **overwhelmingly** conquer through Him who loved us."
- Read Deuteronomy 7:1 and Deuteronomy 7:5

## 8. Discernment

- **Let's caution our teens** that there really are "ungodly people" (Jude 4) and "wicked forces" (Ephesians 6:12) in the world, and even operating in the Church, these days. We must not be gullible. We must not be fooled. We must keep our eyes open. We must be discerning.
- **Let's remind our young people** that sincerity does not always necessarily equal truth. Some of the most spiritually deluded people in the world may also be thoughtful, kind, gracious, moral, selfless, and very sincere and well-intended.
- **1 John 4:1** says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."
- **Ephesians 6:12** "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."
- **Let's caution the youth in our charge** to be careful to identify the true enemy and not mistakenly destroy the very folks we want to win to Christ, i.e. our fellow Christians with whom we may have some relatively minor doctrinal differences.
- Read Deuteronomy 7:5 and Deuteronomy 7:26

Let's remind our young people that **sincerity** does not always necessarily equal **truth**. Some of the most spiritually deluded people in the world may also be thoughtful, kind, gracious, moral, selfless, very sincere and well-intended.

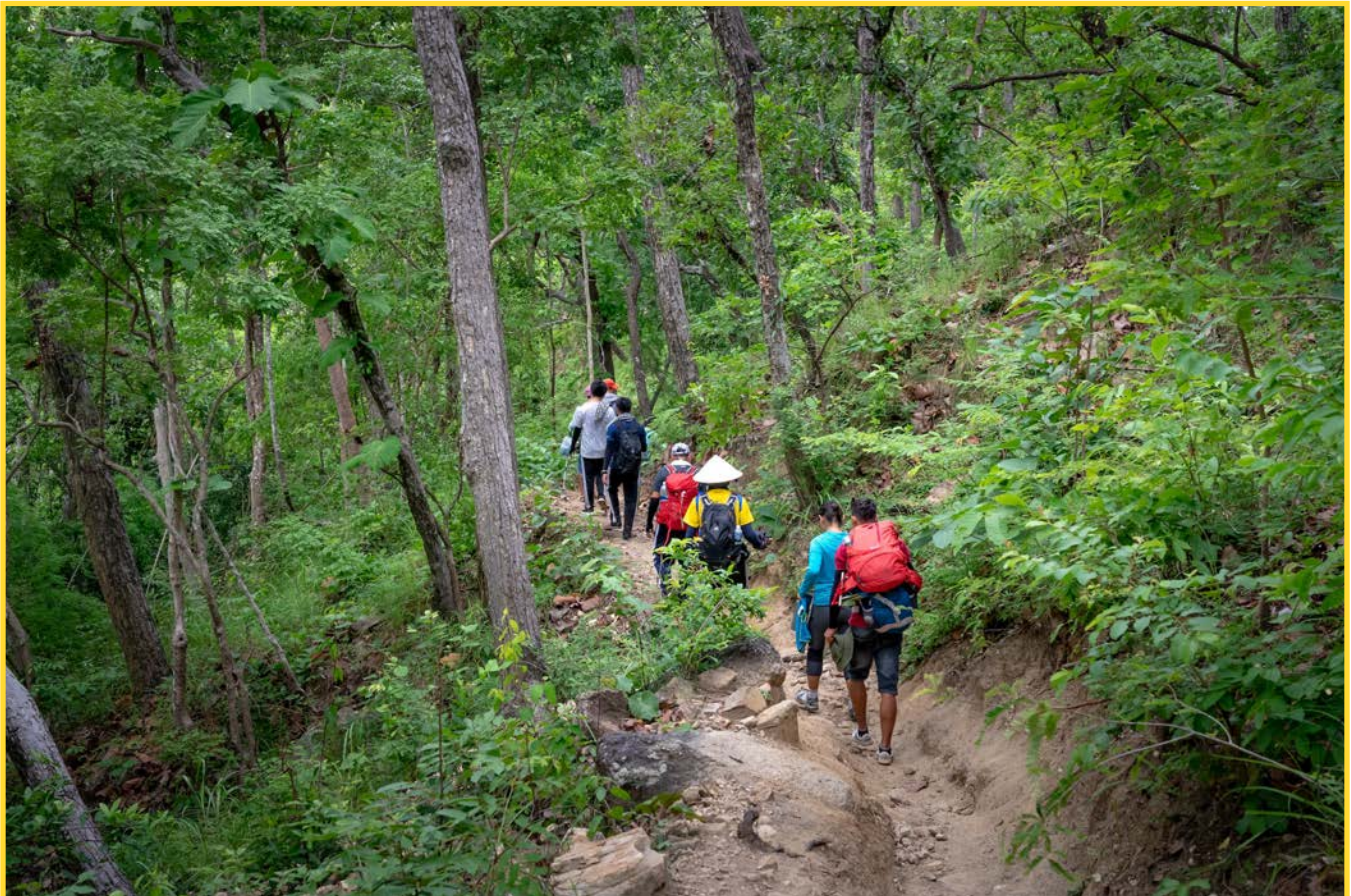
## 9. Goodwill

- **Admonish your teens** to show respect, civility, and kindness to all men — to "honor all men." (1 Peter 2:17). Encourage them to attempt to demonstrate goodwill toward even adversaries.
- **Teach them to affirm others.** That almost always builds a dynamic into the relationship to one's own advantage, as well. If we're convinced of the truth and the security of our status in Christ, we need not feel easily threatened.

- **I have developed** friendly and respectful relationships over the years with Unitarian Universalists, Wiccans, Baha'is, Hindus, and even a man who called himself a theist, but not a follower of Christ as revealed in the Bible. I've learned a lot from them all, and from many others. And I believed that I've challenged their presuppositions and worldviews in the process.

## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, RESPONSE

## CLOSING PRAYER & DISMISSAL



# SCRIPTURAL TEXT AND BASIS

**Deuteronomy 6:20** "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?'

**Deuteronomy 6:21** "Then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.'"

**Deuteronomy 6:22** "Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;"

**Deuteronomy 6:23** "And He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers. "

**Deuteronomy 6:24** "So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today."

**Deuteronomy 6:25** "And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us."

**Deuteronomy 7:1** "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you,"

**Deuteronomy 7:4** "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you."

**Deuteronomy 7:5** "But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their {sacred} pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire."

**Deuteronomy 7:6** "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

**Deuteronomy 7:26** "And you shall not bring an abomination into your house and, like it, come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned."

# SURVIVAL TRAINING FOR TEENS

*A Seminar for Parents and Christian Educators on How to Equip our Youth to Maintain Spiritual Vitality in the Secular Wilderness*

## Outline & Worksheet

*Revised to Spring, 2023*

### INTRODUCTIONS

- to participants: *name, town, church, why this seminar?*
- to presenter: *name, background, credentials*
- to sponsoring agent
- to this seminar material: *sources for what follows*

### SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 3:15  
Deuteronomy 6:20-25, 7:1-26  
Various other texts

### PRINCIPLES

1. Salvation
2. Discipleship
3. Expectations
4. Authenticity

### 5. Encouragement

### 6. Exposure

### 7. Engagement

### 8. Discernment

### 9. Goodwill

### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, RESPONSE

### CLOSING PRAYER

### DISMISSAL

# Apologetics *Alive* in the Local Church: Why & How?



Appreciating the Importance and Implementing  
the Practice of **Christian Apologetics** in the  
Life of New England's Local Churches

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Seminar developed by Daryl E Witmer

# INTRODUCTION

- Distribute worksheets.
- Introduction to presenter, to sponsoring agency, and to the agenda for this session.
- This session is primarily designed for pastors, church leaders, and Christian educators. It is intended to promote an often-neglected facet of local church ministry. Moving from the theoretical to the practical, our intent is to inform, inspire, and challenge.

## PART #1 • Pertinent Principles & Priorities: Making the Case for a New Emphasis on Apologetics in the Local Church

### 1. IS THERE REALLY A NEED FOR APOLOGETICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH TODAY?

Absolutely there is! The Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned the Church to **preach the Gospel** and **disciple the believer** (Matthew 28:19-20). The New Testament makes it clear that all believers are to be prepared to **defend the faith** (1 Peter 3:15) and to **contend for historic orthodoxy** (Jude 3). All four of those tasks involve apologetics.

### 2. IS THE NEED FOR APOLOGETICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER TODAY THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST. AND IF SO, WHY?

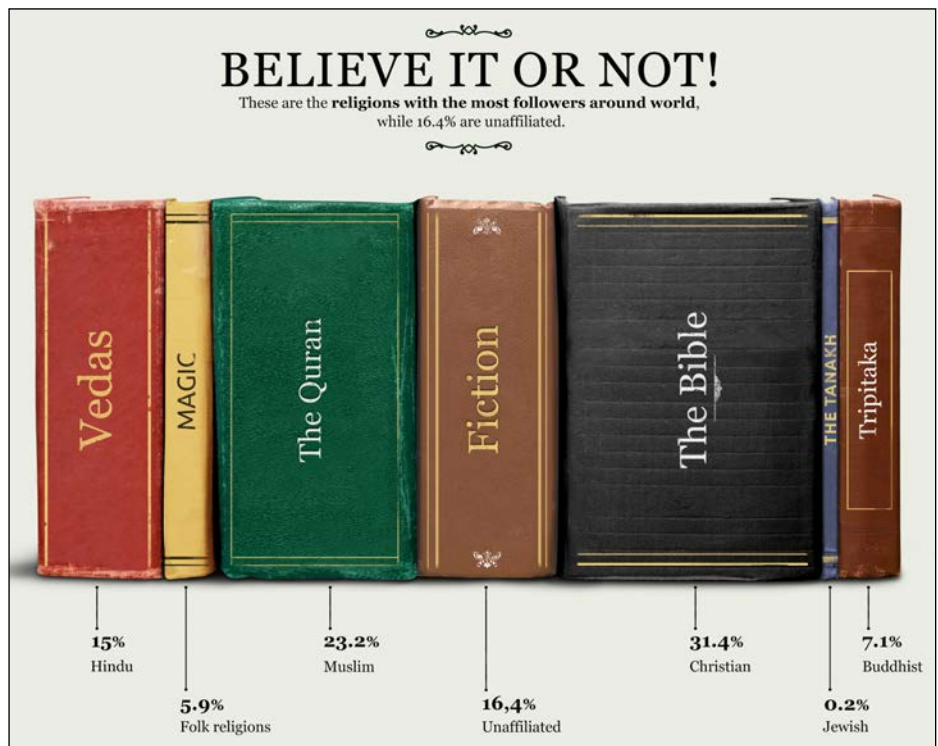
We believe that the need *is* significantly greater today than in the past. Consider these indicators:

#### a) Unprecedented Spiritual Confusion

The proliferation of world religions, cults, aberrational sects, diverse belief systems, and faith movements has increased to numbers without precedent in modern times. **At least 4,000 now exist**, according to Visual Capitalist and other sources. And these trends and sometimes radical expressions of faith are no longer just occurring on the fringe of society. Deviant philosophies and alternative thoughtforms, right along with major world religions, are now on the rise in every corner of America. **There's been a marked uptick in paganism. Nonverts**

(who've ditched the Christian faith) and **nones** (who claim no religious affiliation) are now all part of the fabric of society. Mosques and temples are being constructed in even small, rural communities these days. New Age literature is readily available online, in most bookstores, and is often even promoted through public school reading programs. **The internet is a huge agent of change here.** Only effective local church training in apologetics will enable us to respond to this battle where it's increasingly found — *locally*.

The Illustration at right is used by permission • <https://www.visualcapitalist.com>



## b) Unrivaled Religious Indifference (Apathism)

Along with the increase in unorthodox belief systems comes an increase in the NONES, i.e. those who register “None” or “No religion” when asked or polled about religious preference — particularly here in New England, where the average % of NONES outranks the national percentage. A few years ago a *USA TODAY* analysis revealed that states whose percentage of “nones” exceed the national average are more likely to push a liberal social agenda, e.g. same-sex marriage and homosexual rights issues. The article even at the time it was published in 2008 cited the following statistics: NONES comprise 15% of Americans and the following percentage in each of the following states NH = 29%; VT = 34%; CT = 14%; MA = 22%; RI = 19%; ME = 25%; NY = 14%; Catholics = 32% and Protestants = 30%. **54,000 surveyed.**

The religion-is-an-important-part-of-my-daily-life numbers are **lower** in New England than anywhere in the USA, according to a *Boston Globe* article published in 2008, and have grown even more concerning since. Gallup surveyed 350,000 individuals that same year and revealed that **all six New England states** were even at that time **among the Top Ten Least Religious States in the U.S.**, and that **The Top Four Least Religious states in America were all New England states!** VT = 42%; NH = 46%; MA = 48%; ME = 48%; CT = 55%; RI = 53%. See: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/114022/State-States-Importance-Religion.aspx>

## c) Unparalleled Evangelical Attrition

According to a number of analysts, evangelical influence in culture seems to have peaked and is now on the wane. A **LifeWay Research** study even as early as 2007 revealed that more than two-thirds (66%) of young adults attending a Protestant church in high school will stop attending church regularly for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22. **Rainer Research** has estimated that 70 percent of young people are leaving the church for good by age 22. The **Barna Group** makes that 80 percent by age 30. (*Christianity Today*, 9/2009). The **ex-Christian movement** (complete with their do-it-yourself online de-baptismal certificates) is on the rise. **De-conversion** and **nonverts** are now part of the vocabulary.



**Additional and more recent documentation** of **attrition** in the Church today is easily accessible. All of it uniformly marks a significant, current, and ongoing decline of Christianity in America. Check the following four sources, all published since 2021:

- **BARNA RESEARCH (2021)**  
<https://www.frc.org/blog/2021/06/new-barna-research-reveals-extent-americas-loss-faith>
- **PEW RESEARCH CENTER (thru 2023)**  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/religion/>
- **GALLUP (December 2021)**  
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/358364/religious-americans.aspx>
- **LIFEWAY RESEARCH (September 2022)**  
<https://research.lifeway.com/2022/09/19/americans-theological-beliefs-changed-to-suit-post-pandemic-practice/>
- **SEE ALSO UNDER** “The Warrant for Christian Apologetics” on **page 112** of this compendium.

#### d) Unmatched Anti-Christian Aggression (in America)

First, there is the **New Atheism** with all of its venomous hostility, led by the **Four Horsemen**: Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens (now no longer living), Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett. Then there is the marginalization, ridicule, cynicism, and even outright attacks being leveled against all those aligned with historic Christian belief or Christian values. The **liberal media** continues to peddle postmodern thinking. Television and social media sites such as **Reddit** routinely assault Christian faith and deliver a steady diet of deceptive philosophies into the home of Americans, targeting especially America's youth. Organizations such as the **Freedom from Religion Foundation** and the **American Humanist Association** (their slogan is **Good without a God**) are alive and well and as focused as ever on disparaging and attacking religion in general and Christianity in particular. The aggression may not yet be as extreme or obvious as being thrown to the lions or being burned at the stake, but the aggression is increasing in intensity. In the past, a few key national Christian figures and apologetics organizations tried to respond to (and bridle) such aggression. Today a much broader response by an informed army of local churches committed to apologetics will be needed to field an adequate number of soldiers in the great battle for truth.

This trend of disconnecting believers from secular society is increasingly leaving the **world** without the **leavening influence** of the **Church**, and leaving the **Church** without a personal **interchange** with **non-believers**.

#### e) Unequaled Disconnect Between the Church and Secular Society

Increased enrollment in Christian schools and home schools, as understandable and justified as it may be in today's woke environment, also necessarily means a decreased dialogue between the world and the Church at the community level. Spontaneous conversations between Christian and non-Christian students, and social interaction between Christian and non-Christian adults at Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) type meetings are no longer occurring on the scale that they once did. This trend is increasingly leaving the world without the leavening influence of the Church, and leaving the Church without any personal interchange with non-believers. There is this dual effect. A new emphasis on evangelism and practicing apologetics in America's local churches is one significantly potential means of countering this, at least to some extent.

#### f) Unbalanced Attention to Social Issues

Jesus' Great Commission to the Church was to evangelize and to make disciples. Very often today's great emphasis in the Church is to moralize and reform society. Our primary emphasis should be on calling the world to Christ. Very often it is on waging culture wars. The primary object of our initiatives should be the salvation of human souls. Too frequently it is running to put out the fire of the latest liberal initiatives. To the extent that we are distracted from our God-given mandate we often defeat our own purposes. *Perhaps there's a good way to do both well*, but it seems that for many years now the **balance** has been skewed. A disproportionate amount of time, money, and attention are being focused on protesting temporal issues, **as dangerous as some may be**, to the neglect of sound doctrine, effective apologetics, and genuine Christ-centered life-changing revival. There have been few times, if any, in our nation's history, when it has been more important than it is today for us to get on with our commission to **evangelize**. The local church can lead the way in this. The national spotlight will often focus on hot button issues. But when it does, local churches have a great behind-the-scenes opportunity to make the sort of difference that will really count.

### 3. BUT ISN'T APOLOGETICS TOO INTELLECTUALLY HEAVY FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH?

It better not be. Because God's Word calls all believers to practice apologetics. So the local church should be equipping its members to be effective in doing just that. Just a few gifted folks at the local level who have a heart for God and a love for apologetics can make a major difference in promoting this emphasis in any local church. They can do it by defusing the false yet very often common assumption that apologetics is only for scholars. They can do it, *and already have done it*, by making apologetics understandable and manageable to every follower of Jesus affiliated with the local church.



#### 4. HOW CAN LOCAL CHURCHES AFFORD TO BRING IN TOP NOTCH RESOURCES?

By pooling their limited resources with the limited resources of other local churches, the resources become not so limited after all. Together, in this way, they can acquire helpful tools (curriculum, videos, etc.) and bring in respected and noted apologists, just as is probably often already the case with mission projects, marriage enrichment events, concerts, men's conferences, women's seminars, and regional youth rallies.

#### 5. HOW IS A LOCAL CHURCH POSITIONED TO PROMOTE AND MODEL APOLOGETICS?

One *major* way in which the local church is strategically positioned to make the case for faith involves its unique ability to conspicuously display the covenant and love for one another that we all profess in Christ. Francis Schaeffer used to call the visible love of Christians for one another as the "final apologetic" (John 13:34 and John 17:21). When a local church walks the talk, people will notice. Such a church has a great advantage in demonstrating before the watching world the integration of the rational and the relational. Local churches (particularly small churches) are part of a community where everyone knows everyone, and where non-believers are easily exposed to this potentially powerful method of persuasion.

**Francis Schaeffer used to call the visible love of Christians for one another the "final apologetic." (John 13:34 and John 17:21)**

## PART #2 • Practical Tips & Application: A Guide on How to Make Apologetics Happen in Your Local Church

*In this session we consider a variety of creative ideas for making apologetics come alive in the many aspects of local church life:*

### PASTOR & LEADERSHIP

Develop a personal passion for apologetics by reading relevant Scripture and related books.

Preach a series entitled "Tough Questions About Christianity."

Preach to the mind, not just to the emotions.

Honor as heroes, not troublemakers, those in your church with the spiritual gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Publicly commission and commend those with the spiritual gift of discernment.

Use the term 'apologetics' from the pulpit more frequently.

### WORSHIP SERVICE

Arrange for apologetics resource speakers and seminars, e.g. Anchor New England, Answers in Genesis, NEIRR.

Use **Dramatized Apologetics** (a booklet) or other such material to stage brief dramas with an apologetics theme.

Promote the work and websites of apologetics ministries on an overhead screen before the worship service begins.

Pray publicly for skills and courage to effectively defend and contend for the faith.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Study and discuss apologetics-related curricula (booklets, DVDs, audio CDs, e.g. *Think About That* CD).

Ask one student (adult/teen class) per week to prepare to briefly address a tough question about the faith.

Take your Sunday School class to visit a non-Christian place of faith; use this as the basis for discussion and teaching.

### CHURCH RETREATS & CONFERENCES

Arrange for an apologetics training session for church leadership, e.g. National Conference on Christian Apologetics.

Arrange for an apologetics training session for parents on: "Equipping Children to Defend the Faith."

Arrange for an "Apologetics Saturday" with a special emphasis on apologetics at a conference center in your area.

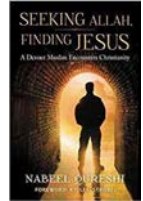
Arrange for a retreat for your men's group or couple's group at Anchor New England's Study Center in Maine.

Arrange for apologetics training for your Christian Ed staff, especially to better acquaint them with helpful resources.

Plan a regional Apologetics for the Church seminar with Mark Farnham, PhD (from Lancaster Bible College in PA).

## CHURCH LIBRARY

Stock and publicly promote key apologetic resources. See **Appendix 7** in this compendium for ideas. Mount a church-wide challenge to read or view an apologetics resource on a quarterly basis. Provide 3-minute congregational **Apologetics Resource Reviews** on helpful apologetics material. Launch a Christian Apologetics Book Club. Reviews books like *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Qureshi).

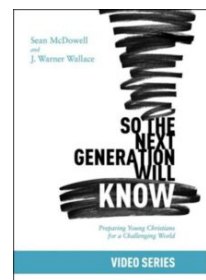
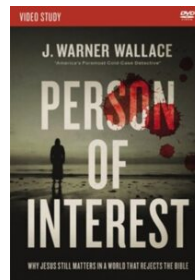
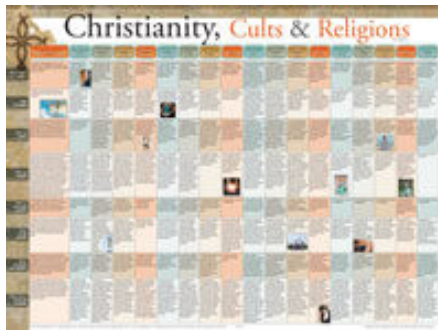
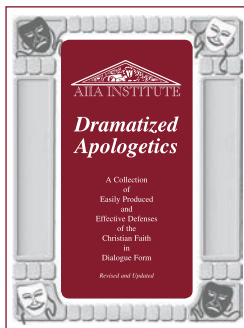


## MISSIONS COMMISSION

Invite an apologist or apologetic ministry (such as Anchor New England) to participate in your Missions Conference. Financially sponsor an apologist or apologetics ministry, just like any other missionary or missions organization. Publicly emphasize the importance of the “Mission Field of the Mind” See **page 147** in this compendium. Designate a Missions Committee member who loves apologetics to be an “Apologetics Promoter” for your church.

## MIDWEEK SERVICE OR SMALL GROUP

Study apologetics-related curriculum such as Stand to Reason’s *Tactics*, or Cold Case Christianity material. Develop and teach a course on comparative religions. See **Rose Publishing** PowerPoint presentation material. Develop and teach a course on **Bible Origins**. See Rose Publishing PowerPoint presentation and charts material. Engage in a video or interactive study series using material from Strobel, Geisler, Koukl, J. Warner Wallace, *et al.* Focused prayer. Encourage and engage in fervent prayer to be obedient and effective apologists. Schedule a personal testimony night on “How I Came to Faith.” Arrange for a live ZOOM session or webinar on apologetics with Anchor New England staff some week.



## YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Use apologetic curriculum (using DVDs, printed workbooks, e.g. TrueU, etc.) for at least one series annually. Take supervised field trips to the “house of worship” of other faiths and then return for debriefing and discussion. Interview adherents of alternative worldviews and then later critique from a biblical point of view. Sponsor or budget for selected youth to attend a major apologetics conference. Run contests to research and answer five difficult questions about Christianity. Offer rewards for doing a good research project on some leading world religion. Set up real or mock debates, e.g. atheist college professor vs Christian student, or a Christian homeowner vs. cultist. Launch a youth group committed exclusively to defending the faith, e.g. **The Guard** at a local church in Maine. Encourage members to sign up for newsletters, or subscribe to the Youtube channels of, noted apologetics ministries.

## PART #3 • Questions & Answers • Exchange

Allow for written questions as well. Have folks write their question legibly and pass to the front row.

## CLOSING PRAYER

## DISMISSAL

# Apologetics Alive in the Local Church: Why & How?

*Appreciating the Importance and Implementing the Practice of Christian Apologetics in the Life of New England's Local Churches*

Seminar developed by Daryl E. Witmer

## SEMINAR OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

### Seminar Description

*This seminar is primarily designed for pastors, church leaders, and Christian educators. It is intended to promote an often-neglected facet of local church ministry. Moving from the theoretical to the practical, it should inform, inspire, and equip all participants.*

### **PART #1 • Pertinent Principles & Priorities: Making the Case for a New Emphasis on Apologetics in the Local Church**

1. IS THERE REALLY A NEED FOR APOLOGETICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH TODAY?
2. IS THE NEED FOR APOLOGETICS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER TODAY THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST? AND IF SO, WHY?
  - a) Unprecedented Spiritual Confusion
  - b) Unrivaled Religious Indifference (Apathism)
  - c) Unparalleled Evangelical Attrition
  - d) Unmatched Anti-Christian Aggression (in America)
  - e) Unequaled Disconnect Between the Church and Secular Society
  - f) Unbalanced Attention to Social Issues
3. ISN'T APOLOGETICS TOO THEOLOGICALLY HEAVY FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH?
4. HOW CAN LOCAL CHURCHES AFFORD TO BRING IN TOP NOTCH RESOURCES?
5. HOW IS A LOCAL CHURCH POSITIONED TO PROMOTE AND MODEL APOLOGETICS?

## **PART #2 • Practical Tips & Application: *A Guide on How to Make Apologetics Happen in Your Church***

Here are a wide range of creative ideas for making apologetics come alive in the various aspects of local church life:

**PASTOR & LEADERSHIP**

**WORSHIP SERVICE**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**CHURCH RETREATS & CONFERENCES**

**CHURCH LIBRARY**

**MISSIONS COMMISSION**

**MIDWEEK SERVICE or SMALL GROUPS**

**YOUTH FELLOWSHIP**

**PART #3 • QUESTIONS & ANSWERS | Exchange**

**CLOSING TIME OF PRAYER**

**DISMISSAL**

# Apologetics **Alive** in Your Small Church

Appreciating Its Importance  
and Implementing Its Practice



*Here's a two-part **seminar** designed for **small church pastors and leaders** that draws attention to a much-neglected facet of small church ministry today. Moving from the **theoretical** to the **practical**, this material should inspire and equip all participants.*

Seminar & Notes developed by Daryl E. Witmer

## Distribute . . .

- Great Commission continuum charts
- Seminar worksheet

## Seminar intro . . .

- This seminar is adapted from a more complete and expanded presentation on **Apologetics in the Local Church**. It therefore includes some duplicate content but, as the name applies, is primarily designed for leaders of small churches, **defined for our purposes here** as churches with a membership and active participant base of 100 or less individuals.
- Two 45-minute segments: 1) Principles & Priorities (theoretical); 2) Ways & Means (practical)
- The worksheet is designed primarily as an outline of this material.

## SESSION #1

### Principles & Priorities (theoretical)

#### Making a Case for the Place of Apologetics in the Small Church • 45 minutes

##### 1. WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR AN EMPHASIS ON APOLOGETICS IN THE SMALL CHURCH TODAY?

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For the same reason that there is a need for an emphasis on apologetics in any church — small, medium, or large. Our Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ, has commissioned His Church to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15), to disciple the believer (Matthew 28:19-20), to defend the faith (1 Peter 3:15), and to contend for sound doctrine (Jude 3-4). Every one of those tasks involves apologetics to some extent.

► Examine and comment on Great Commission continuum chart. (See page — in the compendium)

##### 2. IS IT TRUE THAT THE NEED FOR AN EMPHASIS ON APOLOGETICS IN THE SMALL CHURCH IS SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER TODAY THAN IN THE PAST? AND IF SO, WHY?

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**Yes.** Because the **issues addressed by apologetics**, and the **changes in culture** that can occur as people **come to Christ** through the **practice of apologetics**, are an increasing reality in **grassroots** America.

#### Consider three key factors:

##### a) The proliferation of cults, aberrational sects, and world religious belief everywhere in America today.

These things are no longer just occurring across the ocean, in Big City America, or somewhere out in Crazy California. Deviant philosophies and alternative thoughtforms are on the rise in every corner of the country. Mosques and temples are being constructed in small, rural communities these days. Pagan literature is available in every bookstore and even actively promoted in public school reading programs today. Local church training in apologetics responds to the battle right where it is increasingly based.

##### b) Twenty-first century media is pushing postmodern influence across every cultural line.

Television, an AI bot-driven internet, social media, mass media, and educational institutions are all now aggressively delivering the most deceptive of philosophies and values directly into every ear and eye and home in the nation.

Where once only a few noted Christian leaders tried to bridle this onslaught, a much broader response by a far greater number of Christians is required today. Only many **local churches** working together will be able to produce a sufficient number of truth soldiers to have any discernible effect today.



c) **Increased enrollment in Christian schools and homeschools (as justifiable as that may be in today's public school environment) necessarily means decreased dialogue between the world and the Church at the community level.** Spontaneous conversations between Christian and non-Christian students, and social interaction between Christian and non-Christian adults at PTA-type meetings and sports events is no longer occurring on the scale that it once did. This trend is increasingly leaving the world without the spiritual influence of the Church, and leaving the Church without the opportunity to interchange with, and witness to, non-believers. There is this dual effect. A new emphasis on apologetics in America's **small churches** has the potential to counteract this, at least to some extent (see Session 2 of this seminar).

**Just a few gifted folks with a heart for God, a love for apologetics, and operating in the power of the Holy Spirit, can make a huge difference in promoting this discipline in any and every small church.**

### **3. BUT ISN'T APOLOGETICS TOO WEIGHTY A SUBJECT FOR THE SMALL CHURCH AGENDA?**

The terms small and weighty should not be considered mutually exclusive. Think *David vs Goliath*. Just a few gifted folks with a heart for God, a love for apologetics, and operating in the power of the Holy Spirit, can make a huge difference in promoting this discipline in any and every small church.

### **4. HOW CAN A SMALL CHURCH AFFORD TO BRING IN TOP NOTCH APOLOGETIC RESOURCES?**

By pooling resources with other small churches to purchase helpful tools (e.g. videos, curriculum,) or to bring in effective speakers (specializing in apologetics), just as is already often being done with mission projects, marriage enrichment retreats, gospel concerts, and regional youth conferences.

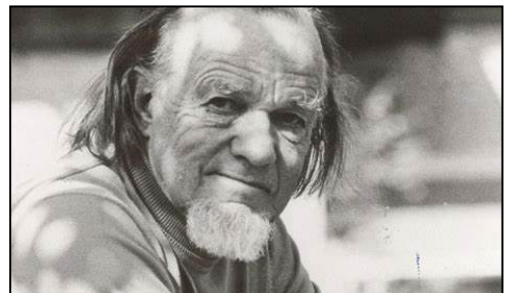
### **5. HOW IS THE SMALL CHURCH POSITIONED TO PROMOTE & MODEL CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS?**

One way in which the small church is uniquely and strategically positioned to promote effective apologetics involves the conspicuous display of the entire fellowship's covenant and love in Christ.

**Dr. Francis Schaeffer often called the love of the brethren the "final apologetic."** By which he meant the **ultimate evidence** that we really are followers of Jesus (John 13:34), and that the Father really did send the Son to be the savior of the world (John 17:21).

When a church truly lives out the gospel, folks notice.

And the small church has a **particularly significant advantage** here in demonstrating before the watching world the integration of the rational and the relational.



Small churches are often (though not always) part of small communities where everyone knows everyone, and where non-believers are easily exposed to this potentially powerful means of persuasion.

## SESSION #2

### Ways & Means (practical)

#### Making Apologetics Happen in the Small Church • 45 minutes

In this session we want to consider a variety of creative practical ideas to make apologetics come alive in various aspects of small church life. I served as the pastor of three small churches over a 30-year period in north central Maine, and believe that each one of the following ideas can work.

#### PASTOR & LEADERSHIP

Develop a personal passion for apologetics by reading relevant Scripture and related books.

Preach a series entitled “Tough Questions About Christianity.”

Preach to the mind, not just to the emotions.

Honor as heroes, not troublemakers, those in your church with the spiritual gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Publicly commission and commend those with the spiritual gift of discernment.

Use the term **apologetics** from the pulpit more frequently.

#### WORSHIP SERVICE

Arrange for apologetics resource speakers and seminars, e.g. Anchor New England, Answers in Genesis, NEIRR.

Use Dramatized Apologetics (a booklet) or other such material to stage brief dramas with an apologetics theme.

Promote the work and websites of apologetics ministries on an overhead screen before the worship service begins.

Pray publicly for skills and courage to effectively defend and contend for the faith.

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Study and discuss apologetics-related curricula (booklets, DVDs, CDs, e.g. *Think About That*).

Ask one student (in an adult/teen class) per week to briefly address a tough faith question.

Take your Sunday School class to visit a non-Christian place of faith; use this as the basis for later discussion and instruction.



#### CHURCH RETREATS & CONFERENCES

Arrange for apologetics training for church leadership, e.g. National Conference on Christian Apologetics.

Arrange for a local apologetics training session for parents on: “Equipping Children to Defend the Faith.”

Arrange for an “Apologetics Saturday” with a special emphasis on apologetics at a conference center in your area.

Arrange for a day retreat for your men’s group or couple’s group at Anchor New England’s Study Center in Maine.

Arrange for apologetics training for your Christian Ed staff, especially to better acquaint them with helpful resources.

Plan a regional **Apologetics for the Church** seminar with Mark Farnham, PhD (from Lancaster Bible College in PA).

#### CHURCH LIBRARY

Stock and publicly promote key apologetic resources. See **Appendix 7** in this compendium for ideas.

Mount a church-wide challenge to read or view and review an apologetics resource on a quarterly basis.

Provide a 3-minute congregational **Apologetics Resource Report** on helpful apologetics material, written or spoken.

Launch a Christian Apologetics Book Club. Review books like *The Case for Christ* (Strobel).

#### MISSIONS COMMISSION

Invite an apologist or apologetic ministry (such as **Anchor New England**) to participate in your Missions Conference.

Financially sponsor an apologist or apologetics ministry, just like any other missionary or missions organization.

Publicly emphasize the importance of the “Mission Field of the Mind” (see **page 147** in this compendium).

Designate a Missions Committee member who loves apologetics to be an “Apologetics Promoter” in your church.

#### MIDWEEK SERVICE OR SMALL GROUP

Study apologetics-related curriculum such as Stand to Reason’s *Tactics*, or *Cold Case Christianity* material.

Develop and teach a course on comparative religions. Use **Rose Publishing** PowerPoint presentation material.

Develop and teach a course on Bible Origins. Use **Rose Publishing PowerPoint presentation** and **charts** material.

Engage in a video or interactive study series using material from Strobel, Geisler, Koukl, J. Warner Wallace, et al.

Focused prayer. Encourage and engage in fervent prayer to be obedient and effective apologists.

Schedule a personal testimony night on “How I Came to Faith.”

Arrange for a live ZOOM session or webinar on apologetics with Anchor New England staff some week.



28th Annual SES National Conference on Christian Apologetics / **APRIL 8-9, 2022**

**NCCA**  
2022

REMAINING  
**STEADFAST**  
IN AN UPSIDE DOWN  
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**PLUS MORE THAN 20 OTHER SPEAKERS!**

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about Extraterrestrial Phenomena *(add-on ticket required)*

**SES** | Presented by Southern Evangelical  
Seminary & Bible College

## YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

Use apologetic curriculum (on DVD, in printed workbooks, e.g. TrueU, etc.) for at least one series annually.  
 Take supervised field trips to the “house of worship” of other faiths and then return for debriefing and discussion.  
 Invite and interview adherents of alternative worldviews and then later critique from a biblical point of view.  
 Sponsor or budget for selected youth (18+) to attend a major apologetics conference (see **sample from 2022** above).  
 Run contests to research and answer five difficult questions about Christianity.  
 Offer a reward for producing an impressive research project on some leading world religion.  
 Set up real or mock debates, e.g. atheist college professor vs Christian student, or a Christian homeowner vs. cultist.  
 Launch a youth group committed exclusively to defending the faith, e.g. **The Guard** at a local church in Maine.  
 Encourage youth to sign up for newsletters from, or subscribe to the Youtube channels of, noted apologetics ministries.

## Response and Questions & Answers

### Closing time of prayer

### Dismissal

# Apologetics in the Small Church

Appreciating Its Importance and Implementing Its Practice

## Seminar Description

*Here's a two-part seminar designed for small church pastors and leaders that brings attention to a much-neglected facet of small church ministry today. Moving from the theoretical to the practical, this material should inspire and equip all participants.*

### Receive distributed material

- Great Commission continuum chart
- Seminar outline/worksheet

### Intro to seminar

## **PART #1: Principles & Priorities (the theoretical)**

### **Making a Case for the Place of Apologetics in the Small Church**

#### **1. WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR AN EMPHASIS ON APOLOGETICS IN THE SMALL CHURCH TODAY?**

- ▶ Great Commission continuum chart

#### **2. IS IT TRUE THAT THE NEED FOR AN EMPHASIS ON APOLOGETICS PARTICULARLY IN THE SMALL CHURCH IS SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER TODAY THAN IN THE PAST — AND IF SO, WHY?**

Consider three key factors:

- a) The proliferation of cults, aberrational sects, and world religious belief systems. Local church training in apologetics responds to the battle right where it is increasingly based.
- b) Twenty-first century media is pushing postmodern influence across almost every cultural line. A much broader response by a far greater number of informed, equipped grassroots truth soldiers is required today.
- c) Increased enrollment in Christian schools and homeschools (as justifiable as that may be in today's public school environment) necessarily means decreased dialogue between the world and the Church at the community level. Spontaneous conversations between Christian and non-Christian students, and social interaction between Christian and non-Christian adults is no longer occurring on the scale that it once did. This trend is increasingly leaving the world without the spiritual influence of the Church, and leaving the Church without the opportunity to interchange with, and witness to, non-believers. There is this dual effect. A new emphasis on apologetics in America's small churches has the potential to counteract this trend to some extent (see Session 2 of this seminar).

#### **3. ISN'T APOLOGETICS TOO WEIGHTY A SUBJECT FOR THE SMALL CHURCH AGENDA?**

#### **4. HOW CAN A SMALL CHURCH AFFORD TO BRING IN TOP NOTCH APOLOGETIC RESOURCES?**

#### **5. HOW IS THE SMALL CHURCH POSITIONED TO PROMOTE & MODEL CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS?**

When any church truly lives out the gospel, folks notice. But the small church has a particular advantage in demonstrating Christian love before the watching world — the integration of the rational and the relational.

## **PART #2: Ways & Means (the practical)**

### **Making Apologetics Happen in the Small Church**

In this session we want to consider a variety of creative ideas for actually making apologetics come alive in the many aspects of church life:

PASTOR & LEADERSHIP

WORSHIP SERVICE

SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHURCH RETREATS & CONFERENCES

CHURCH LIBRARY

MISSIONS COMMISSION

MIDWEEK SERVICE or SMALL GROUP

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

## **PART #3: Q&As and Exchange**

### **Closing Prayer Time**

### **Dismissal**



# Christian Apologetics in Action

What follows here is an updated and adapted version of an **apologetics exchange** that was originally developed by **Daryl E. Witmer** and **Brandon Pustejovsky** for presentation during a midweek service at **Westminster Presbyterian Church** in **Lancaster, Pennsylvania**, in **June of 2000**.

Much of this exchange is based on **actual dialogue** in which Witmer and Pustejovsky had engaged with **skeptics** during the Winter and Spring of 2000.

This dialogue covers a broad range of general objections to the Christian worldview. It should be easily **reproducible** in a church or camp setting as a **two-person drama**.

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# DIALOGUE

**SKEPTIC:** Okay, right off the bat let's get something straight. Do you Christians all *really* believe that you have a corner on the truth — that you **alone** are right about faith and life?

**APOLOGIST:** Well, insofar as Jesus Christ and His teachings are concerned, yes — we do indeed claim to know the truth — and exclusively so, when other views contradict it.

**SKEPTIC:** That sounds very arrogant to me. In fact, in my opinion, someone with an intolerance problem like you evidently have is to be avoided.

**APOLOGIST:** Really? Let me get this straight. **You are not willing to accept my view** that there's only **one ultimate truth** about matters of life and faith? Is that correct?

**SKEPTIC:** That's correct. I certainly am *not* willing to accept such a view. It's very narrow-minded. There are many decent people following many different roads of faith. Who are you to question a lot of very sincere people just because they don't see things the way you do?

**APOLOGIST:** Well, before I answer **that** question — about who I am to question others who disagree with me — let me ask you a separate question. If you're not willing to accept my view that there's only one truth, doesn't that also make **you** intolerant?

**SKEPTIC:** Well, I'm intolerant of intolerance, if that's what you mean. I personally decide what to tolerate and what not to tolerate. That's my right. But you know, there's another sense here in which we may both be right.

**APOLOGIST:** The only sense that I know of that would allow two people holding opposite positions to both be right about the same things at the same time — is *nonsense*.

**SKEPTIC:** Why *can't* we both be right?

**APOLOGIST:** Are you married?

**SKEPTIC:** Yes.

**APOLOGIST:** What if I was to claim that you're not married?

**SKEPTIC:** That wouldn't be true. I just told you that I *am* married.

**APOLOGIST:** But why isn't it possible for **you** to claim to be married and for **me** to claim that you're not married — simultaneously? Why can't we both be right?

**SKEPTIC:** I'm not into playing foolish little head games.

**APOLOGIST:** But I am serious in asking that question. Why would you consider it foolish?

**SKEPTIC:** Because two opposite statements like that can't both be true at the same time.

**APOLOGIST:** Yes, that's **absolutely** correct — and precisely the point that I was trying to make.

**SKEPTIC:** Okay, so let me ask you this — how do you know that there's a God?

**APOLOGIST:** What would you accept as evidence? What would convince you?

**SKEPTIC:** Something scientific.

**APOLOGIST:** Okay — I'll give you three science-based reasons: **1)** the presence of design in nature, **2)** the universal sense of morality in humankind, and **3)** the existence of human personality. Other than for God, how would you account for the reality of even any one of those three?

**SKEPTIC:** Well, maybe there *is* a God. But why would He have to be the God of the Bible? Why would He have to be a Christian God? I mean, look at all the other religions in the world? Are you actually telling me that they're all wrong? If you'd been born in India, don't you think that you'd probably be a Hindu instead of a Christian? Come on. Your position is so myopic, exclusivist, old-fashioned.

**APOLOGIST:** What is  $2 + 2$ ?

**SKEPTIC:** Seven point nine squared! [*pause, then...*] Okay, just kidding. It's four. So what?

**APOLOGIST:** So you're agreed that two plus two equals four? But only four? Only ever four? Isn't that a rather narrow-minded view? I mean, why not five, or even 10 once in a while? I suppose that you're one of those guys who also thinks that two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen only ever makes ice, steam, or liquid water?!

**SKEPTIC:** Yes, in fact, I would agree that that's true.

**APOLOGIST:** But isn't that also a rather exclusivist view?

**SKEPTIC:** Perhaps. But my question about God was a religious matter, not a scientific one.

**APOLOGIST:** Yes, but if it's okay for a scientist to be exclusivist in contending that  $H_2O$  is only ever water, and for a mathematician to be exclusivist in contending that that  $2+2$  only ever equals 4, and for an historian to be exclusivist in stating that only America won the Revolutionary War in 1776 — then why isn't okay for a theologian to be exclusivist in claiming that God is only ever personal, and that Jesus is the only way of salvation, and that the Bible is the only inspired Word of God?

**SKEPTIC:** But what solid evidence would you cite for the truth of the Bible?

**APOLOGIST:** For starters, **fulfilled prophecy**. Then I'd probably go on to cite the **cohesive unity of its theme** as a book written over a period of 1500 years, and its **archaeological validation**, and its **survival** over thousands of years in spite of extreme opposition.

**SKEPTIC:** Let me change the subject. What do you as a Christian have to say about all the suffering that goes on in this world? If God is all-good and God is all-powerful, why are little babies being born in poverty and abuse, some with incurable diseases? Why do good people die of cancer? Why are you in a wheelchair for life?

**APOLOGIST:** The world is temporarily out of order.

**SKEPTIC:** Why doesn't God fix it?

**APOLOGIST:** He is going to do just that. Perhaps before long.

**SKEPTIC:** What's He waiting for? But stop! I should tell you that however you answer that, and in spite of all your other answers here, you're not likely to change my position.

**APOLOGIST:** Why is that?

**SKEPTIC:** Because I'm just not convinced of Christianity.

**APOLOGIST:** What would it take to convince you?

**SKEPTIC:** That's like asking what it would take to convince me that there is a Santa Claus!

**APOLOGIST:** How can you rationally and fairly compare the two? Historically, you know that there's some serious evidence for the existence of at least some sort of God, and for Jesus being God as He claimed to be — but absolutely none for Santa Claus. No one has ever seriously postulated the existence of a real historical Santa Claus who drives a sleigh around the world delivering gifts down chimneys on Christmas Eve. Yet many brilliant minds in history have been persuaded of the existence of God and the deity of Christ.

**SKEPTIC:** Well, I'm not one of them. I'm just not convinced.

**APOLOGIST:** It's not my job to convince you. I can only cite evidence. What you do with that evidence is ultimately up to you.

.....

**NARRATOR:** Now here's one other slightly edited little exchange drawn directly from the account of an open forum held some time ago at **Oxford University in England**. This conversation took place between an apologist and a student espousing the fashionable worldview of postmodernism.

**STUDENT:** What I've been trying to do here is make the point that morality really doesn't have any objective point of reference.

**APOLOGIST:** Well, let me ask you this — do you believe that if I took a little baby and cut it into pieces with a sword, that I would have done anything immoral?

**STUDENT:** Well, I wouldn't personally enjoy that. But no, I don't think that you would have done anything objectively immoral. And you know, just because I don't believe that something is evil, or that anything is evil, doesn't mean that what I believe is untrue.



**APOLOGIST:** Let me try to repeat what you just said — that just because you don't believe that anything is evil doesn't mean that what you believe is untrue?

**STUDENT:** That's correct, sir. The fact that I believe that nothing is evil doesn't necessarily make what I believe untrue.

**APOLOGIST:** But why does it have to be *true*? You're espousing a worldview where truth has no moral value. If there is no moral obligation to tell the truth, or to practice the truth, or to believe that there even is any such thing as the truth, then why does it have to be true in order to be justified? Why did you even bring truth into this?

**STUDENT:** Uh . . . I guess that I'm not sure about that right now.



# THE EVIDENCE OF HOPE

.....  
and Hopeful Living

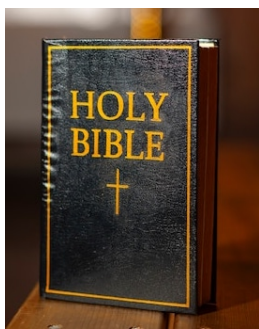
## 1 Peter 3:15



*What follows is an adapted version of the transcript of a sermon delivered on numerous occasions in a variety of venues, but last preached at Faith Evangelical Free Church in Acton, Massachusetts on Sunday, 30 March 2014.*

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Please turn in your Bible to 1 Peter 3:13-17



“Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

Now the 15th verse here in 1 Peter 3 is often referred to as the **golden text of Christian apologetics**. It's usually thought of as the key apologetics verse where Christians are challenged to present convincing evidence for their faith in order to win others to Christ — or in order to defend the Christian faith against the attacks of skeptics and critics.

That is to say — we often reckon that verse 15 is telling us to be effective in apologetics because that's what it's going to take to win people to Jesus and convince them of His truth.

That's the conventional understanding of this verse — and that has, in many cases, been the Church's approach to both apologetics and evangelism. You make a good strong rational case for Christianity — you're going to get strong results. Put in ABC, you get out XYZ almost every time.

Well there's just one little problem with using this verse to make that point. And that is that it's not the point that this verse is making. Upon closer examination it turns out that what this verse is really saying is that we as believers are to be prepared with a reasonable basis for our faith — not in order to persuade people to Christ or to argue them into accepting the truth of Christ — but as a means of reinforcing the evidence for Christ that they've already noticed in us — namely, **the evidence of hope** to which they're already responding here.

**It's not our debating skills or our intellectually impressive lines of evidence or our compelling logic or our reasonable arguments that have people asking us about anything. It's our hope in Jesus that they're asking about. It's the reality of our hope in the living Christ.**

Peter is actually saying that we're to be ready — to do our homework — and have a good defense — an **apologia** — ready for everyone who asks us for a **logos**. People are not asking here for an **apologia**, but for a **logos** — a word, an account, some basis for **the hope that they see in us in the midst of difficult circumstances**. Do you see that? These people are being drawn to Jesus in us because they've noted our **hope** in Him. It's not our debating skills or our intellectually impressive lines of evidence or our compelling logic or our reasonable arguments that has people asking us about anything. It's our **hope in Jesus** that they're asking about. It's the reality of our hope in the living Christ.

To put it in the words of one old fella whom I once heard addressing this subject: “Ain't nobody probably gonna buy the faith that you say works for them until they see the faith that you say works for them work for you.” Or to paraphrase: “Who is going to buy into the hope that you say will give them hope until they see the hope that you say will give them hope giving you hope?”



This principle and approach works especially effectively when times are especially tough, as they were in first Century Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Bithynia — all recipients of this letter.

When Peter wrote this letter by inspiration of God's Spirit, the evil emperor **Nero** was in the on-deck circle in **Rome**. Christians were already being marked for persecution, torture, and death. The times had turned dark. The pressure was on, big time.

You and I have not yet seen the full extent of what it can be like to live with a government that is supposedly there to protect you, but then suddenly turns against you. Not yet, anyway. And I hope that we never do experience that. But if we do, it certainly will not be the first time in history that such a thing has happened.

**Marianne Fischer** in her book **Time of Storm** tells the story of how one bitter cold Winter day in 1944, five months into her pregnancy, she and her Jewish family and friends were forced by Nazi soldiers to walk miles and miles without food outside of their ghetto cages in Budapest, Hungary, to this huge stadium where they were all forced onto the field. Machine guns were trained on them from the bleachers all around, ready to begin a mass slaughter in cold blood at any moment. Some sort of last-ditch political maneuvering spared them, so they are then forced to walk all the way back to Budapest. But their suffering there goes on and on.

They are all cramped together in a ridiculously small space. They cannot sleep. They cannot relax. They have no privacy. They have no peace. They have almost no food. They are shivering and cold.

Consider all the terrible suffering in our world today, and down through history, just as in Rome so many centuries ago as described here in 1 Peter. And the natural human response to all of this is great fear; a troubled mind.

But along comes Peter who says to these Christians in that sort of situation, verse 14: "Don't fear their intimidation and don't be troubled." **Really, Peter?!** But Peter isn't fooling. In verse 15 he says that they are rather to recognize **Jesus** as being supreme and sovereign in all of life. **Set apart and recognize Christ as Lord — not Nero.** Focus on Jesus. Hope in Jesus, my friends. And then also be ready, because folks around you will quickly notice your perspective and your hope and ask you about it — for some account (*logos*) of it. Be ready to intellectually explain why you believe what you believe. Be prepared with an **apologia** — an apologetic for your faith — a reply.

Again, it's usually, initially, not apologetics that tends to draw people to Jesus. It's not our tricky persuasive arguments. It's not our logical one-liners. It's Christ in us, the hope of glory. It's our hope in Jesus that will ultimately have people open to whatever else we may have to say. **But the "everyone" referred to here in verse 15 do not come asking for an apologetic for our faith.** They come asking for a **logos** — some word, some explanation, some testimony, some account for the conspicuous hope that they've seen on your face and in your life — especially in desperate times.

**The hope in us must be conspicuous. Otherwise who is even going to notice your hope, let alone ask about it. Who is going to ask us for a reason for the hope in us if they see no hope in us.**

**And yes, the hope in us must be conspicuous.** Otherwise who is even going to notice your hope, let alone ask about it. Who is going to ask us for a reason for the hope in us if they see no hope in us, but rather only hear the sounds of grouching and whining and complaining with all of the rest of the world around us about the lousy weather and all of the phony politicians and how terrible the government is, and the rising prices and the falling stocks, and how everything is so awful.

**No, our hope must be conspicuous and noticeable.** It must stand out. And it must be genuine. We're not talking here about just sporting a big silly grin in a very bad situation. No, the Greek term for hope here in 1 Peter 3:15 is **elpis**. **Elpis** means expectant, not clueless. Not numb. It means having genuinely great principled expectation! **Elpis** is related to **elpizo** — to anticipate and to expect. That term appears over 45 times in the New Testament.

This kind of Spirit-produced hope is certainly not a reference to just blithely whistling in the rain. Biblical hope is not even always necessarily a very bubbly thing at all. Some folks seem to exude genuine hope in Christ without a lot of perky jolly ebullience at all. But our hope needs to show up in some kind of visible form. We can't walk around looking as if we've been sucking green persimmons and expect people to ask us for an account of our hope.



Perhaps at some point you've seen the classic movie, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*? At one point the two of them found themselves trapped by the sheriff's posse on the edge of a very high cliff. They weren't exactly relaxed. But even under that pressure you didn't see them yield to fear, panic, or despair. Why not? They had hope. And their hope was not groundless. Butch Cassidy had come up with a plan — namely, jump into the river far far below. The Sundance Kid was a bit slow to warm to the plan (because he couldn't swim!). But he finally signed on. There was some nervousness and desperation in their grins in the few moments before they left, but not baseless artificial hope.



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**Biblical hope means knowing that in every trial there's still a plan.** There's still a way out of this mess. Biblical hope involves looking way out beyond the present painful passages of this life to a glorious horizon — to Jesus our hope — and then reading the future with Him back into this present evil age. Reading the future back into the present — that's what this sort of hope in 1 Peter 3:15 is all about.

**Biblical hope involves looking way out beyond the present painful passages of this life to a glorious horizon — to Jesus our hope — and then reading the future with Him back into this present evil age.**

**We all have to have hope to one extent or the other.** Once when I was personally going through a very difficult time, someone sent me a letter. You know, today I have no idea what that letter even said. But on the envelope there was a gold-embossed decal sticker with these words on it:

"Evil will not always triumph, nor God's foes forever reign.  
Sin's dark night will soon be ending, Jesus Christ will come again."

Reading those words was like drinking cold water on a hot day. Those words fanned my hope. They still bless me and they remind me of other words written by another old warrior who also knew great pressure and adversity in life, which makes the words he wrote even more powerful:

"But though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us: The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure, One little word shall fell him. That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth; The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth: Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever."

Martin Luther wrote those words. And that sort of hope, especially when held with great conviction in the darkest hours of life, makes people take notice.

While everyone around us is staggering and disoriented from the strain of this long hard march, we believers move on. **“When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. On Christ the solid rock I stand . . .”**

We steadily shine on with an inner resolve, motivated by the realization that the darker the night, the brighter our light is going to shine, because light shows up best when the night is darkest.

Not that we seek the darkness. Certainly not. We do not hope for the dark or seek the dark for the sake of others, because it's also dark for us. We also have checkbooks to balance and mortgages to pay. We also understand the implications of terrorism and persecution and economic collapse. We don't hope for the dark because the dark is full of pain and misery. **But we hope in the dark.**

And in the dark the hope that we have is a hope that others will not understand. Our hope is not blind optimism. It's not just positive thinking. It is not just getting emotionally whipped up with stories of great courage. It has nothing to do with avoiding reality. No, it's a hope that fully understands the times and yet also at the same time understands all that we have and (are going to have) in Christ. It's a hope that works. And when others see this hope, and notice that it's working for us, they're going to ask us about it.

This kind of hope is no doubt often going to be our most powerful line of evidence in drawing others to Christ. **Our hope in Christ is itself such very powerful evidence of the truth and reality of Christ.** The evidence of our hope and of our hopeful living will likely prove more persuasive than any other apologetics approach.

Francis Schaeffer used to describe the love of Christians for one other as the **final apologetic**. If that's true, then perhaps hope is the **initial apologetic**. The enduring hope of the saints on display, noticed by all the lonely discouraged souls trudging on and on in the darkness. Our hope, based on solid rational evidence, which then itself becomes persuasive evidence of its own, drives us to live out our faith in obedience, attracting those outside of Christ as they see Him in us.

**Our hope, based on solid rational evidence, which then itself becomes persuasive evidence of its own, drives us to live out our faith in obedience, attracting those outside of Christ as they see Him in us.**

**The Irish evangelist Gypsy Smith** once said, "There are five Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and you. And many people will never read the first four."

A well known apologist for the Christian worldview once said: "I have little doubt that **the single greatest obstacle to the impact of the Gospel** has not been its inability to provide answers, but the failure on the part of Christians to live it out." He said that a Hindu once asked him: "If this conversion is truly supernatural, why is it not more evident in the lives of so many Christians that I know?" The apologist said, "That question is so deeply disturbing a question that I think of all the challenges to belief, it is the most difficult of all."

But are people actively looking for the sort of hope that is **intellectually defensible** and **practically livable** today? Is anyone out there actually searching for examples of truth-based consistently-lived-out meaning and purpose? **You bet there are!** Very much so. Many are despairing or even dying for a lack of hope every day. Here are five examples:

■ **There's the tragic story of Robin Williams**, the famous American actor and comedian. Williams made millions of people laugh while he was privately suffering from anxiety, stress, insomnia, memory loss, paranoia, and delusions. On August 11, 2014, he took his own life at his home in California.



■ **There is Michael Phelps**, the celebrity swimmer who has won over 25 Olympic medals. Talented, famous, admired. And yet inside there has been this sense of hopelessness. Phelps says that his lowest point — quite ironically — came right after the 2012 Games when he sat alone in his bedroom for three to five days “not wanting to be alive.”

■ **Consider Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta**. Stefani says that she's dealt with anxiety her entire life and even now has “to take medication for depression.” That's the real story behind the story of one of America's most famous flamboyant pop stars, known professionally as **Lady Gaga**.



■ **There was Naomi Judd**, the country music icon. A star on stage. But behind the scenes — without hope. Devoid of meaning. Deeply depressed. Died by suicide in April 2022.

■ **The insightful 2005 60 Minutes interview with Tom Brady** will probably always illustrate for me the totally bleak view of so many. Arguably the greatest quarterback of all time, even at that time with all of his fame and riches and popularity, his exact words were: "God, there's gotta be more than this."

This list could go on and on and on. These stories are not rare exceptions . . .

**A study by Nashville-based Lifeway Research published in 2021** revealed that **57% of Americans** consciously wonder at least once a month, “How can I find more meaning and purpose in my life?” Statistically, that means that **nearly three of every five people** that you're going to meet today routinely struggle with a lack of meaning in life!



**We should hardly be surprised?! Today human rationalism and secular science are made out to be the great arbiter of truth. But secular science promotes Darwinism. So listen to what Dr. William B. Provine, a professor of the History of Biology at Cornell University for years — and himself an evolutionist — says about where the Darwinian evolutionary worldview leaves us:**

"If you believe in evolution . . . there is no hope whatsoever of there being any deep meaning in human life. We live. We die. And we're gone. We're absolutely gone when we die." "No God. No life after death. No ultimate foundation for ethics. No ultimate meaning in life. All are deeply connected to an evolutionary perspective. You're here today and you're gone tomorrow and that's all there is to it."

So we live in a generation without hope. Little wonder so many are trying to escape reality through drugs and alcohol. Little wonder life has become cheap. Little wonder so many are silently desperately crying out: "Does life really matter? How does it all fit? Is there really any ultimate meaning? Is there any real basis for hope? Can I live with purpose?"

The answer is: "Absolutely! There is. And yes, you can. All those who know Jesus can hope on the basis of solid evidence."

**For that reason, every one of us as believers who know Jesus personally should be radiating our hope *itself* as evidence for Christian truth.**

**Our hope *itself* can serve as a powerful evidence of the reality of the living Christ.** It's "Christ in us, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

**As followers of Jesus, let's resolve to be hopeful.** Let's look hopeful. Let's sound hopeful. Let's exude hopefulness and peace and joy. Let's be living consistently with our profession, content with what we have, anticipating what's ahead.

**In the great battle for truth be sure to strap on your helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8).**

"And when the battle's over we shall wear a crown, we shall wear a crown, we shall wear a crown. And when the battle's over we shall wear a crown in the new Jerusalem."

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.





## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part A

**DOES  
GOD  
EXIST?**

**IF GOD EXISTS,  
WHICH GOD  
EXISTS?**







## Does God exist? And if so, *what* God exists? In which God do we trust?

### PRIORITY OF THIS SUBJECT

Is there a God? Or is there no God? Is everything we see, feel, and even perceives ourselves to be, in the final analysis, only matter, molecules, and chemicals randomly floating around in a cold dark cosmos? Such questions are perhaps the most basic and important ones that human beings can ask, and the answers carry with them **huge implications** — certainly **in** this life and **for** this life — but also, if there *is* a God and depending on who He is, for all eternity. The stakes are that high. In fact, **the stakes are so high that it would be foolish** to simply sit idly by, on the fence, with a company of indecisive vacillating **agnostics**.

### THIS SUBJECT IS FOUNDATIONAL

Wise Christians understand that until the big questions are addressed, it is often — although not always — pointless to expect people to come to Christ for forgiveness and salvation.

I say “not always” because there are times when people come to Christ without a great deal of intellectual struggle — maybe as the result of strong family teaching, or because of an emotional crisis, or other such circumstances. But when someone is asking the big questions, in most cases the questions are going to have to be answered first. As apologist Josh McDowell has said: “The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects.”

Francis Schaeffer, in an interview toward the end of his life, supposedly said that if he had an hour with a person on a plane who did not know the Lord, he would spend the first fifty-five minutes laying the groundwork for the gospel (talking about creation in the **image of God** and where man came from), and the last five minutes on the presentation of the gospel itself.”

### THE BIG QUESTIONS

What about life origins, the existence of God, the identity of Christ, the matter of evil and suffering, the meaning of life, and so on?

## THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL CASE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD FROM SCRIPTURE

Of course the **Bible** simply **assumes** the existence of God. The fourth word in the very first verse of the Bible (**Genesis 1:1**) refers to God as if the matter is already settled. **Psalm 14:1** declares that “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” In **Jeremiah 29:12-13** God Himself issues this invitation and challenge: “Call upon Me and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for me with all your heart.” **Romans 1:20** says that since the creation of the world [God’s] invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.” Atheists are without an excuse.



## THE DEFEATED CASE FOR ATHEISM

We all have some sense of the divine within us. You may have heard of the atheist who held a formal debate with a minister and clearly appeared to win. But at the end he was disqualified because someone heard him breathing a sigh of relief and saying: “Thank God!”

Other atheists who attempt to refute God’s existence seem to have a hard time being consistent. Once an atheist was reportedly overheard asking another atheist: “Do you suppose that God knows that we know that He doesn’t exist?”

But in all seriousness the case for atheism fails before it begins because in order to categorically deny the existence of a God — any God — one would have to have universal knowledge. Otherwise God might exist outside the parameters of the atheist’s knowledge. Because of that logical conundrum many atheists will say, “Well, I’m just saying that I don’t believe there is a good case for theism.” But, ah! — there it is — “I don’t **believe** . . .” He is not able to **prove** his case. He is not altogether certain. So, if pressed, the atheist may admit, technically, to being an **agnostic**. But with the stakes so high, agnosticism of any sort is a very risky position to take.

It takes faith to believe that God **is**, and it also takes faith to believe that God **is not**! But here’s the thing. Just because **agnosticism** is too risky and **atheism** is logically untenable, no thoughtful person should ever just **mindlessly** become a **theist** or a **Christian** — rejecting all that is faith-based and shutting down the mind.

Where does that leave us? Does Christianity not *also* require faith? Yes. It takes faith to believe that God **is**, and it also takes faith to believe that God **is not**! But here’s the thing. Just because **agnosticism** is risky and **atheism** is logically untenable, no thoughtful person should ever just mindlessly become a **theist** or a **Christian** — rejecting all that is faith-based and shutting down the mind.

Can God’s existence be proven empirically? No. Not even the Christian worldview claims that to be the case. In fact, the Bible (**Hebrews 11:6**) says that “. . . he who comes to God must **believe** that He is . . .” **Faith is required**. But **reasonable** faith, not **blind faith** or **mindless faith** — a faith that is based on the best evidence. Theism is a conclusion within the reach of thinking people!

**Chris Halverson** is the son of former **United States Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson**. Writing in the November 3, 1997, edition of **Perspective**, Chris said this: “Years ago my father wrote of the evidence for the existence of God: ‘It takes great faith to be an atheist! Believing in No-god is holding a faith against overwhelming evidence. Evidence within man – his conscience. Evidence within nature — the creation (for every effect there must be a cause). Evidence within society — hundreds of thousands of volumes . . . written by thousands of authors over thousands of years... all of which witness to a personal God who has made Himself known.’”

**But if it’s safe and intellectually prudent to believe that God (or at least a God) exists, one must quickly press on to answer the next question:**

**“WHAT God? WHICH God”**

Is God a mere existential concept of the sum total of all that exists (pantheism, monism)? Is there more than one God (polytheism)? Is God just some sort of impersonal super-intelligence, like a mega-computer? Or is He conscious and personal? Is He an intelligent designer? Is the God who exists the god of Deepak Chopra — an impersonal “process.” Or is **nature** God? Is God like Zeus, or Krishna, or Allah? Was the God who exists once a man (Mormonism)? Or is He the God of Taoism? Today more than ever we need to define terms. What do we mean when we say **God**?

In Acts 17:23 there is a fascinating account of the Apostle Paul’s first-century visit to Athens. While he was there he walked around the city and then addressed the leaders at the Areopagus. He said: “I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ **Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.**”

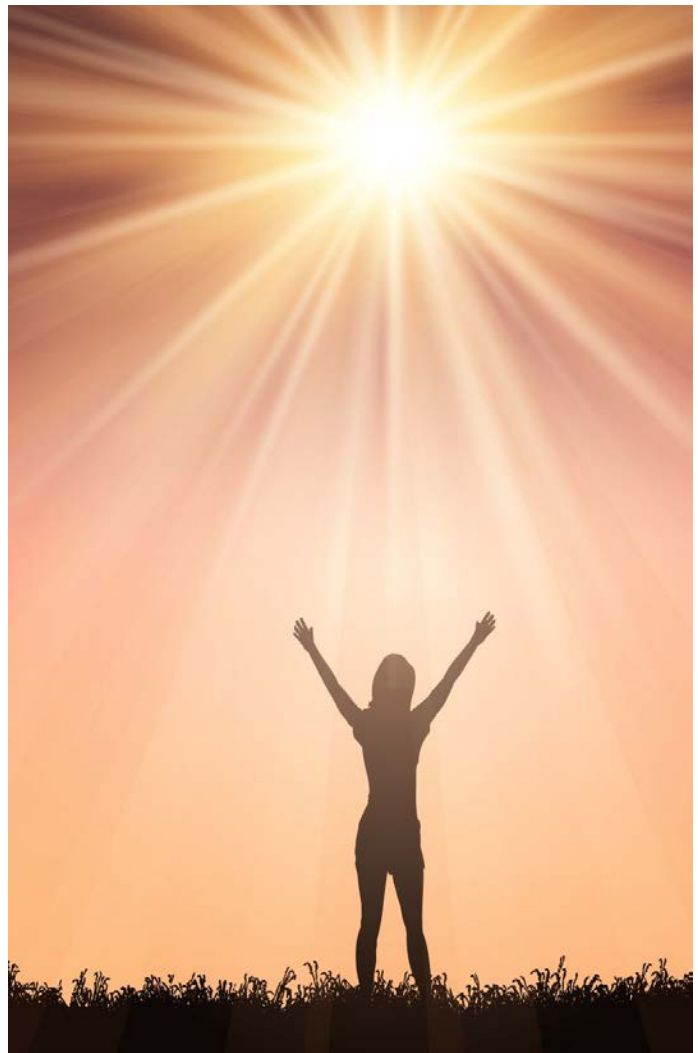


### **WHAT’S COMING NEXT?**

So we will continue in this section now by . . .

- a) presenting the **classic lines of evidence for theism** in general, and for the existence of God as described in the Bible in particular. Much of this material has been adapted from a two-part series that I authored and published in the **January and February 1998** issues of the **Proclamation**, a publication of the AIIA Institute.
- b) including an excellent one-page piece on this subject authored by **Dwight Oswald**, pastor of the Southview Bible Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa, in March 2023. Although we have never met in this life I feel a great kinship with this gifted pastor-apologist. He has been faithfully doing apologetics from his local church base for many years.
- c) also including a seminar on the subject of exactly **which** God exists, and offering insight and clarification on the **nature** and **attributes** of the God of the Bible — all in line with the historic Christian worldview.
- d) ending with a short piece on the doctrine of a triune God, a critical and distinguishing attribute of the God as articulated by the Christian worldview.

# FOUR CLASSIC ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD



## 1. The cosmological argument — the case from cause and effect.

Based on the principle of **causality**, this argument begins by recognizing that for every **effect** there is a corresponding **cause**. Since the universe obviously exists, there must have been a great Cause — a Primary Mover — behind it all.

To put it another way, things exist. People exist, rocks exist, music exists, happiness and loneliness exist, and awareness exists. Things exist — something is really there. Because there is no realistic **natural** explanation for something coming from nothing, there has to be a realistic **supernatural** explanation — a Creator, an Ultimate Source, a Final Cause, a God.

But someone will quickly say, “Well, if God made the universe, **who made God?** Who caused the Causer?” To which we would respond: “No one caused God, because God is by definition a **necessary Being, self-existent** and **self-sustaining.**”

**Human personality** indicates that God is also **personal**, since **personality** is never known to flow from the **impersonal**. While this line of reasoning quickly moves into a consideration of not just the existence of God, but the attributes of God, it does provide rather convincing ground for concluding that a personal God exists.

**The bottom line is that there is either a self-existent God or a self-existent universe.** Because even secular scientific studies nowadays indicate that the universe had a beginning and is now running down (energy is dissipating and heat is being diffused), there is certainly no viable basis upon which to conclude that the universe is self-existent. Therefore, the best evidence points to a **supernatural being** — or **God**. That is the essence of the (cosmological) argument from creation.

## 2. The teleological argument — the case from design.

Probably the oldest and certainly one of the most easily understood and therefore popular arguments for the existence of God, this line of evidence is based on the high order and intricate design readily discernible in our universe. Just as a **finely-tuned** and **operating watch** could never assemble itself by chance, and is evidence of a watchmaker, so the highly complex nature of life in this world is unmistakable evidence of an Intelligent Designer (God) who brought it all about.

**Two more illustrations of the design inference:**

- A million monkeys typing day and night for a million years on a computer keyboard would never write *Paradise Lost*. That would (and did) require the creative intelligence of a John Milton.



- Can you imagine anyone in their right mind looking at **Mt. Rushmore** and saying, “Wow — look! What an extraordinary rock formation. It clearly resembles the faces of four U.S. presidents. But of course we assume that it has resulted from wind erosion and other natural environmental forces occurring over long periods of time out here in the Badlands of South Dakota!”

Life on Planet Earth is itself convincing evidence for the existence of God. In order for life to be sustained here, just the right balance of light and heat, resulting from just the right size, rotation, tilt of the planet on its axis, and distance from the sun — would have all been required. It's known as the evidence of **fine-tuning**. And there's not a chance it happened by chance!

Yale University physicist **Harold Morowitz** once calculated the probability of generating a single bacterium by mere chance as being just “one in ten to the 100 billionth power. That is a 10 followed by 100 billion zeros.” In other words, impossible.



Microbiologist and author **Michael Behe** calls life “irreducibly complex.” **Bill Glass** once said, “You’ve really got to have a lot of faith to be a [naturalist]. You’ve got to believe that **no one** times **nothing** plus **blind chance** equals **everything**.”

The teleological argument is so powerful and convincing that the Bible says no one has any excuse when it comes to acknowledging that there is sufficient evidence for God’s existence. Anyone anywhere in the world who has ever looked at the stars and the vastness of space on a clear night, or considered the complexity and wonder of the human body and mind, has all of the evidence for God that they’ll ever need.

The teleological argument is so powerful and convincing that the Bible says **no one has any excuse** for not acknowledging that there is **sufficient evidence** for God’s existence.

**“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” — Romans 1:20**

### 3. The ontological argument — the case from being.



Of the four classic arguments for the existence of God, the ontological argument (from being) is probably the most challenging to grasp. It was first advanced by **St. Anselm** in 1078 A.D. In short, goes like this:

Because humans can conceive of a perfect God, and because to exist is more perfect than to only be conceived of (not truly exist), a real God must exist.

Here’s another way to say it. When anyone, including an atheist, talks about God, they are **by definition** referring to a perfect Being. Of course, the atheist would say that he is only referring to the **concept** of God. But here’s the problem — the mere **concept** of God wouldn’t be as perfect as the **reality** of God. So the **mere concept** of God is an oxymoron — because to think of a God who doesn’t actually exist wouldn’t really be to think of God at all, in the technical sense of the word.

Let’s try it one more way. Trying to imagine a God who does not exist is **impossible** because you would not actually be thinking of God. You would be thinking of a being without existence whom you propose to be greater than an existing being (of whom, by definition, no greater being could exist). You would be thinking of a being without existence whom you propose to be greater than, or more perfect than, an existing being. Total absurdity. If you can think of God, God must exist.

Where does a sense of **morality** come from in humans (as opposed to wild animals, for instance) **if not** from a **Great Moral Lawgiver**, i.e. God?

### 4. The moral argument — a case from the universal sense of right and wrong.

This argument involves the observation of a universal moral law. Human beings everywhere, even in the most remote jungle tribes, seem to demonstrate an inherent sense of right and wrong. Cold-blooded unprovoked murder, rape, lying, and theft are all recognized as being bad, **wrong**, evil — in all places and at all times. But where does that sense of morality come from in humans (as opposed to wild animals, for instance) if not from a Great Moral Lawgiver, i.e. God?





In the opening chapters of his classic work, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis refers to this moral law as **The Rule of Right and Wrong**. For many years, Lewis says that he argued against God because the universe seemed cruel and unjust. But then he began to wonder where he got the idea of just and unjust. He said, "A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line."

In the end, Lewis says that it was in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist that he was forced to acknowledge his atheism as being too simple. "If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning."

The fact that we even **recognize evil** as being evil is **convincing evidence** for the existence of God.

# EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH | March, 2023

Pastor Dwight Oswald • Southview Bible Church • 135 Bennett Ave. • Council Bluffs, IA. 51503

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✱ See my personal note re: Pastor Oswald on page 213 of my *Compendium of Christian Apologetics Resources*. — dew

## THE EVIDENCE FOR GOD

God made us, mind and all, and He expects us to use it. The evidence for God is all around us and humanity is hardwired with a God consciousness so that all are without excuse (Acts 17:27; Rom. 1:19-20). The fallenness of mankind left him depraved and his ability to reason about God severely skewed. Although the image of God in fallen humanity is marred, it is still there, accounting for his ability to still reason. In his fallenness, God reasoned with Cain about sin (Genesis 4:6-7). To His rebellious people, God said, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). Paul reasoned with Felix about “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:25).

## LOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR GOD

- 1. Cosmological Argument:** The word cosmological comes from the Greek word *cosmos* meaning “world.” Everything comes from something. Nothing cannot account for something. This argument says that every effect must have a cause. There must therefore be an uncaused cause of everything, and this cause is God. It all comes back to God Who is self-existent in a way that defies explanation. We are here, so there must be a God.
- 2. Teleological Argument:** The word teleological comes from the Greek word *telos* which means “end.” This is the intelligent design argument. Design demands a designer. Order and harmony speak to the reality of a super-intelligence behind it all. The laws of nature speak to an ultimate lawgiver. The law of nature says that everything is breaking down (the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics) which harmonizes perfectly with what the Bible teaches regarding an original PERFECT creation that is now breaking down because of the effects of sin. If something is running down it stands to reason that it must have started in an optimum condition which is consistent with the creation account of the Bible. The reality of everything breaking down (the law of entropy) is the exact opposite of evolution which claims things are evolving for the better.
- 3. Anthropological Argument:** The word anthropological comes from the Greek word *anthropos* which means “man.” If there is no God why does humanity universally have a “God-consciousness”? People are moral beings with a God-consciousness including a universal fear of death. It has been said that no one is more obsessed with the idea of “God” than those who deny there is a God, which just goes to prove that they “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). People universally agree it is wrong to steal and kill, etc. Where did we get these universal ideals of “morality” if not from God?

## GENERAL REVELATION V. SPECIAL REVELATION

General revelation in combination with being hardwired with a God-consciousness clearly points to God (cf. Ps. 19:1; Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 1:18-21; 2:14-15). However, it takes special revelation to bring us all the way home to the God of the Bible. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It pleased God through the method of “the message preached to save those who believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:21). The gospel itself is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). Following the resurrection of Christ God NOW “commands that all men everywhere repent” and believe on Christ (Acts 17:30-31). This involves KNOWING and BELIEVING gospel truth. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

So, while general revelation related to rational arguments has its place, by itself it is inadequate. Scripture starts with the presupposition of God. The Bible assumes the existence of God and does not provide all manner of philosophical arguments for God. God has revealed Himself in nature, but most clearly through the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word (Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 John 5:20). Mankind is responsible for the light given and all are without excuse (John 1:9; 8:12; 12:46-48).

**THOT:** The emphasis for God in Scripture is on Scripture! (Isaiah 55:10-11)

**Israel** is the ONE special God-chosen nation (Amos 3:2). Israel is uniquely God’s witness nation (Isa. 43:9-12). God uniquely identified with and revealed Himself through Israel in the Exodus and throughout Old Testament history (cf. Ex. 9:16; Deut. 4:33-35; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 9:17). Both the Scriptures and the Messiah were given through Israel. Track the history of Israel and you will track the **revelatory footprints of God** in the sands of time. — ECT 4/2023

# *In Which God Do We Trust?*

*Defining  
Deity in a  
Confused  
New Age*

**"We must first ask  
what kind of a God  
Christianity believes  
in before we can  
meaningfully ask  
whether such  
a God exists."**

**— Cornelius Van Til**



## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This workshop is intended to provide the case and means for heightened **spiritual discernment** in an era marked by increased influence from cults and New Age-pagan-materialistic influence. A growing number of non-Christian worldviews are challenging the historic Christian view of God in our day — even from **inside** the Church. Christians are being influenced by such forces, often in the form of emergent or so-called “progressive Christianity.” How can we best understand the times and contend for Biblical theology in our homes, churches, and community? We hope to address such concerns in a helpful and practical way in this workshop.

## NOTE TO WORKSHOP LEADER

There is a lot of material here. You may very well need to abridge the content to fit the time allotted for the two halves of this workshop.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*When Cultists Ask*, by Norman Geisler

*The Challenge of the Cults & New Religions*, by Ron Rhodes

*Confronting the New Age*, by Douglas Groothuis

*Another Gospel?* By Alisa Childers

*Christ Among Other gods*, by Erwin W. Lutzer

*Pocket Guide to World Religions*, Corduan, ©IVP 2006

[Rose Publishing](#), aka Hendrickson Publishers

## Distribute

- Workshop worksheet
- Exercise Paper
- A copy of the Schaeffer Interview paper

## Intro to Workshop Leader

### Intro to Participants

- Name, home town, reason for choosing this workshop

### Intro to Workshop

- Refer to information as listed above
- Material will be presented in two parts as outlined on your workshop worksheet
- The worksheet is really more of an outline than a worksheet, due to limited space for notes.

## WORKSHOP

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We begin here by reiterating the first purpose of this workshop — namely, to demonstrate **why** and **how** it is critical for Christian leaders and educators today to be more spiritually discerning than ever when it comes to understanding who God is (theology). And we'll attempt do this in two ways — first, by answering the question "Why?" and second, by answering the question "How"?

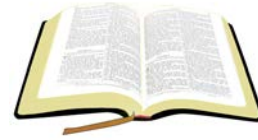
### 1. WHY MUST THE CHURCH BECOME MORE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING?

Very simply, **because we're charged to become more spiritually discerning**. As believers, if we accept the Bible as the inspired and authoritative Word of the God whom we intend to obey, then we need to do what He says — at all times, but especially as we move toward the end of the age.

**Let's review six sample texts from God's Word on this subject right here at the outset.**

- Exodus 20:3 "You shall have **no other gods** before Me."

- Isaiah 46:5: "To whom would you liken Me and make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike?"



- 1 Timothy 6:20-21 "O Timothy, **guard** what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you."

- 2 Timothy 3:13-15 "But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, **continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

- 1 John 4:1 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

- Jude 1:3 "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints."

So the message seems unmistakably clear — **guard** what has been entrusted to you, **continue** in the things you have learned, **test** the spirits, and **contend** for the faith once delivered — that's what we're to do and why we're to do it.

**Why the urgency? Because the times are quickly changing.**  
"Nine in ten Americans believe in a higher power, but only a **slim majority** believe in God as described in the Bible."

**The urgency with which we are dispatched** to become more spiritually discerning is evidenced by three current and fairly obvious trends of our day, as well as the fact that there is increased evidence that we really are moving closer and closer to the time of the end:

**a. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more culturally entrenched.**

No longer are departures from historic Christian orthodoxy the exception. It's not just a radical fringe who is pushing the agenda of opposition to Biblical truth these days. It's becoming more the rule than an anomaly. Heresy in some instances is actually becoming fashionable.

- **In April of 2018 the Pew Research Center said this** in an article entitled "When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?" "Nine in ten Americans believe in a higher power, but only a slim majority believe in God as described in the Bible"

- **According to a March 2022 article in *The Washington Times***, a religious landscape survey released at about that time revealed that **only 54% of U.S. adults** still claim to believe in “God as described in the Bible.” Other surveys of American adults indicate that about 1 in 4 Americans now believe in a non-traditional concept of the nature of God: 11% believe that God is “a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach,” 8% define God as “the total realization of personal, human potential,” and 3% believe that each person is himself or herself God.

- **Wiccans deify nature** (Mother Earth, Father Sky, horned male god, moon goddess), which they worship. But has Wicca really pervaded the culture? In **October 2022** the NBC online **THINK** publication included this paragraph: “Online platforms like TikTok and Instagram offer tutorials on every aspect of magical practice. The witchcraft hashtag has over 7 million posts on Instagram and more than 11 billion views on TikTok or, as it’s known in the community, WitchTok. Podcasts about witchcraft enchant the airwaves. Along with crosses and Stars of David, major retailers like Walmart and Amazon sell the witchcraft symbol of the pentacle, pendulum divining tools and dried herbs for spells and rituals. The use of Tarot cards proliferates in lux magazines.”



- **Pluralism now clearly marks America.** Judeo-Christian values and doctrinal convictions are on the wane. The American Religious Identification Survey shows that “The proportion of the [American] population that can be classified as Christian had declined from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001.” In 2004 the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey concluded that “...the number of Protestants soon will slip below 50 percent of the nation's population.” In England, King Charles had announced years ago that when he assumed the throne he would change his designation to “Defender of the Faiths.”
- **Over the past 25 years there’s been a constant drip of best-selling books challenging historic views of God.** Here are just a few examples: *Conversations with God*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Jesus Papers*, and *Embraced by the Light*. Some time ago noted *New York Times* columnist and commentator David Brooks reviewed “The Five People You Meet in Heaven,” a wildly popular best-seller written by Mitch Albom, author of “Tuesdays With Morrie.” Brooks described it as a book in which God, to the extent that he exists, is sort of a genial Dr. Phil. He said that in Mitch Albom's heaven, God and his glory are not the center of attention. It's all about you. Brooks went on to refer to what he called the “soft-core spirituality” that marks our time. He said, “We live in a psychobabble nation where narcissism is so much a part of the atmosphere that nobody even thinks to protest or get angry about it. ”
- **The media features so many stories about evolution, and the naturalistic doctrine behind them is all enthusiastically yet non-critically promoted by well-established organizations** like National Geographic, network news outlets, and the Public Broadcasting System. Within just about 24 hours in early April 2006 three such stories hit the big news cycle — one about Jesus walking on ice, another about the Gospel of Judas and its “shocking revelation” that the betrayal was actually set up by Jesus Himself, and another about the discovery of the great missing link between sea and land mammals which had now been discovered. All three stories were based on flimsy data and speculation. Since then all the fuss has dissipated. But they leave behind an impression that Christianity is a hoax. That seems to be the real story being pushed.

- Consider the proliferation over time of up to what likely currently numbers 3500+ cults, aberrational sects, and world religious systems across this nation, based in even small-town America today. Mosques are appearing beside little church buildings and the fastest growing religion (in terms of percentage) today is Wicca, a neopagan religion. The number of Wiccan adherents grew from 8,000 in 1990 to 134,000 in 2001 to 342,000 in 2008. They've been doubling about every 30 months, according to the American Religious Identification Survey. **Newsweek** reported **1.6 Wiccans in the U.S. as of 2018**.
- **NOTE:** It's not that there is any less spiritual interest today. But the interest is increasingly misguided. Rev. Gerald McDermott, an Episcopal priest and professor of religion and philosophy at Roanoke College in Salem, VA, says that the **"rise of all sorts of paganism is creating a false spirituality that proves to be a more dangerous rival to the Christian faith than atheism."** An article in the December 14, 2004, issue of *Christian Century* by John Dart was entitled: **"Americans' belief in God is high but nuanced."**
- According to Barna, only 67 percent of those polled in one survey agreed with a definition of God as "the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator of the universe who rules the world today," whereas 73 percent agreed with that definition in 1992. "So many people who might have held orthodox [Christian] views in the past have embraced a much broader set of beliefs," Barna comments. "There is a big trend toward a diverse and inclusive spirituality." ©1994, The Christian Century Foundation

### **b. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more ecclesiastically pervasive.**

Consider the influence of a secular and post-Christian culture on the Church itself, especially in terms of the erosion of doctrines long considered essential.

Leading the list of concerning trends in this sphere is the emergent church movement, which seems to have more recently morphed into what is now being called **Progressive Christianity**.

- Leading the list of concerning trends in this sphere is the emergent church movement, which seems to have more recently morphed into what is now being called **Progressive Christianity**. Postmodern thinking has moved many so-called Christians (leaders and laity) to deny numerous essential doctrines of the Church, such as the atonement, and the exclusivity of Christ as the way of salvation. Influencers such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, and Rob Bell (Love Wins) have taken a tremendous toll among many younger-generation pastors and church leaders who have jettisoned sound Christian doctrine but go right on leading their churches by using

much the same language. Some of them actually admit to being closet agnostics. Two excellent resources that expose this trend are **1)** a video series published by **American Gospel** (can be viewed online), and **2)** a book by Alisa Childers entitled **Another Gospel**.

- George Barna showed many years ago that 26 percent of those claiming to be born-again now believe that all religions are essentially the same, that 50 percent believe that a life of good works will enable a person to get to heaven, and that more than one in three of those who say that they are born-again Christians no longer believe that Jesus rose physically from the dead.

- According to Barna (years ago), 33% of born-again Christians now accept same-sex unions, 39 percent believe that it is morally acceptable for couples to live together before marriage, and more Christians than non-Christians today are likely to have experienced divorce.
- Gene Edward Veith cites all of this as strong evidence of the fact that American Christianity is now conforming to the dominant secular culture.

- **Experience** often appears to be taking precedence over **doctrine**. Worship and praise are almost **replacing** teaching and preaching in some churches. Feel good choruses are supplanting time-tested and theologically-rich hymns. Subjective experience is more popular than objective truth. All of this is taking a high toll on doctrinal literacy. Many folks claiming to be Christians today don't even seem to know what it is that they believe. One Barna poll showed that 17% of white mainline Protestants and Catholics were not able to come up with an answer when asked to describe God in their own words.

- Christians often seem oblivious to New Age thought when they read it in places like Betty Eadie's *Embraced by the Light* or in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Some churches and Sunday School classes are reportedly using *A Course in Miracles* as curriculum.

- Christian bookstores are often routinely now stocking books by authors who may in no way qualify as doctrinally orthodox.

- Calls for full-blown ecumenism (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) are replacing simple co-belligerence when it comes to contending with immoral social issues.

- The toll on the youth in our Christian churches is very significant. George Barna, in his book *Generation Next*, notes that there is a frightening drop-off rate in church attendance once young people complete high school. Why? At some level it may well be attributed to the fact that our youth see no real difference between the world and the church.

- Can you cite any specific examples of the modern application of Romans 12:2 in the Church today? That text says: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Or of 1 John 2:15-16: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

**Secular Humanist Bart Campolo** asks this question "Why would you want to worship a god if you could imagine a better god? That's what I don't understand — like, if you could imagine a god that's better than the one that you worship — trade up!"

Many folks claiming to be Christians today **don't even seem to know** what it is that they believe. One Barna poll showed that 17% of white mainline Protestants and Catholics were **not able to come up with an answer** when asked to **describe God in their own words**.



### c. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more theologically subtle.

Scripture clearly warns that "...impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." Jesus said that "...many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." (Matthew 24:5)

Where is the hard evidence of this today? You need look no further than the Exercise Paper that accompanies your worksheet.

## REVIEW OR HAVE PARTICIPANTS COMPLETE EXERCISE PAPER

## BRIEFLY REVIEW SCHAEFFER INTERVIEW PAPER

### These two papers gets us to the heart of this workshop!

These two papers, along with the rest of the material in this workshop, are intended to **provoke an even more extensive study of your own** (or with your small group or students) **of critically defining and defending the historic Christian doctrine of God** in light of of the **various other doctrines of God espoused by cults and religions and even secularists** (who claim not to believe in God or any gods) **worldwide today.**

There are some excellent resources out there to help you with your study. Some are online and some are in printed publications, as follows:

- **Online:** <https://carm.org/miscellaneous-topics/cult-comparison-chart/>
- **Published pamphlet:** Christianity, Cults & Religions; © July 1 1999 by [Rose Publishing](#)
- **Published chart:** North American Mission Board's **Comparative Belief Chart**

See also **Monism Exposed**, a thoughtletter published by Daryl E. Witmer (with AIIA) in 2003.

## 2. HOW CAN THE CHURCH BECOME MORE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING?

What can and should Christian believers, parents, teachers, leaders, and educators do about such disturbing trends as we've noted above? Let's look at a number of practical proposals.

### a. Become intimately familiar with God and His truth through prayer and Bible times.

- Many of you are no doubt aware of how FBI agents being trained to detect counterfeit currency spend most of their time studying, not the counterfeit stuff, but the genuine item. When one becomes real familiar with what's real, one will automatically recognize what isn't. That same principle is often legitimate and helpful in detecting what is aberrant in the spiritual realm as well.



### b. Appreciate Christians with the spiritual gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10).

- That is, in the larger Body of Christ, e.g. Watchman Fellowship, NEIRR, Bible Answer Man
- But also in the local church, i.e. regard highly those who voice concern about doctrinal drift.

### **c. Observe and carefully examine the wider culture (Acts 17).**

- Make certain safeguards are in place: stay well-grounded in faith and well-connected to church.
- Subscribe to, or critically review, a variety of publications, not only Christian, e.g. Free Inquiry.
- Critically read best-sellers and view current films — again, within reason and with safeguards.

### **d. Study and compare what you observe in the wider culture with the Word of God.**

- Read and listen to gifted and godly apologists, e.g. Strobel, One-Minute Apologist web post.
- Read books on the subject of how to discern false theology (see listing above).
- Carefully compare and define the terminology that you read in the secular world vs. the Bible.
- Visit Anchor New England Study Center for lectures and library.
- Use excellent charts of cults and other media such as Rose Publishing's apologetics resources.

### **e. Distance yourself and your church from heretical influence.**

Four key Scriptural directives apply here:

- Jude 3-4: "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."
- 2 Timothy 3:1-5: "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; **Avoid such men as these.**"
- Galatians 1:8-9: "But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."
- 2 John 1:10-11 "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds."

### **f. Preach or teach a series on apologetics and doctrine-related subjects.**

- Use Sunday School, midweek service, or Youth Fellowship as forums for a series on essential doctrines, cults, comparative religions.
- **Ask one student per week to prepare to explain what a particular religion or cult or worldview (assigned ahead of time) believes about who God is.**

### **g. Arrange for resource speakers in your church or homeschool.**

- Contact **Anchor New England** (Ryan Goding) or **Evidence for Hope** (Bob Valiant).

### **h. Pray personally and publicly for skills and courage to effectively defend the faith.**

### **i. Stock and promote key apologetic resources in your home library and church library.**

### **j. Sponsor (budget for) an apologist just like you would any other missionary.**

- Your heart is often where your money is, and vice versa.
- Consider the priority of the "mission field of the mind."

### **k. Send and sponsor youth to attend events with an apologetics emphasis.**

## **Entertain Comments and Questions**

## **Closing Prayer | Dismissal**

# In Which God Do We Trust?

## WORKSHOP EXERCISE PAPER

1. Read and consider the following pieces.
  2. Underline or highlight all that may indicate a departure from historic Christian theology.
- 

### A. CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

*Neale Donald Walsh has authored an extensive series of bestselling books and articles based on what he claims to have been his personal visits with God. But exactly who is the "God" with whom Walsh has been conversing?*

Spoken by God, according to Walsh, **page 57 of Book 3, *Conversations with God***, ©1998 Hampton Roads: "If Satan exists, he exists as every thought you ever had of separation from Me. You cannot be separate from Me, for I Am All That Is. Men invented the devil to scare people into doing what they wanted, under the threat of separation from God if they did not. Condemnation, being hurled into the everlasting fires of hell, was the ultimate scare tactic. Yet now you need be afraid no more. For nothing can, or ever will, separate you from Me. You and I are One. We cannot be anything else if I Am What I Am: All That Is. Why then would I condemn Myself? And how would I do it? How could I separate Myself from Myself when My Self is All There Is, and there is nothing else? My purpose is to evolve, not to condemn; to grow, not to die; to experience, not to fail to experience. My purpose is to Be, not to cease to Be. I have no way to separate Myself from you—or anything else. 'Hell' is simply not knowing this. 'Salvation' is knowing and understanding it completely. You are now saved. You needn't worry about what's going to happen to you 'after death' anymore."

### B. A COURSE IN MIRACLES (ACIM)

*ACIM is a tome first published in 1975 by The Foundation for Inner Peace. It was authored by Helen Schucman, Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University in New York. Schucman claims that the content of the book came to her in "a kind of rapid, inner dictation" which she took down in shorthand. Since it first became available for sale in 1976, over 1.5 million copies have been sold worldwide in 16 different languages. The philosophy of the Course is monistic, but it redefines and uses terminology and theological elements found in traditional Christianity.*

"The Last Judgment is generally thought of as a procedure undertaken by God. Actually it will be undertaken by my brothers with my help. It is a final healing rather than a meting out of punishment, however much you may think that punishment is deserved." — the words of one said to be Jesus Christ, page 5, ACIM

### C. SPIRIT OF CHANGE (SOC)

*Carol Bedrosian is publisher and editor of Spirit of Change (SOC), a New Age wholistic health publication claiming a reader-ship of about 200,000 — most of which are in New England.*

Bedrosian refers to a retreat that she had attended on the Atlantic coast at Narragansett RI while she was in the midst of a search for her identity and "questioning every belief of her upbringing." She says that she wanted "an irrefutable answer to the question, 'Is there a higher power in our lives, or is God just a comforting idea humans have passed down through the ages....?'" One afternoon she hiked to a remote rock on the beach where she felt compelled to lay face down in the brilliant sun, with the gulls and waves providing background noise.

Suddenly, Bedrosian says that she experienced "a stunning revelation that I was a much beloved creature of this magnificent Creation, and it was God's Creation. Yes, there was a God, and all of this Creation, including me, was God. Every thing, every creature, every person in this Creation was God, without exception. I leapt up from the rock and saw the ocean, the sun, the horizon and the rocks on the beach — all me! I sobbed and I laughed and released all the pent up torment in the surety of what I was experiencing and would never doubt again because it was now a part of my cellular knowledge. There is more, there is God, there is faith, hope, and love!" —from MUSINGS • Winter 2005 edition of Spirit of Change.

#### **D. DEEPAK CHOPRA**

*The following is excerpted from a review by Gail Hudson on Amazon.com about a book entitled: "How to Know God," by Deepak Chopra, a medical doctor of Indian nationality, and a very well known and influential New Age guru now living in the United States.*

God is not a person or a thing but rather a process, according to renowned author and spiritual leader Deepak Chopra. The purpose of this ambitious book is to assure readers that anyone can engage in this process — "it isn't a matter of faith, religious teaching, innate goodness, luck or some other mysterious factor," Chopra explains. "Our brains are hardwired to find God."

"Fortunately, Chopra is a gifted narrator. . . As he drifts through the cloudy realms of ESP, telepathy, clairvoyance, miracles, obedience, loyalty, evil, ego, addictions, and mentors, readers can trust that there is a competent pilot at the helm, deftly guiding this excellent book."

#### **E. RICO FROM PORTLAND, OREGON**

*The following is excerpted from an e-mail that I received from a man named Rico on March 8, 2006.*

"A global approach takes into consideration all the revelations of God to all the peoples of the earth through all sorts of gurus, teachers, wise men, religious figures. I don't care if you are a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sufi, a Buddhist, a Jew, or Christian. Ultimately I accept you for who ... you are, and stimulate you to be true to your path."

