

Proving Christianity – Intro to Apologetics

Purpose of this study:

To equip Christians to effectively defend the Christian faith by providing reasons for the truth of Christianity and by showing them how to use these truths to earnestly contend for the faith.

I. What Is Apologetics?

Christianity is not a belief system that is separated from reasons. That is called fideism. Fideism is believing that something is true regardless of the evidence. Christianity isn't that because it has reasons.

Definition of Apologetics

1 Peter 3:15

*15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always **to give an answer** to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

Apologetics - is the study and presentation of rational justification of the truth of Christianity.

“an argument in the philosophical sense is not a fight or a heated exchange; it's