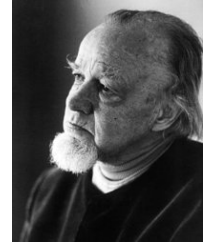
#### **F. RECONSTRUCTIONIST JEWS**

*The following is excerpted from a VOICES column by Rabbi Barry Krieger in the October 13-14 issue of the Bangor Daily News:*

"[Reconstructionist Jews hold] the belief that God is not supernatural, but rather is best understood and felt as a natural part of our unfolding universe."

# In Which God Do We Trust?

## INTERVIEWING FRANCIS SCHAEFFER



The following “mock” interview is excerpted from AIIA’s 1998 thoughtletter series entitled *Crucial Answers from Great Minds: Francis A. Schaeffer, Part 1 of a 3-part series*. Compiled by Daryl E. Witmer. This answers cited below by the late Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer are all sourced in Dr. Schaeffer’s classic work *The God Who Is There (TGWIT)*, ©1968 IVP. For the purposes of this series, Dr. Schaeffer’s writings are presented here in interview format although there was no actual exchange.

Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984) was an author, thinker, and speaker. *TIME* magazine once referred to him as “a missionary to the intellectuals.” In 1955 he and his wife founded *The L’Abri Fellowship*, a community in the Swiss Alps intended to assist sincere seekers in arriving at a sound basis for the Christian faith. Dr. Schaeffer’s books have been translated into more than 25 languages, with over 3 million in print.

All reprints from *The God Who is There (TGWIT)* by Francis A. Schaeffer. ©1968 by L’Abri Fellowship, Switzerland. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

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### OUR QUESTION

Isn’t it possible that all religions point to the same God – one that is just perceived in different ways?

### SCHAEFFER’S ANSWER

“The God who is there according to the Scriptures is the personal-infinite God. There is no other god like this God. It is ridiculous to say that all religions teach the same things when **they disagree at the fundamental point as to what God is like**. The gods of the East are infinite by definition — the definition being ‘god is all that is.’ This is the pan-everything-ism god. The gods of the West have tended to be personal but limited; such were the gods of the Greeks, Romans, and Germans. But the God of the Bible, Old and New Testaments alike, is the infinite-personal God.” — TGWIT, p94, ©1968 IVP

### OUR QUESTION

How is God related to Himself and to His creation?

### SCHAEFFER’S ANSWER

“On the side of God’s infinity there is a break between God and the whole of His creation. I am as separated from God in the area of His being the Creator and infinite, and being the creature and finite, as is the atom or energy particle. I am no closer to God on this side than the machine. However, on the side of God’s personality, the break comes between man and the rest of creation.” — TGWIT, pp94-95, ©1968 IVP

### OUR QUESTION

What does it mean to believe on Jesus Christ, or to cast oneself on Christ?

### SCHAEFFER’S ANSWER

“I would suggest there are four crucial aspects to be considered... [These] are not slogans to be repeated by rote and they do not have to be said in these words, but the individual must have come to a positive conclusion and affirmation concerning them, if he is to believe in the biblical sense:

1. Do you believe that God exists and that He is a personal God, and that Jesus Christ is God – remembering that we are not talking of the word or idea god, but of the infinite-personal God who is there?
2. Do you acknowledge that you are guilty in the presence of this God – remembering that we are not talking about guilt feelings, but true moral guilt?
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died in space and time in history on the cross, and that when He died His substitutional work of bearing God’s punishment against sin was fully accomplished and complete?
4. On the basis of God’s promises in His written communication to us, the Bible, do you (or have you) cast yourself on this Christ as your personal Saviour — not trusting in anything you yourself have ever done or ever will do? This is what ‘believing on the Lord Jesus’ means. If a man has believed in this way he has God’s promise that he is a Christian.” — TGWIT, pp134-135, ©1968 IVP

# In Which God Do We Trust?

## Defining Deity in a Confused New Age

Compiled by Daryl E. Witmer

## WORKSHOP WORKSHEET

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

When Cultists Ask, by Norman Geisler  
The Challenge of the Cults & New Religions, by Ron Rhodes  
Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothuis  
Another Gospel? By Alisa Childers  
Christ Among Other gods, by Erwin W. Lutzer  
Pocket Guide to World Religions, Corduan, ©IVP 2006  
[Rose Publishing](#) aka Hendrickson Publishers

RECEIVE: Worksheet, Exercise Paper, and Schaeffer Interview Paper

### Intro to workshop leader

### Intro to Workshop participants

### Intro to Workshop

### 1. WHY MUST THE CHURCH BECOME MORE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING?

Because we're told to do so: Exodus 20:3; Isaiah 46:5; 1 Timothy 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:13-15, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:3.

### Why the urgency?

a. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more c \_\_\_\_\_ e \_\_\_\_\_.

- Pew stats in 2018
- Washington Times stats in 2022
- Wiccan deify nature
- Pluralism now marks the nation
- Drip, drip, drip of bestsellers.
- Media headlines
- Consider the proliferation of worldviews
- It's not that there is less spiritual interest today.
- Barna: "...trend toward diverse spirituality."

b. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more e \_\_\_\_\_ p \_\_\_\_\_.

- Progressive Christianity (so-called)
- Born-againers believe all religions are the same
- Evangelical on moral issues: same-sex unions
- Veith: "American Christianity conforming..."
- Experience taking precedence over doctrine
- Christians fail to recognize New Age thought
- Christian bookstore undiscerning.
- More call for ecumenism
- Barna: "...frightening youth drop-off rate."
- Where is application of Romans 12:2 today?

c. Spiritual deception is becoming more and more t \_\_\_\_\_ s \_\_\_\_\_.

• Scripture warns that "...impostors will proceed from bad to worse

• Consider Jesus' warning in Matthew 24:5)

• Review or complete EXERCISE PAPER

• Review Schaeffer Interview Paper

• The real heart of this workshop!

• Note helpful resources

### 2. HOW CAN THE CHURCH BECOME MORE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNING?

a. Become intimately familiar with God and His truth through p \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_.

b. Appreciate those in the Church with the s \_\_\_\_\_ g \_\_\_\_\_ of discernment. (1 Cor. 12:10)

c. Observe the w \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 17)

d. Study and compare what you observe in culture with the W \_\_\_\_\_ of G \_\_\_\_\_.

e. Distance yourself and your church from h \_\_\_\_\_ i \_\_\_\_\_. (Gal. 1:8-9, 2 John 1:10-11)

f. Preach or teach an a \_\_\_\_\_ series.

g. Arrange for apologetics resource speakers.

h. Pray personally *and publicly* for skills and the courage to effectively defend the faith.

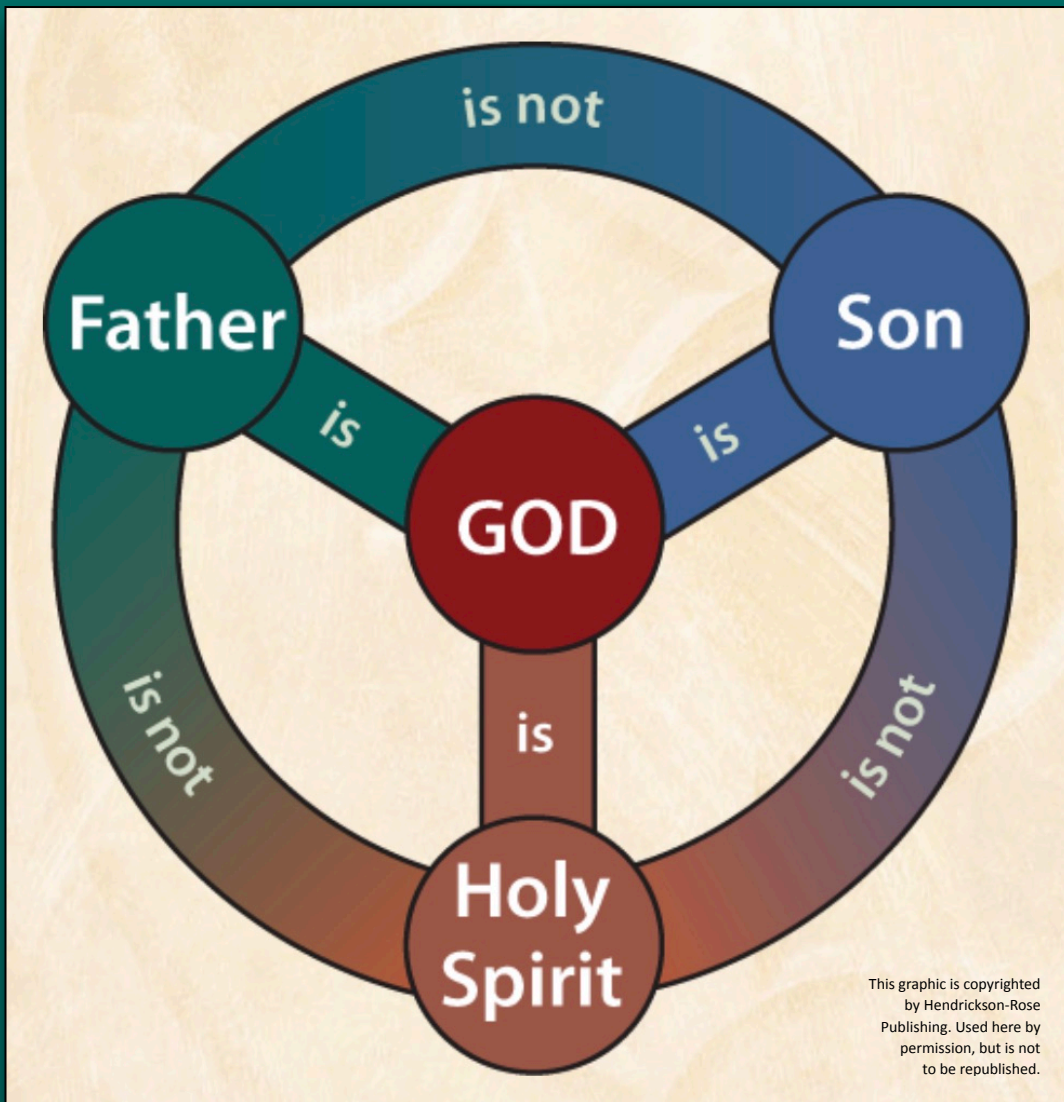
i. Stock and promote apologetic r \_\_\_\_\_.

j. Sponsor an apologist like any other \_\_\_\_\_.

k. Sponsor youth to attend apologetics e \_\_\_\_\_.

### CLOSING PRAYER AND DISMISSAL

# Is It POSSIBLE to Comprehend the Trinity?



How is one to understand the doctrine of the Trinity?  
Can the Trinity be explained? The answer is —  
“Not exactly. Not fully.” However . . .

The word “**Trinity**” does not appear in the Bible. But the reality of **one God** existing in **three persons** can be readily **deduced** from Scripture — in much the same way as the word “**inerrancy**” does not appear in Scripture but the concept of the Bible being free of error can be (1 Timothy 3:16).

**Christians are monotheistic** — not polytheistic (many gods) or monistic (all is God). That is, we believe in only **one God** (Mark 12:29; Isaiah 45:5). **But we are also trinitarian** — not unitarian. We believe that this **one God** exists in **three Persons** (Matthew 28:19). Each Person of the Godhead is fully Divine. That is, the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit **each fully possesses every one of the divine attributes**, e.g. eternally existent, all-powerful, self-sufficient, omniscient, and so on. Yet the three Persons of the Godhead are distinct from one another.

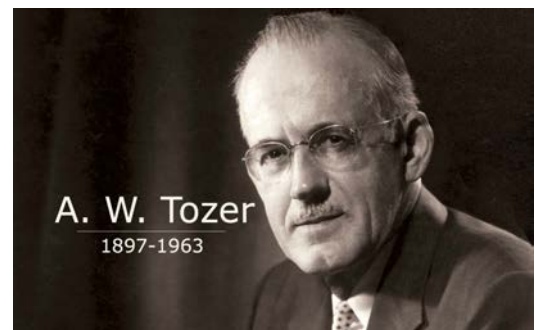
The existence of a triune God has always been a **distinguishing doctrine** of historic orthodox Christianity. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity is a key tenet that very often separates the aberrant teaching of cults and non-Christian world religions from the sound and established position of the Christian Church down through the ages. It would be considered **heretical** to hold, or to teach, that any member of the Godhead is anything **less than fully God**.

**But is there really a solid basis** for claiming that the doctrine of the Trinity is biblical? Yes. In addition to the texts cited above, there are many other texts (e.g. 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:1-2) — **including Genesis 1:26** where God Himself says, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image ... ” But exactly who are the ‘Us’ and the ‘Our’ if they’re not references to the three members of the Trinity? Certainly those pronouns cannot refer to angels or cherubim because neither angels or cherubim create anything in anybody’s image. And they can’t refer to other gods because **Elohim**, the Hebrew term translated “God” here in verse 26, is always everywhere else used as a reference to **the one and only God** (Deuteronomy 6:4). **Yet Elohim is a plural construction**. So there is no other reasonable explanation than that these are references to the plurality of the **Godhead** — right here in the very first chapter of the Bible!

**How is one to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Can the Trinity be explained?**

**The answer is — “Not exactly. Not fully.”**

The great Bible teacher A.W. Tozer wrote in his book, **The Knowledge of the Holy**, that “our most sincere effort to grasp the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity must remain forever futile, and only by deepest reverence can it be saved from actual presumption.”



**Nevertheless, it is possible to gain some insight into this mystery.**

The graphic on the previous page, for instance, is helpful in demonstrating the true biblical position on the inter-relationship between the three members of the Godhead.

And, in addition, there are **five illustrations** that I have come by over the years that have aided me in my own effort to grasp, at least in measure, that which the Scripture clearly affirms. As is true with *any* analogy, however, there are flaws and limitations with each of these five. So what follows is, at best, an attempt to **convey** the truth of what is **infinite** into the **idiom** of the **finite**.



## An Egg

The white of the egg, the egg shell, the yolk. If I hold up any one component and ask you what it is, you will say, "It's an egg." Yet there is a distinction between each of the three components. **However, this analogy fails because each of the three components do not possess the same attributes.**

## Son, Father, Grandfather

Is Daryl Witmer a son? Yes. I am the son of my parents. Is he a father? Yes. I am the father of three sons. Is he a grandfather? Yes. I am the grandfather of three gals and six guys. But wait! Which is it — son, father or grandfather? Well, all three. Yet I am the same person. **However, the problem with this illustration is that God is three distinct persons, not just one person like me.**

## PWh

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, in his book *How Do We Know There Is a God?*, wrote that theoretical physicists might identify an electron as PWh, where P = particle properties, W = wave properties, and h = quantum properties. While these various properties and characteristics may be mutually exclusive, in order to give proper weight to all relevant data, the subatomic entity itself is known as, and referred to as, PWh. **But one of the limitation here is that the three persons of the Trinity are each actual persons, not mere properties.**

## H<sub>2</sub>O

This is probably my favorite illustration. Liquid water, frozen ice, and hot steam. All three share common attributes yet exhibit themselves in distinct form and roles and are all known as **water**. **But even this analogy has its limitations. The members of the Holy Trinity are each complex persons, not a simple combination of elements, i.e. two-parts hydrogen and one-part oxygen.**



## The Ocean

A nuclear scientist by the name of **Robert W. Faid** published a book in 1993 entitled *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries*. He says that one day while standing by the shore of the sea he was struck by the analogy it afforded of the Trinity. If the sea itself is compared to God, or to God the Father, we might then think of a wave as representing God the Son. A wave has an identity of its own, and it comes from and returns to the sea. Yet it is never separate from the sea. Further, we might think of the salt air as the Holy Spirit. It invigorates and penetrates and even draws one to the sea. It signals that the sea is near. It even has a separate existence. Yet it is still the sea. **Helpful, perhaps, but not a perfect analogy. Can you explain where it falls short?**

- There will often be an element of mystery when God speaks. So in those moments when we cannot totally understand His revelation, we bow low in reverence and resolve to accept and trust His revelation. ■

Throughout Scripture the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit are all repeatedly recognized as being fully God. The biblical testimony is unequivocal. The illustrations on page 231 may help, but there will always remain an element of mystery; that which man can never wholly know about God. So we do not disengage the mind, but we bow before Him with what Tozer calls “reverent reason.” **We accept the truth of God’s revelation regarding Himself as the great Three-in-One.**

**The doctrine of the Trinity may be a paradox to the human mind, but it is not a contradiction.**

No worthy Bible-based theologian ever claims that three *is* one or that three *equals* one. That would be illogical. We must be careful here. The Bible teaches that God is **three in one**. Three divine persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — but one God.

Many years ago I had published a thoughtletter on the subject of the Trinity which included some of the illustrations cited on the previous page. Not long after that paper was mailed in 1994, I received a courteous but pointed reply from **Dr. Gordon R. Lewis** who was on our constituency list at the time. Dr. Lewis (1926–2016) was a member of the faculty of Denver Seminary as Professor of Theology and Philosophy. He had also founded Evangelical Missions to Non-Christian Religions (EMNR). He had written scholarly papers and articles on the subject of the Trinity and was probably as much of an authority on the matter as anyone ever could be. His letter to me was affirmative and gracious but he minced no words in cautioning me on the shortcoming of any and all attempts to provide an adequate and correct illustration of the Trinity. I took note, and therefore offer what I have here with that sort of qualification.



Someone once wrote:

“Trust God where you cannot trace Him.  
Do not try to penetrate the cloud He brings over you.  
Rather look to the bow that is on it.  
The mystery is God's; the promise is yours.”

**Ignaz Franz Poland** (1719-1790) summed all of this up rather effectively in his classic hymn, **Holy God, We Praise Thy Name:**

**Holy Father, Holy Son,  
Holy Spirit, three we name Thee,  
Though in essence only one;  
undivided God, we claim Thee,  
And, adoring, bend the knee  
while we own the mystery.**







## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part B

**IS THE BIBLE  
TRULY FROM  
GOD?**

**IS THE BIBLE  
TOTALLY  
RELIABLE?**





**CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS**

# **THE BIBLE**



**Making the Case for the  
Divinity and Reliability  
of Scripture**

# 1. WHY MAKING THE CASE FOR THE BIBLE IS SO IMPORTANT

Establishing the Bible as the reliable propositional revelation of the infinite-personal God of the universe to humankind may *be the most critical feat of all* in terms of providing evidence for the Christian worldview. **Why?** Because **almost every other question about matters of faith** — "How do we know that there is a God? How do we know that Jesus is fully God? How do we know that we are the product of special creation and not Darwinian evolution?" — always, inevitably, traces back to this answer: **The Bible says so!**

But any time that Christians cite the Bible as the sole final authority in all matters of life and faith, skeptics who do not accept their Christian belief system will quickly counter that answer by asking: **"How can anyone know that the Bible itself is true?"**

**Cartoonist Johnny Hart** once had one of his B.C. characters kneeling in bold daylight, praying: "God, the Bible says that You created light. But how do we know the Bible is true?" At which point everything goes pitch black, and the guy says to God, "Okay. That's good enough for me."



Well it doesn't often work that way. So there really does need to be a body of reasonable and convincing evidence that Scripture is the complete, reliably-conveyed Word of God and not just the personal views of its human writers, as well as being flawed in the process of transmission by human error. **There's so much riding on this matter.** In fact, all of Christian theology hinges on the fact that the Bible is divine in origin. That's why this matter is so important.

## 2. EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS DIVINE REVELATION

Following here are **ten separate lines of evidence** in making the case for the Bible as uniquely Divine in origin.

### a) ITS OWN INTERNAL CLAIMS TO BE THE WORD OF GOD

Although some folks might be inclined to dismiss this line of evidence as "circular reasoning," and although it would be of limited value when standing alone, in combination with all that follows **it should not be discounted.** After all, why should we accept it as God's Word if it doesn't even itself claim to be just that? And if it **is** God's Word, a failure to make that claim would seem conspicuous by its absence. The truth is, the Bible **does** claim — over and over — to be special revelation from God. Here are just a few examples:

- **The phrase "Thus says the Lord"** appears 415 or more times in the Bible (NASB 95; ESV).
- **The phrase "The word of the Lord"** appears over 250 times in Scripture (NASB 95).
- **2 Timothy 3:16** "All Scripture is inspired by God . . ."
- **2 Peter 1:21** "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit **spoke from God.**"



## b) FULFILLED PROPHECY

One of the most powerful lines of evidence that the Christian Bible is the unique and truthful revelation of a supernatural God is its record of fulfilled prophecy. Over 2,000 specific prophecies are found in the Bible, many made four or more centuries previous to their fulfillment, but all fulfilled in detail. In the Old Testament alone over 300 prophecies refer to the coming Messiah, His ministry, and His suffering. **This is not the case with the sacred literature of any other religion or worldview.** And how could it ever be explained except for being of supernatural origin. No human, computer, or artificial intelligence is able to predict the distant future with such precision. Humans and computer models often can't even get a ten-day weather forecast right!

Here are **three especially noteworthy examples of prophecies fulfilled in Christ:**

### PROPHECY

**Isaiah 53:5 (700 B.C.):** "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed."

### FULFILLMENT

**Luke 23:33** "When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left." • **John 20:27:** "Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." • **Colossians 1:20:** "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

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### PROPHECY

**Psalms 22:14-18 (1,000 B.C.):** "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots."

### FULFILLMENT

**John 19** (entire chapter) • **John 19:34** "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." • **Luke 23:33** (see in previous section above).

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### PROPHECY

**Micah 5:2 (700+ B.C.):** "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."

### FULFILLMENT

**Matthew 2:1-2** "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.'"

Mathematician and professor **Peter W. Stoner** once calculated that **the odds of just 48** (of the 300+) **such prophecies** being fulfilled in **one person** would be one in 10 to the 157th power. (P. W. Stoner in *Science Speaks*) In other words, the odds make fulfillment a virtual impossible.

**The following two pages provide an even more extensive case from fulfilled prophecy.**

# 75 Bible Prophecies Concerning the Messiah

— compiler and source undetermined

Listed here are 75 of at least 330 total prophecies re: Messiah's first coming. **Note that these prophecies are quite specific.** All of them were recorded in the Greek Septuagint, which was written at least **250 years before Christ was born.** Many of them are also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which most scholars date to at least **100 years before the birth of Christ.** These prophecies claim that the Messiah was...

1. to be preexistent (Isaiah 9:6-7)
2. to be the Son of God (Psalms 2:7)
3. to be born of the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15)
4. to be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
5. to be the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18)
6. to be the son of Isaac (Genesis 21:12)
7. to be the son of Jacob (Genesis 35:10-12)
8. to come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10)
9. to come from the family line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1)
10. to come from the house of David (Jeremiah 23:5)
11. to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
12. to be born when Judea was paying taxes to Rome at the time of His birth (Genesis 49:10)
13. to have a star appear over Israel at His birth (Numbers 24:17)
14. to be given gifts by wise men at His birth (Psalm 72:10)
15. to be born before Herod massacred the innocent children (Jeremiah 31:15)
16. to be called from Egypt (Numbers 24:8)
17. to be called Lord (Psalms 110:1)
18. to be called a Nazarene (Isaiah 11:1)
19. to be called Immanuel, which means **God with us** (Isaiah 7:14)
20. to be a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:18)
21. to be an eternal priest (Psalm 110:1-4)
22. to be a judge (Isaiah 33:22)
23. to be a king (Psalm 2:6)
24. to be anointed of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2)
25. to be zealous for God (Psalm 69:9)
26. to be preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1)
27. to teach in a synagogue of Nazareth (Isaiah 61:1)
28. to be a minister in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1)
29. to be a healer of the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb (Isaiah 35:5-6)
30. to have Israel disbelieve in His miracles (Isaiah 53:1)
31. to be a teacher of parables (Psalm 78:2)
32. to be praised by little children (Psalms 8:2)
33. to enter the temple (Malachi 3:1)
34. to enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)
35. to enter Jerusalem exactly 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24)
36. to be a "stone of stumbling" to the Jews (Psalm 118:22)
37. to be a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 60:3)
38. to be tender (Isaiah 40:11)
39. to be compassionate (Isaiah 42:3)
40. to be meek (Isaiah 42:2)
41. to be a man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:3)
42. to write names in the dust (Jeremiah 17:13)
43. to be betrayed by his best friend (Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14)
44. to be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12)
45. to have his betrayer throw the money into the temple (Zechariah 11:13)
46. to have the betrayal money used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13)
47. to be forsaken by His disciples (Zechariah 13:7)
48. to be accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11)
49. to be dumb before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7)
50. to be wounded and bruised for our sins (Isaiah 53:5)
51. to be smitten and spit upon (Isaiah 50:6; Micah 5:1)
52. to be mocked (Psalms 22:7-8)

- 53. to fall under the cross (Psalm 109:24-25)
- 54. to have his hands and feet pierced (Psalms 22:16)
- 55. to be crucified with thieves (Isaiah 53:12)
- 56. to be surrounded and ridiculed by his enemies (Psalms 22:7-8)
- 57. to pray for his persecutors (Isaiah 53:12)
- 58. to be rejected by His own people (Isaiah 53:3)
- 59. to be hated without a cause (Psalms 69:4)
- 60. to have His friends stay afar off (Psalms 38:11)
- 61. to have people shake their heads (Psalm 109:25)
- 62. to be stared upon (Psalm 22:17)
- 63. to have his garments parted and gambled for (Psalm 22:18)
- 64. to suffer thirst (Psalms 69:21; 22:15)
- 65. to have gall and vinegar offered to Him (Psalms 69:21)
- 66. to cry out a forsaken cry on the cross (Psalm 22:1)
- 67. to commit His spirit unto God (Psalm 31:5)
- 68. to not have any of His bones broken (Psalm 34:20)
- 69. to be heart broken (Psalms 22:14)
- 70. to have His side pierced (Zechariah 12:10)
- 71. to have darkness over the land at His death (Amos 8:9)
- 72. to be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9)
- 73. to be resurrected (Psalms 16:10; 30:3; 41:10; 118:17)
- 74. to ascend into heaven (Psalm 68:18)
- 75. to be seated at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:4)

**All of these prophecies have been fulfilled in great detail!** Check it out for yourself. **Read the Gospel accounts** according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Doing a Bible study of that sort will not just provide convincing grounds for **coming to faith** in Christ and **acquiring confidence in the divinity of the Scripture**; it will also be a **great faith-booster** for those who already believe!

**What are the mathematical chances of one man fulfilling all 75 of these prophecies?** The chances would be  $1 \times 2 \times 3 \dots \times 75!$  Is that true? What would that total be? Even just proceeding to  $\times 26$  would yield  $4.0329146e+26!$

“Whatever the case, in the end, I think we can all agree that **Artificial Intelligence Computer Scientist Dr. Robert Wilensky** said it best in a 1996 meeting at the University of California, Berkley: “We’ve all heard that a million monkeys banging on a million typewriters will eventually reproduce the entire works of Shakespeare. Now, thanks to the Internet, we know this is not true.” (Today I Found Out | Feed Your Brain online post, February 8, 2020)



Today it’s quite evident that **the record of fulfilled Bible prophecies**, as detailed above, could never have happened apart from the involvement of a supernatural all-knowing God. This God has provided us with clear and convincing evidence that the Bible — but only the Bible — is His Word to us.

## c) UNITY | THEMATIC CONGRUENCY

**This very powerful line of evidence — often underplayed — involves the common and cohesive story line of the Bible, from beginning to end.**



The Christian Scriptures (Old and New Testament) were penned by over **35** (up to 40) **men**, representing **numerous professions** (fishermen, a farmer, a shepherd, an IRS official, a medical doctor, a king, a government officer), **living on three continents**, over a span of **more than 1500 years**. Some of us have tried to get a **committee of three** to agree on something without success!

This line of evidence is **unique to the Bible** among **all sacred literature**. Many of the “holy books” of other religions and worldviews were purportedly written by only one human author, e.g. The Quran (Mohammed), The Book of Mormon (published by Joseph Smith), The Tripitaka (Buddha). Those that claim multiple authors have no cohesive story line, e.g. the Vedas (Hinduism).

How can the unity and this overriding congruent theme running through the Bible, all focused on the life and teachings and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, be explained apart from a God who spans time and who inspired and guided the human authors? It **cannot** be explained in any other way!

## d) SURVIVAL

In spite of all the attacks, the jury of time and history has consistently, repeatedly, returned the same verdict: “Let God be true and every man a liar.” (Romans 3:4) The survival of the Bible in the face of an age-long parade of skeptics, critics, and censors, in a sort of ironic twist, has come to be one of the most powerful testimonies of all for the invincible truth of Scripture.

Consider these concerted efforts to destroy or ban the Bible:

- In **167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes** tried to destroy all copies of Jewish Scripture. (Glimpses, Christian History 174)
- In **303 A.D. the Roman Emperor Diocletian** decreed that every manuscript of the Bible was to be seized and destroyed. He put the words “the name of the Christians having been destroyed” over the ashes of one Bible.
- The French philosopher **Voltaire** predicted that within 100 years the Bible would be gone. But just 50 years after his own death men were printing Bibles on the very press he’d once owned, distributing them from his own former house!
- During approximately **70 years of communist oppression in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**, Bibles were often essentially forbidden to the average citizen. Soviet officials at one point decreed that libraries must “contain solely anti-religious books.” Bibles were being smuggled into the USSR during that period of time.



However — in spite of all this and more — the Bible has stood every attack essentially unscathed — **exactly what you'd expect to be the case if it really was God's Word and God Himself really was sovereignly protecting and preserving His revelation to humankind.**

Few have summed it all up better than the venerable old Bible scholar, Henry Halley (circa 1925), in his best-selling Halley's Bible Handbook: **"The dear Old Book has worn out many anvils," he wrote, "and long after the critics have been forgotten, will go marching on, loved and honored, by unnumbered millions. Precious Book!"**

**Another unknown author once penned these lines:** "Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime: Then looking in, I saw upon the floor old hammers, worn with beating years of time. 'How many anvils have you had,' said I, 'To wear and batter all these hammers so?' 'Just one,' said he, and then, with twinkling eye, 'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.' And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word, for ages skeptic blows have beat upon; yet though the noise of falling blows was heard, the anvil is unharmed . . . the hammers gone."

**Bible scholar Arthur W. Pink has written:** "Books are like men — dying creatures. A very small percentage of books survive more than twenty years, a yet smaller percentage last a hundred years and only a very insignificant fraction represent those which have lived a thousand years. **No other book has provoked such fierce opposition as the Bible, and its preservation is perhaps the most startling miracle connected with it.** Just as an earthly parent treasures and lays by the letters received from his child, so our Heavenly Father has protected and preserved the Epistles of love written to His children."

## e) ARCHEOLOGICAL CONFIRMATION

- What was perhaps the **second most significant archaeological discovery of the entire 20th century** occurred in the afternoon hours of July 21, 1993. While work crews were preparing the site for visitors, a broken fragment of basalt stone was uncovered in secondary use in a wall. Surveyor Gila Cook glanced at the stone in the rays of the afternoon sun and saw what looked like alphabetic letters. On closer examination it turned out that, indeed, they had found an inscribed stone. The discovery was of a fragment of a large monumental inscription which mentions King David's dynasty, "the House of David." Two additional fragments were recovered in two separate, disparate locations in June of 1994. The discovery provides an archaeological connection to the biblical references to the ruling dynasty established by King David approximately two centuries before the events that are mentioned in the inscription. It is the first mention of King David and the earliest mention of a biblical figure outside of the Bible. The discovery is of particular importance in the face of those scholars who were either skeptical or had denied the historical existence of King David. (Source: **Keith N. Schoville**, Professor Emeritus of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison)



- **A TIME magazine article on Jericho, dated March 5, 1990.** Evangelical archaeologist **Bryant Wood** (who has served for years with **Associates for Biblical Research**) is cited as having concluded that pottery which was dug up in Jericho in the 1930s was common in 1400 B.C., showing that Jericho could have still been an inhabited city, and Joshua could have been present, in 1400 BC, as the Bible indicates was the case, instead of much earlier, as science had previously supposed. Archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon had herself determined in the 1930s that there was still grain in the grain bins of the city, which means that Jericho must have fallen quickly rather than to have been under a long siege, which would have resulted in all of the grain being depleted. Dr. Wood is quoted as saying: "It looks to me as though the biblical stories are correct." And even the often skeptical left-leaning **TIME** magazine entitled the article: "**Score One for the Bible.**"



- **Christian archaeologist Dr. Bryant Wood:** "Archaeological discoveries many times validated Biblical assertions, but have never once contradicted a Biblical assertion."

## f) CIRCULATION: THE MOST WIDELY READ BOOK EVER

### Consider the following astounding facts:

- **A List of All-Time Top Selling Books:** *Diary of Anne Frank*: 27 million copies; *Gone With the Wind*: 33 million copies; *The Da Vinci Code*: 57 million copies; *The Book of Mormon* 100 million+ copies; the Harry Potter series: 400 million copies; Quotations from the Works of Mao Tse-tung: 820 million copies; the Bible: 4-6 **billion** copies!
- **Dr. Robert Simonds wrote this in ICR's Impact publication (9/1996):** "The Bible has been the number one best-seller every single year since the invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1436. In 1995 the Bible outsold its nearest modern rival by more than five times."

**54,945 Bibles are sold every day somewhere in the world!**

- **WordsRated** (a non-commercial research organization) reported on **February 2, 2022** that:
  - ✓ The number of Bibles sold on average has more than doubled in the U.S. since 1950.
  - ✓ 20 million Bibles are sold each year.
  - ✓ 1.66 million Bibles are sold each month.
  - ✓ 384,615 Bibles are sold per week.
  - ✓ 54,945 Bibles are sold every day.
  - ✓ 2,289 Bibles are sold per hour.
  - ✓ 38 Bibles are sold per minute.
  - ✓ 6.4 Bibles are sold every 10 seconds.
  - ✓ In addition to Bibles sold, another 115,055 Bibles are given away or distributed every day.
  - ✓ The U.S. accounts for a quarter of newly printed Bible sales every year.

- **The December 18, 2006, version of *The New Yorker* magazine says:** “The familiar observation that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time obscures a more startling fact: the Bible is the best-selling book of the year, **every year**. A conservative estimate is that in 2005 Americans purchased some twenty-five million Bibles — twice as many as the most recent Harry Potter book. The amount spent **annually** on Bibles has been put at more than half a billion dollars.”

**Isn't all of this just exactly what you would expect** if the Bible really was a special revelation from the supernatural God of the cosmos who intended to communicate His truth to all people from all nations and languages in all parts of the world?

It certainly is a powerful response to those who arrogantly demand that, if they're going to believe in Him, God must reveal Himself by sky-writing, or by shouting through a megaphone from heaven.



**DW:** What would you take as sufficient evidence for the fact that God exists?

**MM:** How about if He would start by leaving a post-it note on my pillow tonight?

**DW:** He's already given you the Bible and you've rejected it. Why should I expect you to believe that the post-it note was from God and not explain it away through some natural means?

### **g) THE TESTIMONY OF MANY REPUTABLE & THOUGHTFUL INDIVIDUALS**

- **Abraham Lincoln:** "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book."
- **Napoleon:** "The Bible is no mere book, but a living creature, with a power that conquers all that oppose it."
- **Patrick Henry:** "The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed."
- **George Washington:** "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."
- **Daniel Webster:** "If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."
- **Charles Dickens:** "The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world."
- **Sir Isaac Newton** (brilliant scientist): "There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history."
- **All of those discerning men serving on the historic church councils** (Carthage, Hippo) when the canon was settled were very clear that the sixty-six books of the Bible constituted the unique communication of God.



## h) ENDORSEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

This line of evidence carries with it all of the weight of the **character of Christ Himself**. Consider Jesus' words in:

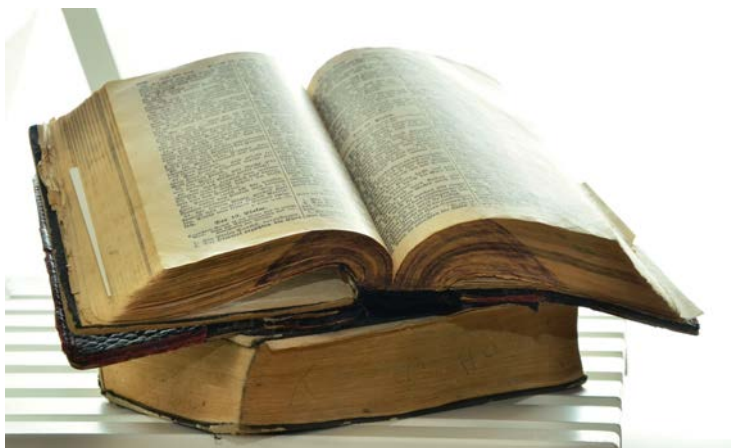
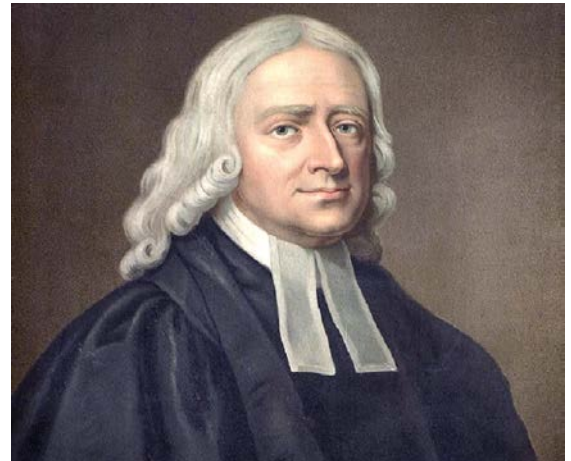
- **John 10:35** where Jesus says that "...the Scripture cannot be broken..."
- **Matthew 5:18** "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."
- **Luke 16:16-17** "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void."



## i) NO REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO DIVINE ORIGIN

The great 18th century English preacher and co-founder of Methodism, John Wesley, reasoned this way:

1. The Bible **could not** be the invention of **good men** or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying: 'Thus saith the Lord,' when it was their own invention.
2. It **could not** be the invention of **bad men** or devils, for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to Hell for all eternity.
3. Therefore I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by **divine inspiration.**"



## j) SELF-AUTHENTICATING NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible has historically demonstrated its own unique power to draw people to God, to build their faith, to convince them of truth, and to change their lives for the better. Romans 10:17 says that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." So there is this real sense in which the Bible has always represented its own best evidence. **Charles Spurgeon said:** "Defend the Bible? I would as soon defend a lion! Unchain it and it will defend itself."



### 3. EVIDENCE FOR THE RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

Christian apologist **Josh McDowell** tells the story of a college professor who once publicly mocked the idea that the New Testament could ever be a **reliable** transmission from earlier manuscripts. So McDowell turned the tables and asked, "What are *your* tests for the reliability of *any* historical document?" There was no answer, so McDowell proposed a three-point test:

- 1) **Internal Claims:** Luke 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; the repeated phrase, "Thus saith the Lord." (See further on #2a above.)
- 2) **External Test:** the corroborative testimony of many of the church father, historians, and authorities regarding the veracity of Scripture — including Eusebius, Bishop Papias (130 A.D.), Bishop Irenaeus (180 A.D.), the great archeologist Sir William Ramsay, and the classical historian A.N. Sherwin-White. See also #2g above.
- 3) **Bibliographical (MSS) Evidence:** Compare the documentation for the writings of Pliny the Elder (7 extant copies with a 750 year span from the original writings to the earliest extant copies); Caesar (10 extant copies with a 1,000 year span); Aristotle (40-49 extant copies with a 1400 year span); Plato (7 copies with a 1200 year span). Compare all that with the documentation for the the New Testament (over 5,000 Greek extant MSS and over 25,000 total extant MSS **with as little as an 80 year span in some cases** (MSS dating to 130 A.D.)! See the chart below for more detailed comparative data. **NOTE:** extant means existing.

Authors/Works	Recorded	Dates of Mss.	Time Span	Copies Survived
Caesar	100–44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 YRS	10
Livy	59 B.C.–A.D. 17	A.D. 300	400 YRS	27
Plato	427–347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 YRS	7
Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )	A.D. 56–120	A.D. 800	900 YRS	3
Pliny the Younger ( <i>History</i> )	A.D. 61–113	A.D. 850	750 YRS	7
Thucydides ( <i>History</i> )	460–400 B.C.	A.D. 100	600 YRS	20
Suetonius ( <i>De Vita Caesarum</i> )	A.D. 69–140	A.D. 800	900 YRS	200+
Herodotus ( <i>History</i> )	484–425 B.C.	A.D. 100	600 YRS	75
Sophocles	496–406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1,400 YRS	193
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1550	1,600 YRS	3
Euripides	480–406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,500 YRS	9

Authors/Works	Recorded	Dates of Mss.	Time Span	Copies Survived
Demosthenes	383–322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,300 YRS	200
Aristotle	384–322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 YRS	40
Aristophanes	450–385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,200 YRS	10
Homer	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 YRS	643
New Testament	A.D. 35–100	A.D. 100–150	5–30 YRS	5,700

*\*New Testament copies include (1) fragments, (2) some incomplete copies of the NT, (3) the complete NT, which are all in Greek. Another 10,000+ manuscripts exist in Latin plus more than one million quotations from the church fathers.*

**Eminent Bible scholar F. F. Bruce says:** "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament."

## The Closer the Better (as a rule)

The proximity of the date of a Bible manuscript to the date that the original writing was made is a pretty big deal! Why? Because there is going to have been less opportunity for scribal error. It's somewhat like the old party-game of **Telephone** where a phrase is whispered to the first person in a circle of friends, and then that person whispers the phrase to the next person, and so on. What comes out at the end of the line? Often the accuracy of what the last person hears is going to be proportionate to how many people are in the circle. Or to say it another way — the closer someone is to the beginning of the circle, the greater the likelihood that what they hear will accurately correspond with what was whispered in the ear of the first person in the circle.

The **John Rylands Papyrus** is one of the earliest New Testament manuscripts in existence today. It contains fragments from the Gospel According to John, the disciple of Jesus, that are thought to very possibly date back to less than fifty years after John wrote his Gospel. Amazing.

Here's an article penned by my son, Stephen Witmer, about his experience with this manuscript.

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# MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE JOHN RYLANDS PAPYRUS

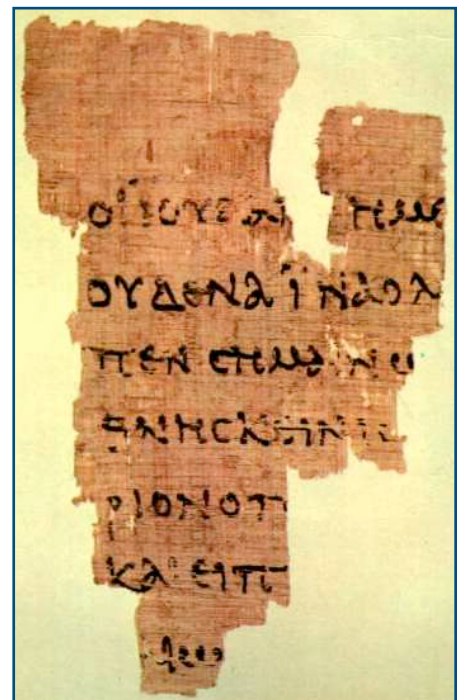
by Dr. Stephen E. Witmer

Emma, Samuel, Annie and I are back from two weeks with Emma's family in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It was a great time with family and friends. Seeing the spectacular, wild beauty of the Northern Ireland coast was a highlight, as was some excellent Celtic music one evening and some fish and chips another evening.

Emma and I also spent a weekend away at a retreat in Wales with 126 university students, mainly from the **University of Manchester in England**. I had been invited to give five talks, and it was an enriching, exciting, and exhausting weekend. There were many good conversations and much fruit in the interactions with college students. After the retreat we were back in Manchester, England and I had a few hours to kill while Emma visited with a friend. So, at the last-minute suggestion of a friend, I caught a bus into the center of **Manchester** and visited the **John Rylands Library**.

I went there in order to see the **John Rylands Papyrus**. This is a tiny scrap of papyrus (3-1/2" x 2-1/2"), written on front and back, and containing a few fragmentary words and phrases from John 18.

The reason this little scrap of papyrus is so significant is that it is the oldest known record of a canonical New Testament text. It has been dated to likely sometime in the early second century A.D. That means that perhaps less than fifty years after John wrote his gospel, some unknown scribe wrote the words I was reading.



As I stood alone in the room, looking at this little fragment of papyrus and the Greek words of John 18, **I was deeply moved to thank God for his Word. I began praying. Tears came to my eyes. Looking at a papyrus this close to the original brought home to me in a fresh way the fact that God actually spoke to a real man (John) at a certain time in history.** The Bible didn't just drop out of heaven. God gave it to men whom he inspired. This really happened. It wasn't automatic that God would speak to human beings or that he would allow his speech to be preserved over the course of the last 2000 years. That is all an act of sheer grace.

As I walked back to the bus station through the bustle of Manchester, I was looking around me at all the people in this busy city center and realizing that likely very, very few of them ever read the Bible or care anything about the Bible. They don't know the words of John 18 I had just read. The Bible is a word from God — the Creator of the Universe! It tells us the most important things we could know — like how to be in right relationship with God. And yet so many people don't care about it, don't read it, don't know it. The morning sports scores are way more important to them.

I'm reminded of the words of John Wesley, who once said: 'I am a creature of a day. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God. I want to know one thing: the way to heaven. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. He has written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book.'

Posted February 8, 2011 by Stephen Witmer | <https://pcfchurch.org> | Pepperell Christian Fellowship

## 4. VARIATIONS AND DISCREPANCIES IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

There appear to exist up to **180,000 or even 200,000 variations** in the various copied New Testament manuscripts (MSS). These variations inevitably resulted from the sometimes flawed, always tedious, process of reproducing Scripture by hand. The large number simply reflects the huge number of MSS. In actuality though, **all but 400 of these variations** involve only minor differences, such as regards spelling and rendition. All are easily discernible for what they are. Of the 400 occasions (and that's only about 40 lines of the 20,000 lines of text in the New Testament) where the sense of the passage is involved, **never once is a single essential doctrine of the Christian faith at issue.** Because they are all explainable, none of these alleged discrepancies need cast any doubt on the reliability of the Bible.

Here are a few additional illustrations that should help in understanding and defending the reliability of the Bible in the light of MSS variations and errors in transmission.

### Gadlee the Cross-Eyed Bear

*Excerpted from the April 1991 issue of the Proclamation (AIIA Institute)*

The story is told of a father whose six-year old daughter had come home from Sunday School one day with a story that he found hard to believe. "We learned a new song today, Daddy," she told him. "It was about a cross-eyed bear named **Gadlee.**"



His little girl was always very honest. She pulled no punches and was usually quite accurate in what she said. So this made no sense. Why would they be singing about a cross-eyed bear in Sunday School? Yet even after pressing the matter, she was adamant. That was the song. So — was this a case of mistaken judgement by her teachers?

Later that night, just as he was falling asleep, he suddenly began to chuckle. From the back of his mind he had just recalled the words of an old hymn that he himself had once learned in church: "For Jesus I'd go anywhere. Gladly the cross I'd bear..."



A simple story. A simple miscommunication. Easily unravelled with a little context. His daughter had *relayed* the title inaccurately. Her teachers and the song's *actual* lyrics were never in error. With a little time and thought what at first seemed to be an error melted away like a snowball in summer. **Can you apply this same principle to variations in the Bible manuscripts?**

## Dale Courtney Study

*Excerpted from the November 1991 issue of the Proclamation (AIIA Institute).*

Dale M. Courtney once lived in Charleston, South Carolina. But when he was in seminary Dale had heard about groups like The **Jesus Seminar** who cast doubt on the integrity of the Bible. He realized that they were attempting to demonstrate that the Gospels were unreliable, denying that the Apostles had ever themselves written any of the Books of the New Testament.

So Dale did something very interesting. Instead of studying the manuscripts themselves, he began to study the analytical methods that some of the **Jesus Seminar's** so-called scholars were using on the manuscripts. Guess what he found? **He discovered that "when the exact same tests [used by these liberal scholars] were applied to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and second inaugural, it was clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that Lincoln had not penned the latter."** Dale Courtney concluded: "[Such] scholars are blowing smoke in order not to deal with the truths that were penned by [the writers of Scripture] under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

## Which Clock is Correct?

*Excerpted from the February 1992 issue of the Proclamation (AIIA Institute)*

I once entered a clock shop. There were hundreds of clocks and watches in that store. There were cuckoo clocks, grandfather clocks, Swiss watches, Hamilton watches, and even Mickey Mouse watches. I went over to the counter and asked the manager, "What time is it, please?" He said, "10:30, sir." I replied, "No, I mean *exactly* what time is it? Your clocks are



obviously not reliable. Look, this clock says one thing and that clock says another." He said, "Listen, fellow, the reason that all my clocks are not set to precisely the same time is because **I don't want every clock in this shop chiming at once.** I wouldn't be able to hear my own voice. But I know what time it is. And if I **really** want the **exact** time, I can always check in with the Bureau of Standards. They maintain a number of highly accurate atomic clocks which measure time based on the rate of atomic vibration — 9,192,631,770 times per second! Their clocks will not gain or lose more than one second in over 300 years. **Besides," he said, "The fact that a clock doesn't happen to be set precisely right at just this moment certainly doesn't make the clock unreliable or worthless!"**

**Good point. Very good point. I wish that I could communicate that same principle to some of my friends and associate who doubt the integrity of the entire Bible because of some of the variations in the copied MSS from which it has been translated.**

And here's yet another illustration to make the point.



## THE EARLY CHRISTIAN LETTERS FOR EVERYONE by N.T. Wright

©2011 WJK Press | *The Day of the Lord*, pages 117-118 (2 Peter 3:1-10)

The late **Bishop Stephen Neill** spent some time, early in his life, as a missionary teacher in India.

Once he suspected that the class he was teaching had been cheating. The boys who were not so good at the subject had been copying from the work of those who were better, and one or two very able pupils had had their work used, directly or indirectly, by almost the whole class.



Neill's solution was to study the scripts carefully. Nobody had got all the answers right, and in the process of copying from one another some of the boys had introduced new mistakes of their own, which were then copied by other pupils further down the chain. **Neill was able, by studying where these mistakes occurred, to draw a chart on the blackboard of exactly who had copied from whom. The class was dumbfounded, and accused him of witchcraft. It was as though he had been secretly present when they were all doing their homework! But he hadn't. He had worked it out purely logically.**

Neill himself used that illustration to explain how it was that, in the early church, mistakes were introduced into the text of the New Testament. Even in printed books, mistakes creep in. In the days before printing, books were copied out by hand: a long, tedious task. Even copy-typing is boring; doing it by hand is even more so. How easy it is for the eye to slip from one word to a similar one in the next line — or to go back and repeat a line, or a word. And how easy it is, when the text says something that seems very strange, to 'correct' it, either deliberately (surely, thinks the copyist, 'they can't have meant that! There must be a mistake! I'd better put it right!') or purely accidentally, producing a smoother sentence or — dangerous, this — a smoother idea.

The trouble is, of course, that the New Testament regularly says things which don't fit neatly into the worldview of the day, and which don't always read easily either. For this reason, students of the text are alert to the possibility that there might have been corruption or distortion. **Because we have so many manuscripts of the New Testament, dating from the second century onwards — far, far more manuscripts than for any other ancient book — we can usually tell when this has happened, because like the schoolboys copying from one another we can track variations across different 'families' of manuscripts. In almost every case we can be reasonably certain that we know what the author wrote."**

## 5. DEFENDING INERRANCY

When we as Christians assert that **the Bible is inerrant**, what we mean is that the **original manuscripts** produced by the **human authors** by direct inspiration of God's **Holy Spirit** were totally without error in every detail — not only in matters of faith and conduct but also where the text touches on matters of science and history. Those papers or parchments or animal skins or scrolls were the inerrant words of God. They said exactly what He wanted to say in exactly the way He wanted to say it.

We do **not** claim that **succeeding copies** of those first original records of God's message were without error. We rather readily acknowledge that those who transcribed the MSS made mistakes.

**All of our church statements of faith are clear and careful on this point**, e.g. "As the verbally inspired (breathed-out) Word of God, the Bible is without error *in the original writings . . .*" (EFCA Statement of Faith). Sometimes the term "autographs" is used instead of "writings" but the reference is always to the actual documents that were penned by the human Bible authors, whether that happened to be Moses or David or Isaiah or Matthew or John or Paul.

Of course, **no original documents** (manuscripts, autographs) **exist today** as far as anyone knows. Perhaps tomorrow someone will discover one, but as of now there are no original documents to be viewed or examined. All of which leads to the following exchange:

### QUESTION

If we have no originals, what is the point of saying that we believe the Bible is without error in the originals?

### ANSWER

Given the **number of existing manuscript copies** and their **proximity to the original manuscripts**, we can be very very certain about what the original MSS themselves actually said.

\* For a fuller explanation of Biblical **inspiration**, see **Systematic Theology**, by Wayne Grudem.

\* For more detail on what Biblical **inerrancy** is all about, click on this link:

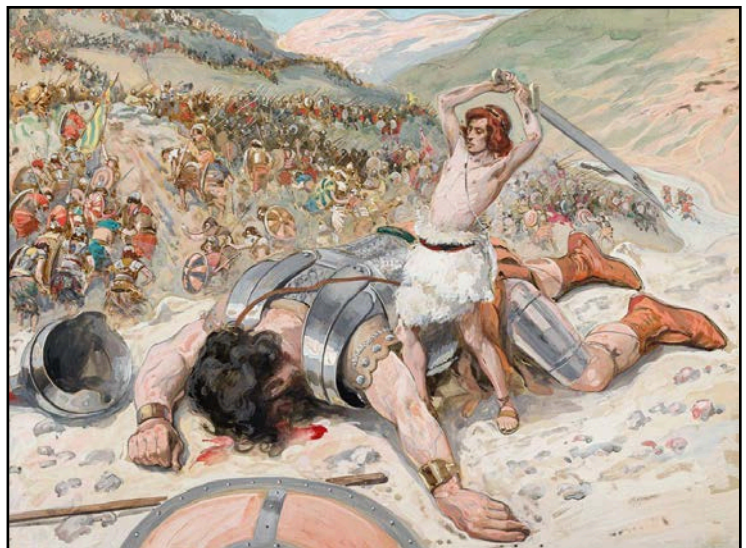
[Chicago Statement of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.](#)

## 6. ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS

### Who Killed Goliath?

*Excerpted and adapted from the February 1992 issue of the Proclamation (AIIA Institute)*

Many years ago I had a friend who was very skeptical about whether the Bible is reliable. He once called me up and asked, "Who killed Goliath?" I said, "David, of course." So he said, "Well you better go read 2 Samuel 21:19!"



**2 Samuel 21:19 states that a man by the name of Elhanan killed Goliath!** If your Bible says that Elhanan killed the *brother* of Goliath you should note that the words "the brother of" are in italics. That means that those words are not in the manuscripts from which the translation was made. What the actual manuscript really says is that Elhanan killed Goliath. **But we know that David killed Goliath!** 1 Samuel 17:50 says so. Furthermore, we know that Elhanan, in fact, killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath—not Goliath himself. 1 Chronicles 20:5 clarifies that point beyond doubt.

So the explanation as to what 2 Samuel 21:19 is all about is simple: either the MSS copyist was so sleepy that he shouldn't have been working (copying manuscripts was very tedious, tiring work), or the manuscript(s) from which he was copying was blurred and unreadable. In his book, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (© 1982 Zondervan), **Dr. Gleason Archer** provides a detailed and very technical scenario as to how what happened happened, linguistically.

**But let's face it, as Dr. Archer himself says, 2 Samuel 21:19 is clearly a "corruption" — a goof — yes, an error — in the Hebrew Masoretic text from which all of today's Bibles are translated!**

**THERE ARE NUMEROUS OTHER INSTANCES OF SCRIBAL ERRORS.** In the New American Standard Bible (NASB) version of the Bible, compare the number of stalls that Solomon had for his horses according to 1 Kings 4:26, and then to 2 Chronicles 9:25.

In both the King James Version (KJV) and the NASB 1995 update, compare how old Ahaziah was when he began to reign according to 2 Kings 8:26, then with his age according to 2 Chronicles 22:2.

### **What Then Does All This Mean?**

If there are errors in the manuscripts from which our Bibles are translated, doesn't that essentially mean that the entire Bible is suspect, unreliable, and worthless? No. Not at all. These errata are easily deciphered. Just about anyone who really wants to can easily see what has happened in those limited number of cases where a text is questioned. There are great resources for resolving these textual aberrations, such as the Gleason text mentioned above, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* by Norm Geisler, and even any comprehensive reputable Bible commentary.

**Although we do not have access to the original manuscripts themselves, we have a sufficient number of copies and supportive evidence to be quite sure of what the original text said.**

Any questions about the meaning of a text have all long been addressed. And because the canon of the Bible is closed, no new surprise issues are going to suddenly arise tomorrow.

## **7. WERE THE BIBLE BOOKS LEGITIMATELY SELECTED?**

*The Da Vinci Code* and other liberal texts and scholars (such as **Bart Ehrman**) critical of the view that the New Testament is God's inerrant reliable Word have often served to cast doubt on the legitimacy with which many of the books of the Bible were chosen and key doctrinal matters settled at the early church councils (Nicea in 325 A.D., Carthage in 367 A.D., Hippo in 419 A.D.)

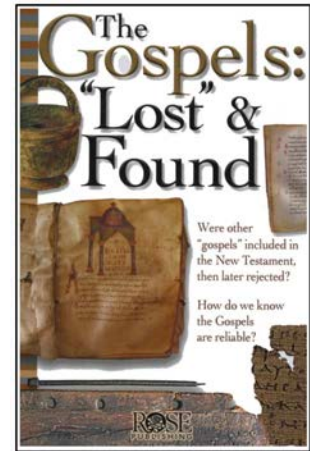
**Charges have been made that sometimes closely-divided votes determined the choice. That is simply not the case. The historic church councils only served to confirm what had already been settled by the various individual churches on their own.**

**Crucial criteria for endorsing a book as canonical included:** 1) Was it the work of an apostle, or directly supervised by an apostle? 2) Was the book used and recognized by all the local churches in existence at the time? 3) Did the Book teach sound doctrine?

### But what about the Lost (Gnostic) Gospels?

The so-called **Gnostic Gospels** have sometimes (misleadingly) been referred to as “**The Lost Gospels**” or “**The Hidden Gospels**” or “the early writings” (even though there was more than a 100-year span between Christ and the writing of any of them!) But what about these books and writings? Were they ruled out by the councils just because they didn’t conform to certain preconceived doctrinal positions?

Here are some helpful answers adapted from a response posted on the website **Got Questions | Your Questions. Biblical Answers** at: <http://www.gotquestions.org/Gnostic-gospels.html>



The Gnostic gospels are writings by early "Christian" Gnostics, as opposed to orthodox Christians. Gnostics held to an unorthodox view of the Bible, of Jesus Christ, of salvation — and virtually every other major Christian doctrine. The Gnostics fraudulently attached the names of famous Christians to their writings, which included the **gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Philip, the gospel of Mary, the gospel of Judas**, etc.

The discovery of the **Nag Hammadi library** in **1945** in **northern Egypt** led to lots of speculation about what had been “left out” of the Bible.

But the truth is, **the Gnostic gospels were all forgeries**. They were fraudulently written in the names of the apostles in order to give them legitimacy in the early church. Thankfully, the early church fathers were virtually unanimous in recognizing the Gnostic gospels as promoting false teachings about virtually every key Christian doctrine. So they were deliberately rejected and neglected, not lost or misplaced.

There are countless contradictions between the Gnostic gospels and the true Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gnostic gospels may be intriguing sources to study early Christian heresies, but **they should be rejected outright as inspired books of the Bible**.

**In short, the “Lost Gospels” were never actual Gospels and never really lost — just discarded.**

**The fate of the Gnostic Gospels also serves as a testimony to the authenticity of the actual Gospels — the canonical books.** Writings that were fictitious or phony or legendary were clearly quickly ferreted out and dismissed as such by the early churches. Conversely, if a book was considered canonical, it certainly wasn’t considered legendary.

Pastor and respected Christian apologist **Tim Keller**, in an article entitled *Four Reasons the Gospels Could Not be Legends*, cites these factors: **1)** the timing of their writing was too early; **2)** the content of their message was too counterproductive (unflattering, not politically correct at the time), **3)** their literary form is too detailed, and **4)** conveying their message was too costly for their authors.



# A FUN INTERACTIVE BIBLE-RELIABILITY EXERCISE

On the following page is a paper you can use in order to illustrate in a **classroom** or **small group** the process of Bible translation, and some of the challenging issues facing Bible scholars when working directly from existing manuscripts to produce an accurate and readable translation of the Bible.



## Needed

- Someone to moderate the exercise.
- 12 primary participants.
- Others in the group or class can either team up with the primary participants, or just observe.
- This exercise may require up to 30–45 minutes to complete.



Special thanks to **Rick Carver** for first coming up with the concept for this exercise. Rick is a Christian apologist now living in Georgia. He served as Associate Director of AIIA for many years, and as a member (with his wife, Cathleen) of AIIA's Board of Directors.

## Directions

- Make at least 12 copies of the following page. (The larger the copies, the better.)
- Cut (separate) or rip apart the 12 manuscripts.
- Distribute the 12 manuscripts in random form to the 12 primary participants.
- The moderator should explain that no original manuscript exists; only these MSS copies.
- Ask the participant who possesses manuscript #1 to read its date and message to the group.
- Proceed through all 12 participants.
- Have the entire group, consulting together, try to establish what the exact words of the original “manuscript” would have been, even though no actual original “manuscript” exists.
- Have the entire group discuss how this exercise demonstrates why we can have confidence in the reliability of the Bible even though no original documents (autographs) exist.

## Important Note

This exercise is only for purposes of illustration only. The actual process of translation from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts is far more complex, whether the work is being done in some remote location for a small language group, or in order to produce a major English translation.

# ARE THE BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS RELIABLE?

How do we know that the MSS weren't corrupted in transmission over the years?

*An exercise in textual reliability originally developed for AIIA by Rick Carver. Adapted by Daryl E. Witmer.*

v170321

SEE DAN RUN

AD 325

MANUSCRIPT #1

SEE DAN ~~RUN~~

AD 500

MANUSCRIPT #7

SEE DON RUN

AD 325

MANUSCRIPT #2

SEE DAN RUN

AD 125

MANUSCRIPT #12

SEE DAN RUNNING

AD 325

MANUSCRIPT #3

SEE DAN R

MANUSCRIPT #8

AD 600

^ rip off here

SEE ~~DAN~~ RUN

AD 350

MANUSCRIPT #4

WATCH DAN RUN

AD 675

MANUSCRIPT #10

SEE DANNY WALK

AD 350

MANUSCRIPT #5

DAN NEVER

ACTUALLY RAN

AD 800

MANUSCRIPT #11

SEE DAN RUN

AD 375

MANUSCRIPT #6

BEHOLD DANIEL

RUNNETH

AD 1611

MANUSCRIPT #9

# Christian Apologetics & the Bible

*How Do We Know that the Bible Is Really & Reliably God's Truth?*

## OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

**1. WHY MAKING THE CASE FOR THE DIVINITY & RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE IS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL.**

**2. TEN LINES OF EVIDENCE THAT THE BIBLE IS DIVINE REVELATION.**

a) I \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_

b) F \_\_\_\_\_ P \_\_\_\_\_

c) U \_\_\_\_\_

d) S \_\_\_\_\_

e) A \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_

f) C \_\_\_\_\_

g) The T \_\_\_\_\_ of reputable  
and t \_\_\_\_\_ individuals.

h) The E \_\_\_\_\_ of J \_\_\_\_\_.

i) No R \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_

j) The S \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_  
nature of Scripture

**3. EVIDENCE FOR THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE**

Josh McDowell's three-point reliability test:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. EXPLAINING VARIATIONS AND DISCREPANCIES IN THE MSS**

- Gadlee the Cross-Eyed Bear
- Courtney study
- Which clock is correct?

**5. DEFENDING INERRANCY IN THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS.**

- Existing MSS: numbers and time intervals

**6. ALLEGED BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS**

- Who killed Goliath? 2 Samuel 21:19 vs. 1 Samuel 17:50 & 1 Chronicles 20:5
- Solomon's horse stalls. Compare 1 Kings 4:26 to 2 Chronicles 9:25.

**7. WERE THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE LEGITIMATELY CHOSEN?**

- Role of the historic Church councils
- The Lost (or Gnostic) Gospels

# HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

## A Study of the Origins and Reliability of the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Faith

Notes & Outline prepared by Daryl E. Witmer

Original draft, Winter-Spring 1986; modified, November 1993; October 2003; July 2022



The story of how the Bible came to us is a powerful testimony to the sovereign power of God. The revelation and preservation of God's Word written is, in some ways, just as amazing as the revelation of Jesus Christ as the living Word. Hopefully this study will build your confidence in the Divine inspiration, reliability, and authority of the Holy Scriptures of the Christian faith, as well as renew your relationship with the Author of that Word!

## **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

*This course of study is designed for ordinary believers, not academics. This subject is vast and can be complex at times. What we are attempting to offer here are the basics; it should not be considered an advanced course in Bible origins.*

## **OUTLINE & CONTENTS**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

The Bible, with little doubt, has had a greater influence in this world throughout history than any other book ever written. It has been an all-time best seller. At least parts of it have been translated into almost every human language. It is the basis for the faith of millions of people worldwide. For these reasons alone the subject of Bible origins is an important one.

But particularly for those seeking an objective basis for faith, the issue is critical. Is the Bible really from God? Are the Biblical records reliable? What reason do we have to believe that this Book is unique in content and accurate in form?

This course is intended to demonstrate how the Almighty Lord of the universe has communicated His truth in propositional form to humanity. It's intended to demonstrate why the Bible as revelation from God deserves to be regarded as the *sole final* authority in all matters of human faith and conduct, and why it is true in all that it affirms — not just in regard to spiritual issues but even when it touches on matters of science and history. A Gallup poll released in July 2022 indicated that **only 20% of Americans** still believe that “the Bible is the actual Word of God, to be taken literally.” Hopefully what follows will make it clear why there is a strong case to be made for being part of that 20%!

## Outline and Scope

Obviously this study is only a condensed version of an extensive and often technical subject. In relatively simple form we intend to provide all salient points regarding:

- a) the text and formation process of both Old and New Testaments,
- b) the subsequent translation, printing, and transmission of early Bible versions,
- c) a review of a number of contemporary versions of the Bible, and
- d) the influence of Bible criticism on our understanding of the history and credibility of the Word of God. This will include a brief review of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*.

## Sources, Bibliography, Suggested Reading

*How We Got the Bible* (pamphlet), © 2007 RW Research; Rose Publishing

*Nothing But the Truth*, ©2006 Evangelical Press, by Brian H. Edwards

*The Origin of the Bible*, ©1992 Tyndale House, by Philip Wesley Comfort

*The Word of God in English*, ©2002 Crossway, by Leland Ryken

*Halley's Handbook of the Bible* (Revised), ©2014 Zondervan

*More Than a Carpenter*, ©2009 Campus Crusade, by Josh McDowell

*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, ©1999 Thomas Nelson, by Josh McDowell

*The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, ©2003 Eerdmans; by F. F. Bruce

*The Canon of Scripture*, ©2018 IVP Academic, by F. F. Bruce,

*The KJV Only Controversy*, ©2009 Bethany House, by James White

*The Case for Faith*, ©2014 Zondervan, by Lee Strobel

## II. GENERAL INFORMATION: TERMS & DEFINITIONS

**THE BIBLE** (from the Greek *ta biblia* for books, or *biblion* for scroll or book) is comprised of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The word *testament* means "official agreement" or "covenant" — in this case referring to the governing covenant between God and His people.

**THE ENGLISH WORD BIBLE** was originally a plural term, but by the 13th Century had become singular — a development regarded by some to be providential, as the singular Greek term *ta biblia* and the English word Bible, referring to one Book (not books), seemed to stress the unique unity of the books of the Old and New Testaments.

**THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE** refers to those writings and books that are acknowledged to be uniquely inspired by God and therefore sacred. The term *canon* is derived from the Greek *kanon* — which means "rule" or "measuring rod." In other words, does a writing "measure up" to the standards which constitute a genuine inspired word from God?

## III. TEXT & FORMATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

**THE OLD TESTAMENT** was written over a period of more than 1000 years (from circa 1450 — circa 400 B.C.). It deals with the era spanning the time from Israel's historic and ethnic beginnings to their return from Babylonian exile.

**THE FAITH OF THE NATION ISRAEL** existed without any written Scripture from the time of Adam (4000 B.C. or before) and Abraham (circa 2100 B.C.) to Moses (circa 1500 B.C.).

**MOSES WAS THE FIRST** person believed to have committed sacred history to written form by Divine inspiration. (Exodus 24:4,7) Moses is considered the human author of the first five Books of the Bible (Genesis thru Deuteronomy), known as the *Pentateuch* (five rolls), which was produced circa 1425 B.C.

**GOD DIRECTED THE FORMATION OF WRITINGS AND A BOOK** by which He chose to reveal His nature, His truth, and His will to humanity. There were the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) which God Himself wrote on tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 10:4,5); the Laws by Moses, written in a book (Deuteronomy 31:24-26); copies of this book (Deuteronomy 17:18); Joshua's additions to the book (Joshua 24:26); other references to this book, or associated books in Old Testament history (1 Samuel 10:25, 2 Kings 22:8-20, Jeremiah 36:32, Ezra 7:6)

**ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THERE WAS ANY FIXED FORM** to the Old Testament until late in the second century B.C., the sacred writings of Moses and other Bible Book authors after him were certainly, and no doubt immediately, regarded as the revealed Word of God — thus binding on the people. Even before the Babylonian exile (587 B.C.) Israel as a nation had come to recognize such writings as uniquely inspired revelation. (Exodus 21-23; Deuteronomy 31:24; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25)

**THE HEBREW BIBLE** (called the *Tanakh* by modern Jews, or *Mikra* in Hebrew) consists of 24 books in a three-fold division: the Law (*Torah*), the Prophets, and the Writings (includes poetical and wisdom literature). The English and Greek Old Testament (39 Books) are basically identical in content, although not arrangement, to the Hebrew Bible.

**BY THE TIME OF JESUS** the Old Testament canon had largely been confirmed, although limited differences seemed to have persisted until sometime after the first century A.D. One Jewish tradition claims that Ezra the scribe did much to finally arrange the Old Testament canon. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself bore clear testimony to the authority of the Old Testament books that we recognize today as canonical (see Luke 24:44).

**NEARLY EVERY OLD TESTAMENT BOOK** is quoted in the New Testament (about 300 separate New Testament quotations of Old Testament Scriptures). They are all referred as Scripture and recognized as authoritative.

**THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** was composed almost exclusively in the Hebrew language. The few exceptions were passages written in Aramaic (a Semitic language akin to Hebrew which Jesus is said to have primarily spoken in the routine of His life and ministry). Writing was, of course, well developed even as early as Abraham's time.

**THE EARLIEST PARTS** of the Old Testament were inscribed in old Hebrew on leather, skins, or papyrus. By about 400 B.C. this more archaic writing style had begun to be developed into the form that was used in later Hebrew manuscripts (MSS).

**THE SEPTUAGINT WAS A GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** completed in the 3rd Century B.C. The Septuagint was in common use in Jesus' day.

**THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS (DSS)** is a common name for the *Qumran Library*). The DSS were discovered in 1947, and represent the earliest extant Old Testament documents, dating from 100-200 B.C. to 100 A.D. They are, by definition, "a collection of Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts discovered in pottery storage jars in caves near Qumran between 1947 and 1956. Thought to have been hidden by the Essenes or a similar Jewish sect shortly before the revolt against Roman rule in 66–70 A.D., the scrolls include the texts of many Old Testament books. They were written nearly 1,000 years earlier than previously discovered manuscripts." (adapted from the *Apple online Dictionary app*, v2.2.2) One amazing related fact is that in the 1000 year span between when the DDS were written (200 B.C.) and the extant MSS at the time of their discovery, there were **no significant changes in the text**, a powerful testimony to the fact that **God not only inspired His Word** in the first place, but was **protecting it in transmission**.

**THE MASSORETIC TEXT** (edited about 500 A.D.) was based on a far more highly developed language system which included vowels. The work of the Massoretes prepared the Hebrew text for the time when the printing press would become a reality *circa* 1454 A.D.

**THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** were the only Scriptures in existence until nearly twenty years after Jesus' ascension. The early Church clearly recognized them as inspired and preached from what is now our Old Testament during this period of time.

## **IV. TEXT AND FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

**THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL WAS FIRST PREACHED** and passed along by word of mouth (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Then the accounts of Jesus' life and teaching were written down, in at least some cases after methodical interviews and research (Luke 1:1-4). The New Testament writers frequently referred to their own teaching, and/or to the teaching of others, as the inspired truth of God. (1 Corinthians 2:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 1:2; 2 Peter 3:15-16)



**THE FIRST NEW TESTAMENT BOOK TO BE WRITTEN** was probably either James or Matthew (*circa* 50 A.D.). The last was almost certainly Revelation (*circa* 95 A.D.). The actual time span of the writing of the New Testament Books, then, was about 50 years. The actual historical process of the formation and final confirmation of the New Testament canon involved some 350 years.

**THE FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS** (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and Acts were indisputably accepted by the Church as the inspired truth of God by the end of the second century.

**PERSECUTION, FORGERIES, AND HERESIES** in the second and third century precipitated the need for a fixed canon of New Testament Scripture. Claims of authenticity were being made for many writings that were patently spurious. Increased confusion was inevitable without some definition of a canon that was acknowledged universally by all of the local Christian churches.

**THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS ESSENTIALLY FIXED BY 367 A.D.**, confirmed at that time by the **Council of Carthage**, and reconfirmed at the **Council of Hippo** (419 AD). Both councils were gatherings of representatives from across the whole spectrum of the New Testament Church. Eusebius (264-340 A.D.) had previously listed the books of the New Testament as we know them. But even his work was the result of a growing and general **consensus** throughout the Church as to which Books measured up (were canonical). *The formation of the New Testament was therefore a process involving all of the churches (the entire Church), not just one event or vote or singular contested decision by any individual, group, or council.*

**THE CRITERIA FOR CONFIRMING CANONICITY** at the Council of Carthage was three-fold:

- 1) Was it the writing of an apostle or directly supervised by an apostle (as an eyewitness of Jesus)?
- 2) Was the writing used and recognized by all the churches?
- 3) Did the writing adhere to and teach sound doctrine?

**THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA** (means *hidden away*), mostly originated between the Old and New Testament eras. They were rejected by the Protestant Church — considered non-canonical as per the three-point criteria cited above. The Jews never recognized the Apocryphal books as part of their Bible, although the Apocrypha did first appear in the Septuagint LXX. Even the Roman Catholic Church did not declare the Apocryphal books to be Holy Scripture until the Council of Trent (1545-1563)! The Apocrypha may offer some theologically, historically, and spiritually useful insight, but should be read with great discernment, remembering that these books are certainly *not* God's inspired Word.

**HERE IS A LISTING OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS:** The First Book of Esdras, The Second Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobit, The Book of Judith, Additions to the Book of Esther, The Book of Wisdom, The Book of Sirach, The Book of Baruch, The Epistle of Jeremiah, Additions to the Book of Daniel, The Prayer of Manasses, The Additional Psalm, The First Book of Maccabees, The Second Book of Maccabees, The Third Book of Maccabees, The Fourth Book of Maccabees

**THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA** ("False Writings") were writings attributed to such well-known individuals as Adam, Enoch, and Noah. Unlike many of the Apocryphal Books, they never even vied for canonicity.

**THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS** were also considered non-canonical, although in some cases they also contained valuable insights. There were also a few other worthy but not inspired writings in existence at the time (1 Corinthians 5:9, Colossians 4:16). But while they may have been informative, they were not handwritten Greek MSS.

**SOME OF THE OLDEST AND BEST KNOWN NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS** (MSS) are the Chester Beatty Papyri (200 A.D.), the Bodmer Papyrus II (150-200 A.D.), the Sinaitic (350 A.D.), Vatican (325-350 A.D.), and Alexandrian (400 A.D.) manuscripts. **The John Rylands Papyrus** is currently the oldest known record (fragment) of a canonical New Testament text, supposedly dating to sometime in the early second century A.D. — which would be less than fifty years after John wrote his gospel.

**THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS WRITTEN IN KOINE GREEK** — the language of the common people. Some 500 words in the Greek New Testament do not even appear in classic Greek.

## **V. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE THROUGH HISTORY**

**NO ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS** of the Old or New Testaments exist today, as far as is known. What does exist is a remarkable number of manuscripts (MSS) that in many cases date from not so long after the originals themselves were evidently written. *Both the vast number of documents and the relatively brief elapsed time between the original autographs and the first copies make the reliability of Scripture a great deal more certain than the work of many other well-known historians and writers, or the great body of ancient literature.*

**THE ANCIENT DOCUMENTS WERE USUALLY REPRODUCED** by a group of scribes taking dictation from a chief scribe. Each individual scribe made a single copy of a manuscript by hand, an extremely tedious process. Too expensive for common use or individual ownership, these New Testament MSS were reserved for the use of groups such as the Christian churches.

**WHY DO SO MANY VARIATIONS** — possibly up to 180,000 — appear in the various copied MSS? The variations are the inevitable result of the tedious process of reproducing Scripture by hand. However, all but 400 of these variations involve very minor differences in spelling (comparable to the difference between 'honor' and 'honour'). Of the 400 occasions where the sense of the passage is involved, never is a single basic doctrine of the Christian faith at issue.

**GOD HAS THEREFORE PROVIDENTIALLY PRESERVED HIS WORD** in its various stages of transmission through the ages just as surely (though in a different manner) as He Divinely inspired its original writing through human authors. The authenticity and integrity of every detail of Scripture has been challenged and validated as reliable by reputable scholars.

**THE VULGATE WAS AMONG THE FIRST FEW** significant translations of the entire Bible. It was a Latin translation, *circa* 400 A.D., and became the Bible of the West for a thousand years.

**CHAPTER & VERSE DIVISIONS** were made somewhat arbitrarily in 1227-1236 A.D. by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and from 900-1551 A.D. by various other individuals.

**WYCLIFFE'S BIBLE WAS THE FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION**, completed in about 1382 A.D.. It was based on the Vulgate. John Wycliffe defied the Roman Catholic Church with this work and, because of it, was excommunicated. But his work and eventual martyrdom paved the way for the Reformation with its renewed emphasis on the Bible, which the popes had supplanted with decrees and dogmas of their own.

**GUTENBERG INVENTED PRINTING IN 1454 A.D.**, and with it Bibles quickly became far more affordable and far more abundant.

**IN 1525 A.D. WILLIAM TYNDALE'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION** from the original languages was released, and **LUTHER'S GERMAN TRANSLATION** followed later in the 1520s.

**THE AUTHORIZED KING JAMES VERSION (KJV)** of 1611 was one of the first major translations completed by a committee rather than an individual. It was based on the third edition of the Greek New Testament published by Stephanus in 1550 A.D. (not the *Textus Receptus* published in 1633 by the Elzevier Brothers in Holland). For 300 years or more the King James Version went on to become the household Bible of the English-speaking world.

**WAS THERE REALLY ANY LEGITIMATE NEED** to replace the KJV with a newer translation? One reason cited for doing so has to do with the **later dates** of the various groups (families) of MSS upon which the KJV is based. The majority of MSS agree among themselves but do not date before the fifth century. The **older (earlier) MSS** (including some of those most recently discovered), though closer to the originals, are fewer in number and at times tend to disagree among each other.

**So which version is superior?** Therein lies a large debate. The KJV is based on the later **majority** of MSS. The more recent translations are, for the most part, developed from Greek texts (e.g. Hort & Westcott), which are based on earlier MSS.

## VI. MODERN BIBLE VERSIONS

### WHAT JUSTIFICATION OR NEED IS THERE FOR MODERN TRANSLATIONS?

For starters, because language is always changing. So there is a never-ending challenge to translate the changeless truth of God into the ever-changing idioms of men. Words that communicated one truth 100 years ago may hold an entirely different meaning today (e.g. a 1958 biography of St. Francis described him before his conversion as a "gay playboy.")

#### **Other examples of confusing renditions of the Bible in KJV English would include:**

- a) **Philemon 1:20** "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord." (refresh my heart in Christ)
- b) **Romans 13:13** "Let us walk honestly . . . not in . . . chambering and wantonness" (promiscuity and sensuality)
- c) **Psalms 139:13** "For thou hast possessed my reins..." (For Thou didst form my inward parts)
- d) **Isaiah 32:7** "...instruments also of the churl are evil..." (As for a rogue, his weapons are evil)
- e) **Acts 19:9** "But when divers were hardened..." (But when some [or many] were becoming hardened and disobedient)
- f) **Job 41:18** "By his neesings a light doth shine..." (His sneezes flash forth light)

**In addition to changing language** there is also a need for newer translations because of the ongoing discovery of more ancient documents that are even closer to the original autographs. Numerous MSS not available to the King James translators in 1611, for instance, have since been discovered and now *are* available.

### **AN IMPORTANT 3-POINT GUIDE for choosing a reliable translation of the Bible:**

1. Is it an actual translation? Some modern versions are paraphrases, not actual translations.
2. How many translators worked on the translation? It is usually safe to assume that 'two minds are better than one' in the work of Bible translation, as counsel sharpens the decisions of the translator in various difficult passages. As a rule, and contingent on how #3 (below) is answered, a committee or translation team is preferable to a lone translator.

3. What was/is the theological bias of the translator(s)? There are occasions when the decision about how best to translate a text becomes a somewhat subjective matter. On such occasions there is little doubt that translators will be influenced by the doctrinal predisposition which they bring to their work. To **demonstrate** the sort of judgment call that can sometimes be required in translative work, consider the following two illustrations (neither are actual cases):

a) Dividing the text, e.g. GODISNOWHERE — *God is no where*, or *God is now here*?

b) Punctuation in the text, e.g. a telegram intended to reject the purchase of a very costly diamond read "NO PRICE TOO HIGH" — obviously mis-communicating its message due to a missed period after the word **NO**.

## A BRIEF SURVEY OF SEVERAL CONTEMPORARY VERSIONS

Perhaps the most literal word-for-word translation available today is the **New American Standard Bible** (NASB). It is a **formal equivalence** translation and is ideal for study purposes.

Also true to the MSS and yet very readable are the **Holman Christian Standard Bible** (HCSB), the **English Standard Version** (ESV), and (with some qualifications depending on the edition or revision) the **New International Version** (NIV).

The **Authorized King James Version** (KJV) is still a trustworthy option. The **New King James Version** (NKJV) is reliable and more readable than the KJV, and the **Amplified Bible** (AB) and other parallel translations can be very helpful for study and comparative purposes.

**The Message** is a **dynamic equivalent** translation by Eugene Peterson using colloquial language. It often features a rendering of concepts or meanings. It does not claim to be a word-for-word translation. **The Living Bible** (TLB) is a **paraphrase** which makes it quite readable. It can be helpful as a sort of Bible commentary. Neither should be used in place of a reliable and reputable **formal equivalence** translation.

The **New English Bible** (NEB) was translated by a team with a more liberal orientation. The **Jerusalem Bible** (JB) exhibits a decided Roman Catholic slant. There may be good reason for expressing reservation about **Today's English Version** (TEV), i.e. Good News for Modern Man, and the **Revised Standard Version** (RSV).

## VII. BIBLICAL CRITICISM

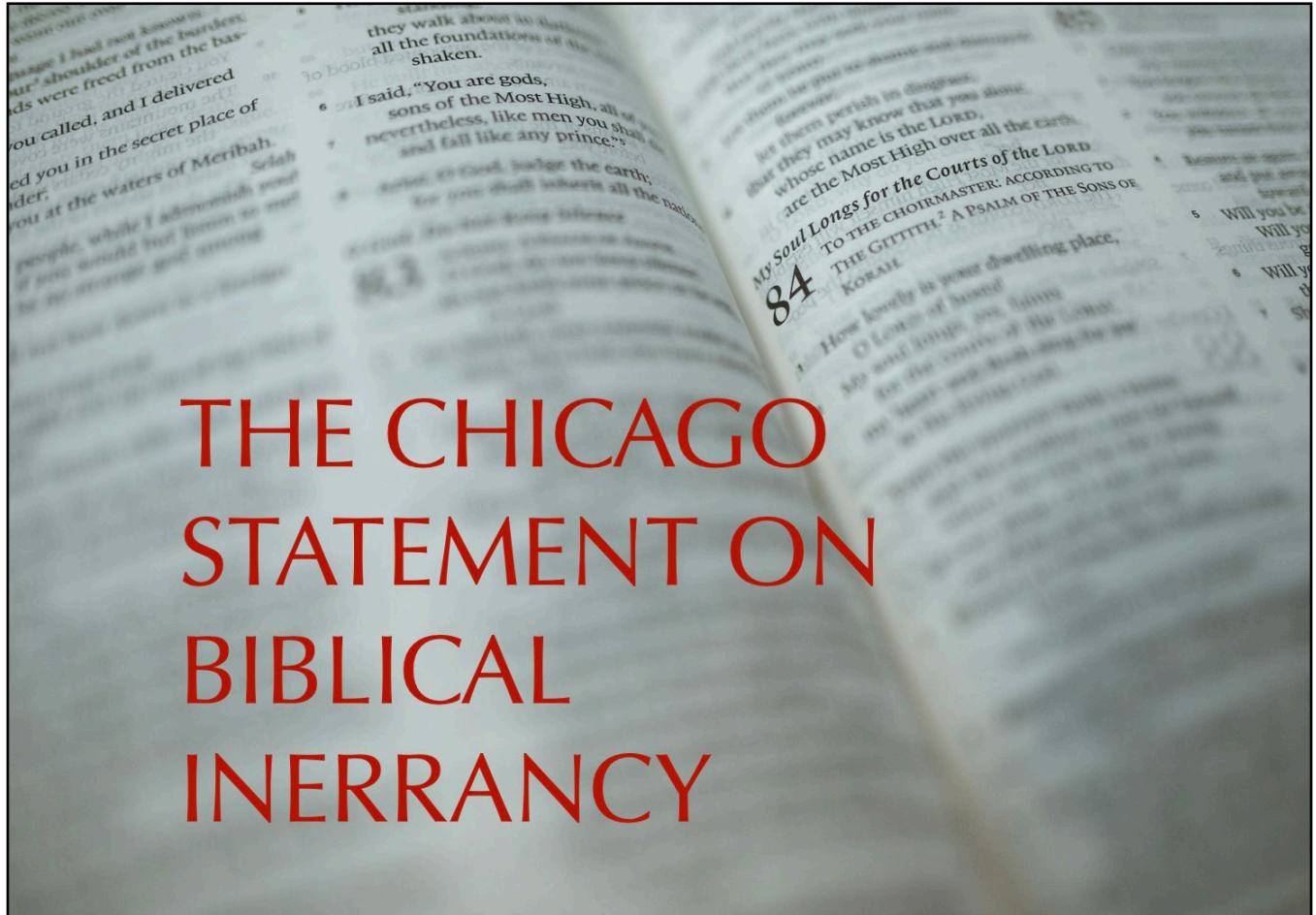
**THE SCHOLARLY AND IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE BIBLE** from an historical and textual standpoint is commonly referred to as Bible criticism. Depending on the bias and presuppositions of the critic (traditional, conservative, liberal, neo-orthodox), such criticism can be more or less helpful in enlarging knowledge and confidence in the Scripture as the Word of God.

**LOWER CRITICISM** deals with issues of **text** and **transmission** while **HIGHER CRITICISM** focuses on literary types and matters of **authorship** and **date**.

**VARIOUS TYPES OF BIBLE CRITICISM INCLUDE:** **Textual** (comparing MSS to determine the source text); **Historical** (dealing with the genuineness of a book, i.e. its author, date); **Redaction** criticism (determining why and how the authors have edited their sources as they did); and **Form, Tradition**, or **Source** criticism.

**ISSUES AND DOUBTS RAISED BY CRITICS** include Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, the number of 'Isaiahs', Q as the source of the Gospels, 'late-dating' of Daniel. It seems that the intent of such critics is often to discredit the Bible. But all such issues have long been effectively answered by other equally well-educated scholars who accept the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

## A CURSORY REVIEW OF THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY



The **Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy** was formulated by over 200 evangelical leaders at a conference organized by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago in October of 1978. The statement sets forth **19 articles** that serve to defend the position of **biblical inerrancy** against liberal academic influences that deny that Scripture is without error even in the original autographs (writings).

The full Statement can be accessed at this link: [https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf)

The following **excerpt** from **Article XII** might serve here as a summary of the Statement's position on the matter of inerrancy, but is, of course, best read in the context of the entire Statement.

"We **affirm** that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We **deny** that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science."

# HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

## *A Check-Up Quiz Based on the Related Study*

*Study Notes prepared by Daryl E. Witmer | revised to July 2022*

1. The English word *Bible* is based on a Greek term *biblia* which means \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The *canon* of Scripture refers to: \_\_\_\_\_. a) doctrinal standard, b) measure or criteria, c) the explosive effect of certain convicting Bible texts, d) conclusion, e) none of above.
3. First individual known to commit sacred history to writing by Divine inspiration? \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The first five books of the Bible are known as the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Which of the following are **not** considered a formal division of the Jewish *Tanaach*, aka the Old Testament? (*choose one*) \_\_\_\_ a) Historical, b) Writings, c) Prophets, d) Law
6. Approximately how many times is the Old Testament separately, specifically, quoted in the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ a) 300, b) 600, c) 1600, d) less than 50, e) over 2000
7. The *Qumram Library* is more commonly known as: \_\_\_\_\_
8. A Third Century B.C. Greek translation of the Old Testament was known as the *Septuagint*, and was commonly used in Jesus day. True or False? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Last book of the Bible written (chronologically), probably in about 95 A.D. \_\_\_\_\_
10. The actual time span of the writing of the New Testament Books was about how many years? \_\_\_\_\_ a) less than 20, b) 30, c) 40, d) 500, e) over 1,000, f) none of the above
11. Name one significant factor creating the need for a fixed canon of Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Which Council met in 367 A.D. to confirm the canon of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_  
a) Carthage, b) Eusebius, c) Hippo, d) Wittenberg, e) Oxford, f) Roman, g) Corinth
13. The original language of the Old Testament was predominately \_\_\_\_\_.
14. The original language of the New Testament was predominately \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Which of the following are **not** Apocryphal books? \_\_\_\_\_ a) Tobit, b) Chester Beatty, c) Baruch, d) II Maccabees, e) Bel & the Dragon, f) The Gospel of Amos; g) Kamala Devi.
16. The Roman Catholic Church recognized the Apocryphal Books as canonical from the very beginning of Church history. True or False? \_\_\_\_\_
17. The early Church Councils met to do which of the following about the *canon* of Scripture: \_\_\_\_\_? a) vote on it, b) confirm it, c) listen to it, d) give incredibly long speeches about it, e) reject it outright.

18. We have in our possession today (worldwide) approximately thirty-seven (37) actual original New Testament manuscripts. True or False? \_\_\_\_\_
19. What two factors combine to make the reliability of Scripture a good bet?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
20. How were ancient Bible documents originally reproduced? Describe the process in brief.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
21. Why do the multiple thousands of variations in the various copied manuscripts of the New Testament not pose an actual threat to the reliability of the Scripture?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
22. The first Latin translation of the Bible was known as the \_\_\_\_ a) the Requiem, b) the Presidium, c) the *Latino Biblios Reproductium*, d) the Vulgate, or e) the Latin Bible
23. The original Bible authors meticulously divided their work into chapters and verses. True or False? \_\_\_\_\_
24. Name the first man to translate the entire Bible into English. \_\_\_\_\_ a) Gutenberg, b) King James, c) Wycliffe, d) Luther, e) Spurgeon, f) Ken Taylor, g) Pope Paul MCMVIIICX
25. Name one of the three critical criterion to keep in mind when choosing a Bible version  
 \_\_\_\_\_
26. Is it *Lower* or *Higher* Criticism that deals with text and transmission? \_\_\_\_\_
27. On a certain level Bible criticism can at times be a good thing. *True* or *False*? \_\_\_\_\_
28. The *Writings of the Apostolic Fathers* may contain valuable history. True or False? \_\_\_\_\_
29. Who invented volume printing in 1454? \_\_\_\_\_
30. Explain briefly how GODISNOWHERE illustrates an important point in Bible translation.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## BONUS POINTS

Two free points for naming more than five different currently available Bible versions.





## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part C

# WHO IS JESUS?

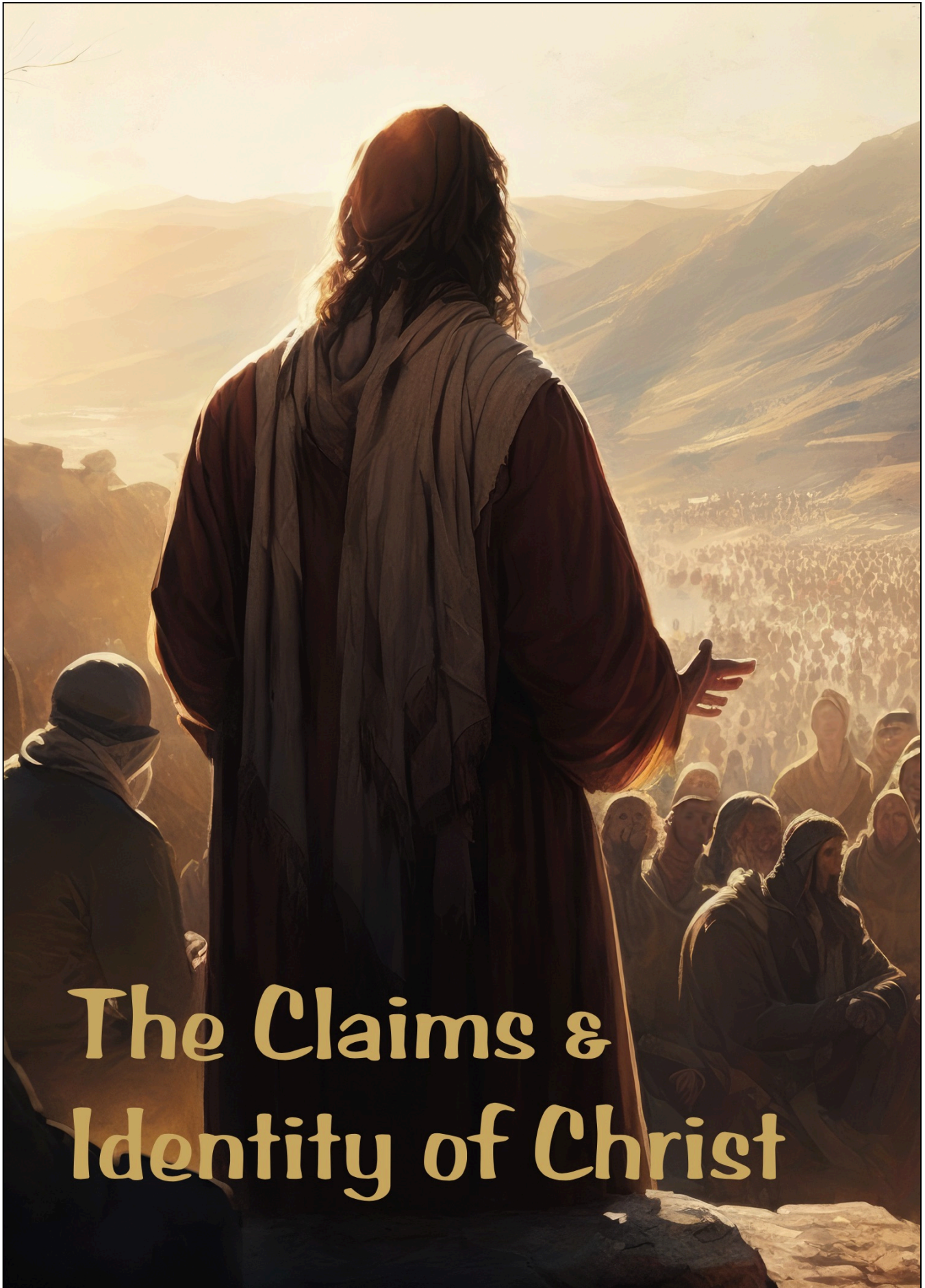
## HIS CLAIMS

## HIS IDENTITY

## HIS UNIQUENESS







# The Claims & Identity of Christ

## A MATTER OF HISTORY

Did a man known as Jesus Christ ever actually live somewhere in the northern part of Israel near the beginning of first century? Philosopher **Bertrand Russell**, scientist author **Daniel Dennett**, and a few others have actually disputed even the *existence* of an historical Jesus. Their arguments are not very convincing and they have almost no academic company today in taking such a position. But they both, along with others who also deny the historicity of Christ, insist that Jesus was merely an idea or a myth, not a real person.

But how do we know that Bertrand Russell himself was a real person who once actually lived? How can we know that George Washington once lived? Or King Henry VIII? Or Genghis Kahn? How do we know that anyone now dead actually ever lived here on earth? What would be acceptable evidence? That same criteria should be applied to Jesus Christ.

### Consider this documentation:

- a) Reputable Roman and Jewish historians with no religious axe to grind (e.g. Josephus, Tacitus) wrote of an historical Jesus of Nazareth.
- b) All major respected (and even secular) references (e.g. encyclopedias, scholarly works, dictionaries) take the position that there was, in fact, a real historical Jesus.
- c) The internationally recognized Gregorian calendar and all corresponding dating systems are based on the life of an historical Christ (*Anno Domini* — in the year of our Lord). And even the currently popular designation C.E. (Common Era) corresponds to the life of Christ (Christian Era).

## A MATTER OF OPTIONS

But if Jesus of Nazareth actually did exist, who was He? Historically, three primary options have been cited — most notably by C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* and by Josh McDowell in *More Than a Carpenter*, in what has been termed the “L” trilemma: Liar, Lunatic, or Lord. In more recent times, however, two other views are receiving attention. Here is a summary of all five options, with a brief comment below each one.

### 1. WAS JESUS A LIAR?

But if so, there was never any indication from historical references that He was a deceptive, misleading, or pathologically lying individual. It's usually only a matter of time until impostors and hoaxes and liars get caught in their lies. Consider the movie *Catch Me If You Can*, i.e. Frank Abagnale, Jr. who posed as a pilot, a lawyer, and a doctor. He got by with it for years, but his lies eventually caught up with him.

### 2. WAS JESUS A LUNATIC?

But Jesus never manifest any sort of self-delusory or hallucinogenic behavior. There is no record of any sort of abnormal psychiatric history. Jesus appears to be completely sane. Can you name even just one reputable psychologist who has diagnosed Jesus as being delusional? Some folks consider Jesus' claims to be God as preposterous and farfetched. But Paul David Hewson, aka **Bono** once said: “The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase — for me, *that* is what is farfetched.”

For an excellent article on the identity of Jesus Christ by respected Christian apologist **Greg Koukl**, click this link: <https://www.str.org/w/why-jesus-part-1>

### 3. WAS JESUS A LEGEND?

This is the view that the historical Jesus never actually Himself claimed to be Divine. This view postulates that the Christian faith and Church developed as the result of mere legends about Jesus which grew in the years following His death. It suggests that the idea that Jesus was truly God is an evolved myth. Books such as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (by Albert Schweitzer), and *The Da Vinci Code* (by Dan Brown) take this sort of tack.

But the impossibility of a full blown legend on this scale ever taking root seems evident. There would not have been sufficient time for things to develop as they did. Think about this. Less than one year had gone by when the Church began growing at a phenomenal rate. Less than 100 years went by between Jesus' ascension and the solid establishment of Christianity and the Christian Church throughout the vast Roman empire. Meanwhile, many of Jesus' contemporaries were still alive. For reports that Jesus Himself had claimed to be God and actually was God to have become so established in such a short time would be highly unlikely.

It would almost be like Elvis Presley fans today claiming — and even being willing to die for claiming — that Elvis was actually God and has come back from the dead. Too many living people who knew the real Elvis would never make it feasible for such a claim to take root.

If someone got carried away with the eulogy at my funeral service and suggested that I was actually God while I was here on earth, and that I had actually even claimed that to be true, I'm quite certain that my wife and family and friends would quickly stand up and refute such assertions, regardless of how highly that poor fellow may have thought of me when I was alive!

By the way, who would **die** for what they know to be a **lie**, as did the disciples and many early believers? **Blaise Pascal**, referring to the testimony and sacrifice of the early Christian martyrs, said that **he was inclined to believe witnesses adamant enough to have their throats slit.**

### 4. WAS JESUS A LUMINARY?

This postulate is actually a variation on Option 4 — that Jesus actually only ever intimated that He was god-like — an avatar or the incarnation of a far eastern god-like being such as Vishnu, or a guru, a swami, a spiritual **luminary**, or part of what is sometimes termed 'The Divine Essence.'

But no such claims would have made sense in the context of the Middle East in the first century. For a Jewish rabbi to claim that he was an avatar would have amounted to gibberish. And there is absolutely not one shred of historical evidence that any of His followers ever understood Him to mean any such thing. This is probably the least likely option of the five.

### 5. WAS JESUS LORD?

Well, if none of the four options above are viable, there seems to be only one option left — namely, that Jesus was exactly who He claimed to be — God incarnate. What you cannot have is Jesus being just a good honorable human teacher who is **simultaneously** either lying or loony about His actually being God. But that's the position that many folks try to adopt and perpetrate. Here is **C.S. Lewis** in *Mere Christianity*, in one of his most famous quotes, explaining why that position is altogether untenable: "That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. [If Jesus is not God], let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

## IMPORTANT NOTE

In recent years the addition of Option 3 and Option 4 (above) have been advanced, so that what we now have is a **quintilemma**. But neither of those two options are convincing, not just because of the reasons cited above, but also in light of Jesus' own claims and uniqueness, as follows.

## A MATTER OF CLAIMS

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### Did Jesus actually claim to be the infinite-personal God of the universe?

1. The Bible makes it clear that the Jews themselves evidently thought so. In fact, His claims to be Divine were the primary reason that Jesus was accused by Jewish leadership. **John 5:18** says: "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." Also, in **John 4:26** Jesus says to the woman at the well: "I who speak to you am He (the Messiah of God)," and in **John 13:13** to His disciples in upper room: "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am."

**Are these records of what Jesus said reliable?** Well, they were written by the one man who probably knew Jesus best — His disciple John. And we've already established (on page 249) that the manuscripts of John's account is reliable by any standard of reliability for ancient literature.

2. Consider also Jesus' own references to Himself as the **Son of Man**. The fact that Jesus used this term to describe Himself is acknowledged by even very liberal scholars and critics of historic Christianity, such those who are part of the **Jesus Seminar**. This favorite nickname of Jesus — Son of Man — actually pointed to His **deity**, not to His **humanity**. See Daniel 7:13 which says: "*I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.*"

## A MATTER OF UNIQUENESS

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Consider three amazing ways in which Jesus Christ differs from all other well known *established* religious leaders:

a) **His claims.** In John 10:30 Jesus says, "I and the Father are one." That is a stupendous claim coming from a popular Jewish rabbi. No other major religious leaders have made such a claim.

b) **His miracles.** John 11:38-43 provides impressive eyewitness documentation of Jesus' miracles.

c) **His empty tomb.** Luke 24:3ff refer to the empty tomb of Jesus on the third day of His remarkable crucifixion-resurrection experience. The empty tomb of Jesus has never been credibly explained by those disputing the deity of Christ. **And it sets Jesus apart as totally unique.** The graves of Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Confucius, Lao-Tsu, and every other major religious founder and leader are occupied. But the tomb where Jesus was laid (the Garden Tomb or in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher) remains empty to this day.

**Auguste Comte**, the famous French thinker and atheist, once supposedly told **Thomas Carlyle** that he was going to start a new religion to replace Christianity. According to the account, Carlyle said to Comte, "Good, then. All you have to do is be crucified, rise again on the third day, and convince the world of it. Then you'll have a chance."

## A MATTER OF IMPLICATIONS

This subject is more than of academic interest. The implications of this matter are immense, and should be considered and acted up by by every thinking person. No one can realistically afford to remain agnostic on the matter. The stakes are too high.



Some time ago I spoke with a young lady who, when I asked her about her beliefs about God and the afterlife, said, “I don’t know and I don’t think that anyone **can** know with certainty. I’m just happy to be alive today!”

I appreciated her optimism but was astounded by her naive and somewhat cavalier response. **Does she not understand** or **does she not care** about matters with stakes so high? **Where she spends eternity hangs in the balance.** Why not at least take a position based on where the evidence **points**, even if 100% certainty currently seems beyond her grasp?!

**How about you?** Who is Jesus to you?

If Jesus really is who He claimed to be, what does that mean for you?

If you were to die tonight, where would you wake up tomorrow morning?

Why should God let you into His heaven?

Is the promise of heaven the only reason why you should personally turn to Christ as savior?

In response to that last question, perhaps the most important and noble reason to come to Jesus is **not** because of what it will someday give **you**, but because of how it will right now honor **Him**. A good reason to say “yes” to Jesus is for the honor of Christ Himself — just because He deserves your allegiance, surrender, and worship.

**“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” (John 1:12)**

For more about why and how you can receive Christ, see **Appendix 8** in this compendium.

For much more on the uniqueness of Christ see the following seminar in this compendium, beginning on page 281.



# The Claims & Identity of the Historical Christ

## OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

Material, Notes, and Worksheet developed by Daryl E Witmer

### A MATTER OF HISTORY

Did a person by the name of Jesus Christ ever really live on this planet?

### A MATTER OF OPTIONS

Who was the historical Jesus, really?

1. L - - - ?
2. L - - - - - ?
3. L - - - ?
4. L - - - - - ?
5. L - - - - - - - ?

### A MATTER OF CLAIMS

Did Jesus Christ ever really claim to be the infinite-personal God described in the Bible?

- a. The Bible and the Jews (John 5:18)
- b. Reliability of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16)
- c. Son of Man (Daniel 7:13)

### A MATTER OF UNIQUENESS

Consider these three ways (among many others) in which Jesus Christ differed from other noted and established religious leaders:

- a. His c\_\_\_\_\_
- b. His m\_\_\_\_\_
- c. His e\_\_\_\_\_ t\_\_\_\_\_

### Thomas Carlyle quote

### A MATTER OF IMPLICATIONS

#### Why do the implications matter?

- If Jesus is who He claimed to be, what does that mean for you? Who is Jesus to you?
- If you were to die tonight, where would you wake up in the morning?
- Why should God let you into heaven?
- Why should you receive and recognize Jesus Christ as Lord in your life?

#### Read and consider John 1:12

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”





# The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

# THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST

Lecture and Seminar developed by  
Daryl E. Witmer

**FIRST SESSION: 45-60 minutes**  
.....

**Introduction to presenter**

**Introduction to topic**

The topic itself here immediately raises at least four important questions. For purposes of clarification and in order to set the parameters of what we hope to accomplish in this seminar, here they are:

## 1. Of which Christ are we speaking?

There have been numerous self-proclaimed "Christs" throughout history, and many more are coming. In Matthew 24:5 Jesus warned, "For **many** will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." So how can we begin to realistically address the matter of "The Uniqueness of Christ" unless we first define which Christ is being considered unique?

- Is it the Christ of the **Mormons**? The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints teach that Jesus was created as a Spirit Child by His Father and Mother in heaven, was once the spirit brother of Lucifer, and that His human body resulted from sexual relations between Mary and God.
- Is it the Christ of **Islam**? Muslims believe that Jesus was one of 124,000 prophets sent by Allah, that He was never crucified or raised from the dead, and is certainly not God or the Son of God.
- Is it the Christ of **A Course in Miracles**? ACIM claims that Jesus is The Self that God created by extension of His Spirit. And that the Christ is not to be exclusively identified with Jesus.
- Is it the Christ of **Scientology**? Was Jesus a Great Teacher who fully realized His personal divinity as a "clear," but who never created and who certainly never died for anyone's sin.
- Is it the Christ of the **Unification Church**? Consider this excerpt from an e-mail sent to me by Michihiro Takano on Monday, October 25, 2004: "In other words, God Himself allowed people in the spirit world, who were blessed by the True Parents, to become one with Rev. and Mrs. Moon. They have fulfilled the responsibility as the Lord of the Second Coming, Messiah and the True Parents, and under His [Sun Myung Moon's, I take it] absolute, unique, unchanging and eternal authority, all of the wrongdoings of the past have been liquidated and the totally new heaven has been prepared. Also He revealed the fact that the conventional Christian faith is different from the Will of God, the God of Bible, and the God of Jesus. He has disclosed facts recorded in Christian history, as well as the real meaning of the Book of Revelation to John."



- Is it the Christ of the **Self-Realization Fellowship** (SRF)? SRF publishes a book entitled "The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You | A revelatory commentary on the original teachings of Jesus" — by Paramahansa Yogananda (Utne Nov–Dec 2004)?
- Is it the Christ of the **Jesus Seminar**?

**Or can we agree that, for the purposes of this seminar, the Christ to whom we are referring is the historical Christ, the Son of God, as revealed in the four gospels of the biblical New Testament?**

**There's really nothing so unique about being unique in and of itself.  
So what makes the uniqueness of the biblical Christ unique?**

## 2. Unique relative to who or what?

- Unique among men of faith worldwide? Well, Jesus was Jewish. That would narrow the field.
- Unique relative to Jewish men who grew up in Nazareth and whose fathers were carpenters? Well, His parents' names were Joseph and Mary, His brother's name was James, He had a few sisters, and He had a cousin by the name of John. Those facts should make Him quite unique.
- Unique relative to all the other founders and leaders of world religions? Well, He was a first-born with the initials J.C. That, even more than His virgin birth, would make Him unique from the Buddha, who some claim to also have been the result of a divine conception, but whose initials are S.G. (Siddhartha Gautama). (To clarify, the Buddha is said to have descended from the higher realm into the womb of his mother, the Great Queen Maya "without defilement." So the father who raised him (King Suddhodana) is not believed by many Buddhists to have been the Buddha's biological father.
- Unique relative to all the gods of ancient Rome and Greece? Well, this Christ had been born in the part of a crowded lodging facility reserved for livestock, located in a small Judean town on the West Bank of Palestine, then wrapped up and laid in a cattle trough after His delivery. Of which Greek god can that be said?

**What's the point in all of this?** The point is that it's really not so difficult to find some unique characteristics in Jesus Christ, depending on where you draw the circle — compared to what or to whom you are comparing Him. So that raises yet another question.

## 3. Why is being unique of itself such a big deal?

Aren't all religious leaders unique in some way? In fact, aren't all *people* unique in some way? Like snowflakes in winter, of which we are told no two are alike.

My wife, Mary, and I have biologically identical twin sons, born in 1976. But we would assure you that they are not 100% identical. Neither nurture nor nature plays out in the exact same way for any two individuals. No two people, not even clones, would ever end up being totally 100% alike in every detail during the full course of their lives.

**All of which is to say that there's really nothing so unique about being unique in and of itself.**

So why is the topic — The Uniqueness of Christ — even worth considering? The answer to that question may be discovered by asking one more question.

## 4. Who cares if Jesus is unique? So what?

Even if Jesus Christ is demonstrated to be unique among the gods, or among the company of those claiming to be God, or those who have founded belief systems that claim to represent God — why does that matter? Does it matter enough to justify the time and effort to understand it all?

**Yes — it matters a great deal — because the uniqueness of the biblical Christ consistently corroborates His claims to deity. One is inextricably linked to the other. He is uniquely God!**

Here's why  
it matters!

Also, if we as humans are accountable to Jesus as Lord (ruler) of the universe, the rationale for grasping this matter should become more evident. **If you are a fair-minded skeptic** why wouldn't (or why shouldn't) you want to check out this critical credential that sets Jesus apart from the founders and leaders of all other religions? **And if you're already a believer** why would you not want to know as much as you can about who Jesus is, and about this critical credential, so that you can at least cite it when speaking to your skeptic friends, co-workers, and neighbors?

Hopefully these four introductory questions and answers have set the stage as we now move on to briefly consider **A)** The history of the doctrine that Christ is unique, **B)** What the Scripture contributes to our understanding of the uniqueness of Christ, **C)** The arguments of three noted apologists on the uniqueness of Christ, and **D)** My own **Top Ten Ways in Which the Historical Christ was Unique Among Major Religious Leaders Through History**.

### A) History

Richard Keyes, a committed follower of Jesus, an author, and director of the L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough MA for many years, has specialized in the study of worldviews for most of his life. In a lecture entitled "The Uniqueness of Christ in an Age of Relativism" (published in 2003 by Covenant Theological Seminary) Keyes says this: "The conviction of Christ's uniqueness did not arise or thrive first in the nineteenth century colonial era of Western imperialism. In fact, it did not even arise in Europe. The whole Christian faith is a Middle Eastern religion, not a European religion at all. **The Christian faith**, with its claims to Christ's uniqueness, **grew and thrived [right in the first century pluralistic Roman Empire.]**"

The doctrine of the uniqueness of Christ has been part and parcel of the Christian gospel from the its beginning. The Apostle Paul, speaking at the Athenian Areopagus in 53 A.D., proclaimed to the men of Athens that: "...God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

**The resurrection of Jesus is perhaps the most significant mark of His uniqueness.**

Resurrection is perhaps the most significant mark of Jesus' uniqueness. Jesus was the man who wouldn't stay dead — **and that was unique!** Paul cites the resurrection as part of his apologetic message for faith in Christ in 1 Corinthians 15. And it is this distinction which has been at the heart of the Christian message ever since — for over 20 centuries now.

## B) Scriptural Case for Christ's Uniqueness

What else does the Bible say about the uniqueness of Christ? Does the Bible ever use the term unique or uniqueness? The answer is "yes."

Four times in the Old Testament (NASB) the Bible uses the Hebrew term ***echad***, which means **one** or **unity** and actually derives from the cardinal number **one**. None of these four texts refer to the Christ (Messiah) *per se*, but the concept of the Lord God (Yahweh) as a one-of-a-kind God is noted from the Pentateuch forward. When Moses went before Pharaoh, he said, ". . . that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God" (Exodus 8:10). This Hebrew term ***echad*** appears when the Lord God of Israel is recognized as being **one** God. And 1 Samuel 2:2 says: "There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, nor is there any rock like our God."



So the doctrine of the Judeo-Christian deity as being **unique** is made abundantly clear in the Old Testament — **the one true God is unique, distinct, and different from all other purported gods**. In fact, by definition, the God of the Bible is unique because of many of His attributes. For instance, the Christian God is **omnipotent** (all-powerful). The concept of a pantheon of gods in Greece and Rome, or of a plurality of gods (polytheism) in the East **is oxymoronic**. How could there be two or more omnipotent beings existing simultaneously?

In the New Testament, the **Amplified Bible** cites Moulton & Milligan as translating the Greek "monogene" (accusative case, pronounced "monoganay") or "monoganees" (nominative case, pronounced "monoganase") in **John 3:16** as God's "[One and] only" begotten Son with a footnote that reads: "Jesus, God's only Son, the One who is truly **unique**, the only one of His kind."

The **King James Version** and the **New American Standard Bible** (1995) both translate the Greek as "only begotten" Son. The **Holman Christian Standard Bible** translates the Greek as "One and Only" Son. And the **New International Version** translates the Greek term as "one and only" Son. So we clearly have this New Testament reference to Christ as being **unique**.

Green's Greek-English Lexicon defines **monogenees** as "only born." Jesus is the **only** son of God born into the world from heaven and from the Father. All other sons of God in this New Covenant age have been **adopted** into His family (Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5). Christ is unique in this sense as well.

See also John 3:18 and John 1:18 which state that "No man has seen God at any time; the **only** begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." And 1 John 4:9, which says, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His **only** begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."

**The Scripture makes an unequivocally clear case for the uniqueness and deity of Christ.**

## SECOND SESSION: 45 – 60 minutes

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During the first session of this seminar we considered the grounds for recognizing that the biblical Jesus — that is, the Christ of the New Testament gospels — is God, and how He is unique among the founders and leaders of many belief systems through history.

We looked at the history of the matter of Christ's uniqueness, and at what the Bible says about it all.

Now in this second session we are set to examine what a few noted apologists have had to say about the subject, and then end with a **Top Ten** list in making the case for the uniqueness of Christ as evidence for the veracity of His claims to deity.



### C) The Arguments of Three Noted Apologists for the Uniqueness of Christ

Following are the arguments of three noted apologists in making the case for Jesus' uniqueness.

**1. Dr. Norman Geisler** (1932-2019) was a prolific book author, teacher, speaker, and highly regarded evangelical Christian apologist around the world. He also served for some time as president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Matthews NC.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** What follows here are excerpts from an **outline** of Dr. Geisler's excellent treatise, "The Uniqueness of Christ." Each of the items in this outline **are hyperlinked to more detailed commentary** in the PDF form of this huge treatise. We highly recommend it for more detailed study of this subject. All of it is easily downloadable (at no cost!) at this link:

<https://jashow.org/articles/the-uniqueness-of-christ/>

In the first section Dr. Geisler expounds on the following unique aspects of the supernatural **NATURE** of Christ as evidence of His deity:

- Unique in Messianic Prophecies
- Unique in Conception
- Unique in Life
- Unique in Death
- Unique in Resurrection
- Unique in Ascension

Geisler then moves to expound on the following unique aspects of the **CHARACTER** of Christ as evidence of His deity:

- Unique in Exemplifying Virtues
- Unique in Seemingly Opposite Traits, e.g. boldness yet humility, meekness yet assertiveness
- Unique in Life and Teaching, i.e. "No one ever spoke the way this man does." (John 7:46)

Finally, Geisler shows how Christ is uniquely superior in His **LIFE & MINISTRY** to six historic world famous moral teachers, as follows.

**First, in regard to Moses:**

- a. Christ is a superior prophet to Moses
- b. Christ's revelation is superior to that of Moses
- c. Christ's position is superior to that of Moses
- d. Christ's miracles are superior to that of Moses
- e. Christ's claims are superior to that of Moses

**Second, in regard to Muhammad:**

- a. Christ offers a superior message.
- b. Christ offers a better way of salvation.
- c. Christ offers a superior model life.

**Third, in regard to various Hindu Gurus:**

- a. Christ teaches a superior worldview.
- b. Christ's teaching is morally superior.
- c. Jesus gives a superior path to enlightenment.
- d. Christ teaches a better way of salvation.

**Fourth, in regard to Buddha:**

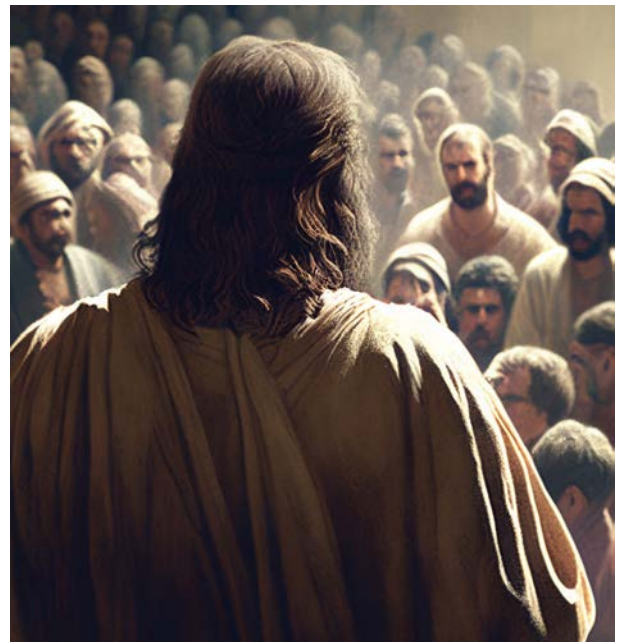
- a. Christ fills life with more hope.
- b. Christ offers a better way of salvation.
- c. Jesus is a better Christ.

**Fifth, in regard to Socrates:**

- a. Christ has a superior basis for truth.
- b. Christ gives more certain knowledge.
- c. Christ's death was more noble.
- d. Christ's proof of His message is superior.

**Sixth, in regard to Lao-Tzu (Taoism):**

- a. Christ brings superior freedom.



**Dr. Geisler summarizes his treatise by noting that no other world teacher has claimed to be God. No other religious leader (except for some who copied Christ) offered salvation by faith, apart from works . . . And no other religious or philosophical leader has displayed the love that Jesus did in dying for the sins of the world.**

**2. Erwin W. Lutzer** served for many years as senior pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago. In his book, *Christ among other gods*, ©1984 Moody, Lutzer articulates and defends nine aspects of the life of Christ which mark Him alone, in contrast to the gods or leaders of other world religions, as being Divine and true.

Lutzer makes an individual case for the extraordinary birth, life, authority, death, resurrection, ascension, return, and responsibility of Jesus Christ. This book is well illustrated and tightly argued. We'd recommend it.

**3. Ravi Zacharias** was for many years a respected Indian-born American-based apologist, author, and speaker before his death in 2020 and the subsequent well-documented disclosure of long-term immoral conduct on his part. During his years of ministry he had lectured on "The Uniqueness of Christ in History," Parts 1 and 2, and on "The Uniqueness of Christ in World Religions." He had also authored a 195-page book entitled *Jesus Among Other Gods — The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*, ©2000 by Word Publishing.

In spite of the fact that Zacharias never publicly repented of his sin and that **we no longer endorse him personally**, we are including in the notes for this seminar some of the material that he had developed with the thought that **"all truth is God's truth" regardless of who speaks it.**

In an attempt to show that there is "a clear difference between Jesus Himself and any other claimants to divinity or prophetic status," and that Jesus' claims to deity are unique in and of themselves, Zacharias compared Christianity to such worldviews as atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. To do this, He used a novel tactic. He imagined Jesus' response to significant questions that were asked of Him (or on His behalf) in Scripture. These questions and Jesus' response to them make an effective case for the uniqueness and deity of Christ.

In *Jesus Among Other Gods, Youth Edition*, ©2000 Word, Zacharias with Kevin Johnson, distilled from the larger text these questions (just four of six included here), as follows.

• **Where did You live? | John 1:38**

**Answer:** "With My heavenly Father.", i.e. "I came from heaven."

• **Our fathers ate manna in the desert... why don't You give us the same? | John 6:31ff**

**Answer:** Jesus offers Himself as satisfying (John 6:35), an unexpected response unlike that of any other religious leader in the world. Mohammed is different from the Koran. Buddha didn't claim to be the Noble Path.

But Jesus identifies Himself with His message, and even as being the message. He didn't just proclaim truth, but said that He **was** the truth.

• **Is God the source of suffering? | John 9:1-11**

**Answer:** This happened that the works of God might be displayed in His life. We can thereby conclude that God is good and that He proposes a realistic solution to evil as a cause for suffering. By contrast, Hinduism suggests suffering to be illusory and thus denies reality. Hinduism has no way to deal with the problem of evil. Buddhism lays the blame on God and man as the result of past sins. Deformed babies are paying for their sin in a previous life. How much of a help and consolation is that?

• **Who are you looking for? | John 20:15**

This is actually a question asked by an angel on Jesus' behalf in the Garden on Easter Sunday.

**Answer:** In a world of many gods, Jesus is absolute truth. He is beyond comparison. He is real, righteous, radical and risen. The claims of Christ are credible, defensible, and consistent. In Jesus alone we get God.

**God is good and proposes a realistic solution to evil as a cause for suffering. By contrast, Hinduism suggests suffering to be illusory and thus denies reality. Hinduism has no way to deal with the problem of evil. Buddhism lays the blame on God and man as the result of past sins.**



# THE TOP 10

## D) Witmer's Top Ten Ways in Which the Historical Christ was Unique Among Major Religious Leaders Through History

After reviewing all of the sources above and many others over the years, I'm offering here my own conclusions on the matter in the form of this **Top Ten** list, as follows.

### 10. The integrity and credibility of Jesus' life *in combination with His claim to be God.*

- Sun Myung Moon has claimed to be a second Messiah, but not actually the fullness of God in human form. Jesus claimed to be fully God, i.e. one with the Father.
- When I was growing up in southeastern Pennsylvania, I recall hearing about an elderly black man from Philadelphia who one day began claiming that he was God. But his claims never went anywhere because his character was so limited and flawed. Not so with Jesus whose character was beyond reproach — **while at the same time** He was claiming to be God.
- Norm Geisler said: "No other world teacher has ever claimed to be God." Jesus did claim to be God, and He did so with a strength of character that made His claim credible.

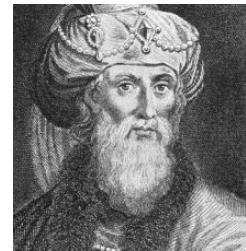
### 9. Jesus' ability to perform miracles — as prophesied!

When John the Baptist began doubting whether Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus cited this unique credential. **Luke 7:21-22**: "At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them." **All of this fulfilled age-old prophecies such as the one in Isaiah 35:5**: "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped."

This is something that has never been the case with any other key religious figures, and could not have been human-based, without the involvement of an all-knowing God.

**Pat Zukeran (Probe Ministries)** says: "During His three-year ministry, Jesus exercised His authority over death by raising several people from the grave. Most notable is the account of Lazarus found in John 11. Here, even in the face of His enemies, Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. If this were not an historical account, this story would not have survived since it was recorded and propagated in the very city where it occurred, in the lifetime of the witnesses, both followers and enemies of Christ. The enemies of Christianity could have easily refuted the account if it were not true. The fact is, they could not refute it."

Consider the sustained Gospel accounts and extra-Biblical record of the unusual signs and wonders that Jesus performed. Josephus, a reputable first century historian and not a Christian, in *Testimonium Flavianum*, describes Jesus as "...one who wrought surprising feats..."



### 8. Jesus' conviction and authority.

Unlike the despair and uncertainty that marked the lives of **Lao-Tzu** (Taoism) and **Mohammed** (Islam) when they began to (or had already) received their "messages," Jesus never hedged in His personal convictions and claims about who He was, and in His authoritative manner.

**Mark 1:22** says: "[The people] were amazed at [Jesus'] teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

## 7. Jesus fulfilled scores of other prophecies.

His place of birth (Micah 5:2), his manner of death (Psalm 22), His historic role as redeemer (Isaiah 53), and many more. In all of this, He stands alone among the company of religious figures and the founders of major world religions.

## 6. The testimony of so many thinking people to a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Many of Jesus' contemporaries and an ever-increasing number of people living in subsequent generations have continued to ascribe full deity to Christ rather than to write off His claims as false or to say that His claims were purely legendary.

Some other religions may claim that adopting their set of beliefs will change people for the better, but no credible adherents of any belief system claim that their founder or leaders will personally, even in death, change people's lives and save their souls from an eternal hell as the result of a personal ongoing relationship with that religious figure.

## 5. Circumstances of Jesus' birth.

- Jesus was virgin born. That alone pretty much sets Him apart from all other religious founders and leaders (except, perhaps, the Buddha. Then there was also the unique visit of the magi and the appearance and guidance of the star of Bethlehem.
- The testimonies and prophecies of Zacharias, Elizabeth, His own mother Mary (The Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55), the angels at His birth (Luke 2:9-14), Simeon, and Anna — all to the effect that the infant Jesus was in truth the long-awaited Messiah. Nothing like this ever accompanied the birth of any other religious leader in world history.
- The unexpectedly **unique** simplicity and lack of public fanfare at His arrival on Planet Earth. (See further the Proclamation thoughtletter entitled **Unconventionally Supernatural**, first published in December 2006 by Daryl E Witmer; now available at: <https://www.anchornewengland.org>)

## 4. Jesus' morally consistent life standard.

Consider the consistency between Jesus' profession and lifestyle in comparison with so many of the stories and scandals of other religious leaders in terms of what is appropriate to One claiming deity. The Bible says that Jesus lived on earth for 33 years without sinning (Hebrews 4:15). Of what other religious leaders can that be said?

## 3. Jesus' continuing positive influence and personal reputation.

Unlike Mohammed (often marked by violence), cult leaders such as Jim Jones, David Koresh, and Joseph Smith (a polygamist with some of his wives in their early teens!), idols of the East (often given to wanton hedonism), and the controlling leaders of dark secretive sects, **Jesus Christ is almost universally viewed with respect as a man of light and high moral standards.**

# ONE SOLITARY LIFE

"Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure for much of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever sailed, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as this One Solitary Life." — from **One Solitary Life**, by James Allen Francis © 1926.

## 2. Jesus remains inextricably linked to the belief system He founded.

Respected Christian apologist Greg Koukl expresses this aspect of the uniqueness of Christ best in his essay entitled **Why Jesus? Part 1**:

“The humanity of Jesus is not merely a stray point of religious doctrine. It is a quantifiable fact of history that’s central to the Christian Story. Take any other religious leader — Gautama of Buddhism, Muhammad of Islam, Nanak of Sikhism, et al. — remove them from history, and their essential religion remains since the teachings ground the faith, not the founder. If those founders are fictions, the teachings remain with full force. Not so with Jesus. Take Jesus out of Christianity and Christianity disappears.”

## 1. Circumstances of His death and, especially, His resurrection and ongoing life.

**Jesus lives on!** His followers today can know Him and relate to Him by faith on a daily basis. Today His grave alone, of all other religious founders and leaders, remains empty. The evidence for His resurrection is still 100% irrefutable after 20 centuries of time.

**The uniqueness of the biblical Christ relative to the founders and leaders of all other religions and worldviews throughout history provides much evidence and makes a powerfully convincing case for His deity, for Christianity and, as a result, for all humans of all ages and races to surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord in faith and obedience.**



**Christian writer Philip Yancey** effectively sums up this subject quite effectively in his book, ***The Jesus I Never Knew***:

"Why am I a Christian? I sometimes ask myself. And to be perfectly honest, the reasons reduce to two: **1)** the lack of good alternatives, and **2)** Jesus. Brilliant,

untamed, tender, creative, slippery, irreducible, paradoxically humble — Jesus stands up to scrutiny. He is who I want my God to be."

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

## SEMINAR & LECTURE OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

Developed by Daryl E. Witmer

### SESSION #1

#### Introduction to presenter

#### Intro to the topic

Immediately this topic prompts four questions...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. Who care whether Jesus is unique? So what?

**Answer:** It matters because the uniqueness of the biblical Christ consistently corroborates His claims to deity. One is inextricably linked to the other. He is uniquely God!

#### A) History

#### B) Scriptural Case for the Uniqueness of God and Christ

Old Testament (Exodus 8:10; 1 Samuel 2:2) \_\_\_\_\_

New Testament (John 3:16; John 3:18; John 1:18; 1 John 4:9)

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### SESSION #2

#### C) The Arguments of Three Noted Apologists for the Uniqueness of Christ.

1. Dr. Norman Geisler | see material at: <https://jashow.org/articles/the-uniqueness-of-christ/>

Unique aspects of the NATURE of Christ as evidence of the deity of Christ:

Unique aspects of the CHARACTER of Christ as evidence of the deity of Christ:

Unique aspects of the superior LIFE & MINISTRY of Christ compared to six famous teachers — Moses, Muhammad, Hindu Gurus, the Buddha, Socrates, Lao-Tzu

2. **Erwin W. Lutzer** • *Christ among other gods*, ©1984 Moody

Makes an individual case for the extraordinary \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Ravi Zacharias** | *Jesus Among Other Gods, Youth Edition*, ©2000 Word, RZ with Kevin Johnson

- Where did You live?
- Our fathers ate manna in the desert... why don't You give us the same?
- Is God the source of suffering?
- Who are you looking for?

### **D) Witmer's Top Ten Ways in Which the Historical Christ was Unique Among Major Religious Leaders Through History**

10. The integrity and credibility of Jesus' life *in combination with* His claims to be God.
9. Jesus' ability to perform miracles just as prophesied.
8. Jesus' conviction and authority.
7. Jesus fulfilled scores of other prophecies.
6. The testimony of so many thinking people to a life-changing relationship with Jesus.
5. Circumstances of Jesus' birth.
4. Jesus' morally consistent life standard.
3. Jesus' continuing positive influence and personal reputation.
2. Jesus remains inextricably linked to the belief system He founded.
1. Circumstances of His death and, especially, His resurrection and ongoing life.

**The uniqueness of the biblical Christ** relative to the founders and leaders of all other religions and worldviews throughout history **provides much evidence** and **makes a powerfully convincing case** for His own deity, for Christianity, and — as a result — for all humans of all ages and races to surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord in faith and obedience.

**Christian writer Philip Yancey** effectively sums all of this up in *The Jesus I Never Knew* by asking, "Why am I a Christian?" I sometimes ask myself. And to be perfectly honest, the reasons reduce to two: 1) the lack of good alternatives, and 2) Jesus. Brilliant, untamed, tender, creative, slippery, irreducible, paradoxically humble — Jesus stands up to scrutiny. He is who I want my God to be."



## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part D

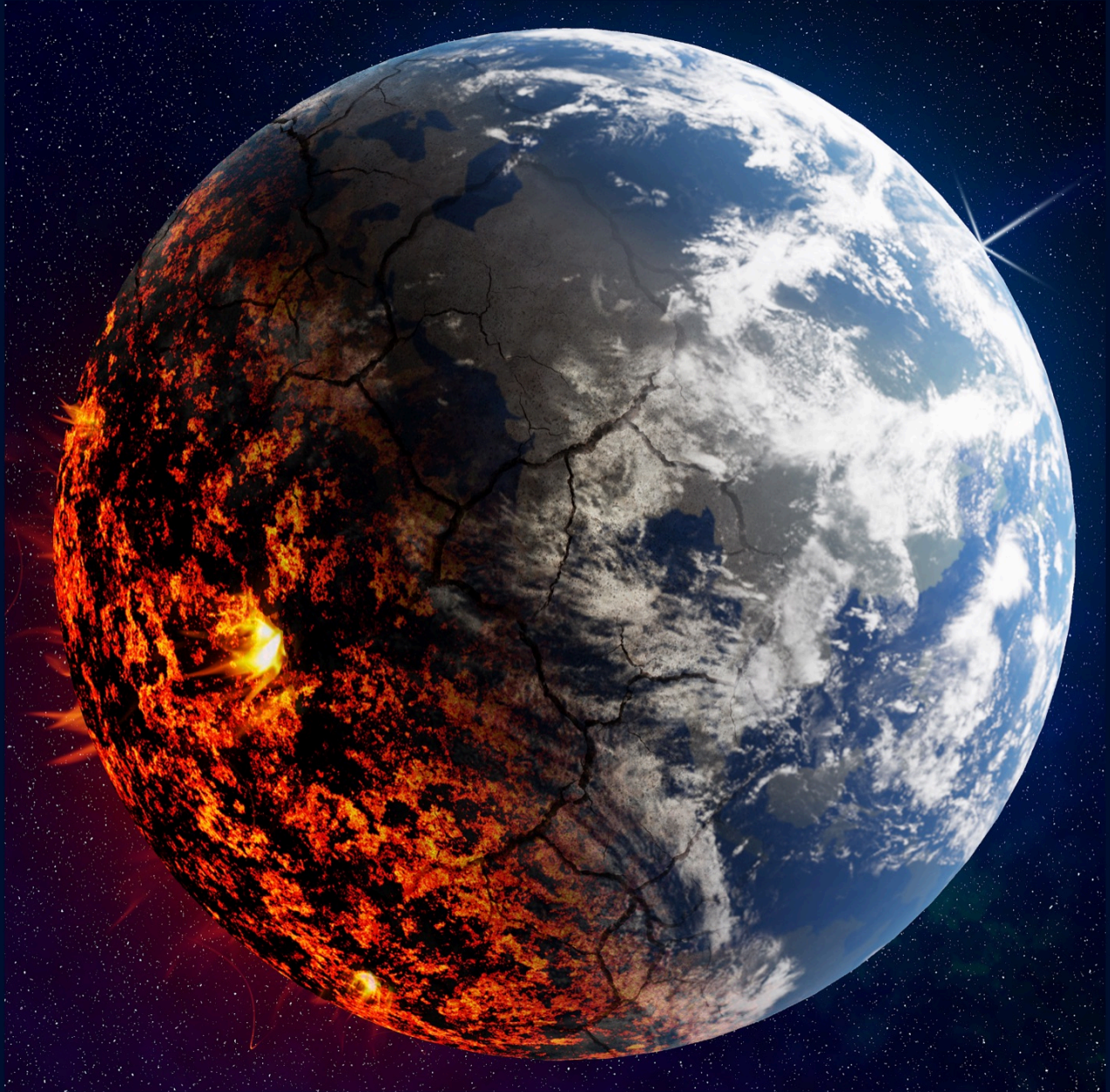
# IF GOD IS GOOD AND IF GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL, WHY SUFFERING AND EVIL?







# GOOD GOD? WICKED WORLD!



*Reconciling the Doctrine of an Omnipotent Omnibenevolent God with the Reality of a World of Suffering, Pain, and Evil*

# GOOD GOD? WICKED WORLD!

## INTRODUCTION

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What follows here are **not** the notes from any one seminar or lecture or article that I've written on this subject. What follows here is a **collection** of stories, Bible texts, illustrations, notes, talking points, relevant quotes, and commentary — a collection that has been assembled over a period of 50+ years — which I have developed and **from which I've drawn in order to** write, teach, and develop seminars on this subject. Some of it is based on my personal experiences with adversity.

I have made an effort to present what follows in some sort of organized manner, using a series of 19 questions, each followed by resource materials that are intended to answer those questions in a thoughtful manner. Then there follows the outline and notes from a lecture, an actual workshop that I've presented on this subject, and an actual email exchange — all drawing from the material provided in response to the questions, but including some addition material.

I trust that this collection will prove helpful to pastors, teachers, parents, and every other person (even including skeptics) who are working to address this subject for either personal reasons or for the instruction and enlightenment of others. — D. Witmer | December 2023

## TALKING POINTS & PROMPTS FOR ADDRESSING THIS SUBJECT

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When I am asked how it is possible for a good God who allows suffering and evil in the world to exist in this world, my mind immediately begins to think of the following responses, each of which are dealt with individually in this section of the compendium:

- The matter of why and how a good God would allow suffering and evil in the world is the **most asked question about the Christian worldview**. Anyone asking such questions is not alone.
- Why are you interested? Are you personally going through a difficult time right now?
- If a **good God** did **not** exist, where would our innate sense of good (and evil) come from?
- Is it not likely that God is more glorified as a savior and comforter in a world of sin, evil, and suffering than He would be in a world where sin, evil, and suffering does not exist?
- Can you think of any way for God to have created thoughtful volitional beings (with the ability to disobey and reject Him) without some of those beings eventually choosing to do just that?
- Are you aware of what the Christian worldview offers to all those who are suffering that no other religion or worldview offers?

## 1. WHAT IS THE ISSUE? WHAT IS A THEODICY?

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A **THEODICY** (from the Greek *theos*: God, and *dike*: justice) is the term given to the endeavor to “justify” the goodness and providence of a God who allows (or even decrees) ongoing evil and human suffering in the world. It refers to the human attempt to reply and defend the ways and nature of the God of the Bible in the face of pain, adversity, and even gratuitous evil. The term is thought to have been coined in 1710 by the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716).

**HERE IS THE PROBLEM IN A NUTSHELL.** Here is the historical paradoxical triad as posed by Harvard scholar **Frederick Buechner**: **1)** God is all-powerful; **2)** God is all-good; **3)** Terrible things happen. Buechner says that “the problem has always been — you can match any two of those propositions, but not all three.” That is, if God is all-powerful but not all-loving, He may actually be a God who delights in watching humans suffer. But that is not the God of the Bible who is omnibenevolent, who loves all humans (John 3:16), and who actually **is** love (1 John 4:16). Or if God is all-good but not all-powerful, He may simply not be **able** to conquer evil and suffering. But neither is that the God of the Bible who is sovereign and omnipotent (Isaiah 40:21-31).



**DAVID HUME**, the 18th century Scottish skeptic, has cited the same trilemma in a somewhat different way in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. He wrote: “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”

**WHY IS THERE EVIL?** Why are children abused? Why do missionaries die of cancer? How can terrible injustice and corruption prevail so many times in so many ways? Why are little babies born with addictions and malformities? Explain the Holocaust. Explain why a God who cares would allow someone to suffer for years with terrible chronic back pain. What about cancer? What about typhoons, earthquakes, and tornados? Why did God create Satan? Where is God when it hurts? Where is God when good parents lose a child, or when an old man is so terribly lonely, day after day after month after year for his dear wife who has died many years ago?

## 2. DOES THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING & EVIL PERTAIN TO BELIEVERS?

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**Paul**, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, was beheaded in Rome circa A.D. 67. **John the Baptist**, who pointed Israel to Christ, met a similar fate about 35 years earlier. In the year 1415 A.D., **John Hus** was burned alive for his faith at the age of 42. **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** was executed at the age of 39 for standing against evil in Hitler’s Germany. The influential Christian apologist **Francis Schaeffer** died of cancer. The “Prince of Preachers,” prolific writer, and Bible expositor **Charles Spurgeon** died when he was only 57. **Joni Eareckson Tada** was paralyzed for life at the age of 17. **Richard DeHaan** of Radio Bible Class died of Parkinson’s disease in July of 2002. The famous evangelist **Billy Graham** also suffered for years with Parkinson’s disease and then lost his beloved wife, Ruth, eleven long lonely years before his own death. Consider all the faithful servants of God who’ve buried their own children, or sat in a nursing home for years following a stroke, or been martyred.

No wonder **St. Teresa of Avila** once lamented: "Lord, if this is the way You treat Your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!"

## 3. HOW ARE WE DEFINING SUFFERING AND ADVERSITY?

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In this section of the compendium I’m defining adversity in **a very broad sense**. I intend for the term to refer to everything from headaches, flat tires, and broken appliances, to loneliness, grief, low self-esteem, conflicts in relationships, mental illness, depression, financial stress, and much more. In other words, adversity for our purposes here includes more than terminal cancer, divorce, wheelchairs, martyrdom, and the like. **I intend for the circle of adversity as it’s used here to encompass every reader.** And I am very much aware that I may be writing or speaking to someone who has experienced adversity in far greater measure than I personally ever have.

## 4. WHY ARE YOU ASKING? ARE YOU CURRENTLY STRUGGLING?

What follows below, and what is primarily offered in the workshops and messages that I have prepared on this subject, is a **Christian apologetics type response** to the question about why God allows suffering. It is a **reasoned academic response**.

But a reasoned academic response is certainly **not always the most appropriate response** for those raising questions on this subject. So I will proceed here as I do whenever I speak or lecture on this subject by saying that **if you as a reader are presently dealing with some awful ordeal**, what follows here may not prove especially helpful.

When it really hurts, when the mind is still reeling and numb from tough news or circumstances, one is most often not inclined to think logically, reasonably, theoretically, or academically.

For that reason oft times **the most appropriate thing that can be offered is a quiet, understanding and accepting presence**. Just be with them. Sit with them. **Sing with them**. Sing *to* them. During my worst days in the Intensive Care Unit at Eastern Maine Medical Center with Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) in 1984-1985 I did not want to see my mail, get-well cards, or even the Bible. I didn't need any more Joni Eareckson Tada books given to me. My world was very small. I was unable to process anything heavy. I didn't need a reasoned response.

One man who'd lost his baby girl to drowning later told his pastor: "I would never have understood it at the time even if someone had explained it to me." **Harold Umble** told me that in the midst of a terrible ordeal that he was once going through, his friend **Ralph Stoltzfus** came over and said: "Harold, I just don't know what to say." Harold told me, "That said it all." **Alison Krauss** sang: "You Say It Best When You Say Nothing At All."

**Of particular help** is the quiet sympathetic support coming from someone who has already walked the same way. When **Sandy Ford** (son of evangelist **Leighton and Jean Graham Ford**), who was born in 1960, died on the operating table on November 27, 1981, my parents — who had lost their own son (my younger brother) in an aircraft accident just three years earlier, got up early on the morning of November 29 to catch a 7:25 AM flight from Philadelphia PA to Charlotte NC. They attended a morning service, visited for just a short time with the Fords in the early afternoon, and then returned home the same day. The Fords never forgot that. My parents' willingness to just **be there with them** spoke volumes. It was their presence far more than their words that was helpful. And the Fords knew that they cared deeply, because they had also known Sandy personally, and had even prayed with him on the telephone at 11:05 PM three days before his surgery.

## 5. DO WE NEED TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS?

**Here is one other qualifying pause** before we have a go at this age-old enigma. Do we really **need to know** why God allows suffering? **Why do we need to know?** What is going to change as a result of *whatever* answer we may get to all of our questions? Are we going to hold our faith hostage for an answer?

**A reasoned academic response is not always the most appropriate response in the midst of some awful crisis.**



Furthermore, **do we even have a right to the answers to such questions?** Is it any of our business? Are we not presumptuous to press this issue with God? In his essay, *God In the Dock*, **C.S. Lewis** says: "The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For modern man the roles are reversed. Man has become the judge and God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have some reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that [these days] Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock."

In other words, the *arrogance* of it all! **Who do we think we are to be insisting that God justify or even explain anything to us?** Is this not the essence of Job 38-41 where God escorts Job on a grand tour of creation and then says to him **with obvious sarcasm**: "But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced!" (38:21, LB)

This reminds me of **A.W. Tozer's** remark that the whole "We-must-'accept-Christ' mentality is badly skewed." He said that "It shows Christ applying to us rather than us to Him. It makes God stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life."

**"Why do bad things happen to good people? Well, that only ever happened once, and He volunteered." – R.C. Sproul, Jr.**

Perhaps also implied in our pressing this matter with God is the ever-so-subtle but still totally **arrogant anthropocentric assumption** that we somehow just don't *deserve* adversity because we are basically good people. **R.C. Sproul, Jr.** has exposed that pretense: "Why do bad things happen to good people? Well, that only ever happened once, and He volunteered."

At any rate, as **Elizabeth Elliot** (1926-2015) once wrote: "God knows what He is doing and He is not under any obligation to make us any explanation."



At the Washington National Cathedral a few days after 9/11/2001 **Billy Graham** said that during his lifetime he'd been asked hundreds of times about why God allows suffering. He said, "I have to confess that I really don't know the answer, totally, even to my own satisfaction." What a refreshing response. It let us know that "I don't know" can be an entirely legitimate answer.

No doubt the most appropriate question for us to ask about adversity in our lives is not "Why does it happen?" but "What will I do about it?" How will I respond? Will I continue to trust and obey God in the face of loss and pain?

During the five months that I was in the Intensive Care Unit in 1985 one of my parishioners, **Veronica Ronco**, somehow managed to arrange for **Billy Graham** to write to me personally. Here at right is a direct quote from his letter:

**"There are some things in life we shall never understand, nor should we even try. His ways are past finding out. We know that the one thing God cannot do and will not do is to fail."  
– Billy Graham**

**However**, all that being said — and whether it is right or not for people to press God for some explanation about suffering and evil in their lives — it certainly is a “human” thing to do so — to cry out to Him for help in making sense of why He would allow what seems so senseless!

Job did this. Moses did this. David also did this when he cried out in Psalm 22, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” And even the human nature in Jesus echoed that same anguished cry 1,000 years later, during His awful hours of ordeal with human sin on the cross.

The struggle is human and it takes many forms, including bitterness, doubt, spiritual confusion, and even anger toward God. I experienced much of this personally during the time of my 1984 ordeal with GBS, and again in 1990 when our family was on a trip to the West coast.

## **Turning east instead of west that day, and giving up our family trip West for the second time, was devastating for me. Why? Why, Lord?**

In the Spring of 1989 our family had planned a trip to the West Coast. It was actually the second time that we'd planned such a trip. Our first attempt was scrubbed by my ordeal with GBS. But now we were making a second effort. We left Maine on April 13, 1989. **On our fifth morning out, at 6:15am on April 18, 1989, Mary slipped on a dew-covered ramp in the predawn darkness of a Michigan morning, and landed hard on her lower leg, which was immediately fractured in three places.** She was in a cast for five months. I was in a wheelchair; she was in a wheelchair. My parents' home in Pennsylvania where we stopped to regroup on our way back to Maine looked like a Rehab Center. Turning east instead of west that day, and giving up our trip West for the second time, was devastating for me. “Why? Why, Lord?” Then I began to feel guilty for even asking such questions — until one day during our time there, the pastor of the Paradise Mennonite Church where I had grown up, **Fred Martin**, came to call. In the course of the conversation, after patiently hearing me out, Fred very kindly mentioned that even Jesus had once asked “Why?” “He did?” I asked. “Sure,” Pastor Fred said. “When He was on the cross, even Jesus asked **why** — why God had forsaken Him.”

**One of the most difficult, painful, and faith-challenging moments in my life to date occurred on Easter Sunday morning — March 30, 1997.** Our church's Easter sunrise service and breakfast had just concluded in the dining hall of the Monson Community Church. Two of the men from the church were pushing me in my wheelchair on the path alongside the church so that I could get back to the Parsonage before returning to deliver the Easter Sunday morning message. Suddenly we hit an icy ridge and I slid forward out of my chair. The full weight of my body went straight down, crunching both legs. I could hear them snap.



They dragged me the church driveway where I lay in tremendous pain and shivering cold for close to 30 minutes before an ambulance finally arrived. They got me on the stretcher which was an excruciating process, but not as bad as when one of the EMTs suddenly thoughtlessly winched the stretcher belt tight over my broken legs. I shrieked. Within two hours, instead of preaching my Easter Sunday sermon, I was in surgery. The tibia and fibula in **both** legs were fractured in numerous places. There were spiral fractures in both legs and multiple fractures in the right leg.

Still, as painful as the physical ordeal was, the tormenting attacks on my spirit seemed even worse, in a different way. As I was laying there in pain, looking up at the steeple that morning, I began to think: “Really? You’re professing faith in a God who can’t even protect you as His servant and spokesman **on Easter Sunday**. You’re encouraging others to trust in a God who, seemingly, in absentia, is consigning you to the hospital instead of blessing you in the pulpit — and today of all days. It’s Easter Sunday, for goodness sake!”

**Craig Loscalzo:** “Doubt in and of itself is not bad or evil. Healthy doubt prevents blind allegiance. And God’s presence whispers [even] in our cries, permeated with doubt. The questioning of God shows faith in God rather than doubt of God’s existence. Ultimately, faith overcomes doubt. A questioning doubt often leads to greater faith.”

**Why are bad things always happening in this world?  
Because the world is temporarily out of order. It was created in perfection and was all very good in the past (Genesis 1-3). It will once again be perfected and very good in the future (Revelation 20-22). But meanwhile, temporarily, things are badly, sadly, terribly out of order.**

## 6. WHAT IS ONE SUCCINCT THEOLOGICALLY ACCURATE RESPONSE?

**ONE SUCCINCT THEOLOGICALLY ACCURATE RESPONSE** to questions about why there is so much suffering and pain and evil, and why bad things are always happening in this world is to simply state: **“It’s because the world is temporarily out of order.** It was created in perfection and was all very good in the past (Genesis 1-3). It will once again be perfected and all perfectly good in the future (Revelation 20-22). **But meanwhile, temporarily, things are badly, sadly, terribly out of order.** Not out of control and not out of the will of a sovereign God, but out of order. Jesus said, “In this world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”



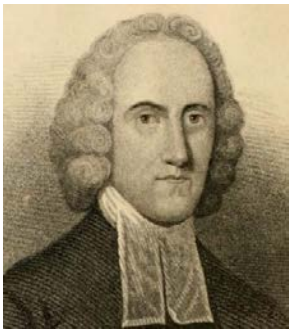
## 7. DID GOD CREATE EVIL?

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No. God did not create evil, because **evil is not something. It is not some thing.** It is the **absence** of something or some things — namely, God and His own inherent goodness. And the absence of something, which is nothing, cannot be created. Evil is like darkness — it can only be qualified in terms of the absence of light. Or cold, which can only be measured in terms of the absence of heat.

So, no — God did not create evil, because evil is in reality only the name we give to the **nothing** that is left when God is removed from the picture. See the following link for a helpful explanation of what Isaiah 45:7 actually means when it states that God creates evil, i.e. calamity.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Isaiah-45-7.html>



**Is God the Author of Sin?** The great 18th century American theologian **Jonathan Edwards** answers: "If by 'the author of sin,' be meant the sinner, the agent, or the actor of sin, or the doer of a wicked thing . . . it would be a reproach and blasphemy, to suppose God to be the author of sin. In this sense, I utterly deny God to be the author of sin." But, he argues, willing that sin exist in the world is not the same as sinning. God does not commit sin in willing that there be sin. God has established a world in which sin will indeed necessarily come to pass by God's permission, but not by his "positive agency."

## 8. WHY DID GOD ALLOW EVIL IN THE FIRST PLACE?

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**HOW DID IT HAPPEN?** Why did God ever create a world in which there would be evil in the first place? How did it get to be this way? **One answer:** Because God understood that He would receive greater glory than would have been possible in a world without sin and evil. And God receiving glory and honor is what it's all about in this universe.

To say this another way — it appears that in the wisdom of God it seemed good and preferable to Him to create a world in which human beings have the ability to make moral choices, including the possibility of actually even turning on Him in sin. The wages of sin inevitably include disease, brokenness, alienation, and ultimately death — so we have what we now have.

But you may say: Wouldn't some superior scheme have been possible? Evidently not. It obviously could not and would not have been possible to create humans with the capacity to sin without those humans actually sinning, any more than it would have been possible for God to have created a married bachelor. Both are logical non-starters.

Certainly an omniscient God would have had no need to run experiments, or to resort to trial and error in order to create the best of all possible worlds. And it is not as if He were presented with some sort of great cosmological creation menu and finally, reluctantly, happened to settle on the least distasteful of many distasteful options.

**God was not presented with some sort of cosmological menu, finally settling on the lesser of many distasteful options.**



This is the very point on which Gottfried Leibniz is criticized by some evangelical scholars who point out that in his theodicy he seemed to assume that somehow God's choices existed "outside" of Himself. Which would be theologically impossible, by definition.

So we really must accept the fact that in the sense that all things are ultimately in accord with the will of a sovereign God, all things are precisely the way that He designed them to be. We must believe that evil exists because He has chosen, and does even now intend, for it to exist. As **Dr. John Piper** has said, there is this sense in which **God even actually willed the Fall.**

**If this is not the best possible world, then we can conclude that, as Dr. Norm Geisler points out, "It is the best possible way to the best possible world."**

Sin has entered the world. Creation has become corrupt and the world often appears to be precarious from our human point of view. The effects of sin in a sin-fallen world multiply exponentially from one moment to another, and are even transmitted from one generation to the next. The only way to avert the snowballing effect of sin would ostensibly be for God to send a universal Noah-sized flood every hour on the hour. Instead He has sent a rainbow and is withholding final judgement, so the world is temporarily out of order.

## **9. IS THE WORLD PRECARIOUS? IS GOD CAPRICIOUS?**

Although the world in which we live may very often, from a purely human point of view, *appear* to be independently precarious (dangerously lacking in security or stability; subject to chance or unknown conditions), the fact is — from God's point of view — that is not the case. **God actively governs every detail of every event and every entity in the universe.** He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). And God is not capricious (characterized by or subject to whim; impulsive and unpredictable).

It follows that God is never in the least surprised by how circumstances unfold in this sin-fallen world. That is the erroneous assumption of Open Theology. But God does not wait around to see how things go and then update His plan. He is never caught off guard. He is not whimsical in decreeing even the most minute details of the great plan that He has developed for His children even before the world was created (Ephesians 1:4-6).

There is a human sense, however, in which the world **is** precarious and life **is** precarious. This is true because **we do not always know the details of God's plans** and how they will unfold. He does, but we don't. There can be a surprise around the next corner **for any of us** (but not God). So we are cautioned to **walk carefully** (Ephesians 5:15) and **not to speak presumptuously**. James 4:13-15: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'"

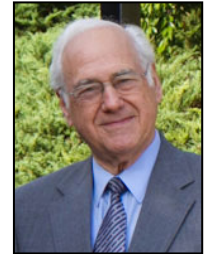
**God does not wait around to see how things go and then update His plan. He is never caught off guard. He is not whimsical in His ordering of even the finest details of His great plan for the ages.**

In any event, **if we love God and are determined to march to the tune of His purpose, we can be 100% certain that even what seems to be evil and negative in life is actually being orchestrated by the Great Composer into a powerful symphony of honor and praise that will serve His own good purposes** (Romans 8:28). This truth can be of tremendous comfort to us as we experience what now may often seem confusing, disappointing, and painful.



**Joni Eareckson Tada**, from *Pain & Providence* (Rose Publishing): “God is not a sweep-up boy who follows you with a dust pan and brush, second-guessing how everything will fit into a divine pattern for good. God’s hands stay on the wheel of your life from start to finish so that everything follows His intention for your life. This means your trials have more meaning — much more meaning — than you realize.”

**Dr. Myron Augsburger** wrote to me in April of 1989 as I was still recuperating from my GBS ordeal that: “...[so-called] accidents become occasions for the affirmation of faith. . . We can't answer "why," only "what," as we honor Him by accepting the disappointments in grace.”



## 10. HOW CAN WE COPE?

### WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS WHEN THE BOTTOM FALLS OUT OF LIFE?

If we adopt a correct theology of pain and suffering, and understand that God is not surprised by evil (even though we may be surprised by it), and that evil is somehow part of a greater plan that will end up working for the ultimate good (even though it may not be good of itself), **does all that mean that we will then no longer hurt when adversity strikes? Not at all.**

**The only alternative to disappointment with God is disappointment without Him. And disappointment without God is a far worse fate.**

When we're hit we're still going to feel real pain. When we are attacked we'll still be bruised. When we experience loss, we'll still cry real tears and feel a large lump our throat. When the bottom falls out we may still feel swamped with confusion, questions, and disappointment with God. But at such times, it is *particularly* important for us to remember that **the only alternative to disappointment with God is disappointment without Him**, as **Philip Yancey** points out in his book by the same title. **And disappointment without God is a far worse fate.** It leaves one with nothing but raw despair. So we must resolve even ahead of time that we're going to struggle on in our pain, ask whatever questions we must ask, vent to some understanding friend when we need to vent, and continue to know through it all that the promises of God are sure. We must resolve to remember that what we've known to be true in the light will also be true in the dark.

## 11. WHY DOESN'T GOD PUT A STOP TO ALL EVIL IN THIS WORLD?

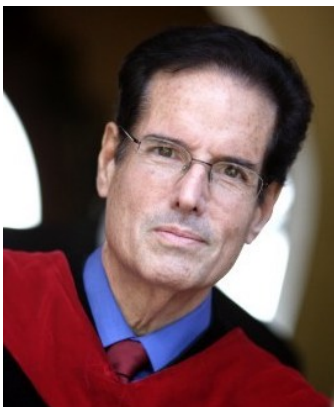
**He will.** That's the simple two-word theologically-accurate answer to this stumper of a question. God is not oblivious, unconcerned, or unable to deal with evil. He knows all about evil (unlike Elie Wiesel's God "in exile"). He can do something to stop evil (unlike Rabbi Harold Kushner's impotent God in his best-selling but theologically misleading book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*), and He really will stop all evil and damn the devil (unlike Nietzsche's God who is dead). But He will only **eventually** do all of that.

**Psalm 37 makes it clear that deliverance and justice are often future tense.** The wrongs **will** be righted, if not today. The bad guys **will** lose, but probably not this afternoon. There **will** be a glad reunion, but tonight and tomorrow night and the night after that you're very possibly going to be all alone again. So "wait for the Lord," "wait patiently," and know that help is on the way in just "a little while." Meanwhile, "don't fret," trust in the Lord," "do good," "cultivate faithfulness," "rest in the Lord," "cease from anger," "forsake wrath," and "delight yourself in the Lord."

**In Cecil B. DeMille's classic movie *The Ten Commandments*** there is a scene where the young Egyptian prince Moses is accosting the rebellious Hebrew slave Joshua. At one point during their heated exchange Joshua testifies to the great power and might of the God of Abraham, whereupon Moses roars at him, "If your God is so powerful, why does He leave you in bondage?" Quick as a whip Joshua answers: "[Our God] will choose the hour of our deliverance." And of course He does just that in Israel's great exodus from Egypt.



The point is that the answer to the classic trilemma about why, if God is all-loving and all-powerful, do His people continue to suffer, is as simple as "Divine timing." In His sovereign wisdom, He knows that there are sometimes good reasons to delay. Consider **Lazarus** who endured sickness and even actual physical death. Consider the man born blind who was healed, but only after years of living in the dark. Consider Joseph who languished in prison for thirteen years.



**Dr. Robert A. Morey**, in his book *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom* addresses those who often press this point about seeing no current evidence that God is dealing with evil and wrong: "Why can't He (God) deal with evil in a progressive way? Why does He have to deal with it all at once? Can't He deal with it throughout time as we know it and then bring it to a climax on the Day of Judgment? You [skeptics and naysayers] are assuming that the only way for God to deal with evil is in one single act. This is an erroneous assumption on your part. I am saying that God has solved the problem (of evil), but in a long-term way; in stages."

## 12. BUT WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP EVIL RIGHT NOW?

**Readers of Revelation 6:9-10 are granted a private hearing** into the anguished cry of Christian martyrs struggling with the delay in God's move to judge evil: "When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, '**How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?**'"

**Revelation 8:3-4 provides further insight** into the fact that although God may not immediately answer our cries for justice, He does not discard them. It appears that our prayers may be "flash-frozen" for a while, but later thawed out in the heat of burning incense before God: "Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the **prayers of all the saints** on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with **the prayers of the saints**, went up before God out of the angel's hand."



**But why the delay?** There seem to be at least **three reasons why, over the years, God has not judged evil on the spot.** And relevant to each of the three is the fact that all of our suffering in the dimension of time will be **proportionately credited to our account** as glory throughout eternity. In Romans 8:18 Paul says: "For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

In other words, a relatively few pain-filled years in this life will prove to be worthwhile in the long run of eternity — both for God's glory and for our benefit. This does not imply that God is insensitive to our pain today. He fully realizes that it really does hurt, and He hurts with us. But He is looking at our temporary adversity from His higher, more eternal, objective point of view.

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18 bears witness to this principle:**  
**"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."**

**Here are two illustrations of this principle at work on a much smaller scale:**

- Mary and I once knew of a little boy born in a very poor country overseas. His birth parents were either not able or not willing to care for him, so he was adopted by America parents. He was just a wee boy at the time — perhaps less than two years old, but very alert and very scared. He was loaded onto a large transport plane for what must have seemed to be a long, lonely flight to America. It was a traumatic experience. But **worth it all** once he arrived and was welcomed into the warm and loving home of his new American family. Plenty of food, clean sheets, and hope.

- On November 1, 2018, Mary agreed to have a heart surgeon slice into her chest with a very sharp knife. She knew that weeks of pain and discomfort would ensue. So why did she do this? Because if she doesn't she will die. And if she does a new aortic valve will give her many more years of normal life without the weakness and shortness of breath that she'd been experiencing.

**In a somewhat similar way God seems willing to leverage our temporary pain with His eternal purposes and the greater good.** He evidently has in mind **at least three** substantial gains to be realized from a temporarily delay in His coming restoration of justice and good in this world:

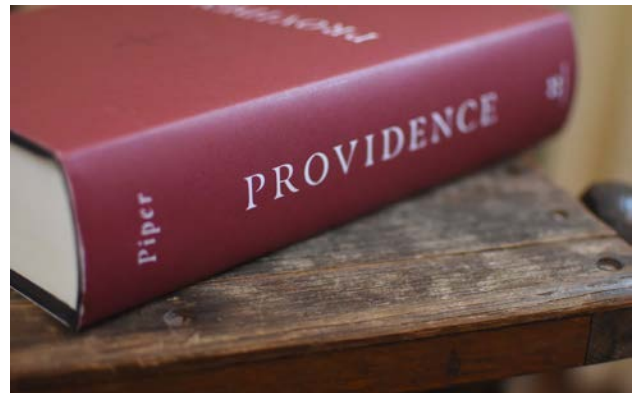
- Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment will result in fewer souls spending eternity in hell and more souls spending eternity with Him in heaven.** Because when God does finally move to judge the world, He will not do so in any half-way manner. 2 Peter 3:9-10 says: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."
- Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment can result in the personal refinement of believers** as God turns their adversity into a blessing. Joseph understood this when he told his brothers who had sold him into slavery: "You meant it for ill, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20); Romans 5:3-4 says: "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;" And James 1:12: "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him."
- Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment will result in God receiving greater glory than would otherwise be the case.** Consider the case of the woman who had been bent double for eighteen long years from a sickness caused by an evil spirit. **Luke 13:12-13** picks up the story: "When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your sickness.' And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and *began glorifying God.*" **God is often more glorified when He is recognized as Creator, Comforter, Healer, and Redeemer than He would be if He was only recognized as Creator.**

**As a direct corollary of this last gain,** a believer's **ongoing** deliberate surrendered response to God in suffering brings greater glory to God in the spiritual realm, before the forces of both good and evil, than if we as believers were all immediately taken to heaven. **Ephesians 3:1-10:** "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

**By delaying judgement and allowing for the ongoing faith and obedience of His children** through adversity, it's almost as if God is **rubbing it in** to Satan. Rather than a once and done grand finale, day after day the devil sees faithful surrendered saints choose God — not for what He does for them but for who He is. That's raw faith. It's like the story of Job playing out over and over and over again. It must make the enemy miserable.

**A believer's ongoing deliberate surrendered response to God in suffering brings greater glory to God than if that believer would suddenly be taken to heaven.**

John Piper says this in **Providence** (© 2022 Crossway; Desiring God Foundation): "If God abolished Satan immediately and totally removed his influence in the world, God would glorify his own power in a marvelous way. But the aim of God's providence is to glorify more than his power. God aims for the fullness of his beauty and worth to be magnified in the way his people prefer him over what Satan offers." And also: "In the course of a lifetime of being a faithful Christian, thousands of thoughts and feelings and deeds are owing to the Christian's blood-bought, Spirit-wrought defeat of temptation by preferring Christ over sin. In other words, **every day** in which there is any godly fruit of life in Christ, sin is being defeated, and Christ is being magnified. **These triumphs in warfare with sin would not happen without the warfare.**"



This theme about the eternal and cosmological purposes of God seems to imply that extraordinary degrees or forms of **suffering may actually be a privilege granted to a select number of believers** — to sort of an elite Navy Seal type team commissioned to make a point to the spiritual hosts, good and evil. This concept is grounded in Paul's words in **Philippians 1:29**: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

**C.S. LEWIS** in *The Efficacy of Prayer* [1959], *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, pp. 10-11): "God may treat new Christians with a special kind of tenderness, much as a parent dotes on a newborn. As the Christian life proceeds, this becomes rarer. The refusals (to prayer) are not only more frequent, but more emphatic. "Does God forsake those who serve Him best? Well, He who served Him best of all said, near to His tortured death, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?' When God becomes man, that Man, of all others, is least comforted by God, at His greatest need. There is a mystery here which, even if I had the power, I might not have the courage to explore. Meanwhile, little people like you and me, if our prayers are sometimes granted, beyond all hope and probability, had better not draw hasty conclusions to our own advantage. If we were stronger, we might be less tenderly treated. If we were braver, we might be sent, with far less help, to defend far more desperate posts in the great battle."

### 13. WHAT IS UNCONDITIONAL FAITH AND OBEDIENCE?

**OUR CALL AS BELIEVERS IS TO DEMONSTRATE UNCONDITIONAL FAITH AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD before the cosmos.** Just as God loves us unconditionally, so He would have us trust and obey Him unconditionally, in every circumstance — even and especially when life gets tough.

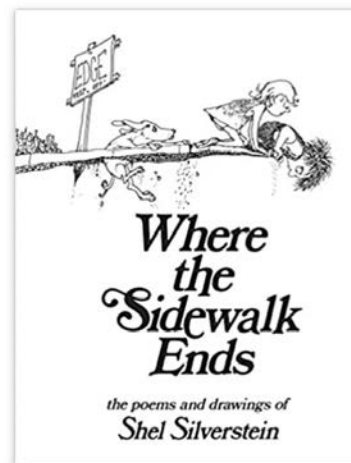


**GEORGE MACDONALD:** "That man is perfect in faith who can come to God in the utter dearth of his feelings and desires, without a glow or an aspiration, with the weight of low thoughts, failures, neglects, and wandering forgetfulness, and say to Him, Thou art my refuge."

**C. S. LEWIS CORROBORATES IN THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS** where the evil demon, Uncle Screwtape, is addressing his nephew demon: "Our [evil] cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do the enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys."

**HECTOR THE COLLECTOR.** On the evening of August 14, 1991, I was serving (from my wheelchair) as camp pastor for **Christian Overcomers**, a one-week gathering of physically disabled individuals at Spruce Lake Camp in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania.

That evening in my message I had talked about the high calling and privilege that some Christians are granted to suffer well for Jesus' sake — before the entire cosmos. During the message I read a poem entitled **Hector the Collector** by Shel Silverstein, published by HarperCollins in 2014 (first edition) as part of a larger collection of Silverstein poems in a book entitled **Where the Sidewalk Ends**.



I strenuously sought permission from the publisher, acting on behalf of the Shel Silverstein Estate, to reprint the poem here, but was flat-out denied due to what the Estate called “contractual obligations.” So you’ll either have to buy the book, search for the poem online, or listen to Shel Silverstein himself reading the poem at one of the links below. But in order to appreciate the full weight of what happened that evening in the Poconos, you’ll need to do one of the two, and familiarize yourself with the words of this poem.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw50rRNkdqs> (YouTube video)
- <https://allpoetry.com/Hector-The-Collector> (available at the time of this printing)

The poem is about a boy (or man) who absolutely cherished his collection of broken toys and other odds and ends — from bells and string and guns to bottles and keys and cracked cups — that were defective or mangled and rejected by others in some way. But he saw value in them.



**Now you must remember** that I was reading this poem to a gathering of perhaps 120 people, many of whose minds were very sharp, but whose bodies were contorted and broken and bent in every way imaginable. A number of them were spastic. In many cases, they were unable to be very neat about the way they looked and presented themselves, even though they would have otherwise done so. So there were stains on their shirts and their shoestrings were untied. There were some in the group who were very bright, but who could not feed themselves, some

who could not see, a few who could not speak clearly or at all, a number who were ugly and unattractive and even repulsive **by social standards**. To this group I read the words of that poem.

When I finished reading, there was a long silence. Then there followed a sort of collective sigh. Yes — they had gotten it! It was as if everyone there was saying, “Yes, we understand perfectly. In this poem, for our purposes, Hector is God. And we are His shining diamonds. It's just that most of the people in our world do not see it that way right now. They figure that we are the sightless ones, the silly ones, the ugly ones, the rejects. They do not understand at all the meaning of **2 Corinthians 4:7** when it talks about “*having this treasure in earthen vessels ...that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*” Others often just don't get it. But that's okay because we now more fully understand that the way things seem to be in this world is often clearly not at all the way things really are. Guess who's sightless.”

## EXHIBIT A in the great cosmic drama of the ages.

The Bible teaches that Christians are Exhibit A — leading players with a key role on the stage of this world. This theme is illustrated further in my booklet, *Passing Showers*, as follows:

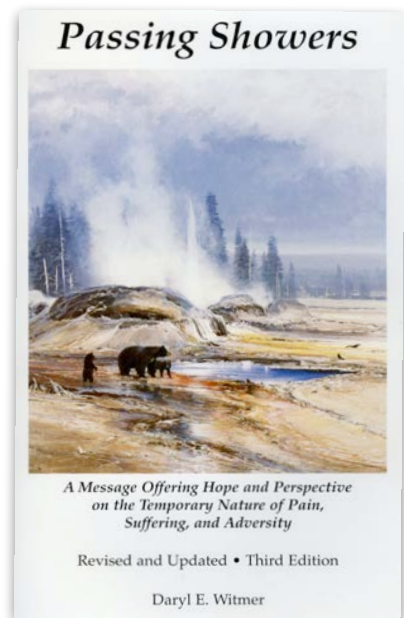
The Old Testament sufferer Job is the quintessential example. He had once suddenly lost his whole family, his possessions, and his health. The bottom had literally fallen out of his life. Nothing he did, nothing he could do, nothing anyone could say was able to change the tragic circumstances. The vain speculation of his friends only complicated matters. So what *did* Job do? He struggled, he questioned, and he agonized. But at one point he also stated: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

Later in the story, as trial piled upon trial, it really began to appear that he was very possibly going to soon be down for the count. Satan may even have begun rubbing his hands together in anticipation of Job's great, forthcoming 'Renunciation of the Faith' speech. But instead this man once again opened his lips and said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job 13:15, KJV) It wasn't exactly what the forces of darkness were hoping to hear. But up on the scoreboard of the universe God scored a huge triumph and the angels must have cheered.

After you've dragged a man through every imaginable form of misery, loss, and pain, and that man, lying there in the mud —dirty, bruised and bleeding— *still* manages to look up toward the heavens through swollen eyes, with a pounding head, and hum a little chorus of praise — what more can a demon do to destroy faith like that?!

If you're the devil, or if you are in any way aligned with the devil, what can you do in the face of that sort of commitment? Not much, except swallow what must be about the most bitter pill of all for Satan and his hellish legions to swallow — namely, to concede that it must be possible, after all, that some men actually love their God just because of who He is and not necessarily because of what He does for them. That there are, after all, some men and women who have actually chosen to be loyal to Jesus Christ as their Lord regardless of the blessings or the lack of blessings that happen to be theirs at any particular moment in time.

And so it was with Job. At perhaps *the* most difficult moment in his life, when nothing seemed to make sense and all looked utterly bleak, the man looks toward Heaven and says, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." And in that moment, folks, something very significant occurs for the glory of God and the cause of good in the universe. It is an instance of what might be referred to as **unconditional praise**. And I really suspect that the unconditional praise of men and women for their God, and to their God, is close to being at the heart of the very created purpose of mankind on earth. To sing a song of praise to God, to ascribe to the Lord of the universe glory and honor, not just because of good times and blessings, but even when everything has gone terribly wrong. Even when you've got to head east when you so very much wanted to go west. Even when you find yourself in a muddy, messy swamp in Maine on the very day you had planned to be basking in Arizona sunshine.





If you will understand it, all of those individuals living in this world (past and present) who have heard the call and made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as the Lord of life have been placed, as it were, on the big stage of the universe, positioned front and center before all of the other hosts of the cosmos. And somehow, in the great, hidden, historic battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, in a way that we as humans can hardly yet begin to comprehend, how we respond and how we relate to our God when things are all gone awry is a very big deal to Him.

Again, what we are suggesting is that something tremendously immense is accomplished for the cause of our God whenever a man or a woman who is sitting in the midst of a terrible dilemma of pain and loss and adversity and misery, suddenly looks up and begins to praise God anyway — unconditionally. In such a moment as that, the 'bad guys' lose, and lose big. Your faith and my perseverance, your praise and my adoration, *especially* in the middle of a messy muddle, really promotes the cause of the Creator in a manner not yet completely comprehensible to us.

**The unconditional praise** of a man to his God not only spurs *us* on to victory although it does just that; it also puts a tremendously significant stroke in God's column. And it does so before all the vast hosts, good and evil, who dwell in the unseen realms of this universe.

**Dr. John Piper corroborates** this understanding as well in his book **Providence** (© 2022 Crossway; Desiring God Foundation) when he writes: “God aims for the fullness of his beauty and worth to be magnified in the way his people prefer him over what Satan offers. God’s worth and beauty are magnified in proportion to our preference for them over all that Satan can offer.”

## 14. BUT HOW CAN GOD BE GOOD IF HE ALLOWS SUFFERING?

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**Here is some further profound insight** about how to best answer this question about **the goodness of a God** who allows and even ordains that bad things will happen in this world from **Dr. Al Mohler**, a respected Christian apologist and theologian who has served many years as president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

**R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**

“The entire problem of theodicy arises from a wrong presumption. In other words, rather than seeing God as essentially good and deriving whatever good is from observing the one true and living God, **we abstract an idea of good and then try to measure God against that human abstraction. That is always a losing proposition because we don't know what good is.**”

See, that's the problem. When people come up to us and say, "If God does this He can't be good," they don't realize that's an internal contradiction. **The only God that exists is a God who is good. He defines what is good by consistency with His own character, not by the fact that He corresponds to some arbitrary understanding of good.** “We must have an eschatological view of this as well.”

**We often erroneously abstract an idea of good and then try to measure God against our human abstraction. That is always a losing proposition because we don't know what good is. — Al Mohler**

Mohler explains that **the greatest good is that which brings God the greatest glory**. And that God is more glorified as Creator and Redeemer than He would be if we knew Him only as Creator. But in order to be our redeemer He must redeem us from sin, which may be at least in part why He has created a world in which sin and evil exist. We are dependent upon the eyes of faith on this. "We cannot defend God against a human abstraction of good."

## WHAT IS GOOD?

- ❑ **Is it good** that a family is so poor that the floor of their house is dirt? Not just dirty, but dirt. A dirt floor.
- ❑ **Is it good** that a little baby has to crawl around on this dirt floor?
- ❑ **Is it good** that a family is so poor that nine people have to live and eat and dress in just one room?
- ❑ **Is it good** that a little boy's mother dies of a sudden disease when he is just 9 years old?
- ❑ **Is it good** that this little boy's father leaves him and his sister and cousin alone for weeks to go find a wife?
- ❑ **Is it good** that this little boy's only sister dies a few years later?
- ❑ **Is it good** that this young boy has to leave home to find work?
- ❑ **Is it good** that this boy's father disparages his son's desire for an education?
- ❑ **Is it good** that the business which this young man finally buys into with what little he has goes bankrupt?
- ❑ **Is it good** that even though he is honest and kind and decent, this young man incurs great debt?
- ❑ **Is it good** that the one young woman whom he evidently cared about at this rough time suddenly dies?

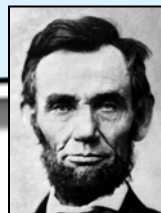
**All of this did, in fact, happen to a specific person.**

None of these circumstances are probably what you or I would have considered to be good at the time.

**But that's because we don't always know what good is.**

**And we certainly don't always know the good which those circumstances that don't seem to be good can produce.**

In this case all of these things which didn't seem to be good at the time produced the character of a man who was arguably more respected than any other man in American history. **His name was Abraham Lincoln.**



**Was it good that the Jesus was murdered by the very people He came to rescue?**

**What was so good about Good Friday?**

Why would God have decreed that His own Son would die if it were not that that which is good could result from that which was never recognized as good at the time?

**So what?**

Am I suggesting that **the crucifixion of Christ was good?** Am I suggesting that **God willed the Fall, the Holocaust, 9/11, devastating earthquakes, and awful tsunamis?**

**Am I saying that evil is good?** No. Evil is not good.

Am I suggesting that God sometimes does what is evil as a way of seeing to it that evil exists, or by actually even decreeing that evil things happen in our world at times? Well, God never does anything evil. He never tempts anyone to do evil. But yes, He may at times arrange for evil to occur.

**Am I saying that it is good that there is evil? Yes.** Evidently so. Because God is good, by definition. And because all that He does and wills is for the good. He is omnipotent and sovereign, by definition. And He created a world in which evil exists.

How can that be good? **Because God and God alone knows what good is.** And we do not know how God may work some evil circumstance for His ultimate good and glory. His ways are higher than our ways. He sees the beginning from the end. He is infinite. We are not.

Does knowing all of this help us to make sense of tragedy and deal with disaster? Perhaps. Somewhat. Sometimes. But not altogether. There is still often a great struggle to trust what we cannot grasp at the time.

That's the challenge of faith. When we put our faith in God and insist that He is both good and omnipotent in the face of evil, we please Him. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. If we come to God we must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him.



**Julie Ackerman Link**, writing in the **Our Daily Bread** devotional guide; 28 December 2012: "God is the One who determines what is good or bad, and He does so not by how it affects our plans but by whether or not it accomplishes His."

**James Montgomery Boice** (1938-2000): "God's judgment in the end will be so absolutely perfect that the damned will agree with their damnation."



## **15. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS PROVIDENT IN SUFFERING?**

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**Apologist R.C. Sproul** (1939-2017) in *The Invisible Hand* (Providence and the Problem of Evil):

I do not know the solution to the problem of evil. Nor do I know of anyone else who does. I have never been fully satisfied by any of the theodicies I've ever seen. This does not mean the problem is insoluble or that the question is unanswerable. Perhaps tomorrow the problem will be solved. But so far I haven't been able to find a solution.

My ability to identify the problem is no solution to the problem. Diagnosis or analysis is not a cure. This does not mean I have not reached any conclusions on the matter. I have concluded that evil is real. I also agree that evil is dependent on the good for its very definition and that evil must be defined in terms of privation and negation. **Most importantly perhaps is the conclusion that ultimately it must be good that there is evil or evil would not exist.**

We must be exceedingly careful here. To say it is good that evil exists is not the same thing as saying that evil is good. To say evil is good is itself evil, as Scripture so clearly declares. Evil is evil. However, to say that it is good that there is evil is simply to declare that God is good and that **His providence extends to all things, including evil.** God's sovereignty stands over evil, and He is able to bring good out of evil and to use evil for His holy purposes. When I say it is good that there is evil I'm saying that evil could not exist for a second apart from the providence of God."

**HEIDELBERG CATECHISM** (1563), a document of the Reformed Christian faith.

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**Question 27.** What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

**Answer:** The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

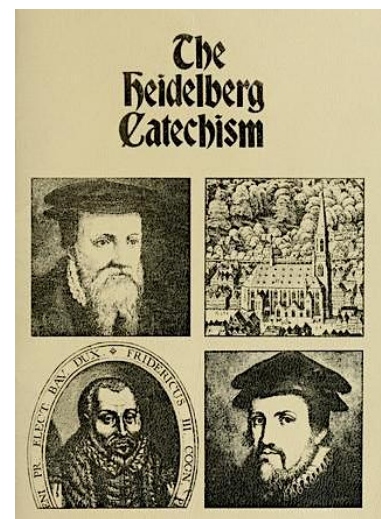
**William Cowper (1731-1800)**

**God Moves In A Mysterious Way** | written in 1774.

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea And rides upon the storm.  
Deep in unfathomable mines of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs and works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flow'r.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.



**Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)**

English non-conformist Puritan preacher and author.

"Providence is the unceasing activity of the sovereign Creator whereby He upholds His creatures in orderly existence, guides and governs all events, circumstances, and free acts of men and angels, no matter how great or trivial. All of this is done to accomplish one great design: to give glory to Himself."

**Joni Eareckson Tada:** paraphrased from *Pain & Providence* (Rose Publishing): “Nothing happens that God does not decree. God permits what He hates in order to accomplish what He loves. God’s decree makes room for evil, but God doesn’t do the evil.”

## 16. WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF EVIL & SUFFERING IN GOD’S PLAN?

**Here are five reasons for starters**, all based in Scripture (note the citations), for why God might ordain suffering and evil in the world — with some possible overlap:

**a) Suffering and evil can at times represent the direct or indirect intervening judgment of God for disobedience.** Examples in Scripture would include what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah; the plagues that fell on Egypt when Pharaoh refused to release Israel from captivity, and the many problems and suffering of Old Testament Israel when they turned from God.

This category (reason) would include the **horrifying demonstration of the depths of the human heart** that turns away from God (Jeremiah 17:9). What torturous carnage humans will wreak on other humans if left to their own devices.

This category (or reason why God might mete out suffering and evil in this world) would also include the hideous results of God just finally pulling back and **giving people over** to the black pits of their own warped wicked, evil desires. What abomination the minds of sinful rebellious humans will devise when there is no divine restraint, and no restraint of a godly conscience. Romans 1:24-32 uses the phrase “God gave them over” three times in less than ten verses. How terrifying is that?! Written off forever by God.

**What abomination the minds of sinful rebellious humans will devise when there is no divine restraint, and no restraint of a godly conscience. Romans 1:24-32 uses the phrase “God gave them over” three times in less than ten verses. How terrifying is that?!**

**b) Suffering and evil can at times be the result of the precarious nature of the sin-fallen world in which we live.** This is **not**

to suggest that God is capricious or that the world is independently precarious from God’s control or point of view, running on the laws of physics and biology apart from His constant involvement and supervision. It **is** to say that God can run a “dangerous” show. See Question #9.

**The Lord does not always reveal His complex strategies to us!** And at times He may use the laws of nature or even a lapse in good human judgment to accomplish His good purposes. So people get sick from disease (Peter’s mother-in-law got a fever; Trophimus got sick in Miletus), or are shipwrecked by bad weather (Paul in Acts 27), or suffer accidents and even die (Eutychus in Acts 20:9; the eighteen who died when the Tower of Siloam fell).

**John Piper writes** that if “someone should raise the question of sheer chance and the kinds of things that just seem to happen with no more meaning than the role of the dice, Proverbs 16:33 answers: ‘The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.’” In other words, **there is no such thing as “chance” from God’s perspective.** He has His purposes for every roll of the dice in Las Vegas and every seemingly absurd turn of events in the universe.”

c) **Suffering and evil can sometimes be used to provide an occasion for the greater glory of God** through no particular wrongdoing on the part of the sufferer, e.g. the story of Job (Job 1-40); Joseph (Genesis 37); the sickness and death of Lazarus (John 11); the man born blind (John 9). Outside of Scripture and in more recent times (1956), the story of the death of Jim Elliott and four other missionaries with him in the jungles of Ecuador in 1956 come to mind.

d) **Suffering and evil are sometimes used by God to discipline His children, and to refine our faith**, e.g.; Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33); the Laodicean church (Revelation 3); all Christians during the course of their lives (Hebrews 12).

**John Piper says that** Satan is real and may even at times “have a hand in our calamities, but not the final hand, and not the decisive hand. James makes clear that God had a good purpose in all Job's afflictions: “You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose (telos) of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful” ([James 5:11](#)). So Satan may have been involved, but the ultimate purpose was God's and it was “compassionate and merciful.”

**Satan is real and may even at times “have a hand in our calamities, but not the final hand, and not the decisive hand.” — John Piper**

e) **Suffering and evil are sometimes the inevitable result of God delaying His judgment in order that more souls will be saved from eternal torment** (2 Peter 3).



Some qualifications and words of caution at this point.

- **There are certainly cases where one of the purposes above overlaps another purpose.** And because we are not always certain of God's purposes in using suffering and evil to work His will we had better be careful about too quickly drawing conclusions to our own advantage.

- **In November 2013 I received a note** from a Christian lady whose oxygen tank had gotten tangled in her walker, causing her to fall, cut herself about the right eyebrow to the point of needing stitches, fracture her nose and damage a tooth so badly that it needed to be extracted. But her note said, “One good thing. No broken hip or leg or arm. God was with me.”

Of course I knew what she meant, but a skeptic might quickly ask, “If God was with you, why did you fall in the first place? Why did you get hurt at all?”

Unless we choose our words carefully we may sound as though we were spared from a particular tragedy because of something **we** have done, or not done, or are — rather than because of God's sovereign designs. **We should be careful about saying**, “God was certainly with me,” or “Thank God that He takes care of His own,” or “Thank God for healing all those who trust in Him,” or “Praise God for sparing us,” in light of those faithful believers who were not spared, healed, and or protected in a similar way.

**We should be careful about saying, “God was certainly with me.” or “Praise God for sparing us.” in light of those faithful believers who were not spared or protected in a similar way.**

## 17. BUT HOW COULD GOD ORDAIN EVIL WHICH HE HATES?

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**It sounds like a flat-out contradiction** to assert that God would ever will the very things that are against His will to accomplish His will! A holy God hates evil, right? So how is it even possible that He would ordain or decree evil, even it were to serve a good purpose? Does God believe that the end justifies the means? Does He endorse situational ethics? How do we explain such things?

To say that God may at times condone the use of evil or actually decree evil does not mean that God ever condones evil itself. And the Bible makes it clear that God never Himself commits evil.

But to know that God in His sovereignty totally rules over all evil, and is not merely the opposite of evil (as per light and darkness, yin and yang), and is able to turn evil for good **can be a great source of comfort to the believer.**

**John Piper says:** “If you would see God's glory and savor his glory and magnify his glory in this world, do not remain wavering before the sovereignty of God in the face of great evil. Take his book in your hand, plead for his Spirit of illumination and humility and trust, and settle this matter, that you might be unshakable in the day of your own calamity.”

And from that base Piper is able to go on to say: “Thus in one sense God wills that what He hates will come to pass, as well as what He loves.” And “God is more glorious for having conceived and created and governed a world like this with all its evil.”

### THE TWO WILLS IN GOD

There is another theological tack that is a key component of a helpful response to this question about how a holy God could ordain the very evil that He hates — and that is that there is a very real sense in which there are **two wills in God**. This does not mean that God is schizophrenic. In fact, all of us, created in His image, reflect the same phenomenon.

Perhaps you can more easily understand this concept by answering the question, “Would you like to eat a whole box of chocolates once a week?” Or, “Would you like to purchase a brand new vehicle of your choice later today?” Yes and no, right? You don't always want to do what you want to do. And that's the way it is with the question, “Is evil the will of God?” “Yes” in one sense and “no” in another. So consider this:

**There is the Divine Will of Command**, sometimes known as the revealed will of God, or the preceptive will or moral will or even “perfect” will of God. This addresses what **should** happen.

**There is also the Divine Will of Decree**, also known as the secret or hidden will, or the efficient will, or sovereign will, or **decretive** will of God. The term “permissive” here would be too passive.

**Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758), considered by many secular as well as evangelical historians to be the greatest religious thinker in American history, writes about the Two Wills in God by explaining that [God's] will of decree [or sovereign will] is not His will in the same sense as his will of command [or moral will] is. He says: “Therefore it is not difficult at all to suppose that the one may be otherwise than the other: his will in both senses is his inclination. But when we say he wills virtue, or loves virtue or the happiness of his creature; thereby is intended that virtue or the creature's happiness, absolutely and simply considered, is agreeable to the inclination of his nature. His will of decree is his inclination to a thing not as to that thing absolutely and simply, but with reference to the universality of things. So God, though he hates a things as it is simply, may incline to it with reference to the universality of things.”

Jonathan Edwards goes on to illustrate the principle: "The crucifying of Christ was a great sin; and as man committed it, it was exceedingly hateful and highly provoking to God. **Yet upon many great considerations it was the will of God that it should be done.**" And: "I answer, [the sufferings of Christ] could not come to pass but by sin. For contempt and disgrace was one thing he was to suffer. [Therefore] **even the free actions of men are subject to God's disposal.**" And: "God decrees all things, even all sins."

For more on the subject of why God would ordain evil to His own ends in this world, click the link below to see an excellent article by John Piper based on the work of Jonathan Edwards, entitled "Is God Less Glorious Because He Ordained that Evil Be?" Jonathan Edwards on the Decrees of God; The Jonathan Edwards Institute: Evangelicals Seeking the Glory of God; 7.1.1998

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/is-god-less-glorious-because-he-ordained-that-evil-be>

## 18. WHAT ABOUT SO-CALLED NATURAL DISASTERS

**Are so-called natural disasters really natural (the result of nature alone), or acts of God (with God acting unilaterally)? Or are they man-made, the result of sin?**

**Earthquakes** on their own may **not** be a problem. Tectonic plate shift is part of God's design for a healthy planet. Human death and injury resulting from earthquakes **are** a problem. And most if not all of this is the result of shoddy, substandard, or illegal construction conventions, as well as poor choices about where to build. Both usually result from sinful human behavior.



**When the earth shakes violently, shabbily-built cement structures will crumble.** God does not cancel the law of gravity for impoverished nations. New York Times columnist **David Brooks** once wrote: "On October 17, 1989, a major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 struck the Bay Area in Northern California. Sixty-three people were killed. [On January 12] a major earthquake, also measuring a magnitude of 7.0, struck near Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The Red Cross estimates that between 45,000 and 50,000 people died. **This is not a natural disaster story. This is a poverty story.** It's a story about poorly constructed buildings, bad infrastructure and terrible public services."

**I recall my son Stephen telling me** while participating in earthquake relief efforts in Turkey in January 2000: "Dad, a lot of the damage and death here is the result of shoddy construction."

We have also heard of earthquakes being triggered by earth cavities that result from inappropriate oil drilling procedures. **So terms such as "act of God" and "natural disaster" often unjustifiably ignore the human factor, identified or not, that is part of the story wherever people suffer and die.** In the case of the terrible 2010 Haitian earthquake and carnage, **years of flawed policy by Haitian leaders** (and perhaps even our own U.S. government) failed to stem the poverty that proved so significant a factor in the collapse of buildings with all the resulting death and injury.



**Famine and starvation** are often the result of a prolonged lack of rainfall. Reduced levels of rainfall over a long period of time often seems to result from the disruption of natural atmospheric cycles. Such disruptions often seem to result from global warming (in part human induced?) and human interference with the ecology. On a local basis, this may be most evident in cases where **large tracts of rain forests have been destroyed**, which has reduced natural evaporation cycles and therefore critical rainfall.



**Starvation also results from war and conflict between corrupt leaders.** Two 2023 headlines from CBS News illustrate how this works: “Russia used ‘starvation tactics’ against Ukraine civilians, investigators claim in new war crime allegation” (Emmet Lyons; updated on June 2, 2023); and “How Russia's Wagner Group funds its role in Putin's Ukraine war by plundering Africa's resources” (Debora Patta, Sarah Carter), updated May 16, 2023). The starvation of many children has resulted.

**In what sense is any of this a direct “act of God” or a “natural” disaster?!**

**Floods, Hurricanes, Tornadoes** often appear attributable to oceanic warming and *El Nino* type currents which are very possibly linked to a disruption in atmospheric conditions which has been shown to result from the release of hydrocarbons, harmful auto emissions, and the destruction of rain forests, all of which disrupt the ozone layer and all of which reflect poor and sinful stewardship of the world in which we live.

The June 2006 issue of *Ode* magazine carried a cover story entitled “The Courthouse Effect” with this subtitle: “Politicians won’t stop climate change. CEOs won’t stop climate change. But lawyers will . . . and they are just warming up.” Another caption says it all: “Business people are deathly afraid of potential lawsuits claiming they are responsible for climate change.” The article referred to impending large-scale suits, comparable to those against Big Tobacco, which will likely be filed by insurance companies against industries responsible for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The suits will seek to establish a “link between CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, warmer sea water, stronger hurricanes, and damage in New Orleans.” In any case there’s a **human factor** affecting nature.

**Cooling temperatures in Europe and the Northeastern United States** may very well result from a disruption or cessation of Gulf Stream currents, which results from arctic ice cap melt which results from global warming which results from atmospheric deterioration which results (at least in part) from the sinful **human** stewardship of earth.



**Mud slides?** Consider the headlines in the papers on February 18, 2006 from Manilla, Philippines, where hundreds died when a wall of boulders and mud killed over 1500 hundred villagers. The headlines said: “Rains, illegal logging blamed for Philippines landslide.” “**Illegal logging** that began in the 1970s. Roger Mercado, a member of the Philippine Congress said in an AP release, “**This is the result of the logging in the past.**”

## Tsunamis?

The infamous South Asian Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 resulted in over 220,000 deaths. Once again human sin in the form of pride and greed seems to have played a key role. The decision to



save face and bow to pressure from the tourist industry seem to have played roles in preempting warnings from Thailand's meteorological services, the head of which was supposedly even fired.

Additionally, consider two factors that my friend **Brandon Pustejovsky** (serving as a World Relief Disaster Response officer at the time) cited as contributing to the casualty rate after his on-site inspection: **1)** squatting in high risk areas designated off limits by the government, and **2)** lack of education about the danger of tsunamis by government, resulting in such things as children collecting shells in the ocean waters that quickly recede before a tsunami hits.

Finally, consider the fact that relatively few animals died in the tsunami. Many fled, perhaps as a result of their detection of low frequency sound waves. In this world we have so much noise. Is it even possible to tune in to God's voice in nature as would have been true for Adam and Eve when they were first created? Has that sort of pre-Fall heightened level of communication with God been forfeited by sin? It seems that disasters from tsunamis cannot be so easily attributed to **God**, acting unilaterally or through the laws of nature, apart from the sinfulness of humans.



## Snow Avalanches?

A large avalanche struck on remote Boulder Mountain near Revelstoke, British Columbia, on Sunday, March 14, 2010, killing at least three people and leaving an unknown number missing. The event may have been triggered by three **daredevil sledders** who apparently unleashed a deadly wall of snow on up to 200 people gathered for an informal snowmobile rally. RCMP Cpl. Dan Moskaluk said the avalanche was definitely "human triggered" and is being investigated by both the Mounties and the BC Coroners Service.

## What about Flooding?

Check this article entitled **Are Floods Natural Disasters?** by Sebastian Abbot and Ashraf Khan. Associated Press release | 7 September 2010



**SUKKUR, Pakistan** — As the disastrous floods recede in Pakistan, something new is rising: suspicions and rumors that **powerful officials and landowners used their influence to divert water away from their property and inundate the villages and fields of millions of poor Pakistanis.**

Even before the floods, many Pakistanis harbored a deep mistrust toward their government and the landowning elite. "The politicians and the rich and powerful just sacrificed the people," said 30-year-old farmer Mohammed Yousuf, who lost his home and 11 cattle last month when flood waters surging down the Indus River swept across southern Sindh province. The floods, which were triggered by extremely heavy monsoon rains in the northwest at the end of July, have killed more than 1,600 people across Pakistan and affected some 17 million others. At its peak, the flood covered one-fifth of the country — an area larger than England.

**Many people suspect powerful Pakistanis were able to manipulate the flow of water by influencing which levees were breached.** Levees are tall dirt and rock embankments meant to prevent a river from overflowing and can be intentionally breached using explosives or heavy machinery. The provincial government has ordered the Lahore High Court to investigate, but Dasti has little faith in a fair outcome since one of the members of the Khosa family is an adviser to the chief minister of Punjab. **"The landlords," he said, "did this crime in connivance with government officials, who are like their personal servants."** (Associated Press writers Khalid Tanveer in Muzaffargarh and Asif Shahzad in Islamabad contributed to this report.)

**To summarize our response to Question 18** — human suffering resulting from many so-called natural disasters may not be as attributable to **nature** or to the **laws of nature** as they are to **human sin** in a fallen world. Nevertheless, God is sovereign over even human sin and may at times permit or even decree that nature-related disasters occur for His own wise and good ends.

## 19. WHAT DO OTHER WORLDVIEWS SAY ABOUT SUFFERING AND EVIL?

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Here's what ten leading belief systems have to say about suffering and evil.

### 01. HINDUISM

Suffering is the result of bad karma due to wrong choices in a previous life. No mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children.

### 02. DAOISM | TAOISM

Evil is an inevitable component of the Yin & Yang principles in this world. Evil reflects an imbalance in this Yin & Yang. There is no mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children.

### 03. MORMONISM

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints teaches that suffering is an option that all people chose in their pre-mortal state as a way of learning discipleship. Mormons believe that even God himself is unable to abrogate the eternal principle of moral agency, and is therefore not really, technically, omnipotent.

### 04. CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

This cult teaches that although they may appear to be real, suffering and illness are false beliefs or errors of mortal thought. They believe that suffering can only be overcome by asserting the truth of one's being as an idea of God. A trained Christian Science practitioner may be called to support the patient's thought through prayerfully "knowing the truth." There is never any mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children.

### 05. ISLAM

Islam teaches that suffering is either punishment for sin and unbelief, or a test from Allah. There is considerable similarity between the Islamic and Christian views of suffering but, unlike Christianity, there is absolutely no mention of a personal God who ever enters into suffering with His children.

### 06. HUMANISM

Humanists teach that suffering typically results from uninformed, foolish, human beliefs, choices, and actions — such as religious views and conflicts. They hold that it can also result from unfortunate coincidences. Humanists often resist using the term evil because of its religious associations. There is obviously never any mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children as per the humanistic worldview.

### 07. JUDAISM

Some rabbis (e.g. author Harold Kushner) hold that God is essentially impotent to deal with evil. There is no mention of a Father God who enters into suffering with humans.

### 08. NEW AGE & PAGANISM

New Age doctrine holds that suffering is a rather illusory phenomenon to be overcome through meditation. Pagans advocate syncing with nature as an important means to mental and physical health. There is no mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children.



## 09. BUDDHISM

Suffering is a very key component of, and central to, Buddhist belief. Buddhists teach that suffering results from misguided desire and unhealthy attachment. They believe that it can only ever be ended by following Buddhism's eight-fold path. There is no certainly no mention of a personal God who enters into suffering with His children.

## 10. CHRISTIANITY

Christians believe that suffering is the result of human sin, directly or indirectly, **or** perpetrated by evil forces, **and/or** used by God as helpful discipline. Christianity holds that suffering is ultimately controlled by a personal sovereign God who in Christ has Himself experienced physical suffering (Hebrews 2:18), and who will eventually deliver all believers from all evil (Revelation 21:4).

Respected Christian theologian and teacher, **Dr. John R.W. Stott** wrote in *The Cross of Christ*:

"In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time, after a while I have had to look away. And in imagination I have turned instead to the lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. **That is the God for me!** He laid aside His immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of His. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering."



## 20. WHAT DOES CHRISTIANITY OFFER SUFFERERS THAT IS SO UNIQUE?

### Does God Feel Our Pain? Is He with Us in the Dark?

There is a distinctly Christian angle on the problem of human suffering that is very significant for just that reason — it's so unique. **No other religion or faith system of which I am aware involves the doctrine of a personal-infinite God who has experienced human pain first hand, and who has historically, and who does presently, actually enter into pain with those who trust Him.** This is amazing, and it can make a huge difference to us in our suffering if we really get a handle on it.

**"For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." —Hebrews 2:18, NASB**

**D. A. Carson** in his book *How Long, O Lord?* writes: "Frequently it is when we are crushed and devastated that the cross speaks most powerfully to us. The wounds of Christ then become Christ's credentials. The world mocks, but we are assured of God's love by Christ's wounds."

**One Sunday morning during my eight-month-long hospitalization with Guillain-Barré syndrome in 1984-85** the nursing staff offered to take me to the hospital chapel service. I was in the Intensive Care Unit at the time, extensively paralyzed and unable to even breathe on my own. Somehow they got me into a high-backed wheelchair and disconnected me from the mechanical respirator. Nurse Julie accompanied me, periodically pumping air into my lungs from an ambu bag (BVM) as we slowly proceeded to the little chapel on Second Floor.

I don't remember what the sermon was about that morning. I don't recall the name of the chaplain leading the service. What I do clearly recollect is the long, loud, rhythmic, exhaling whine of the ambu bag every time that I was given a breath. I was self-conscious about that. I also remember feeling uncomfortable, anxious, and an increasing desire to get back to the security of my bed and the mechanical respirator. But that's about all I remember — until the service reached its closing hymn.

**Then, suddenly, I recall being totally overwhelmed with emotion** as the small group in the chapel that morning began singing, "Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and song; as the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the way grows weary and long?"

As a minister, I had led my congregations in that song for years. But never did the words of Frank Graeff's hymn connect with me as they did that Sunday morning at Eastern Maine Medical Center. Hot tears coursed down my cheeks and onto my hospital johnny as I listened to them sing the refrain:

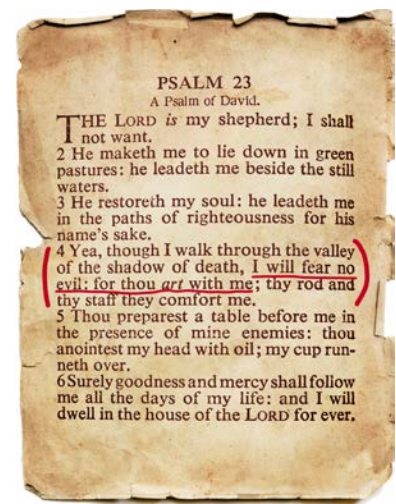
*"O yes, He cares, I know He cares! His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares. He cares."*

Those simple lyrics responded to the very core of the issue with which I had been struggling for weeks, and the truth they conveyed was far more therapeutic than all the medical care, pills, and therapy in the place.

"The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak; They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne; but to our wounds only God's wounds can speak, and not a god has wounds, but Thou alone."

— **Edward Shillito** in his poem *Jesus of the Scars*

**Over the past 50 years** I have officiated at well over 250 funerals and graveside services. I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death with many families. Almost without exception they've ask me to read Psalm 23. And when I've asked, "What part of this Psalm means so much to you?" they always say, "Oh, it's that phrase 'I will fear no evil **for Thou are with me.**'"



"But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." — **Hebrews 2:9-10.**

**Many years ago I recall reading** these words in a publication by Our Daily Bread Ministries:

“No one has suffered more than our Father in heaven. No one has paid more dearly for the allowance of sin into the world. No one has so continuously grieved over the pain of a race gone bad. No one has suffered like the One who paid for our sin in the crucified body of His own Son. No one has suffered more than the One who, when He stretched out His arms and died, showed us how much He loved us. It is this God who, in drawing us to Himself, asks us to trust Him when we are suffering and when our own loved ones cry out in our presence (1 Peter 2:21; 3:18; 4:1).”



**From Revelation 21:1-8, NASB:** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He \*said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

# Good God, Wicked World

## Christian Apologetics & Human Adversity

### OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

#### TALKING POINTS

#### TWENTY QUESTIONS

**1. WHAT IS THE ISSUE? WHAT IS A THEODICY?**

The infamous trilemma

**2. DOES THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING & EVIL PERTAIN TO BELIEVERS?**

**3. HOW ARE WE DEFINING SUFFERING AND ADVERSITY?**

**4. WHY ARE YOU ASKING? ARE YOU CURRENTLY STRUGGLING?**

**5. DO WE REALLY NEED TO KNOW THE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS?**

**6. WHAT IS ONE SUCCINCT THEOLOGICALLY ACCURATE RESPONSE?**

**7. DID GOD CREATE EVIL?**

**8. WHY DID GOD ALLOW EVIL IN THE FIRST PLACE?**

**9. IS THE WORLD PRECARIOUS? IS GOD CAPRICIOUS?**

**10. HOW CAN WE COPE? WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS?**

**11. WHY DOESN'T GOD PUT A STOP TO ALL EVIL IN THIS WORLD?**

**12. BUT WHY DOESN'T GOD STOP EVIL RIGHT NOW?**

- a) Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment will result in fewer souls spending eternity in hell and more souls spending eternity with Him in heaven.
- b) Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment can result in the personal refinement of believers as God turns their adversity into a blessing.
- c) Allowing additional time before He moves in judgment will result in God receiving greater glory than would otherwise be the case.

C.S. LEWIS | The Efficacy of Prayer [1959]



### **13. WHAT IS UNCONDITIONAL FAITH AND OBEDIENCE?**

HECTOR THE COLLECTOR

EXHIBIT A in the great cosmic drama of the ages.

### **14. BUT HOW CAN GOD BE GOOD IF HE ALLOWS SUFFERING?**

R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

What is good?

### **15. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS PROVIDENT IN SUFFERING?**

Apologist R.C. Sproul

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

William Cowper

Thomas Brooks

Joni Eareckson Tada

### **16. WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF EVIL & SUFFERING IN GOD'S PLAN?**

- a) Suffering and evil can at times represent the direct or indirect intervening judgment of God.
- b) Suffering and evil can be due to sin and the unpredictable nature of this sin-fallen world.
- c) Suffering and evil can sometimes be used to provide an occasion for the greater glory of God.
- d) Suffering and evil are sometimes used by God to discipline His children and refine their faith.
- e) Suffering and evil are sometimes the inevitable result of God delaying His judgment in order that more souls will be saved from eternal torment (2 Peter 3).

### **17. BUT HOW COULD GOD ORDAIN EVIL WHICH HE HATES?**

The Two wills in God

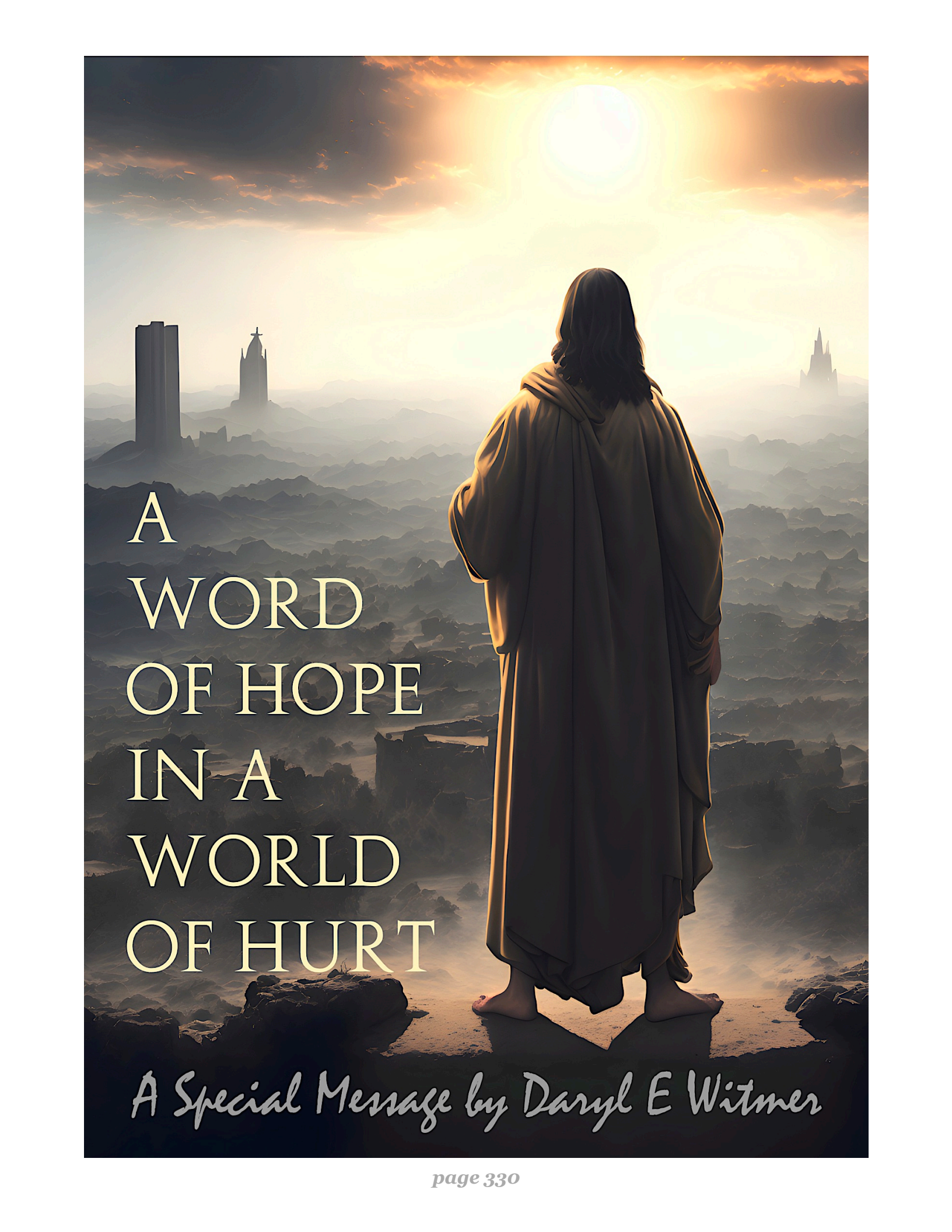
Jonathan Edwards

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/is-god-less-glorious-because-he-ordained-that-evil-be>

### **18. WHAT ABOUT SO-CALLED NATURAL DISASTERS**

### **19. WHAT DO OTHER WORLDVIEWS SAY ABOUT SUFFERING AND EVIL?**

### **20. WHAT DOES CHRISTIANITY OFFER SUFFERERS THAT IS SO UNIQUE?**



A  
WORD  
OF HOPE  
IN A  
WORLD  
OF HURT

*A Special Message by Daryl E Witmer*

# A Word of Hope in a World of Hurt

## A Special Message by Daryl E. Witmer

Largely adapted from material in [Section 2 | The Big Questions | If God Is Good, Why Suffering?](#) of this compendium.

You may have heard about the guy who decided to jump from an airplane. The good news is that he had a parachute. The bad news is that it didn't open. The good news is that there was a big old haystack down below. The bad news is that there was a pitchfork in the haystack. The good news is that when he finally hit, he missed the pitchfork. The bad news is that he also missed the haystack. The good news is that even though he didn't survive, he eventually came to on the other side. The bad news is that the first thing he saw when he came to was another pitchfork.

Sometimes it seems that for every bit of good news there is an equal or greater amount of bad news. These are troubled times. Economically, politically, morally. **We live in a whole world of hurt.** And no one — not even Christians — are exempt from the temptations and trials of life that are common to all men and women (1 Corinthians 10:13).

I've been a Christian apologist by vocation for much of my life. Apologetics is the branch of theology that has to do with defending Christianity, or presenting an intellectually credible basis for faith in Christ — answering tough questions about the Christian worldview.

As an apologist I have regularly been asked about evidence for the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible, whether evolution can be reconciled with Scripture, if it's possible that the resurrection of Christ can be explained naturally, and for the Christian take on cults, religions, and worldviews — just to name a few.

**But the one question that is asked more often than any other question** is why an omnipotent (all powerful) and omni-benevolent (all kind) God would allow suffering and evil in His created world.

Very often I address this question by presenting a theodicy. **A theodicy is an attempt to justify God's ways in view of all of the terrible things that happen.** But it's always rather presumptuous for any human to try to do that because . . .

**#1. Who are we as humans to try to justify God's ways?** He is God. He doesn't need to be justified by us for anything that He does. In his essay, *God In the Dock*, C.S. Lewis says: "The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For modern man the roles are reversed. Man has become the judge and God is in the dock [witness stand]. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have some reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock."

In other words, the whole arrangement reeks of arrogance on our part! Who do we think we are to be asking or expecting God to justify, defend, or even explain anything at all to us, ever? That seems to be the essence of Job's concluding response in Job 38-41. God takes Job on this grand tour of creation and then essentially asks him who he thinks he is to even be questioning Him. Job manages to squeak out: "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth." Oops.

**#2. We don't need to justify God's ways in order to trust Him.** In fact, it's often impossible to comprehend His ways because, by definition, His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).

Still, all that being said, the human component in us often instinctively wants to make some sense of the God in whom we are to place our trust. So is there any appropriately-humble biblically-consistent way to resolve this historic trilemma as it is summed up by the Scottish skeptic, **David Hume**:

**"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?  
Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing?  
Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing?  
Whence then is evil?"**

**The human  
component in us often  
instinctively wants to  
make some sense of  
the God in whom we  
are to place our trust.**

Perhaps the most appropriate starter response to that thorny question is to simply acknowledge that **the world is temporarily out of order**. It is out of order. **But only temporarily**. God is both fully able and altogether willing to judge evil, but He is not ready to judge evil right now — not in an ultimate sense, anyway.

Of course that response will quickly lead to other questions, but based on my years of examining those questions, I am convinced that there are intellectually credible and biblically consistent answers to all of them — if one is objective in his or her search for truth on this matter, that is.

For our purposes here and now, however, I'm limiting my comments to focus on three particular advantages of the Christian worldview when it comes to the problem of suffering and evil.

## **1. God is prepared to make pain serve a worthy purpose, for His glory and in your life.**

**In Genesis 50:20 Joseph told his bad-boy brothers:** "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

**Romans 8:28:** "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

**James 1:2-4:** "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

**Romans 5:3-5:** "And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

## **2. God is eventually going to bring an end to all pain.**

**Revelation 21:4** says that "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." No advocate for reincarnation can claim that promise on their death bed. Hindu have to come back and go around again whether they like it or not.

### 3. God is willing and able to enter into our pain with us.

In fact, He has already done so, historically, on the cross. But God is also willing to do so right now, today, whenever we hurt. He has promised to come alongside us. He knows us. He understands us. **And He cares.** The God of the universe cares about you.

This truth can make a huge difference to Christians in moments of big or small trials — if they really get a handle on it. To know that the God of the Bible is immanent (near to us). He is transcendent, yes, but He is also immanent. **Dr. Francis Schaeffer** often referred to the God of the Bible as the infinite-personal God. This is the God who is intimately acquainted with all of our ways. He knows what you're going to speak before you speak it.

**Hebrews 2:18:** "For since He [Jesus] Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

**1 Peter 5:7:** "casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."

**Psalms 139:3:** "You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways."

**Acts 17:27:** "He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist."

**Hebrews 13:5b:** "He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,""

**Deuteronomy 31:8:** "The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

■ These things are not true for the **Hindu**. Brahma is essentially unknowable.



■ These things are not true for the **Muslim**. Allah never suffered as a man. The incarnation and the cross are not a part of Islamic theology.



■ None of this is true for **Wiccans**. The goddess of nature has no personality.



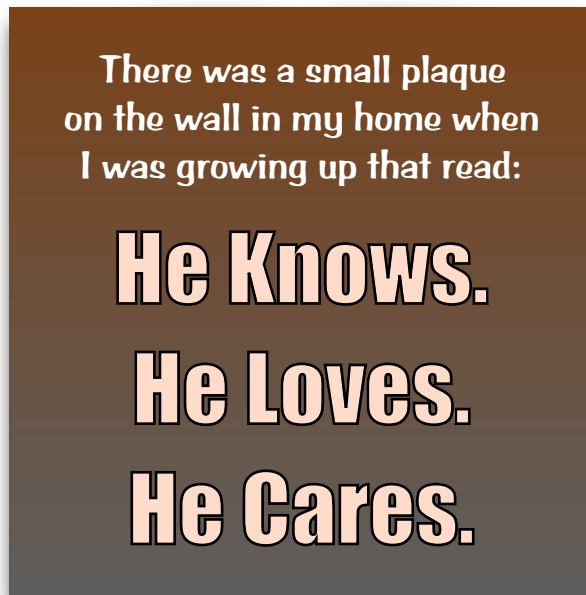
■ This is not true for **Sikhs** who conceive of God as the Oneness which permeates the entirety of creation and beyond — a creator but not a sufferer.

■ None of this is true for the **Jew**. Yahweh is not Abba under the first covenant.



■ None of this is true for the **Deist**, whose God is distant, withdrawn, away.

■ None of this is true for the **Buddhist**. Siddhartha Gautama died at age 80. His cremated remains are held near the city of Kushinagara, in northern India.



**Hebrews 2:9-10** is referring to Jesus when it says: "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."

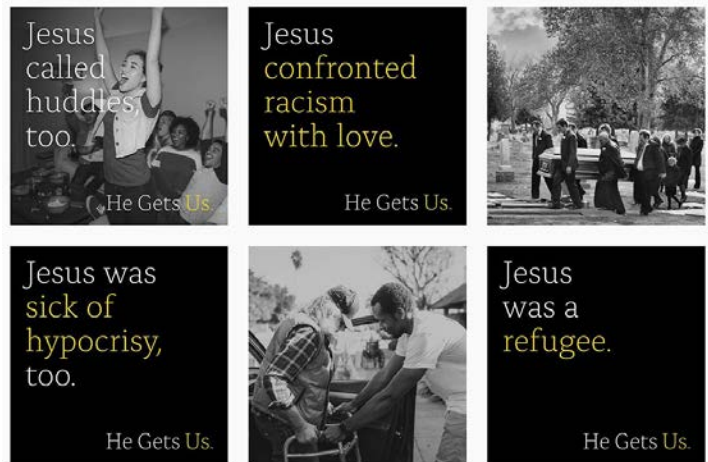
**On December 12, 1984, just 13 days before Christmas**, I awoke with my legs feeling numb. I had never before been seriously ill in my life. But within hours I was unable to walk. By that evening I couldn't move my toes, and then my legs stopped working, and then I couldn't move my arms or my fingers or my head. By the next day I was almost completely paralyzed. I was unable to move my lips, swallow, or even to breathe on my own. I was connected to a respirator and fed through a tube for the next five months — in the hospital for eight months.

Over the past 50 years I have officiated at well over 250 funerals and graveside services. I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death with many families. And very often they've asked me to read Psalm 23 at the funeral or graveside service for their loved ones. When I've asked, "What part of this Psalm means so much to you?" they almost always say, "It's the part that says 'I will fear no evil **for Thou with me.**'"

**Our God has come near to us in the person of Jesus.** He has walked our road. He has felt real pain. As the popular Jesus ad campaign says: "**He Gets Us.**"

**Hebrews 2:18:** "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

**John 16:33:** Jesus says, "In this world you shall have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."



**Romans 8:18** says: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

- \* **Some of the poorest people in the world** have found contentment in that truth.
- \* **People suffering from chronic pain** have been strengthened to cope with that promise.
- \* **Lonely souls** have been sustained by those words, and the hope of a future of companionship with Jesus in all of His glory.

**This is all good news and the solid basis for a word of hope in our world of hurt.**

**1 Peter 3:13-15:** "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should **suffer** for the sake of righteousness, you are **blessed**. And do not **fear** their **intimidation**, and do not be **troubled**, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the **hope** that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."



In the early Fall of 2010 I engaged in the following email exchange with a woman from Yuba City, California, who had contacted the AIIA Institute. To protect her identity I have changed her name and abridged some of our comments here, but otherwise what follows here fairly and accurately represents our correspondence.

September 15-16/2023

I am seeking for truth in matters of faith. I am a Christian but have been doubting. I am already convinced of the truth of historic orthodox Christianity. I need reaffirmation in my faith.

Lately I have been doubting there is a God. The Earth is so small with an infinite universe beyond. Why would a God choose to create life on a small speck of dust when there is an endless amount of space beyond? What about other planets? What makes man so special when there is so much evil in the world? Why do people believe the bible is the word of God and where did it come from? What makes the bible so special? I have a lot of questions.

I went to an apologetics seminar a few weeks ago and it answered a few questions, but mostly it seemed to be debating for the sake of debating. God feels so cold and distant. I have been through a really horrible year with near-suicidal depression and I really feel that God (if He is there), just sat back and watched.

People keep saying that God carries you during your trials and tribulations, but I honestly never felt further from Him or gained any comfort. There is just so much evil and darkness in this world I really don't know why He would create it to begin with. I mean, if he knew this was going to happen before He even created it all and that there was going to be so much pain, suffering and wars, holocausts and such, why do it at all? If He wanted people to love and worship Him at the cost of those who would suffer through human evilness, isn't it sheer vanity to know that others will suffer but you will get your worship?

How about those who never hear the word of God? Will they go to hell since they never knew He was the real thing? How is that just? I don't know, I just don't know. If you know the answers to any of these questions or have some information, I would very much appreciate it. Jesus just doesn't seem too real anymore.

Ada Doring  
Yuba City CA 95991

Thank you.

From: aiiainstitute  
Subject: Doubts  
Date: September 16, 2010 2:51:36 PM EDT  
To: Ada Doring

16 September 2010

Hello, Ada.

You've been on a journey through some very dark times and I'm afraid that any quick answers that I might try to provide here would not be particularly useful to you at this point.

I, too, have visited the Land of Doubt, and it wasn't just a few quick answers or apologetics seminars that pulled me through. I can relate to much of what you're saying. Sometimes nothing makes sense. It's like looking through a distorted lens. Even a rose looks weird. Even the things that might otherwise make sense don't make sense to you right now.

Let me make a few suggestions:

- 1. Don't make any decisions about God or truth or faith or the Bible right now.** Don't jump ship. This is a bad time to be making any major moves. Give yourself more time. Otherwise you're likely to trade disappointment with God for disappointment without God, and if you think that what you now feel is black and bleak, the alternative would be worse — believe me.
- 2. Speaking of disappointment with God** — have you ever read the book by that title by **Philip Yancey**? You can buy it for less than \$20 on Amazon.
- 3. Have you ever read Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan?** If so, read it again. If not, buy a copy and read it soon.
- 4. I'm going to send you a free copy of Passing Showers**, my personal testimonial of finding hope in tough times.
- 5. Ask God to lead you to** (and then actively seek out) a church or a few Christians friends who will accept you, doubts and all, and walk with you for awhile.
- 6. Know that doubt is not always all bad.** It can motivate us to read and learn and believe even more strongly. But it's not a good thing when doubt begins to gain the upper hand, which may be what's happening to you right now.
- 7. Know that there really are good solid intellectually-credible answers to every tough question.** Articulating them is what I do every day as a Christian apologist. But in your case, there'll be time later on to discover what they are. For right now, just put it in neutral and relax. Let the mystery be. Allow God to hang onto you until you are once again able to grab hold of Him. His truth is not contingent on your faith. It'll still be there, solid as a rock, when you turn the corner. And you will. And you will see.

I suspect that God has directed you my way just to get this counsel today.

In Christ,

Daryl E. Witmer, Executive Director  
**AIIA INSTITUTE**  
Monson ME 04464-0262



## POST SCRIPT

Sadly, three years later, on July 14, 2013, I received the following email from Ada:

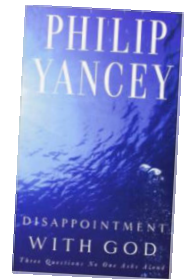
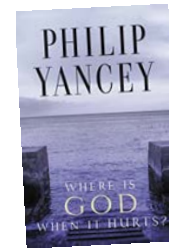
“Please remove me from your mailing list. I am no longer a christian and don't believe in a god in any way, shape or form. No offense is meant by this, but please remove me from all your mailings. Thank you.”

I have no idea whether Ada had ever followed the advice in my letter of September 2010 or not. But after thinking it all through again, in retrospect, I decided that I would not change what I said to her in that letter. I would (and should) have, however, made a greater effort to follow up with her after our exchange in 2010, and tried to get her connected with a good church near her home.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE SUBJECT OF THIS CHAPTER

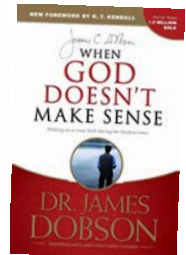
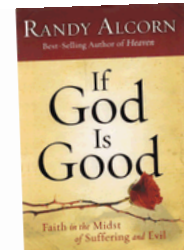
I'm including here a brief mention of seven books that I've found very readable and especially helpful in dealing with one aspect or another of the vast subject of theodicy. Thousands more have been written, including classics such as Lewis' **The Problem of Pain**, which are not in this list but which are also well worth reading. Please also see **Appendix 7 on Resources** for other books, materials, and links to websites that provide good solid Bible-based answers to the questions that keep on coming about why God allows pain and evil.

**Where Is God When It Hurts** | Philip Yancey; © 2002 Zondervan; a classic.



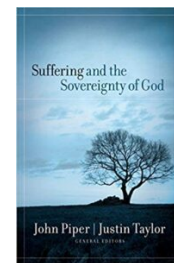
**Disappointment with God** | Philip Yancey; © 2015 Zondervan; another classic.

**If God is Good** | Randy Alcorn; © 2014 Multnomah; an especially comprehensive examination.



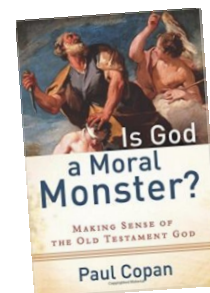
**When God Doesn't Make Sense** | James Dobson; © 2012 Tyndale. Sensitive and compassionate in tone.

**Suffering and the Sovereignty of God** | John Piper and Justin Taylor; © 2006 Crossway; theological but readable.



**Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen?** | Chris Morpheus; © 2021 The Good Book Company; addressed especially to young people, but good for all. Written in simple terms.

**Is God a Moral Monster?** | Paul Copan; © 2011 Baker Books; tackles some of the toughest and most-asked questions about the God of the Old Testament.



**What About Evil?** | Scott Christensen; © 2020 P&R Publishing; newly published; academic; very thorough; well referenced.



## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part E

# WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF THE COSMOS AND HUMANITY? WHAT ABOUT SCIENCE?







WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

HOW DID THE COSMOS BEGIN?

IS IT SCIENCE OR THE BIBLE?

IS IT NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION OR INTELLIGENT DESIGN?

Questions & Answers compiled by Daryl E Witmer

# Christian Apologetics, Science, and Origins

## INTRODUCTION

Matters of science, earth origins, and human life origins form another major category under the rubric of general Christian apologetics. Such matters are of interest to everyone, so it's good that the Christian worldview does not ignore them. But is Christian doctrine consistent with the position of modern science on such issues? How do Christians arrive at their conclusions? Does Christian faith necessarily conflict with rational thought and scientific discovery? Can solid Bible-believing Christians also embrace science? How objective can Christians be anyway? And is there any hard scientific evidence for resolving the big questions: **How did the cosmos come into existence? Who are we as humans and how did we get here? Why are we here? Is there any way of reconciling what the Bible says about such matters with the claims of modern science?** That's what this part of the compendium is all about.

As in the previous section on Suffering and Evil, what follows here are **not the notes from any one seminar, lecture, or article** that I've authored or presented on this subject. What follows here is a **collection** of stories, illustrations, notes, talking points, observations, relevant quotes, Bible texts, and commentary — a collection that I've been assembling for over 50 years but which I've more recently organized and updated for this publication. It is a collection **from which I have drawn** In order to write, teach, and present seminars on this subject.

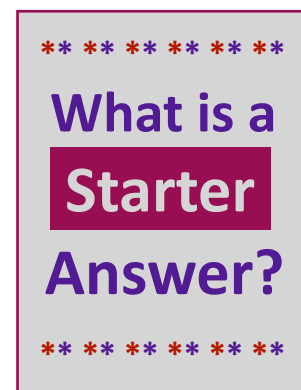
**This section/part of the compendium certainly does not attempt to provide a comprehensive Christian response** to every question and issue related to the subject of earth and life origins, evolution, and creation. Countless books (scholarly and otherwise) have been written on the many specific aspects of this vast subject. But what is here will hopefully be informative, thought provoking, and a help in guiding the discovery process in thinking people when it comes to what is true regarding the most basic aspects of the subject.

**I have made an effort to present this material in as simple and organized a manner as possible**, using a series of **topical headings, questions and talking points**. **Note:** the term **talking points** is not used here in the sense that it is sometimes used to describe how to “spin” a report, but rather it is used to refer to **key salient points** or **prompts** for use when addressing a subject.

**Throughout this part of the compendium** I have also included a number of **highlighted starter answers**, formatted as follows:

- Question:
- Starter Answer:

**A starter answer is just that.** It's intentionally very brief. And sometimes being brief can be a problem **unless the reader understands** that it's only an answer to get us started in the direction of a more complete and adequate response.



Each of the topical headings, questions, and talking points are associated with resource material intended to be helpful to pastors, teachers, parents, and everyone else (including even skeptics) desiring to understand and address these matters for either personal reasons or for the education and enlightenment of others.

**Credentials.** Someone might ask how I am qualified to produce material on matters of science? **Am I a scientist?** No, but I am able to read and understand what scientists have written. You don't need a doctorate in theology to understand the Bible. You don't need a degree in culinary arts to rate a restaurant, or to be a pro football player to render an advised opinion on last night's game.

**For further reference.** Over the years I have published more than twenty-five thoughtletters addressing specific aspects of these matters in greater detail. Here are just four examples:

- Can a Person Believe in God and Evolution?
- Six Leading Archaeological Myths
- Is 'Intelligent Design' Scientific? (see also page 512)
- Questions Kids Ask About Natural Disasters



These thoughtletters and many others can be accessed at <https://www.anchornewengland.org>:

## IS IT SCIENCE OR THE BIBLE?



◉ Is it science or the Bible?

● There should be no need to choose.

◉ Doesn't Christian faith necessarily conflict with rational thought and scientific discovery?

● No.

◉ Can Bible-believing Christians also embrace science?

● Operational science? Yes. Historical or philosophical science? Often, No.

The evangelical Christian position is that when the Bible is properly interpreted and correctly understood there is going to be **no ultimate conflict** between what the Bible asserts and the conclusions of **true empirical operational science** — facts that can be verified and falsified.

◉ Is Christian doctrine consistent with the position of mainstream science on matters of origins?

● No. Not usually. Not for the most part.

Major conflicts arise when **mainstream secular science** moves past conclusions that are based on observable data and established scientific principles, speculates or theorizes about the past, and then passes the latter off as being just as "scientific" as the former, when such is not the case.



• The renowned cosmologist **Allan R. Sandage** was once quoted by John Noble Wilford in the *New York Times*: "Science cannot answer the deepest questions. As soon as you ask why there is something instead of nothing, you have gone beyond science. I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is the explanation for the miracle of existence — why there is something instead of nothing."

## WHAT IS OPERATIONAL SCIENCE AND WHAT IS HISTORICAL SCIENCE?

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE AND WHY IS THE DIFFERENCE IMPORTANT?

#### ◉ What is the difference between historical science and operational (empirical) science?

- Operational science is based on observable verifiable data. Historical science is speculative.

Whenever anyone (a scientist or otherwise) talks about the “scientific position” on any matter, it’s appropriate and even critical that a distinction be made between traditional, **operational**, empirical, experimental science (the kind of science that draws conclusions from repeatable, observable, recurring phenomenon and hypotheses that are verifiable and falsifiable) and, on the other hand, the science of origins or so-called **historical science**, where the events in question have not been (and cannot be) observed, and the conclusions drawn are therefore speculative to one extent or another.

**Operational science** can prove that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level. But it is not able to prove that the cosmos came into being through purely naturalistic causes. Scientists may point to current observable realities (processes or entities) and then extrapolate on what is known to build a case for **what has happened in the past** (historical science). But in the end it is all ultimately speculation. It’s **ultimately** theory, hypothesis, and philosophical conjecture. No scientist was there at the time the universe and the life began. So the conclusions of historical secular science on origins are no less based on faith than are the conclusions of Christians.

#### ◉ What does it come down to when choosing between historical and operational science?

- *Were you actually there* to observe what happened at the time? Read Job 38:4.

To paraphrase the founder and president of what is very likely the largest Christian apologetics ministries in the world today (**Answers in Genesis**), **Ken Ham**: In our search for answers on the matter of earth and life origins, why should anyone take the word of those who were not there and do not know everything over the word of God who was there and does know everything?

If you were one of the **three million people** who watched the live debate between Ken Ham and Bill Nye the Science Guy on the evening of February 4, 2014, you probably know that this point was one of Ham’s major arguments. And here’s a link to an excellent thoughtful succinct article by Ham along this line:

<https://answersingenesis.org/the-word-of-god/were-you-there/>

#### ◉ Why is Darwinian macro-evolutionary theory essentially a quasi-religious belief?

- It’s never been observed. It can’t be proven. It’s a set of passionate convictions requiring faith.

To say all this yet another way — no one can go back in time to study the formation of life or the universe. No one ever observed it happen. No one can falsify *any* theory about how it happened. Therefore, no model of origins (including both macro-evolution and biblical creationism) can be **proven** in the same sense that something can be proven empirically. They are both faith positions.



That is, the evolution vs. creation debate is, in a very real sense, philosophical and even religious in nature. Neither model should technically be considered more or less **scientific** than the other where the term scientific implies or involves **empirical** testable scientific methodology.

**But here's where Christians have a leg up when it comes to the matter of origins.** Mainstream secular science **outrules** by default the testimony of Scripture as a key witness, and unilaterally **rules out** creationism as an option — *even before the trial begins!* Most mainstream secular scientists claim that science (as they define the term science) is the only reliable basis to draw conclusions about the origin of earth and life. Their “logic” goes something like this:

1. Any view of origins that involves supernatural revelation or faith is not based on science alone.
2. Any view of origins that is not based on science and the natural world alone is not scientific.
3. Any view of origins that is not scientific is necessarily false.
4. Therefore any view of origins that involves supernatural revelation and faith is necessarily false.

**On the other hand, Christians do not limit the options to science alone.** They **read their Bibles**, and allow for **supernatural revelation**. Then they gather and consider all the scientific evidence available, consult with knowledgeable reputable specialists, and develop their view of origins. **But that view must be consistent with the Bible**, their ultimate arbiter and sole final authority.

Christians believe that the “logic” above is flawed in Step #2 — that just because a view is not based on science and the natural world **alone** doesn't mean that it isn't scientific. They believe that:

- a) revelation and reality can be **supernatural** without being **unnatural**; that
- b) faith can reach beyond finite human discovery without being **irrational**; and
- c) truth can be based on that which lies beyond science alone without being **anti-science** (where “science” means operational empirical scientific discovery and conclusions).

⦿ **So how should Christians arrive at their conclusions?**

- Read the Bible as authoritative. Be scientifically informed. Consult wise reputable individuals.

## **BUT THE BIBLE IS NOT A SCIENTIFIC TEXTBOOK, IS IT?**

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**Correct.** The Bible was neither written **by** scientists (excepting Dr. Luke, a physician) nor exclusively **for** scientists. That is important to keep in mind. **However**, the fact that the Bible is not a scientific textbook, and never intended to be, does not mean that the Bible does not speak truly about matters of science.

In October of 1978 the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy convened a conference of over 200 evangelical leaders in Chicago to formulate and issue **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**. Here are two verbatim excerpts from that statement (but with our boldface):

**The fact that the Bible is not a scientific textbook, and never intended to be, does not mean that the Bible does not speak truly about matters of science.**

- From the **Short Statement** at the beginning of the document: “Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, **no less in what it states about God's acts in creation**, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.”

■ From **Article XII** of the Statement: “We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of **assertions in the fields of history and science**. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly **be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.**”

## BUT AREN'T BIBLE-BELIEVING CHRISTIANS AUTOMATICALLY BIASED?

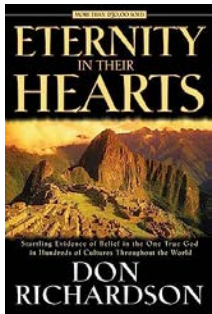
⦿ **How objective can Christians be if they insist from the start that the Bible is their authority?**

● **Every human, Christian or not, comes to the table with presuppositions.**

We are all influenced from birth by **nature** (genetic code) and **nurture** (culture, upbringing, life-experiences). But as we grow older, we are able to read, study, research, consult with others, think hard, read the Bible, pray, and make a sincere attempt to be objective in deciding **where we're going to start** in our search for the truth about earth and life origins.

**Will we start with the Bible** as our authority and then measure the assertions of historical secular science against it? **Or will we begin with the assertions of historical secular science** and try to make the Bible fit that narrative?

Once we make our choice our search will always be biased in some way. We will proceed with that chosen set of presuppositions. To assume or suggest that all mainstream secular scientists are always objectively building their fields of evidence and analyzing that evidence without any bias about the existence and role of an Intelligent Supernatural force is simply not being realistic.



Perhaps the only totally unbiased seeker for truth about origins would be some isolated tribesman who has never seen a Bible or been influenced by the teaching of science, theology, or religion. And interestingly enough, anthropologists have documented the tendency of many isolated tribes to recognize and even worship a Being outside the realm of the natural as the Source and Controller of life. One example would be the Great Spirit referred to by Native American Indians. An entire book on this subject entitled *Eternity in Their Hearts*, © 2006, by Don Richardson, cites other examples.

### So All Scientists Have Presuppositions and a Bias of One Sort or Another

To restate here what has been said above in a slightly simpler way, someone has suggested that today the mainstream secular scientific establishment, when it comes to the search for truth about earth and life origins, reasons thusly:

1. If something is not of the natural world it is outside of science.
2. If it's outside of science it's fictional.
3. Therefore, anything supernatural is fictional.

**Secular scientists wrongly make themselves out to be the only authorities, and historical science the only discipline, source, or body of scholarship through which one can know the reality about earth and life origins.**

In so reasoning, secular scientists, by default, make themselves out to be the only authorities, and historical science the only discipline or body of scholarship, through which anyone can know the reality about earth and life origins. Any other voices are flat-out dismissed from the conversation. All other views are non-starters. All biblical texts are disallowed. Faith is out. The options are limited.

**What if the Post Office** took a similar approach, declaring that any news you receive via e-mail, fax, telephone, or television is to be distrusted? **What if Christians** declared that all science is off the table and that the only way to be sure about anything in this world (e.g. gravity, inertia, at what temperature water freezes, how to treat appendicitis) is by reading the Bible, and only the Bible? **What if people of faith** ruled out all rational thought in the effort to understand God? What if they declared all scientific discoveries (e.g. the vastness of space) off the table when it comes to worshipping God — just because it involves something other than faith? **How ludicrous!** And yet this seems to be the position of mainstream science when it comes to origins. If the answers involve faith or the Bible they are automatically rejected or even disparaged and ridiculed.

The following is drawn from a Letter to Editor, *Wall Street Journal* (12/6/93), Christopher Illiff, Stillwell KS, ©1993 Dow Jones & Co, Inc.:

### **The Ten Rules of Scientific Fundamentalism**

01. Science holds the answers to all the questions of life.
02. Anyone who does not believe Rule #1 is not scientific.
03. Any evidence for intelligent design of the universe is not scientific evidence.
04. Anyone teaching that there is evidence for intelligent design of the universe is not a scientist.
05. Scientists know for a fact that matter is all there is.
06. Anything which is not matter does not matter.
07. Religion or religious impulse is the result of undesirable mutations in biological matter.
08. Whatever is not science is religion.
09. Only science may be taught.
10. Stuff happens, but only by coincidence.

**Every scientist or individual** approaching the subject of origins today does so with a certain set of presuppositions about life and truth and the world in which we live.

**J. Warner Wallace** from, *Why Do Two People See the Same Evidence Differently?:*

“I was a philosophical naturalist, and my presupposition prevented me from taking seriously any claim of a miraculous event, including the many miracles recorded in scripture. I never examined my presupposition; in fact I seldom thought about it at all. That’s the way presuppositions work. They are so subtle and foundational most of us fail to either recognize or challenge them. But this is where decision-making truly lies: Not at the point where we first encounter the evidence, but back at the foundational level of our accepted presuppositions. If you want to chart a new course or make a foundational transformation in your thinking, you probably won’t get there by examining the evidence with more vigor. Instead, you’ll need to examine your presuppositions.



**C.S. Lewis** said, “What we learn from experience depends on what kind of philosophy we bring to experience.”

**Francis Bacon** once said, “A man prefers to believe what he prefers to be true.”

**Aldous Huxley**, a great promoter of evolution and moral relativism once went so far as to openly admit his prejudice with a little parody of Jesus’ words: “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad.” (BSN, 30:6, p2).

**Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed!** is a feature length documentary produced by **Ben Stein** in 2008 that powerfully portrays the overwhelming bias of mainstream science on the subject of origins. And this film was not even made by Christians. Highly referenced and recommended.

## SCIENCE MAY BE VITALLY IMPORTANT, BUT IS IT ALWAYS CORRECT?

**No Christian should dispute the importance and value of good operational science.** Many great scientific advances have been credited to professing Christians, e.g. Newton (1642-1727), Faraday (1791-1867), Pascal (1623-1662), Lister (1827-1912), Mendel (1822-1884), George Washington Carver (1864-1943), Meyer (1958-), Collins (1950-).

But science, by definition, involves an ongoing process of discovery and verification — checking out hypotheses and validating theories, sometimes over vast periods of time.

- **Dr. John G. T. Anderson**, professor at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, and a naturalistic evolutionist, has stated: "Science is about doubt. Science is about questioning. We never intend to prove things in science. We only disprove them. This can be very disheartening at times, because what many of us are looking for is some truth."

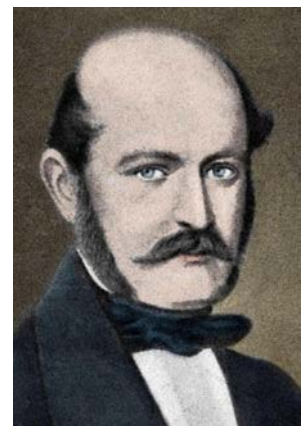
Serious problems arise when scientists (sometimes, evidently, intentionally and deliberately) conflate theory with fact, and hypothesis with laws.

All of this is important to keep in mind as we note that the almost monolithic cultural posture today is in lock step with the mainstream secular scientific establishment and its doctrine of godless naturalistic macro-evolution. Its views are often promoted uncritically (with no counterpoint allowed) by major media outlets such as PBS and National Geographic — and in almost every high school biology textbook.

"The scientific advancements of the last two hundred years are like **sand pails** of saltwater hauled up from the **ocean of God's wisdom** and dumped in a hole on the beach while the tide is rising." "We should be more over-whelmed with **our ignorance**, and amazed at countless God-governed wonders and mysteries, **than we are impressed with science.**"

**Scientism** — defined in the dictionary as "**excessive belief in the power of scientific knowledge and techniques**" — has essentially become a worldview and even a sort of religion. Yet it is rare to hear about how science down through history has often been wrong. Consider these examples:

- **Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis** (1818-1865) was an Austrian physician. He reached a point in his life when he became convinced — and then even adamant — that the incident rate of death was influenced by having direct contact with victims of the highly contagious puerperal fever. This was years before **Louis Pasteur** with his microscope had scientifically documented the danger of infectious bacteria, and also before **Joseph Lister** ever had a chance to teach the world what to do to prevent the likelihood of infection. Semmelweis, warning about contact that he was altogether certain was highly risky, was met with categorical contempt and derision from that point on in his life **by the scientific establishment of his day**. Finally, as a direct result of all the social pressure, he lapsed into insanity and died at the age of 47, just as right as he could be while the entire world and all of the scientific experts held otherwise.



- **Pitldown Man. Java Man** (revised details on its discovery). The "stone age" **Tasaday tribe**. The **brontosaurus "Thunder Lizard" misrepresentation** — all of which, as T.A. Green says, "now inhabit the realms of science fiction and outright fraud."

- **When I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s I despised eating liver.** But my mother told me that the (scientific) experts said that it was healthy for us. After many years and thanks to some creative liver recipes that my wife began to use, I finally actually learned to like liver, only to read at about that time (**1970s**) that health experts were saying that eating any animal organ is unhealthy! That turned me on eating liver. But today (**2020s**) science has flip-flopped once again and refers to liver as a “superfood,” claiming that it is “rich in protein, low in calories, packed with essential vitamins and minerals, and one of the most nutrient-dense foods available.”

The point being — even operational science is often an ongoing process of learning, discovery, and revising tenets that may not always represent the most accurate view at any given time. Many of the **prevailing views of mainstream science** can be wrong. That does not mean that we reject science. But we should keep it in mind and know that “truth” in any sphere is never up for a human vote, either by the scientific community or by the general population. God alone knows what is true. And an important corollary of all this is that the world today, as always, desperately needs bold, brave thinkers who dare to question prevailing views and popular opinion — who dares to go wherever the best evidence will lead.

Many of the **prevailing views of mainstream science can be wrong.** That does not mean that we reject or disparage science. **But we should keep it in mind.**

## **IS IT DANGEROUS TO MIX SCIENCE WITH RELIGION?**

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Some scientists strenuously object to mixing science with religion.

A University of Maine professor at UMO’s Orono campus, **Doug Gelin**, once referred to such a mix as **obfuscation** (the action of making something obscure, unclear, or unintelligible).

And yet it seems that such objections **are almost only ever raised** when the subject involves earth and life origins, when the religion is Christianity, and when macro-evolution is the target. In so many other scientific disciplines, science seems all too willing to stand beside religion. Consider:

- **Physical science:** a popular book entitled *The Tao of Physics*.
- **Medical science:** *Quantum Healing* by **Deepak Chopra**; *Healing and the Mind*, a **PBS** series by **Bill Moyers**; *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, by **Larry Dossey**, M.D.; *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, by **Herbert Benson**, M.D.; a **Family Weekly** article 4/5-7/1996, *Where Religion & Medicine Meet*.
- **Archaeological science:** the publication of discoveries by religious scholars.
- **Behavioral science (Psychology/Business):** seminars on relaxation techniques and mantras.

**A 1996 scientific poll** showed that **79% of those being asked** believed that spiritual faith could help people recover from illness, injury, or disease, and **63% believe** that it’s good for doctors to talk with patients about their spiritual faith.

**There seems to real value in the integration of scholarly disciplines** in the treatment of illness as it is carried out, for example, by hospital chaplains — treating the whole person. Why cannot the same be true in the search for truth about the origins of life and the cosmos?

## HOW DID THE COSMOS BEGIN?

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### ◉ How did the cosmos come into existence?

● By the word of the Lord. By decree (*fiat*). From nothing (*ex nihilo*) but God. He spoke and it was.

### ◉ How can something come from nothing?

● Not from nothing and no one. From nothing but **God**. The biblical God has the power to create.

### ◉ What about the Big Bang?

● According to 2 Peter 3:10 it may not have happened yet!

**2 Peter 3:10:** “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”



## HOW DID THE EARTH BEGIN AND EARLY EARTH HISTORY DEVELOP?

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### ◉ Is there any way of reconciling what the Bible says with what science claims on these matters?

● No. Not ultimately, if by science you mean the claims of modern secular mainstream science.

### ◉ What evidence would you use to demonstrate that a supernatural God created the world?

● Design. Specified complexity. Probability science. The vastness of space (Psalm 19:1).

• **What's the difference between micro & macro evolution.**

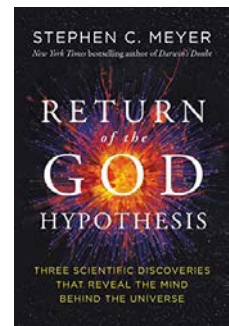
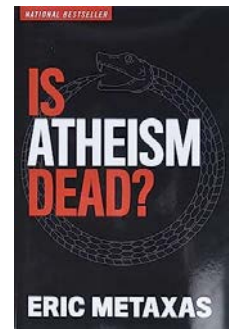
- Macro-evolution involves change from one kind to another, e.g. sea creatures to land animals.
- Micro-evolution involves change within a kind, i.e. dogs into dog species (collies, beagles).

**Is the case for naturalistic unguided Darwinian evolution crumbling?** Recently it often seems that way. The titles of so many books published over the past 20 years (some even authored by agnostics and atheists) tells a story. Here are just a few examples:

- **Evolution: A Theory In Crisis**, by Michael Denton (2002)
- **Doubts About Darwin**, by Thomas Woodward (2007)
- **Darwin's Doubt**, by Stephen Meyer (2014)
- **Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis**, by Michael Denton (2016)
- **Darwin Devolves**, by Michael J. Behe (2019)

**Eric Metaxas**, in his new book, **Is Atheism Dead?** (2021) — in combination with **Stephen C. Meyer** in his new book, **Return of the God Hypothesis** (2021) — cites three leading lines of what many now consider to be hard **scientific** evidence, developed over the past fifty years or so, for the existence of God (or an Intelligent Designer), which mainstream secular scientists, materialists, and naturalists have not been able to adequately answer. They are:

1. **A finite universe.** Mainstream science now seems to have adopted Big Bang cosmology). That means that the universe had a beginning after all. So how did it get started? Who or what started it? (Hint: Not nothing!)
2. **Fine-tuning of the universe.** Some scientists now list over 100 parameters, or constants, that had to be present, and still do have to be present, to sustain life in this universe. The odds of all of this happening on its own are infinitesimally minute or, in other words, impossible.
3. **The debunking of abiogenesis**, the idea that life and human consciousness simply developed on their own from inorganic or inanimate substances.



So the pressure seems to be building, and the words of **Malcolm Muggeridge** in *The End of Christendom* may yet prove prophetic: "I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially to the extent to which it has been applied, will be one of the greatest jokes in the history books of the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity it has." (Quoted from The Summit newsletter, 4/1993; David Noebel, Editor).



Even evolutionists themselves seem to know that the theory is in trouble. **Robert F. Smith**, a card-carrying member of the godless A.C.L.U., admitted as much in 1995 when he said; "In practical terms, the past decade of intense activity by scientific creationists has left most evolutionist professors unwilling to debate the creationist professors. Too many of the evolutionists have been publicly humiliated in such debates by their own lack of erudition and by the weaknesses of their theories."

Even the politics of macro-evolutionary doctrine seem to complicate things for those holding out. Not long ago I heard someone reason: "If there is no Creator then one must necessarily conclude that every single founding father here in America was ignorant when signing the United States Constitution which states that 'all men are endowed by their Creator...'"

At this point someone may say, "Well if evolutionary thinking is so off base, why is it still being so widely propagated? Why hold out?" My friend, **Dr. Emery Dunfee** (1912-2005), answered that in an exchange that I had with him many years ago: "One wonders why, with all the evidence, the theory of evolution still persists. One major reason is that many people have a sort of vested interest in this theory. Jobs would be lost, loss of face would result, text books would need to be eliminated or revised."



Here are a few more starter answers related to the matter of earth origins and earth's early history:

◉ **Did God create the heavens and the earth and all things therein in six 24-hour days?**

● A straightforward at-face-value reading of Genesis 1-3 seems to indicate that such is the case.

◉ **Why was the sun not created until Day 4? Where was the light on Days 1-3?**

● Many Bible scholars believe that before the sun the **Shekinah** glory of God illuminated the earth.



◉ **What about dinosaurs?**

● What about them? Job 40-41 refers to dinosaur-like creatures, i.e. Behemoth and Leviathan.

◉ **Where do the dinosaurs fit into history?**

● Certainly they existed, were created by God on Day 6, lived, and are now mostly extinct.

◉ **Were dinosaurs on Noah's ark?**

● Most likely. But only a few species, and only young ones, which would have later reproduced.

◉ **What happened to the dinosaurs?**

● They became extinct, maybe due to natural phenomenon such as a cooling planet, i.e. Ice Age.

◉ **Was Noah's flood truly global (worldwide) or did the waters only cover the known world)?**

● A straightforward reading of Genesis 7 would indicate that the flood was truly global.



## WHERE DID WE AS HUMANS COME FROM?

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### SPECIAL CREATION? INTELLIGENT DESIGN? NATURALISTIC EVOLUTION?

**They say that one day a group of scientists got together** and decided that because humans had progressed such a long way there was no longer any particular need for God. So they picked one particular scientist to go and tell God so. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we're now at the point that we can clone people and do many miraculous things. We've decided that we no longer need You." God listened very patiently and then proposed a man-making contest." The scientist agreed. God said, "Okay, let's do this just like I did it originally with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down to grab himself a handful of dirt. At which point God said, "No, no, no. You go get your own dirt."

**Genesis 2:7:** "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

**The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer** wrote that no one has ever thought of a way to derive personality from impersonal sources. To illustrate that point he used the example of the level of two lakes in the Swiss Alps, and pointed out that the lower lake never runs into the higher lake.



In responding to the question above I am providing below what I have personally come to regard as compelling **scientific** evidence for creationism, particularly as it pertains to a young earth and the beginning chapters of earth and human history, and then proceeding to explain how a literal interpretation of Scripture makes the best sense, and is linked to the determination of how life on this planet came to be.

#### ◉ **How did life begin?**

- God spoke it into being. Even secular science now refutes the idea of spontaneous generation.

#### ◉ **Who are we as humans?**

- Finite conscious beings created by God in His own image with a mind, soul, and conscience.

#### ◉ **How did we get here?**

- God formed Adam from dust thousands of years ago, and breathed into him the breath of life.

#### ◉ **Why are we here?**

- To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

#### ◉ **Was Adam real and historical as the first human being?**

- In spite of recent equivocation on this by even Christians, the Bible is clear: Adam really existed.

#### ◉ **Where did Cain get his wife?**

- His sister or his niece. Marriage with close family was not forbidden by the law at that time.

◉ **How do you explain skin color and race origins?**

● All humans were once one race. Variations in color and features are the result of adaptation.

◉ **What about cave men?**

● They were men who lived in caves.

◉ **Did physical death result from Adam's fall into sin?**

● Yes. Spiritual death, and the process of physical death, began because of human sin.

• **Romans 5:12:** "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned . . ."

• **Genesis 2:17:** ". . . but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

## WHAT ABOUT THE AGE OF THE EARTH?

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Many sincere reputable knowledgeable wonderful Bible-believing Christians and scholars have differed through the years on the details of how God brought the earth and life into existence. These differences extend to the matter of whether God created the earth and life **millions of years ago**, or **thousands of years ago**, and also whether the days of creation were **six consecutive 24-hour days** or not.

Here are a few of the varying views advanced by professing Christians about how it all happened, with the names of some of those who developed, or are now leading proponents of, the respective view:

■ **Theistic Evolution:** Francis Collins, BioLogos

■ **Progressive Day-Age Creationism:** Hugh Ross

■ **The Gap Theory:** Chalmers; the Scofield Reference Bible

■ **Framework Interpretation:** John H. Sailhamer

■ **Young Earth Creationism:** Answers in Genesis (Ham); Institute for Creation Research (Morris).

For further reference and more detailed information on these views, click this link:

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/creation.cfm>

Of course every one of the above views are in dispute with:

■ **Secular naturalistic evolution:** Charles Darwin; Richard Dawkins; Stephen J. Gould (1941-2002)

Ad yet another view of origins is as follows (with commentary further below):

■ **Intelligent Design:** Stephen C. Meyer, William Dembski, The Discovery Institute.

**Christian unity does not mandate uniformity of opinion on nonessential doctrines.** And for that reason Christians should never make the age of the earth “a hill to die on,” or a hill on which Christian unity should be sacrificed. Christians should not consider the views of other sincere professing Christian re: the age of the earth a litmus test of who is saved or even who is orthodox.

However — having said that — we would quickly go on to say that there are major ramifications (see below) to the particular views of the age of the earth that Christians choose to adopt.

⦿ **So does the age of the earth and the length of the creation days matter?**

● Yes.

**The view of most young-earth six-day creationists is as follows:**

**If the Bible is not interpreted in a straightforward manner,** and is essentially considered poetic allegory, in its opening chapters, then why might it not be the case that other scriptures should also be considered allegorically, including the accounts of the miracles, the Virgin Birth, and the resurrection of Christ? None of those events conform to the known laws of nature and science.

Furthermore, if the earth and life were created millions of years ago, then there must have been physical death **long before** Adam and Eve came along and sinned. So Adam must have been standing on top of the fossils of millions of dead animals that had died a violent bloody death over eons of time — **in spite of the fact** that God had said six times (in Genesis 1) that the result of His very first acts of creation (including animals) was “good” or “very good.” How can those two truths be reconciled?

For these two reasons and for other more positive ones, many Christians throughout history, including highly credentialed scientists, have concluded that there is a better case for supporting a **straightforward reading of the Genesis account of origins** than there is a case for supporting either the secular naturalist macro-evolutionary model or other any of the other views above that often appear to attempt to accommodate the secular view.

Men and women of all ages, nationalities, educational attainment, economic and social status, have taken the position that, because the Bible is and has always been totally reliable in areas where the facts **are** self-evident, they're going to trust the Bible in areas where the facts may not yet be self-evident or clearly demonstrable.

\*\*\* \*\*  
Many Christians throughout history, including highly credentialed scientists, have concluded that there is a better case for supporting a straightforward reading of the Genesis account of origins than there is for supporting any of the other views.  
\*\*\* \*\*

**In sum, regarding life origins,** because no scientist was present **when** life came into being, and because science can neither repeat nor verify *any* of the given views and theories about **how** life came into being, why should Christians not simply give God the benefit of the doubt? After all, if the Bible is God's Word, and if God was there, why would He mislead us on the matter? If there seems to be a conflict between what God says in Scripture and what men currently reckon to be the case, why not give God the benefit of the doubt? If God can create life and earth at all, what's the problem with His doing so in six 24-hour days thousands of years ago?

## ● Is six-day creationism scientific?

● Six-day creationism never contradicts the facts of operational science and it is evidence-based.

**What is Intelligent Design theory?** Intelligent Design Theory postulates that the cosmos and all of the complex life forms in the universe cannot be explained by natural causes alone, and therefore an intelligent higher power played a key role in the origins of the universe.

**What is the position of young earth creationists regarding Intelligent Design?** Many young earth creationists draw a distinction between **endorsing the idea of intelligent design** and **aligning with the so-called Intelligent Design Movement (IDM)**.

Young earth creationists themselves often use arguments for intelligent design, but contend that because the IDM doesn't cite Scripture and specifically identify the intelligent designer as the God of the Bible, it is **deficient, misleading, and even dangerous**. They cite individuals such as Anthony Flew who have turned from atheism to accept the existence of an intelligent designer but then gone on (or even, like Flew, died) without ever coming to accept God, the Bible, and the full gospel message. There are, however, other young-earth creationists who would not agree with those sentiments and who view ID as laying a scientifically credible intelligent foundation by recognizing God's revelation of Himself in nature (Romans 1:19-20), with ID thus serving as a sort of pre-evangelism, opening the way toward full faith in the God of the Bible.



## BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TO BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE?

### WHAT IF THE CREATION NARRATIVES ARE SPEAKING FIGURATIVELY?

**First, a clarification of terminology.** In this compendium we often opt for terms such as "face value," "natural interpretation," "perspicuity," "obvious meaning," and "straightforward reading" **rather than "literal"** when contrasting the interpretive approach Christians use in regard to Bible texts related to earth and life origins. All sincere Christian believers who endorse the inerrancy of Scripture would claim to interpret the Bible **literally** even when they view some passages as poetry or metaphor. We will therefore grant the term "literal" to all, not just to young earth creationists.



• "Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect

as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning." — **John Calvin** (who was himself a six-day creationist)

"Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the **natural and obvious meaning**; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely."

— **John Calvin**

- **The Bible is considered by many to be a good and godly book.** But how can the Bible be a good book if it is scientifically and historically misleading? If the Bible doesn't mean what it seems to say or seem to say what it means, or if it presents ambiguous information on scientific and historical matters, then in what sense can it be considered reliable? And if it is not reliable, **in what sense is it good?** How can the Bible be good if its readers must often qualify what it says?

How can the Bible be considered a **good book** if it is **scientifically and historically ambiguous or misleading?**

- **There are verses and texts where a figurative meaning or metaphorical intent is quite obvious to all;** passages where the plain sense doesn't make common sense or is not compatible with the world as we know it (e.g. the "four corners of the earth," Isaiah 11:12). But otherwise, if the Bible's straightforward meaning is becomes suspect in one area, it may soon become suspect in other areas, or even in all areas. In that case things quickly devolve into an endless debate about what is actually factual (true), what is not factual (true), and who will decide which parts are meant to be taken at face value and which parts are to be taken symbolically? I've watched that very thing happen a number of times in various arenas in my lifetime, and those who travel down that road have often ended up in utter confusion about the Bible, or even with no Bible at all, as is the case with what is now called Progressive Christianity.

**Someone boiled all of this down to one simple (but perhaps not *too* simple) hermeneutical principle:** "If the plain sense of the Bible makes common sense, seek no other sense."

- **In Mark 10:6 Jesus Himself** links human origins to the beginning of creation: "But from the *beginning* of creation, God made them male and female." Are we to interpret "male," "female," "God," and "creation" all at face value and then claim that Jesus did not actually mean that the earth and humans all came into existence by the word of the Lord at about the same time? Why should we not read that verse in a simple straightforward manner?

- **Dr. Henry M. Morris** wrote the following in 1995: "[We here at the Institute for Creation Research] take a firm stand on Biblical inerrancy, **perspicuity**, and absolute authority . . ." "The word **perspicuity**, often used by theologians of a former generation, simply means, according to Webster, 'the quality of being clear and plain to the understanding; not obscure, or ambiguous.' In other words, if the Bible is 'perspicuous,' it means what it says. Figurative or symbolic usage is employed only when the purpose of clarity is better served thereby, with the meaning of any symbols being made clear in the context." "Should Bible believing Christians try to make their interpretations of Scripture fit current scientific thinking, or, rather, should they try to correlate the actual data of science with the perspicuous revelations of Scripture?"



- **If we as Christians are going to be consistent in our principles of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics),** and if we deny the perspicuity of the Genesis accounts of earth and life origins **in the opening chapters of the Bible,** and if we deny the perspicuity of the Revelation accounts of end time events such as the millennium and an actual Anti-Christ figure **in the closing chapters of the Bible,** then on what consistent grounds will we stand in insisting on the perspicuity of the biblical accounts of the miracles, the Virgin Birth, and the resurrection, none of which are "scientifically" tenable and all of which liberals have long alleged to be figurative?

- **The Westminster Confession of Faith** was written by reformed theologians between 1643 and 1649. It is still used by many churches today. **Chapter IV Section I** states: “It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, **in the space of six days**; and all very good.”

## EXTENSIVE ROSTER OF DISSENTERS FROM DARWINIAN EVOLUTION (Updated to 2023)

### The Discovery Institute

The following link leads to a downloaded file of thousands of scientists skeptical of Darwinism who have signed a formal statement expressing that dissent. The file includes the credentials of these scientists.

<https://www.discovery.org/m/securepdfs/2023/05/Scientific-Dissent-List-05012023-2.pdf>

See also: <https://dissentfromdarwin.org>

## CREDENTIALS OF THOSE WHO ENDORSE A SIX-DAY YOUNG-EARTH CREATIONIST VIEW

The intellectual credibility, character, and credentials of individual scientists and other educators who have opted for six-day young-earth creationism as their considered with regard to earth and life origins should be regarded as significant when weighing the credibility of the view itself.

- **In July 2019 a Gallup poll** revealed that **40%** of American adults believe that God created humans in their present form within roughly the past 10,000 years (**Creationism**), **33%** of Americans believe that life and the earth resulted from a God-guided evolutionary process over millions of years (**Theistic Evolution** or **Progressive Creationism**), and **22%** of Americans subscribe to a godless evolutionary process over millions of years (**Naturalistic** or **Darwinian Evolution**).

Such statistics make it clear that **young-earth creationism is anything but** the radical extreme fringe view that it is often made out to be by secular science and even by some in the Church.

- **Following are five links** to some several impressive **but only partial** lists of creationist organizations and well-credentialed scientists who hold to a young-earth creationist view — listed by name and in most cases listed on separate rosters of those alive and those deceased:

### Creation Ministries International

<https://creation.com/creation-scientists>



### Answers in Genesis

<https://answersingenesis.org/creation-scientists/>



### Creation & Earth

<https://creationsd.org/about/creation-scientists/>



### Institute for Creation Research

<https://www.icr.org/research/team>



### ChristianAnswers.com

<https://christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-scientists.html>



## IS THERE ANY SUBSTANTIVE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR CREATIONISM?

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Following are three lines of positive, direct, evidence for a general creationist view of origins — that is, evidence for creation vs evolution:

### 1. Evidence of Order and Design in the natural world.

**T. A. Green**, in an article entitled **Faith in Science**, published in the 8-10/1993 issue of the Associates for Biblical Research newsletter, demonstrated how ludicrous the current evolutionary view is by postulating that works in the Sistine Chapel of Rome (which most people consider to be the works of Michelangelo from 1508-1511 A.D.) rather be labeled as “weeping seams of moisture which over time has caused mineralized molecules of water to mix and stain into a beautiful collage of color and design . . . spectacular images that depict historical events. After all, no one alive today observed its creation. On the empirically scientific face of things what else can be said about this oddity of nature?”

**William C Deutsch**, writing in *World* magazine, 4/18/94, used another Illustration of the same type — suggesting that evolutionists on one hand want to ascribe the complex design of human physiology and intelligence to mere chance + time simply because a supernatural Designer cannot be empirically demonstrated. But on the other hand, evolutionists know that they cannot get by using that thinking in any other empirical realm. For instance, most folks aren’t going to speculate very long about whether Mt. Rushmore is just a freak, “extraordinary natural rock formation . . . so well adapted to its environment . . . actually eroded to resemble four of our most famous presidents.”



**Has the Great Sphinx of Egypt** resulted from 200 million years of tectonic plate shift?

**The dilemma that haunts the naturalistic evolutionist is: Which came first? DNA or RNA? And how could one have formed without the other?**

Consider the far more complex design of the components necessary for even the simplest forms of life: the proteins and enzymes and amino acids and RNA and DNA molecules, and the fact that DNA is required to make protein, and yet DNA wouldn’t exist without some protein having been present to make that DNA in the first place. The dilemma that haunts the natural evolutionist is: Which came first? And how could one have formed without the other? Besides, how could random evolution ever produce something so complex as either a protein or DNA molecule when, if left alone, biological molecules always naturally react in destructive ways?

**The point is, the highly complex design that we see all around us** — from the degree at which this planet tilts toward the sun, to the complexity of our own eyes, to the physiological intricacies of human brain function — all of it is **powerfully convincing scientific evidence** that a supernatural Designer was involved. A Transcendent Creator. In other words, God. The God of the Bible.

Those who argue that the existence of a supernatural Designer or Intelligence isn't technically scientific because it goes beyond the present natural world and can't be observed, must explain why we consider archaeologists to be scientists. Because archaeologists do the exact same thing every time they dig up an arrowhead or some other primitive tool, and conclude something significant about the intelligence of the person who must have designed it; someone not living in our present world and whose work we cannot observe. How is that scientific?

## 2. Evidence based on function and irreducible complexity: The Mousetrap Principle.

The fact that the components of life must have all been developed and functional from the start. This would be impossible with evolutionary gradualism.

Read more about this in **Darwin's Black Box** by Michael Behe, ©1996 Free Press



## 3. Evidence based on the laws and mathematical science of probability.

We now know that 124 is the minimum number of proteins needed to form any self-replicating unit. The probability of 124 proteins forming by mere chance is 1 in 10 to 210th power. The size of the entire universe in inches is only 1 in 10 to 28th power! Many physicists agree that any event with a probability of greater than 1 in 10 to the 15th power has never occurred and will never occur. You certainly wouldn't sell many lottery tickets with those odds!

**Yale University physicist Harold Morowitz calculated the probability** of generating a single bacterium by chance as "1 chance in 10 to the 100 billionth power — the number 10 followed by 100 billion zeros." (*Origins*, Robert Shapiro, quoted in *Breakpoint*, 1/1996).

**A Princeton professor once compared the possibility of life resulting by chance** to the odds of an unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print factory.



**British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle** dismissed the idea of the random origin of life as being about "as ridiculous and improbable as the proposition that a tornado blowing through a junkyard may assemble a Boeing 747."

**The Infinite Monkey Theorem** postulates that a monkey with a typewriter and enough time could produce the entire works of Shakespeare. But someone decided to try this in real life. After a very long time, the monkey had only ever managed to write five pages of the letter "s." Then he slammed the keyboard shut with a stone and defecated on it.

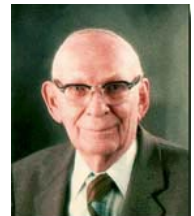
⦿ **Is there any hard scientific evidence for resolving questions about young earth creationism?**

● Yes.

**Following are a four (plus more) lines of science-related evidence for a six-24-hour-days view of earth and life.** That is, that the earth is thousands of years old rather than millions or billions of years old.

### 1. Decay of Earth's Magnetic Field

During the 1980s **Dr. Thomas G. Barnes** (1911-2001) was a professor of Physics at the University of Texas, El Paso. He researched the rate of decay of the earth's bi-polar magnetic field, determining that, based on a half-life of approximately 1400 years, taking its level of strength at that time and extrapolating backward even only 10,000 years, the earth would have had the same field strength as that of a magnetic star — highly unlikely. Measuring back one million years ago (much too short a time for any viable old earth evolutionary scenario) yielded a force so great that it would have literally torn the earth apart. In response to the predictable outcry of criticism over Barnes' conclusions, **D. Russell Humphreys, PhD**, an American physicist at Sandia National Laboratories, refined Barnes' work with corroborating and convincing conclusions of his own. Here's an article that helps to make all of this understandable: <https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/earth/the-earths-magnetic-field-and-the-age-of-the-earth/>





## 2. Relatively low levels of atmospheric Helium content.

**Dr. Larry Vardiman** has stated that if the earth was billions of years old, in spite of predictable levels of helium escape, far greater quantities of helium gas should by now have accumulated in the atmosphere from the radioactive production of helium in the earth's crust than is the case.

Alpha particles or positive helium nuclei are continually being produced by earth's radioactive isotopes. One atom of helium is produced each time a radioactive atom undergoes alpha decay. The rate at the time of Vardiman's study was **13 million helium atoms per second** (being exuded from every square inch of earth's crust). **Conclusion:** the present atmospheric helium content (3.5 x 10 to 15th grams) is far too low to support a projected earth age of 4.5 billion. That amount could easily have formed in thousands (not millions or billions) of years.

## 3. Rapidly formed geological rock strata at Mount St. Helens.

On May 18, 1980 Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington blew its top with a released energy equivalent to 400 millions tons of TNT. Since 1980 over 600 feet of stratified, laminated beds of rock have formed, many within only hours. But here's the thing: each of those rock layers would normally have been assumed by geologists (had they not been observed) to have required thousands or even millions of years to form. Extensive research and a film entitled **Explosive Evidence for Catastrophe** was produced by researcher Dr. Steve Austin.

The point here is that the formation of rock layers does not always require the vast amounts of time that geologists have long contended the process requires.

## 4. Other convincing lines of evidence for a young earth.

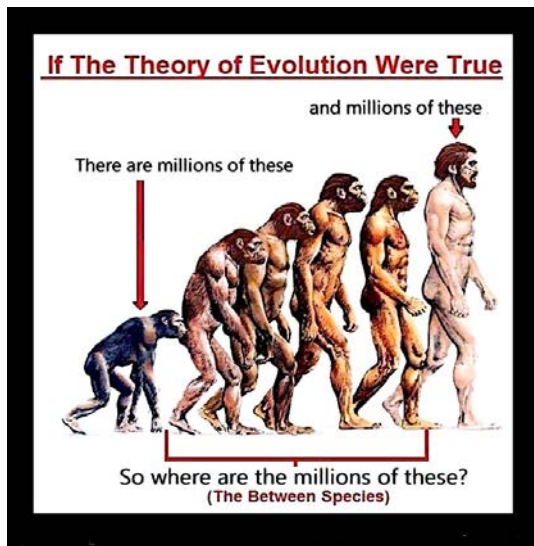
- a) Studies on the influx of meteoritic nickel into ocean from earth's crust.
- b) Sea-Floor Sediment and Ice Core studies by Dr. Larry Vardiman.
- c) The influx of cobalt into the ocean from earth's crust.
- d) The influx of uranium into the ocean which contains over 4 billion tons of dissolved uranium.
- e) The influx of meteoritic dust from space to earth.
- f) The accumulation of moon dust.

**g) The famous Fruit Fly Experiment.** Fruit flies produce a new generation every two weeks, resulting in millions of generations of fruit flies since the turn of the century when such experiments began. This would serve to simulate or model the number of generations required by Darwinian evolution to produce change from one kind to another kind, e.g. amoebas to fish to monkeys to men. In some cases the experiments have even been artificially bombarded with gamma rays, X-rays, etc., to induce change. So what has been the result? There has certainly been no evolutionary transition of fruit flies into other kinds of creatures of any sort. The only result to date has been a bunch of "messed up fruit flies," according to Dr. Harry Payne, Jr., a Florida science teacher with a Masters degree from Harvard.



**Over 40 other such studies and lines of evidence point to a range of projected ages for the earth, but always far short of the billions of years required by the evolutionary model.**

The great discrepancy between the results of such studies and the vast ages required by evolutionary theory points to the fallacy of uniformitarian assumptions, and all of the estimates are based on assumptions which can never be accurately tested anyway, let alone proven.



The basic point in all of this is that, short of vast ages, naturalistic Darwinian evolution must be dismissed as a credible explanation of earth and life origins because there has been an insufficient number of years for macro-evolution — with all of its transitional forms and fossils — to play out. In which case we are essentially left with either creationism in some form, or just a great big "I dunno."

**What is the mature earth concept, aka the apparent age concept.** This concept holds that God created the earth in a state of full maturity. That is, if a scientist had examined the world or walked up to Mr. Adam even just one day after he was created, Adam would have **appeared** to be maybe 20, 30, 40, or so years old. The earth would have had the definite appearance of age. You may say, "Wouldn't that have been deceptive? Why would God try to fool us about the age of the earth?" The answer provided by young-earth creationism is that no, God would not have done this to be deceptive, but rather to make the world fully functional, i.e. fruit trees were created bearing fruit (Genesis 1:11) to eat, immediate starlight for purposes of navigation, and tree rings for the maturity and productivity of trees. But Adam would have probably had no navel!



◉ **What about the Hebrew word "yom" in Genesis 1?**

● Yom is the Hebrew for **day**. It's used 30X in the Bible and always refers to a 24-hour period.

◉ **What about distant starlight as evidence that the universe is billions of years old?**

● Well-educated scientists have answered this, i.e. time dilation, "stretched out" heavens (Job 9:8).

Following are links to two scholarly yet readable articles on the subject of distant starlight:

<https://creation.com/how-can-distant-starlight-reach-us-in-just-6000-years>

<https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/starlight/does-distant-starlight-prove-the-universe-is-old/>



# How in the World Did the World Begin?

*Christian Apologetics, Science, Earth & Life Origins*

## OUTLINE & WORKSHEET

### Christian Apologetics, Science, and Origins

#### INTRODUCTION

For further reference: see more than 25 **thoughtletters** addressing specific aspects of this subject at: <https://www.anchornewengland.org/proclamation-index>

#### IS IT SCIENCE OR THE BIBLE?

#### WHAT IS OPERATIONAL SCIENCE AND WHAT IS HISTORICAL SCIENCE?

#### BUT THE BIBLE IS NOT A SCIENTIFIC TEXTBOOK, IS IT?

- The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy Article XII

#### BUT AREN'T BIBLE-BELIEVING CHRISTIANS AUTOMATICALLY BIASED?

- All Scientists Have Presuppositions and a Bias of One Sort or Another
- **Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed!** is a feature length documentary produced by **Ben Stein** in 2008.

#### SCIENCE MAY BE VITALLY IMPORTANT, BUT IS IT ALWAYS CORRECT?

- Scientism
- Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis
- Piltdown Man. Java Man, The Tasaday tribe

#### ISN'T IT DANGEROUS TO MIX SCIENCE WITH RELIGION?

#### HOW DID THE COSMOS BEGIN?

- **What about the Big Bang?** According to 2 Peter 3:10 it may not have happened yet!

#### HOW DID THE EARTH BEGIN AND EARLY EARTH HISTORY DEVELOP?

- Defining micro and macro evolution.
- Is the case for naturalistic unguided Darwinian evolution crumbling?
- Eric Metaxas in *Is Atheism Dead?* (2021) and Stephen C. Meyer in *Return of the God Hypothesis*
- Where do the dinosaurs fit into history?
- Was Noah's flood truly global?

## WHERE DID WE AS HUMANS COME FROM?

- What about cave men?
- Did physical death result from Adam's fall into sin?

## WHAT ABOUT THE AGE OF THE EARTH?

- **Theistic Evolution:** Francis Collins, BioLogos
- **Progressive Day-Age Creationism:** Hugh Ross
- **The Gap Theory:** Chalmers; the Scofield Reference Bible
- **Framework Interpretation:** John H. Sailhamer
- **Young Earth Creationism:** Answers in Genesis (Ham); Institute for Creation Research (Morris).

• **Christian unity does not mandate uniformity of opinion on nonessentials.**

- What is Intelligent Design theory?
- Defining young-earth six-day creationism.

## BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TO BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE?

- The Westminster Confession of Faith
- **EXTENSIVE BUT PARTIAL ROSTER OF DISSENTERS FROM DARWINIAN EVOLUTION (2023)**  
<https://www.discovery.org/m/securepdfs/2023/05/Scientific-Dissent-List-05012023-2.pdf>
- **CREDENTIALS OF THOSE WHO ENDORSE A SIX-DAY YOUNG-EARTH CREATIONIST VIEW**

## IS THERE ANY SUBSTANTIVE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR CREATIONISM?

1. Evidence of Order and Design in the natural world.
2. Evidence based on function and irreducible complexity: The Mousetrap Principle.
3. Evidence based on the laws and mathematical science of probability.

**Here are 4+ lines of positive, direct, evidence for a six-24-hour-days view of earth and life.**

1. Decay of Earth's Magnetic Field
2. Relatively low levels of atmospheric helium content.
3. Rapidly formed geological rock strata at Mount St. Helens.
4. Numerous other convincing lines of evidence for a young earth, as detailed in this seminar.

**The basic point in all of this is that naturalistic Darwinian evolution should be discounted** as a credible explanation of origins because there has been an insufficient number of years for evolution to play out. In which case you are essentially left with either creationism (in some form) or just a big "I don't know."

**What is the mature-earth concept, or the apparent age concept?**

**What about distant starlight as evidence that the universe is billions of years old?**





## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

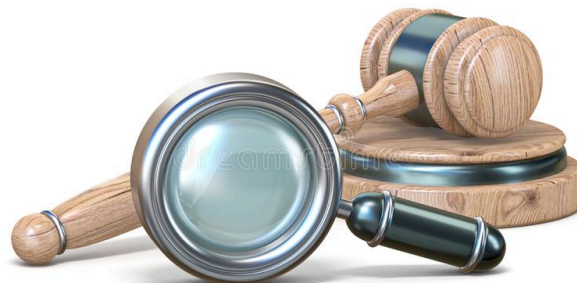
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#### Part F

**WHICH  
WORLDVIEW  
IS TRUE?**

**IS THERE ANY  
SUCH THING  
AS TRUTH?**

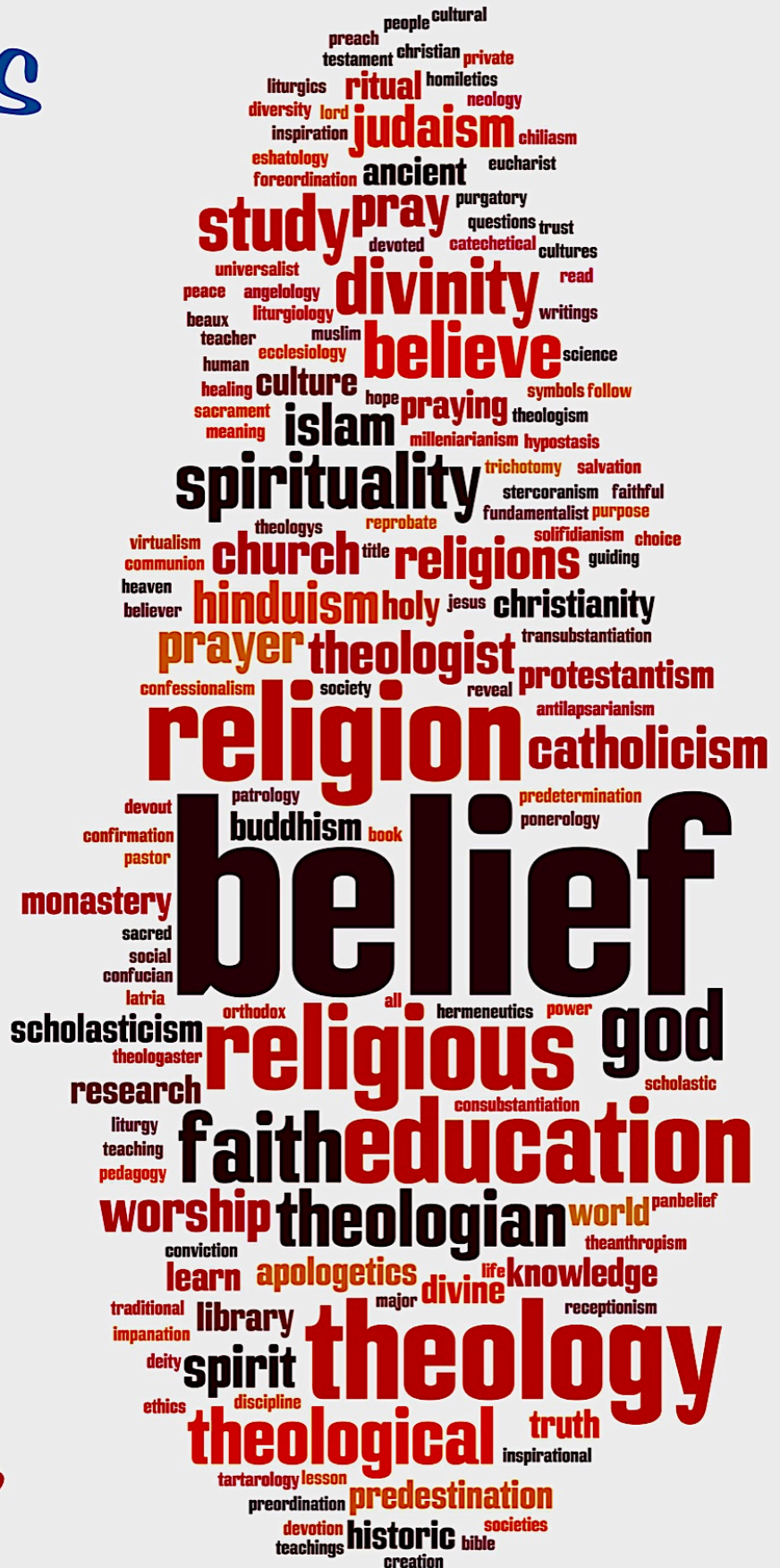
Worldviews, Religions, Cults, ThoughtForms, Epistemology







WHAT IS  
TRUE  
AND  
WHAT  
IS  
TRUTH  
IN A  
WHOLE  
WIDE  
WORLD  
OF  
VIEWS?



# Christian Apologetics & WorldViews

Examining Alternate Belief Faith Systems, Religions, Ideologies, Thoughtforms, and Views

## INTRODUCTION

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What follows in this **Section 2, Part F** of the compendium is a collection of notes, quotes, lectures, sermons, and seminars from which I have drawn to speak and teach on this subject. I hope that others who are also in a position to address or teach on this subject will be able to use this material to enhance their work.

## WHAT IS A WORLDVIEW OR A LIFEVIEW?

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**Dr. Norman Geisler and William D. Watkins in *Worlds Apart*, ©1989-2003 Wipf and Stock Publishers:** "What is it that everyone has, no one can live without, every important decision in life is made with, and yet most people do not even know they have? **A world view.** It is what makes a world of difference in how you view your life in the world. It is the framework through which you see and the basis on which you decide. A world view is not put on the bed stand at night. One even dreams within the framework of his world view."

**The American Heritage Dictionary:** "1) The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. 2) A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group."

**James W. Sire** (former Sr. Editor at IVP), in ***Naming the Elephant***, © 2004: "A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being."

**Ronald Nash:** "A world view is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life."

**George Gallup**, famous for his public opinion polling, once said: "Most Americans who profess Christianity don't know the basic teachings of the faith . . . Overall, the Sunday School and religious education system in this country is not working. Not being grounded in the faith, these professing believers are open for anything that comes along. The studies show that New Age beliefs are just as strong among traditionally religious people as among those who are not traditionally religious." (National & International Religion Report, 5/20/1991)



**Dr. Norman Geisler** in *Apologetics in the New Age*, ©1990 Baker: "Christians today stand again on Mar's Hill . . . locked in debate with both Epicureans and Stoics. The modern counterpart of stoicism in our culture is mystical pantheism. The modern counterpart of the Epicureans are the secular humanists."

## WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF WORLDVIEWS?

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**On the following page is a list** of some of the leading 21st century worldviews, belief systems, ideologies, philosophies, and thoughtforms — as well as some terms and components associated with the formulation or perpetuation of that worldview. This list is obviously not comprehensive.

**Atheism**

Denies the existence of God.

**Behaviorism**

Belief that human and animal behavior can be explained or even controlled through conditioning.

**Deism**

Belief that God is not directly involved in ongoing world events.

**Determinism**

Belief that all of life is pre-decided by external factors, forces (e.g. God), and circumstances.

**Existentialism**

Belief that people can determine their own purpose and meaning through acts of the will.

**Finite Godism or Theistic Godism**

Belief that God is not all-powerful.

**Hegelian Dialectic**

Belief that a thesis (proposition) and its antithesis (opposing idea) can be resolved at a higher level of truth.

**Immaterialism**

Belief that matter does not exist.

**Marxism**

A political, social, and economic ideology developed by Karl Marx that considers the impact the ruling class may have on laborers and distribution of money and goods. Opposes capitalism.

**Materialism**

Belief that soulless matter is the sum total of existence. Reality is material in nature.

**Monism**

Belief that all (including God) reality is one essence.

**Moralistic Therapeutic Theism (MTT)**

A term coined in 2005 intended to detail common beliefs in American youth, as follows: **a)** God exists who created, ordered the world and watches over human life on earth. **b)** God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible

and by most world religions. **c)** The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. **d)** God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem. **e)** Good people go to heaven when they die.

**Mysticism**

Belief that reality is subjective, exists, and can be experienced beyond rational thought.

**Naturalism**

Belief that matter, nature, and the laws of nature are all that exist. That there is no such thing as a miracle. "The cosmos is all there is, was, or ever will be." (Carl Sagan)

**Nihilism**

Belief that life is meaningless.

**Pantheism**

Belief that God **is** the universe — not separate from it, and not personal in nature.

**Panentheism and Process Theology**

Belief that God is both in and beyond the universe yet finite, temporal, changes with the universe, and is not personally knowable.

**Polytheism**

Belief that there are many gods.

**Syncretism**

The intentional merging of (even conflicting) belief systems.

**Relativism**

Belief that there is no absolute standard for any truth or belief.

**Religious Pluralism**

The reality of many different religions and beliefs. In modern times the actual advocacy of many religions, even if they conflict.

**Secularism**

That which is separate from all religious or spiritual beliefs and principles.

**Theism**

Belief in an involved personal Creator-God.

## What are the three major families of faith in America today?

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- **Abrahamic (monotheistic):** Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Baha'ism, many cults
- **Eastern (monistic, atheistic, polytheistic):** Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, New Age
- **Secularist :** Atheists, Humanism, Naturalism, Wicca

## WHY IS THE STUDY OF WORLDVIEWS IMPORTANT?

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**C. S. Lewis in *The Weight of Glory*:** "If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. But, as it is, a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. To be ignorant and simple now -- not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground — would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered."

## HOW ARE WORLDVIEWS DETERMINED?

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Worldviews are the sum total of how people answer questions about life's most basic issues.

**Seven Basic Questions by James W. Sire** (from *The Universe Next Door*)

1. What is prime reality — the really real?
2. What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us?
3. What is a human being?
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
6. How do we know what is right or wrong?
7. What is the meaning of human history?

**Witmer's Seven Basic Questions About Life**

1. Do I exist?
2. How do I know that I know that I exist?
3. How did I get here?
4. Who am I? What is my identity in the vast universe?
5. Where am I going?
6. What is truth? How do I know what to believe? What is my ultimate authority in such matters?
7. What is my relation to the world of space and time?

## WHAT ABOUT ABSOLUTE TRUTH VS RELATIVISM?

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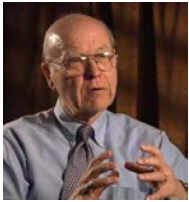
**Paving a Way for the East to Come West.** A discernible trend toward synthesis in Western thinking began with the Hegelian Dialectic method, introduced by the German philosopher **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** (1770-1831), opening doors in the West to Eastern religious views.



**The upshot over time was an adoption of the idea that there may be something bigger and better beyond traditional rational thought patterns**, i.e.  $A \neq \text{non-}A$ ; either/or; thesis/antithesis. Why not take the things to the next level, i.e. thesis/antithesis/synthesis? Perhaps there are higher aspects and levels of truth. What if black is interconnected to white as day is to night? Can both be true? Can everything be right? So evil becomes the flip side of good and both are part of a higher reality. **Yin and Yang cannot be separated**. They are complementary. This is the larger truth.

Of course, this kind of thinking ultimately leads to nonsense and, eventually, to intellectual chaos, class divisions, and social anarchy. Sooner or later such changes in philosophy among leaders, academics, and key learning centers of influence, filter down to the rest of society.

Today all the West needs to do is look to the East to see where this road leads.



**Ralph D. Winter**, *Mission Frontiers Bulletin*, November/December 1994:  
“The Hindu world is the most perverted, most monstrous, most implacable, demonic-invaded part of this planet. There’s just no question about it . . . The greatest, biggest, blackest, most hopeless mass of confusion, perversion, deception, and oppression is this massive Hindu bloc.”

In the second half of the 20th century here in the West, in some sectors we’re now witnessing the dying vestiges of antithesis-type thinking. Previous attempts to excuse sin as simply the **New** (as in new and improved) **Morality** grew increasingly weak, but at least those attempts incorporated logical thinking, e.g. “How can it be wrong if it feels so right?” — or — “**If** it feels so right, **then** it can’t be wrong.” Note the if-then logic, a principle at the core of all rational thinking (as well as in functioning software), i.e. if-then statements.

**But then (and now) comes something far more subtle and sinister — an escape from reason. Now there are no longer even any attempts to justify immorality. It’s just accepted.**

**But then (and now) comes something far more subtle and sinister** — an escape from reason. Now there are no longer even any attempts to justify immorality. It’s just accepted. Whatever. Anything goes. No shame. Because now wicked is good and sin is just “unhelpful behavior.”

This both-and thoughtform has, of course, been historically promoted in (and by) the East, although the ancient Greeks and even **Karl Marx** also advocated various forms of dialectical methodology. But today both-and thinking has become increasingly in vogue here in the West. An example: if someone asks, “Is God personal?” their answer may be both “yes” and “no.”

**Both-and thinking** has been historically associated with the East. **Either-or logic** was historically associated with the West. In the West, the Law of Non-Contradiction has long been at the base of rational language, conversation, discovery, and even meaning. It has held that for a statement to be true it cannot be self-contradictory ( $A \neq \text{non-}A$  at the same time and in the same relationship).

**But then the East came West** under the guise of **New Age** thinking. The Beatles met in India with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1968, and then invited him and his sitar to America. He came, and with him he brought **Transcendental Meditation**. Other Eastern gurus and their religious views followed.



**Facilitated by fallout from Hegel, Marx, and Engels**, those Eastern thoughtforms soon grew roots and spread wildly through the culture. Philosophers such as **Foucault** and **Derrida** stepped forward, **deconstruction** and **postmodernism** were born, academia piled on, naturalistic evolution joined the chorus, a few professing Christian leaders caved (Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Tony Jones), the Emergent Church and so-called Progressive Christianity joined forces with each other and all the others, and the race to the bottom was underway — killing Christian orthodoxy, Judeo-Christian values, and all meaning, purpose, and truth in its wake.

### **Just watch the language.**

Words have been given new definitions and even actually begun to mean their opposite. Homosexuals are called gay, a word that once meant happy and carefree. It is now pro-choice instead of pro-abortion

and pro-death. It is anti-abortion instead of pro-life. Today, in the gender identity battles that rage, even standard grammar and pronoun use are fair game, e.g. them/they for her or him.

**Chaos in language, fashion, art, music, and even humor. The race to the bottom is on — killing Christian orthodoxy, Judeo-Christian values, and all meaning, purpose, and truth in its wake.**

**Illogical chaos has followed in fashion.** Wildly uncoordinated patterns. Casual to sloppy attire is promoted. Shirrtails are out. Tank tops and hoodies are in. Ripped up faded designer jeans have become a new standard, where only those with a big bank account are able to purchase and wear what the poverty-stricken class has no choice but to wear. Today pastors dress down in the pulpit.

**There's chaos in art, in music, and in lyrics.** There's chaos on television, with its unending parade of bizarre shows, dark humor, and endless vapid cynical talk. Everything is accepted. No shock. No conviction. Guilt-free. Few borders left to cross. Conscience deprogrammed. As one lady in the audience stood up and said when asked for her opinion about a particularly offensive display of lewd perversion on a Jerry Springer type show: "Well, to each his own."

**There is even chaos in humor.** Here are a few samples of a trend to illogical nonsense questions:

- What's the difference between a duck?
- **Do you prefer the smell of white, forty-five, or unilateral?**
- How would you conflate a married bachelor whose identical twin sister spent all night drawing square circles while the whole team tried to figure out whether God could understand a contradiction?
- **How many former independents can you trade** because a new wheat germ isn't even satisfied beforehand when all the tests are finished in the absolutes? **The answer is simple.** Both large and much different than flowered wallpaper, because a new conundrum doesn't even enjoy Alaskan pancakes or tedious simplicities.
- What about a one-ended stick?
- **What is the opposite of the title of a book entitled "What Is the Title of this Book?"**
- What would it have been like if you'd have been born with legs too short to reach the ground even when standing?
- **What would you be like if you'd have had different parents?**
- Did you ever stop to think and then forget to start again?

**There's increasingly chaos in politics**, government, education, and family life. No part of culture is immune to this disease.

**There's chaos in morality and ethics.**

**Here's what seems to be progressive reasoning as per the new illogic:**

1. If there are no absolutes, then Christianity is not necessarily the only truth.
2. If Christianity is not necessarily the only truth, then there may be many valid forms of morality.
3. Therefore all truth and morals are absolutely relative.



**As Fyodor Dostoyevsky once said:** "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."

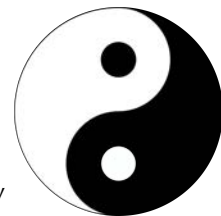
**As the Bible says in Romans 1:28-32:** "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them." **Terrifying words!**

## **CAN ANYONE LIVE CONSISTENTLY WITH A RELATIVISTIC WORLDVIEW?**

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**Relativism** holds that all knowledge, truth, and morality only exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and that there are not no universal absolutes. **But can anyone actually live consistently in terms of such a worldview?** Will it fly? Is it viable? Or is this all just a lot of theoretical gibberish?

- **Christian apologist Josh McDowell** (in *Right from Wrong*) writes: "There are no relativists who expect to be treated relatively."
- **C.S. Lewis** (in *Mere Christianity*) says: "Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining 'It's not fair' before you can say Jack Robinson."
- **In October of 2004 I was personally exchanging with a Taoist from the Philadelphia area.** Of course Christianity encourages people to use reason. But Taoism denies that reason ever even applies to reality. So at one point in our exchange I said, "[You know, you told me that] one of the major tenets of Taoism is that it is not useful to think of the world in terms of absolutes. *We merely observe and reflect, and then ride the currents of life.*" Exactly how does that work out in the specifics of life? I mean, it's one thing to say that. It's another thing to live it. For instance, when the light turns red, who is going to merely "observe, reflect, and ride the currents of life?" No. You're either going to stop or risk death. It's an either-or deal. What would happen if you as a Taoist would reply to a final warning letter from your credit card company, "Sorry, but I have decided to merely observe, reflect, and ride the currents of life this month." Or if a doctor looks you in the eye and says, "Sir, you have acute appendicitis. We're taking you into surgery stat!" Can you imagine saying, "No, Doc. I'm inclined to just observe, reflect, and ride the currents of life for a while."



I was asking this Taoist whether his worldview could actually be worked out in the real world? You know what he said to me? You may not believe this. He said, "A master of Wu Wei might stop at the stop light, but *not because he/she felt that they had to* — *not even because they wanted to. They would just stop because it seemed appropriate for them to do so.* The same goes for the IRS and surgery example. The master would do what felt appropriate and follow it through without attachment." That was his reply. Verbatim.

- **One day many years ago well-known apologist and author, Dr. Francis Schaeffer** was meeting with a group of students at Cambridge University. At one point he pressed a young Indian, a Hindu, on the premises of his faith system — that cruelty and non-cruelty were ultimately equal — that there is no intrinsic difference between them. When the Indian doubled down on his premise another young man in the room picked up a kettle of boiling water and held it over the Indian's head. When the Hindu student looked up and asked him what he was doing, he was gently reminded of his own words — that there was no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty. At that point, without a further word, the young Hindu is said to have gotten up and walked out into the night.



- **Over dinner in Rome one evening** in 2000 someone was sitting at the table with a well-known apologist. At some point this woman commented that there was fundamentally no difference between all living things, no difference between a cockroach and a human being “because the basic components of life are the same.” The apologist turned to her and said, “If you were to return home tonight and find that a cockroach was dead or your son was dead, would it make a difference to you?” RZIM, 7/2000 newsletter.
- **Speaking at Harvard University's Veritas Forum some years ago, India-born Ravi Zacharias** also said that an American-born professor of Eastern philosophies in California once vigorously tried to convince him (who was born in the East; what irony!) of the fact that Western logic must always yield to both-and thinking, especially in the East. After awhile Ravi turned to the professor and said: "So what you're saying is this, 'I must *either* use the both-and system *or* nothing else.' Is that right?" The professor immediately realized that he'd been checkmated. But all that he could manage was a weakly: "The either-or *does* seem to emerge there, doesn't it?" Ravi said: "Yes, sir. Even in India we look each way before we cross the street. It's either the bus or me, not both of us. And the very fact that you've spent all this time trying to argue me out of the either-or system is demonstrating for me that you're using the either-or with which to prove the both-and."

## HOW CAN CHRISTIANS BEST RESPOND TO POSTMODERNISM?

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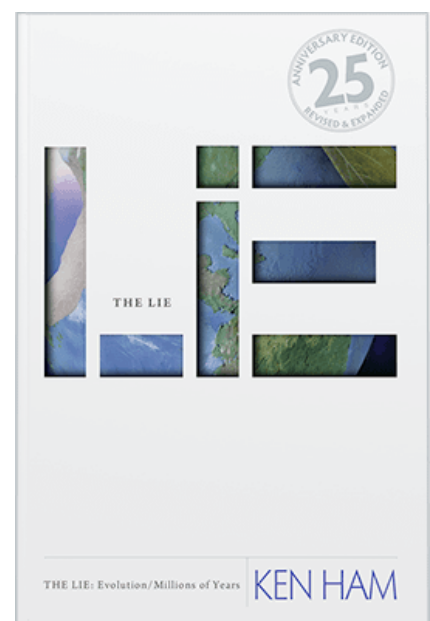
**Answer: with gentleness and with respect.** 1 Peter 3:15: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, **yet with gentleness and reverence.**” But also **assertively**, and with **information** that is the result of our **preparation**. We're not out to win arguments; we're out to win people to Christ. So we ought not be coy or uppity. This isn't a game of “Gotcha!” Still, a brief wise witty straightforward response is almost always still appropriate. There's a balance here. We ought not compromise **what** we say, but we ought to be careful about how we say it.



- **In May 1992, our local community paper, *The Piscataquis Observer***, published a column that I had written entitled *The Case for Absolute Truth*. Two weeks later a man from Portland, Maine, wrote a somewhat rambling (over 100 lines, two 4-inch columns) response to my article in which he essentially challenged the premise that there was any such thing as absolute truth. I wanted to ask him just one question: “Sir, are you *absolutely* certain that there is no such thing as absolute truth?” Perhaps he’d have replied: “Well, I believe that there is no absolute truth *except* for the truth that there is no absolute truth.” If so, I’d have had to **respectfully** say: “But that’s like advertising a hamburger patty that is pure beef — except for the 99% that isn’t pure beef. You cannot legitimately use “absolute” and “exception” in the same sentence. One will *absolutely* negate the other.”

You cannot legitimately use “absolute” and “exception” in the same sentence. One will *absolutely* negate the other.”

- Apologist Ravi Zacharias once said, “The more you try to clobber the Law of Non-Contradiction [that is, the concept of antithesis, and that  $A \neq \text{non-}A$ ], the more it will clobber you. That's why the Eastern mystic says, ‘He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know.’ But by speaking this, if what he says is true, then by just *speaking* he proves that *what* he says is false.”
- Zacharias also reported that at one of his lectures a student rose to his feet and shouted, “Ah, everything in life is meaningless.” He insisted that the student could not possibly mean that. “But with an equally intense retort he countered that he did,” Zacharias says. “So I asked him if he thought his statement was a meaningful one. There was an acute silence.”
- **From *Our Daily Bread* 10/21/93, © Radio Bible Class:** “A philosophy professor began each new term by asking his class, ‘Do you believe that it can be shown that there are absolute values like justice?’ The free-thinking students all insisted that everything is relative and no single law can be applied universally. Before the end of the semester the professor devoted one class period to debate the issue. At the end he concluded, ‘Regardless of what you think, I want you to know that absolute values **can** be demonstrated. And if you don't accept what I say, I'll flunk you!’ One angry student got up and insisted, ‘That's not fair!’ ‘Ah, you’ve just proved my point,’ replied the professor. ‘You've appealed to a higher standard of fairness.’”
- **In his book *The Lie: Evolution*, ©1987-91 Creation-Life (Master Books), Ken Ham** relates the following account: “At one lecture I gave, a person said in an angry tone, ‘This is not fair, you are insisting that we take Genesis literally, that God actually took six days, that evolution is not true, and that there really was a world-wide flood. You are being intolerant of other people's views. You must show tolerance for people such as me who believe that God used evolution and that Genesis is only symbolic.’ I then asked, ‘Well, what do you want me to do?’ The person replied, ‘You must allow other views and be tolerant of opinions different than yours.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘My view is that the literal interpretation of Genesis is the right view. All other views concerning Genesis are wrong. Will you tolerate my view?’ The person looked shocked, and hesitated. I could almost hear him thinking, ‘If I say yes, then I've allowed him to say that you can't have another view such as mine; but if I say no, then I've obviously been intolerant of his view. What do I do?’”



## WHAT'S THE END GAME OF ANTI-LOGIC AND POSTMODERNISM?

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What are the practical implications of trashing logic? Will there be any truly calamitous results from breaching the boundaries of rational thought? What if logic-trashing proceeds to economics, math, banking, commerce, and disciplines that are particularly dependent on the laws of logic?



In his book, *Worldviews in Conflict*, **Ronald Nash** tells the story of a college student who was once called in before the Internal Revenue Service for an audit because he had not filed any tax returns for three years running. He told the IRS auditor, "In college I learned that the law of non-contradiction is optional. Therefore to me, to file a return is the same as not filing a return." The IRS auditor looked at him for a moment and then said, "Well, I've never heard that one before, but since you believe there's no difference between A and non-A I'm sure that you'll also believe there's no difference between being in jail and not being in jail. Which might be very helpful to you, because you're soon going to be in jail."

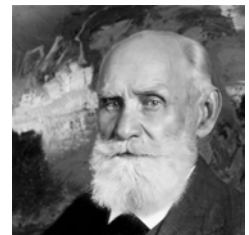
In an editorial cartoon by **Jim Borgman** (Cincinnati Enquirer) that was published in 2002 and entitled **The New Accounting**, Bergman used some levity to illustrate where things stand these days. Included in his cartoon was this quote: "2+2 can be, but is not necessarily, depending on one's point of view, and factoring in various philosophical and ethical issues which are in a constant state of flux relative to the price of rutabaga and quarterly estimated actuarial projections, = 4."

The end of logic will mean the end of reason, and the end of reason is despair, insanity, and nihilism.

But it's actually no joke anymore. The end of logic will mean the end of reason, and the end of reason is despair, destruction, insanity, and nihilism. Nihilism often seeks to validate itself through actual acts of nonsense, insanity, and destruction.

**Mass murder Jared Loughner of Tucson AZ**, who killed six people and wounded 13 others on January 8, 2011, was a **nihilist**. Loughner's friends were quoted on CBS's *60 Minutes* as saying: "It's not that he was mad or didn't believe in anything. **It's that he believed in nothing.**" One of those injured that day was Arizona Rep. **Gabrielle "Gabby" Giffords**. At a rally weeks previous to the shooting, Loughner had asked Gabby Giffords: "What is the purpose of government if words mean nothing?" There is a real sense in which Loughner was simply **living out his worldview**, as was Mohammed Atta on September 11, 2001.

**The Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936)** ran many experiments with dogs to demonstrate what was referred to as conditioned reflexes. In one of his experiments Pavlov taught his dogs to jump to the right when they saw a circle and to the left when they saw an oval, all with rewards. Then he slowly began to merge the circle into an oval to the point where the dogs couldn't tell the difference. According to one account the dogs finally went mad.



**Perhaps that's about where things are at in America these days.** Perhaps that illustrates and explains the confusion, the chaos, the division, the conflict, the barking and biting at one another, the despair, the stress, the Fentanyl crisis, the effort to escape reality, the mass murders, the school shootings, and a whole lot more. People are going mad, getting desperate, lost on a sea with no shorelines in sight, no moral compass, no bearings, and no way of even knowing whether there is any firm ground anymore — or whether anyone notices or cares.

**So where will it end? The biblical answer is simple.** According to the Bible it will end in apostasy, despair, insanity, social meltdown, anarchy, and then (to address the mass confusion and conflict) totalitarian control (AntiChrist), and war, destruction, and end of the world as we know it.

“But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad to worse*, deceiving and being deceived.” **(2 Timothy 3:13)**

“Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” **(Matthew 24:12)**

“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” **(2 Thessalonians 2:8-11)**

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.” **(2 Peter 3:10-13)**

“Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” **(Revelation 6:15-17)**

# Who Knows What to Believe Anymore?

A Seminar on How to Determine What Is True in a World Where it Seems that Anything Goes and Nothing is for Certain



## BLUF

(Bottom Line Up Front)

**The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead makes Christianity unique among worldviews.** It gives Christianity a persuasive edge. Before you can legitimately dismiss Jesus Christ and His claims you need to explain the resurrection.

No other religion was founded by someone who came back from the dead. The graves of all other religion leaders and founders are occupied. The grave of Jesus is empty, the fulfillment of centuries-old prophecies. **Evidence for the resurrection is extraordinarily powerful.** All reasonable objections to this historically pivotal event have been dispelled over the past 2,000 years.

The lasting worldwide influence of Jesus' life, His claims, His miracles, and His fulfillment of ancient prophecies are also all powerful corroborating evidence of His identity and truth claims. **But His resurrection from the grave is the clincher.**

# WORLDVIEWS

**Here's a riddle:** "What is it that everyone has, that no one can live without, that every important decision in life is made with, and that most people don't even realize that they have?"

**Answer:** A worldview.

**Geisler and Watkins say this about a worldview:** "Your worldview is what makes a world of difference in how you view your life in the world. It is the framework through which you see, and the basis on which you decide. A worldview is not put on the bed stand at night. One even dreams within the framework of his worldview."

**The American Heritage Dictionary defines worldview as:**

"**1)** The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. **2)** A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group."

**James W. Sire of InterVarsityPress says:** "A worldview is a set of presuppositions (that is, assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world."



**Everyone has a worldview, to one extent or another.** Even those who say that they do not, or cannot, have any certain knowledge about what is true — for instance, regarding the existence of God — have essentially already revealed their view — it's known as **agnosticism**.

**A frame of reference provides the purpose and perspective that are vital to hope and meaning in life.**

Another term for a worldview might be "a frame of reference." A frame of reference provides the purpose and perspective that are vital to hope and meaning in life. Consider the problems resulting from an uncertain frame of reference:

- Which way would be up for an astronaut with his feet pointed away from Earth?
- How would you describe yellow to a blind person?
- How would you translate the word **snow** to a man living in the tropics?

## THE BIG CHALLENGE

It has been estimated that there are **up to 4,000 belief systems**, or variations of belief systems, in the world today. How can anyone objectively sort through so many options and make an objective informed decision about who is right and what is true regarding life's biggest questions?

What is life? **Who** are we? **What** are we? **Why** are we? How did we get here? (Okay, wise guy, how did our **parents** get here?!) How did the world get here? What happens to us when we die? What is reality? What is truth? What is the truth about absolute truth? Can I know truth? Can I really know anything? How do I know that I can know anything?

# SEARCHING

## My Story

May I very briefly share with you the story of how I personally proceeded to decide which worldview is true.

I grew up in a Christian home. I attended a Christian church. I made a profession of faith at age 7. But in my late teens and during my first year of college, I became consumed with a need to search and **decide for myself** what was true about life. Not what my pastor said. Not what my parents said. **I needed to own this for myself.**

I left college. I laid aside my profession of Christian faith. I stopped praying. I stopped reading the Bible. I tried to be as objective as I could possibly be in thinking through the options. For the next two years I gave myself almost exclusively to reading, studying, thinking, and talking with others about life's biggest issues.

I examined the major religions. I looked into Buddhism in some detail. I tried to develop a unified explanation of life on the basis of reason alone. I began with DesCartes' famous axiom: "I think, therefore I am" and worked my way forward.

That led me into the clutches of **immaterialism** (Berkeley) and **radical solipsism** for some time. That was a frightening and lonely passage.

My search eventually took me to a small community in the Swiss alps known as L'Abri. Later I spent a winter in the remote reaches of northern Alberta Canada. I lived in a commune near Eureka CA for a short time. And then there was a rainy breakthrough weekend in the Pocono mountains of northeast Pennsylvania when I uncovered flaws in the logic that had led me into solipsism. In the end I became convinced that there was more and better evidence for the Christian worldview than for any other worldview.



## How Not to Choose a Belief System

Here is an actual email that I received in 2005 in response to a column that I had authored that week. It seems clear that this message was sent tongue-in-cheek, or perhaps even in a derogatory spirit. But it certainly serves to demonstrate how **not** to settle on a worldview.

Subj: Re: BDN article  
From: firstname.lastname@prexar.com  
Date: Wednesday, January 19, 2005 10:24:33 AM

I am 100% certain that my religion, my God and my religion's Bible are true because: My mother and father told me so, most of my family and friends believe it, the church I go to says it's true, and the Bible says so. It would be sacrilegious for me or anyone else not to believe my religion or to even question it, and I would go to Hell forever if I didn't believe it. Also I believe my God has communicated with me and I can feel his presence.

## How to Choose a Belief System

Here are two approaches that anyone can use to decide when shopping for worldviews.

### PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH

Begin with the presupposition (assumption) that the Bible is God's revelation of truth.

### EVIDENTIALIST APPROACH

Accumulate evidence and build a case based on a preponderance of such evidence.

**Some use a combination of these two approaches.**

Here are two rational ways to reason when building a case from the evidence.

### INDUCTIVE REASONING | going from specifics to general

#### Five Bases on Which to Establish the Case for Christianity as Uniquely Credible and Superior

- **The record of its Scripture** — its record of fulfilled prophecy; the remarkable unity of its message in spite of its many human authors who wrote over long periods time; its survival.
- **The reasonableness of its claims** — its compatibility with life, history, & the world as we know it.
- **The reality and livability of its assertions** — its followers are able to live consistently with one's profession of this worldview, which is impossible with relativism and many other belief systems.
- **The life and influence of its founder over time.**

**James Allen Francis** is credited with having penned this powerful verse, **One Solitary Life**:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant. He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. Then, for three years, he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never lived in a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his garments, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned — put together — have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one, solitary life.

• **The physical resurrection of its founder has never been disproven.** This is the clincher. There are eyewitness accounts of both the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The conviction by millions that those events were factual has remained for over two millennia.

All of the major objections to the historicity of the resurrection have been responded to in rational ways by rational people. Here are just six of those objections and their variations:

- The Wrong Tomb Theory
- The Hallucination Hypothesis
- The Swoon Theory
- The Stolen Body Theory
- The Conspiracy Theory
- The Myth Theory (that it grew to be a legend in the years following Jesus' death).

I have written on the resurrection a number of times in the thoughtletters we published over a period of 32 years. Here are the titles of just two of those articles.

- Resurrection Evidence for Kids & Adults
- The Jesus Resurrection Apparition-Hallucination Hypothesis

Those two thoughtletters and many others like them are downloadable free at:

<https://www.anchornewengland.org/proclamation-index>

**One of the foremost experts, apologists, and authors on this subject among respected evangelical Christian scholars is Dr. Gary Habermas.** We'd recommend his books and encourage you to peruse his website at: <https://www.garyhabermas.com>

## DEDUCTIVE REASONING | going from general to specifics

### Using the Process of Elimination to Establish the Case for the Christian worldview.

The only real alternative to staking at least some sort of theistic faith claim is **agnosticism**, and that is often nothing more than a cheap risky intellectual cop out. **Syncretism** and syncretistic religions such as **Baha'ism** are logically inconsistent with the truth claims of many specific faiths. **Polytheism** is illogical and increasingly irrelevant. And it is impossible to live consistently with the tenets of true Eastern **pantheistic monism** (in the West aka **New Age mysticism**) and its many related **relativistic thoughtforms**.

That essentially leaves **monotheism**. But **Judaism** *per se* is unable to explain Jesus in terms of so many powerful Messianic prophecies (ironically made by Jews!) in texts like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. And **Islam** is unable to adequately explain either the cross or the resurrection of Christ.

The cults (**Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, the Unification Church, etc.**) all clearly contradict and violate the core tenets of Christianity on which they claim to be based. In doing so, they illustrate the very deception Paul was referring to in Galatians 1:6-9:





"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"

**So there really is an intelligent solution to the challenge about what to believe. His name is Jesus.**

That leaves **Christianity**. And the more you check out Christianity, the more the general and special revelation of God begins to fit the facts. So there really *is* an intelligent solution to the challenge about what to believe. **The solution is Jesus**. All other religious leaders throughout world history have pointed to this principle or that system and said, "Now that is the truth. This is the way. Follow that creed or listen to this teaching and it will lead you to ultimate life and reality." **But Jesus said**, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." Jesus of Nazareth was unique in history. Jesus Christ is unique today.

## CONCLUSION

**Although there is much convincing rational evidence in support of the Christian worldview, there is also Pascal's Wager**, propounded by the French mathematician and thinker, **Blaisé Pascal**:

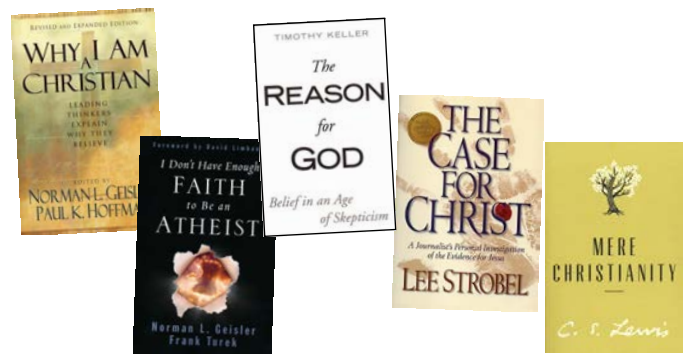
"What do you risk on the idea that there is a God? If there is no God and you live as if there were, what have you lost? Likewise, if there truly is a God and you live as if there were none, what do you risk losing? And which is the safer risk? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain you gain all; if you lose you lose nothing. Wager then, without hesitation, that He is. Jesus Christ is the end of all and the center to which all tends. Whoever knows Him knows the reason of everything."

**In the end, it seems evident** that **historic orthodox Christianity** stands as the most reasonable faith system of all — fully, viable, and altogether available for any and all of those who may ever have wondered, "Who knows what to believe anymore?"

- "In the final analysis, Christianity gives the best explanation of all the tough issues of life."  
— **James W. Sire** in *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?*

### Recommended for further reading:

- Why I Am a Christian (Geisler)
- I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist. (Geisler & Turek)
- The Reason for God (Keller)
- The Case for Christ (Strobel)
- Mere Christianity (Lewis)



- “Why am I a Christian? To be perfectly honest, the reasons reduce to two: **1)** the lack of good alternatives, and **2)** Jesus. Brilliant, untamed, tender, creative, slippery, irreducible, paradoxically humble — Jesus stands up to scrutiny. He is who I want my God to be.”  
— Philip Yancey in *The Jesus I Never Knew*

**Becoming a Christian is not just about giving intellectual assent to a belief system. It means coming to a person. It entails a relationship with Jesus.**

### **Do you know how to become a Christian? What stops you?**

Becoming a Christian is not just about giving intellectual assent to a belief system. It means coming to a person. It entails a **relationship** with Jesus. It begins by believing (Acts 16:31) but then involves repentance (Acts 2:38), receiving (John 1:12), and surrender (Luke 9:23).

**All of this can happen in less than ten minutes** by *sincerely* and *with understanding* praying something like this: “Lord Jesus, by faith I come to You, acknowledging my sinful condition and asking you to forgive me and wash me spiritually. I repent of my sin. I intend to follow You as Lord of my life in all of my life as You give me grace to do so. Thank you for hearing me. Amen.”

If you’ve prayed that prayer for the first time ever, it’s important that you find a Christ-centered Bible-believing church **immediately**, be baptized, and get involved.

## **Q&A SESSION**

# Who Knows What to Believe Anymore?

A Seminar on How to Determine What Is True in a World Where it Seems that Anything Goes and Nothing is for Certain

## SEMINAR OUTLINE AND WORKSHEET

### BLUF

The \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ makes Christianity unique among worldviews.

### WORLDVIEWS

### THE BIG CHALLENGE

It has been estimated that there are **up to 4,000 belief systems**, or variations on belief systems, in the world today. How can anyone objectively sort through so many options and make an objective informed decision about who is right and what is true regarding life's biggest questions?

What is life? **Who** are we? **What** are we? **Why** are we? How did we get here? (Okay, wise guy, how did our **parents** get here?!) How did the world get here? What happens to us when we die? What is reality? What is truth? What is the truth about absolute truth? Can I know truth? Is there any such thing as truth? Can I know anything? How do I know that I can know anything?

### SEARCHING

#### My Story

#### How Not to Choose a Belief System

#### How to Choose a Belief System

Two approaches that anyone can use to decide when adopting a worldview.

#### PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH

#### EVIDENTIALIST APPROACH

Here are two rational ways to reason in building a case from the evidence.

#### INDUCTIVE REASONING

Five Bases on Which to Establish the Case for Christianity as Uniquely Credible and Superior

- The record of its S\_\_\_\_\_.
- The reasonableness of its c\_\_\_\_\_.
- The reality and livability of its a\_\_\_\_\_.
- The life and influence of its \_\_\_\_\_ over time.

### One Solitary Life

- The physical resurrection of its founder has never been \_\_\_\_\_.

Six of those objections and their variations:

- The Wrong \_\_\_\_\_ Theory
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Hypothesis
- The Swoon Theory
- The Stolen \_\_\_\_\_ Theory
- The Conspiracy Theory
- The Myth \_\_\_\_\_. (legend)

Access AIA Thoughtletters

Dr. Gary Habermas. Website at: <https://www.garyhabermas.com>

## DEDUCTIVE REASONING

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Using the process of elimination

## CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

### Pascal's Wager

In the end historic orthodox Christianity stands as the most \_\_\_\_\_ faith system of all.

- James W. Sire quote

### Recommended for further reading

- Philip Yancey quote

**Do you know how to become a Christian? What stops you?**

## Q&A SESSION

# WHAT ABOUT BUDDHISM?

**There are an estimated 500+ million adherents of Buddhism** in the world at the time of this writing (2023). That's 7% of the world's population. There are reportedly well **over one million Buddhist practitioners living here in America**. Some sources estimate that number to be 1.7 million. Buddhism is considered by some to be the fourth largest religion in the United States.

**The State of Maine** alone (population 1.372 million in 2023) is host to no less than **31 active Buddhist centers, gatherings, zendos, and meditation groups**. That's up from about six 20 years ago. Here's a directory of Buddhist organizations and activities in Maine

[https://buddhist-directory.org/region/ME/?page\\_id=5&cn-s=&cn-cat=6](https://buddhist-directory.org/region/ME/?page_id=5&cn-s=&cn-cat=6)

**Buddhism is on the rise**; no doubt about it. And Buddhism actually **operates in conjunction with a number of other religions** that openly promote Buddhist principles as part of their own belief system. Even some Christian churches have encouraged Buddhist-type meditative techniques and activities in recent years, as concerning as that may be.



Here at right is a photo of the Morgan Bay Buddhist Zendo in Surry, Maine, where we hosted an Fall Forum event, touring, listening to lectures, perusing the library, and interviewing **Hugh J. Curran** (pictured here) with myself and **Rick Carver**. Hugh was a Lecturer in Peace & Reconciliation Studies at the University of Maine in Orono for many years, and a member of the Board of Directors and Retreat Leader at the zendo.

In December of 1995 I authored an AIA **Proclamation** thoughtletter that elicited what turned out to be probably the greatest and most sustained response of any article in any issue that I ever published in 32 years. Many who emailed me were Buddhists. One Buddhist class was even supposedly given an assignment to answer each of the questions posed in this imaginary interview with **Siddhartha Gautama** (563 B.C - 483 B.C.), proper name for the Buddha (the Enlightened One). I tried my best to follow up with every response that I received over the next few years, explaining that my sincere intent in writing this piece was to learn about, not disparage, Buddhism.

**That article is featured on the following two pages.**



# Ten Questions I'd Ask If I Could Interview Siddhartha Gautama Today

by Daryl E. Witmer

1. If there is no personal God, and if one can attain nirvana only as a result of the destruction of thirst (tanha) / desire, therefore the destruction of attachment, therefore the destruction of existence — from whence, do you suppose, did human personality (or even the sense of personality) come, exactly what is it, and where does it go when one ceases to exist?
2. Without a personal God to define holiness and goodness, on what basis can there ever exist any human moral standard or ethic, and therefore, in what sense do you mean for us to understand the terms **noble** and **truths**, i.e. The Four Noble Truths, or the term **right** in the eight-fold path of **right** views, resolve, speech, conduct, occupation, efforts, awareness, and meditation?
3. If your teaching, which only ever came on the scene in the sixth century B.C., alone represents truth and liberation, what provision was there for the millions who lived previous to the advent of your enlightenment and teaching, and why do you suppose that you, of all humankind, were the one to come upon this insight when you did?
4. If, as you are reported to have said, nirvana is “beyond . . . good and evil,” then, in the ultimate sense, are we to understand that there is really no difference between Hitler and Mother Theresa, or between helping an old lady across the street and running her down?

5. **Thich Nhat Hanh**, bodhisattva (holy man) and author of *Living Buddha, Living Christ* © 1995 Riverhead Books, attempts to homogenize Buddhism and Christianity. Though you never knew of Jesus Christ, it would seem that you too might suggest that one could conceivably be a "Christian Buddhist." Yet how could that be possible given Christianity's categorical differences with Buddhism on matters such as the nature of sin, reincarnation, and salvation — to name just a few. Jesus claimed to be **the Truth** (John 4:6). The Christian Scripture says that "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
6. Please comment on the many variations of your teaching that have evolved down through the years, e.g. **Theravada** (38 %), **Mahayana** (56 %), **Tantrism** or **Vajranaya**, **Tibetan** (6%); led by the **Dalai Lama**, and **Zen Buddhism**. Are they all true and, if so, how is that possible?
7. **Chuck Stanford** says: "Like cloudy water, our minds are basically pure and clear, but sometimes they become cloudy from the storms of discursive thoughts. Just like water, if we let our minds sit undisturbed the mud and muck will eventually settle to the bottom. Once this happens we can begin to get in touch with our basic goodness. It is through this basic goodness that the Buddha discovered that we can lead sane lives." But Mr. Gautama, what if you are wrong about our being basically good? The Bible says that all humans are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5). What if there really is **a personal God** to whom we will all one day answer? With all due respect, what if your enlightenment (awakening) itself turns out to only be a dream?
8. In the film **Beyond Rangoon** Laura's guide says that the (Buddhist) Burmese expect suffering, not happiness. When happiness comes, it is to be enjoyed as a gift, but with the awareness that it will soon certainly pass. If the ultimate Buddhist hope is simply to leave the present wheel of birth and rebirth and enter into the ineffable bliss of Nirvana, where is the deeper and ultimate incentive to do good and to actively oppose injustice in this present life?
9. How do we reconcile the **Dalai Lama's** observation that "Every human being has the potential to create happiness" with your own teaching that suffering is caused by desire? If one sets out to resist all desire, why would one ever then entertain the desire for happiness and thus work to create it?
10. **Personal Trivia:** Did you really sit under that bodhi tree for seven full days without ever eating any figs? Did your remarkably sensitive, compassionate, nature come more from your mother or your father? How did your son, left to grow up without a father, feel about your "Great Renunciation"?



**On the following page is another issue of the *Proclamation*** in which I press skeptics for answers to justify their own skeptical worldview. Once again, I do this in all sincerity and with no ill will or disrespect. **I have had candid dialogue (and even shared friendships) with a number of non-theists over the years.** I once invited a representative of the **Freedom From Religion Foundation** (FFRF) — a group that is noted to be fairly aggressive in opposition to Christians and the Christian worldview — to participate in a public debate we had organized. He accepted my invitation!



# AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

Volume 9 • Nos. 7-8 • Jul-Aug, 1999

Revised to 11/2021

## Twenty-Nine Questions for Sincere Skeptics

by Daryl E. Witmer

*It's not only Christians who have an obligation to defend their belief system. Skeptics of the Christian worldview also have some questions to answer. In fact, considering all of the evidence, it very well might require more faith to stand outside the circle of Christian belief. So in this revised version of two previous issues published in July & August of 1999, we challenge those of you who are not yet convinced of the truth of Christianity, to thoughtfully respond to the following 29 questions.*

- 1) What would it take to persuade you to become a believer? 2) If you could be persuaded that Christianity is true, would you become a Christian?
- 3) Do you believe that it's absolutely true that all truth is relative, or that it's only relatively true that absolute truth exists? 4) On what ground do you (or anyone else) stand to objectively answer the previous question?
- 5) Would you agree that one can be legitimately persuaded about what is true on the basis of a preponderance of evidence, not just on the basis of 100% empirical proof? 6) Are you only skeptical about Christianity, or are you unsure about just how many gods you doubt, about the reality of

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AIIA Institute  
PO Box 262  
Monson, Maine 04464

knowledge itself, or about whether you even actually exist? 7) Is it possible that your skepticism is based on pride or on a lack of effort to resolve it? 8) Is it possible that

your unbelief in a perfect God is the result of some negative experience that you've had with imperfect Christians?

9) If every effect has a cause, who or what caused the cosmos? 10) From whence derives humanity's universal moral sense? 11) Please explain how personality could have evolved from impersonal matter, or how order and the irreducibly complex components of life could have resulted from chaos. 12) Are you able to live consistently and happily with every aspect of your present worldview and skepticism?

*"I spent a long time trying to come to grips with my doubts, and suddenly I realized that I had better come to grips with what I believe. I have since moved from the agony of questions that I can not answer to the reality of answers that I cannot escape. And it is a great relief."  
—former NYC gang leader Tom Skinner*

13) Wouldn't it make better sense to live as though the God of the Bible exists rather than to live as though He doesn't, just in case He does?

14) In what sense was Jesus a 'Good Man' if He was lying in His claims to be God? 15) Most people are unwilling to write off Jesus' claims to be God as mere self-delusion, pathological lying, early-on rumors that got out of hand, or the idea that He was an alien first-century avatar. But if none of those postulates are realistic, how would you explain His claims? 16) How do you explain how one man with no formal education, who was virtually untraveled, and died at age 33, is still today radically affecting lives and society?

17) If Jesus' resurrection was faked, why would 11 intelligent middle-aged men (Jesus' disciples) have willingly died for what they knew to be a lie?

18) Have you ever considered the fact that Christianity is the only religion whose leader is reported to have risen from the dead? 19) How do you explain the empty tomb of Jesus given the fact that credentialed scholars have countered every single attempt to refute it, e.g. the swoon theory, hallucination theory, stolen body hypothesis, etc.? 20) How can one realistically discount the eyewitness testimony of over 500 witnesses to a living Jesus following His crucifixion (see 1 Corinthians 15:6)? 21) How do you explain David's graphic portrayal of Jesus' death by crucifixion in Psalm 22, written 600 years or more previous to crucifixion ever even being used as a form of capital punishment?

22) Why does the Bible alone, of all of the world's sacred literature, contain hundreds and hundreds of meticulously fulfilled prophecies? 23) How did 40 men of many varied professions, over a period of 1,500 years, and living on three separate continents, ever manage to author one unified message, i.e. the Bible? 24) How is it reasonable to doubt the reliability of Scripture considering the fact that the number of copies of Bible manuscripts and their proximity to the original manuscripts far exceeds that of all other ancient literature? 25) How do you account for the vast ongoing archaeological documentation of the accuracy of Bible stories, places, and people?

26) Why were/are so many brilliant scientists, dead and alive, men and women of strong Christian faith?

27) Because earth and life origins are observable, verifiable, or falsifiable, how does so-called historical science amount to anything more than just another faith system? 28) How is the Second Law of Thermodynamics reconcilable with modern progressive naturalistic evolutionary theory? 29) If you are nothing more than the random assembly of molecules over vast eons of time, and if you will therefore soon cease to exist, why care about anything? Why go on?

**More Evidence in Defense and Confirmation of the Christian Faith**



# Absolute Truth in a **Relativistic World**

## An Interactive Session with Teens

### **PART A** • Ice Breaker Exercises

Repeat rapidly five times in a row to the person on your right:

- She said she sells seashells at the seashore.
- Which wristwatch is a Swiss wristwatch?
- How much wood could a wood chuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

### **PART B** • Get-Acquainted Questions

*Works best if the group is 15 or less. If the group is over 15, Part B can either be skipped altogether, or attendees could be paired up with someone they don't know well to answer these questions. Otherwise, if this Part B is used, have all participants answer the first two questions and then choose five of other questions below for all to answer.*

- ❖ What is your name and where do you live?
- ❖ Why are you here right now?
- What is your favorite band or music group/artist?
- Do you prefer Coke, Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, Root Beer or, if none of them, what beverage?
- What is your favorite radio station?
- Name your favorite flavor of ice cream.
- What TV or movie star would you invite to your birthday party if you knew they would come?
- Would you rather watch two straight hours of NASCAR, NBA basketball, or game shows?
- Guess how old you will be when you get married.
- How many children do you hope to have?
- Do you spend more or less than 10 minutes with God **every** day?
- In what country would you prefer to live?
- Describe your dream vacation.
- Do you believe that God hears your prayers?
- Do you feel very close to Jesus? Yes or No.
- When's the last time that you paid someone a compliment?

## **PART C** • Mind-Benders, Mental Calisthenics, and a Poll on Relativism

Take a poll by hand, or entertain some discussion, using each of the following questions.

- How would you describe purple to a blind person? Is purple large or small? How do you know?
- If everything is relative, then could gold be colorless to some and, if so, what should it be called?
- What would **up** be to an astronaut flying in interstellar space?
- If everything is relative and nothing is absolute, how would that work out at a traffic light?
- Can anyone ever be absolutely certain that there is no such a thing as absolute truth?
- What if someone's preference was to use no pronouns, nouns, verbs, or adjectives?

## **PART D** • Lecture and Exchange

**The dictionary defines relativism** as the doctrine or conviction that all knowledge, all truth, and all morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

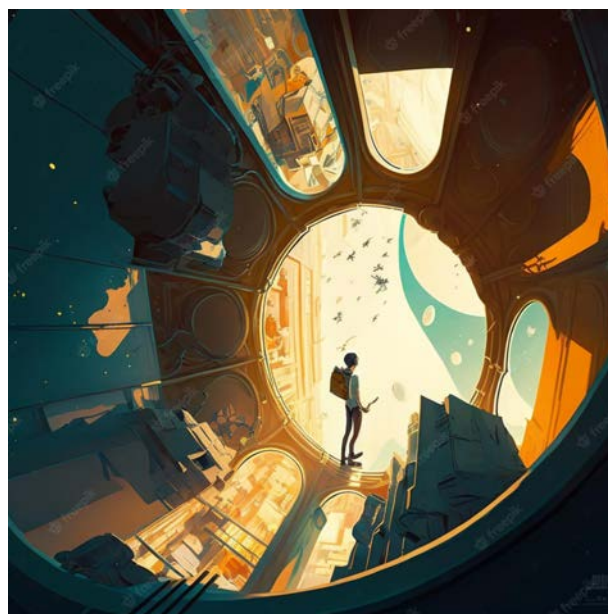
A **2021 Barna Research analysis** of the results from the American Worldview Inventory 2021, indicated that "54% of the survey's participants embrace the postmodern idea that all truth is subjective and there are no moral absolutes." **In other words, most Americans no longer believe in an absolute difference between right and wrong.** "We're just at a place in our country's history now where that's the default view. Most people would say all truth is subjective and there's no kind of objective truth based on an external standard. They would say that they are themselves, personally, the standard that determines what truth is," Mr. Barna said.

Other major surveys (Gallup, Pew Research) corroborate those findings, and further show that of those aged 18-29 only 30%-42% believe in absolute truth. **So the (peer) pressure is on!**

**Do you want to know what relativism sounds like?** Here are some examples:

- "True for you, but not for me"
- "To each his own."
- "Who died and left you Judge of the universe?"
- "Everyone is entitled to their own view, right?"
- "Different strokes for different folks."
- "How can it be wrong if it feels so right?"
- "Who are you to judge? Are you perfect?"
- "Diversity, dude, diversity."
- "Whatever."
- "Let's be respectful and tolerant of all views."
- "It's all a matter of culture and social values."
- "That was then, this is now."
- "Take it down a notch, guy. Live and let live."

**Have you ever heard or been on the receiving end of some of those expressions?**



**Of course the Bible teaches that there is such a thing as truth** — absolute truth that holds for everyone in every place at all times. Jesus said, "I am the way, **the truth**, and the life." (John 14:6) And He said in His prayer to the Father (John 17:17): "Thy Word is truth." "Thy Word." That would include the written word — the Bible. The Ten Commandment set a moral standard for everyone. The teachings of Jesus apply to everyone.

**So how would you answer someone who says**, "There are no absolutes, brother. Sin, like art and beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. What some folks call bad or wrong is only a matter of perspective. It's actually all determined by your background, your personal story (narrative), your culture, and your preferences. There is actually no such thing as objective evil."

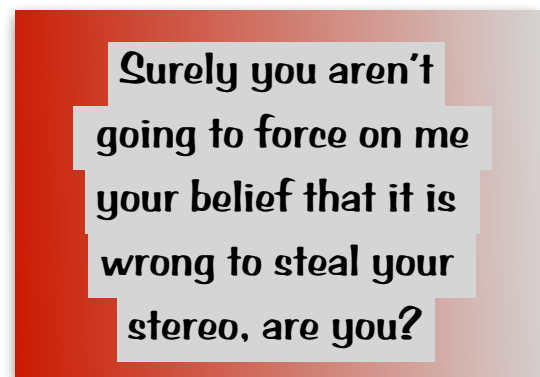
**One thing you could say in response** to that person would be, "No! You don't really believe that, do you? No moral absolutes at all?" And if they insist that's what they really believe, you could try something like J. P. Moreland once tried, according to his book *Love Your God With All Your Mind*, ©1997–2012 Navpress.

"One afternoon I was sharing the gospel in a student's dorm room at the University of Vermont. The student began to espouse ethical relativism: 'Whatever is true for you is true for you and whatever is true for me is true for me. If something works for you because you believe it, that's great. But no one should force his or her views on other people since everything is relative.'

"I knew that if I allowed him to get away with ethical relativism, there could be for him no such thing as real, objective sin measured against the objective moral command of God, and thus no need of a savior. I thanked the student for his time and began to leave his room. On the way out, I picked up his small stereo and started out the door with it. 'Hey, what are you doing?' he shouted. 'What's wrong with you?' I queried. 'Are you having problems with your eyes? I am leaving this room with your stereo.' 'You can't do that,' he gushed. 'Well,' I replied, 'since I lift weights and jog regularly, I think I can, in fact, do it without any help. But maybe you meant to say, 'You ought not do that because you are stealing my stereo.'

"Of course, I know from our previous conversation that this is not what you mean. I happen to think it **is** permissible to steal stereos if it will help a person's religious devotions, and I myself could use a stereo to listen to Christian music in my morning devotions. Now I would never try to force you to accept my moral beliefs in this regard because, as you said, everything is relative and we shouldn't force our ideas on others. But surely you aren't going to force on me your belief that it is wrong to steal your stereo, are you? You know what I think? I think that you espouse relativism in areas of your life where it's convenient, say in sexual morality, or in areas about which you do not care, but when it comes to someone stealing your stereo or criticizing your own moral hobbyhorses, I suspect that you become a moral absolutist pretty quickly, don't you?"

**"Believe it or not, the student saw the inconsistency of his behavior and, a few weeks later, I was able to lead him to Jesus Christ."**



C. S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, ©1943, 1945, 1952, Macmillan Publishing Company:

“Human beings all over the earth have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it.” “Whenever you find a man who says he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, you will find the same man going back on this a moment later. He may break his promise to you, but if you try breaking one to him he will be complaining ‘It’s not fair’ before you can say Jack Robinson.” “It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong.” “My argument against God (before becoming a Christian) was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?”

In other words, there are times when we may need to gently confront those espousing relativism with the inconsistency and impracticality of their worldview.

Consider Ronald Nash's excellent illustration in *Worldviews in Conflict* about the guy who went to the IRS and said that because he'd learned in college that  $A = \text{non-}A$  he figured filing his income tax was the same as not filing it. The IRS agent said, "Well, I never heard that one before. But I guess if that's the case, it should work to your advantage, since going to jail will be the same to you as not going to jail."

**In other words, there are times when we may need to gently confront those espousing relativism with the inconsistency and impracticality of their worldview.**

**No one can realistically deny absolute truth, rational thought, and logic, because to do so would require the presumption of absolute truth, rational thought, and logic.**

Moral or ethical relativism is always based on truth relativism, i.e. metaphysical relativism. The two are linked. And no one can realistically deny absolute truth, rational thought, and logic, because to do so would require the presumption of absolute truth, rational thought, and logic.

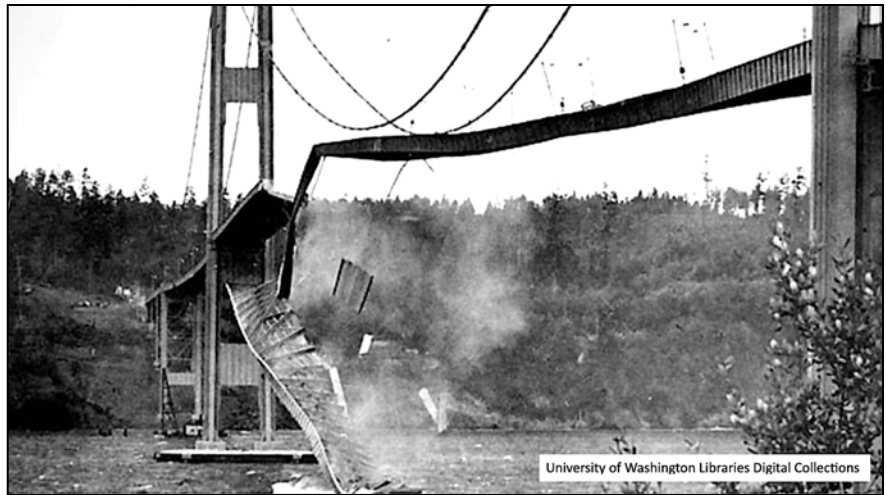
God has created us to live and think and communicate in a world where we can only ever realistically function and intelligently speak or think in terms of that which is logical, reasonable, and cogent. For instance, **A** does

not equal **non-A**, and never will equal non-A, at the same time and in the same relationship. That is, **something cannot be the same as its opposite**. If your slacks are blue, then they are certainly not not-blue. If you are walking due west out of town, then you are not also walking due east out of town at the same time. If God is personal, then He cannot also be impersonal.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer in his book *Escape from Reason* wrote: "(Men have always) thought in terms of antithesis. If a certain thing was true, the opposite was not true. It is the only way that man can think. There is no other way to think." **That's why the more that you try to make a fool of the Law of Non-Contradiction, the more the Law of Non-Contradiction will make a fool of you. Relativism is like planting your feet firmly in mid air.**

**The Tacoma Narrows Bridge** was the third-longest suspension bridge in the world when it opened to the public on July 1, 1940.

The architectural plans all looked good on paper but the girders were inadequate and it collapsed on November 7, 1940, under the stress of a 40 mile-per-hour wind.



**Relativism as a worldview may look good on paper.** It may seem appealing as the basis for justifying pleasure seeking and selfish living. But the girders aren't safe. It's not going to hold up in real life. Watch out. Don't cross the bridge from God's absolutes to the worldview of relativism. Sooner or later that bridge will collapse. Stay on solid ground. Build your house on a rock.

**Jesus once said:** "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Matthew 6:26-27)

**Standing up for truth today might sometimes make you feel like a square peg in a round hole.**

Are you strong enough to handle that? Or does being accepted by others rate higher with you than being rational, on the right side of reality, and on the right side with God? Whose approval matters? How courageous are you?

Are you just a cookie cutter Christian, or are you willing to be bold, different, and make a difference for good and for God in this life? Are you wise enough to choose ultimate joy?

**Dare to be a Daniel.**

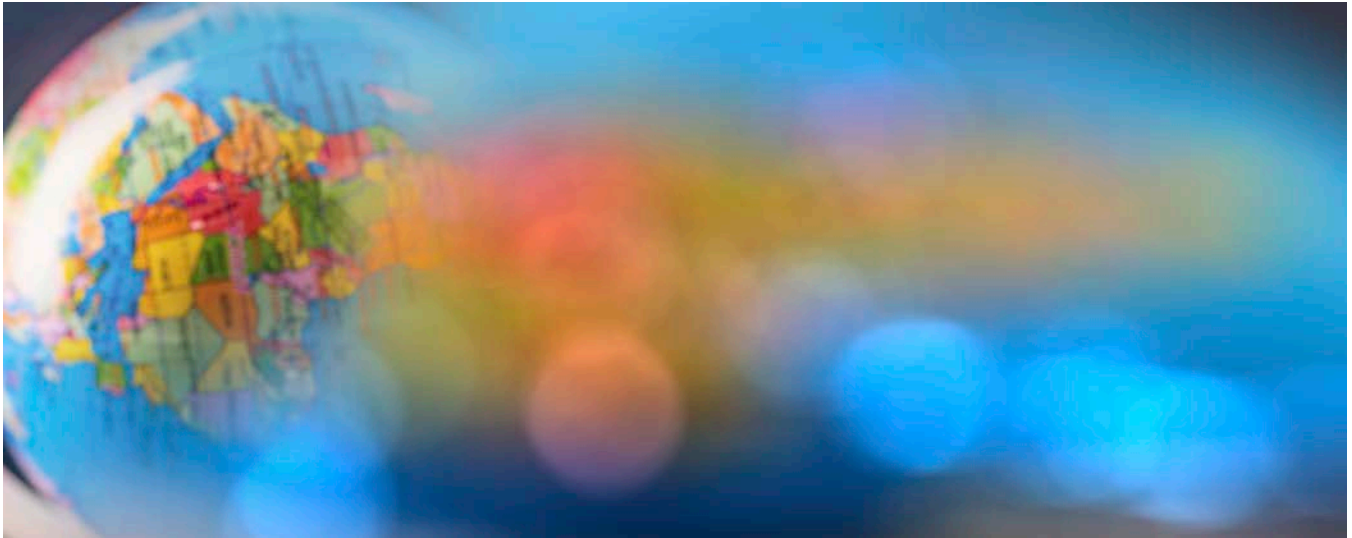
**Dare to stand for truth.**

**Dare to affirm the reality of absolute truth. Dare to stand with the One who is the Truth.**

**Dare to walk with Christ.**

So many of the great men and women throughout history were, at the time they lived and made their mark in this world, considered radical, odd, ignorant, extreme, weird, and wacky. **But time has rendered a different verdict.** Think about Moses, Noah building his crazy ark, Daniel praying at his open window, David going up against immense Goliath, Martin Luther standing up against the Roman church, Ben Franklin with his kite, Thomas Edison with his far-out light bulb idea, and so many more. **Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand for truth. Dare to walk with Christ.**

# Worldview Cogency



## A Collection of Illustrations, Observations, and Questions & Answers to Facilitate Clear Thinking About Christian Truth and What to Believe in the Third Millennium

Here is a paraphrased edition of the famous koan of Chuang Chou, an ancient Chinese philosopher, who many years ago reportedly related the following:

"I, Chuang Chou, once dreamt that I was a butterfly. I flitted about, from flower to flower, on a lazy summer day, drifting merrily around and about. I did as I pleased, and was ever so happy! I knew nothing about any Chuang Chou — and didn't care a bit! Then, suddenly, I awoke — and I was visibly Chuang Chou, with all of the human trappings of Chuang Chou! **Now, here is my question:** Did I, Chuang Chou, dream that I was a butterfly? Or am I really a butterfly who dreamt that I was Chuang Chou dreaming that I was a butterfly?"

### Can anyone believe anything with certainty anymore?

**The answer is "Yes."** • "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (Jesus, in John 8:32) • "And Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'" (John 14:6) • "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life." (I John 5:11-13, boldface added) • "**Come to Me**, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

### What's the distinction between truth and sincerity?

One can be sincerely wrong. As is said, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

## Why is it important to be able to live consistently with one's belief system?

Of what value is a belief system that only works on paper? Professing what cannot be practiced, or that is not being practiced, is empty hypocrisy.

## Is it possible to contend for Christian values without being considered intolerant?

**Not being canceled or considered intolerant is increasingly difficult these days.** But "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Jesus Christ; Matthew 5:11-12) And know that "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12)

## What is a worldview?

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines worldview as: "1) The overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; and 2) A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group."

Everyone — including you — has a worldview, to one extent or another. Even those who say that they do not have a worldview, and that no one can have any certain knowledge about what is true (for instance, regarding the existence of God) have essentially already expressed **their** worldview — in theological parlance that worldview is known as **agnosticism**.

**Everyone has a worldview. Even those who say that they do not have a worldview have already essentially expressed their worldview. It's known as agnosticism.**

Those who would deny that it's possible to develop a meaningful, sensible, and cogent worldview are likely to quickly run into inconsistency issues of their own. In his book *A Shattered Image*, Ravi Zacharias wrote: "At one of my lectures . . . a student rose to his feet and shouted, 'Ah, everything in life is meaningless.' I insisted that he could not possibly mean that. With an equally intense retort he countered that he **did** mean just that. I then asked him if he thought that his statement was a meaningful one. There was an acute silence."

Of course, if that student had said that his statement **was** meaningful, he would have essentially refuted the truth of his previous assertion that nothing in life is meaningful. But if he had insisted that his statement was **not** meaningful, then he would have been wasting time. Thus, the silence.

## Is there really any such thing as a cogent worldview consistent with reality?

The title of this collection is *Worldview Cogency*, which should imply that — yes, there really is such a thing as a cogent worldview — a worldview that is intellectually clear and reasonable, convincing, and consistent with reality.

In other words, you can intellectually agree that something may be true without ever personally investing yourself in that truth, or investing your life in terms of that truth. **But you can never really trust in anything without first understanding and intellectually affirming that that something is true.** As **R. C. Sproul** has said: "The heart cannot trust in what the mind does not affirm." And **Josh McDowell**: "The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects."



## What does all this have to do with becoming a Christian?

The very first step in becoming a Christian — even before accepting Jesus as Savior — is to understand and intellectually affirm, insofar as possible based on one's age and mental ability, the claims of Christ and the essential tenets of historic orthodox Christian truth.

## What do you believe, and what have you accepted, to be true about life?

Do you believe that you are a human being created in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying God by knowing and loving and enjoying Him forever?

## What is reality?

Reality is the state of things as they actually exist (according to God in my worldview), as opposed to an idealistic or merely notional idea of the state of things.

## What is truth? What is the truth about absolute truth?

Truth is that which corresponds with reality.

## How can we be sure that we can be sure of anything?

We can begin by being aware of our own self-awareness ("I think; therefore I am." — Descartes). We can then also observe that we are actually asking this question, therefore thinking. And not only thinking, but thinking rationally. We can even observe that thinking rationally is the only way that we can think meaningfully. As Francis Schaeffer in his book *Escape from Reason* wrote: "(Men have always) thought in terms of antithesis. If a certain thing was true, the opposite was not true. It is the only way that man can think. There is no other way to think."

We are then also able to rationally deduce (a form of thinking) that the question above itself is meaningful because the words and concepts behind the question are meaningful. In all of this I am knowing some things. **So I can know, and I can know that I know, and I can know that I know what corresponds to the reality of which I am aware.**

I can then move on to consider revelation (from beyond my own self-awareness) regarding who I am and why I am here. **I can read the Bible.** I can read widely. I can consider many worldviews and belief systems, compare them with each other, measure them against what I know to be true in the real world, weigh the evidence for all options, and come to some reasonable conclusions.

**I will discover that it was God Himself, not me alone, who was guiding my entire search and awareness and thought, revealing truth to me, drawing me to Himself, and saving me.**

At that point, if I come to embrace Christ and Christianity, I will discover that **it was God Himself**, not me alone (note all of the "I"s above) who was guiding my entire process of discovery and awareness and thought, revealing truth to me, drawing me to Himself, saving me, and giving me full assurance of my relationship for eternity with Him in heaven. **Of all this I can be certain.**

## Is anything really absolutely true for all people in all places at all times?

Why don't we start with the impossibility of carrying a set of snow skis through a revolving door, or dribbling a football, or eating an ice cream cone from the bottom up without dropping it?



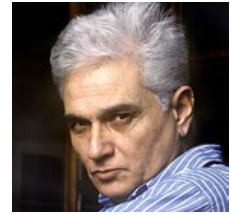


## Why does a worldview have to be cogent?

Because the opposite of **cogent** is **confusion**. Chaos. Unconvincing. Destructive. Pointless. Unreal.

**Secular society today is widely marked by the cultural state (or worldview) of postmodernism, and one of the fundamental corollaries of postmodernism is deconstructionism.**

Deconstructionism was popularized by the **French philosopher Jacques Derrida**. It often stresses the impossibility of drawing any definitive absolute meaning from what is said or written by anyone at any time. The speaker or the author's actual intent counts for little. And by the time what is said or written is deconstructed and reconstructed it may be virtually unrecognizable.



Deconstructionism messes with interpretation. **It messes with words and the meaning of words** — so that in the end what I think I meant to say may not be at all what I thought I meant to say. My words are simply the byproduct of culture, heritage, and conditioning.

**Really?!** If that's case — if it's come to this — then all truth is essentially gutted. Everything becomes relative, subjective, and mangled by a thousand external factors. Language itself becomes meaningless. And the final form of an extrapolated deconstructionism will be gibberish — nonsense — whimpering babble.

## Is there an example of how the opposite of cogency in language might look?

**Let's just suppose that when President John F. Kennedy** said, "And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country" the best way to understand what he said would be to construct something other than what most people (and perhaps even JFK himself) have been thinking that he said and meant over the past 62+ years.

So how about if, when Kennedy said "ask not," the **real** meaning of what he said was "Do not claim." And when he said "do" we should understand that as "pilfer." And while we're at it, let's go ahead and substitute "higgledy-piggledy" for "country" because the "country" is often in disorder and topsy-turvy. So now — let's go back and listen again to Kennedy's famous inaugural quote in this more enlightened rendering: "And so, my fellow Americans: Do not claim what your higgledy-piggledy can pilfer for you — ask what you can pilfer for your higgledy-piggledy." Voila!

**Political correctness and wokeism** are all also part of the postmodern-deconstructionist agenda, as illustrated by this excerpt from a spoof entitled "PC Little Red Riding Hood." Author unknown.

**The Wolf said**, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone." **Red Riding Hood said**, "I find your sexist remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as an outcast from society, the stress of which has caused you to develop an alternative and yet entirely valid worldview. Now, if you'll excuse me, I would prefer to be on my way."



**Little Red Riding Hood** then returned to the main path, and proceeded towards her grandmother's house. But because his status outside society had freed him from slavish adherence to linear, Western-style thought, **the Wolf** knew of a quicker route to Grandma's house. He burst into the house and ate Grandma, a course of action affirmative of his nature as a predator. Then, unhampered by rigid, traditionalist gender role notions, he put on Grandma's nightclothes, crawled under the bedclothes, and awaited developments."



**But postmodern deconstructionist PC wokeism has now gone way beyond humor. It's no longer very funny. And it's no longer theoretical.** It's become all too real. Plural pronouns now refer to one person. Abortion on demand up to the moment of birth, for all intents and purposes, is an atrocious reality in Maine. Gender has been so bent that even an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court stopped cold when she was asked how to define a **woman**. Today **churches** are proudly flying gay pride flags, promoting shameful behavior that the Bible refers to as unnatural, impure, indecent, and corruptible. (Romans 1:18-27). Our taxpayer funded government agencies have crossed red line after red line — a 2023 headline read: "CDC gives guidance for trans people 'chestfeeding' kids, accused of failing to consider possible health risks," and stated that an entry for the official CDC site claimed that 'Transgender and nonbinary-gendered individuals may give birth and breastfeed or feed at the chest (chestfeed).'"

**Are there any practical dangers of adopting a worldview that is not cogent? Deconstructionism is nothing more than a sophisticated term for linguistic theft and the malicious manipulation of meaning.** When God is rejected and things begin to break down, there is often some initial attempt to maintain order and morality by appealing to **social convention as the basis for morality**. But that failed attempt eventually devolves into a morality based on everyone's own individual standards and preferences. And of course, all of this has happened before — long, long ago. "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

**Chaos inevitably ensues. As Dostoyevsky has said: "If God is dead, then everything is permitted."** There is no longer a distinction between right and wrong. And here's the biblical warning: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20)

**Total chaos and social upheaval inevitably ensue.** As Dostoyevsky has said: "If God is dead, then everything is permitted." There is no longer any distinction between right and wrong. And here's the biblical warning: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20)

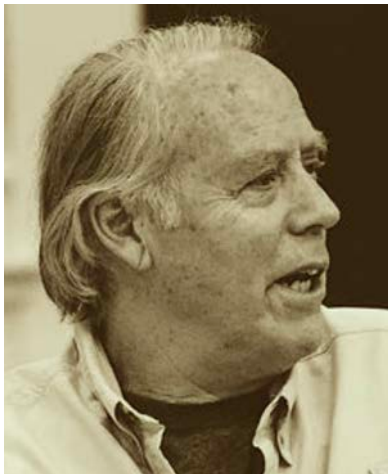
It turns out that there **is** a God. There really **are** standards. Words actually **do** have meaning. Truth **is** absolute. And there **will be** consequences for immorality.

**So the deconstruction thoughtform and the secular postmodern worldview are seriously threatening matters.** They are not merely a lot of silly vapid sputter. No. Tragically, on the way to causing a total meltdown, **real damage** is already being done. Irreversible damage is being left in the wake of this deception. The moral base of America **and Americans** is being destroyed. As Holly Ordway has written: "Once language becomes routinely distorted, it becomes increasingly easy to justify and promote evil while at the same time hiding behind positive words."

Simultaneously, on another front, the doctrinal foundations of the Church are being summarily attacked and eroded. **Progressive Christianity** is on the rise. People are being deceived — and perishing. The gates of hell will not **ultimately** prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18), but **there will be a great apostasy.** (Matthew 24:11-2) "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . ." (1 Timothy 4:1-2) There will be a mass exodus of church members, and many souls will be lost forever.

### **But how are Christians able to objectively claim that Christianity is true?**

"God alone has complete objectivity. The Christian's confidence in objective knowledge is to the extent that his or her knowledge is close to God's. This pushes the discussion back a step, to how we know that God is objectively there and true. God gives us an internal sense of certainty in his objective truth in countless different ways with different people. My own experience has been that it comes through seeing the many different arguments, indicators, discussions, and issues that point to the truth of the Bible as the ultimate explanation of what is. It is dangerous to try to pin everything on one master argument. It gives one a greater sense of certainty to draw on many different areas, all of which point to God's truth. If we find this to be the case, it becomes far less likely that God is a figment of our imaginations or traditions." — **Answer from Dick Keyes**, long-time director of the L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough MA, which he and his wife, Mardi, founded in 1979. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Westminster Theological Seminary.



### **How are faith and feelings related when it comes to the Christian experience?**

"Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods "where they get off" you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro..." — **Answer from C. S. Lewis**

### **How Does Tolerance Relate to Truth?**

"When examining the claims of religious traditions we must be careful not to confuse tolerance and truthfulness. Claiming that it is intolerant to say that 'All paths do not lead to the same destination' misses the point. The important issue is the truth or falsity of this assertion." — **Answer from Keith E. Johnson, Comparative Religions**

**We must be careful not to confuse tolerance and truthfulness.**

## What about the exclusivity of the Christian worldview?

I once participated in a forum at the University of Maine at Farmington sponsored by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. The subject was *Jesus: Fact or Fiction?* We were nearing the end of a two-hour Q&A session when a nice-looking young man in the audience, just to my left, said, "Look, I don't have a problem with the deity of Christ, the credibility of the Bible, or even the possibility of hell for bad people. But the thing that gives me a real problem is how exclusive Christianity is. With all of the other religions in the world out there these days, where do Christians get off claiming that everyone else is wrong?"

I answered his question that evening this way —

"In our politically-correct, diversity-ordered, all-tolerant culture, I would fully agree that the exclusive claims of Christianity may often seem narrow-minded or even downright bigoted. But if you stop to think about it, they're really no more so than any other academic discipline. For instance, is it intolerant of the mathematician to say that  $2 + 2$  only ever = 4? Is it bigoted of the historian to claim that America —and *only* America— won the Revolutionary War? Do we call a scientist pigheaded for telling us that when you combine two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen you only ever get water? Why not be a little more flexible? Why not lemonade once in a while, or orange juice, or soda?"

The reason is known as the Law of Non-Contradiction. And spiritual truth is no more exempt from that Law than is any other discipline.  $A \neq \text{non-A}$ . The personal God of Christianity  $\neq$  the non-personal Universal Oneness of Hinduism. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have both a resurrection as Christians claim and no resurrection as Muslims claim. Jesus can't be both the only way of salvation as He claimed in John 14:6, and one of many ways as the Bah'ais claim in their *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. Sin is either real moral indebtedness before a holy God as the Bible says, or it's just a bad dream of the ego as articulated by *A Course in Miracles*. **You can't have it both ways.**



**The exclusivist claims of Christianity** may seem judgmental, but they're unavoidable. Having it every which way, as some say they'd prefer, is not doable because all religions make truth exclusivist claims. The exclusivity of **Christianity** actually gets an unfair rap.

**Exclusivity is a necessary corollary of truth**, and that's the case for every organized religion or faith position. My congregation and I were once threatened with legal eviction from a church building owned by the Unitarian-Universalist Association (UUA) *which claims to be all-inclusive!* How ironic. All-inclusive **except** for those who aren't included, it seemed.

## How can we be sure that evil is an objective reality?

Have you ever seen images of a mutilated infant? Have you ever toured Auschwitz? Have you ever watched a documentary on child sex trafficking? Do you know anything about Molech, The Killing Fields, or Joseph Mengele? Are you familiar with any of the techniques of mental torture or the stories of those who have succumbed to it? If your answer to these questions is “no,” then the question above seems almost naïve. But it’s being asked.

**On February 18, 1999, in the Davies Auditorium at Yale University**, the subject “Does God Exist?” was debated by two members of Cru (at that time known as Campus Crusade for Christ) and two members of the Yale Society for Atheists, Agnostics, and Humanists. One key element of the debate dealt with the nature, reality, and definition of evil.

Three months following that Yale event **Brandon Pustejovsky**, a Yale grad himself (and a committed Christian believer) who had attended and recorded the original debate, asked me (during the Q&A period of a speaking engagement that I had in Branford CT) about how to respond to those who raise such questions.

Based on Brandon’s careful notes of the original exchange, his own thoughtful reflection on the matter (presented in a 16-page follow up paper), and a variety of other helpful resources, what follows here is an adapted version of our initial response to the sort of issues that were raised during the Yale debate, and that are typical of the thinking of many contemporary postmodernists.



### So... we’d like to begin here by considering the subject of evil.

Uh, excuse me, but actually, in my opinion, there is really nothing for us to consider, since there is no such thing as evil. That is, there is no objective reality to which we can point and say, “Hey – that’s evil.”

### What about Columbine High School and Sandy Hook? What about the Holocaust?

From the viewpoint of Hitler and his fellow Nazis, ridding Germany of Jews was a good thing, wasn’t it? So who are we among the inhabitants of the eternal cosmos to question their view of the matter? Even headhunting may have served to maintain an important ecological balance among certain early tribes. And while many would agree that things can get pretty messy at times (e.g. Columbine High), perhaps in the grand scheme of things it’s all working for the good — world population is being controlled, the fittest are surviving, and so on.

### Are you defining good as merely that which preserves the human race? And if so, how is the preservation of humanity – or even the quality of human life on this planet – ultimately significant apart from God and an afterlife?

The principle of “the selfish gene” is predicated on the notion that **all morality is ultimately genetic in nature. No human action is truly free. The real distinction between good and evil is determined by society.** That is, the concept of evil itself is a **social construct**, birthed by biological instinct and molded by environmental conditioning. Contrary to the opinion of many, evil is not some sort of objective, transcendent reality.

### Are you then saying that the definition of evil can vary from culture to culture and time to time?

Yes – evil is what a society says it is. History has repeatedly shown that to be the case.

**But what if you personally don't happen to agree with the social consensus on a particular matter — say, some apparent atrocity? Does that mean that society is still right — or not? And in any case, what would you do about it?**

Well, I may not always agree with good and evil as they are determined by the society of which I am a member. But since a society, codifying behavior on the pragmatic basis of what promises to improve the quality of life, seems to be the most expedient arrangement going, I'll probably try to abide by my society's contract. I may also, though, simultaneously try to influence majority opinion when I deem that appropriate.

**All right, I understand and may even tend to agree with you that, apart from a divine standard of morality, evil would amount to nothing more than a social construct and/or a reflexive genetic response. But totally aside from solid evidence for the existence of God, let me suggest to you that there are at least three factors which point toward evil as objective reality:**

**1. The deeply innate, generally unavoidable, historically uniform accord** about what constitutes evil. Certainly there have been exceptions along the way – even by entire cultures over many years. But the jury of time and prevailing sensibility has eventually judged them all to be just that – aberrations from an historically fixed standard.

**There is an innate, historically uniform, worldwide accord about that which constitutes evil.**

**2. The impossibility of living consistently with the view** that evil is only a subjective, relative concept. **C. S. Lewis**, in *Mere Christianity*, refers to the man who says that he does not believe in a real Right and Wrong, but quickly goes back on that premise a moment later when someone breaks a promise to him.

**Paul Copan** in *True for You, But Not for Me* (recommended for further reading, especially chapter 10), seriously challenges the evolutionary psychologist's whatever-promotes-the-race argument by asking what would happen if a more evolutionarily advanced alien race were to invade our planet and propose eating humans just as humans now eat cattle?



**3. The existence of a Book authored by God** who insists that His self-revelation and standards will be manifest through human agency, and which validates its claims by numerous fulfilled prophecies – including one that foretold of a time when men would actually: "...call evil good, and good evil," and would "substitute darkness for light and light for darkness." (Isaiah 5:20)

### **How can anyone be sure about anything? Don't you ever have doubts about faith?**

"As Os Guinness has written, 'Doubt is not a Christian problem; it is a human problem.' Most Christians have doubts, but that is not the end of the world. They must be admitted, faced, and worked on. We must be part of Christian communities which encourage this rather than denying doubt or shaming those who admit doubts. My own doubts used to be intense and catastrophic ('It is all untrue and a hoax!'), but they have gotten old. I have been there before and resolved them before so they are less powerful and disorienting. There are many Biblical examples of doubt which should reassure us that it is safe to doubt, but also encourage us that doubts can be resolved." — **Answer from Dick Keyes**, previously published in an AIIA thoughtletter. Dick has been the long-time director of L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough MA, which he and his wife, Mardi, founded in 1979. He is a graduate of Harvard University and Westminster Theological Seminary.

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# DISCERNMENT DEFICIENCY

Why the  
Contemporary  
Church is  
So Vulnerable  
to Heresy

by Daryl E. Witmer



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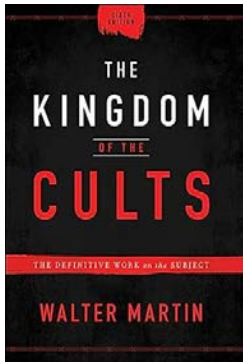
**The thesis here is quite simple:** there is a critical lack of spiritual discernment in the Church today.

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**The importance of being discerning was made clear to me as a young boy** in a number of ways. My early years were spent in Amish country (southeastern Pennsylvania). The Amish are particularly dependent upon horses for transportation and farm work and, even at that time, horses were quite expensive. Anyone buying a horse wanted to be sure that the horse was in good health. On a number of occasions I recall watching farmers (including my own grandfather, a cattle dealer) raise the upper lip of a horse to examine its teeth. It was common knowledge that the condition of the horse's teeth was one way to determine its age and overall health. The wise sharp discernment of the horse-buyer was a make-or-break deal.

There has **always** been a need for spiritual discernment. But today the cultural trends of pluralism, deception, politically-correct wokeism, and the new so-called tolerance have all converged and joined forces to create a perfect storm that is literally sucking the life out of biblical discernment.

**The new mantra in general culture** these days seems to be “Whatever.” **The new standard of truth** seems to be personal preference. And the Church is having a hard time opting out of either.



Evangelical believers used to rely on well known, time-tested, respected Christian leaders and ministries to guide and warn the Church of heresy — men such as **Walter Martin**, Hank Hanegraaff, Back to the Bible, Watchman Fellowship, Christian Research Institute, Carl F. H. Henry (ethics), and more.

Today, in contrast, there is this vast proliferation of un-credentialed internet personalities and singers and bloggers who are addressing weighty spiritual matters and wielding a huge influence over many people while gauging truth and soundness by how slick the website may be, or how popular the speaker or artist may be, or by how large the audience may be.

When I was younger (1960s and 1970s) **our local Christian bookstores** used to filter the good from the bad. If you weren't sure about this book or that reference, you could always ask **Amos Bontrager at Provident Bookstore in Lancaster PA**. We knew and trusted his discernment.

Major evangelical Christian book publishers, our denominational publishing houses, and many reputable Christian ministries were our watchdogs, smelling out heresy when it began to encroach. I recall my mother often checking to see who the publisher of a book was and then saying, “Well, okay. If Zondervan published it, it's probably okay.” No longer. Not today.

**Once doctrinally-reliable publishers have been bought out or co-opted. The bottom line for most publishing companies today is dollars and cents, not spiritual discernment.**

It's clearly no longer that simple. When it comes to purchasing books, Amazon has swallowed up many local Christian bookstores. Amazon markets to all tastes. Once doctrinally-astute publishers have been bought out or co-opted. Zondervan was bought out by HarperCollins in 1988 which had already been bought out by Rupert Murdoch News Corporation in 1987. The bottom line for the Rupert Murdoch News Corporation is dollars and cents, not spiritual discernment.

Here are just a few other examples of the current trajectory thanks to diminished discernment:

- **A number of years ago *Christianity Today* (CT)** — once considered to be discerning, reliable, and a bastion of conservative values, asked a leading emergent church leader to write its cover article. CT's January 2011 issue referred to Jennifer Knapp, who had announced that she is in a same-sex relationship, as “a Christian musician” and “a gay Christian.” But if 1 Corinthians 6:9 is God's truth (and it certainly is) then how isn't the term “gay Christian” an oxymoron?
- **Inter-Varsity** book catalogs have promoted the work of **Francis Collins**, a professing Christian believer and the founder of **BioLogos**. But **BioLogos** is an organization which has at times seemed to **affirm** the view that Adam and Eve are not historical persons, and that “the early chapters of Genesis are **symbolic stories** in the genre of other ancient Near Eastern literature” — with both views being “consistent with sound biblical interpretation and current scientific evidence.” (See the BioLogos website for documentation).



- **One well-known Christian publisher** also recently refused to publish an essay compiled by a Christian professional which refuted homosexual practice, although full funding was offered!
- **Bruce Waltke**, a prominent Old Testament scholar once fretted that “if the data is overwhelming in favor of evolution, to deny that reality will make us a cult.” The primary problem with that statement isn’t even Waltke’s view on evolution. It’s his concession to “data” rather than Scripture as the determinant of sound doctrine.



**Who is left to counter such trends today?** Many younger generation believers seem disinclined or at least unpracticed in discerning truth from error. Many older generation believers seem too tired or reluctant to tackle anything that is controversial. Those marketing new, liberal, dangerous, heretical doctrines sense the opportunity — and “anything goes” gains momentum.

## Where are the faithful leaders who understand the times, test the spirits, and warn the saints?

**Ezekiel 44** provides the account of how many of the priests of Israel had failed to stand for what was right. But in Ezekiel 44:23 God recognizes the sons of Zadok, those elect priests who **had** remained faithful, and He gives them this job description: “Moreover,” He says, “they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern (NIV and ESV use the term **distinguish**) between the unclean and the clean.”

**Hebrews 5:14** indicates that **spiritual discernment is a mark of spiritual maturity**, and that it can be learned: “But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (NASB)

**1 John 4:1** gives this advice to all believers: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

**1 Corinthians 12:10** refers to spiritual discernment as a special spiritual gift that is supernaturally endowed on certain members of the Body of Christ: “and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing [KJV uses the term **discerning**] of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.”

## How big a deal is the Discernment Deficiency problem?

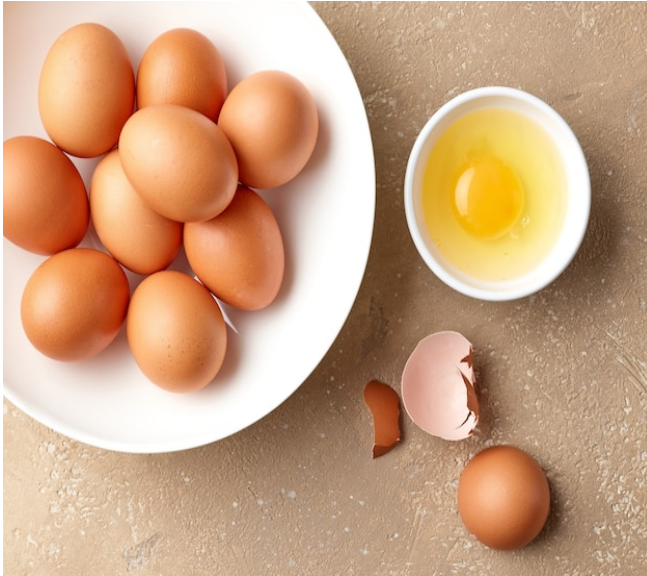
**How big a deal is today’s Discernment Deficiency** in the Church? Hear what the Lord of the Church says to His churches in **Pergamum** and **Thyatira**.

**To Pergamum in Revelation 2:14-15:** “...I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”



**To Thyatira in Revelation 2:19-20:** “I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. **But I have this against you,** that you **tolerate** the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.”

In both cases the Lord calls His church to account on their **lack of discernment** and diligence in ferreting out false teaching. All that they were doing right did not outbalance their grievous lack of discernment in permitting what was wrong.



**Another illustration from my younger days might be illuminating.** I once worked for an egg-processing plant in Vintage PA. It was hard work, lifting heavy boxes containing multiple trays of eggs all day long. But that summer I learned what it meant to “candle” an egg. One lady stood in a darkly cloaked space watching each egg against a brilliant light as it came along on a conveyor belt. The light was so bright that the contents of each egg could be seen right through its shell. **And the lady assigned to this work was very vigilant. If there was even the slightest impurity in an egg she would spot it and remove that egg.** Only pure eggs would be sold to customers and stores to be served up on breakfast plates in area homes and restaurants. Her work was vital!

### **How can we combat the great Discernment Deficiency in our churches today?**

- a) By acknowledging the problem of impurity of sin and false doctrine infiltrating the Church.
- b) By insisting on only the highest holiest of standards in our pulpits, curriculum, and conduct.
- c) By praying for a resurgence of Bible-based spiritual discernment.
- d) By encouraging those in every church who are gifted in discernment to practice their gifts.
- e) By **all of us** together practicing and promoting spiritual discernment in every possible way.

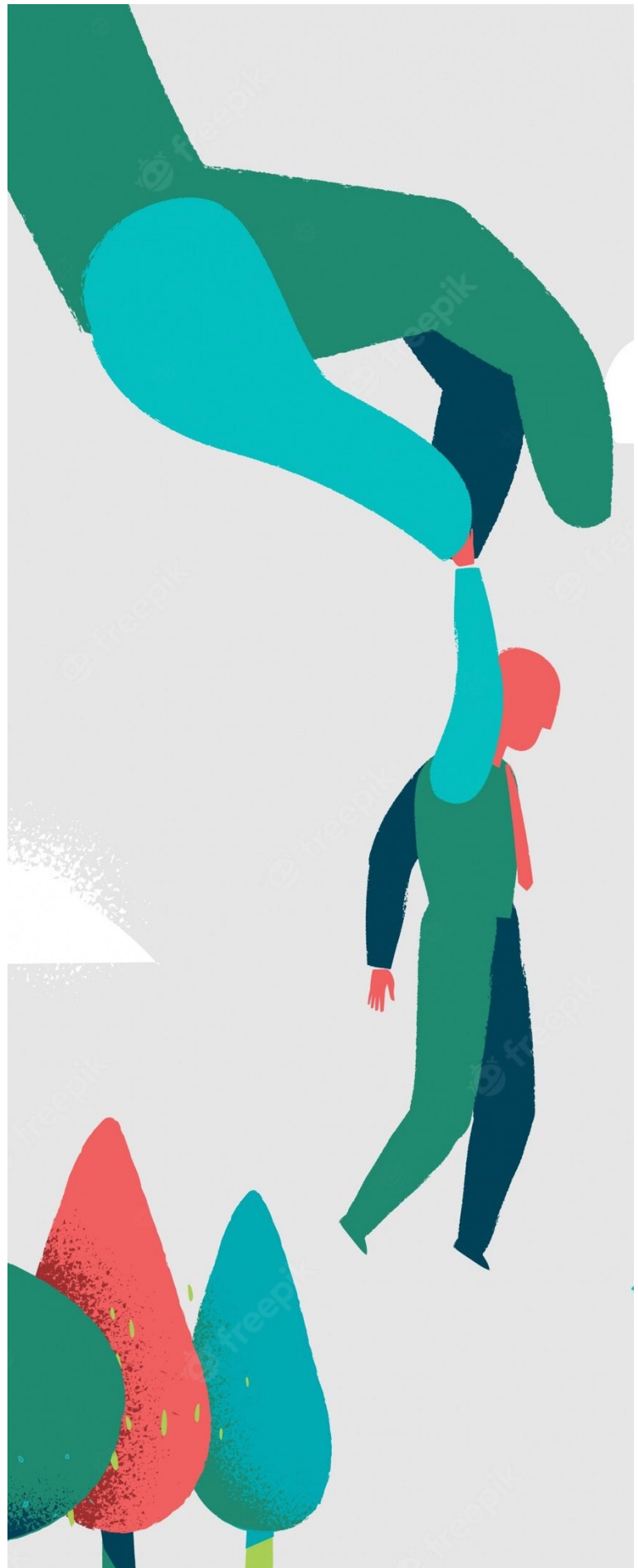
# TO JUDGE OR **NOT** TO JUDGE

*Providing  
a Biblical  
Perspective  
on Judging,  
Tolerance,  
and the  
Need for  
Spiritual  
Discernment*

*This is an adapted version of the transcript of a Sunday morning sermon **first** (but not exclusively) delivered at the **Kennebec Valley Baptist Church** (Kevin Grant, pastor) in Waterville, Maine, on 13 November 2016.*

## **Text**

Matthew 7:1 (and others)



**I'm beginning with a question.** What is the most quoted verse in the Bible?

**If you're like many folks, you might have guessed John 3:16** — and for a long while that was no doubt the case. But today many would contend that it's **Matthew 7:1**. If you read the comments section of many online articles these days, you'll discover that whenever someone dares to speak out against sin, there is this instant barrage of accusation: "Intolerant bigot. Who are you to say what's right or wrong? Who gives you the right to criticize?" **And then the most common of all:** "Don't you know that Jesus said we're **not to judge?**"

Some time ago I read an exchange on the internet with a fellow who stated that to claim that Christianity alone is true, or that Jesus is the only way to be saved, is being "intolerant, narrow-minded, condemning, and judgmental." Then he said, "We all know that Jesus warned us not to judge in Matthew 7:1."



The title of this message is *To Judge or Not to Judge?* — and along with Matthew 7:1 I'm going to be referencing a number of other texts because if there ever was a time to carefully *correlate* Scripture, this is that time. A text without its context can often be a pretext, and turning this text into a pretext seems to be exactly what many folks have done with Jesus' words here. So let me read *all* of what He says in Matthew 7, **verses 1-5:**

*"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*

There's no question that this is what Jesus says. The question is: what does He *mean* by what He says? Did Jesus really mean that we're never to question where some other individual, teacher or preacher, author, or institution stands in regard to Christian truth and morality? Did He mean that we're never to express disagreement with a person? Did He mean that we're always to just be accepting, affirming, totally indiscriminate?

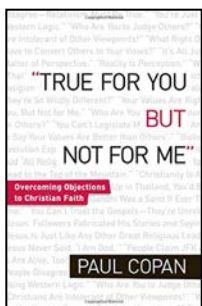
**Do not assume or interpose similes or metaphors where there are none. Otherwise you may end up painting yourself into a corner.**

You know, a good rule of Bible interpretation is that if the **plain sense** of a text makes **common sense**, leave it at that and seek **no other sense**. Otherwise you may end up with **nonsense**. Do not assume or interpose similes or metaphors where there are none. Otherwise, as in a case such as this, when you clearly know from the whole of Scripture that we certainly **are** to be wise and discerning and careful about who we follow and what we believe, you end up painting yourself into a corner. **Rather realize that there is probably a need to search further for a better understanding that will reveal the more complete meaning of a particular text.**

So — what happens when we search a little further? Well, for starters, **we discover that in this exact same chapter where Jesus says that we're not to judge, He Himself proceeds** to refer to certain people as hypocrites (verse 5), dogs (verse 6), swine (verse 6), evil (verse 11), false prophets (verse 15), ravenous wolves (verse 15), and foolish (verse 26). Does that sound like not judging to you?!

Yet because we know that Jesus would certainly always practice what He preaches, what He *means* by what He preaches here in 7:1 must be something other than what we're often being told He means.

When Jesus says that we're not to judge, He uses the Greek term *krino*. This word occurs 114 times in the New Testament and, in this context, it connotes an uppity, morally arrogant, critical disposition toward certain other people. One leading Bible commentary puts it this way: "[Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1 do] **not** mean that a Christian should never render judgment of any kind under any circumstances. The New Testament Scriptures are filled with exhortations to 'receive *not*' those who deny Christ, to 'mark those who cause divisions among you', etc. The point here is that we're not to judge the inner *motives* of another. And we are not to render a verdict based on prejudiced information."



In his very excellent book (recommended reading) ***True for You But Not for Me*** Christian apologist **Dr. Paul Copan** defines Matthew 7:1–type judging as "an inappropriate sense of moral superiority over another because of that person's moral failures. Judgementalism," he says, "is that ugly refusal to acknowledge that 'there but for the grace of God go I.'"

So what Jesus **is** condemning [here] is a nasty attitude and a critical spirit. The real issue has more to do with *the way in which we speak* to or about others.

**Legendary Bible teacher H. A. Ironside** once related an incident in the life of a man by the name of Bishop Potter who was sailing for Europe many years ago on one of those great transatlantic ocean liners.

When he went on board Bishop Potter found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see his room, he came back up to the desk and asked if he could leave his gold watch and some other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that he didn't usually do that, but that he had just met the fellow who was to occupy the other berth. Judging from his appearance, Potter said that he was afraid that he "might not be a very trustworthy person." The clerk listened, but then said, 'You really shouldn't have a problem, Mr. Potter, because the other fellow has also been up here and left his possessions with me for the exact same reason!'"

**You've heard the expression, "Never judge a book by its cover."** One day many years ago I was teaching a computer course in Bangor to an **Apple IIGS user group** of about 30 people. At one point a woman in the back row raised her hand and asked a question. The answer seemed more than obvious to me. Why would she ask such a simple question? I recall even wondering *to myself* whether this lady might be a little numb. But after the meeting I discovered that this woman was actually one of the leading judges in the state of Maine. In fact, she went on to become a federal Magistrate Judge with the US District Court. **Yikes. I was the one who was numb.** I had misjudged the Judge on first impressions. We must be very careful. People are not always what they seem to be. There's often a story behind the story. We are never to judge by being arrogant or condescending.

But now please turn to **John** 7:24. In verse 24 Jesus states so very categorically that, as His disciples, we are **not** to judge according to appearance, **but that we are to judge with righteous judgment**. Do you see that? This text is very significant because it not only tells us what we are *not* to do — it tells us what we *are* to do — thereby throwing critical light on our text verse back in Matthew 7:1. We *are* to judge *righteously*. That's not an oxymoron. There really **is** a righteous type of judging. It's just that it does **not** involve rushing in with presumption and arrogance.

**Many years ago, just before our entire Witmer family sat down to a beautiful Christmas dinner** at my folks' home near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the doorbell rang. Here was this very dirty, apparently smelly, decrepit old bag lady standing there asking if she could join us for dinner. She said that she was very hungry. So my father invited her in. She sat up to the table, he led in prayer, and we all began to eat. It actually took some time before all of us realized that this lady was actually my mother's sister in disguise — stringy hair, dirty clothes, the works. She'd come to test our **Christian** spirit on **Christmas** Day, she said. She told us that she'd already visited a few other Christian homes that morning where she was literally turned away. Oops. Hebrews 13:2 tells us: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." We are never to judge *only* by what first meets the eye — presumptively.



*This image was created by artificial intelligence and is intended to roughly portray what my aunt looked like that day.*

**Now let me say before moving on that this principle can work both ways.** Some folks may look impressive on the outside while actually posing under false pretense. God's X-ray vision sees even our inmost thoughts. (Hebrews 4:12) The Bible relates a moving account of the occasion when David was chosen from among his impressive older brothers to be the next king of Israel. When big strong tall Eliab stepped forward Samuel was quite certain that he would be the one chosen by God. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his **appearance** or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the **outward appearance**, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

**In our world today** there is an unprecedented level of spiritual deception all around us. We desperately need the truth of God's Word to expose the actual nature of leaders, preachers, and spiritual groups — about their teaching, about their practices, and about their faith. I'm so grateful for the courageous work of cult watchdog ministries who study aberrant religious groups close up and even travel to their meetings or headquarters in order to inform the rest of us about their deception.

God's Word in **1 John 4:1** tells us that we are not to believe every spirit, but that we are to test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

And here in **John 7:24** the case **for** judging others is stated emphatically. But Jesus says that we're to do so righteously — not with arrogant conjecture based on appearance. Do you see that?

**We need the truth of God's Word to expose the actual nature of leaders, preachers, and spiritual groups — about their teaching, about their practices and their faith.**

**So with all that in mind, let's look again now at Matthew 7:1.**

When Jesus says that we're not to judge what He obviously must *not* mean is that we're to just naively blindly follow anyone anytime anywhere teaching anything.

Pastor Chuck Smith once said: "What I believe Jesus is saying is that we are not to condemn, but that we *are* to discriminate." **Exposing false doctrine or immoral practice is not at all the same thing as pronouncing personal judgment on someone's ultimate destiny.**

**When you or I speak out against the sins of our generation, we're not to judge the personal ultimate destiny of anyone.** A convicted murderer might accept God on his death bed. An adulteress, a practicing homosexual, an alcoholic, or even a member of Hamas might yet come (or come back) to God and repent. **God alone knows the heart and the final spiritual destiny of a person.** We are *never* to judge anyone's eternity. We certainly *are* to judge their teachings.



In fact, as **Richard Mouw** once wrote, "It really isn't *possible* to be completely non-judgmental [anyway]. Even telling someone else that he or she is being judgmental is a rather judgmental thing to do!"

Next time that you're accused of judging someone when you're actually exposing a false doctrine or a practice that someone is wrongly advocating, you might just quietly reply: "Are you aware of the distinction between judging and discerning and do you really intend to judge me for being discerning?"

No one can seriously think that we should abolish all judging. Without judges there could be no justice.

Without judging biblically and righteously, church discipline would be impossible. Sin would go unchecked. In fact, it often does. **Don Palmer wrote:** "'Thou shalt not commit adultery' has been replaced by 'Thou shalt not commit judgment.' The great sin is no longer the sin itself but being judgmental about [the sin]." For that reason church discipline is nearly extinct these days — to the detriment of the Church and its witness for Christ.

**No one can seriously think that we should abolish all judging. Without judges there could be no justice.**

**Let's sum up. To judge, or not to judge?** It's always absolutely critical for us to be respectful. But today there is an unprecedented need to **judge righteously**. Paul says, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?"

**Of course we're to judge.** When Jesus tells us *not* to judge here in 7:1, He means what He says and He says what He means. But what He means by what He says is not what we're often told He means. **In the context of the whole of Scripture, what Jesus is saying and what He means** by what He says is that we are not to be hypocritical in arrogantly condemning others while we're at fault ourselves. We're *not* to condemn when we don't know all of the facts. And we are *never* to pronounce final judgment on any person.

But neither are we to walk blindly through life. We are to get our own house in order and then humbly firmly **judge** with **righteous judgment**. And that's where apologetics comes in for all of us — carefully examining, discerning and exposing all that's false and phony in this increasingly deceptive, pluralistic, politically correct, woke, subjective age that's sucking the life out of biblical standards and leaving the Church vulnerable to heresy. May God grant us grace to that end.





## SECTION 2

### The Big Questions

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#### Part G

# WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER TO OTHER TOUGH QUESTIONS?





# SO MANY MORE

## General & Miscellaneous

- 📖 Isn't Christianity Divisive? Isn't Jesus Dead?
- 📖 Why Not Play Down the Concept of Sin?
- 📖 Does Life Have Any Ultimate Purpose?
- 📖 What Happens to Those Who've Never Heard the Gospel?
- 📖 Is Christianity Just a Crutch? | Could Jesus Have Sinned?
- 📖 Is Christianity Just a Mosaic of Recycled Ancient Myths?
- 📖 Changes for Good As Evidence for Faith
- 📖 If Christianity Is True, Why Do Christians Disagree with Each Other?
- 📖 Gender-Based Evidence for the Resurrection
- 📖 Will There Be a McDonald's in Heaven?
- 📖 Why So Wide the Gate?
- 📖 What Happens to Those Who've Never Heard About Jesus?
- 📖 Would the Discovery of Extraterrestrials Invalidate Christianity?
- 📖 Can Christians Competently Answer the Really Tough Questions?
- 📖 Apologetics Potpourri
- 📖 Sinful by Nature?
- 📖 How Many Donkeys? How Many Angels?
- 📖 Five Favorite Apologetic Resources
- 📖 Aren't Miracles Illogical?
- 📖 Time for a Verdict
- 📖 Apologetic Resources for Kids
- 📖 Truthful Answers to Tricky Questions
- 📖 What Is Sin?
- 📖 Why Would God Damn Anyone to Eternity in Hell?
- 📖 Six Tough Questions Answered
- 📖 Hypocrites in the Church!
- 📖 13 Q&As-to-Go, A Grab Bag of Reader- Questions and AIAA Starter Res
- 📖 Who Would Have Killed Cain?
- 📖 Can I Believe? Can I Be?
- 📖 Crucial Answers from G... Minds: Walter Martin, Part 3 of a
- 📖 Crucial Answers from G... Minds: C... 2 of a
- 📖 Crucial Answers from G... Minds: F... Schaeffer, Part
- 📖 AIAA's Thoughtletter Inc... 1991-1998
- 📖 Internet-based Evidence... Christianity, ... of a 2 Part Ser
- 📖 Internet-based Evidence... Christianity, ... of a 2 Part Ser
- 📖 The Wealth of Evidence... Christianity
- 📖 More Convincing Evid... n Defense an... Cor... mation, Con... cins
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- 📖 Co... nces to Y... ucia... Que... Part
- 📖 Co... nces to Y... ucia... Que... Part
- 📖 What Happens to Those Who've Never Heard of Christ...
- 📖 Why So Wide the Gate?
- 📖 Christ...
- 📖 An Open Letter to Ted Turner
- 📖 On the Gamble of a Lifetime

## 2016

- 📖 Why Would God Have Done What He Knows He'd Done?
- 📖 Changes for Good As Evidence for Faith
- 📖 Evil, Suffering, and the Sovereignty of God
- 📖 Darkness at Noon & the Deity of Christ
- 📖 Is Jonah Just a Parable?
- 📖 If Christianity Is True, Why Do Christians Disagree with Each Other?

## 2015

- 📖 What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True? • Robert Gordon
- 📖 What About Yoga?
- 📖 Didn't Just Men Write the Bible?
- 📖 ECKANKAR: Co-worker with God or Victim of Deceit?
- 📖 Resurrection Evidence for Kids & Adults
- 📖 Who Believes What About Suffering?

## 2014

- 📖 What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True? • Dick Keyes
- 📖 Is God Personal? Is God Knowable?
- 📖 Rightside-Up Living in Upside-Down Times
- 📖 Gambling for Eternity
- 📖 The Jesus Resurrection Apparition-Hallucination Hypothesis
- 📖 Does God Ever Get It Wrong?

## 2013

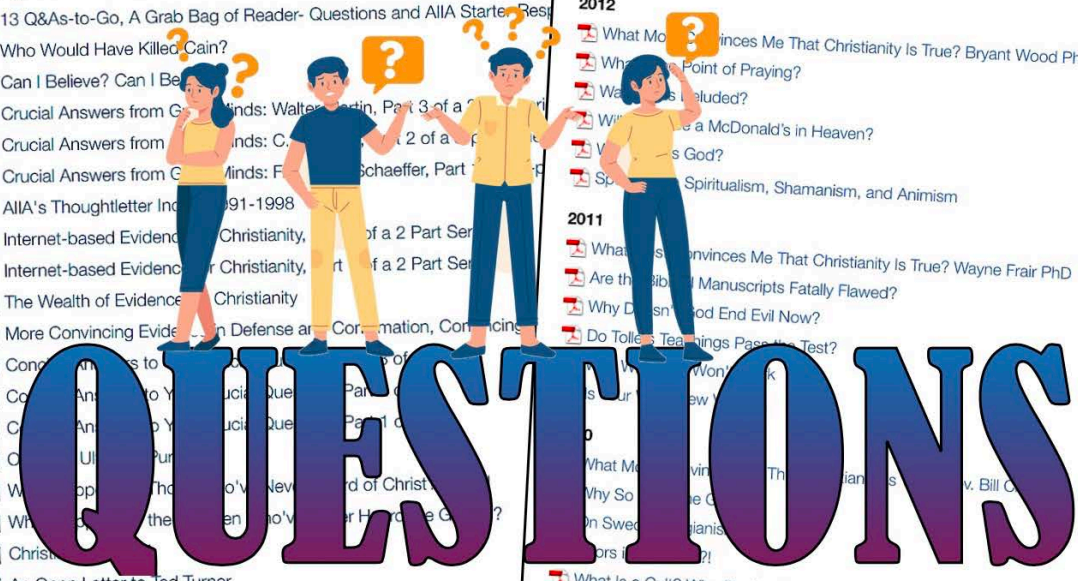
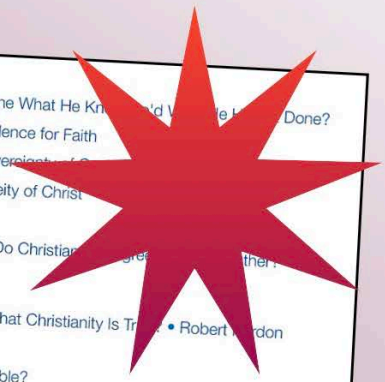
- 📖 What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True? Andrew Witmer, PhD
- 📖 Open Letter to An Ex-Christian
- 📖 Altered States of Consciousness
- 📖 Did God Create Evil?
- 📖 Gender-Based Evidence for the Resurrection
- 📖 Five Problems with Agnosticism

## 2012

- 📖 What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True? Bryant Wood PhD
- 📖 Why the Point of Praying?
- 📖 Was Jesus Included?
- 📖 Will There Be a McDonald's in Heaven?
- 📖 Who Knows God?
- 📖 Spiritualism, Shamanism, and Animism

## 2011

- 📖 What Most Convinces Me That Christianity Is True? Wayne Frair PhD
- 📖 Are the Biblical Manuscripts Fatally Flawed?
- 📖 Why Doesn't God End Evil Now?
- 📖 Do Tolerant Teachings Pass the Test?
- 📖 What Is a Cult? Who Decides?
- 📖 Does Bible Prophecy Prove Divine Authorship?



# INTRODUCTION

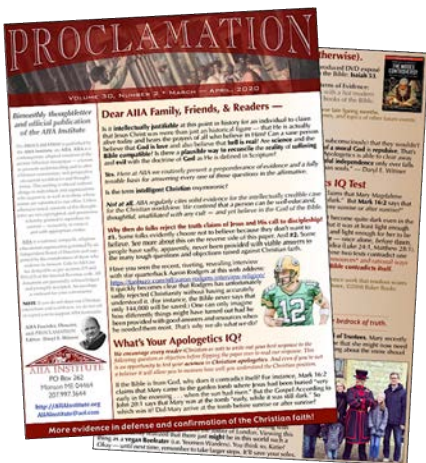
Thus far in Section 2 of this compendium we have tackled **five really big apologetics-related subjects in depth** — subjects dealing with **1)** the divinity and reliability of the Bible, **2)** the claims and identity of Jesus Christ, **3)** matters of science and origins, **4)** tough questions about suffering and evil, and **5)** worldviews (world religions, cults, thoughtforms).

**But what about so many other questions** that can be asked, such as the following, to name a few:

- ✳ **What happens to those who have never heard the gospel?**
- ✳ **Why would God have created humans if He knew ahead of time how badly things were going to turn out — and that so many people would be eternally lost?**
- ✳ **Why should I become a Christian if Christianity, just like all other religious views is, bottom line, merely a faith position that can never really be empirically proven?**
- ✳ **Why should I follow Christ when I see so many church hypocrites?**
- ✳ **How can Christians reconcile **miracles** with the laws of science?**
- ✳ **And scores of other questions.**

**For over 30 years** I have looked to Scripture, done a ton of research, and consulted the work of many respected Christians for answers to scores of questions like these. Then I published a series of thoughtletters in which I tried to provide the best **simple** answers to those questions, without sacrificing accuracy.

There is insufficient room in this compendium to include all of those thoughtletters. But every one is available on the website of **Anchor New England** (AIA's successor apologetics ministry) at this link: <https://www.anchornewengland.org/proclamation-index>



**Some of the thoughtletters** are provided in PDF format. Others are available as HTML files. Few of them are copyrighted (only where indicated), and all of them are available in a double-indexed database, are easily downloadable (therefore searchable) without cost, and in most cases may be used without having to request special permission.

Of course our thoughtletters are not the only source of answers to tough questions about the Christian faith. God has gifted many men and women down through history to articulate thoughtful, intellectually credible, responses to any and every question that has ever been raised. Please see **Section 4 Appendix 7** for a roster of many more excellent resources.



**NOTE: On the next four pages are samples of topics and thoughtletter issues that we've published since 1991. Hopefully these samples will whet your appetite for exploring the complete database.**

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*Bimonthly thoughtletter and official publication of the AIIA Institute*

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AIIA Founder, Director and PROCLAMATION Editor: Daryl E. Witmer



More evidence in defense and confirmation of the Christian faith!

## Dear AIIA Family, Friends, Readers —

What is **apologetics**? The word means to **reply with reason, to make a case for, or to defend.** You could be an apologist for a sports team. Or for green tea!

Of course, **Christian apologetics** involves making a reasonable case for **Christ** and the essential **d** evidence for making it. But one face is **relationship**. Christ. Faith is not just a religion, it becomes real and knowable. It is rather unique among alternate religions.

Then also, Jesus calls His followers **evidence of true faith** in His disciples, if you have loved the truth claims and deity of a real love among believers!

## Apologetics Thought-Provokers

“God provides enough evidence to convince those whose hearts are open but not enough evidence to coerce those whose hearts are closed.” Chamberlain & Price, *Everyday Apologetics*, © 2020, p14.

“[Pascal] argued explicitly that there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough obscurity for those who don’t.” To put it simply: if you are looking for God you will likely succeed; if you are avoiding him, you will also likely succeed. — Gavin Ortlund, *Why God Makes Sense in a World That Doesn't*, Baker Academic, © 2021, pages 213-214.

## What's Your Apologetics IQ?

We encourage every reader (Christian or not) to write out your best response to the following question or objection before flipping the paper over to read our response. This is an opportunity to test your acumen in Christian apologetics. Even if you're not a believer, it will allow you to measure how well you understand the Christian position.

There are a number of very intelligent people who believe that we are all part of an elaborate Matrix-like computer simulation created by an advanced civilization in an alternate universe. Can that idea be refuted?

# What About the Simulation Hypothesis?

## On the Agenda — at AIIA's Study Center in Monson, Maine.

- July 2, 2022 | **Return of the God Hypothesis.** Reviewing Stephen Meyer's powerful new book. By reservation.
- August 6, 2022 | **Aliens.** (DVD) If proven to exist, would UAPs and aliens cancel Christianity? By reservation.

**VISIT AIIA'S WEBSITE TODAY** for the latest listing of our complete 2022 schedule of events — including details, dates, times, and topics. While there, be sure to click the slideshows on the home page, read the blogs, and view the most recent videos created with AIIA's ministry partner, ANCHOR, SEW ENGLAND.

## Here's Our Response to this Issue's Apologetics IQ Test

Woody Allen once said: “What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case I definitely overpaid for my carpet.” All levity aside, **The Simulation Hypothesis** (TSH) holds that the odds that we as humans exist in “this reality” are only one in billions; that we are most likely part of a sophisticated simulation. Inventor and technology futurist **Ray Kurzweil** once had a little fun with this concept. He said, “Maybe our universe is the science experiment of some junior high school student in another universe.” He then joked that, based on the way things are going in this universe and world right now, she may not be going to get a very good grade!

Perhaps you're saying, “This view is way too far-fetched for me!” Yet it's true that many **bright minds** (Elon Musk, Jack Bostrom, others) have endorsed the concept. Every sincere challenge deserves a thoughtful response, right? Christians should be prepared to **defend** the gospel against an idea instead of **avoiding** it or being **dismissive**.

Here are **four possible lines of response**: 1) Actually, the **latest** secular scientific opinions appear to be casting more doubt on the plausibility of TSH; 2) **As of now** TSH is **ultimately scientifically unprovable** because it's practically **unfalsifiable**. Of course, so are Christianity, unicorns, and the claim that inside every true American are 1,776 very tiny undetectable flags! In such instances, a case must rest on **evidence** alone. And there's a lot of **solid evidence** for the Christian worldview. 3) The argument for TSH is actually an argument for an Intelligent but the nature of reality. If it is **not** the God of the Bible, many more questions are raised, e.g. Why has the designer never self-revealed? Why is the Christian worldview written into the simulation? What's the end game?

Is it possible that TSH proponents are a little like **Charlie Brown** who once wrote a letter to the **Great Pumpkin**: “Everyone tells me that you're a fake, but I believe in you. P.S. If you really are a fake, don't tell me. I don't want to know. Could TSH be a convenient alternative to reality as described in the Bible, **where we are all sinners by birth**, fully accountable to a **holy God**, needing to repent, accept His grace in Christ, and live in obedience?”

FOR FURTHER READING: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Simulation-theory.html>

## The Maine Witmer Family Report

*An album and diary of one family's effort to anchor the business of life in the bedrock of God's truth.*



Here's our son **Stephen** and daughter-in-law **Emma** with **Samuel** (13), **Annie** (11), and **Henry** (9). Oh, yes, and **Cabin** (2). Stephen continues to serve **Pepperell MA** Christian Fellowship in **Pepperell MA**, and to work with **Small Town Saratoga**.

These are indeed **troubling times** in the midst of it all and along with the effects of aging and in my case **sex** — to be wearing out, (I'll spare you the details), **Mary and I are grateful for many blessings!** One of them is living here in **Monson, Maine**—our home for 47 years now. **And 2022 is Monson's 20th anniversary!**

**A hymn from my childhood** sometimes comes to mind: “O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end. Be Thou forever near me, my Master and my friend. I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side, nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my guide.” **Okay — have I ever told you about the day I finally got up the nerve to propose to Mary?** I said: “Well, honey, I think I'm at last ready to walk down the aisle.” She said, “Good” and sent me to the grocery store!

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My thoughts than your thoughts.” [Isaiah 55:9]

One reputable old prophet observed: “Verily Thou art a God that hides Thyself, O God of Israel.”

when men would have opted for bigger and more. [Judges 7:7, 1 Samuel 16:11-13; 1 Samuel 17:41ff] He inspired flawed men to convey and preserve His most critical truths to this world (2 Timothy 3:16), an approach that still seems untractious and risky even to those of us who hold to a high view of Scripture.

## UNCONVENTIONALLY SUPERNATURAL

by Daryl E. Witmer

For 4,000 years of Old Testament history the prophets of Israel had been announcing that a Messiah would one day visit this planet.

The Messiah was to be supernatural, God Himself entering space and time in order to redeem those whom He loved/loves. [Isaiah 9; John 3:16]

“Deep in unfathomable mines, Or never failing skill, He treasures up his bright designs, And works his sovereign will.”

Who of us would dare suggest that we have God figured out? Who of us has any basis for believing that we could ever map strategy for the Almighty?

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth. Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.” [Isaiah 40:28]

Someone once noted, “If there is anything predictable about God, it is the fact that He is unpredictable.”

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” [Romans 11:33]

God's *modus operandi* in all of history has differed so radically from the approach that humans would most likely have taken. He has delayed when men would have proceeded [Exodus 12:40]. He has called for smaller and fewer

Considering all of this, doesn't the fact that Jesus didn't arrive on earth with a great deal of fanfare — that the advent of this key historic spiritual leader was so private, so unpredictable, so unexpected, so humble, so low-key — doesn't that hint to you that this may indeed have been a God thing?

The Biblical account of the birth of Jesus, given all that we now know about Jesus, should strike every one of us as uncannily Divine. It should, upon reflection, impress us as being un conventionally supernatural.

Carol and Jimmy Owens wrote:

*How should a King come? Even a child knows the answer, of course. In a coach of gold with a pure white horse. In the beautiful city in the prime of the day. And the trumpets should cry and the crowds make way. And the flags fly high in the morning sun. And the people all cheer for the Sovereign One. And everyone knows that's the way that it's done. That's the way that a King should come!*

*How should a King come? Even a commoner understands. He should come for His treasures and His house and lands. He should dine upon summer strawberries and milk, and sleep upon beds of down and silk. And high on a hill His castle should glow With the lights of the city in the coldest street. With the shafts and the rings of their donkey's feet. And a King lay hid in a virgin's womb. And there were no jewels before. And everyone knows that's the way that it's done. That's the way that a King should come!*

*How should a King come? On a star-filled night into Bethlehem. Ride a weary woman and a worried man. And the only sound in the coldest street. With the shafts and the rings of their donkey's feet. And a King lay hid in a virgin's womb. And there were no jewels before. At last in a barn in a manger of hay He came... And God incarnate lay!*

More Convincing Evidence in Defense and Confirmation of the Christian Faith

A bimonthly thoughtletter published by the AIIA Institute  
PO Box 262  
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## Would the Discovery of Extraterrestrials Invalidate Christianity?

compiled by Daryl E. Witmer

We asked a number of Christian thinkers: “Would the discovery of intelligent human-like life elsewhere in the universe invalidate Christianity? How would such a discovery affect your faith personally?” Here are the answers they gave us, along with a published excerpt on the subject by Dr. Norman Geisler.

**DR. NORMAN GEISLER**, apologist, author, professor

My professional opinion as a theologian is — the Bible is true and the Bible teaches this kind of thing [UFOs] can and does occur in the world... I think that they are a Satanic manifestation in the world for the purpose of deception — from Appendix 4 of *Creation and the Courts: Eighty Years of Conflict in the Class*, © 2007 Crossway.

**DENNIS HALL** • gardener and landscaping, carpentry, Dexter, Maine

What about the real extraterrestrials: angels, demons, spirit guides, the devil, and yes — God Himself — all relegated to the realm of fantasy today.

God told the Israelites to treat strangers kindly. We are cautioned to do the same; we may be entertaining angels.

I think much of the hysteria of the UFO and alien phenomenon is fueled by demonic activity... Satan strives mightily to derail God's plan. As an astronomer for 40 years I've never seen anything in the night sky [and I've seen a few *new*] that couldn't be explained naturally.

**DR. WAYNE FRAIR** • scientist, professor, author; Basking Ridge NJ

This exobiology matter keeps coming up, and one character elucidated that this is the only “biological” field in which there is nothing to study! I know of no Biblical references to this subject. But “scientifically” there has never been an issue which engendered more interest from people around the world. Multiplied millions with their computers search for messages which demonstrate extraterrestrial intelligence. Reliable evidence? Zilch! And though there is virtually no likelihood of finding life “out there,” even if we did, it should have no effect on humans because Biblical revelation is for “fallen” earth (the “silent planet.”) Read further in my books, *A Case for Creation* and *Biology and Creation*.

**REV. BRAD JOHNSON**, pastor, Acton MA

The Bible does not say anything about God creating or not creating life on other planets. It would probably surprise me to get to heaven and find out that God created this vast universe without other life existing. Because He is far greater than I can ever imagine! He can do far greater than I can imagine, and that includes life on other distant planets. I don't have a biblical answer about sin and Christ's death covering sin in other worlds, but this doesn't shake my faith. See C. S. Lewis' *Space Trilogy!*

**ROBERT GREGORY**, ESQ attorney from Danverscott, Maine

How would the discovery of other-worldly “human-like” creatures fit into the scheme of the fall? Would they be “in Adam,” i.e. Romans 5? I'm afraid I have no answers, or even speculation, that would address those hypotheticals. But in the end such a discovery would not affect my personal faith beyond seeking meaningful answers to these perplexing questions. It would be astonishing indeed, but it would in no way invalidate Christianity as I understand it. My hunch, of course, is that God planed human-like life here on planet earth and no where else.

More Evidence in Defense and Confirmation of the Christian Faith

**BELOW IS JUST ONE SAMPLE** of the many topics covered in our large database of thoughtletters which can be explored at: <https://www.anchornewengland.org/proclamation-index> | **See also Section 4 Appendix 7** for many more resources — including books, DVDs, and valuable links.



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## WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD ABOUT JESUS?

by Daryl E. Witmer

You're a Christian, right?

Yes.

You believe that a person must believe in Jesus to get into heaven?

Not just *believe* in Jesus, but *receive* Him and His grace offer. (John 1:12)

Well, then, what is the fate of the millions of people (past and present) who have never even *heard* about Jesus? Are they all going to hell?

We can be sure that whatever happens to them will be fair. Abraham once said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25)

Sounds like you're avoiding my question. Will they all go to hell?

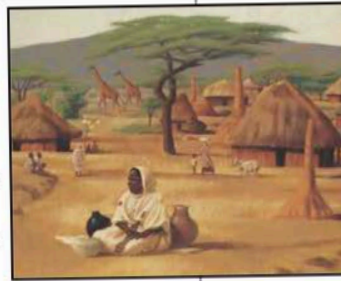
Quite likely. But it depends.

Wow! Sending people who have never even heard about Jesus to hell because they haven't believed and received Him doesn't sound very fair or kind or loving to me.

Well, God doesn't actually *send* people to hell. People end up in hell because they've rejected God's offer to spare them from that terrible place. But remember, I said, "It depends."

### It depends on what?

According to the Bible a person's eternal fate will be determined on the basis of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether they ever hear about Jesus (through God's *special revelation*) may depend on how they respond to the evidence of God that they are provided in nature and conscience (through His *general revelation*). Everyone in the world has an innate sense of God and eternity in their heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:11). No one anywhere has any excuse for not seeking (vs. suppressing) further truth about God after noting the evidence of Him in nature (Romans 1: 19-20). But because the human heart is sinful by birth, many will *not* seek Him. Which is why I said earlier that it's quite likely that most of those who have never heard of Christ will spend eternity in hell. But how can that be attributed to God?



Let me get this straight. You're suggesting that if someone is looking at the stars one night, senses that there is a God, and does nothing about it, they may be doomed forever? But if they act on that vague sense by seeking God, they will be granted a word about Jesus, and able to receive Him?

Listen to this true story, related by my friend and fellow Christian apologist, Alex McFarland. Alex says that he was once in Shabwalala, a small dusty town 100 miles from Lusaka, Zambia. While he was talking with some African boys he heard a clanging noise slowly coming down a nearby path. Then they all spotted this rail-thin cow with a bell around its neck being led along by an old disheveled-looking man. The old man immediately came up to Alex and began rattling off words in his native Bebma dialect. A translator explained:

"This man has walked a day and a half to meet with you. He heard there were white missionaries from America visiting, and he has a question for you." When Alex asked about the cow, he was told that the man wouldn't leave his only cow behind or it would have been stolen. So he brought it all the way with him. At that point the man began pointing at the sky and all around him, saying, "I know there's a god, because all of this had to come from somewhere. It couldn't have come from nothing. But I don't know where to take it from there..."

Alex says: "I nearly burst into tears. Here was a man nearing the end of his life, certainly weathered by its trials and storms. He obviously had little to eat, maybe wasn't even sure where his next meal was going to come from. And yet the burning inside him had caused him to leave everything on the chance that maybe a strange foreigner

might have an answer to his soul-searing question. This was probably the most intelligent man I've ever met—more so than any of the university professors I was used to meeting on American campuses—because he knew enough about what he didn't know to seek out an answer. He recognized the stark contrast between the fullness of his surroundings and the emptiness inside him. It was a matter of words before he accepted Jesus into his heart. 'I have sought this for my whole life,' he said with tears in his eyes, his life changed forever and the weight of the world lifted off his shoulders. He then asked if I would come to his village. 'There are 13 more who need to know this,' he pleaded. We went and saw 13 more souls added to the kingdom of God."



NOTE: The somewhat abbreviated account above is related directly from The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity, by Alex McFarland, ©2007 Regal. Visit Amazon.com

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**AREOPAGUS  
PROCLAMATION**

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# Why Would God Have Done What He Knew He'd Wish He Hadn't Done?

by Daryl E. Witmer

**In Genesis 6:5-8 the Bible (NASB) says:** "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

**QUESTION:** If God knows the future, why would He have created humans in the first place, knowing that He would later "regret" and be "sorry" that He had created them?

**ANSWER:** God was willing to bear the grief of seeing the world fall into the mess that it did in order to show grace to Noah and be glorified through him and his family.

God was genuinely sorry to have made man on the earth, but not so sorry as to not have done it. His choice was vindicated in the grace that He showed Noah. It is still being vindicated today in the grace and salvation of all those who come to believe, and in the glory that God has and will forever receive through them.

The Hebrew term for "grieved" in Genesis 6:5-7 can also be translated 'displeased' — and note that **nothing** in these verses implies that God was at all **surprised** by what happened.



From God's eternal and omniscient perspective, the wicked behavior of men on the earth, and His own grief over it, **were already fully known to God as He was creating humanity.**

The phrase, "The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart" is very possibly an **accommodation of tense** to us in our time-bound state.

To say it another way, this was no doubt God's way of explaining what initially occurred *from His perspective outside of time* to us humans who live within the framework of time.

Therefore, the point is — even as God was proceeding to create man on the earth, He was already experiencing sorrow and grief over what He knew, and has always known from eternity past, would happen

as the result of that creative act. Yet He proceeded anyway. Why? What could be so good as to justify and explain the terrible judgment about to fall on so many people, and the anguished grief of a great and righteous God?

Dr. Albert Mohler says that "the greatest good is that good which brings God the greatest glory." He also explains that "God is more glorified as a creator *and* redeemer than He would be if we knew Him only as creator. Yet in order to be our redeemer He must redeem us from sin." Which may at least in part explain why God created a world in which sin and evil temporarily exist.

In his classic *Systematic Theology*, Dr. Wayne Grudem says that God's creating mankind "led to events that in the short term caused him sorrow, but that nonetheless in the long term would ultimately achieve his good purposes. This is somewhat analogous

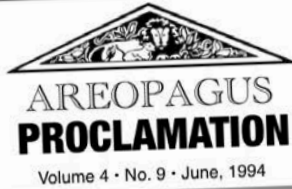
to a human father who allows his child to embark on a course he knows will bring much sorrow, both to the **parent** and to the child, but who allows it nonetheless, because he knows that greater long-term good will come from it."

Dr. Grudem points out that this text in Genesis says **nothing** that should lead us to think that "if God could start again and act differently, he would in fact **not** create man." In other words, God deliberately purposefully did what He did because, in spite of the grief, a far greater good results.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:33-35)

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Revised to 6/2018

# What If Christianity Can't Be Proven?

An Intriguing Parable  
About Three Guys on  
the Trail for Truth

by Daryl E. Witmer

Once upon a time three fellows decided to hike the Appalachian Trail (AT). None of the three had ever previously hiked the trail. But early that April they departed with much anticipation from the trail's southern terminus, Springer Mountain, in Georgia.

Day after day they hiked, progressing slowly but steadily through the southern and mid-Atlantic states. Finally, they arrived in New England, then Maine.

One of the three men had been carrying a compass. Whenever they would come to an AT sign, he took a reading. As they moved along the trail, all three noted that the compass consistently indicated that they were traveling in a generally northeasterly direction.

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One evening in an overnight shelter, the three men engaged in a long and intense discussion about matters of faith. One claimed to be a Christian. Another said that he was agnostic because — as he put it — there just wasn't sufficient evidence to know for certain what was true about life, and that until there was, he was inclined to remain uncommitted.

The third man said that his search had revealed that no religion could be 100% proven, so he had come to the conclusion that it didn't greatly matter what one believed. "To each his own," he said. "I've tried Zen and Dianetics. I'm now exploring New Age thought. It seems to me that all religions lead to the same ultimate destination. So if you're happy, that's what counts. Nobody can 100% prove that they have a claim on truth, so I say go for whatever feels right."

Over the next few weeks they occasionally revisited the subject. The Christian tried to explain that even though Christianity is a faith system, it is an *intelligent* faith system. "Christian faith and reason are compatible," he insisted. "You go as far along the road of reason as possible toward a unified explanation of life, and then you **invest** your faith on the basis of the *preponderance* of evidence."

He pointed out that our justice system operates on a similar principle — or no verdicts would ever be rendered. "Just because one can't 100% reason their way to Christianity doesn't mean that they need to reject reason out of hand," he said. "We should invest our faith on the basis of what we *do* know to be true. And I am now convinced that Christianity is the

the most reasonable faith system proposed in all of human history." But the other two remained unconvinced.

Finally, one day in mid-October, the three arrived at a three-way fork in the trail. Each path led in a separate direction and they were unable to locate any AT blaze marks. After checking the compass, they realized that the trail on the right seemed to head in a generally northeasterly direction. The trail on the left appeared to loop around horse-shoe style and head south. The trail in the middle headed west.



For over two hours the men discussed their options. Finally, the Christian said, "Look, guys, for over six months now this trail has been heading northeast. I for one think that we should take the trail to the right which continues in that same direction." But the agnostic said, "No. Unless we can 100% verify that the right fork is the Appalachian Trail, I'm going nowhere!" And he sat down. The third guy said, "Because we can't *absolutely* prove that any of these trails is the AT, for me one guess seems just as valid as another." So he stood up and headed left.

Consider all the evidence for a **personal Creator-God** consistent with the Christian worldview, e.g. nature, human personality, conscience. Consider all evidence for the **deity of Jesus Christ**, e.g. fulfilled prophecy, His miracles, His resurrection. **Where does the evidence point? Have you invested your faith *intelligently*?**

**More Evidence in Defense and Confirmation of the Christian Faith**







## SECTION 3

# Apologetics in Action

**Clarifying Goals**

**Tips for Preparation**

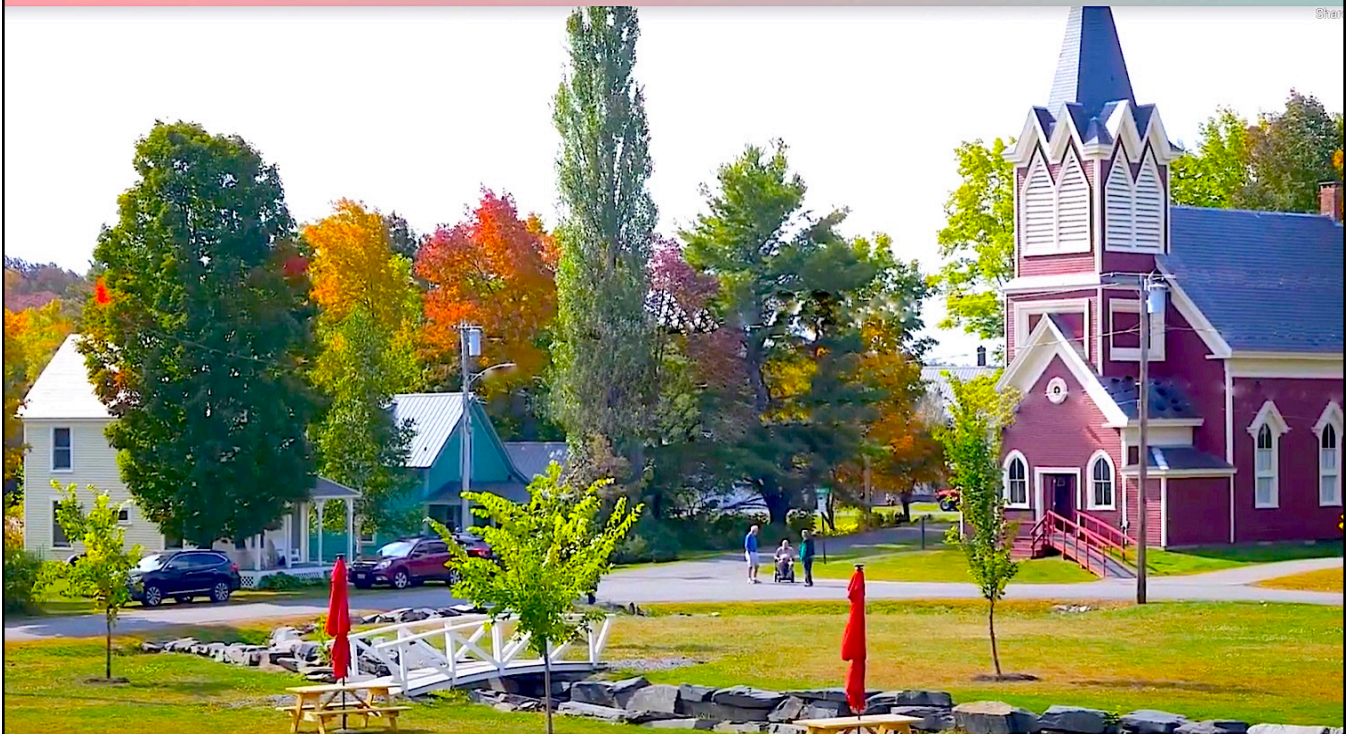
**Helpful Approaches**

**A Diary of True-to-Life  
Dialogues & Live Exchanges**





# APOLOGETICS **LIVE** AND **UNREHEARSED**



ENGAGING IN **REAL-LIFE ENCOUNTERS**  
WITH REAL LIVING PEOPLE ON THE  
SUBJECTS THAT MATTER MOST

## INTRODUCING YOU TO SECTION 3

In this section of the compendium I'm inviting you to sit in with me on a **select number** of the many live unrehearsed apologetics-related conversations that I've engaged in over just the past seven years (2016-2023) — with Appalachian Trail (AT) hikers, Monson Arts students, visitors passing through Monson, and some of my own Monson neighbors and friends.

### PURPOSE

What is my purpose in including this section? Certainly not to boast. I can honestly say that (for the **most** part) I play **to** God and **for** God in my work. I also do my work for the eternal benefit of those elect who, perhaps through **my** efforts, will come to Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord. Of course I am accountable to my board of directors, to my family and church family, and to my supporting constituents for how I steward my time. So this record can serve that purpose.

But beyond that I do not need many accolades at this point in my life. Besides, my work is often flawed. You as the reader will no doubt think as you review my various encounters, "Oh, I would have handled that differently." "Oh, I could have done much better than that." Well, I too have had such thoughts about my words and approach — often just a few minutes after the exchange is over and the moment is past. "Oh, why didn't I think to say it this way or that way?!"

Of course my additional purpose and hope in including this section is that by reading the accounts of my attempts to do effective evangelism and apologetics on the streets of Monson, you the reader and other believers will be spurred and better equipped to engage with skeptics, seekers, neighbors, kids, students, co-workers, and so on — at the office, at the grocery store, across the backyard fence, at the mall (if there are any malls still in existence), in a plane or Uber taxi, or online via email and social media — but in a smarter, sharper, more creative manner. That will make my time and efforts in publishing this diary worthwhile.

### PRIVACY

In order to honor the privacy of those with whom I've conversed I have changed the names and the trail names of many (but not all) of those mentioned, along with certain details of their lives. But every single account is based on an actual event and I believe accurately represents the gist of the conversation.

### ONLY SMALL TALK?

You will note that in a number of the encounters cited below there is no specific mention of the gospel at all. Sometimes not much more is noted than a brief chat and some light conversation. And in very few of these accounts is there any specific discernible outcome in terms of a decision to follow Christ. **Why is that?**



## THE GRANDER SCHEME OF THINGS

Apologetics is different than evangelism. I often combine the two, but in numerous other cases I clearly sense that it would be wiser to build an acquaintance, clear away obstacles, and lay some groundwork than to hustle someone into praying “the sinners’ prayer.” I often pray and try hard to be sensitive to the leading of God’s Spirit in this, noting the demeanor and apparent openness (or not) of whoever it is with whom I am speaking. But it’s often a fairly subjective call.

I fully understand the urgency of evangelism. I am well aware of the fact that someone with whom I’m speaking may die before they have another Spirit-guided opportunity to receive Christ. But particularly when I am talking with a neighbor, or expect to see the person with whom I am speaking again soon, or cross paths with them on a regular basis, it seems preferable not to risk prematurely alienating the very folks whom I’m seeking to point to Christ. In the grander divine scheme of things the best route to the destination doesn’t always involve a straight line. Establishing a caring friendship and chipping away at any intellectual objections to faith may at time best serve the greater purpose.

**In the grander divine scheme of things the best route to the destination doesn’t always involve a straight line. Establishing a caring friendship and chipping away at any intellectual objections to faith may best serve the greater purpose.**

## NOT SO MANY TANGIBLE RESULTS

By nature, apologetics outreach is very different than a Billy Graham evangelistic crusade invitation, a church altar call, or a summer Christian camp program where someone can go quickly tally the number of souls saved and lives rededicated within the past seven days. I’ve learned that I must often be content to simply lay the basis for what will hopefully be a later conversion to Christ.

That is to say, in the work of apologetics we very often will not see immediate tangible results. So I frequently think of what Steve Wingfield (an evangelist himself) once told me:

**“If you sow and do not reap, be faithful; someone may reap after you. If you reap and have not sown, be humble; someone has sown before you.”**

## AGENT, MESSENGER, FACILITATOR

In all of this I often think of myself as an agent in the process of God drawing to Himself those whom He has already elected for salvation. He does not **need** me to bring His plan for this or that person to fruition, but by His **choice** and in His **wisdom** He has devised a process that might involve me to guide him or her to eternal life in Christ.



So when I approach some candidate for the kingdom I am often thinking, “This guy or this gal may very well be among the elect; they just don’t know it yet. Perhaps God will be pleased to use me today to make the gospel persuasive and to facilitate their entry into the kingdom of God.” Or “Perhaps God has chosen this man or this woman for His own, and is going to make that clear to him or her through me today.”

## PREPARATION

**Cold turkey apologetics.** Exactly what does this expression mean? It might perhaps legitimately refer to unrehearsed and unpredictable street encounters with skeptics on matters of faith; that which is sometimes referred to as **buttonholing** someone about their spiritual condition.

But it is hopefully not a term advocating the methodology of, for instance, rashly approaching someone and blurting out, “The Bible says that only fools deny the existence of God. So I have a question for you. Are you a fool?” or “Are you aware of the fact that all agnostics are cowards?” or “Give me your best argument against Christianity and I’ll checkmate you in ten minutes flat!”



So how then do we best engage others in conversations on issues that matter?

- **Resolve.** Let me suggest that we begin by resolving to resist the urge to just blend into the routine of all the generic vapid talk that’s occurring around us day in and day out: “**How are you?**” “Good.” “**Great!**” “**Nice weather, huh?**” “Yeah, great weather.” “**Well, have a good day then.**” “Yeah, you, too. Have a wonderful day.”

*Come to an understanding with yourself before you even head out into the world each day that the world needs what you have to offer more than you need the world’s approval.*

No! Dare to break into such mindlessness. Dare to be different. Resolve to be conspicuously radical, if necessary. Come to an understanding with yourself before you even head out into the world each day that the world needs what you have to offer more than you need the approval that the world might offer you. (John 12:42-43)

- **Rely.** Don’t get ahead of God’s Spirit. Pray that He would prepare the heart and mind of someone whose path He will arrange to have intersect with your own path today. Then when you see a candidate, ask Him silently whether this is the right person and the right moment.
- **Ready your mind** to be inconvenienced. The schedule that God arranges for your encounter with a candidate for the kingdom may not fit your plans for the day. There may be interruptions. You may have to skip lunch. Be ready to move when the Spirit says “Move.” And go when the Spirit says, “Go.” Or take a detour when the Spirit says, “Take this detour.”
- **Read the receptivity level** of whomever it is with whom you begin to converse. Read the body language. Arms crossed? Shifty eyes? Shuffling feet? Crawdadding backward? It may be time to move on to the next appointment.
- **Relax.** Leave the results to God. Don’t take it personally when someone resists your initiative, or be crushed if someone rejects you personally. Jesus met with lots of resistance and rejection before you. So have countless other missionaries and martyrs. Accept it, wear it as a badge, move on, try again. How many doors does a salesman need to knock on before he makes a sale? You’ve got the greatest product of all time — even if someone isn’t buying it today.



## APPROACHES

### CLARIFYING TERMS

There is unfortunately the sometimes cumbersome matter of establishing good clear communication! For instance, I go into many conversations knowing that there's probably going to be a need for some clarification of terminology. **Why?**

Well, as an example, what I mean when I say “God” (i.e. the infinite-personal creator and sustainer of the universe) may not at all be what a Wiccan thinks when she hears me say “God” (i.e. feminine and male deities or the world of nature that represent aspects of the divine) — or what a Hindu thinks when hearing me say God (i.e. a pantheon of gods who point to Brahman as the great supreme ultimate Oneness of the universe), and so on.



So I might need to elaborate on the word I'm using by defining the term, e.g. defining sin as not just **bad things that we do** but **a condition that we inherent**; a condition that stands in opposition to the truth and will and character of the holy Moral Lawgiver who is really there.

In this regard I would also highly recommend a classic tested-and-tried apologetics tool authored by **Greg Koukl**, a respected Christian apologist in his own right. His book is entitled **TACTICS**, and it offers practical guidance on how to clarify and draw out what your conversation partner is really thinking and meaning by what he or she says. | A newer book by Koukl is: **Street Smarts**.

*I may discover by asking just a few questions, for example, that the person with whom I'm speaking has just been diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. He really doesn't need an academic treatise right now on why God allows evil.*

### LISTENING WITH TWO EARS AND A MIND

Clear communication also involves taking time to understand the challenges that someone may be facing in life and bringing to the table in our exchange with them. I may discover by asking just a few questions, for example, that the person with whom I'm speaking has just been diagnosed with advanced

pancreatic cancer. He really doesn't need an academic treatise right now on why God allows evil. Or I may discover that the young fellow who seems rude and dismissive when he learns that I am a Christian once suffered horrible abuse from a religious person and is still blaming God for deserting him in his hour of need for protection. Or that a gal with whom I'm speaking once felt condemned by her church because she didn't fit in and meet the standards of their idea of morality, and is therefore transferring that hurt and anger to **everyone** else who identifies as a Christian.

The list of reasons for turning on God and resisting His truth seems endless — and I've run into many on the list. Often the resistance takes the form of claiming that Christian faith (or the Bible) is old-fashioned, out-of-touch, and illogical. But there's often a story behind that story. My task is to discover why someone is rejecting faith in Christ and gently walk with them in His direction for awhile.

I say “**gently** walk with them for a while” because effective apologetics is almost always best done with sensitivity and compassion. Contrary to conventional thinking apologetics must be about far more than wielding evidence and logic in a cold calculated manner in order to make the case for faith. **How** we say **what** we say is important. Good apologetics must be couched in kindness.

My friend Joe Bubar tells the story of one of his fellow seminary students who had managed to land a part-time job cleaning the school's classrooms. One night as he was completing his work a profoundly brilliant professor [possibly his own professor of apologetics!] entered the room and began to verbally berate the student for his poor cleaning performance. Joe says that at that point his friend took a deep breath and said to the professor, "Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, I just want you to know that, if I were not a Christian, there is nothing that you could say right now to convince me to become one." Then he walked away.

### **"HOW ABOUT AFTER THAT?"**

One morning in late September 2020 I met **Butterscotch** just outside AIIA's Study Center. Butterscotch was probably in her early 20s and was in Monson while hiking the Appalachian Trail (AT). Almost all AT hikers use trail names, and this hiker's trail name was **Butterscotch** (altered slightly here to assure anonymity).



She told me that she was from New York City and was hiking the trail alone. I said, "Aren't your parents worried about you being way up here by yourself in such remote country?" She said, "No, actually they'd be more worried about me being back in New York City — you know, with COVID and all."

I said, "What will you do after you've finished the AT?" She said, "I hope to hike another trail in Colorado." I said, "**How about after that?**" She said, "Well, I plan to study physics and get a degree." I said, "**How about after that? Get married? Raise a family? Live a life? But then, how about after that?**" She smiled and said, "I'm not sure." So I said, "Do you believe in an afterlife?" She said, "Well, I'm Jewish." I replied, "Great. Jesus was also Jewish, and so were His closest followers. What do you believe about Jesus?"

The conversation went on from there. As she later went on her way I prayed that the Spirit of God would make that phrase — "**But how about after that?**" — echo in her ears for days and weeks and until she took up my challenge to read more about **Jesus** in the Gospels. I went inside to my office. My day was off to a good start, doing what I'm here to do — pointing people to the One who is truth, right where I'm to do it.

Next time someone tells you what their plans are for the next week, why not ask them, "How about after that?" "But how about after that?" "But how about after this life? What then?"

## USE PROBING QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP RAPPORT AND LOWER BARRIERS

Get the conversation going. Most any of the following will do if the person to whom you're hoping to talk about issues that matter has the time and is open to talking.

- Where do you see yourself five years from now? What's your favorite music genre? Who is your favorite author? Tell me about your family. Are you interested in sports? If money was not a factor, where would you want to go on vacation for a month?
- Do you attend church anywhere? If not, why not? Are your parents religious? How about your grandmother? How do you figure life began? What do you think about artificial intelligence? When and how do you suppose the world will end?
- What do you believe about Jesus? What would you say is the main message of the Bible? How do you cope with the challenges that you face in life? You seem like a reasonable person. So why haven't you thought more about what comes after this life? How do you feel about your approaching death? If I could prove to you that Christianity is true, would you become a Christian?

## USE SURVEY QUESTIONS

I have often used self-designed surveys as conversation openers: "Hey, I'm taking a two-minute survey every year and this year the question is, 'Do you believe that there's any such thing as heaven? Why or why not?'" I used that question in 2022 with good success.

This year (2023) I've been asking: "What's your authority when determining what's true about life? Multiple choice: Science? The Bible? Your parents? Elon Musk? Q? Scooby Doo? If none of the above, what? If one of the above, why?"

### Other possible yes-or-no survey questions that can lead to a fuller exchange:

- ★ Do you believe that there are truths that apply to everyone everywhere all the time?
- ★ Would America be better or worse off if all churches closed this week?
- ★ Will artificial intelligence without a Judeo-Christian moral base lead us to a better world?
- ★ Do you believe in space aliens and, if so, will they one day try to take over our planet?

## MORE CONVERSATIONAL SEGUES

After I meet someone and we engage in a little small talk, I often begin actively thinking about how to creatively move the conversation from, say, the weather to the meaning of life or the existence of God.

- "Bad weather everywhere these days, it seems. You've probably heard about the record-breaking heatwave in Phoenix, and the floods in Vermont, and the tornadoes in Oklahoma? Someone asked me not so long ago whether I believe that God really is in control of the weather. How would you have answered that question?"
- "Yeah, Monson is a great place to live. I enjoy the slower pace and all the unspoiled nature here in the northwoods. I'm very grateful to God for miraculously bringing us here so many years ago. Do you believe in a personal God who directs the details of your life?"
- "You doing okay these days? I find that getting older causes me to think more about what comes after this life. Does that happen to you as well?"

- “Hey, I like those shades. Did you know that there’s a verse in the Bible that refers to your shades? Yep. In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul wrote ‘Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.’ Do you expect to see Jesus face to face when you die?”
- “Yeah, the news is pretty bad these days. But I’m glad for some good news that has given me a solid reason to hope.” (Hopefully you’ll be asked what it is.)
- “Do you attend a church where you live?” (That’s a fairly innocuous unoffensive question that I often use to get a sense of where someone stands on matters of faith before moving the exchange to spiritual matters.)
- “You know, you remind me a little bit of my third cousin once removed whom I’ve never seen or met or even know anything about. Just joking. But it brings to mind a place in the Bible where Jesus is telling some people that they aren’t going to be getting into heaven because He said that He never knew them in life. Let me ask you this. If you were to die tonight and God was to say to you, “Why should I let you in My heaven,’ what would you say?”

### CAN I TELL YOU MY STORY?

Stories often work well today. Narratives. Meta-narratives. Most folks are open to hearing a **brief** (emphasis on **brief**; maximum three minutes) story — a mini-meta-narrative — about how you came to faith.

### TRAIL MAGIC

For years I’ve carried a small basket with me as I drive my wheelchair around town. It’s filled with free post-cards of Monson, watercolor bookmarks of the Study Center, a few gospel tracts (such as the Navigator’s Bridge Illustration) and — last but not least — candy bars! To be more specific: Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups, Hershey’s Almond Bars, Snickers bars, and so on.)

AT hikers are used to such “Trail Magic,” as they call it. People, towns, and groups randomly set up a card table or cooler along the trail in unexpected places and hand out free snacks, cold sodas, or whatever. A hiker comes out of the woods drenched in sweat, hot, smelly, thirsty, and — there’s a smiling face handing out an ice-cold bottle of water. That’s Trail Magic.

I’ve discovered that once a hiker accepts some trail magic from me they’re less inclined to quickly walk away! Am I playing on guilt or using manipulative techniques to entice them to engage on issues that matter? Maybe. But I don’t think so, because there’s no actual coercion or pressure involved. But even if the **trail magic is a hook**, I believe that it’s justified.

I’m here to persuade them to truth that may change their eternal destiny. And it was Jesus who told His disciples 2,000 years ago that He would make them fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). He must have expected them to use some sort of hook or net to catch people, right?



## BETTER NOT CONSIDER THIS CONVERSATION A COINCIDENCE

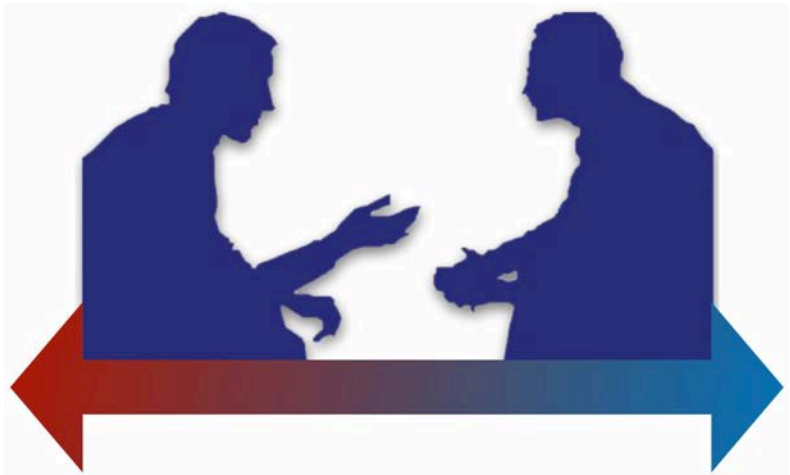
*I often conclude my exchanges with skeptics by pointing out that they had better not consider our meeting to be a mere coincidence.*

I often conclude my exchanges with skeptics by pointing out that they had better not consider our meeting to be a mere coincidence. I point out the long odds of our just happening to both be in this place at the same time. I endorse the idea that a sovereign God directs the trajectory of every molecule and every little dust mote in the universe. And I stress what I myself firmly believe — that our visit was divinely-arranged. Then I emphasize the solemn and eternal implications of that truth.

### TRUE LIFE ENCOUNTERS

#### One day in the Fall of 2016 I

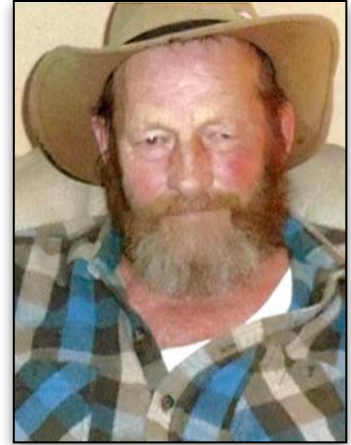
welcomed an Appalachian Trail (AT) thru-hiker by the name of Ethan into AllA's Study Center. His trail name was **Friendly Guy** and he was in Monson for just a brief visit before launching off into the 100-Mile Wilderness on his way to the northern terminus of the trail on mile-high Mt. Katahdin. Ethan told me that he was a software programmer for the BOSE company — and an agnostic. When he mentioned having been a math major in college I asked him to give me his opinion on a short video by apologist Greg Koukl about the fact that math itself could actually not be proven. That led to an hour-long discussion about matters of faith. Before he left that day, he agreed to read **I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist**, by Norm Geisler and Frank Turek, and then be in touch with me to let me know his thoughts.



**A few weeks later I met an unassuming young couple** at the public landing on Lake Hebron, just a few steps from the Study Center. They were from the Boston area, driving north toward Montreal thru Monson. When I asked about their work, he told me that he was a nuclear physicist at Harvard University. She informed me that she was a physician, specializing in internal medicine. He asked me what I do in Monson. I told him. Then I invited them in and asked them about their faith. He said he'd been raised Presbyterian. She was raised Hindu. Neither of them were currently "active" in their faith, they said. Their total visit lasted less than 30 minutes, but in that brief time I was able to demonstrate that credible evidence for Christian faith exists, pass along some literature, and provide them with a way to be in further touch if they chose.



**Carl Vainio** (real name) **was a living legend in our town of Monson, Maine, for years.** Although he showed a tender side at times, for the most part Carl's reputation was that of a rough tough old Finn who frequently ended up on the wrong side of the law and local officials. It seemed that more often than not he operated on the principle that's "It's easier to get forgiveness than to get permission" because he would typically go ahead and do whatever he was inclined to do and then deal with the consequences. Often that meant that things (trees, buildings, acreage) and people were left in a path of destruction behind him. And not many folks were inclined to cross Carl Vainio. He had that sort of reputation when we first came to town in the mid-1970s.



Perhaps the following abridged excerpt from his obituary (published in the **Bangor Daily News**) will give you a better idea of who Carl was and how he rolled. You may need to read between the lines to get the whole picture.

Carl E. Vainio, 78, rolled a seven, at home where he wanted to be, on December 21, 2019. He was born November 6, 1941, in Dover-Foxcroft. He was a woodsman and farmer most of his life and in later years he owned Monson Maine Slate Co. As a young man he dreamed of owning those quarries. He made his dream come true. He was a member of the Guilford Fire Department in the 1960's.

He was known to donate to organizations for children, but always anonymously. In hard times he put wild game on tables of people in need. He could also make the most beautiful bouquets of wild flowers you have ever seen. He loved hunting and fishing, the more illegal it was, the more enjoyment he got out of it. (There was a lot of enjoyment). His greatest pride was his grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and dogs.

He loved his television, especially old Westerns (no commercials). If the Red Sox were losing, he would get mad and turn the channel back to the Westerns. He didn't sing, but if the situation was right, he would sing "Young at Heart" by Frank Sinatra to you.

And just between you, me, and the woodbox, he and Weldon have Inspector Finley on the run again.

He lived his life his way. He was a LEGEND.

In the summer there will be a celebration of life at the family farm in Abbot, where we will share stories of adventures, tender moments, and the times he did it when they said he couldn't.

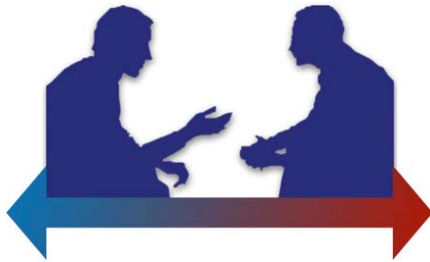
One afternoon a number of years before his death I met Carl Vainio on Homer Hill Road, not far from my home. Carl said to me, "Hi, boy." Not too many people call me "boy" these days. But I smiled. I knew that Carl didn't take his cue from other people. We spoke for a while. He told me that he felt that God had given him all these Monson slate quarries. I said, "Well, Carl, since you believe in God, let me ask you a question. If you were to die and stand before God tonight and He would say to you, 'Why should I let you into My heaven?' how would you answer?" Carl replied, "I guess I'm about as good as some people and not as bad as some others." I said, "Well, how good do you suppose that you'd have to be? 50% good? 99% good?"

Then I explained the gospel to Carl — and he listened. I told him that according to Scripture God doesn't save anyone on the basis of how good they are. He saves people as a gift, by His grace, if they will repent of their sins, ask for forgiveness, and be serious about following Jesus. He'll do it for even those like me who would otherwise be a totally no-good mess. Was he aware that the song, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me?" was written by a rough blasphemous old English sailor? I'm not sure.

Carl was noncommittal that day, but he listened carefully. I left the results with God and him.

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**One day in the Fall of 2018** I was sitting under a shade tree just a few feet from the front door of AllA's Study Center here in Monson, chatting with a 22-year-old Appalachian Trail hiker who had walked all the way from Georgia on the trail that summer and was taking a day off before setting out through the 100-Mile Wilderness for Mt. Katahdin. He said, "I'm praying that hurricane Florence won't catch up with me this week."



I said, "You're praying? Are you a Christian?" He grinned and said, "No — that was just an expression. I'm actually an atheist." He was reading a book which he compared to **The Lord of the Rings**, so I asked, "Have you ever heard of Tolkien's close friend, C. S. Lewis? Lewis was also an atheist who eventually came to faith in Jesus." Then I asked him two questions: **1)** Are you able to prove your atheism?, and **2)** Was Jesus lying or psychotic in His claims to be God?

We talked for quite awhile about both questions. Then he said, "Well, to be honest, I've actually never really explored religion in much depth." I said, "Well you probably should. This life is just a drop in the ocean of eternity. Even just to be fair to yourself, you should be looking into these things. Maybe that's why you ended up sitting here under this tree right now — so that I could challenge you in this way. Perhaps this will turn out to be the most important hour of your hike."

I then shared with him the story of my own search for truth and offered to give him a free copy of **Mere Christianity**, Lewis' most famous work, if he would stop by after summiting Katahdin." (He didn't need any additional weight in his backpack at that point). He seemed most sincere in thanking me for the conversation as we parted ways.

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**During the first week of June, 2019**, on two separate occasions, I had a self-identified lesbian (which matter came up in the course of our brief conversations) stop by and talk. One was a hiker passing through Monson and the other was an art student, in town for a one-week workshop.

The hiker told me that she had been canoeing and was staying at **Shaws Lodging**, the most frequented option for hikers coming through Monson. I was happy to talk with them both and the spirit of each exchange was cordial. But before I could move the topic to spiritual matters, they each, on their own, seemed ready to go along. I wondered whether my being identified with the church building made them less inclined to stay and chat. Maybe so. Maybe not. But either way they had met a smiling friendly face associated with a Christian ministry, in spite of whatever disapproval of their lifestyle they may have sensed was my understanding of the biblical position.

**At 3:46 PM on June 10, 2019, I met Paul** (from New Bedford MA) **and Carla** (from Scranton PA), both serving with the AT Conservancy at the AT Welcome Center. Our conversation was light but I hoped would lead to another visit later on because they were staying in town for an extended time. I also hoped that our meeting would engender additional goodwill with the wider hiking community insofar as they had influence to that end and would remember our visit.

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**On June 12, 2019 at 4:03 PM** I met and spoke for about 20 minutes with an AT hiker by the name of John. John was in his 20s and told me that he was agnostic. He told me that his future plans included possibly working with lobstermen in Bar Harbor and then traveling to Australia. He had just section-hiked 100 miles of the trail, north to south. We talked further and he was open enough to tell me that he had accepted Christ at church when he was young, but later drifted away from that decision due to lots of trauma and death. He told me that his grandmother had died right before his eyes in a sledding accident. When I asked him what he believed he said, "It's complicated (knowing what to believe)." I invited him to drop by the Study Center. He said that he might. But he never showed up.



**On June 28, 2019** I met a young AT hiker from New York state. I was able to turn the conversation to spiritual matters fairly easily. When I asked him what he believed, he described himself as an agnostic. I asked him, smiling, whether he was a nice agnostic or a nasty agnostic. He said that he hoped he was in the former category. He listened attentively as I shared with him the heart of the gospel message. But he said that he was not inclined to reach out to Christ in prayer at that point. As is my custom I prayed for God to draw him to Himself as he walked down the street.

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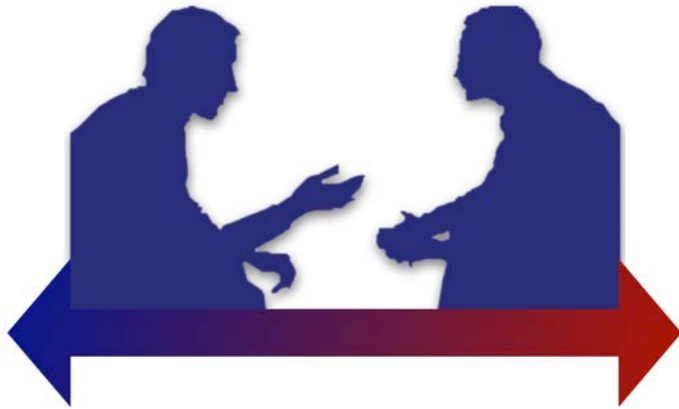
**July 15, 2019.** On that date I met a hiker who, when I asked whether he believed that the Bible was God's Word, said, "Well, I'm a fan of the good parts of the Bible." He actually knew some Scripture and quoted Isaiah 40:31(verbatim) to me: "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." Evidently he considered that to be a good part. But he said that he was unwilling to accept all Scripture as inspired. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) And that's where the conversation ended.

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**On August 19, 2019,** I engaged in a conversation with a mother and daughter from Scarborough, Maine, who were staying overnight in Skowhegan (about an hour southwest of Monson) but visiting Monson that day. They told me that they were affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The UUA is an advocate of liberal social issues that does not even pretend to be Christian, but claims to be all-inclusive (except for the Christian worldview, I guess!).



The daughter told me that she was majoring in International Studies at a college near Washington D.C. When we talked about whether it was possible that all roads lead to God, I cited John 14:6 which quotes Jesus as saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." They acknowledged my point but offered no significant response before leaving that day. I thought to myself, "Well, I've hopefully challenged their thinking. I've quoted Scripture, which has a power of its own. May God use our exchange to further prod their thinking in the days ahead."



**On another day in August 2019** I had a productive conversation with **AT** hiker Mark. Mark's trail name was **Mark the Sage**. He told me that he was 25 years old and from Salem MA. He said that he worked a job serving tables at a Bar & Grill restaurant in the North Shore Mall near Danvers MA, just off Route 128. I told him that we'd been in that mall once. So we had that in common.

Mark told me that he was on a search for truth, which was the real reason he was hiking the trail. I'm thinking to myself at this point: "Wow — you've come to the right place, my friend!" He was very open with me. He said that he had been raised by his mother and a stepfather and had a much younger brother. He told me that he aspires to one day be his family's patriarch.

Mark informed me that he had previously done some flip-flop hiking south to Luray VA. He told me that he just loves Monson and was going to zero for two days here in our town. (Zeroing is hiker talk for "staying put," i.e. walking zero miles.)

We were talking all this while right in front of the beautiful Monson General Store.

I asked if I could share my story. He agreed, so I did, quoting Jesus's words in John 14:6 about Him being **the** way, **the** truth, and **the** life. At that point Mark told me once again that he had been hoping to discover his spiritual self on this hike. I said, "Mark, I think that you might better consider this conversation God's answer to your wish, and not assume that it has happened by mere coincidence." He told me that he was getting the chills just thinking about that, thanked me twice profusely for the conversation, and promised to drop me a note when he finished his hike. As of this writing I'm still waiting and hoping to hear from him one of these days.

**On August 26 2019** I spoke at length with a couple from California who walked into the Study Center just to see the building. That happens a lot. They had seen our welcome poster up on the Main Street bulletin board. They told me that they are Christians, and have a daughter attending the University of Maine in Orono. I was able to suggest that they refer her to the **Ratio Christi** apologetics ministry fellowship group on campus. Then I gave them a copy of Lee Strobel's classic book, **The Case for Christ**, to share with another one of their children — a brilliant chemical-engineering-student son who is currently agnostic.

**On another day in August 2019** five University of Maine at Farmington students popped in for a quick tour of the Study Center. They asked me what apologetics meant. That led to a productive conversation. I was able to let them know that there are many good solid reasons for the Christian worldview. I also recommended that they look into the InterVarsity chapter on campus, and referenced **Summit Faith Community**, a church in Farmington where **Ryan Goding** has served as pastor for many years.

**On Tuesday, August 27 2019**, I met with a young man by the name of Lanny Barlow from another town in Maine. His mother attended a church where I had spoken many times, and had encouraged her son to meet with me.

Lanny had professed faith in Christ and was baptized when he was in the fourth grade. But later he had developed serious doubts and set his faith aside. He told me that he currently surmises “that Christianity is 60% plausible and desperately hopes that it is (true).” He told me that he continues to pray and just hopes that there is someone on the other end of the line because he senses a need for someone beyond himself. He wondered how sure he has to be about all this in order to once again commit himself by faith to Christ.

**Lanny had acquired a B.A. in Philosophy** along the way and told me that he intends to pursue a PhD in Philosophy. I did my best to respond to his current situation, doubts, and questions. When he left he let me know that he was grateful to have spoken “in person with someone who has studied and given life to these things.” We agreed to meet again.



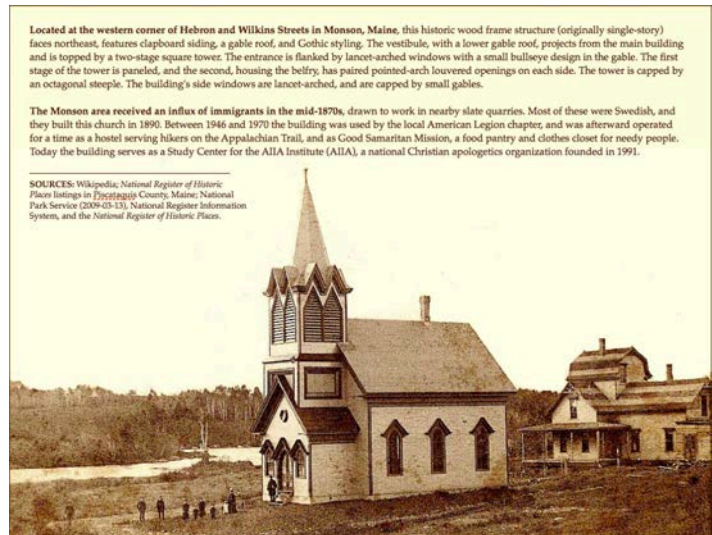
*Here I am at Monson’s public boat landing, just steps from the Study Center, with AT hiker Greg who went by the trail name of **Rope**. Rope was a Christian from near Dallas TX.*

**Late in the morning of October 2, 2019**, a Monson Arts student from Lewiston, Maine, by the name of Jeri came into the Study Center “just to see the building.” Jeri was white, female, and probably 35-40 years of age. Her art specialty was writing SciFi. She sat down. I asked about her family, her writing, and her love of the woods. She told me that she was really enjoying the art residency and that her most favorable experience so far was the great food being served by The Quarry. The Quarry is a fine-dining restaurant right here in small town Monson, Maine, that provides meals for all art students and serves the public with plates that begin at \$68 — and a bit pricey for most Monson residents!

Jeri seemed smart, reasonable, and quite open. So I asked her if she had any religious affiliation. She told me that she had once attended a Unitarian church. Then I asked her what she made of Jesus. Immediately, for the first time, she shifted in her chair and then suddenly and unexpectedly said: “Now we’re beginning to stray into territory with which I am not comfortable,” although she quickly also acknowledged that it was natural and understandable for me (as a minister meeting her in a church building) to ask such questions.

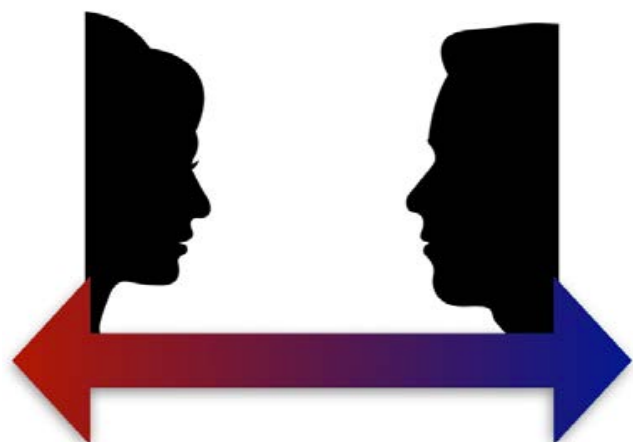
She had begun getting her things together, preparing to stand up and go. So I quickly changed the subject. We talked a bit more on a lighter note and, when she did leave, it was with what I believe was all goodwill. In fact, she thanked me for the tour and conversation. I invited her to stop in again anytime and to bring along any other art students who might be interested in seeing the inside of this formerly grand old Swedish Lutheran church — now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After she left I reflected on how the name of Jesus had been such a major trigger point for her. The name of Jesus made her squirm uncomfortably. I have seen that exact same reaction from so many others over the years. **Why?** The words of an old hymn come to mind: “What will you do with Jesus? **Neutral you cannot be.** Someday your heart will be asking, ‘What will He do with me?’”



**On October 24, 2019, two ladies passing through Monson stopped by.** They asked what I do here at the Study Center, so I explained. Sometimes when folks ask me what I do for work here I tell them that I’m a “guide” or a “travel agent” or “an advisor” — all as a hook for further conversation. “What kind of a guide?” **“A trip guide.”** “You mean, like, for people taking a trip somewhere?” **“Yeah. Everyone is on a journey to wherever they’re gonna end up for eternity, right? For instance, where are you going when this life is over?”** And we’re off!

But on this particular day I took a more straightforward approach and said, “We teach and write about worldviews from a Christian perspective. We answer tough questions about life, the Bible, the existence of God, the claims of Christ, suffering and evil, and so on.” When I mentioned suffering and evil one of the ladies cited Rabbi Kushner’s famous book, **Why Bad Things Happen to Good People.** I said, “Yes, but Rabbi Kushner’s God is essentially impotent. He’s upset by the way things are in this old world, but seems rather unable to do much about it. Whereas the God of the Bible is omnipotent. He is fully able to prevent or even end evil, but often does not do so in order to bring about some greater good.” We talked further and before they left I was able to share the gospel with them.



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**On June 19, 2020, a mother and her young son** were walking past the Study Center. While the boy ran up and down the ramp, his mother and I started talking and somehow, within a few minutes, we got onto the subject of God, faith, and morality. She told me that she was inclined not to believe in God. So I asked her how it would be possible for morality and meaning to exist without God — in which case, I said, “Why should anyone help an old lady across the street instead of just knocking her down?” She seemed intrigued by that line of reasoning. The spirit of our conversation was 100% cordial, but her little boy was impatient to walk on, so that’s where we ended. However, a few weeks later I saw them again and gave her a book (**Christianity for People Who Aren’t Christians**, by James Emery White). She agreed to read and then discuss the book with me in the future. So that story isn’t over yet.

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**On July 22, 2020, I talked with a southbound AT hiker** (most hikers are traveling from south to north) who went by the trail name **FireRunner**. He was 68 years old and hailed from Tennessee.



I said, “Welcome to Monson. How long will you be here in town?” He looked down and seemed almost embarrassed when he said that he’d run out of water and food, had been chewed up by bugs, and had fallen, banging himself up pretty badly. His leg was noticeably swollen. “So,” he said, “long story short, I’m giving up for this year. My wife and daughter are driving through the night all the way from TN, non-stop, to pick me up tomorrow.” I felt sorry for him. His dream was in shatters.

At some point during our conversation he mentioned to me that he’d been reading his Bible. I said, “Oh, so you’re a Christian?” He said, “I hope I am.” I said, “Well, if I asked you whether you were married or not you wouldn’t say, “I think I am, I hope I am, I wanna be.” Or if I asked you whether you were alive, you wouldn’t say, “I think I am, I hope I am, I wanna be.” So why are you so unsure about your status with God? Why are you uncertain about whether or not you’re a Christian? Then I recited: 1 John 5:11-13: “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.”

I told him that if he had sincerely asked Jesus to save him and wanted to follow Christ, that he could then be 100% sure of his salvation. Then I prayed with him, wished him well, and told him to look me up again when he decided to give the trail another try. He agreed.

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**Two days later, on July 24, 2020**, I chatted briefly with AT hikers **Sage** and **Lotus** from North Carolina. Sage told me that she had sold her house while she was on trail, so is now homeless but happy. I couldn’t think of a good way to steer the conversation to the gospel until later. Then I thought, “I could have said, ‘Well, heaven is your home, right?’ and waited for her response. That would have been so simple. But I couldn’t think of what to say in the moment. I returned to my office feeling rather frustrated with myself.

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**On the afternoon of August 5, 2020, I offered an almond bar to QuickSand.** Quicksand told me that he was hiking north and hoped to summit Mt. Katahdin (the northern terminus of the AT) in four days. That's being optimistic! He said that his father was scheduled to pick him up there.

I said, "Where's home?" He said, "Gainesville, Florida." I said, "What do you do in Gainesville?" He said, "I operate a bike taxi service." I said, "Really? How does that work?" He replied, "I have a bike with a rider seat right beside mine. I pick people up and shuttle them around town. Gainesville is almost all level, so it usually goes quite well. I pedal, they pay, everybody's happy."

He told me that he is an Episcopalian who has a relationship with the Lord but he then expressed doubts about his salvation. During the short visit we had I tried my best to offer him spiritual encouragement and guidance. And then he was off!

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**September 2, 2020.** My diary says that I spoke for about fifteen minutes with Nate Grenier from south Florida on this particular afternoon. Nate was all set to hike the 100-mile Wilderness with his father. The One Hundred Mile Wildness is what we call the final totally uncivilized 100-mile stretch between Monson and the Big K (mile-high Mt. Katahdin). He also told me that he had a daughter in the sole custody of her mother, and that he had been rejected from joining the military "because I was once hospitalized with mental issues, and because I have a hand tattoo of a smiley face." He claimed to be a skeptic, leaning against the existence of God. Yet he seemed totally open to the gospel when I shared it with him, quoting John 3:16. He listened carefully to everything that I said. I ended by telling him that this was no doubt a Divine appointment. He agreed to read the Gospel of John and email me when he got back to Florida. Sadly, though, I've not yet heard from him.

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**Just outside the Monson General Store** I ran into two hikers on September 4, 2020. **Tortoise** told me that he was a French Huguenot and **WalkAlong** told me that he was an inactive Methodist. In the course of our seven-minute exchange, Tortoise told me that Huguenots often disparage the need for the church, but believe the Bible and focus on good deeds. Both hikers seemed to be in a hurry, so I felt that the conversation was not all that productive.



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**I met Lydia on September 16, 2020.** Lydia told me that she was a Christian! And that she attends an Evangelical Free church (EFC) in western Iowa. And that she loved the L'Abri Fellowship in nearby Rochester MN. Bingo. Bingo. Bingo. We had much in common. My ministerial standing is with the EFCA (Evangelical Free Church of America). L'Abri had played a key role in my journey to meaningful faith. But why were she and her daughter in Monson? She explained that she had just cut short hiking the trail with her daughter and were now waiting here for transportation. I believe that they were encouraged by visiting with me, as was I with them.

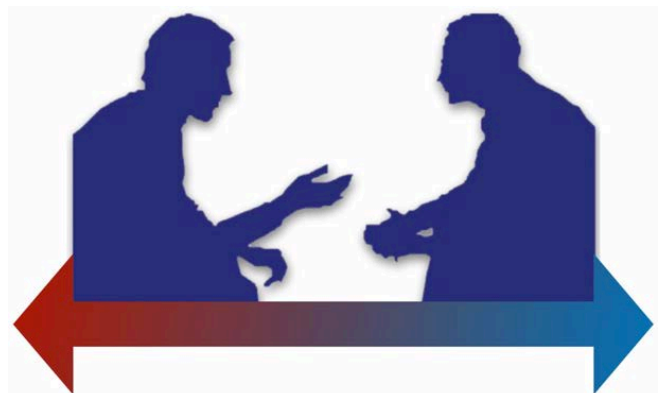


**On September 22, 2020, I met and gave a brief tour of the Study Center to Misty Greer**, an established artist from a small town near the coast of Maine. She said that she loved the upstairs of the Study Center. We had a cordial visit. But not much of spiritual value was talked about. She took along a recent thoughtletter that I had written. But she told me that she had Universalist-Unitarian background and seemed guarded about discussing spiritual matters. I have discovered that seems to be the case with a disproportionate number of artists. I wonder why.

**One day in late September 2020 a fellow by the name of Eddy Carr** walked into the Study Center, introduced himself, and said that he was interested in knowing what the building was and what we did here. So I gave him a tour. Then we sat down to talk.

Eddy said that he had recently purchased some property in Monson and was going to live here — part time for now, with the idea that he would eventually settle here. He told me that he had been working in computer security for a large reputable firm when they suddenly recently fired him for what he claimed were unjustifiable reasons (without going into detail). He told me that he was a former Roman Catholic, and before that an agnostic, and before that an atheist. But he said that he now believes in God, although he is nagged with doubts and conflicted by certain doctrines that seem to him to be untenable.

Eddy did most of the talking while I sat and listened. He was quite vulnerable, but never really asked for my advice or guidance. I figure in cases like that that God will use me in a less direct way — just quietly listening and injecting what I think to be good common God-sense into the exchange. The visit lasted for about 45 minutes. I invited him to come back anytime he was in town. He said that he would, but will call first. I've never heard from him again or seen anything of him around town.



**On October 22 2020 I had a fascinating 90-minute visit** with a 60-year-old former marine sporting a long bushy beard who told me that he lives just outside of Monson, although I had never seen him around town. Perhaps that was because, as he explained, he had just moved to Maine a few years ago. He said that he had always wanted to see inside this little church building. We talked long enough to discover that we had a few things in common, and then the conversation turned to matters of belief.

He told me that he had been raised Catholic but now observes Jewish traditions and sayings, and that He is convinced that Yeshua (Jesus) was Israel's Messiah. So far so good. But then he added that he does not accept the doctrines of the Trinity or the deity of Christ and has recently been confused with some influential teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses. What a hodgepodge of belief!

This fellow struck me as rather humble but he also seemed uptight and was constantly voicing concern that he would offend me by telling me what he believed. I assured him that was not the case, but every few minutes he would continue to voice the same concern.

He became very passionate when talking about religious matters and was conversant enough in the Scriptures to argue his point by reciting this or that text. He also said that he had many doubts and acknowledged that he had no relationship with Jesus. He told me that his wife was not religious.

There was so much to which I wanted to respond but our time for that day was up, so I invited him back. He indicated that he would take me up on my offer, but to date I have not seen him again.

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**October 23, 2020.** It was about 9:20 AM. I had just disembarked from my van and was heading into the Study Center when a guy by the name of Mack (whom I had never met before) walked by drinking a large coffee. I said, "Good morning. How is it with you this fine day?" He gave me a big grin and, "Great. I just got some good news." I said, "Really, what was the good news?" He explained that he had been staying at Shaws Lodging here in town for the past few months but had just heard that morning that he'd been accepted to work at Dulvatex, a large fabric company in nearby Guilford. I said, "Wonderful. But where will you stay in Guilford?" He told me that he would camp out and sleep in his warm sleeping bag if necessary. That was his good news?!

I proceeded to ask Mack about the state of his soul. I asked him if he knew Jesus. He responded by saying that he wasn't convinced that Jesus had ever even really lived on earth at all. I asked, "Well, then, why has even our calendar traditionally been dated B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini) for centuries, as if Jesus' life was some sort of major pivot point in history.



He sidestepped my question and said that he had "studied Josephus" and

figured that he (Josephus) was the actual author of the New Testament. When I asked him what his source was for holding that position, he cited a video called "Caesar's Messiah." I watched it later. It is not well referenced by any reputable or reliable sources. No wonder he was confused.

Mack seemed a little spaced out to me at times, but I didn't sense that he'd been drinking or doing drugs. So I tried my best to set the record straight on who Josephus was, and on who Jesus really was. Then I went on to share what I told him was the "**really** good news" — that Jesus was not only an historical figure, but that He was alive today and actually loved him (Mack). I quoted John 3:16 and asked whether I could pray for him. He said, "Yes." So I did. Right there on Wilkins Avenue at 9:30 in the morning! Then I invited him back to talk again anytime that he noticed my silver GMC van in the driveway.

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**The weather was turning cold in Maine on November 3, 2020**, when, at about 2:40 PM, Ben walked into the Study Center. I estimated Ben to be in his mid-30s. He informed me that he had been doing an art residency here in Monson for the past three weeks.

Ben wanted to know if he could check the upstairs of the Study Center for sound effects. I said, "Sure." So he spent about ten minutes or so upstairs. Then came down and told me that it was acoustically fantastic and proceeded to ask about possibly bringing an entire choir back to record a concert upstairs. I encouraged him to check with me ahead of time.

Ben then told me that he lives in New York City. When I asked what he thought of Jesus he gave me a bit of a runaround, saying something about finding his spirituality in music. He told me that he had turned off to God as being unfair after his father died of cancer when he (Ben) was just nine years old. His father was a Catholic who married Ben's Jewish mother, who still attends a synagogue today. He told me that his favorite composers include John Tanner and Rachmaninoff. He said that he is a pianist. He seemed genuine and humble.



We hit it off well but he had limited time to talk. He took a thoughtletter with him when he left and said that he may be going to contact me. I later mailed him a copy of **More Than a Carpenter** (a brief but classic apologetics resource, authored by Christian apologist Josh McDowell).

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**It was January 7, 2021, it was cold, and there were certainly no hikers or art students out and about that day!** But in the mail I received a note from a lady in a church where I have often spoken. She told me that one of her friends attending the same church had offered her literature on **patristic universalism** and she was wondering what I thought of it and whether she should agree to read the literature.

I wrote back telling her that although I was not well-versed on patristic universalism *per se*, any form of the doctrine of universal salvation is unbiblical. I wrote: "Why would Jesus have warned about hell, and what would be the incentive for missions and obedience, if all is going to end well for everyone universally?" But even more to the point, on what specific Bible text might anyone base such a view?

I invited her to write me again if she would like to pursue the matter and that, if so, I would be happy to do more extensive research.

**"Should you agree to read this material? Well, normally it's fine to become better informed. But if your friend is subverting orthodoxy in the church by asking you and others to explore this teaching, then might your agreeing to read it have unintended consequences? Weigh all the factors."**



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**The very next day (8 January 2021)** I received a note from a friend who had questions about the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses (JW). She said that she had been studying with them for some time. Here is an abridged and somewhat adapted version of my emailed response:

**Dear Tracy,**

In November of 2011 I met with local Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) elders and leaders, as well as some Christians (including one local pastor), here at the AIIA Study Center, for a question and answer forum. I have met with Jehovah Witnesses numerous times over the years, and once Mary and I actually sat in on a live service at a Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall.

In a subsequent meeting with one of their regional leaders the subject of their own JW **New World translation** (NWT) came up. At some point, in an attempt to defend the validity of the NWT, this regional JW leader made the statement that even the game show **Jeopardy** had once recognized the NWT as the most reputable translation of all. I immediately contested his statement, but he stood by it defiantly. So I called Jeopardy headquarters in Hollywood. They told me that they have maintained a database of all questions and answers on the show since its beginning, and flat-out denied ever having made any such a statement about the NWT on the show.

I asked them if they would put that in writing. They agreed, and mailed me the letter. I still have a copy of the letter in my files. So the next time when I spoke with this JW elder and showed him the letter on **Jeopardy** stationery, he looked at it, thought for a while, and then said: "Well I can't explain this. I can only tell you what happened and what's true. It was on the show at one point."

That little incident demonstrated for me what I have long recognized to be the case. With Jehovah's Witnesses all answers are scripted and settled by their leaders at their Watchtower headquarters. It's rather like: "Here is our position. Please do not try to contradict us with any actual facts." They simply won't hear it. In fact, listen to this . . .

JWs have often tried to hand me their literature. The last time that happened in my home I said politely, "Sure, I'll take yours if you'll take mine," and then held out to this same regional leader a paper that I myself had written. He absolutely refused to take it from my outstretched hand. So I let it fall on the floor for effect.

In my library I have a copy of the JW's own somewhat confidential "playbook." In this book, published by the Watchtower, JWs are provided with a scripted answer for almost every conceivable question that you or anyone else might ever ask, or any objection that might ever be raised.

In other words you will usually not be able to profitably debate a JW. They are not typically open to objective rational arguments. So I no longer consider engaging with, or "studying" with, a JW to be a profitable use of their time or mine.

Now I want to also quickly add that I have never yet met a mean-spirited JW. Quite the opposite. Many JWs are very pleasant, honest, cordial, and well-intentioned. It's just that they are, in my opinion, caught in a deep deep web of deceit. Some have escaped. But sadly, most JWs are probably trapped in their delusion for a lifetime.

Remember that no one on earth had ever even heard of Jehovah's Witnesses and their teaching before 1870! Like many cults, they were formed by just one solitary magnetic individual. **Charles Taze Russell**. So it seems to me that one has to ask the question, "Where was what JWs claim to be God's truth until the late 1870s?!"

Although today they claim to be Christian, number in the millions, and are still experiencing some net growth, by global standards JWs are part of a **relatively** small sect that is widely regarded by both Christian and secular leaders as having seriously deviated from the fundamentals of historic orthodox Christianity. There are numerous reputable sources (e.g. the Christian Apologetics Research Ministry) that address all of the pertinent theology in great detail. I'll attach some links.

Perhaps my most helpful counsel here is to simply encourage you to politely but firmly end the dialogue. As well-intentioned and pleasant as your JW friend may be, her **ultimate** interest in maintaining a relationship with you is almost undoubtedly your own conversion to JW belief.

Someone might say, "But I'm willing to follow the truth wherever it may lead, even if that might involve affiliating with the JWs. To which I would respond by appealing to you to consider the wisdom of the ages — the vast host of trusted Christian scholars whose interpretation of holy Scripture stands in categorical opposition to JW belief.

If the Bible alone is our guide, then why should the jury ruling on its correct interpretation be comprised of only those who stand so far apart from the truth espoused by the historic Church from its earliest days, i.e. the Church councils.

May God guide you into all truth. I respect your desire to be fair and polite and careful in drawing conclusions and then acting accordingly.

By the way, I grew up using the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible and still use it occasionally. The KJV uses the term **Jehovah** in various texts. And some of our hymns and praise choruses use the term Jehovah. I have no problem with that. And no one is suggesting that we "censor" the term Jehovah. The choice to substitute LORD is for other reasons entirely, as this link will explain:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/YHWH-tetragrammaton.html>

Take care and stay in touch!

Daryl

I heard from this friend sometime later. She thanked me for my letter and informed me that she had indeed politely terminated her study with the Jehovah's Witness with whom she had been meeting. Praise God for this positive outcome. It doesn't always end this way.

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**On July 23, 2021, the Study Center door opened and in walked an AT hiker.** He said, “You probably don’t remember me, but three years ago you came up to me under a tree by the lake when I was feeling discouraged about having to pull off the trail prematurely. Now I’m back. I’m gonna make it this year!”

He continued, “We talked about faith that day. You gave me a book by C.S. Lewis.” I asked, “Have you read it?” He said, “Not yet, but I will.” He told me that he’d been into **Taoism** and **Buddhism**. I said, “Have you given **Jesus** a fair hearing? Would you read the Bible if I give you a copy?” He agreed. So I handed him a small New Testament. (Hikers eschew any extra weight). We talked for another half-hour, I prayed for him, he thanked me, and headed out. I asked God to draw him to the One who is **Truth** and then continued with much fascination to follow his progress over the next few weeks via his hourly **GPS tracking signals**. What amazing technology!

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**Just three days later, on July 27, 2021,** I engaged in another lively conversation with a middle-aged lady by the busy public boat landing — just steps from the **Study Center**. I asked her, “Where’s home?” She pointed to an RV not far away. Then she proceeded to tell me that she believes that the universe is all there is. I said, “But how did the universe itself get here?” She replied, “The Big Bang.” I pressed her: “But how did whatever it was that went ‘bang’ get here?” She said, “It’s all energy.” I said, “Well, the Bible makes it clear that God is the creator of energy. Have you ever read the Bible?” She said, “No, and I don’t want to because I’m okay with where I am.” I bring **Pascal’s Wager** into the conversation and later quoted the words of **Jesus**. Then the visit ended (cordially). But who knows? Perhaps she’ll be back and look me up. Maybe next year. **Maybe in three years!** Maybe in 21 years!!



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**On the second day of August 2021 Nimblewill Nomad walked into the Study Center, sat down, and told me** that twenty-one (21) years ago he was here in town and I had invited him to church. Nimblewill Nomad is now world famous as the Perpetual Hiker, as an author (at least two published books available on Amazon), and as a wise and seasoned legend in the hiking community who even has his own listing on Wikipedia.

**It was early on a Monday afternoon** when he showed up at the Study Center on Wilkins Street in Monson. Initially I did not recognize him. So he reminded me that we had first met **21 years ago**, in the Fall of 2000, when he was thru-hiking the trail for the first time. He said that upon my invitation he had joined us for worship at the **Monson Community Church**.

Then it all began to come back to me.



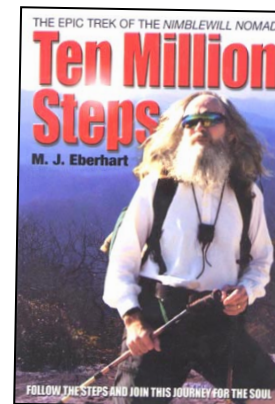
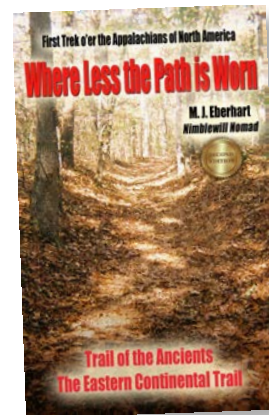
We visited for about an hour. As the moments went by, I began to be increasingly impressed (and to even feel humbled and blessed) by this gentle unpretentious man. His incredible story and fame were about to gain even wider attention because, when he completed his AT hike later that year (2021), he became the **oldest person on record to ever thru-hike the entire trail in one season — at the age of 82-83!**

**Nimblewill Nomad** is the **trail name** for **Dr. Meredith “Sunny” Eberhart** who one day, as the story goes, at the age of 61, retired (as an optometrist making a six-figure salary), went on a hike and . . . never stopped walking.

**Eberhart** has authored a number of books about his many colorful experiences as a **perpetual hiker**. He told me that he owns no property in this world.

Our discussion turned to spiritual matters. When I asked him what he thought about **Jesus** he said, “Maybe this will answer your question” and promptly launched into a moving recitation (actually, he seemed to be praying, not just reciting) of the following self-composed prayer-poem:

Lord, set me a path by the side of the road,  
Pray this be a part of your plan.  
Then heap on the burden and pile on the load  
’n I’ll trek it the best that I can.  
Please bless me with patience;  
touch strength to my back;  
Then cut me loose and I’ll go.  
Just like the burro totin’ his pack,  
The oxen plowin’ his row.  
And once on this journey, a witness for you  
To’rd truth, Thy way... and the light.  
Shine bright my countenance steady and true,  
O’er the pathway to goodness and right.  
And lest I should falter and lest I should fail,  
Let all who know that I tried.  
For I am a blunderer, feeble and frail,  
When you, dear Lord, I’ve denied.  
So blessed be the day Your judgment comes due,  
And blessed be the mercy You showed.  
Oh blessed be this journey. All praises to You  
o’er this path by the side of the road.



Later he told me plainly that — yes, Jesus is “my Savior.”

During the Summer and Fall seasons, I have the opportunity to meet and converse with numerous hikers, art students, and visitors passing through Monson who would **not** call themselves Christians. But on that day I was happy to meet with (and pray for) one who did.

Christians will spend eternity together in the presence of the great God of the universe. We might as well get acquainted now.

The extraordinary saga of **Nimblewill Nomad** can be explored on his website (click the link):  
<https://nimblewillnomad.com>

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**On August 16, 2021, I had an encouraging visit with “Front End,”** an energetic young AT hiker and a Christian! (Lutheran) from New Jersey who at that time was enrolled in a law school in Minneapolis MN with a vision to serve with the State Department in the Middle East.

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**26 August 2021.** On this day I had a brief conversation with a Monson Arts resident artist (who created small abstract paintings) by the name of Ned, from New York City, who was in town for two weeks. Ned told me that he was raised as a Methodist but never seemed to really believe that Jesus was anything more than an historical figure. He told me that he had recently had a stroke. He seemed quite weak. But when I mentioned how important it is that he settle his beliefs and relationship with God through Christ now while he still had an opportunity to do so, he suddenly and rather uncomfortably told me that he had to go — evidently more concerned about where he needed to be in ten minutes than where he would spend eternity.



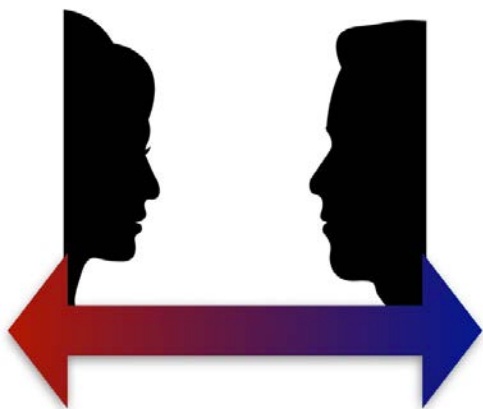
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**30 August 2021.** Sometimes I end up having only brief exchanges with folks out and around, on the streets of Monson, or by the boat landing — as was the case on this day with an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) hiker from Maryland, and another fellow from Long Island NY paddle boarding on beautiful Lake Hebron. The conversation never transitioned to spiritual matters, but I have tried to accept the fact that that’s just the way it’s going to be sometimes. Even so, I am often silently but actively thinking about how I might introduce Jesus into the exchange without being inappropriately blunt. And I often silently pray that God would draw this or that person to Himself in His own time, even if it’s not through me.

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**1 September 2021.** On this day at Monson’s public boat landing I spoke with a thoughtful 25-year old Catholic from Wisconsin who was hiking the trail and who told me that he was looking to chart his future course in life. He agreed to come over to the Study Center, where another minister (who had just arrived for a meeting with me) and I spent some time talking with him and praying for him. He told us how much he appreciated the visit.

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**In the morning of 27 September 2021** I stopped to chat with an AT hiker with the trail name **Gusher**, from Oregon. In the afternoon I conversed with another hiker from Michigan — a believer who told me that she’s decided to go ahead with Nursing School. Then I met a hiking **couple** from Wisconsin. He told me that he “makes books.” She told me that she was a translator. Her trail name was Cotton Candy. I love those trail names. On this late Fall day the town was crawling with northbound thru hikers, all trying to finish their hike before Mt. Katahdin is closed for the season — usually in mid-October. So many gospel opportunities.

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**On October 4, 2021, I exchanged briefly with White Wolf** (from Atlanta and Thailand) and **Snaps** (from Michigan and Iowa) about what ultimately comes next for them — after this life is over. White Wolf said that he figured that he'll be doing life all over again. When I asked him how he knew that reincarnation is a reality he cited how "the plants come back." He claimed that all roads lead to the same destination.



I have discovered that what a person believes often seems to ultimately come down to what that person accepts as their authority. And for so many people with whom I talk — especially those of a younger generation — it seems that authority is not much more than mere subjective wishful thinking.

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**7 October 2021.** This was the date on which I met an art student and forager from Damariscotta. She was foraging near the Study Center — collecting acorns from which she told me she would create the recipe for a meal that she would serve to all the other artists later that week. She actually invited me to join the feast! Acorn stew. Should I accept? Would you?



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**On October 11, 2021** I visited with Tony, a hiker from Rhode Island who flat-out denied the reality of the COVID virus. He told me that it was all imagined — the symptoms, the pandemic, the crowded hospitals, the related deaths, and even the existence of any such thing as a SARS-CoV-2 virus. All made up. A big hoax. The whole thing. That's what he said.



**13 October 2021. On this date I had an extensive conversation** with a guy by the name of Harry. He was carrying a huge orange backpack and a walking stick but told me that he was not currently hiking the trail. Just hanging around Monson for a while, he said — staying with a lady here in town who takes in hikers who are running low on cash but needing a place to stay. She does this as a mission.

Harry told me that he was born on Long Island, lived in Idaho for awhile, and had worked in numerous shipyards in the Northeast.

It turned out that he professed Christ. And what a bold and verbal witness for Christ he turned out to be!

The next day we talked again. He told me that his mother was Jewish. He described himself as expressive but wanted me to know that he was "not a Pentecostal."

He divulged the fact that he had once been a marine. He was always smiling and very talkative. He knew that he was talkative and even apologized for it. He kept his huge backpack with him with no exceptions, never once leaving it out of his sight — not even for a few minutes.

Over a period of time our acquaintance deepened. He ended up coming to our Monson Community Church and attending our midweek AIIA Faith Matters event.

He was intelligent, keen, articulate, and familiar with Christian history, doctrine, and life. He stayed in Monson through the long Maine Winter and even did snow removal for us at our home. He was a hard, conscientious, and reliable worker. He made a lot of friends in the church.

Then one day he just disappeared. We've never heard from him since. There was no way to trace him. Maybe he'll be back. But meanwhile I have often wondered, "What was so important in that big backpack that he wouldn't even take it off when he was shoveling snow?"

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**19 January 2022.** I had a brief exchange in the vestibule of the Study Center on this date with a Buddhist and atheist art student who had admired the building while passing by on a very snowy day. So on impulse he just popped in to see the interior. He told me that he specializes in "grief art" and was scheduled to teach a class at the University of Maine in Orono in the not-too-distant future. He said that he would be back for a visit. But that was the last I saw him.

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**28 February 2022. I had two live apologetics-related exchanges** on this cold mid-Winter day. Both were over the phone, as follows:

**1) An 88 year old lady from San Francisco called.** She told me that she had seen our color full-page ad in **Yankee** magazine and wanted to receive our bimonthly thoughtletter. I noted her address and information but then went on to ask her more about herself and her beliefs. She told me that her father was once a mayor and that that she can clearly and easily see the **Golden Gate Bridge** from her apartment. I said, "Really?!" She said, "Yes, I can see it right now."



She mentioned that she was a professing Roman Catholic who believed that the most important thing in life was to "live a good life." She said that she had three degrees in education. That she had been a school teacher. That she had never married. And then, almost as an afterthought, she added that she was lesbian. She said, "I love a woman and feel that I have finally 'come home.'"

Of course, Romans 1 teaches that yielding to sexual attraction with someone of the same gender is sinful. I hung up hoping that she would be influenced by the thoughtletters I agreed to send her.

**2) The second call was from an older man from Illinois.** He asked to be removed from our mailing list because he is "mostly blind and can't read." But a little while later, after some light conversation and without seeming to realize it, he informed me that he spent most of his days "watching TV and **reading**." Oops. I picked up on the discrepancy and asked him about it. He hastily ended the conversation. I smiled and got on with my day, wondering for a few moments whether I should have just kept quiet (or not) when I noticed his obvious fabrication.

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**On May 23, 2022, I had a good 15-minute visit** on the street outside the Study Center with an attractive middle-age female artist specializing in textiles by the name of Kenzie, from Phoenix AZ. She told me that she was here in Monson doing an art residency. She told me that she also teaches art at the University of Arizona. She said that she runs six miles a day and often takes long walks. She also said that her partner back home envies her being here in cool Maine this week while he swelters in the Arizonan heat.

I told Kenzie that I was taking a poll on what people believe about the afterlife. She told me that she thought that after death our energy may still remain here in some form — but that she just wasn't sure. I asked if I could briefly share with her my own story about how I had discovered what I considered to be a credible authority on such matters. She agreed, listened carefully, made a few comments, and then wished me a good day and began running her six miles. I prayed that God might bring my remarks back to her mind and draw her to Himself.

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**On 24 May 2022** Mary and I attended the Monson Arts Open House event in the Moore Building where Kenzie was presenting her artwork, made of iron deposits that she had found on Monson's black slate — wow! I'd seen iron residue on slate many times but never thought of it as art. We spoke briefly and wished her well, as she was scheduled to return to AZ the next day.

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**On 28 June 2022**

I welcomed into the Study Center a group of young hikers from Lititz, Pennsylvania. The hike was organized by **Trail Life**.

I addressed them for about fifteen minutes, shared my testimony, offered a brief apologetics defense of the Christian faith, and challenged them to thoughtfully settle their faith in Jesus as soon as possible.



I also told them that there are good credible answers for every question that anyone (including themselves as they got older) would ever think of asking about how Christianity can be true.



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**On 29 June 2022 I spoke for ten minutes or so** with a hiker whose trail name was **M&M**. He was a northbound thru-hiker from North Carolina who had retired as a high school principal because he had become fed up with the politics of the job. He told me that he was now looking for next steps.

So many folks are on the trail searching for what should come next in their lives. College students transitioning to postgraduate work or a job. Someone who just lost a spouse to cancer or who has gone through a divorce. Young people hoping to discover what they want to do with their lives. The AT is ripe with opportunities to talk with people about the meaning of life and matters that count. And Monson is so strategically located as a trail town — the last place to pick up mail and stock up on supplies before the 100-Mile Wilderness.

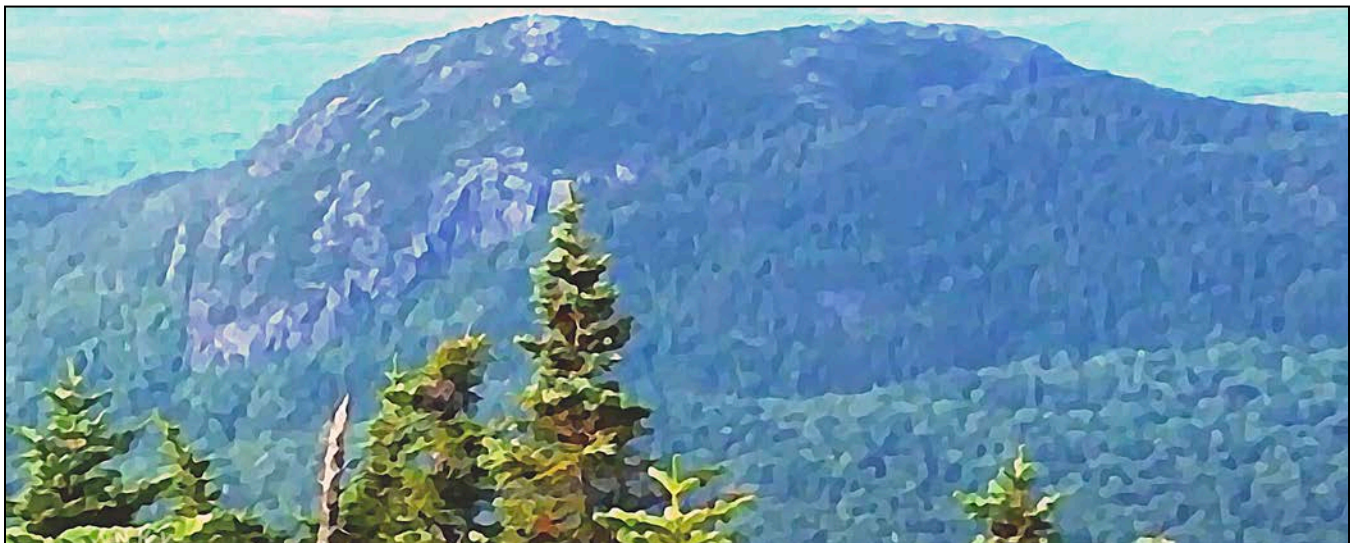
The brilliant French thinker Blaise Pascal is quoted as having once said: “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”

I’m always so blessed when I find an opportunity to introduce some searching soul to Jesus as the only One who will ever fill the vacuum in his or her life.

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**14 July 2022. I visited with a young couple on this date.** Her trail name was **Puddleduck**. She had been working on an organic farm in another state. He had been working as an airplane mechanic. They told me that they believed that this life is all there is, except for the effect that their morality and kindness may have on others. They have no idea what comes after the trail.

I often try to respond briefly to those sorts of comments in this way: “Based on my search for truth I’ve become convinced that we’re here to bring glory to God, to whom we will all one day give an account, and who will reward good deeds and kindness in the lives of those who have trusted in His Son, Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. Otherwise the Bible makes it clear that even our best moral acts and kindnesses have no solid basis and no ultimate purpose. I mean, what would make morality honorable if all we are is a collection of molecules? And who determines what is moral and what is not moral anyway? Even after a lifetime of good deeds, all that would ultimately result would be a few ripples of kindness and so-called goodness on the huge vast endless ocean of time. What’s your response?”



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**Sunday, 31 July 2022.** I invited an older hiker who was standing outside the Monson Community Church into our service. He told me that his trail name was **Sling Shot**. After we spoke further he told me that his real name was **David**. Aha! I put two and two together and asked him for the story. He smiled and said that when he first started his hike north his backpack was gigantic and that some people referred to it as a real goliath. When he got up the trail some distance he decided that it had to be left behind. He opted for a lighter backpack. He said that at that point **David** (he) **did away with Goliath!** I ask him to relate that brief story to the entire congregation during our welcome time and announcements, which he did, to everyone's amusement.

Later, during a downstairs brunch he suddenly stood up and asked for everyone's attention. He said that he had thoroughly enjoyed our hospitality and being in our service. Then he said that he had something for us. Whereupon he pulled out a small ziplock bag full of small wooden crosses. He distributed the crosses, one to everyone present, and said that he personally likes to keep a cross in his pocket as he walks. That reminded me of a little verse attributed to Verna Mae Thomas which I'd heard years earlier in the same vein:

I carry a cross in my pocket, a simple reminder to me  
of the fact that I am a Christian no matter where I may be.

This little cross is not magic nor is it a good luck charm.  
It isn't meant to protect me from every physical harm.

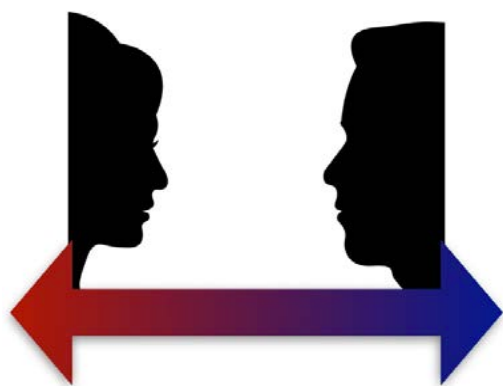
It's not for identification for all the world to see.  
It's simply an understanding between my Savior and me.

When I put my hand in my pocket to bring out a coin or a key,  
the cross is there to remind me of the price He paid for me.

It reminds me too, to be thankful for my blessings day by day,  
And to strive to serve Him better in all that I do and say.

It's also a daily reminder of the peace and comfort I share  
with all who know my Master and give themselves to His care.

So I carry a cross in my pocket reminding no one but me  
that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life if only I'll let Him be.



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**On 5 August 2022 I met a female hiker who told me that her home was near Lake Tahoe, California.** Along with hiking a section of the AT, she explained that she was exploring Maine by car. I asked how far she lived from Eureka CA. She told me. I said that in the early 1970s I had once lived briefly at The Lighthouse Ranch Commune near Eureka, high on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. I told her that at that time I was searching for truth and meaning, along with thousands of other young people, during what became known as The Jesus People Movement. Then I attempted to segue the conversation by asking

her whether she believed in Jesus. But she was very guarded and the rest of our visit was seemingly unproductive in regard to spiritual matters.

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**Later that same day I met a hiker** from Quakertown PA (Bucks County) who was just coming into Monson and heading for Shaws Lodging. He was obviously tired and hot. He told me that he was hoping to get from here to the top of Mt. Katahdin in just four days! I thought to myself, “Good luck. That’s going to be a hard push.” But I wished him a happy eternity — with Jesus — to which he responded “Amen” as he headed off for a cool shower and a good night’s sleep.

He was African-American. I don’t see many black hikers coming through Monson. I wonder why.

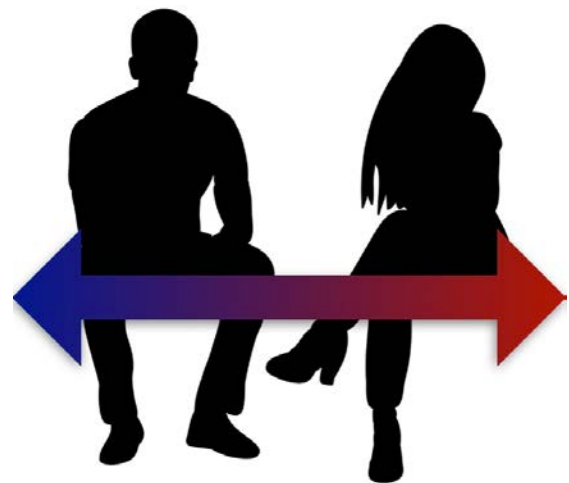
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**August 10-11, 2022.** Within two days two people on the streets of Monson told me how influential our small church’s Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS) had been. One was a mother speaking about her son. The other was a young man speaking about himself. In both cases the DVBS experience had occurred many years ago. Now, after all this time, I’m hearing about how what we did made a lasting experience. Sometimes we do not know at the time just how much our efforts for Christ are making a difference. Hearing these stories on that day gave me a boost, especially because I had recently become discouraged with the lack of tangible results.

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**On my way into the Study Center on the morning of August 15, 2022,** I met a young woman who just happened to be walking down the street at the time. We started to talk. She told me that she was hiking the trail. She said that she had been a Park Ranger in many different parks all across the United States for many years. She said that she was now working for the State of Maine. She said that she was hiking parts of the trail here in Maine with her boyfriend, but was taking a day or two off here in Monson. She told me that she was enjoying the experience so much, and that she felt very blessed to have had such a great life.

At that point I asked her what she anticipated was going to happen after this life. She replied, “Isn’t that the question?” I said, “Well what’s your answer?” She told me that she felt that she would continue to live on in some form of energy but she wasn’t sure just how that would work. I asked her on what she based her views. She basically said that her views were based on feelings. Very vague. I told her that after years of searching I had come to trust the Bible as the basis for my faith. I cited the first verse of the old hymn **How Firm a Foundation:** “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.”



I then asked her what she thought of Jesus. Was He a liar or a nut case? She seemed open to continue talking, so I also asked whether she had ever read the Bible. She said, “It’s funny you ask, because just last week I asked my mother for a Bible and she was so happy to give me one — even a whole pile of them!” She told me that before and after her trail hike, she had been and would be temporarily staying in a Christian camp near the coast of Maine.

I said, “Well, Wanda, it seems clear to me that the Lord is closing in on you. You’ve shown an interest in the Bible, your mother’s prayers are being answered, you’re staying at a Christian campground, and now this morning we meet like this.” She said, “Yes, I agree, and it makes me very emotional. I feel Him right here on my shoulder.”

I shared with her the fact that Christian faith is more than just a religion; that it’s a relationship with Jesus. I gave her a simple sample prayer for asking Christ to be real in her life. I encouraged her to read the Gospel according to John. She said that she would do it when she got back to Shaws Lodging. She said that this was a moment that touched her life. She said, “Aren’t you sweet for speaking to me this way and giving me this prayer.” I encouraged her to contact me if she followed through on my suggestions, prayed the prayer, came to Christ, and began attending a good church. She thanked me and went on her way.

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**August 22, 2022, was a day for AT hikers!** A group of five hikers walked into the Study Center that morning just to look around. I had a good opportunity to talk about faith and give them each a **More Than a Carpenter** tract. Later in the day I had an extended conversation with a guy whose trail name was **High Gear**. He was from Utah. When I said, “Lots of Mormons live in Utah,” he told me that he had rejected Mormonism and all religions a long time ago. He said that he believed in good energy and could tell what sort of a person someone is shortly after meeting them, based on their vibes. I asked him what sort of a vibe he was getting from me. He said “Super vibes, all very good.” What a relief.

We talked about the quadrilemma of who Jesus is — Lord, Liar, Lunatic, or Legend. He said he thought that it was possible that Jesus was a liar but that His lies have done a net good for the world. I contested that idea, explaining that there was no indication from first century eyewitnesses and historians that Jesus was deceptive, an egomaniac, a “good” liar, a pathological liar, or any other kind of liar.

Later High Gear stopped in at the Study Center and took a selfie of himself with me. He said that every day he meets someone on the trail who stands out and that I was that person for today. I believe that he sincerely meant it as a compliment. I gave him a little Lee Strobel booklet with questions and answers about Christianity.

Later in the day I had yet another conversation with a hiker from Ohio who stopped by the front of the Study Center and complimented the building. I also had a number of other brief exchanges with hikers during the course of that day as well.



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**29 August 2022. Today I had a one-hour conversation** with **Turtleneck**, a Christian hiker from South Carolina who found his way into the Study Center. He was in his late 50s and was hiking south thru Maine to the New Hampshire border. He told me that he had been a chemical engineer with Eli Lilly until he decided to take an early retirement. During his hike through the 100-Mile Wilderness into Monson he had met another hiker with the trail name **Allegheny**. The two of them decided to hike this stretch of the AT together. Turtleneck told me that Allegheny was a skeptic whose wife was a believer. So Turtleneck was hoping to win him to Christ. I listened to him talk for perhaps 45 minutes and then prayed with him before he left and went on his way.

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**30-31 August 2022. On Tuesday I had a pleasant ten-minute conversation** in front of Study Center with an artist by the name of Clarisa from San Francisco CA. She was a writer, crafting a story about her family during this month-long residency. I asked her if she attended church in the San Francisco area. She replied that she had been raised Catholic but ended up “taking a different route.” The tone of our brief visit was cordial but devoid of much substance.



It was rather much the same the following day (Wednesday) when I spoke with another artist — Kendra, from Hallowell ME in front of the Post Office. She said that she had recently moved from Wisconsin where she grew up, and that her next move was unknown. The trail hike was sort of an interlude to figure that out. She told me that she is currently living with a partner, hopes to get a job at a Maine museum, and then start her own studio at some point. She wants to teach pottery. She told me that she loves Monson. She said that she would be leaving town the very next day after having been here for two weeks. I wish that I could have left a mark for Christ in her life, but that did not seem to happen.

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**On 2 September 2022** I spoke for 30 minutes with an Appalachian Trail hiker from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, whose wife, a nurse at the Hershey Medical Center in Hershey PA, was going to meet him in Monson that very day to join him on the remainder of his northbound hike. He told me that he had been an ordinance officer in the army for many years.

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**15 September 2022.** On this date I had what I felt to be a productive exchange with **Cucumber**, a hiker who informed me that his home was in southern Maine. Cucumber had come all the way from Georgia on the AT that year, and was now preparing to walk the 100 Mile Wilderness, northbound. A neighboring pastor and I were sitting out in the driveway in front of the Study Center when he came by. I offered him some Trail Magic (a Snickers bar) and he seemed relaxed and quite open to conversation. When I asked what comes after the AT he told me that he was heading for California to help with the vegetable harvest at a farm north of the Napa Valley, then possibly back to see his father in Delaware, and after that — well, he wasn't sure what.

At that point I asked him what he sees as his objective in life after his hiking days are over. He seemed uncertain. I asked if he believed that there was a heaven and he said that he thought so, but wasn't sure. He said that he thought there was a God of some sort. When I asked on what he bases his beliefs he said, "That's a good question. I'm not sure. Maybe my feelings."

With his permission I shared a brief personal testimony and then challenged him to read the Bible, beginning with the Gospel of John. His eyes brightened and he said, "John. That's my name so I shouldn't have any trouble remembering it." He also wrote down the name of McDowell's book, **More than a Carpenter**, which he agreed to read and then email me to let me know what he thought of it, and how things were going in general.

He told us that someone else had also recently encouraged him to read the Bible, beginning with the Gospel of John! I pointed out to him that this seemed to be more than coincidence and that he should probably take it as God drawing him to Himself. John thanked us for the conversation and left on a very positive note – while tearing open his Snickers bar.

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**3 October 2022.** I had been across town at the **Monson Community Church** on this beautiful morning and was on my way back to my office when, as if on cue, on the street right in front of the Study Center I met **Ayana** who was studying in the United States, but whose native home was in **Ethiopia**. Ayana said that she was in Monson as an artist for the next month. She told me that she writes prose, mostly dealing with the political situation in Ethiopia. She also told me that one of her plays had been produced on stage at the Lincoln Center in New York. I was impressed.

Our conversation then turned to the Study Center. She asked what I did for work inside. She had spotted the weathervane high above the belfry and noted that it looked like a cross. So I asked her whether she was a follower of Jesus. She smiled and said "Yes, I am. My mother in Ethiopia is a Pentecostal." I invited Ayana to church and she said that she would be there at 9:00 AM that Sunday. It was a very pleasant encounter, totally unplanned by me, but no doubt by God's Holy Spirit.

On a later occasion I saw Ayana again. She was very distressed about having to cut her time in Monson short in order to return to Africa to deal with a dying relative. I asked whether she would like me to pray for her. She said, "Yes." So right there on the street in broad daylight we bowed our heads and I asked God to give her strength to deal with this sudden change of plans.

Unfortunately, though, she never showed up at church during her time in Monson.



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**On May 15, 2023, Rochelle and her 4-year old daughter Jackie** entered the Study Center and asked to use the bathroom. She said that the two of them were just visiting Monson, and that she loves this town because, she said, “I met friends here when I was hiking the AT seven years ago.”

Rochelle told me that she studies whales for an agency based on the Maine coast. She said that she was one of eight kids in her family who had all grown up in North Carolina. She described her family as being close, but then said that her parents had divorced when she was just 10. She mentioned that her father was very negative and hard to relate to in any meaningful way.

Most amazingly, she told me that both of her parents professed Christ, but not one of their eight kids were Christians (including her)! Not one. She said that she doesn't feel that she is able to know what is true about God or the afterlife, but is just glad to be alive for now. She told me that she has issues with Christianity on many levels.

Meanwhile, little Jackie had become increasingly bored, had begun running around, and had even disappeared into my office at one point. So our time was cut short. I handed Rochelle some contact information and have since asked God to move her to have seen in me a saner, more personable, yet thoughtful side of what it means to believe in Christ than what she had evidently seen in her earthly father — which may have skewed her thinking about the heavenly Father.

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**On 20 June 2023 I was rolling past the boat landing** on my wheelchair when I saw a car with a man sitting inside. Very loud music originating from within the car was blaring out around the neighborhood — loud enough to be heard at quite some distance. I thought about how ironic that was because the scene at Monson's boat landing is exceptionally beautiful, quiet, and serene. Many people sit there on one of the park benches, under small shade trees, watching the loons and enjoying the peaceful view of Lake Hebron with Russell Mountain in the distance.

I pulled up beside his car. He noticed me, immediately loudly apologized for his loud music, and lowered the volume — in that order. We chatted briefly. He told me that his name was Gary. He said that he was from Newport, Maine — about one hour to the south — and that he had just dropped off an Appalachian trail hiker. He acted as if he knew me so I asked him whether we had ever met. He replied that we must have met at some point **in infinity**. That and a few other observations that he had made about life made it obvious to me that he was not a professing Christian.

Gary was quite talkative, so I mostly listened. But at some point I asked him about how he had come to drop off a hiker if he lived an hour south of the trail. He told me that he had taken the guy home for the weekend. Highly unusual. Then something else that he said made me suddenly realize that he was homosexual. A while later he confirmed that in some further comments he made about his life, not realizing that I was a Christian minister. We talked a bit further and I asked him whether he was happy. He told me that he's never been happier in his life.

I found out differently when I later met a Christian couple from another town who had come to know him well and were praying that he might come to Christ. They told me that he had been struggling with depression, was very unhappy, and had plans to soon move away from the area.

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**On 21 June 2023** I was talking with a Monson resident by the name of Joe. I asked about his work and then, a bit later, invited him to send his kids to our church's Summer Daily Vacation Bible School. He very politely explained that their family "doesn't have much to do with religion." And that was that. But we continued to talk for a while and the tone was cordial.

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**22 June 2023. On this beautiful sunny Thursday** I chatted with two guys who said that they were thru-hikers. They informed me that they hailed from near San Francisco. Their trail names were Camel and Scapegoat. They claimed to have started the trail in Georgia in **March 2023** and were planning to summit Katahdin on **June 28**. Now that's a fast hike! A *suspiciously* fast hike. 2100+ miles in three months. Really? I was skeptical, but didn't say so. If true, though, I wondered how many roses they had missed smelling, how many moose they had missed spotting, and how many joys they had missed experiencing along the way as they made their mad dash to the finish line.

Some hikers actually literally run the trail, trying to set all-time speed records. The Appalachian Trail Commission and the hiker community take a dim view of this practice, as it can pose a risk to themselves and others. Besides, it is antithetical to the very purpose of the trail — to experience nature in a quieter slower mode than the routine human rat race often affords.

**NOTE:** Below is a digitally enhanced photo of our son, Tim, "double-packing" deep in the 100-Mile Wilderness with his wife Amy in 2007.





But back to Camel and Scapegoat. The arithmetic is pretty simple. If what these guys were telling me was true, it would mean that they had **averaged** over 20 miles a day, seven days a week, for three straight months, over some very high mountains and thru some very rugged terrain. Was that likely? **And why the trail name Camel?** Camels are not usually thought of as speedsters, are they?

But on the other hand I could see first hand that they were young and fit and in a very good mood, paddle boarding on Lake Hebron on what they had decided would be their one day off. Although, whoa — once again — really?! After all that hiking, they are now finally taking a one-day break to rest their bone weary bodies — and they're going to spend it paddle-boarding?!

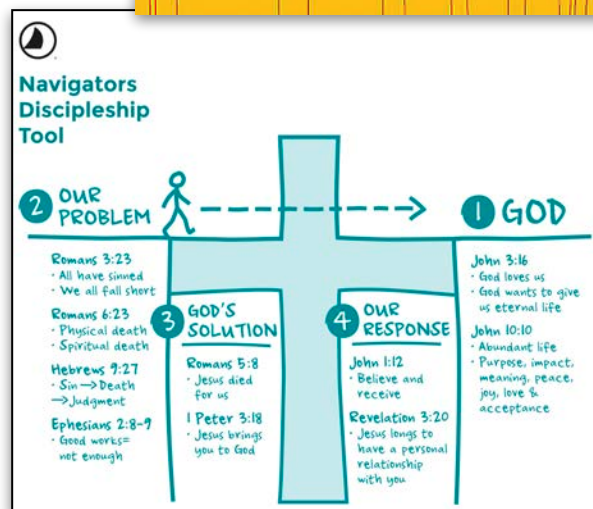
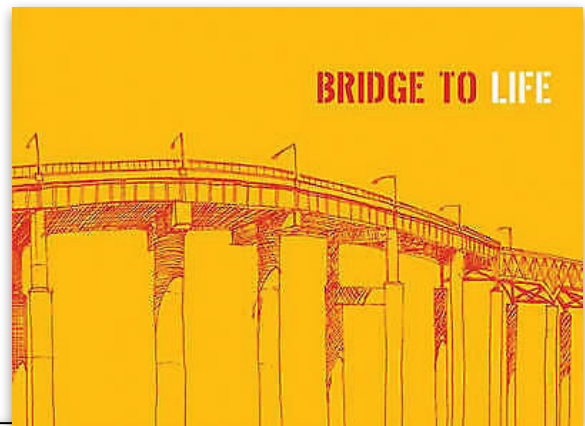
At any rate and in spite of all this, Camel told me while Scapegoat was taking his turn with the paddle board out on the lake that they both really loved Monson. So, what can I say? How can you not love a couple of guys who are in love with your hometown?!

**13 July 2023. I began this day by asking God** during my morning devotional time to provide me with an opportunity to have a gospel conversation with someone that day. At around 10:00 AM a fellow who lives some distance outside of Monson walked into the Study Center. We were well acquainted and talked for a while about a number of rather superficial matters. But then he began to express his growing frustration with current events. He wondered if we might be approaching end times. And he described a sort of restlessness that he'd been feeling recently. He then asked a question about how the church was doing, at which point the conversation quickly segued into my asking him if he had ever received Christ as his savior. He said, "No."

After having explained some of what was involved, I asked him whether he was prepared to do so right then. He hesitated for a moment, but then quietly said, "Not now." We spoke for quite a while after that. I handed him a small tract published by the **Navigators** called **The Bridge to Life** which depicts how sin divides all humans from God and explains how Jesus' death on the cross is the only way that chasm can be bridged. Then the tract presents a simple pattern for praying to receive Christ as Savior.

[Here's the link to a .pdf file of the booklet.](#)

I told him that when he is ready he could pray that prayer on his own, but that I would also be happy to meet with him if and when that time came. I invited him to talk further. And I told him that I sensed God was drawing him to Himself — or as C.S. Lewis once put it, "The Hound of Heaven" is on your trail. I encouraged him to receive Christ while he had the opportunity, and not to wait. I am hoping to hear from him soon, but if not I plan to contact him again to follow up.



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**24 July 2023.** In most cases when I am engaging with AT hikers no one is standing around taking pictures. So in order to illustrate this diary with a few photos, on this beautiful day I had asked Mary to bring her iPad to the Study Center on this day. She agreed and had just arrived. Now all I needed was a hiker with whom to speak.

It usually doesn't take long to spot a hiker in Monson in July — and this day was no exception. I soon saw a guy with a flowing white beard sitting in the gazebo just across from the Study Center. I rolled over and, after confirming that he was hiking the AT, asked if he would mind if Mary snapped a photo of the two of us talking for a project that I was working on. He readily agreed.

As she was preparing to take the picture I asked him what his trail name was. He said, "Turtle." I said, "Oh, last August I met Tortoise — probably your third cousin once removed or something." He smiled. Then I asked him where home was and he said, "Tennessee. I'm a retired truck driver who decided to walk the AT. So here I am."

As the two of us were talking I spotted another hiker with a backpack walking past. I asked him if he would mind joining us for a quick photo op. He came right over and was immediately part of the conversation. I asked what his trail name was. He said, "Rabbit." Oh, my. I said, "Well, then, Turtle — meet Rabbit! So who's going to reach Katahdin first — the tortoise or the hare?" Turtle never missed a beat. He said, "It'll be the hare because I'm staying put for the next two days."



I asked Rabbit where he was from. He said, "Pennsylvania." "Where in Pennsylvania?" "Lancaster." This exchange was getting more interesting all the time! Although Monson has been our home for almost 50 years now, I grew up just east of Lancaster near Atglen PA.

Something about Rabbit made me think that he may have at some point been Mennonite. But when I asked, he said, "No. Amish." He had just gotten into town and was ready for a hot shower, as most hikers are. Sometimes some of them come into town quite ripe, i.e. smelling pretty gamey.

I invited him back for a chat before he left Monson. What an interesting confab this had been. Although both Turtle and Rabbit seemed happy to have posed for this photo (above) I decided to show my appreciation by sharing with them a little Trail Magic. So everybody ended up happy that day. I got my photos. They got their Hershey bars.

On the way back to the Study Center I passed by the public boat landing and watched a hiker by the trail name of **Space** (from Baltimore MD) getting out of the water where he'd just enjoyed a quick swim. He had a great big happy smile on his face. He said, "I love this day. I love this weather. I love this town. I really love Monson." I told him that I did, too.

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**1 August 2023.** On this date I found myself in a conversation with a Monson neighbor by the name of Herb whom I had never yet gotten to know very well. At some point during the first ten minutes of our chat he referred to his days in seminary. So I said, "Oh, so you are a believer?" He said, "No." I said, "But you went to seminary. Did you become a minister?" "Yes. In the Methodist church." "But you're not a believer now?" "That's right," he said.

Then, after a quick pause, he added, "I also studied physics. And the more I studied physics the more I realized that nothing in life is absolute. Nothing is for certain. Nothing. So I gave up my faith. And sometime later a guy asked me if I realized that the majority of ministers don't really believe what they're preaching, either." Wow.

I said, "So let me get this straight. You don't believe that anything is absolutely true for anyone and everyone at the same time?" He said, "That's correct." I said, "And that includes even what you're telling me right now, I presume? So if what you're saying — that absolutely nothing is certain or true — then what you're telling me about nothing being absolutely certain and true is not even absolutely certain itself. In which case, why should I pay any attention to what you're saying?"

This time the pause lasted much longer. Maybe ten long pregnant seconds. And then, do you know what he said? He said, "Because it's *interesting*. That's why you should pay it attention." I said, "Well, to be honest, I find the idea that everything is relative and uncertain a lot more depressing than interesting. And I'd have to see some clear documentation about **most** ministers being closet skeptics. There may be some, but I doubt there is a majority. And I know that I'm not among them. I privately believe the faith that I proclaim publicly."

Then I added, "You know what? I'd like to hear your story in more detail. Would you be willing to sit down for an hour and talk about all this at greater length?" He said, "Only if you're not going to try to change my thinking." I said, "It's a deal." So he agreed. This should be good.



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**2 August 2023.** On my way past the Monson General Store this morning I pulled over to talk with four smiling friendly guys who were sitting at one of the tables, snacking away. I asked, “Are you guys all hikers?” One of them said, “Yeah. How could you tell? Was it the smell?” We all laughed.

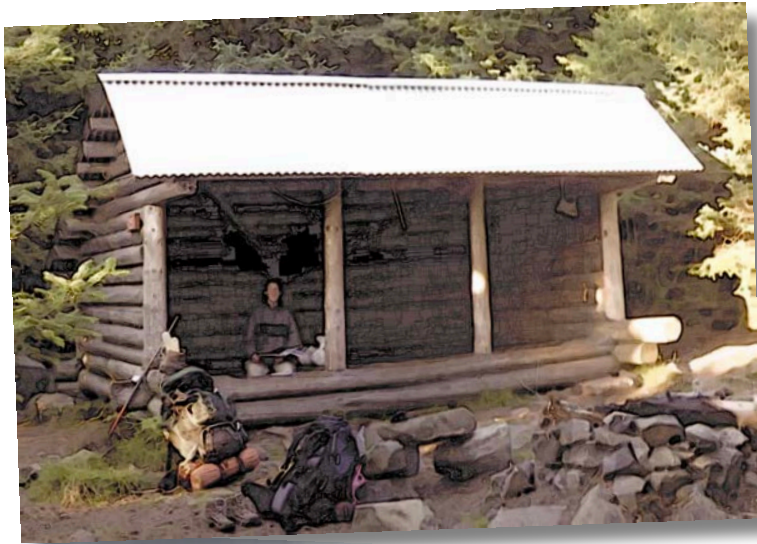
Two of them were from **Virginia**, one from **Belgium**, and one from **Sweden**. Only one of them had ever been in Maine before this hike. And I noticed that he was the one who had purchased a full pint of fresh Maine blueberries and was eating them by the handful. Hikers who’ve been on a diet of dried food often crave fresh fruit and anything greasy. About that time another hiker came by who had just summited Katahdin the day before, so they were all comparing notes. I needed to get back to my office, so I wished them all a safe week and a successful conclusion to their hike.



## CONCLUSION

I’m going to end this Section 3 of the compendium by underscoring what I wrote in the **Introduction** to this section. I do not claim to be a blue-ribbon street evangelist or street apologist. If you are a Christian you may have read the accounts of these various encounters and thought to yourself, “Oh, I would have handled that situation differently.” Or “Oh, I could have done much better than that.” You probably have good grounds for thinking that way. So my primary purpose and hope in sharing these accounts is simply that you will be spurred to engage with others in a sharper, more creative manner. If that happens it will make my efforts to publish this diary worthwhile. Otherwise if you stop with only criticism, then — to paraphrase D. L. Moody — I think that I prefer the flawed approach that I **have** used to the much better approach that you have **not** used.

# BONUS PHOTOS AND RELATED INFORMATION



## Photos on left (top to bottom)

- ▶ Lean-to along the AT in 100-Mile Wilderness.
- ▶ The infamous Knife Edge approach to Big K's summit.
- ▶ Stephen, Tim, & Andrew Witmer (*l to r*) atop mile-high summit of Mt. Katahdin (2021).

## Photos below

- Monson Arts welcome sign
- Artist materials, Moore Bldg

## Contact information for

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<https://monsonarts.org>





## SECTION 4

### Appendix 1

# Questions for Skeptics

**Here are five diagnostics questions for skeptics that will often cut to the chase and save everyone a lot of time.**

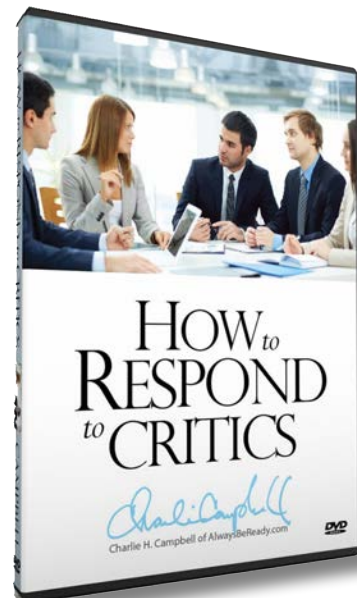
- 1.** What would it take for you to become convinced that Christianity is true?
- 2.** If I was able to convince you that Christianity is true, would you become a Christian?
- 3.** What do you believe about Jesus?
- 4.** What would you say is the main message of the Bible?
- 5.** Are you able to live consistently with your worldview?

# Here are **five more questions\*** for skeptics that can be used to **effectively** turn the tables on those making false and unfounded assertions about Christianity.

1. Would you please clarify for me what you just said?
2. Given what you've just said, what is it that **you** believe is the truth on this matter?
3. How did you come to believe that?
4. What is the evidence for what you're saying?
5. Why should I believe what you're claiming to be true?

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\* These questions are a slightly adapted version of the five questions posed by respected Christian apologist **Charlie Campbell**, director of the **Always Be Ready** apologetics ministry, in his lecture, **My Top Five Questions for Skeptics**. We highly recommend watching Campbell's video presentation: <https://rumble.com/vao3f9-charlie-campbell-top-five-questions-for-skeptics.html> — and visiting his website: [AlwaysBeReady.com](http://AlwaysBeReady.com) | **NOTE:** An updated version of the lecture just mentioned is now available in DVD format and is entitled **How to Respond to Critics**.





## SECTION 4

### Appendix 2

# Apologetics- Related Quotes, Notes, & Snippets

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*Wise insights from gifted minds through the years.*

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Many years ago a valued mentor in my life (Pastor Herman Glick) told me that the cost of subscribing to a periodical could pay itself off if I would come across even just *one* powerful insight or quote. Insofar as that is the case, **this section of pithy insights from men and women speaking about things that matter may prove to be the most valuable component of this compendium.**

The following **179 apologetics-related quotes** have been culled and **selected** from a much larger 52-page (8.5x11 single-spaced) collection that I assembled one-by-one between 1990 and 2022. The citations are not always as complete as I wish they were, but will hopefully provide at least some sense of the source.

I have included a number of entries here that, though dated, are still true in principle and make a significant point.

**Also — and very important.** Inclusion of a quote does not always necessarily imply our endorsement of its message. Some entries quote nonbelievers or articulate *non*Christian worldviews (such as the amazingly candid quote about evolution and naturalism by William Provine of Cornell University on page 485) and are included in order to provide insight as to how unbelievers often think and understand life.

## THE APOLOGETICS OF GRACE AND UNDERSTANDING

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- "In my early 20s, I attended an event where Tim Keller, an orthodox, evangelical Presbyterian pastor, was having a public debate with a secular humanist. In the nearly 20 years that have passed since the event, I still recall one moment distinctly. The secular humanist struggled with a point he was making and was unclear, something that happens often enough in public speaking. Keller could have chosen to go in for the kill rhetorically and make his opponent look foolish. Instead, he paused and asked, "Is this what you mean?" Keller then restated the secular argument in a clearer, better way, arguing against his own point of view. The other speaker agreed that was what he had meant, and Keller continued, countering the (now much stronger) point.

"This generosity and understanding toward those with whom we disagree helped shape the way I now see the world. It had more of an impact on me, as a Christian, than any argument could. Keller refused the easier route of debate, insisting on finding the best argument of others, even if it meant strengthening his opponent's case. He was in pursuit of truth and kindness, not point-scoring. That night I saw what Christian leaders should be like." — **Tish Harrison Warren**, *New York Times* | Opinion | May 28, 2023.

## THE APOLOGETICS OF CHARACTER & TESTIMONY

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- "Many years ago the head of a rescue mission in London accepted the challenge to debate a well-known skeptic, but with this condition: He would bring with him 100 people who would tell how believing in Jesus had changed their lives. He invited his opponent to counter with witnesses to the benefits of unbelief. On the appointed day the believer came with his 100, but the skeptic never showed up. Even though we should be prepared to give a reasonable answer to a person who asks about the hope we have in Christ (I Peter 3:15), our Christlike character and conduct remain the strongest argument for our faith." — **Herb Vander Lugt**, *Our Daily Bread*, 6/13/1999

## ENGAGING NONBELIEVERS

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- "In an age when people with different points of view have difficulty talking together, I'd like to see Christian scholars stop talking only to each other and reach out to those with whom they may have little or no common ground. If we can develop conversational discourse so Christian scholars talk to both non-Christian scholars and non-scholars — those they generally don't talk to — we'll have accomplished something. We have so much to learn from each other." — **Dr. Harold Heie** of Center for Christian Studies, Gordon College, Wenham MA

## QUOTES RELATING TO APOLOGETICS & EVANGELISM

### ARE EVANGELISM AND APOLOGETICS SERIOUSLY THREATENED THESE DAYS?

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- "Christian apologetics is the branch of Christian theology devoted to persuading skeptics of the truth of the gospel." "Apologetics makes the difficult accessible. It is the art of using commonplace language and construction to reveal the persuasiveness of the gospel." "Unfortunately, we've abandoned knowledge standards in the culture to such an extent that the language of theology and the knowledge of past apologetics is beyond the grasp of vast numbers of Americans. Theology was not intended for the seminaries. Apologetics certainly wasn't. Both were intended for all believers. But their fall into desuetude is so complete that the recapturing of theology and apologetics requires a major effort." — **Hugh Hewitt**, *The Embarrassed Christian*

### THE GROWING NEED FOR APOLOGETICS-EVANGELISM

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- "I fervently believe apologetics is the way we will spell Christian evangelism, missions, and discipleship in the 21st century. Dr. Elmer Towns, co-founder of Liberty University, recently said to me, 'The next great trend in the evangelical church is **apologetics evangelism**, those who can go and give a defense of the faith while they present the Gospel.'" — **Dr. Richard Land**, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary • 11.19.2013

### SINCERITY, AUTHENTICITY, CONVICTION

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- "Sincerity does not trump truth. After all, one can be sincerely wrong. But sincerity is indispensable to any truth we wish others to believe. **There is something winsome, even irresistible, about a life lived with conviction.** I am reminded of the Scottish philosopher and skeptic, David Hume, who was recognized among a crowd of those listening to the preaching of George Whitefield, the famed evangelist of the First Great Awakening. 'I thought you didn't believe in the Gospel,' someone asked. 'I do not,' Hume replied. Then, with a nod toward Whitefield, he added, 'But he does.'" — **Larry Alex Taunton** in **Listening to Young Atheists: Lessons for a Stronger Christianity**, *The Atlantic* magazine, June 6, 2013

### GREAT QUESTIONS IN APOLOGETICS DIALOGUE

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- What do you mean by that? How did you come to that conclusion? Can you clear this up for me? Let me think about what you're saying. — **Greg Koukl** on using the Columbo tactic, from **STR.org**
- If Christianity were true would you want to know it? If not, why not? If it were true it seems that it would matter, doesn't it? Isn't a simple dismissal of the matter intentional ignorance, or an assumption that it's false? And if it's false on what basis do you believe that? — **Frank Turek**, noted Christian apologist

# QUOTES RELATING TO APOLOGETICS & EVANGELISM

## STREET LEVEL APOLOGETICS

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- “We need to show how the main promises secular culture makes regarding meaning, satisfaction, freedom, and identity can’t be fulfilled. We need an explosion of ‘memoir’ apologetics — thoughtful, accessible, and wildly diverse stories of people who encountered Christ and had their lives changed by the gospel.” — **Tim Keller**, 5/26/17, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-to-have-effective-missionary-encounter-with-culture>

## APOLOGETICS FOR YOUTH

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- Instead of addressing teens’ questions, most church youth groups focus on fun and food. The goal seems to be to create emotional attachment using loud music, silly skits, slapstick games — and pizza. But the force of sheer emotional experience will not equip teens to address the ideas they will encounter when they leave home and face the world on their own. A study in Britain found that non-religious parents have a near 100 percent chance of passing on their views to their children, whereas religious parents have only about a 50/50 chance of passing on their views. Clearly, teaching young people to engage critically with secular worldviews is no longer an option. It is a necessary survival skill. — **Nancy Pearcey**, from her article, How Critical Thinking Saves Faith

## HOW CAN CHRISTIANS BE PERSUASIVE TODAY?

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- Almost all our witnessing and Christian communication assumes that people are open to what we have to say, or at least are interested, if not in need, of what we are saying. Yet most people quite simply are not open, not interested and not needy, and in much of the advanced modern world fewer people are open today than even a generation ago. Indeed, many are more hostile, and their hostility is greater than the Western church has faced for centuries. Through the explosion of pluralism in the last fifty years, our world has grown dramatically more diverse, and through the intensification of the culture warring in many Western countries, our world has grown far more dismissive of our faith. In short, the public squares in many of our nations are more secular and the private spheres are more diverse. We therefore have to speak many languages, and not just “Christian,” and we have to be persuasive when we address minds and hearts that often listen to us with a default position of prejudice, scorn, impatience, and sometimes anger. — **Os Guinness** in Fool’s Talk

## APOLOGETICS, EVANGELISM, LISTENING, CARING

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- “It is not enough to proclaim the good news; we have also to defend it and confirm it (Philippians 1:7,16). The apostles did not separate these tasks. Nor must we. There was a strong element of apologetics in all their evangelism.” — **John R. W. Stott** (Evangelical Truth, ©1999 IVP)

## QUOTES RELATING TO APOLOGETICS & EVANGELISM

- "Christians must be the best listeners. Christians need to help form and mold the discourse on campus. They need to be asking questions such as 'What do you mean? How do you know? Why do you think it is true? So what? How does this affect your life? Can you live this way?' And there are two questions that Christians need to answer. 'Do you really care?' 'Do I want to be like you?' Is your evangelism simply proclamational or is it incarnational?" — **Doug Palmeter**, from a note sheet provided on 11/6/1999 on Evangelism & the Postmodern Student

### REACHING KIDS WITH GOD'S TRUTH

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- "I find that everywhere I go, children of Christians are being lost to historic Christianity . . . They are being lost because their parents are unable to understand their children and therefore cannot help them in their time of need... We have left the next generation naked in the face of twentieth-century thought by which they are surrounded." — **Francis Schaeffer**

### ACTION EVANGELISM IN NATURAL DISASTERS

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- Please don't forget to put some Bibles next to the powdered milk. Any major disaster can become a marvelous opportunity for evangelism. A tract wrapped around a can of tuna fish might actually get read by a hungry neighbor. How about some nice Gospels of John to hand out with a candle when the lights go out, for those in both spiritual and earthly darkness?

If you anticipate neighbors borrowing wood, plan to offer them a good Christian novel to read by the fire. If they have children, maybe they'll accept a copy of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to read aloud to the kids while video games are down. Are you blessed with a gasoline generator? Plan for an occasional video afternoon for all the neighbors. How about the Jesus film? Kids going through television withdrawal will watch nearly anything, even gospel shows. For less overt outreach, try *Ben Hur* — it may not be on the theological level of Calvin's Institutes, but it's a start, and your hospitality may open doors to speak about the Lord. The national electric grid is alive and well; the embedded microchips are still in 1998, the ATMs are pumping cash, the Christian bookstores are brightly lit, and the printing presses are rolling. No ice storms or blizzards are stopping your shopping. Now is the time to stock up food that endures to life eternal, and the words that are the pure water of life. Think "Y2K," think evangelism, think "disaster," and think of glorious opportunities to witness! Stock up and prepare! — **Lyn Hettler**, Ambler, Pennsylvania, on preparing for Y2K or other natural disasters.

## QUOTES RELATING TO APOLOGETICS & EVANGELISM

### INTELLECTUALIZING OR EVANGELIZING?

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- "I teach, read books, and do my research like every other academic. But somewhere deep in my soul I cannot help but believe that, on God's scale of values, an afternoon in the park sharing my faith is more important than an afternoon in the library; or more to the point, a life given to Christ in New Guinea (preferably as a medical missionary) is more important than a life lived as a tenured professor at the State University." — **William Dryness**, Dean of Fuller School of Theology, FTS, in a review on Mark Noll's *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.

### CRITICAL NEED FOR THE CHURCH TO PERSONALLY ENGAGE THE WORLD

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- ". . . those who function within the smug, self-enclosed hothouse atmosphere of Hollywood seem unaware of [America's religious activism]. Most movie makers assume a patronizing attitude toward religiously committed people because they know so few of them personally. A 1982 survey... showed only 4% of them attend church or synagogue regularly [vs] 40% [of the general populace]." —Reader's Digest, 7/1990, **Michael Medved**, co-host of weekly PBS TV program "Sneak Previews Goes Video"; adapted from an address at Hillsdale College on March 25, 1989.
- "...so few editors and reporters seem to know anybody who is anti-abortion..." — **John Leo**, U.S. News & World Report, page 17, 7/16/1990
- "Journalists ...don't know anybody [personally] who is part of the anti-abortion movement". — **Richard Harwood** of Leonard Downie, Managing Editor, Washington Post, 5/6/90 (referred to by Leo in preceding quote)
- "People almost invariably arrive at their beliefs not on the basis of proof but on the basis of what they find attractive." — **Blaisé Pascal**

### REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FROM APOLOGETICS TODAY

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- "Some folks are hard on Paul for not being more successful [in Athens], but he won some; I think we're going to have to settle for a few these days vs the old mass evangelism." — **Ken Ham** (ICR), paraphrased from video.

### PASCAL'S WAGER

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- "What do you risk on the idea that there is a God? If there is no God and you live as if there were, what have you lost? Likewise, if there truly is a God and you live as if there were none, what do you risk losing? And which is the safer risk? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain you gain all; if you lose you lose nothing. Wager then, without hesitation, that He is. Jesus Christ is the end of all and the center to which all tends. Whoever knows Him knows the reason of everything." — **Christian Living for Senior Highs**, Lesson 6 for October 7 1990.

## QUOTES RELATING TO APOLOGETICS & EVANGELISM

### TACKLING THE ISSUES THAT MATTER

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- "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."  
— **Martin Luther**

### THE NEED TO PROCLAIM, NOT PROTEST | MAKING EVANGELISM OUR PRIORITY

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- "I think we've lived as a protest to our culture in North America more than we realize, and it's not going to work anymore. If there's a change in evangelism, I think that's where it lies. We must recognize that we are called to proclaim, not protest. ...the church has pretended to the throne of political control in our nation, thereby hoping to govern moral behavior through political access." — From NIRR 2/22/93, Supplement Interview with **Jack Hayford**
- "Maybe it's time to remember that our calling has never been to remove the darkness around us, but instead to be lights in a dark place (Philippians 2:15). Our calling is to be a 'society within a society' committed to dealing with any hint of sexual, social, or economic scandal within our own ranks (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). Our mission is to bring ourselves under the rule of Christ and then to lead as many people as possible to the One who has changed our own hearts. This is not to be critical of those whose conscience has led them to be social advocates. As American citizens we have a God-given opportunity to have a hand in the making of national policy. Let's just remember that our Lord's strategy to save the world was not carried out by reshaping Roman or Jewish law. His strategy was to 'fulfill the law' by His love. His strategy was to risk His own reputation by mixing with and then dying for the worst of sinners. If we give most of our energies to our democratic rights, who will be the friend of sinners? Who will call all to Christ?" —from *Been Thinking About Social Strategy*, by **Martin DeHaan**, Times of Discovery 5/93
- They once offered Charles Spurgeon \$1000 per lecture to do a 50-lecture circuit of the large cities of America. All expenses would have been paid. Spurgeon declined saying, "I can do better. I will stay in London and try to save 50 souls."

### SPIRITUAL CRISIS

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- "The real crisis of our time is spiritual," says former Education Secretary William J. Bennett.

## QUOTES RELATING TO EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRISTIANITY

### THE EXCLUSIVITY OF ALL WORLDVIEWS

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- "Religions are inherently exclusive." — **BDN Editorial** entitled, "America's Ground Zero," published 7/25/10 06:23 pm

### IS CLAIMING THAT CHRIST IS THE ONLY ONE WAY OF SALVATION ARROGANT?

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- "We live in a world of confusion. Competing and often contradictory intellectual and religious voices clamor for our attention and our allegiance. In the midst of so many crosscurrents, is it not arrogance or narrow-mindedness to claim that there is only one way of salvation? I think not. Do we consider it arrogant or narrow-minded when a doctor points us to one medicine that will cure us of a particular disease? The human race is infected with a spiritual disease—the disease of sin — and God has given us the remedy. Dare we do anything less than urge people to apply that remedy to their lives? Since I committed my life to Jesus Christ some 60 years ago, I have become more and more convinced of the uniqueness and the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Is that merely stubbornness on my part? No, it comes from a deeper and a growing understanding of who Jesus Christ was — and is." — **Billy Graham**, Decision 11/1997
- "The metaphor of the smorgasbord is often used, with various worldview dishes offered for our consumption. We can choose to be Christian or Muslim, Marxist or Capitalist, but postmodernism itself is not on the menu. It is not offered as simply one option among others, for in fact, in the metaphor it functions as the table from which all the other dishes are served. The denial of truth is at the same time a claim to truth, and is self-defeating." — **Bill Kynes**, pastor of the National EFC, Annandale VA, in The Ministerial Forum, Fall 1997, Vol 8 No 1.

## QUOTES RELATING TO THE BIBLE

### IS THE BIBLE FROM GOD?

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- "The Bible is either the invention of good men and angels, bad men and demons, or of God Himself. It could not be the invention of good men and angels for they neither could nor would write a book and tell lies all the time they were writing it saying, 'Thus saith the Lord.' It could not be the invention of bad men and demons for they would not and could not write a Book which commands all noble duties, forbids all sins, and condemns their own souls to a lost Eternity! Therefore, we can not escape the conclusion that the Bible is from God." — paraphrase of a quotation originally attributed to **John Wesley**

### CONVICTED BY BIBLICAL CLARITY

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- "Most people are bothered by those Scripture passages which they cannot understand. But for me, the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand." — **Mark Twain**



## QUOTES RELATING TO THE BIBLE

### ARCHAEOLOGY VALIDATES THE BIBLE

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- "In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New Testaments — corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus." — **U.S. News & World Report**, 10/25/1999

### DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EVIDENCE & PROOF IN TRUSTING THE BIBLE

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- All Christians should understand the difference between blind faith and rational faith. We must acknowledge that we are unable, on the basis of traditional empirical scientific methodology alone, or on the basis of reason alone, to establish the scriptures of any particular system of faith as being "from God." We may be able to eliminate some, but on the basis of reason alone no scripture is ever able to be conclusively established as being God's Word. But here is the point — viewed dispassionately, there is overwhelmingly *more and better evidence* of a circumstantial nature for the Bible being of Divine origin than there is for that of any other scripture of any other faith system in the history of the world. — Daryl E. Witmer

### WHY THE HARSH LAWS & CONDONING OF SLAVERY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

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- "Matthew 19:8: 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you...'  
This is a very profound principle, which is of immense value in dealing with Scripture. There were certain precepts and commands given to Israel, which are not of lasting obligation, because they were stages in their moral discipline and education. It would have been impossible to lift them suddenly from the degradation into which they had sunk in Egypt, to the glorious levels of Isaiah or the Sermon on the Mount: so God's dealings with them were graduated and progressive. Such were the regulations about a plurality of wives, the keeping of bond-slaves, the treatment of captives, the destruction of their foes. With respect to these, our Lord says, Moses interposed a parenthesis of legislation, which was a stage higher than anything known among the surrounding nations, though it was not God's normal or original code. What was true of Israel is true of us. We do not realize, in the first stage of our redemption, all that is included in the word 'Sin.' We are like men enveloped in morning mist, which permits them to descry only the bolder outlines of the cliffs around them, but as yet veils the minuter eminences or depressions. As the mist clears, surrounding objects become ever more distinctly defined: so that they know more of God, we know ourselves better, and realize what sin is, and come to see it where we had never guessed its presence. Thus we condemn today what we permitted five years ago. It is interesting to find in these words of Christ the germ of an argument which his apostle used afterwards in the Epistle to the Galatians with such marvelous force. He said the Mosaic dispensation was a parenthesis; but it cannot dis-annul God's primal institution (Galatians 3:15-17)." — **F.B. Meyer**, *Great Verses Through the Bible*, ©1972 Zondervan

# QUOTES RELATING TO THE BIBLE

## SHOULD THE BIBLE BE INTERPRETED LITERALLY?

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- “In other words, we are to read and understand the Bible in a *plain* or *straightforward* manner. This is usually what people mean when they say ‘literal interpretation of the Bible’ (this phrase is common among those not well-versed in hermeneutics). I try to use the term ‘plainly’ so I don’t confuse people.” “Reading the Bible plainly or straightforwardly (taking into account literary style, context, authorship, etc.) is the basis for what is called the *historical-grammatical* method of interpretation which has been used by theologians since the church fathers. This method helps to eliminate improper interpretations of the Bible.” — **Bodie Hodge**, *Confounding the Critics*, © 2014 Master Books, page 186.

## THE MYTH OF INFALLIBLE INTERPRETATION

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- “But the church’s widespread condemnation of Copernicus in the 16th century provides a poignant reminder that we can learn from science, and that it **is Scripture that is infallible, not our interpretations**. Science can indeed correct our theology, not because Scripture is fallible but because we are.” — **Gavin Ortlund**, associate pastor at Sierra Madre Congregational Church, editor at The Gospel Coalition | Posted on November 11, 2014

## DISTORTING THE SCRIPTURE

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- “Perhaps it is worth remembering that a denial of inerrancy is not the only way of denying Scripture. Every Jehovah’s Witness claims to believe in inerrancy, but then distorts the Holy Scriptures to refute the deity of Christ.” — **Kevin T. Bauder**, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. | Inerrancy and Creationism | October 24th, 2014

## HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE

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- Biblical perspicuity is sometimes termed the normative hermeneutic, or grammatico-historical interpretive methodology, which states that the customary usage of a word or phrase or grammatical construction rules unless the context of the specified passage or the context of a parallel passage suggests that an alternative interpretation is indicated.

## HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLE OF BIBLICAL PERSPICUITY

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- If the plain sense of a text makes common sense, be slow to impose some other sense, or you may end up with nonsense.

## CALVIN ON THE PERSPICUITY OF SCRIPTURE

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- “Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning.” — **John Calvin**

## QUOTES RELATING TO EPISTEMOLOGY

### CRIMES AGAINST REASON

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- "History has shown that crimes of logic can be more catastrophic for humanity than crimes of passion." — RZ, noted apologist in *Can Man Live Without God?* page 11.

### THE DEATH OF KNOWLEDGE?

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- "The death of God spelled the death of theology, but the morticians of the Absolute were not content to just bleed God-talk. Inevitably God's undertakers were marching to their own funeral with all of knowledge being pronounced dead." —from a message at the TTT conference, 5/1998, **Trinity Evangelical Divinity School**

### WHAT QUESTION WOULD STUMP GOD?

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- "Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable. How many hours are there in a mile? Is yellow square or round? Probably half the questions we ask — half of our great theological and metaphysical problems — are like that. — **C.S. Lewis** in *A Grief Observed* (1961)

### USING THE MIND

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- "What luck for rulers that men do not think." —**Adolf Hitler**, 11/95 Wheaton Record

### ENCOURAGING KIDS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES

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- \* Robert Morey says that at a Bible College he attended he was told to pray that God would take away his questioning mind and give him a believing heart. — from the Rockford papers by Eric Pement

## QUOTES RELATING TO JESUS CHRIST

### WAS JESUS JUST A GOOD MORAL TEACHER?

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- "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." "That is the one thing we must not say," Lewis writes. "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. [If He is not Lord], let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to." — **C.S. Lewis**, In his classic work, *Mere Christianity*.

## QUOTES RELATING TO JESUS CHRIST

### A CHALLENGE TO AGNOSTICS & APATHEISTS

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- “I don't care where you're from, what your history is, what your background is, what religion you came from, or non-religion you came from... Jesus of Nazareth is, inarguably, the most influential human being to ever walk the earth. If you're going to call yourself a pursuer of truth you have to, at least, read what He allegedly said and did. He's the center of human history. You're not going to look into Him?”  
— **Frank Turek**, noted Christian apologist

### THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST

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- “Moses could mediate the law; Mohammed could brandish a sword; Buddha could give personal counsel; Confucius could offer wise sayings. But none of these men were qualified to offer atonement for the sins of the world. Christ alone is worthy of unlimited devotion and service. He alone is able to redeem. He alone is worthy of worship.” — **R.C. Sproul** in *Reason to Believe*, © 1978 Zondervan

### WHY ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOT THE SAME | UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST & CHRISTIANITY

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- “There is no halfway house and there is no parallel in other religions. If you had gone to Buddha and asked him, 'Are you the son of Brahma?' he would have said, 'My son, you are still in the vale of illusion.' If you had gone to Socrates and asked, 'Are you Zeus?' he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, 'Are you Allah?' he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, 'Are you Heaven?' I think he would have probably replied, 'Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste.' The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question.” — **C. S. Lewis**, "What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?" in *God In The Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 157-158.

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### DO ALL PATHS LEAD TO GOD?

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- In the marketplace of religious ideas there are extreme religious beliefs that most people in the West have no problem rejecting or declaring to be untrue. Consider those religious traditions that require child sacrifice or girls being forcibly mutilated. Or how about the extremist who believes that the path to Paradise is blowing up innocent people? Most people, even those who normally say that all paths lead to God, would say that these are, in fact, not equally valid paths to God.”  
— **Jason Ballard** in *Everyday Apologetics*, page 169

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### CAN ALL WORLDVIEWS BE CORRECT?

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- "I believe Jesus was right, Buddha was right, and all of those people like that are right. They're all saying the same thing — and I believe it." — **John Lennon** in an interview with LOOK magazine in December 1966.

### RELIGION IS A CRUTCH

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- If religion is a crutch then skepticism is hobbling around with a broken leg, refusing to see an doctor. — unknown source

### THE TRAGIC SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

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- Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. — **C.S. Lewis**

### WHAT DOES THE KORAN SAY ABOUT CHRISTIANS?

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- The Koran, Sura 2, verse 62, seems to imply that Christians (and Jews and Sabeans) are all saved. But we know that Islam condemns those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. So a Christian can be considered saved so long as they are not a Christian?!

### PASSIONATE ATHEISM?

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- "Intellectually it makes no sense to passionately give yourself to fighting against something that you honestly believe does not exist. People that seriously give themselves to destroying the idea of Frosty the Snowman are in need of help."  
— **Pastor Dwight J Oswald**, Earnestly Contending, October 2018, Council Bluffs Iowa.

### THE BLEAKNESS OF ATHEISM, NATURALISM, MATERIALISM

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- "If you believe in evolution you can't hope for there to be any free will. There is no hope whatsoever of there being any deep meaning in human life. We live. We die. And we're gone. We're absolutely gone when we die." "No God. No life after death. No ultimate foundation for ethics. No ultimate meaning in life. And no human free will — are all deeply connected to an evolutionary perspective. You're here today and you're gone tomorrow and that's all there is to it." — **Dr. William B. Provine**, professor of the History of Biology at Cornell University, and an evolutionist himself!

### WHICH HOPELESSNESS DO YOU WANT?

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- "More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly." — **Woody Allen**, summing up the paradoxical dilemma faced by the secularist today.

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### THE QUR'AN'S CATCH-22

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- "If Jesus did **not** die a violent and imminent death, then that makes him a false prophet. But the Qur'an says that he's a great prophet, and so the Qur'an would be wrong and thus discredited. On the other hand, if Jesus **did** die a violent and imminent death as he predicted, then he is indeed a great prophet — but this would contradict the Qur'an, which says he didn't die on the cross. So either way, the Qur'an is discredited."  
— **Mike Licona** in Finding the Real Jesus, by Lee Strobel, © 2008 Zondervan

### NO SONGS OF JOY FOR ATHEISTS?

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- The humorist **Steve Martin** sang a song at the 2013 New Orleans Jazz Fest that he called "the entire atheist hymnal" (on one page of paper). He called it: "Atheists Don't Have No Songs."

Christians have their hymns and pages,  
Hava Nagila's for the Jews,  
Baptists have the rock of ages,  
Atheists just sing the blues.

Romantics play Claire de Lune,  
Born agains sing "He is risen,"  
But no one ever wrote a tune,  
For godless existentialism.

For Atheists there's no good news.  
They'll never sing a song of faith.  
In their songs they have one rule:  
the "he" is always lowercase.

Some folks sing a Bach cantata,  
Lutherans get Christmas trees,  
Atheist songs add up to nada,  
But they do have Sundays free.

### THE ROOTS OF ATHEISM

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- "History strongly suggests that those who are attracted to atheism are first repelled by theism." —**Alister McGrath**, Christianity Today 8/2010, p40

### THE FAITH OF THE EVOLUTIONARY ATHEIST

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- "You've got to have a lot of faith to be an atheist. You've got to believe that no one times nothing plus blind chance equals everything." — **Bill Glass** in Wheaton Chapel service, 9/15/1995

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### WORLDVIEW TRUTH TESTS

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- Logical thinking allows us to list three distinctive qualities which test the truthfulness of any worldview:

FIRST, an adequate worldview must be consistent within itself, and non-contradictory. Any contradiction is a definite indication that the worldview contains at least some untruth; and if the contradiction involves an essential element of the worldview, then the worldview must be false, having failed the first truth-test.

SECOND, an adequate worldview must fit basically all the relevant facts and data of reality and human experience. The worldview which accounts for the greatest number of facts, with the fewest difficulties, has the highest probability of being a worldview which is true. A worldview which is inconsistent with human experience and with the empirical facts of history, nature and the universe, fails the second truth-test.

THIRD, an adequate worldview must be subjectively satisfactory and livable on an every-day basis. We must ask: When a man is done talking and "philosophizing" about the nature of his worldview, can he consistently live it out, and does he actually practice it in his daily life? If not, then the actions of his life reveal his true inner conviction of the untruth of his professed worldview . . . that it is not livable, and therefore, by his actions he rejects his own worldview — so that it fails the third truth-test.

— Three Truth-Tests by **R. Totten**, © 2004

### EXCLUSIVITY OF BUDDHISM

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- Outside of this path, the path of the many who teach other things doesn't go to Unbinding as does this: Thus the Blessed One instructs the Community, truly showing the palms of his hands. —**Theragatha**, I.86, Thanissaro bhikkhu translation. Unbinding here stands for Nirvana.
- In the **Canki-suttam, Majjhima nikaya**, 91, the Buddha compares the followers of the Vedas (Hinduists, that is) to "a row of blind man, each holding to the one in front of him: the first one doesn't see, the middle one doesn't see, the last one doesn't see."
- In **Devadaha-suttam**, Majjhima nikaya 101, the Buddha states: "the striving of the Niganthas is fruitless, their exertion is fruitless." The Niganthas are nowadays known as the Jains.

### IS ATHEISM IMPLAUSIBLE?

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- "Anthropologists have never discovered a tribe of atheists."  
— **Vernon Grounds**, 11/18/98, Our Daily Bread

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### JOYFUL ATHEIST OBITUARY

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- STETSON (Maine) — Mike Maher Langford, 11, died unexpectedly March 4, 2006, at a Bangor hospital. Mike was born Oct. 6, 1994, in Ellsworth and lived most of his life in Levant and Stetson. He was in the 4th grade at Morison Memorial Elementary in East Corinth. He is missed so much by his parents, Lil Langford and Tom Maher; his brother, beloved role model and protector, Alf Maher; and his sister and constant companion and playmate, Tara Langford, and all of Stetson. He is also survived by his brother, Joey and Joey's family. Mike had many special people in his life, including Carolyn Smart and her family, Jo and Bob Phillips, Uncle Wil Langford, cousins, Jesse Langford and son, Jesse, [and others]. He was predeceased by his grandmother, Millie Wragg, someone he loved so much, in October of last year. Mike's faithful dog, Jetta, will miss him, but will be well taken care of by Alf and Tara. Mike was so special that it's hard to describe him. He was a shining whirlwind of activity, talking, singing, laughing, crying, yelling and filling our house with his usually sunny presence. He was always making something, doing something, talking about something he wanted to do or be in the future. He loved his family and his people, as he called them passionately and unconditionally, no matter how often they let him down or made him do things he didn't want to do. He managed to live a life full of illness, discomfort and pain with zest, spirit, optimism and enjoyment. He taught us so much about life — and now, death. In lieu of a memorial service, friends are invited to call, email, write or visit as they wish. We hope that Mike's "people" will remember him by doing some of the things Mike loved to do: hugging their kids, saying yes instead of no to other people and to life; by running to embrace other people and life and taking every opportunity to have fun and make other people happy. Because we're atheists, we don't believe that Mike is going to an afterlife or to heaven. But we do believe, that the laws of physics apply to human beings and that is a comfort to us. In Nature, nothing is created or destroyed, only changed. We believe that Mike's spirit and essence have been changed into something else. We hope that he's at peace and we will celebrate his life for the rest of our lives. — **Bangor Daily News**, obituary column, 3/7/2006

### PLURALISM IN AMERICA

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- "So I wrote a book and when I go around the country talking about it people ask me if I'm still a Catholic. Well . . . in a way I am. I drop in to churches. I talk to St. Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila, my favorites. I light candles for people's intentions. But I don't confine myself to the faith of my fathers anymore. All the religions are spread before me, a great spiritual smorgasbord, and I'll help myself, thank you." — **Frank McCourt** in *When You Think of God What Do You See?*, cover story and feature article, **Life**, December 1998.
- "Scientology is not my life. I've found a mishmash of many things. There's a little Buddhism, a little Scientology. I was raised a Catholic and a big part of me is still a Catholic girl." — **Actress Nicole Kidman** (Mrs. Tom Cruise at the time), 12/14/1998 cover story, *Newsweek*.



## QUOTES RE: **WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM**

### THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

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- "When I first rode the New York City subway almost 30 years ago, I was impressed by the number of riders reading the Bible in Spanish. Now I am as likely to see someone reading the Koran. Islam is America's fastest growing religion. Muslims now outnumber Episcopalians and Presbyterians, and soon may outnumber Jews. Along with Muslim minarets, Buddhist retreat centers and Hindu temples now dot our religious landscape."  
—**Bill Moyers**, USA Weekend, 10/11-13/1996

### DOES BUDDHISM SATISFY?

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- "Tibetan Buddhist and Oxford scholar Chogyam Trungpa had died in 1987 at the age of 45 from cirrhosis of the liver. People told me he'd never tried to hide his alcoholism, giving talks on the Buddhist idea of, say, emptiness, with a can of Colt 45 by his side."  
— **James Kullander** in The Sun, January 2005

### PAGANISM & NEW AGE RELIGIONS IN MAINE

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- "No other indicator gives a more accurate picture of the obvious decline of our society than the proliferation of so-called 'New Age' religions. Nature abhors a vacuum, and into the spiritual vacuum created by a 'Post-Christian' culture has rushed every sort of strange Eastern religion, from Taoism, to Tantric Buddhism, to dangerous cults of a newer sort. Our insularity in the Christian community has kept us from realizing just how prevalent these New Age religions are in Maine. How many of us know for example, that along with the many Christian radio stations in Maine, there is one radio station which is devoted to the teachings of these New Age religions, and which has regularly scheduled programs that feature the teachings of, for example, the Indian Guru Yogi Ananda? Or that retreats are held in Maine for married couples which combine 'Shamanistic' religion with marriage 'therapy' of the most intimate sort? Or that a church of Spiritualism exists only a few blocks from the Capitol in Augusta? Add to this the innumerable better known cults such as the Unification Church and Scientology, and the picture is quite disturbing. We must regard the proliferation of these cults with profound sadness. The toll in lives and lost souls is enormous. It is much like watching shipwreck after shipwreck where the lighthouse has gone out. Would it not be possible for us to stir ourselves to greater effort in making an outreach to these poor lost souls? As Christians, we do have all the answers — of that there can be no doubt. What a pity if we keep these answers to ourselves, while so many of our fellow citizens are lost in spiritual darkness." — From the **Civic League Record** of 6/7/2005

### IS THE UNIVERSE RATIONAL?

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- "The reason you don't walk out into the middle of the street when you see a bus coming is because you realize that it's a bus, not a non-bus. The West just assumes that the universe is rational." — **James Sire**

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### IN SEARCH OF COHERENCE?

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- "Some months ago I recall lecturing at one of the universities in the country when a student stormed up to the microphone and bellowed, 'Who told you culture is a search for coherence? Where do you get that idea from? The idea of coherence is a Western idea,' she said. 'Let me ask you this then,' I pleaded. 'Do you want my answer to be coherent?' Some laughter rippled through the auditorium." — from a message at the Telling the Truth conference, May 1998, **Trinity Evangelical Divinity School**

### IS REALITY AN ILLUSION?

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- Zhuangzi, once dreamed that he was a butterfly who knew nothing about Zhuangzi. But then Zhuangzi awoke — or at least thought he did — and began to question whether now, in truth, he was a man who had dreamed he was a butterfly, or whether he was a butterfly actually still dreaming that he was a man.  
— famous Chinese koan
- "What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case I definitely overpaid for my carpet." — **Woody Allen** once said.

### DELUDED AND HERETICAL WORLDVIEWS & THINKING

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- "One question asks about God's forgiveness of sin. God's reply: 'I do not forgive anyone because there is nothing to forgive. There is no such thing as Right or Wrong and that is why I have been trying to tell everyone, do not judge people. People have chosen to judge one another and this is wrong, because the rule is 'judge not lest ye be judged.'" — from *Conversations with God* by **Neale Donald Walsch**
- "Science has eroded the plausibility of the Judeo-Christian myths found in the Bible, disproving the Bible, but since with no Bible man is subject to nihilism (life & universe are meaningless), modern culture urgently needs a noble lie' — a myth so beautiful and imaginative and compelling that it can't be resisted." — Religious philosopher **Loyal Rue**, speaking in Washington DC in late 1991, *Think & Believe*, December 1991, Vol 8, No 6.

### THE PROBLEM WITH EASTERN THOUGHTFORMS

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- "If the both-and is all that it's cracked up to be, then why can't I use both the both-and **and** the either-or?"
- A guy goes to the IRS and says that since he learned in college that A=non-A, so he figured that filing his income tax was the same as not filing it. The IRS man said, "Well, I never heard that one before. But I guess if that's the case, it should work to your advantage, since going to jail will be the same to you as not going to jail."  
— **Ronald Nash** in *Worldviews in Conflict*

## QUOTES RE: WORLDVIEWS, RELIGIONS, ATHEISM

### INCONVENIENT MORALITY

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- "We object to morality because it interferes with our sexual freedom."  
— **Aldous Huxley** in *Ends & Means*

### MEANINGLESSNESS OF MAN WITHOUT GOD

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- "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves." — secular scientist **Carl Sagan**, *Pale Blue Dot*, New York: Random House, 1994.

## QUOTES RELATING TO FAITH, PROOF, APOLOGETICS

### MAKING APOLOGETICS RELEVANT

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- "We must learn from Paul (on Mar's Hill) how to address the pagans of our own day, to engage them in their own frame of reference, to invade their intellectual strongholds. History has proven the wisdom of Paul's strategy. Just up the hill from where Paul spoke stands the Parthenon, which, centuries later, became a Christian church. To this day, on Good Friday, the flag of Greece is lowered to half-mast. Then, on Easter Sunday, it is raised to full staff in honor of the resurrection that Paul boldly proclaimed there so long ago." — **Charles Colson**, CT column, Fall 1993

### THE NEED TO DEFEND CHRISTIAN FAITH

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- "There may have been a day when there could be the propagation of Christianity without defense. But such a day at any rate is past. At the present time, when the opponents of the Gospel are almost in control of our churches, the slightest avoidance of the defense of the Gospel is just sheer unfaithfulness to the Lord."  
— **J. Gresham Machen** (1881-1937), quoted in *FCM Informer* 10/93

### MCGRATH ON APOLOGETICS FOR BELIEVERS

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- "Apologetics is not simply about reaching outside the church and helping people realize why Christianity makes so much sense. There are many people inside church congregations who are wrestling with apologetics questions; who come to faith but haven't . . . had all of their questions answered. I think the pastor, the preacher, needs to realize if they want their people to be good and minister to the faith, apologists and evangelists, they've got to be equipped. They've got to be reassured about their faith. They've got to be helped to be able to explain it and defend it in the secular marketplace. Now maybe many pastors and preachers say, 'You know, I couldn't do this.' In which case, you need to bring somebody in who can. But there's a real need for the local church to see this kind of ministry as a priority in our present cultural situation." — **Alister McGrath**, taken from the GON Quote Forum.

## QUOTES RELATING TO FAITH, PROOF, APOLOGETICS

### IS THERE ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR FAITH OR PROOF?

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- “[Blaisé Pascal] argued explicitly that there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough obscurity for those who don’t.” “To put it simply: if you are looking for God you will likely succeed; if you are avoiding him, you will also likely succeed.” — **Gavin Ortlund**, *Why God makes Sense in a World That Doesn’t*, Baker Academic, ©2021, pages 213-214.
- God provides enough evidence to convince those whose hearts are open but not enough evidence to coerce those whose hearts are closed. — **Chamberlain & Price** in **Everyday Apologetics**, page 14

### DETERMINISM & FREE WILL

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- “A puppet is free as long as it loves its strings.” (unknown)
- I remember a wise preacher pointing out that even when people are free to make up their own minds and form their own decisions, most of them quickly find a framework to fit into. They adopt a stereotype; they fit into a pattern; they behave in an utterly predictable way. Perhaps we’re not so free after all. — **N. T. Wright** in *The Early Christian Letters: James, Peter, John, and Judah*, page 72, © 2011 Westminster John Knox Press

### THE TEST OF TRUE FAITH

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- When Joy Davidman was explaining to C.S. Lewis the extent to which she had once gone as a card carrying member of the communist party he said, “So you were a true believer then?” And she said, “I thought I was.” But of course, as we now know, she really wasn’t ultimately a tried and tested and proven communist at heart.

Might this explain the story of many ex-Christians? They were among us but not of us (1 John 2:19) because genuine faith is often only truly evidenced when it is subject to great pressure and survives; when it survives great doubt and still chooses to believe all of what cannot totally be understood. This would imply that, in the Parable of the Sower, the seed which sprang up but later withered and was snatched away, was never truly seed that would bear real fruit. It just looked that way for awhile. — **DEWitmer**

### CRITICAL NEED FOR APOLOGETICS

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- “We are more concerned about whether something works than if it is true. We should be teaching our people how to defend their faith. I’m afraid many could fall prey to a cleverly disguised apostasy because they have not stopped to examine why the claims of Christ are true.” — From TEDS Wellspring publication (Fall 90), quoting Park Street Church’s former pastor **David Fisher**, expressing concern about the lack of real theological understanding among so many believers.

## PRESUPPOSITIONS

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- A bird is unable to determine the view from his perch, but he is able to choose his perch. So every man and woman are responsible for carefully settling the matter of their presuppositions because, once determined, those presuppositions will automatically determine almost everything else of importance in life. - **DEWitmer**, 4/2014
- “I was a philosophical naturalist, and my presuppositions prevented me from taking seriously any claim of a miraculous event, including the many miracles recorded in scripture. I never examined my presupposition; in fact I seldom thought about it at all. That’s the way presuppositions work. They are so subtle and foundational most of us fail to either recognize or challenge them. But this is where decision-making truly lies: not at the point where we first encounter the evidence, but back at the foundational level of our accepted presuppositions. If you want to chart a new course or make a foundational transformation in your thinking, you probably won’t get there by examining the evidence with more vigor. Instead, you’ll need to examine your presuppositions.” —**J. Warner Wallace** (from, Why Do Two People See the Same Evidence Differently?)

## THE MORAL EVIDENCE FOR GOD

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- **RE:** “The moral aspect (conscience of man) — from Romans 2:11-16. The key verses are 14 and 15, ‘For when the Gentiles who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them...’ We saw these verses so plainly in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. The Cit. (CHEE-tuck) people with whom we worked knew what adultery was, knew what thievery was, knew what black magic was, etc., and that those things were wrong. How? No other way than what Romans 2:14 –15 says. God put it in their hearts. One day I asked our language helper what the old people believed regarding where their spirits go when they die. Abdon replied, ‘If your spirit is good, it will go to the sea; if your spirit is bad, it will go to the jungle — and those are the spirits that haunt us and give us so much trouble.’ Then he paused and finally said, ‘But you know, we don’t know of anyone’s spirit that has ever gone to the sea!’ So even by their own standards, they didn’t measure up, but proved themselves sinners in God’s sight and worthy of judgment. They obviously will be judged in Hell, but not to the extent of others who have heard and rejected the message. Revelation 20:13 says that they will be judged according to their works, and that impartially (Romans 2:6,11). So the Gentiles have God’s witness both in nature and in their own hearts to move them to seek Him if they will. Then, as you indicated in your article, He will lead them to someone who can tell them of Christ. This whole issue is a very sobering one.” — PROOF OF GOD IN CONSCIENCE from former missionary **Bob Leland** of Maine, addressed to AIIA in a 9/2009 e-mail.

## QUOTES RELATING TO FAITH, PROOF, APOLOGETICS

### REASON & FAITH

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- "Faith does not come by reason, but neither does it come without reason. Somehow God unites credible evidence for His truth with faith in our hearts to bring about salvation." — paraphrase of a statement by **Ken Ham** (ICR).

### THE SECRET OF EFFECTIVE APOLOGETICS

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- "I have found that nothing is more dangerous to one's faith than the work of an apologist. No doctrine of that faith seems to me so spectral, so unreal, as one that I have just successfully defended in a public debate... That is why we apologists take our lives in our hands and can be saved only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments, as from our intellectual encounters, into the Reality — from Christian apologetics into Christ Himself." — **C.S. Lewis**, quoted in *New Oxford Review* 6/95 by David Hartman.

### APOLOGETICS DEFENDS CHRIST, NOT CHRISTIANS

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- "May we never forget that apologetics is the defense of the gospel, not the defense of Christians." — Gary Thomas, *World* magazine, 7/15-22/95, referring to some of the despicable positions taken by believers in the name of Christ

### FREEDOM TO BE HAPPY? COST TOO HIGH? DISAGREEING WITH GOD?

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- "The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free. Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way; apparently He thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with Him. But there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes; you could not be right and He wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source." — **C.S. Lewis** in *Mere Christianity*

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### THE REJECTION OF REASON AND ABSOLUTE TRUTH STANDARDS

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- "Postmodernists typically reject the idea that truth is objective, that reality can be known as it is, and that reality is rational. (One professor at an American Academy of Religion & Society of Biblical Literature conference AAR/SBL — a mainline denominational gathering — said in response to Craig's questioning his premise) "Oh, I'm not claiming that my interpretation is correct. What do you expect me to do? Have a foundation for my belief?" — **William Lane Craig** writing in the 2/21/1994 issue of the *CIS Newsletter*

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### POSTMODERN ANTI-RATIONALISTIC THOUGHTFORMS

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- "They tend to have an image-based standard of truth. If I ask, 'What evidence supports your view or contradicts it?' they look at me as if I came from another planet. It's very foreign to them to think in terms of truth, logic, consistency and evidence." — **Professor Joshua Meyrowitz** at the University of New Hampshire School of Communications was quoted in U.S. News and World Report, March 8 93), speaking about his students.

### UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

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- "We stand again on Mar's Hill, surrounded by a host of unfamiliar and, doubtless, unfriendly gods. At some time in the future, perhaps more quickly than we think, true Christianity could well be reduced to a small minority. Christian ministry in the New Age of Aquarius will not be for the fainthearted. Discerning, dedicated leaders are essential for the church in the Age of Aquarius. But not only leaders. At every level, Christians need to understand what is going on and carry that understanding to every corner of life." — **Peter Jones**, *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back*, on how the New Age Movement isn't new, but rather as old as the ancient heresy called gnosticism.

### RELATIVISM

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- "Moral outrage at others is absurd if you claim to believe in moral relativism. Either justice is a real objective thing that exists or it is a mere personal preference, opinion, or moral construct invented by your community that has no universal binding authority on others." — unknown source

### TOLERANCE & INTOLERANCE

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- "The old idea of tolerance was summed up in such statements as, 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' The new dispensation is: 'I disapprove of what you say, therefore you may not say it.'" — **Roger Kimball** (Editor and Publisher), writing in **Imprimis**, February 2019.

### IS TOLERANCE A VIRTUE?

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"Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions." — **G.K. Chesterton**

### IS 2 + 2 = 4 JUST AN ARBITRARY HUMAN CONVENTION?

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- Several years ago **Nancy Pearcey** co-authored *The Soul of Science*, a book that applies the Christian worldview to various scientific disciplines. "You might not think there is a Christian view of mathematics, but there is," she said. "Those involved in the philosophy of mathematics no longer believe that mathematics is objectively true. They believe it is a social, cultural creation. They say mathematical principles are like the rules of bridge: they are not true; they are conventions."

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### THE RAINBOW FLAG

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- The rainbow flag was invented in 1978 by Gilbert Baker, a struggling San Francisco artist who hand-dyed several strips of fabric and sewed them together to form a flag. The flag remained in limbo until the outburst of gay activism in San Francisco which culminated in the first "Gay Pride Parade" in 1979. Baker attempted to have the flag mass-produced, but this proved impossible at first, since none of the flag makers he contacted stocked "hot pink" as a color. According to Gilbert Baker, the inventor of the rainbow flag, the eight colors of the flag each have a particular meaning. The first color, at the very top of the flag is hot pink for "sex." Red is for life; orange is for healing; yellow is for sunlight; green is for nature; turquoise is for magic; blue is for serenity; and violet is for spirit. A black stripe is often added to the bottom of the rainbow flag to commemorate the deaths caused by the AIDS epidemic. It is not known where Baker drew his inspiration for the flag. A rainbow-colored flag has long been used in Europe as a symbol of left-wing peace movements, and the flag is also a symbol of the co-operative movement there. In addition to the rainbow flag of the homosexual community, other "sexual orientations" have their own flag. The bisexual flag is pink on the top for "homosexuality," blue on the bottom for "heterosexuality," and purple in the middle, where the two colors merge, to symbolize "bisexuality." Sadoomasochists, which represent an established subculture within the homosexual subculture, have their own flag, which is black and blue, for the bruises inflicted on their partners and victims. The rainbow flag, which was once confined to San Francisco, is now part of every pro-homosexual rights demonstration, and is a common sight in our public schools in Maine. Rainbow signs and banners were prominently displayed at the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Expo held at the State Capitol Building this summer, only a short distance from the Governor's office. This was the same expo where school-children from Augusta on a tour of the Capitol Building picked up condoms and brought them back to school. A rainbow flag bumpersticker is now available which shows a map of Maine entirely in the eight colors of the homosexual flag. [Some photos originally accompanying this article showed] the rainbow flag flying outside City Hall in Boston in observance of Gay Pride Day. — from the on-line **RECORD** of the **Christian Civic League of Maine**, 10/18/2005

### ROOT OF DIVISION IN AMERICA

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- "Many of the problems that now divide our country are not, in an ultimate sense, political or even moral. They are spiritual. The issue really comes down to the belief in a holy God who has revealed His will and to whom men are accountable, or the belief in humanism which ultimately says of man, 'I am the captain of my own ship; I am the master of my fate.'" — **Marvin Rosenthal**, *Zion's Fire*, 9-10/1992

### CATEGORICALLY POSTMODERN

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- "I agree with you completely — and you're totally wrong." — **Millard Erickson** at ETS 11/95 on what he tells postmodernists, and then waits for their reaction.



## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### THE CONVOLUTION OF POSTMODERN LANGUAGE & NON-LOGIC

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- "Regarding Bill Clinton's difficulties with the word "is" during his taped grand jury testimony: "Well, is 'is' 'is' or isn't it? I mean, if not, then what is 'is'? If 'is' was 'was,' which it isn't, then that would also mean 'was' was 'is.' But 'is' isn't that, either. So, just what is 'is'? Maybe it's easier to decide what 'is' isn't. Well, 'is' isn't 'were,' because if 'is' were 'were' then 'was' would be 'is,' but we already know it isn't. 'Is' could be 'are,' but if 'is' is 'are' ...no... let's not go there because 'are' implies plural, and surely he didn't mean 'is' was 'are.' So, if 'is' wasn't 'were,' and 'is' isn't 'was,' and 'is' are not 'are,' just what is 'is'? "I think 'is' is 'is.' Isn't it?" — From an OpEd in the 10/24/1998 Bangor Daily News by columnist **Kent Ward**.
- "It seems to me that what we're witnessing here is a conflict, a clash between two very different views. One view is that there is absolute truth. The other view is that everything is relative. This is not new. This is not a new debate in this country. And it's actually been going on quite awhile. [President Clinton] is the perfect embodiment of everything being relative. He is the epitome of someone who says there is no truth. Everything is relative. And that's the big conflict here. [Thomas Jefferson] said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." Now, let me rewrite that in the way that the White House spin machine would write it. "We hold these relativistic moral assertions to be relativistically true. They work for me; see if they work for you." That's the way the White House spin machine would rewrite the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. But I, for one, hope that we reassert here, at the end of this millennium and the beginning of the next, that truth matters — that it matters whether the president of the United States lied or not. That, I believe, is the real question behind this." — from a transcript of the opening statement of **Rep. Inglis**, House Judiciary Committee hearing, December 10, 1998, during Clinton presidential scandal.

### IS ABSOLUTE TRUTH INTOLERANT?

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- "Does believing in absolute truth make you intolerant? Actually the opposite is true. The fact that there is a truth and we have different beliefs makes acceptance and appreciation possible. If there is no disagreement then there is no pluralism because everyone would believe the same. Philosophical pluralism, the belief that all beliefs are equally valid, undermines our ability to really get along. Let's take a person's claim seriously as follows. 'Allah is God and Mohammed is His prophet.' 'Oh, you mean that Allah is God and Mohammed is his prophet for you?' By adding 'for you' one puts words in the author's mouth that were not intended. That is not tolerance but disrespect." — **Doug Palmeter**, from a note sheet provided on 11/6/1999 on Evangelism & the Postmodern Student

### REFUTING MORAL RELATIVISM

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- "Everyone (who) lives in this world believes certain things are right and wrong, even if the only thing they think is wrong is believing that anything is wrong." — **Greg Bahnsen**, Basic Training in Defending the Faith DVD set, #3

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### ANTAGONISTIC SPIRIT OF THE AGE

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- [Outside of the card] "I was in a card store the other day looking for a card with a message that would just fit you, when suddenly this born again Christian guy came up to me and started quoting Scripture... [Inside of the card] So I shot him. Happy Birthday!" — **Point of View** radio show on 9/7/1990
- "Another interesting aspect of this phenomenon (of man's opinions pervading society) is the increasing anti-Christian sentiment that is growing with it. I recall watching a television program on a pro-abortion rally, at which one of the first speakers (a Hollywood actor) put up his fist and shouted, 'When you see the sign of the fish on a car, remember, they are the enemy!' The atmosphere was such that you could almost see this mob deciding that they must get rid of Christians who oppose abortion. Maybe mob law is not so far away in our society, and perhaps it will be directed against those who say that there is a God and that His laws must be obeyed." — From **Institute for Creation Research's** 10/90 Back-to-Genesis (written by Ken Ham).
- "Bernie Ward, a Bay-area radio talk show host known for his anti-Christian slant, called for a fist fight between Christians and homosexuals... I'd really like to get both camps in Candlestick Park to fight it out, and then the winner gets dinner in the nearest gay bar." — From the **National & International Religion Report** (NIRR, 9/24/90)

### HOW DANGEROUS IS POSTMODERNISM FOR OUR YOUTH?

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- "When the postmodern worldview takes root and grows, we are certain to see a decline in civility, respect, decency and responsibility. [We are already] celebrating songs that graphically depict horrific acts of violence and murder. These postmodern attitudes are taking root in a growing number of young lives — both Christian and non-Christian alike. Effective parenting and youth ministry in a postmodern world must be preceded by a growing understanding of this new cultural climate. Postmodernism is here, it's going to stay, and we've got to understand and address it." — CPYU President, **Walt Mueller**, in youthculture@2000, Fall 2000

### POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

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- "The notion of political correctness declares certain topics, certain expressions, even certain gestures off limits. What began as a crusade for civility has soured into a cause of conflict and even censorship." — George Herbert Walker Bush; from an online version of the RECORD, published by the Christian Civic League of Maine), 10/18/2005.

### ABSOLUTE TRUTH

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- "To say that there is absolute truth is one thing. To say that we understand it absolutely is another." — **Millard Erickson** at ETS 11/95

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### CRAZY IS AS CRAZY DOES. IS EVERYONE CRAZY?

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- \* In reply to an ABC interview with Diane Sawyer who had asked, "Is Charles Manson crazy?" Manson said: "Sure, he's crazy, mad as a hatter. What difference does it make? You know, a long time ago being crazy meant something. Nowadays everybody's crazy."

### TOLERANCE REDEFINED

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- "Tolerance originally meant allowing people whom you believed to be wrong to live according to their beliefs without fear of reprisal. It then mutated into the idea that all beliefs are equally valid. While this was mistaken, at least it allowed for the possibility that Christians might publicly express their beliefs. Now 'tolerance' means that no one — other than Christians — should ever hear anything that contradicts what they think, or otherwise upsets them. This is especially true if the subject is human sexuality."  
— From Breakpoint 2000 by **Charles Colson**

### ABSOLUTE TRUTH & ABSOLUTE MORALITY

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- "At an open forum at Oxford University, hosted by the Oxford Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, I was the afternoon lecturer, speaking on the assigned topics of Truth, Meaning, Suffering and Hope. It would be impossible to have been present at this event without realizing the terrifying hostility of postmodernism, which disavows truth, meaning and certainty, while at the same time groans with a hunger for some kind of meaning. One student came to speak with me at the end of one of the forums, surrounded by the group for whom he was the spokesman. He was trying to prove that morality had no objective point of reference. So I asked him, 'Do you believe that if I took a little baby and cut it into pieces with a sword, I would have done anything immoral?' He did not even wait to think of an answer. 'I would not enjoy it,' he said, 'But no, I do not think you would have done anything immoral.' And then he added this. 'Just because I do not believe that anything is evil does not mean that what I believe is untrue.' Think about that for a moment. 'Just because I do not believe that anything is evil does not mean that what I believe is untrue.' 'But why does it have to be true,' I asked, 'in a worldview where truth has no moral value? If there is no moral obligation to tell the truth or to practice the truth or to believe there is such a thing as the truth, why does it have to be true to be justified?' — noted apologist RZ in constituency letter of March 2000

### RIPTIDE OF SUBJECTIVISM

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- "Large segments of the Church of Jesus Christ are increasingly swimming against a riptide of growing subjectivism, and if it does not make a concerted effort to counter those currents with a biblically trained laity it is in danger of being swept away."  
— **Robert T. Pardon**, Exec Director, NEIRR, Support Partner letter 2/29/2000

## QUOTES RE: POSTMODERNISM & RELATIVISM

### IS RELATIVISM JUDGEMENTAL, EXCLUSIVIST, PARTISAN?

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- "Relativism is judgmental, exclusivist, and partisan. This may seem odd, because the relativist would like you to think his viewpoint is non-judgmental, inclusivist, and neutral when it comes to religious and moral beliefs. But consider the following: First, the relativist says that if you believe in objective moral and religious truth, you are wrong. Hence, relativism is judgmental. Second, it follows from this that relativism excludes your beliefs from the realm of legitimate options. Thus relativism is exclusivist. And third, because relativism is exclusivist, all non-relativists are automatically not members of the 'correct thinking' party So, relativism is partisan."  
— **Dr. Francis Beckwith**, Associate Professor of Philosophy Culture and Law, Trinity International University, from Moody magazine, 3-4/99

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### SUFFERING, DIVINE GRACE, HUMAN OBEDIENCE

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- "If his glory will come of it, shall I not even crave the honor of being the agent of his glory, even though it be by lying passive and enduring in anguish." — **C. H. Spurgeon**
- "The glory of God was always the preeminent issue in the life of faith for Spurgeon, Müller, and Taylor. If God should will that the time for their death had come, they would say with Paul, 'It is my eager expectation and hope that . . . Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death.' (Philippians 1:20) They would not think the promises of God's care had failed. What would it mean in this situation that God 'withholds no good thing.' It would mean that he did not withhold the grace to die in a way that would magnify Christ. This was the greatest 'need' they felt." "Therefore the camaraderie of confidence in God that these friends shared did not include the confidence that they would never get sick or that they would be able to pray their loved ones out of the hospital. Both Müller and Taylor laid two wives in their graves because of illness. They both lost children and Spurgeon died early because of a body racked with disease. Their confidence was not that God would prevent sickness and death but that God would give them all they needed to do his will and give him glory in life and death." — from *21 Servants of Sovereign Joy*, © 2018 Crossway, **John Piper**

### THE SILENCE OF GOD

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- From **The Bag**, by George Herbert, (Works, I, p. 127)"  
Away, Despair! My gracious Lord doth hear:  
Though winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it: he doth steer,  
Ev'n when the boat seems most to reel:  
Storms are the triumph of his art:  
Well may he close his eyes, but not his heart.

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### MOHLER ON EVIL & THE GOODNESS OF GOD

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- How does God exercise His rule? Does He order all events by decree, or does He allow some evil acts by His mere permission? This much we know — we cannot speak of God's decree in a way that would imply Him to be the author of evil, and we cannot fall back to speak of His mere permission as if this allows a denial of His sovereignty and active will.

A venerable confession of faith states it rightly: "God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures."

We dare not speak on God's behalf to explain why He allow(s) . . . particular acts of evil to happen . . . Yet, at the same time, we dare not be silent when we should testify to the God of righteousness and love and justice who rules over all in omnipotence. **Humility requires that we affirm all that the Bible teaches, and go no further.**

God is absolute righteousness, love, goodness, and justice. Most errors related to this issue [of theodicy] occur because of **our human tendency to impose an external standard — a human construction of goodness — upon God. But good does not so much define God as God defines good.**

— from an article by **Al Mohler** was originally published on August 20, 2005.

### MUSING ABOUT PAIN VS EXPERIENCING PAIN

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- "C. S. Lewis could write masterfully about suffering, but faced with the prospect of real suffering in his own life, he was acutely aware of the gulf between theory and practice. In his introduction to **The Problem of Pain** he wrote: 'I have never for one moment been in a state of mind to which even the imagination of serious pain was less than intolerable. If any man is safe from the danger of underestimating this adversary, I am that man. I must add too, that the only purpose of the book is to solve the intellectual problem raised by suffering; for the far higher task of teaching fortitude and patience I was never a fool enough to suppose myself qualified.'" — **C.S. Lewis** in **The Case for Christ**, by **Art Linsley**, ©2005

### MORALITY & THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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- "Today I want to argue that if God exists, then the objectivity of moral values, moral duties, and moral accountability is sacred, but that in the absence of God, that is, if God does not exist, then morality is just a human convention, that is to say morality is wholly subjective and non-binding." — unknown source

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### ADVERSITY & ANTHROPOCENTRISM

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- "We live in a time and in a culture that is so drunk with the centrality of the values of men, and ourselves in particular, and our rights, and our virtues, and our esteem, that a sentence like this [Romans 3:4: "May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, 'That You may be justified in Your words, And prevail when You are judged.'"] must land on us either with absolute incomprehensibility or rage. Because what this sentence says is if every man is lost, God is true and loses nothing. God is not leaning on us for *anything*. Let God be true, let God be righteous, let God be faithful, let God be God and every man a liar and perishing. And God will stand at the center of the universe *glorious*, and every man in hell, if it must be. And oh, how we think, 'Poor God, poor God, poor God.' Paul the Apostle, inspired here, has a vision of the universe, and of God's supreme central value in the universe that is so different than the atmosphere we breathe as to make many parts of the Bible unintelligible for contemporary Americans until the Holy Spirit transforms our values."

— Dr. John Piper, "Let God Be True, Though Every Man a Liar," 3/7/99

- "God is the very first piece of the Christian Story because the Story is all about him. God is the central character. The Story does not start with us because the Story is not about us. When I was young my mother used to say, "Gregory, the world does not revolve around you." It was one of the most important lessons she could teach me. ... We have an important part to play in the Story, but we are not the most important players.

"Many people are confused on this point. When discouragement, disillusionment, or defeat creep into their lives, they are caught by surprise. They thought the Story was about them—their happiness, their comfort, their personal prosperity. Then they wonder what went wrong when things go in another direction. 'How could God let this happen to me?' they ask. They thought that with God in their lives they would be the center of his attention and everything was going to be easier. Then they are caught off guard when things work out differently. That's what happens when we think the Story is about us. In fact, a large part of the Story was written to people who believed in God and trusted in him yet experienced tremendous conflict and distress in this world.

"Suffering is standard fare in life, but especially so for those who take the Story seriously. This is a clue that man did not make up the Story by himself. If he did, he probably would have written a different story. There is a saying that has been helpful in some ways but I think is misleading in this regard. The saying goes, 'God has a wonderful plan for your life.' From what I understand now, that perspective is in the wrong order. **The Story is not so much about God's plan for your life as it is about your life for God's plan.** Let that sink in. God's purposes are central, not yours. Once you are completely clear on this fact, many things are going to change for you."

— excerpts in my review of *The Story of Reality*, chapter 6, pages 43-44, by **Greg Koukl**; recommended reading.

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### DELIVERED BY AFFLICTION

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- “Do you want to hear a counter-intuitive verse? Try this one. Job 36:15: ‘He delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ear by adversity.’ He delivers *by* affliction? What about *from* affliction? How does God deliver *by* affliction — doesn’t the fact that he’s using the affliction negate the idea of deliverance? We need to be careful with [Job 36.15](#), because Elihu speaks it and Elihu draws too strict of a connection between sin and suffering. But there is truth in what he says here in Job 36:15. The truth is that God uses affliction to humble us and bring us back to a place of listening to him and being led by him. In so doing, he delivers us from our sin. He ‘opens our ears’ with adversity. C.S. Lewis said the same thing. In *The Problem of Pain* he wrote: ‘God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.’ The brother of Jesus said something similar and it has been helping me in recent days. James said that we should consider suffering joy because of the good things it produces in us (James 1:2-4). Are you afflicted? Look to the fruit. Ask God to deliver you (from hard-heartedness, from deafness to him, from disobedience) *by* your affliction.” — posted by **Stephen Witmer** on November 7, 09:27 AM

### SUFFERING AND THE SOVEREIGN PURPOSES OF GOD

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- The Bible presents God as “not merely omnipotent but sovereign over every event in history, and it also shows us God as not merely ‘good and loving’ but as entering our world and becoming subject to greater evil, suffering, and pain than any of us have ever experienced.” — **Timothy Keller** in *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, © 2013 Dutton, p139
- So one of the purposes of suffering is to glorify God by simply treating him as the infinite sovereign all-wise and yet incarnate and suffering God that He is. This glorifies God to God — the most fitting thing that can be done. “The theme that runs through all of [Elizabeth] Elliot’s work is that to trust God when we do not understand him is to treat him as God and not as another human being. It is to treat him as glorious infinitely beyond us in his goodness and wisdom.” “God willed to show the hosts of Heaven as well as all the hundreds of millions of readers of the book of Job that he *can* make human beings into loving servants.” — *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, © 2013 Dutton, by **Timothy Keller**

### DOES FREE WILL ALONE EXPLAIN EVIL?

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- “I’m afraid that many people fail to feel the serious weight of this burden of explanation. The simple presence of free will is not enough to explain the origin of evil, in as much as we still must ask how a good being would be inclined freely to choose evil. The inclination for the will to act in an immoral manner is already a signal of sin.”  
— **R.C. Sproul**

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### WHY EVIL?

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- “This is not the best world possible but it is the best way to the best world achievable. A world of pain, danger, and sin is a necessary condition for attaining a world without any of these preconditions.” — **Norman Geisler** in “If God, Why Evil?” © 2011

### ADVERSITY

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- “Sometimes God allows what He hates to accomplish what He loves.”  
— **Joni Eareckson Tada**

### DID GOD CREATE EVIL?

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- As the story goes (whether the account is true or invented is uncertain), at a certain college there was once a professor with a reputation for being tough on Christians. At the first class every semester he asked if anyone was a Christian and proceeded to degrade and mock their statement of faith. One semester he asked the question and a young man raised his hand when asked if anyone was a Christian. The professor asked, “Did God make everything, young man?” “Yes, He did, sir,” the young man replied. The professor responded, “If God made everything, then God made evil and if we can only create from within ourselves, then God is evil.” The student didn't have a response and the professor was happy to have once again proved the Christian faith to be a nutty myth. Then another man raised his hand and asked, “May I ask you something, sir?” “Yes, you may,” responded the professor. The young man stood up and said, “Sir, is there such a thing as cold?” “Of course there is, what kind of a question is that? Haven't you ever been cold?” The young man replied, “Actually, sir, cold does not exist. What we consider to be cold is really only the absence of heat. Absolute zero is when there is absolutely no heat, but cold does not really exist. We have only created that term to describe how we feel when heat is not there.” The young man continued, “Sir, is there such thing as dark?” Once again the professor responded, “Of course there is.” And once again the student replied, “Actually, sir, darkness does not exist. Darkness is really only the absence of light. Darkness is only a term man developed to describe what happens when there is no light present.” Finally, the young man asked, “Sir, is there such thing as evil?” The professor responded, “Of course. We have rapes, and murders and violence everywhere in the world; those things are evil.” The student replied, “Actually, sir, evil does not exist. Evil is simply the absence of God. Evil is a term man developed to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. It isn't like truth or love, which exist as virtues like heat and light. Evil is simply the state where God is not present, like cold without heat or darkness without light.” The professor had nothing to say.

### HOW BIG IS GOD?

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- “If God were small enough to be understood, he wouldn't be big enough to be worshiped.” — **Evelyn Underhill**



## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING & THE PROMISES OF GOD

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- "I like the homely philosophy of the preacher who said, 'My favorite text in the Bible is: "It came to pass." I like that text and it gives me so much comfort. "It came to pass." Yes, all my troubles come to pass. They won't last. When I am sick I say, "It came to pass." When I am in trouble, "It came to pass.'" That may be a simple philosophy, but it is effective. In our lives, too, these things come to pass; but more than that, they are for a definite purpose. God does not permit even one thing to happen to us without a divine and wise purpose, which we shall know by-and-by. The hope of the future is the cure for every ill of the Christian. It is not for us to unravel the mystery now; it is enough to know that He doeth all things well and that 'all things work together for good to them that love God.'" — **M. R. DeHaan**, M.D. in *Broken Things — Why We Suffer*.

### WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?

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- "People often ask, 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' Most people think of themselves as good, so they assume that in a just world they deserve good things and are troubled when bad comes their way. But Scripture informs us that from God's perspective no one is good (Psalm 14:3; Romans 3:23). Only once in recorded history did bad things happen to a totally good person — when Jesus died on a cross to reconcile his followers to God. Since I'm bad, in a just world I can expect bad things and should be surprised when I receive good things. So, I ask the question, 'Why do good things happen to bad people?' Good things happen to bad people because God is good." — **David T. Lamb**, *God Behaving Badly*, © 2011 IVP Books, pages 120-121.

### THEODICY, GOD, & GOODNESS

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- "The entire problem of theodicy arises from a wrong presumption. In other words, rather than seeing God as essentially good and deriving whatever good is from observing the one true and living God, we abstract an idea of good and then try to measure God against that human abstraction. That is always a losing proposition **because we don't know what good is**. See, that's the problem. When persons come up to us and say, 'If God does this He can't be good,' they don't realize that's an internal contradiction. The only God that exists is a God who is good. He defines what is good by consistency with His own character, not by the fact that He corresponds to some arbitrary understanding of good." — **Al Mohler**

### OBEDIENCE EVEN WHEN GOD DOES NOT DELIVER US FROM ADVERSITY

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- "When I was in prison in Cuba for a year and a half, my wife did not cry during our three-hour visit and say, 'I hope you can get out of here.' Instead, she smuggled powdered grape Kool-Aid to me so the prisoners could have communion together. Dare to live for Christ." — **Tom White**, Director, Voice of the Martyrs, Spring 2010

## QUOTES RELATING TO SUFFERING & EVIL

### EVIL & THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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- "One cannot disprove the existence of God by introducing the reality of evil. Evil exists only if an absolute moral law exists, but an objective moral law exists only if God does. To raise the question [in order] to disprove God is self-defeating." — noted Christian apologist and author, quoted in Moody magazine, 3-4/1999

### SUBMITTING TO GOD IN SUFFERING

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- "A thought struck me. Who are you to question God and say that you have a better plan than He does? You don't have the same wisdom and knowledge that He has, or the understanding of the big picture." — **Lisa Beamer**, upon being confronted with news of the death of her husband, Todd, who was aboard 9/11/2002 United Flight 93; World magazine, 17 Aug 2002
- "Basically, Job 42:1-6 is the answer to the issue of death and suffering. Job acknowledged that compared to what God knows, he knew nothing. He repented of his human arrogance and totally submitted his life to the all-knowing sovereign God." — **Ken Ham**, Answers, Volume 9, Issue 8.

### ABSOLUTE MORALITY

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- "Could anything be more obvious than that objective moral values do exist?" "The fact is that we do apprehend objective values, and we all know it. Actions like rape, torture, child abuse, and brutality are not just socially unacceptable behavior — they are moral abominations. As [Michael] Ruse himself states, 'The man who says that it is morally acceptable to rape little children is just as mistaken as the man who says,  $2+2=3$ '" — **William Lane Craig**, The Indispensability of Theological Meta-ethical Foundations for Morality," Foundations journal, Spring 1997

## QUOTES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

### ARE CHRISTIAN ACADEMICIANS CAVING IN?

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- "Christian academicians are often so eager to seem intellectually respectable to their non-Christian peers that they capitulate at the first sign of blood. Instead of entering into intellectual combat by trying to refute the untruths of today's intellectual establishment, many evangelical theologians are busy trying to find a way to make them compatible with a revised version of Christianity." — **Gene Edward Veith** in a piece entitled **Fight or Flight?**, World magazine, 3/27/99

### THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN APOLOGETICS

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- A Christian college professor at a meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society mentioned the idea of suing local churches for malpractice because of number of youth coming to college with relativistic world view.

## QUOTES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

### WHERE IS TODAY'S MISSION FIELD?

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- The trustees of Denver Seminary have concurred with former president Haddon Robinson's assessment that "America has entered a post-Christian era." From now on they plan to "train future pastors as foreign missionaries assigned to an alien culture."  
— **NIRR**, 5/20/91
- George Gallup says: "Most Americans who profess Christianity don't know the basic teachings of the faith... Overall, the Sunday School and religious education system in this country is not working. Not being grounded in the faith, these professing believers are open for anything that comes along. The studies show that New-Age beliefs are just as strong among traditionally religious people as among those who are not traditionally religious." — **NIRR**, 5/20/1991
- "Missions Have Come Home to America" — title of an article by **Jerry Appleby**
- "Over There is Here" — chapter title in **George Barna's** *Frog in the Kettle*, referring to the changing nature of 'foreign' missions.
- "We can't seem to rid our psyches of the notion that the uttermost parts are somewhere on different continents than our own. Despite what many faithful Christians think, our missionary task is no longer just from here to there. It must also be from here to here, because this is where the people from the uttermost parts now live, work, and worship at their own growing mosques and temples." — **Jim Reapsome**, ©1999 Evangelical Missions Quarterly

### ZEAL FOR DOCTRINAL PURITY

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- "One weak tradition has St. Nicholas (280-350 AD), Bishop of Myra in Lycia (Turkey) attending the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, when Arian doctrine was rejected. The story goes that he got into a heated debate with Arius himself about whether there was a time when the Word did not exist. Nicholas strongly disagreed. The debate ended suddenly when Nicholas punched out Arius then and there on the floor of the council! This gives new meaning to the ditty: 'He's making a list and checking it twice, he's going to find out who's naughty or nice!' The mental image of Santa Claus punching out Arius on the floor of the Council of Nicea with Emperor Constantine looking on has to fundamentally change the way one would ever see Santa Claus again. While I might not agree with his methods, I certainly admire his passion for Christological orthodoxy and doctrinal purity! So when you think of Santa Claus, think of someone with an unparalleled passion for doctrinal purity. And think of someone whose whole purpose in life was to point people to Jesus. Now that's my kind of Santa Claus!" — **excerpted from a piece by James Parker III**, associate dean and professor of worldview and culture at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Parker is also founder and director of the Trinity Institute in Tehuacana TX, which provides a study center that equips Christians to understand and articulate the Christian worldview. 12/2009

## QUOTES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

### THE REAL CURE FOR AMERICA: PROCLAMATION & TRANSFORMATION

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- "When truth retreats, tyranny advances. The single biggest mistake the Church has made through the centuries is that whenever it thought its task was to rescue the culture, it became politicized. Our job is not to rescue the culture; our job is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to make disciples; to be the Church; to be faithful to God's holy Word; to make men and women holy and righteous as part of a holy, righteous community; to proclaim truth to society; and to pervade society as salt and light. When we do this ... then the culture is rescued." — **Chuck Colson** "The Crisis of Truth" NRB speech, WDC 1/29/1994, reprinted in Breakpoint.
- "In his day, Tertullian called for all Christians to take a stand, even to the point of sacrificing their lives, to bring about changes in a Rome beset with corruption and a disregard for the sanctity of human life. He challenged the Christians of ancient Rome not to retreat from the culture, but to contend for it. A generation of apologists arose from the midst of this tiny religious minority and not only was the nation changed, but the world was changed." — **Keith A. Fournier**, Executive Director of the American Center for Law & Justice, Religious Cleansing
- "We are no longer using the gospel to change America. The biblical way to transform society is to lead people to Jesus Christ and disciple them, one at a time. Only the gospel deals with the roots." — **Luis Palau**, Discipleship Journal, Mar/Apr 1995
- "He who converts his neighbor has performed the most practical Christian political act of all." — **C. S. Lewis**, quoted by J. Stephen Lang in Mar/Apr Discipleship Journal, p57

### EVANGELISM VS SOCIAL ACTION

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- "I've always leaned on believing that the most effective way to transform a culture is to win as many people as possible to Christ and make the most radical disciples out of them as possible . . ." — **John Piper** 2016.02.29, in a roundtable discussion with Tim Keller and D. A. Carson on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTSWxY0yLo8>

### MAKING MISSIONS RELEVANT TODAY

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- "Today we communicate and defend the gospel in an age dominated by scientific naturalism, intellectual and moral relativism, and theological pluralism. A thoughtful approach to each of these is necessary if you desire to influence intellectually curious seekers or even to parent your children." — **Dick Staub**, president of the Center for Faith & Culture, author; source DJ 122; 2001.

## QUOTES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

### • WOULD-BE MISSIONARIES

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We're concerned for the sinner in China,  
The heathen in Mandalay  
But say, do we care; have we offered a prayer  
For our neighbors just over the way?

We say we would go with the Gospel  
To lighten dark Africa's shore.  
But have we spoken a word in the name of the Lord  
To the New Agers who live next-door?

That cultist who lives down the highway,  
Who looks so forbidding and grim,  
Do we have no call to witness at all,  
Or to speak of the Savior to him?

We'd take the gospel to savages,  
We'd cross the stormy tide.  
Yet we will not proclaim what the Gospel's about  
To the Muslim who works by our side.

We'd tell of our wonderful Savior  
And His love we have found so sweet  
To the Hottentot, but certainly not  
To the Buddhists who live on our street.

Oh, we would be missionaries  
And go out the lost ones to seek.  
We send our teams to Hindustan,  
Yet never a word will we speak.

— *paraphrase of a verse by Lorie C. Gooding*

## QUOTES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

### TODAY'S MISSION FIELD

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- "We must take the Gospel into all the world, including the pluralistic world of modern America." — from an editorial in **Moody** magazine, 11/1993
- "The Mission Field Comes Home: Foreign Missionaries Returning to Home Field" — Headlines in **Evangelical Free Church Beacon** 11/1993
- "To most American churchgoers the 'mission field' is some far-off place on another continent, in some jungle somewhere. It's time to change our definition. The mission field greets every one of us whenever we step out of our homes. Once upon a time, America was considered a Christian nation. No longer. Now third-world countries send missionaries to the United States. The mission field is not some place else. It's where you and I live every day. Just look around you." — **David Ramsdale**, *Beyond*, Vol 21, No 5.
- "America's religious pluralism is not (an) issue in our mission executive suites because we are still quite firmly wedded to the notion that missionary work is done 'over there.' Therefore we send our people and our money to evangelize people outside the U.S. Meanwhile, like two trains passing in the night, those people are coming here by the millions. Of course, we ought not to shut down our trains going overseas, but at least we should start a few rolling into the cities and towns across America where God has brought the mission field to us." — **Jim Reapsome**, *Pulse*, October 8, 1993

## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### DOES TEACHING EVOLUTION ENGENDER ATHEISM?

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- "I could take you back to the very place where I lost my faith in God. I was 14 years old. At Prospect High School in Mount Prospect, Illinois, the biology classroom was on the third floor in the northwest corner of the building. I was sitting in the second row from the windows, third chair from the front, when I first learned about Darwin's evolution. Our teacher explained that life originated millions of years ago when chemicals randomly reacted with each other in a warm ocean on the primordial earth. Although the teacher didn't address this aspect of evolution, its biggest implication was obvious to me: If evolution explains the origin and development of life, then God was out of a job! What did we need God for? Life was just the natural result of the random interaction of chemicals." — **Lee Strobel** in *The Case for Christ*. Lee later went on to believe in Christ, and is today a Christian leader, pastor, teacher, apologist, and author.

### GOD VS SCIENCE

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- Saying that we don't need to believe in God because of science is like saying that we don't need to believe in orthodontists because of braces. —unknown source

## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### SCIENTISM

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- *Scientism* is the belief that science explains everything. This requires the *a priori* ruling-out of a mind behind the origin and disparity of life. Instead, everything must have a natural explanation . . . Essentially, scientism is atheism dressed up in a lab coat. It is a philosophical position that has inordinately influenced otherwise good science. Consequently, science is forced to commit to conclusions before the experiments have even been done . . . — **Kirk Durston** in **Everyday Apologetics**, page 149

### THE INHERENTLY ODD PARADOX OF EVOLUTION

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- “Evolution is supposed to be the scientific explanation of origins — replacing the old naive idea of special creation — but it does so by postulating an almost infinite series of miracles of creation in order to get from primeval particles (and even these have to come out of nothing!) to planets and people. Evolution may be a very influential man-pleasing philosophy, since it allegedly makes the idea of God and creation redundant, but it does so by assuming an infinite array of imaginary creations to replace the one creation by the omnipotent Creator God. It professes to be scientific, but it breaks the basic laws of science over and over and over again. It is truly a remarkable concept.” — **Henry M. Morris** in *Miracles*, ©2004 MasterBooks, pages 62-63.

### HOW DID LIFE ORIGINATE?

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- “The type of information present in living cells — that is, ‘specified’ information in which the sequence of characters matters to the function of the sequence as a whole — has generated an acute mystery. No undirected physical or chemical process has demonstrated the capacity to produce specified information starting ‘from purely physical or chemical’ precursors. For this reason, chemical evolutionary theories have failed to solve the mystery of the origin of first life — a claim that few mainstream evolutionary theorists now dispute. — excerpted from *Darwin’s Doubt* © 2103 by **Stephen C. Meyer**

### THEISTIC EVOLUTION

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- “No one ever came to any belief except special creation and a young earth by simply reading the text. Theories of progressive creationism and theistic evolution are always proposed by people who are trying to accommodate the text of Genesis to alternative cosmogonies, and those accommodations are only attempted by people who have already ceded disproportionate authority to non-biblical speculations.” — **Kevin T. Bauder**, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. | *Inerrancy and Creationism* | October 24, 2014

### THE NATURE OF MIRACLES

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- “Miracles do not happen in contradiction to nature, but only in contradiction to that which is known to us of nature.” — **St. Augustine**

## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### MEANING IN LIFE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A NATURALIST

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- “In any event, the idea that this life is all there is should not be an occasion for despair and despondency, but just the contrary. It should be a source of joy and dreams — joy of living for the moment and dreams of trying to make the world a better place, both for ourselves and for others in it.” — **Bart D. Ehrman** in *God’s Problem*

### IS INTELLIGENT DESIGN SCIENTIFIC?

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- “In Intelligent Design, William Dembski contends that scientists routinely detect design through scientific inquiry. Think, for example, of a forensic scientific investigation into a suspicious death. Forensic science attempts to determine whether the death was accidental (i.e., an undirected cause) or deliberate (i.e., an intelligent cause). Other areas where design may be recognized through scientific inquiry are archaeology, cryptography (code-breaking), and the SETI project (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence). Although not obvious to the casual observer, these varieties of scientific inquiry identify intelligent causation by detecting and measuring the complexity and information content of the systems under study. Intelligent Design proponents believe that designed systems are frequently quite complex and information-rich, while systems resulting from natural causes are less complex and information-poor. The science of information theory has developed methods that allow for the discrimination of complex information-rich systems from less complex information-poor systems. These methods enable investigators to detect intelligent causation (or design) empirically. Intelligent Design theorists argue that these methods work with the observable features of systems. Thus, these methods used for detection of design are scientific and can be expected to yield valid scientific conclusions.” — Excerpted from *Intelligent Design* by **Angelo G. Rentas**, TRINITY MAGAZINE, Spring 2006, page 24.

### ANTI-EVOLUTIONIST STRATEGY?

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- “Monkey Business — Rebuffed in the courts, anti-evolutionists are seeking a new niche in the schools, one classroom at a time,” title and subtitle of an article by **Eugenie C. Scott**, executive director of the National Center for Science Education, a group that vehemently opposes ID and what they call creation-“science.”

### THE ABSURDITY OF NATURALISM

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- “[One] strict British evolutionist stated it plainly: ‘If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of the atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.’ Even Charles Darwin himself expressed doubt over how a mind produced by natural selection could be trusted.” — **Larry Witham** in *By Design*.



## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### CREATIONISM: TOO RATIONAL TO DEBATE?

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- "For the past five years, I have closely followed creationist literature and have attended lectures and debates on related issues. Based solely on the scientific arguments, pro and con, I have been forced to conclude that scientific creationism is not only a viable theory, but that it has achieved parity with (if not superiority over) the normative theory of biological evolution. That this should now be the case is somewhat surprising, particularly in view of what most of us were taught in primary and secondary school. In practical terms, the past decade of intense activity by scientific creationists has left most evolutionist professors unwilling to debate the creationist professors. Too many of the evolutionists have been publicly humiliated in such debates by their own lack of erudition and by the weaknesses of their theories." — **Robert F. Smith**, a member of the A.C.L.U., drawn from ICR 11/27/1995.
- "Science cannot answer the deepest questions. As soon as you ask why there is something instead of nothing, you have gone beyond science. I find it quite improbable that such order came out of chaos. There has to be some organizing principle. God to me is the explanation for the miracle of existence — why there is something instead of nothing." —Cosmologist **Allan R. Sandage**, quoted by John Noble Wilford in the New York Times, reprinted in the 12/1995 Reader's Digest
- After criticizing the 'science' of creationists, the author states: "Avoid Debates... Have you ever watched the Harlem Globetrotters play the Washington Federals? The Federals get off some good shots, but who remembers them? The purpose of the game is to see the Globetrotters beat the other team. And you probably will get beaten. In such a forum, scientific experts often try to pack a semester-long course into an hour, hoping to convey the huge sweep of evolution, the towering importance of its ideas, the masses of evidence in its favor. Creationists debaters know better. They come well prepared with an arsenal of crisp, clear, superficially attractive anti-evolutionary arguments — fallacious ones, yes, but far too many for you to answer in the time provided. Even if you win the debate in some technical sense, most of the audience will still walk away from it convinced that your opponent has a great new science that the schools should hear about. Teachers have enough problems. Above all else, do no harm." — from an article in **The Sciences**, January/February 1996.

### HOW DO REDSHIFT AND OUR LOCATION IN THE UNIVERSE POINT TO GOD?

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- "To the secularist seeking to avoid any hint of God there is a further heresy: we are much too close to the center. The quantized redshift data imply that we are within about 100,000 light-years of the center, a very small distance compared to the diameter of all the matter in the cosmos, at least 40 billion light-years. The probability of us being so close to the center by accident is less than one out of a quadrillion, implying we are where we are as a result of purposeful design. Not liking these high odds for God, the secularists have sought other explanations for the redshift quantization, without much success so far." — **D. Russell Humphreys**, ICR's Impact, August 2002.

## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### CREATION, GENESIS 1-3 & THE PERSPICUITY OF SCRIPTURE

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- Our main purpose here at ICR is to teach and preach God's word, showing how true science (not scientific speculation) supports its revelations, especially in relation to Creation and the flood. This requires us to take a firm stand on Biblical inerrancy, perspicuity, and absolute authority, even though that position is quite unpopular, not only with evolutionists but (sadly) even with many evangelical Christians. The latter often agree with us about inerrancy, but not on the "perspicuity" of Scripture. This word, often used by theologians of a former generation, simply means, according to Webster, "the quality of being clear and plain to the understanding; not obscure, or ambiguous." In other words, if the Bible is "perspicuous," it means what it says. Figurative or symbolic usage is employed only when the purpose of clarity is better served thereby, with the meaning of any symbols being made clear in the context.

However, many Christians are convinced that we must accept the great ages postulated by evolutionists, even though they would not accept "theistic evolution" as such. Instead, they prefer the term "progressive creation," calling themselves "old earth creationists" and chiding us "young-earth creationists" for being so naive as to take the Genesis record literally and "perspicuously."

Should Bible believing Christians try to make their interpretations of Scripture fit current scientific thinking, or, rather, should they try to correlate the actual data of science with the perspicuous revelations of Scripture? Progressive creationists choose the first alternative, literal creationists the second. Since we are starting from two different premises, we are bound to come to two different conclusions. Each of us must finally choose just where to place his faith. But the young-earth "faith" is a reasonable faith. We can cite the overwhelming evidence for a global and catastrophic flood, for example .... We don't have to resort to the search for the missing dark matter, or rely on mathematical solutions to physical problems in order to "explain" the origin of the cosmos. God simply "commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9)

— **Dr. Henry M. Morris**, excerpts from Acts & Facts, February, 1995, Volume 24, No. 2

### EVOLUTIONARY RELIGION

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- "We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of the failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door." — **Richard Lewontin** in The New York Review, January, 1997, page 31.

## QUOTES RELATING TO SCIENCE & ORIGINS

### THE CRUX OF THE MATTER OF CREATION VS EVOLUTION

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- "At another Christian college someone said, 'What do you think of evolutionism versus creationism?' I said, 'I can't tell you. I think there's only one question worth asking, and that is, "Did God make it?" If the answer is yes, why get so upset about how? That's a peripheral question. We get stuck on peripheral questions rather than saying, 'Yeah, the central question is that God made it. I'm interested in how, but it has nothing to do with my faith.'" —**Madeleine L'Engle**, interview in *The Wheaton Record*, page 9, March 17, 1995

### SCIENCE OR THE BIBLE?

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- "For me to accept an old age (billions of years) for the earth, is to accept that fallible man's fallible methods are in authority over God's infallible Word. I can't do that!" — **Ken Ham**, *Back to Genesis*, No. 29, ©1991 ICR



## SECTION 4

### Appendix 3

# Apologetics-related Humor & Brain Teasers

- 😊 **Have you heard about the dyslexic, agnostic, insomniac who stayed up all night wondering if there really was a DOG?!**
- 😊 How could a Cretan warn you that all Cretans are always lying if such is the case?" (Titus 1:12)
- 😊 **There's a new Dial-A-Prayer service for atheists. You call a number and no one answers.**
- 😊 If He chose, could God have created Himself? If so, how would He have been there to do it?
- 😊 **Q:** What did the Buddhist say to the hot dog vendor? **A:** Make me one with everything.
- 😊 What does an atheist do when he drives up behind a car with a **Honk-if-you-love-Jesus!** bumper sticker on it — and then that car doesn't move when the traffic light turns green?
- 😊 **Bumper Sticker: "His karma ran over my dogma."**
- 😊 That was Zen. This is Tao.
- 😊 **Everybody has to believe in something. I believe I'll have another piece of pie.**
- 😊 National Atheist's Day: April 1st. (Psalm 14:1)
- 😊 **Q:** Why did the Buddhist refuse novocain during root canal work? **A:** Because he wanted to transcend dental medication.
- 😊 "A guide at the Grand Canyon was telling his tour group that it took 13 million years for the Colorado River to carve the canyon. Someone spoke up and asked: "How do you know that? You certainly don't look that old to me." —adapted from Dave Nutting | Alpha Omega Institute

😊 What would you say to a professing Christian who insists that he has always strongly and categorically refuted the idea of reincarnation, and did so in his last life, too?!

😊 **Define God. Give two examples.**

😊 In the beginning the world was without form, and void. And God said, 'Let there be light.' And God separated the light from the dark. And God did two loads of laundry. (Genesis 1:3?)

😊 **Wife to husband:** "Here are the two basic facts of life: **1.** There is a God. **2.** You're not Him."

😊 Did you hear about the agnostic polytheist? She doubted the existence of many gods.

😊 **"They think, therefore I am."** Signed, God.

😊 **Sign:** People who think that they know it all are especially annoying to those of us who do.

😊 **T-SHIRT INSCRIPTIONS:**

➤ "Intellectual Incognito."

➤ **On front:** "God is Dead." — Nietzsche | **On back:** "Nietzsche is dead." — God

➤ **Immortal Words:** "Know Thyself." — Socrates  
"To thine own self be true." — Shakespeare  
"Never wash whites with colors." — Mom

➤ **Life's Big Questions:** "Who Am I? Why Am I Here? Where is the nearest McDonalds?"

😊 Descartes famously said: "I think, therefore I am." But perhaps he should have said, "I am, therefore I think." Seems like maybe Descartes got de cart before de horse. (Norm Geisler at TFNG Conference in Wallingford CT 9/21/2004)

😊 **"One tooth, the whole tooth, but nothing but the tooth."** — Dave Nutting of the Alpha Omega Institute, referring to the pathetically skimpy evidence for Nebraska Man.

😊 **Q:** "What do a dead atheist, a dead agnostic, and a dead saint all have in common?"  
**A:** They all know that there is a God." (**Source:** B.C., Johnny Hart, 7-31-2001)

😊 **Q:** What do you get when you cross a Jehovah's Witness with a Unitarian-Universalist?  
**A:** Someone who goes from door to door with nothing particular to say.

😊 An atheist once participated in a formal debate with a Christian minister. The atheist clearly out-debated the clergyman, but the minister was declared the winner. Why? Because at the end of the debate, in a sudden flush of victory, the atheist shouted out: "Thank God! I won!"

😊 **Sects, sects, sects. Seems that's all we Christian apologists ever talk about.**

😊 A boy came home one day and asked his father, "What holds up the world, Dad?" The father replied, "A camel holds up the world, son." But the next day the boy was back. "Dad, if a camel holds up the world, what holds up the camel?" The father answered quickly, "A kangaroo." Soon the son returned. "Dad, what holds up the kangaroo?" Realizing that he was now in trouble, the father said emphatically, "An elephant!" "Come on, Dad, what holds up the elephant?" Exasperated, the father blurted out: "It's ... it's elephants all the way down, son!" (James Sire in *The Universe Next Door*)

😊 **When an atheist dies she will either “discover that there is a life after death or will not discover that there is not.” — Garrison Keillor, 4/16/2016**

😊 Someone the other day asked me: “How do I know that I really exist and am not just dreaming?” I said, “Hey, if I were you, I wouldn’t lose any sleep over it.”

😊 **I was predestined to be an Arminian, but I chose to be a Calvinist of my own free will.**

😊 I doubt, therefore I might be.

😊 **A fellow in a mental institution is lying in bed saying over and over, "I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon, I'm Napoleon." A guy in the next bed says, "Who told you that?" The fellow says, "God did." The guy snaps back, "Oh no I didn't!"**

😊 Is it possible that black holes might be the result of God trying to divide by zero?

😊 **Don't join dangerous cults: Practice safe sects!**

😊 Atheism is a non-prophet organization.

😊 **God doesn't expect us to lean on our shovels while we're praying for a hole.**

😊 One atheist once asked another atheist: "Do you suppose that God knows that we know that He doesn't exist?"

😊 Christian apologist Lee Strobel tells a story about how he and a friend were once passing a woman on the street when he heard her say, "What's a Deist?" So he whirled around and answered her question. Then he proceeded to powerfully **refute** Deism. By the time he got finished, the woman's mouth was just hanging open. Strobel then said to his friend, "Is this of God or what?! Here's a confused seeker being misled into a false worldview and she asks this question just as I am passing by — and I get to share the gospel." His friend quietly replied, "Lee, she didn't ask, "What's a Deist? She's Hispanic and she just said, 'Buenos Dias.'"

😊 **A man was once running late for an important business meeting but couldn't find a parking space anywhere. Circling the block numerous times he finally cried out to God in desperation: "Please, God, help me find a parking space!" Amazingly, at just that moment a car up ahead pulled out and left nice big parking spot wide open. So the guy says, "Oh, never mind, God. I just found one by myself."**

Without objective morality,  
everything is permissible.



**Three evidences that Jesus might have been from California:**

1. He never cut his hair.
2. He walked around barefoot.
3. He started his own religion.

**Three evidences that Jesus might have had some Italian ancestry:**

1. He talked with his hands.
2. He had wine with every meal.
3. He worked in the building trades.

**Three evidences that Jesus might have had some Irish roots:**

1. He never got married.
2. He never held a steady job.
3. His last request was for a drink.

**Four evidences that Jesus was Jewish:**

1. He went into his father's business.
2. He lived at home until he was 33.
3. He was sure that his mother was a virgin.
4. His mother was sure that he was God.

😊 **One apologist's advice:** Abstain from sects.

😊 **Comedian Steve Martin** supposedly sang the following song at the 2013 New Orleans Jazz Fest, claiming that this one song comprised "the entire atheist hymnal."

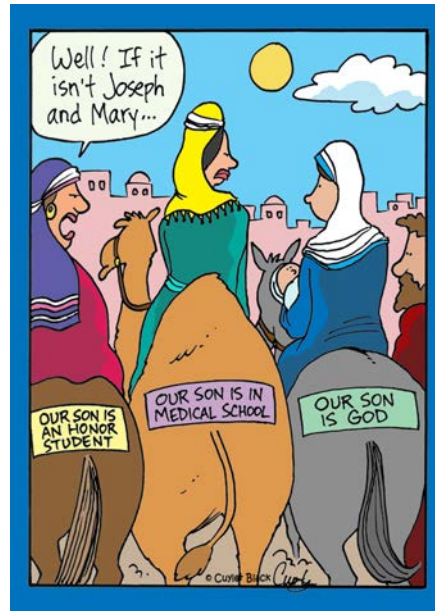
Christians have their hymns and pages,  
Hava Nagila's for the Jews,  
Baptists have the rock of ages,  
Atheists just sing the blues.

Romantics play Claire de Lune,  
Born-agains sing "He is risen,"  
But no one ever wrote a tune,  
For godless existentialism.

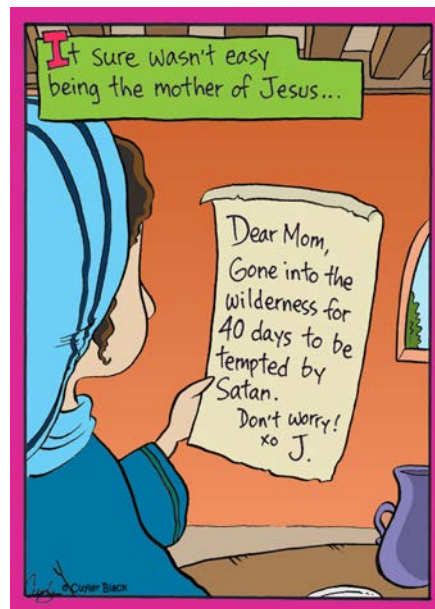
For atheists there's no good news.  
They'll never sing a song of faith.  
In their songs they have one rule:  
the "he" is always lower case.

Some folks sing a Bach cantata,  
Lutherans get a Christmas tree,  
Atheist songs add up to nada,  
But they do have Sundays free.

😊 **OLD AGE APOLOGETICS.** An apologist getting along in years was asked to explain how to reconcile the love and justice of God, He replied: "I can easily answer that my making two simple points. Well, make that three points. But to be honest, by the time I get to the third point I might have trouble remembering what it was. In fact, right now I'm struggling to recall what my second point is. Oh, no — what was the original question? And who was asking it? You or me?"



Cartoons here are used by purchase and are **not** to be duplicated. [cuylerblack.com](http://cuylerblack.com)





# SECTION 4

## Appendix 4

### The Bangor Statement on Christian Apologetics & the Church

**RECOGNIZING** that many Americans today either disparage religious belief altogether or are confused about what to believe and are therefore indifferent to religion, and

**RECOGNIZING** that evangelical Christians and the biblical worldview are more and more under siege in America's increasingly secular culture, and

**RECOGNIZING** that in many cases those who profess Christian belief, young and old, are not always well-prepared or confident about articulating a rational basis for their faith, and

**RECOGNIZING** that as a result of all this there is a growing void and lack of a basis for meaning and hope and morality in our nation, and many who are spiritually lost, and

**RECOGNIZING** that there is much evidence that God has historically used apologetics as a key means of effectively addressing the concerns expressed above,

**WE THEREFORE CALL ON** pastors, church leaders, campus ministry leaders, para-local church organizations, and Christian believers everywhere, to be creative and resolved in placing a fresh emphasis and priority on equipping believers to practice and promote loving Christian apologetics in our time, beginning here in New England, and to do it all in a spirit of hopefulness and with dependence on the Word of God.

---

#### **ADOPTED & SIGNED UNANIMOUSLY BY**

Forty-five (45) Christian participants and leaders representing churches in all six New England states met in a *Think Tank* session on Christian Apologetics, organized by the *AIIA Institute* as part of its *Bulwark Coalition* initiative, held on June 9-10, 2017, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Bangor, Maine USA.



# SECTION 4

## Appendix 5

### Roster of Key AIIA Events

This Appendix provides a listing of annual or semi-annual Spring Symposium and Fall Forum events hosted by the AIIA Institute between 1992 and 2017 — a span of twenty-five years. Our purpose in providing this abridged log (a more thorough record of each event is on file) is **not** to impress readers with what we did **then**, but rather to encourage Christian believers and groups (e.g. Sunday school classes, small groups) to take a similar initiative **now**.

In most cases these events were arranged with a simple Google search for likely entities and contact information, a few phone calls and emails, and perhaps an onsite visit. A high percentage of contacts responded favorably — even enthusiastically — to our proposal for an event.

#### Why do we suggest organizing such events?

1. We believe that people are often more likely to listen to our gospel message if we have first taken the time to listen to them and show interest in what they believe.
2. We believe that we will often learn more from meeting directly with representatives of other belief systems than by reading books by Christian authors about those other belief systems. When I was in my teens one Sunday morning our Sunday school teacher, Henry Benner, took our class to visit a large Roman Catholic Church service. Then we went back and talked about what we had experienced. I probably learned as much from that experience than I would have learned by listening to three lectures and reading three books on Roman Catholicism.
3. We believe that such forums can engender goodwill with those of other belief systems — and the world certainly needs more goodwill these days! This is especially true if the forums are not set up in an antagonistic fashion. We have discovered that roundtables often prove more profitable than debates.

"In an age when people with many different points of view have difficulty talking together, I'd like to see Christian scholars stop talking only to each other and reach out to those with whom they may have little or no common ground. If we can develop conversational discourse so Christian scholars talk to both non-Christian scholars and non-scholars — those they generally don't talk to — we'll have accomplished something. We have so much to learn from each other."  
— **Dr. Harold Heie**, serving at the time he made this statement with the Center for Christian Studies, Gordon College, Wenham MA

**Now — read on** for some ideas that might work for you. Then go organize an event of your own!

## AlIA's Spring Symposiums (1992–2017)

- **May 3, 1992**; YMCA; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Evolution or Creation: Why Should I Care?**
- **March 28, 1993**; YMCA; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Don't Check Your Brains at the Door** (video), and **Evolution & Promiscuity** (address by special speaker).
- **April 16, 1994**; Foxcroft Academy; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Worldviews** — with David Noebel of Summit Ministries (Colorado), and Wally Potts.
- **May 6, 1995**; Foxcroft Academy; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Relativism** — with Dick Keyes of L'Abri (Southborough MA).
- **April 20, 1996**; Wells Commons and Alford Arena; University of Maine, Orono, Maine; **Origins** and a **Creation-Evolution Debate** (Dr. Gary Parker and Dr. John Anderson); Ken Ham and Gary Parker; attendance approaching 2000.
- **April 18-19, 1997**; Foxcroft Academy; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Sermons from Science** — with Dean Ortner of Moody Bible Institute; attendance approximately 400.
- **April 18, 1998**; YMCA; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Tackling the Riddle of Why God Allows Suffering.**
- **April 17, 1999**; YMCA; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Is the Bible Really Reliable?**
- **April 15, 2000**; YMCA, Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
- **April 7, 2001**; Nutting Hall; University of Maine in Orono, Maine; **Cults on Campus** — with Bob & Judy Pardon of New England Institute of Religious Research in Lakeville MA
- **June 15, 2002**; Ramada Inn; Bangor, Maine; **Is Darwin's Ship Sinking** — with Dr. Tom Woodward from Trinity College in New Port Richey FL.
- **June 7, 2003**; Scotty's Restaurant; Newport, Maine; **Archaeology as Evidence for the Christian Faith** — with Dr. Bryant G. Wood of Associates for Biblical Research in Harrisburg PA.
- **June 5, 2004**; Parkwood Inn; Cook's Corner (Brunswick), Maine; **Introducing Apologetics to the Local Church** with Q&A session.
- **March 18, 2005**; Bangor Baptist Church; Bangor, Maine; **Mormonism: A Biblical & Scientific Response.** This forum was co-sponsored by Grace Evangelical Seminary in Bangor, Maine.
- **April 21, 2006**; Faith Evangelical Free Church; Waterville, Maine; **Reproductive Bioethics** — with Dr. Robert Scheidt, Chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Christian Medical and Dental Association. Co-sponsored by Grace Evangelical Seminary.
- **June 16, 2007**; AlIA's Study Center; **How We Got the Bible.**
- **March 26, 2008**; AlIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine; **Boiling It Down without Dumbing It Down: Providing Simple Intelligent Answers to Life's Really Tough Questions.**

- **May 9, 2009**; AIIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine; **Examining the Emerging Church Movement**.
- **April 24, 2010**; First Evangelical Free Church of Maine; Westbrook, Maine (near Portland). **Emergent Concerns in the Church Today** — with Bob DeWaay (author and speaker from Minneapolis MN).
- **May 21, 2011**; Teen Challenge New England (TCNE) headquarters; Brockton MA. **Defending Your Faith** — with Dr. Mark Bird from Cincinnati OH, author of a 12-week curriculum by the same title.
- ◆ **May 12, 2012**; AIIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine. **Apologetics for Kids** (ages 6-16).
- ◆ **June 1, 2013**; AIIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine. **Just How Old Is Just How Important?** — a consideration of the importance and implications of taking a position on earth's age.
- ◆ **April 5, 2014**; AIIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine. **Is God Only the Imaginative Product of Human Brain Chemistry?**
- ◆ **April 4, 2015**; AIIA's Study Center; Monson, Maine; **The Gospel of Jesus Christ for Hindus?**
- ◆ **May 7, 2016**; Cross insurance Center; Bangor, Maine; region-wide **WHY JESUS? 2016** conference.
- ◆ **June 9-10, 2017**, Hilton Garden Inn, Bangor, Maine, **AIIA's Bulwark Coalition 2017 Think Tank Event**; issued a White Paper report.

## **AIIA's Fall Forums (1994–2016)**

- **November 4-6, 1994**; Monson Community Church; Monson, Maine; **Apologetics in the 90s**.
- **November 3-4, 1995**; Monson Community Church; Monson, Maine; **Apologetics in the 90s**.
- **November 1-2, 1996**; Monson Community Church; Monson, Maine; **Cultic Deception**.
- **November 8, 1997**; YMCA; Dover-Foxcroft, Maine; **Round Table on Three Theological Issues** (Christ, sin, the afterlife); Representatives of Baha'ism, Unitarian-Universalism, and Evangelical Christianity.
- **November 7, 1998**; Miller's Restaurant; Bangor, Maine; **Dialogue Dinner with the Muslims**.
- **November 6, 1999**; Parsonage; Monson, Maine; Timely Truths, Timeless Voices; video series produced by RZIM. Also, Doug Palmetter of Campus Crusade was present to facilitate discussion and answer questions; **Is Christianity Defensible in a Non-Christian Culture?**
- **November 4, 2000**; Monson Community Church; Monson, Maine; **Making Sense of Pain & Suffering**; The Acts of Faith Drama Team from Waterville, Maine, R. Scott Leighton, M.D.; Bill Irwin, the only blind person to ever thru-hike the entire Appalachian Trail, and author of Blind Courage, and Daryl E. Witmer. Betty Beless provided reflective, transitional, piano pieces.

- **November 3, 2001**; Steve's Restaurant; Waterville, Maine; **An Evening of Dinner & Drama**; The Acts of Faith Drama Team performing **Timely Truths, Timeless Voices: A Colloquy on the Pressing Warrant for Effective Christian Apologetics in the Third Millennium A.D.**
- **November 3, 2002**; Congregation Beth Abraham, orthodox Jewish synagogue in Bangor, ME; **An Evangelical Minister Interviews an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi**. Invited to sunset prayer service.
- **November 9, 2003**; Fireside Inn, Auburn, Maine: **Christians & Muslims at the Table**.
- **November 13, 2004**; New England Hindu Temple; Ashland (Boston area), Massachusetts; **A Conversation with Hindus**. Tour of the temple; Q&A session for over one hour with leaders.
- **November 6, 2005**; Grace Baptist Church, Hudson MA: **Hindus & Christians at the Table**.
- **November 5, 2006**; AIIA Study Center; Monson, ME. Humanist and retired pharmacologist Dr. Richard Faust addressed a full house on **The Faith of Humanists and Freethinkers**. Q&A session.
- **November 10, 2007**; AIIA Study Center; Monson, Maine; Non-Christian theist Miklos Jako spoke on **The Top Five Reasons Why I Am Not a Christian**. Candid exchange.
- **October 5, 2008**; Kennebec Valley Baptist Church; Waterville, Maine. **Understanding Islam**. A live unrehearsed colloquy with Muslims, Dr. Ahmed and Eman Rahman, from the Islamic Center in Orono, Maine. Powerpoint presentation and Q&A exchange.
- **September 26, 2009**; Morgan Bay Zendo; Surry, Maine. **A Primer on Buddhism**. Tour of facilities, lecture, Q&A session; thoughtful exchange.
- **October 17, 2010**; Kennebec Valley Baptist Church; Waterville, Maine. **Dramatized apologetics, mock debates, two panels posing and responding to tough questions**.
- ◆ **November 6, 2011**; Jehovah's Witnesses Kingdom Hall; Abbot, Maine. **Jehovah's Witnesses Sunday morning congregational service**.
- **November 12, 2011**, AIIA Study Center; Monson, Maine. Wide-ranging 90-minute exchange with JW leaders on **Jehovah Witnesses's Doctrine and Practice**.
- **November 15, 2012**; Islamic Center of Maine; Orono ME; **Islamic Beliefs & Practices**; approximately ten local church leaders attended by special invitation; candid two-hour exchange with two local Muslim leaders (one a medical doctor and the other a university student). Part of this event involved a brief tour, and witnessing mid-day prayers in the Center's worship room.
- ◆ **October 4, 2014**; Hampton Inn; Presque Isle, Maine. **Meet the Pagans!** — extensive session with the Northern Maine Pagan Pride Association.
- ◆ **November 7, 2015**; AIIA Study Center; Monson, Maine. **Ex-Christians** — with Larry Spencer, an ex-Christian and articulate blogger from Marlborough, Massachusetts.
- ◆ **November 12, 2016**; Diamond Building, Colby College; Waterville, Maine. **Can We Really Coexist?** featuring a panel of presenters representing five major belief systems or traditions (Islam, Humanism, Zen Buddhist, Conservative Judaism, evangelical Christianity). Co-sponsored with **InterVarsity** student group at Colby, **Global Friends**, also based in Waterville, and Colby's **Office of Religious & Spiritual Life**.

# SECTION 4

## Appendix 6

### Statement of Faith \*

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.
5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*\* This Statement of Faith is endorsed by the author, was that of the AIIA Institute (1991–2023), and is the same as that used by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The author also affirms, as did AIIA, the [Chicago Statement of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy](#). The author further affirms the [Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America](#).*

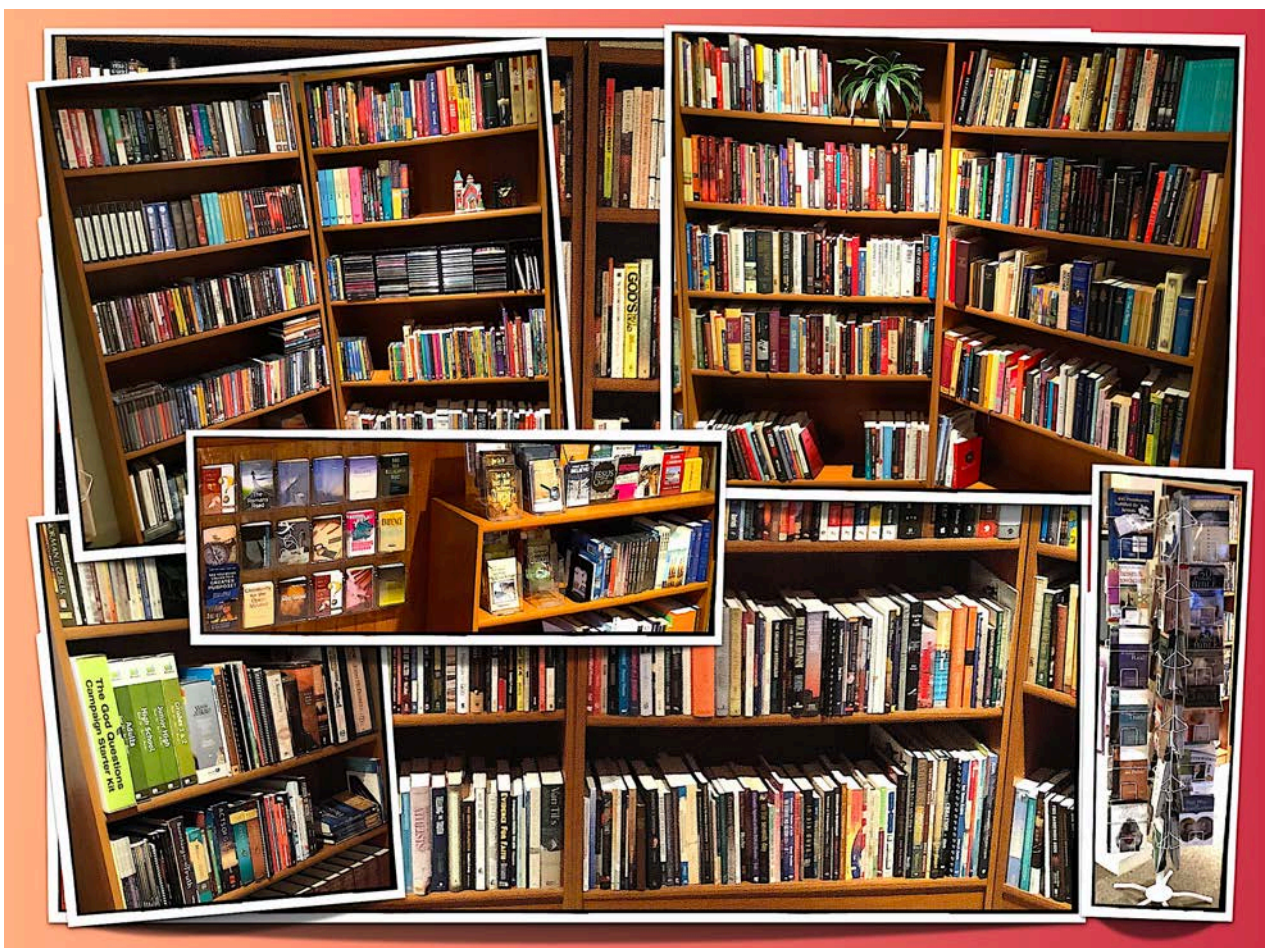




## SECTION 4

### Appendix 7

# The Evidence of Great Apologetics Resources



**Library Apologetics.** On numerous occasions over the years, when questions about the credibility of historic Christian faith have come to my mind, or been posed by others, I have turned to the witness and written records of hundreds and thousands of respected, well-lived, thoughtful men and women throughout human history — beginning, of course, with the inspired writings and messages of the Bible writers, prophets, and apostles. The calm reasoned persuasive testimonies of so many reputable individuals — old and young, rich and poor, black and white, Asian and Latino, folks from every background and nation, some with a high school education and others with double doctorates — have had a cumulative and fortifying effect on my own faith and confidence in the Christian worldview.



Sometimes simply entering what was formerly **AIAA's apologetics resource library** (pictured at left) and perusing the great collection of reference books, charts, graphs, testimonials, lectures, DVDs, CDs and curricula there (not to mention all that's now also available online, e.g. Christian apologetics websites, articles, videos, and files, where learned scholars have provided good solid rational answers to every conceivable question that could ever be asked about the Christian faith)

— **all of this has proven very reassuring.** I have sometimes thought of it as “library apologetics.” The corroborative witness of so many believers over long ages of time is a powerful evidence of itself — fortifying the believer in times of faith and offering a potent antidote in times of doubt.

For that reason — **here in Appendix 7** — I want to provide you with a multi-sectioned roster of some of the leading, most valuable, insightful, powerful testimonies and Christian apologetics resources that have come to my attention since 1991 (although some of what's included here was published well before 1991). I am quite familiar with most of these resources, have read (at least page-by-page) most of the books, and recorded or published brief reviews on the majority of them.

**Someone asked me recently,** “What one apologetics-related book would you recommend for my library if I can only afford to buy one?” I told him that if I was **personally** offered an all-expenses paid year-long vacation on some exotic remote island where there was no internet and I could only take one apologetics-related book along with me, I might have to pass on the whole offer and just stay home! How could I ever choose just one?!

Of course **Mere Christianity** by C.S. Lewis is probably still the gold standard — the quintessential classic text for making the case for Christian faith. Chuck Colson said that he came to faith in Christ after reading **Mere Christianity** while vacationing on the coast of Maine.

But then there are Lee Strobel's **The Case for Christ** and **The Case for Faith** — also now classics in their own right. Josh McDowell's **More Than a Carpenter** is very readable, not too long, and packs a punch. I often use it with those seeking for truth in life. McDowell's **Evidence That Demands a Verdict** (published in 2017 as a revision of early versions) is also a classic apologetics reference. And just out in 2023 is the McDowell's' excellent handbook-styled **Evidence for Jesus.**

A more recent and very excellent compilation of apologetics-related evidence for faith is **Cold Case Christianity** by J. Warner Wallace. And **I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist** by Norman Geisler is regarded by many as one of the best treatises on the case for Christianity. Geisler has also published **The Big Book of Christian Apologetics** (An A to Z Guide) which brings it all together in an impressive reference encyclopedia-type reference. **The Reason for God** by Tim Keller is also noted as especially effective with a younger generation of skeptics and seekers.

My answer to the question about which **one** book I would recommend would probably depend on how that book was to be used. There are **testimonials** and there are **narratives** and there are **reference texts**. It's hard to make that choice for someone else, but one that would certainly be a leading candidate would be **Cold Case Christianity updated expanded edition**.

In addition to printed books, DVDs, charts, and pamphlets, we have published a collection of skits and plays in a spiral-bound resource know as **Dramatized Apologetics** (see below). A limited number of copies are still available via our successor ministry, **Anchor New England**.

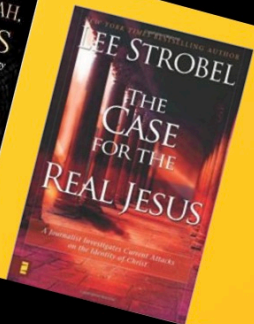
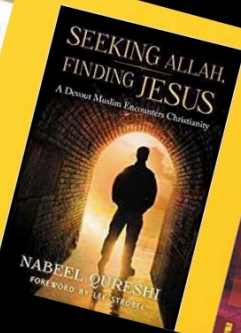
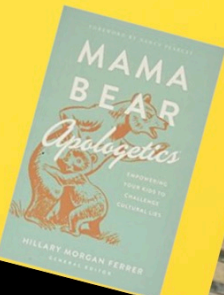
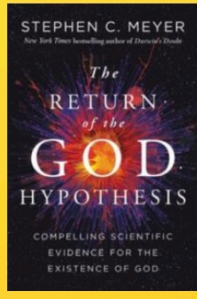
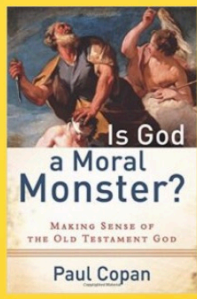
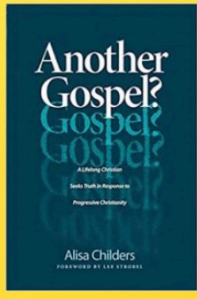
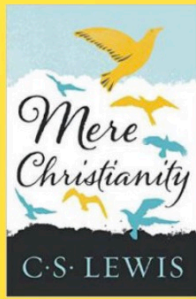
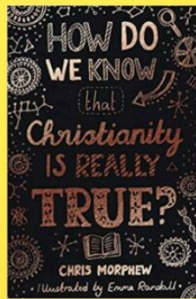


And of course there is the archive of **Proclamation** thoughtletters that were published between 1991 and 2022. A **partial** index of the topics covered in that archive appears above. Individual issues are downloadable at no cost and with generous reprint and permissions policies. Each downloaded file is then searchable. To access the archive click this link: <https://www.anchornewengland.org/proclamation-index> and please also see **Section 2 Part F** in this compendium for further related information.

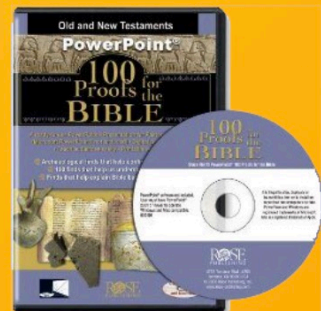
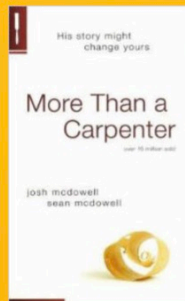
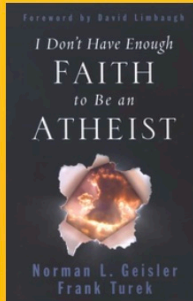
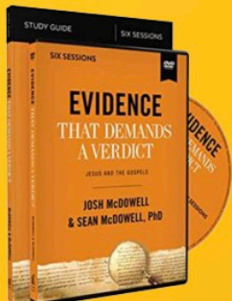
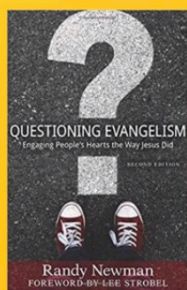
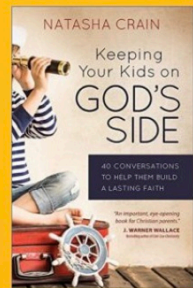
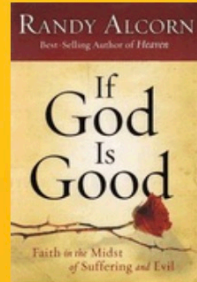
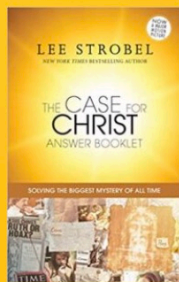
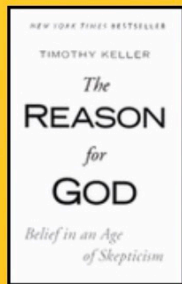
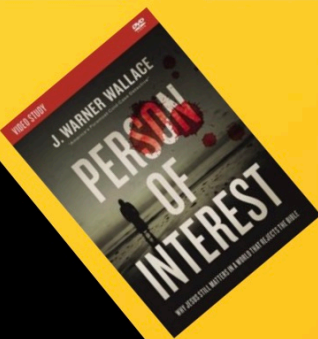
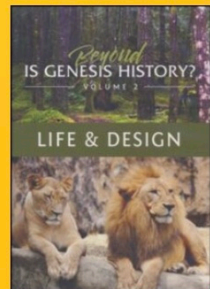
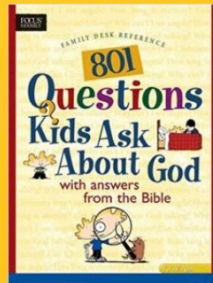
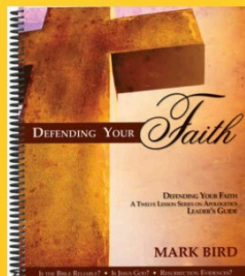
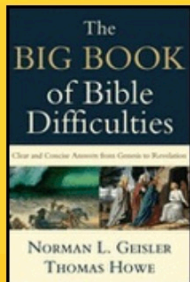
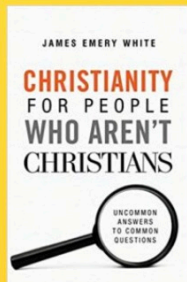
**All of these resources in combination with one another**, plus the very major body of apologetics-related resources listed on the following pages, add up to a formidable case in defense of historic Christian truth. Honest and fair critics and skeptics must reckon with this powerful case for faith.

## Proclamation Index

By Year	
2022	What If Religion Is Just Not for Me?
2021	Isn't Evil the Absence of Good and Only an Illusion?
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2019	Why Not Just Love and Accept All Religious Views?
2018	Is the Bible Antiquated and Contradictory?
2017	Skepticism vs. Christianity
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	Doesn't the Bible Contradict Itself About When Mary Came to the Tomb?
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	Why Did a God of Love Condone Genocide in Ancient Times?
	What Happens to Those Who've Never Heard the Gospel?
	<b>2017</b>
	Why Believe in God if Science Can Explain Everything?
	Why Would a God of Love Damn People to Hell for Eternity?
	Isn't Morality Just a Matter of Personal Opinion?
	What About All Those Bible Contradictions?
	Is Christianity Just a Crutch?   Could Jesus Have Sinned?
	Is Christianity Just a Mosaic of Recycled Ancient Myths?
	<b>2016</b>
	Why Would God Have Done What He Knew He'd Wish He Hadn't Done?



# A FEW OF OUR FAVORITES



## Especially Valuable Christian Apologetics-Related Ministries and Websites

With the advent of the internet a vast host of material in defense of historic Christian faith has become readily accessible. The following links will direct you to a number of these helpful, reputable, well-established Christian apologetics organizations that have a presence on the world wide web today, and that hold views generally compatible with our own.

The links listed here are all active in the PDF version of this compendium, and were working as of our publication date.

**Disclaimer:** Although we are in agreement with the basic charter and scope of the resources listed here, we do not necessarily endorse every specific view or practice of every resource.



**Always Be Ready** • <https://alwaysbeready.com> • Solid general apologetics ministry with Charlie Campbell. Offers an extensive index to good teaching and valuable resource material.

**Anchor New England** • <https://www.anchornewengland.org> • New England-based apologetics-related content and curriculum, especially for kids. (Ryan Goding, Exec Dir.) Great future vision!

**Answers in Genesis** • <http://www.answersingenesis.org/> • Perhaps the largest Christian apologetics organizations in America today, offering many articles and resources.

**Associates for Biblical Research** • <https://biblearchaeology.org> • Christian apologetics specializing in Biblical archeology.

**Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry (CARM)** • <https://carm.org/> • This well-noted, seasoned, widely-used website is directed by expert Christian apologist, Matthew Slick.

**Christian Answers Network (CAN)** • <http://www.christiananswers.net/> • For many years AIIA's work was hosted by CAN. This site offers many succinct articles, including helpful movie reviews.

**Cold Case Christianity** • <https://coldcasechristianity.com> • Very impressive and unique approach to Christian evidence featuring the work of former L.A. police detective, J. Warner Wallace.

**Creation Ministries International** • <http://creation.com/> • Offers a large inventory of resource material on Biblical creationism. Scholarly yet readable.

**Cross Examined** • <https://crossexamined.org> • Impressive and comprehensive Christian apologetics ministry directed by Frank Turek.

**C.S. Lewis Society** • <http://www.apologetics.org> • Dr. Tom Woodward keeps this page current with the latest apologetics information, primarily (but not only) related to science and origins.

**Evidence for Hope** • <https://www.evidenceforhope.com> • A really good solid grassroots apologetics ministry based in New England (NH); directed by our friend, Bob Valiant.

**Got Questions?** • <http://www.gotquestions.org/> • Perhaps the most extensive and helpful database of doctrinally-reliable answers to questions about Christian truth, life, and theology.

**L'Abri** • <https://southboroughlabri.org> • Residential study center making a strong case for the Christian worldview. Directed for many years by seasoned apologist Dick Keyes, and now by his son, Ben. L'Abri was founded by the late Dr. Francis Schaeffer.

**Ligonier Ministries** • <https://www.ligonier.org> • Reliable time-tested academic ministry featuring the late Dr. R. C. Sproul that will better equip Christian believers to offer a reasonable basis for their hope in Christ.

**New England Institute of Religious Research** • formerly also associated with **MeadowHaven** <http://www.neirr.org/> | Bob & Judy Pardon have long specialized in exposing aberrational religious organizations and cults, as well as healing those who have been entrapped in them.

**One-Minute Apologist and Christianity Still Makes Sense** <https://www.youtube.com/@ChristianityStillMakesSense/videos> • This link leads to scores of Youtube videos offering practical succinct answers on a broad range of apologetics-related topics.

**Patterns of Evidence** • <https://patternsofevidence.com> • Christian apologetics focusing on archaeology with Tim Mahoney.

**Peace with God** • <http://peacewithgod.jesus.net/> • We recommend this site (affiliated with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) for those who begin to understand that Christianity is reasonable and true, and who then wonder what comes next.

**Ratio Christi** • <http://ratiochristi.org/> • Promotes Christian apologetics on college and university campuses worldwide — referencing many other apologetics ministries, resources, and more!

**Reasonable Faith** • <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/> • The web site of respected Christian philosopher and apologist, William Lane Craig.

**Stand to Reason** • <http://www.str.org> • Greg Koukl directs this excellent apologetics organization.

**What Would YOU Say?** • <https://whatwouldyousay.org/> • Brief animated videos that help Christians understand and communicate Christian truth on a wide variety of really tough topics. A project of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

## Without Excuse

God has revealed Himself in a general way to all humans through **nature** (from the vastness of the cosmos to the microscopic orbit of an electron) and through **conscience** (a universal inherent moral sense of right and wrong). He has revealed Himself in more specific particular ways through **His Word** (beginning with Moses and the prophets, and ending with the completed canon of Scripture, i.e. the **Bible**). Most importantly He has revealed Himself to the world in **Jesus**, the “radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:1-3). God has also provided men and women with evidences of His existence and nature through **miracles**, Bible-based **preaching**, and the intellectually keen **insight** and **instruction** of brilliant, scholarly, well-credentialed teachers, authors, and apologists down through history. **Let no one ever claim that they did not believe due to a paucity of solid evidence and clear rational thinking. A preponderance of evidence for faith is everywhere — as illustrated above in this Appendix 7. Persistent skeptics, atheists, agnostics, and critics are all without excuse.**



## SECTION 4

### Appendix 8

# How to Be Sure That You're Going to End Up in Heaven

If you're not a Christian but you have made a sincere effort to consider evidence for the truth claims of Jesus Christ in this compendium — and if you are thoughtfully reading this page right now — you should probably consider the strong possibility that God may be drawing you to Himself.

John Lennon once wrote and sang, "Imagine there's no heaven. It's easy if you try." But wait. Why not imagine that there **is a heaven**? And suppose there really **is** a God to whom you will one day give an account. Why not assume that the Bible is God's Word, just as it claims to be?

Here's what the Bible says about how you can be sure that you'll end up in heaven.

**Romans 10:9-10.** "That if you **confess** with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

**Acts 2:37-38.** "Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' Peter *said* to them, '**Repent**, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

**John 1:12.** "But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who **believe** in His name,"

**Confess** (acknowledge) Christ. **Believe in** Him. **Repent** before Him. **Receive** Him.

## But exactly how does one receive Christ as Savior?

By calling on Him to save you — in prayer.

**Acts 2:21** says, 'And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

If you are sincere, you can come to God by faith with a prayer something like this:

“Lord God, I acknowledge my sins and my sinful lost condition. I know that I cannot save myself from my sins, no matter how good I am or try to be. I believe that You are real. I believe that Your blood shed on the cross provides a way for my sins to be forgiven. I need You to save me right now. I call on You to save me and come into my life. I intend to follow You and Your will for my life as You empower me to do so. I am ready to be baptized as a public profession of my faith in You. Thank You, Lord — in Jesus' Name.”

To become a Christian means to become a follower of Jesus. This is not about **religion** or **getting religious** or never again making any mistakes or living in some sort of euphoric state. It's about a day-to-day **relationship** with Jesus. Through good times and bad. Getting to know Him. Getting to enjoy Him. Learning to serve Him and praise Him in all of life.

The best way to develop a relationship with Jesus is to spend time every day . . .

- 1) Reading your Bible.
- 2) Praying to Him — about everything.
- 3) Getting involved with other Christians in a good Bible-based Christ-centered local church.
- 4) Talking with other about Jesus — what He means to you and how the one with whom you're talking can also become a follower of Jesus.

**1 John 5:11-13.** “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

### NOTE

If you have just asked Jesus to be your Savior for the first time, we highly recommend that you contact us and **also** visit this site (which is affiliated with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association). It will confirm what you have just done and guide you in what comes next,

<http://peacewithgod.jesus.net/>





# Choosing *to* Believe

What follows here is such a powerful commentary on the matter of choosing to follow Christ that I felt compelled to include it in this compendium. Every honest skeptic, in order to be fair to himself or herself must ask not only “Why **should** I come to Jesus?” but also “Why should I **not** come to Jesus?” What a concept — and the stakes could not be higher!

All of this is so very effectively and dramatically illustrated by **Sheldon Vanauken** in his book, **A Severe Mercy**. This book was first published by Harper Rowe in 1977, then in 1987 by HarperOne, and most recently by HarperCollins.

## IMPORTANT NOTE

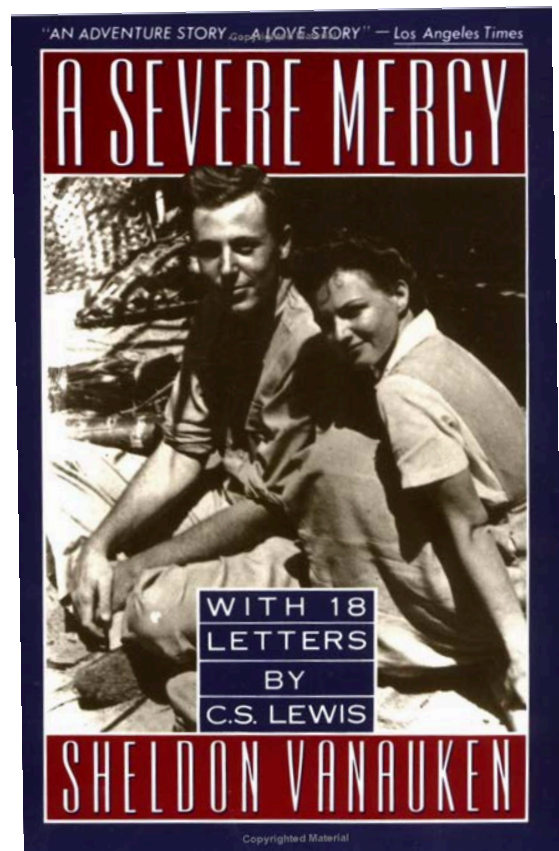
The following excerpt is taken from **A Severe Mercy**, copyright © 1977, 1980 by Sheldon Vanauken. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

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“Christianity—in a word, the divinity of Jesus—seemed probable to me. But there is a gap between the probable and proved. How was I to cross it? If I were to stake my whole life on the Risen Christ, I wanted proof. I wanted certainty. I wanted to see Him eat a bit of fish. I wanted letters of fire across the sky. I got none of these. And I continued to hang about on the edge of the gap.”

“Davy [Vanauken’s wife] and I, sometimes with friends, sometimes alone, were reading Dorothy Sayers's tremendous series of short plays on the life of Jesus. In one of them, I was forcibly struck by the reply of a man to Jesus's inquiry about his faith: ‘Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.’ Wasn't that just my position? Believing and not believing? A paradox, like that other paradox: one must have faith to believe but must believe in order to have faith. A paradox to unlock a paradox? I felt that it was.”



"One day later there came the second intellectual breakthrough: it was the rather chilling realisation [sic] that *I could not go back*. In my old easy-going theism, I had regarded Christianity as a sort of fairy tale; and I had neither accepted nor rejected Jesus, since I had never, in fact, encountered Him. Now I had. The position was not, as I had been comfortably thinking all these months, merely a question of whether I was to accept the Messiah or not. It was a question of whether I was to accept Him—or *reject*. My God! There was a gap *behind* me, too. Perhaps the leap to acceptance was a horrifying gamble—but what of the leap to rejection? There might be no certainty that Christ was God—but, by God, there was no certainty that He was not."

"If I were to accept, I might and probably would face the thought through the years: "Perhaps, after all, it's a lie; I've been had!" But if I were to reject, I would certainly face the haunting, terrible thought: "Perhaps it's true—and I have rejected my God!"

"This was not to be borne. I could not reject Jesus. There was only one thing to do, once I had seen the gap behind me. I turned away from it and flung myself over the gap *towards* Jesus."

"Early on a damp English morning with spring in the air, I wrote in the Journal and to C. S. Lewis:

'I choose to believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — in Christ, my lord and my God. Christianity has the ring, the *feel*, of unique truth. Of *essential* truth. By it, life is made full instead of empty, meaningful instead of meaningless. Cosmos becomes beautiful at the *Centre*, instead of chillingly ugly beneath the lovely pathos of spring. But the emptiness, the meaninglessness, and the ugliness can only be seen, I think, when one has glimpsed the fullness, the meaning, and the beauty. It is when heaven and hell have *both* been glimpsed that going back is impossible. But to go on seemed impossible, also. A glimpse is not a vision. A choice was necessary: and there is no certainty. One can only choose a side. So I — I now choose my side: I choose beauty; I choose what I love. But choosing to believe is believing. It's all I can do: choose. I confess my doubts and ask my Lord Christ to enter my life. I do not *know* God is, I do but say: Be it unto me according to Thy will. I do not affirm that I am without doubt, I do but ask for help, having chosen, to overcome it. I do but say: Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief."

"Davy sat beside me while I wrote, full of quiet joy. Of course I had told her first. Indeed, she had been in the room when the series of thoughts about the gap behind me had flashed through my mind. She had heard me mutter, 'My God!' And then, as she looked up, I'd said, rather tensely, 'Wait.' A couple of minutes went by. Then I said: 'Davy? . . . dearling . . . I have chosen — the Christ! I *choose* to believe.' She looked at me with joy. Then she came over to me and knelt. I knelt, too, and committed my ways to my God. When we rose, we held each other a long moment. It is perhaps significant that we prayed first."

## SECTION 4

### Appendix 9

# Full-Page Full-Color Outreach Ad

On the following page is one version of the full-page full-color print ads that the AIIA Institute ran in a number of Maine-based publications (including **Yankee** magazine, **Down East** magazine, and **Maine Seniors** magazine) between 2020 and 2022.

We're including it in this compendium **as an example of what other Christians, churches, and para-local church ministries might do.**

We discovered that it not only exposed the ministry and helped to build our constituency base, but also added credibility to the gospel of Christ and the case for historic Christian truth. We received expressions of interest from across the country.

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**PHOTO CREDIT | NORTH WOOD AERIAL | MONSON MAINE**  
ISAAC CRABTREE, PROPRIETOR • RIGHT TO REPRINT PURCHASED BY AIIA.

Other amazing photos of Monson and environs can be viewed and purchased at:

<https://northwoodsairial.smugmug.com/Monson>

What's not to love about Maine? Pristine, calming, revitalizing. Maine really is *The Way Life Should Be*.

But time here on earth is **fleeting**. Good times don't last. Even the best of Maine vacations draw to a close. So what comes **after** Maine — and after this life? Can anyone know? Science deals with the natural world. But if there's a **super-natural dimension** to reality, how could science, by definition, ever explain the **totality** of human existence? What **really counts** in life? Why are we so often too busy or too uncomfortable to **consider** such matters?



What is our ultimate purpose as humans? What if there *is* a God? Imagine there *is* a heaven (and a hell). Suppose that the Bible is **reliable** — and that **Jesus** of Nazareth actually was who He claimed to be. What if Jesus is existentially **knowable** today?

The **AIIA INSTITUTE** exists to encourage and facilitate the **life of the mind**. We educate thinkers to better understand world religions and thought forms.

We're transdenominational. We seek to engender **goodwill** among those of many varied belief systems, including even those who deny all religions.

AIIA provides a preponderance of hard **evidence** for the Christian worldview. We demonstrate how it's possible to be well-educated, thoughtful, unaffiliated with any cult, totally sane and rational — and yet **trust in the God of the Bible**.

How do we do this? We mail a **FREE** one-page bimonthly **thoughtletter** to interested readers. No obligation. No cost. No catch. Unsubscribe at any time. Ask us to begin sending it your way **today**. Discover how we make an intellectually persuasive case for **historic orthodox Christian faith**.

We're also willing to meet personally with those interested in exploring such matters. We'll listen to your story, respond to your questions, and think **with** you about the most **important matters** in life.

Let us know when it suits. We'll arrange a **visit** at AIIA's **Resource & Study Center**, situated by the shores of beautiful **Lake Hebron** in the newly-renovated quiet little northwoods village of **Monson, Maine**.

AIIA'S Study Center is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This photo is enhanced from an original image by North Woods Aerial.

Contact us at: [AIIAInstitute.org](http://AIIAInstitute.org) | [AIIA@AIIAInstitute.org](mailto:AIIA@AIIAInstitute.org) | 207.997.3644

## SECTION 4

### Appendix 10

# Apologetics Initiatives

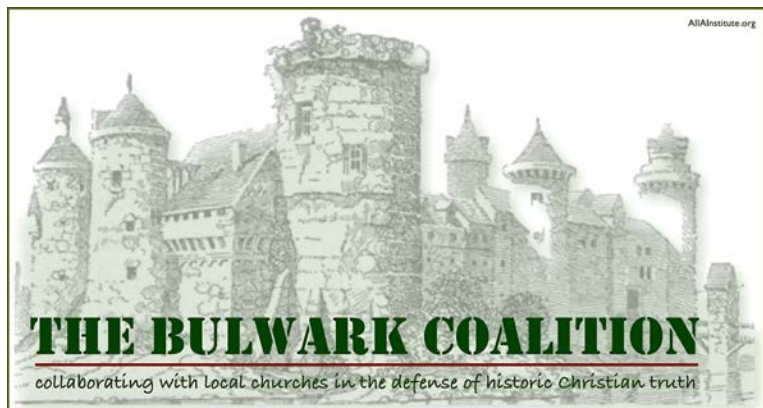
Many excellent Christian apologetics ministries using a wide variety of creative names are in existence today. Some of the ones that I most respect are listed on pages 533-534 of this compendium. Another listing can be found at: <https://crossexamined.org/resources/>

During the years of my ministry with the **AIIA Institute** (1991-2024) we created **two subsidiary initiatives**, both operating under AIIA, which served an important purpose.

One was **The Best Defense (TBD)**, a three-component strategy that we used in the lead-up to the major region-wide **Why Jesus? conference** in May of 2016.

Another was **The Bulwark Coalition (TBC)** that we deployed as a moniker under which we called together a **think tank** of Christian leaders, local church pastors and leaders, and noted apologists in June of 2017 to produce, among other things, **The Bangor Statement** (see page 521 of this compendium).

The logos for these two initiatives are pictured at right. Neither of the names or logos are copyrighted or trademark-protected. So anyone launching a new apologetics ministry is welcome to use or adapt either of the names or logos. I've chosen to mention them here in this appendix as **just two examples**, alongside the names of the many already existing apologetics ministries, of what one can do with a little creative thought in developing a new Christian apologetics organization. I very much hope that will happen. May the tribe increase!



# SOURCES, ATTRIBUTIONS, CREDITS

## RESTRICTIONS, DISCLAIMERS

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**DISCLAIMER:** With regard to all notes related to RZIM or Ravi Zacharias, please see **page 288**.

## IMAGES

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**Cover Graphic: *Paul preaching in the Areopagus* | Painted 1729-1731 by Sir James Thornhill.**  
Oil on canvas. On free display in the Collection Gallery of the Royal Academy of Arts. Used here as per terms outlined in the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial No Derivative License of the Royal Academy of Arts, headquartered in London, England.

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- **PONG5** | <https://www.pond5.com> | as per personal account.
- **ADOBE STOCK** | <https://stock.adobe.com/> | as per personal account.
- **FREEPIK** | <https://www.freepik.com/> | annual paid **Premium** license; used for majority of images.
- **PEXELS** | <https://www.pexels.com>
- **PIXABY** | <https://pixabay.com>
- **FREE SVG** | <https://freesvg.org> | vast collection of free vector files.
- **VECTEEZY** | <https://www.vecteezy.com>
- **UNSPLASH** | <https://unsplash.com>
- **ARTVEE** | <https://artvee.com> | collection of hi-res Public Domain artworks.
- **SKUAWK** | <https://skuawk.com>
- **CLIPART ETC** | <https://etc.usf.edu/clipart/>
- **SAME ENERGY** | <https://same.energy/>
- **YAHOO IMAGES** | limited use due to copyright restrictions on many images.
- **GOOGLE IMAGES** | used judiciously and with caution due to the copyrights on many images.
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- **IMSI PREMIUM IMAGE LIBRARY** | drawn from images on personally owned set of CDs.

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- **DOVER PUBLICATIONS** | draws from personal set of > 20 books of public domain images.
- **PERSONAL PHOTO COLLECTION** | photos from from albums assembled between 1991-2023.

**MEME on page 10:** The Laugh Club. Public Domain. iFunny.co.

**Photo of Monson, Maine, at bottom of page 13:** North Woods Aerial (by drone). Rights purchased.

**Full-color painting on page 121 is:** *St. Paul* (oil on canvas), by Pompeo Girolamo Batoni (1708-87), and it is in the Basildon Park collection. Used here as per stipulated terms.

**Top photo on page 168:** included from the DeepRoots website at: <https://deeprootsbible.com>

**Graphics of deconversion shirts and bumper stickers on page 183:** various merchandise websites.

**Illustration of the Trinity on page 231** is included in a Rose Publishing PowerPoint presentation on the Trinity. This graphic is copyrighted by Hendrickson-Rose Publishing. Used here by special permission, but is not to be republished without permission.

**NCAA 2022 poster on page 193:** website of Southern Evangelical Seminary.

**Image of Moses and Joshua on page 307:** frame capture from *classic The Ten Commandments* film.

**MEME of evolution's missing links on page 362:** public domain; captured on the internet.

**Photo on page 429 of D. Witmer doing street apologetics:** frame from video by Ryan Goding.

**Photo of old Swedish Church on page 443:** archived Monson photo on display inside building.

**Digitally enhanced photo** on page 457 of Borestone Mountain by Tim Witmer.

**Digitally enhanced photo** on page 464 of Tim Witmer “double-packing” deep in the Appalachian Trail’s 100-Mile-Wilderness taken by his wife, Amy Witmer.

**Photo** on page 469 of Amy Witmer on front porch of a lean-to in the heart of the Appalachian Trail’s 100-Mile-Wilderness by Tim Witmer.

**Photos** in lower right corner on page 469 from Town of Monson and Monson Arts websites.

## CHARTS

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**Chart of manuscript history on page 249.** With some modifications this chart is sourced as follows: **a)** Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, page 71; and **b)** Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*, vol. 1 (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1972), 42–43. Permission to use with stipulated credits courtesy of **Associates for Biblical Research** at: <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/founder-s-corner/3278-the-physical-resurrection-a-historical-fact-part-one?highlight=WyJwZXRlcidzIiwicGV0ZXIiLCJwZXRlciciLCIncGV0ZXIiLCJob3VzZSIsIidob3VzZSIsImhvdXNlIj3MiLCJob3VzZSciLCJwZXRlcidzIGhvdXNlIi0=>

**Graphic depicting analysis of sacred literature on page 182:** <https://www.visualcapitalist.com>

## STATISTICS

**ASARB** | Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies | <http://www.asarb.org/Products.html>

**NBC News (page 222)** | <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/paganism-witchcraft-are-making-comeback-rcna54444>

**Pew Research** | <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/04/25/when-americans-say-they-believe-in-god-what-do-they-mean/>

**Today I Found Out** (page 243) February 8 2020 | <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2020/02/time-someone-actually-tested-infinite-monkey-theorem/#:~:text=Robert%20Wilensky%27s%20said%20it%20best,know%20this%20is%20not%20true>

**Words Rated** (page 246) February 2022 | <https://wordrated.com/bible-sales-statistics/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20bibles%20sold384%2C615%20bibles%20sold%20per%20week>

**Lifeway Research** | <https://research.lifeway.com/2021/05/25/protestant-church-closures-outpace-openings-in-u-s/>

**Christianity Today** (2021) | <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/may/lifeway-church-close-open-2019-planting-revitalization.html>

**Grid News** (2022) | <https://www.grid.news/story/politics/2022/12/17/a-mass-exodus-from-christianity-is-underway-in-america-heres-why/>

**The Atlantic** (2023) | <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/07/christian-church-community-participation-drop/674843/>

**CT | Christianity Today** (2021) | <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/may/lifeway-church-close-open-2019-planting-revitalization.html>

**Worship Leader** (2023) | <https://worshipleader.com/worship-culture/where-did-everybody-go-breaking-down-the-decline-in-worship-attendance/>

**Gallup** (2021) | <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>

## OTHER

**Quote on page 109 by Alister McGrath** was excerpted from Part 3 of **Does God Exist?**, Volume 3 of the classic DVD-based academic curriculum series **Foundations of Apologetics** on the subject: **The Existence of God**. Alister McGrath is the presenter on this volume. This video series was filmed on site in Oxford, England.

**Are the Bible Manuscripts Reliable? Exercise on page 257** | This is a refined version of an exercise originally developed by **Rick Carver**. Rick worked faithfully with me as Associate Director of AIIA for many years before moving to Georgia in 2014. He also developed and recorded the excellent **Think About That** CD that AIIA distributed widely. Additionally, he taught many seminars with me and on his own, in Maine and throughout New England during his time of service with AIIA.

**Cuyler Black cartoons** on page 509 are included here with permission and by purchase.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**To the eternal righteous triune Lord God** of the cosmos be all glory and praise for inspiring and empowering me to complete this project — to whatever extent that it serves *His* purposes.

**To my wife, Mary** — consistently upbeat, steady, kind, dependable, selfless, supportive, a great listener, a disciplined and dedicated intercessor, and diligent proofreader. God has blessed me beyond measure to have this extraordinary woman at my side for over 50 years now. She has endured my many health challenges, my frustration with the tedious process of bringing this to press, postponed vacations for over a year, and much more — without complaint.

**To our three sons, three daughters-in-law, and nine grandchildren** — Andrew & Maureen (Katie, Ben, John); Stephen & Emma (Samuel, Annie, Henry); Tim & Amy (Malachi, Logan, Kaylie). Thank you for your love, for your interest in and support of our work, for your encouragement and, most of all, for walking faithfully with our Lord through thick and thin.

**To my folks**, Eugene (age 96 at the time of this writing) and Anne (summonsed to heaven on November 14, 2019) Witmer. These two were the earliest effective apologists in my life — consistently standing with me through all of the questions and challenges that those years entailed. From my earliest days, they seemed ready with an answer for the hope within them and the faith they professed. They did this in word, with good books, and with wise referrals. Dad arranged for me to attend a L'Abri conference here in the U.S., and later to fly to Switzerland to meet personally with Francis Schaeffer with my questions. Their lives presented powerfully convincing evidence that Jesus really is who He claimed to be, that knowing Him personally is possible, and that the Christian faith is reasonable and true.

**Thanks to Grace Point Church (GPC) in Paradise PA** — Paradise Mennonite Church during our earliest years of ministry in Maine — for praying for us, generously supporting our work for so many years, and sending missions teams every year (except during COVID) to help us.

**Thanks to Dale & Laurie Hoover** for 20+ years of volunteer labor to help us at our home, with AIIA's property, and at the Monson Community Church, and for leading the vast majority of those GPC mission teams. Their labors provided me with a better base from which to work.

**Thanks to Joel Marsters and Amy Purington at Bangor Letter Shop** for printing and mailing thousands upon thousands (more than any of us can count) of thoughtletters to addresses in all 50 states (and many more internationally) over the years — and for now making this compendium project happen. Joel — you've been kind and patient through the years. Thanks.

**Thanks to Matthew Bjork** for praying for this project — and for my eyesight during cataract surgery, refractions, more refractions, and the long *ongoing* search for corrective lenses.

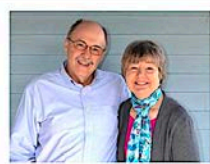
**Thanks to Steve & Debby Daman** for their grammar-checking, encouragement, and friendship.

**Thanks to all of the prayer warriors, financial supporters, and writers of encouraging notes.** You know who you are, as does our Lord. Your actual name may not appear here in print but you will receive your reward in due time.

I am also so very grateful (as stated in the Dedication) for AIIA's Board of Directors — especially to those currently serving (pictured below; bottom photo by Jerry Leaman) for approving the plan that allowed me to make working on this project a top priority during my final full year of ministry with AIIA. They trusted me to be disciplined in my work during extended periods when I was holed up and relatively *incommunicado*. These nine couples have become far more than board members over the years. They have become dear valued friends.



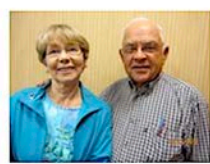
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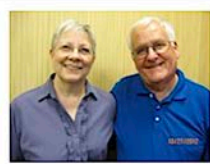
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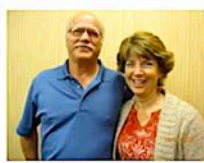
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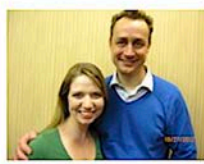
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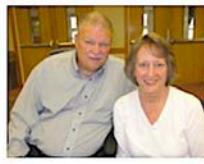
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daryl E. Witmer is a follower of Jesus Christ. He served as a local church pastor in north central Maine for 30 years — many of those years riding a circuit of multiple churches. His ordination credentials are with the **Evangelical Free Church of America**. In 1972 he was influenced by a term of study at Dr. Francis Schaeffer's **L'Abri** Fellowship in Huemoz, Switzerland. In December of 1984, Witmer contracted Guillain-Barre syndrome which left him in a wheelchair with quadriparetic paralysis.

In 1991 Witmer founded the AIIA Institute. AIIA was a contemporary adapted construct of the ancient Athenian forum, employing many of the principles and approaches that the Apostle Paul employed when he visited that pagan culture and spoke at the Areopagus circa 53. A.D. — as recorded in Acts 17:16-34.

Daryl and his wife Mary have three grown sons, three daughters-in-law, and nine grandchildren.

As of this writing the Witmers are living in Monson, Maine, where they have ministered since 1975. They continue to serve in full-time ministry with **Next Chapter**. More information can be provided upon request.

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**NOTE:** Due to health-related risks and restrictions, Witmer is no longer traveling or able to accept speaking engagements.

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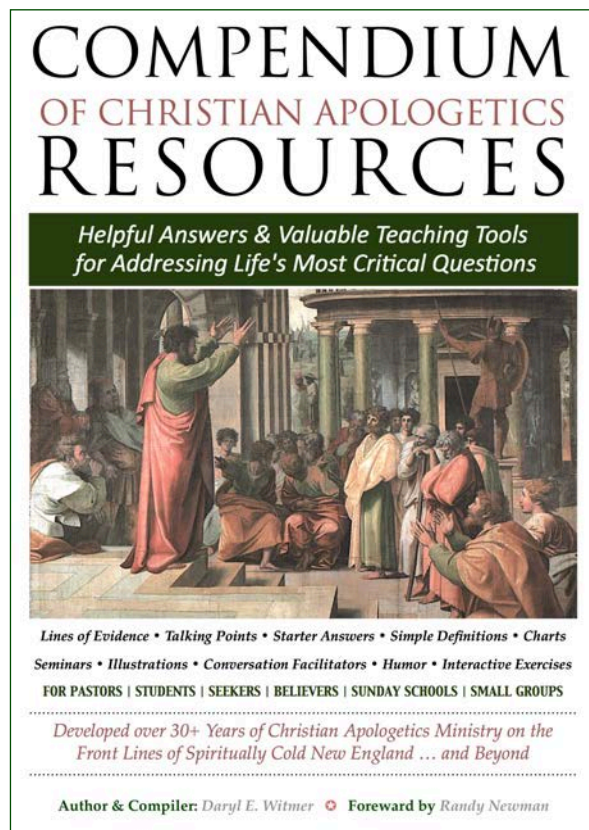
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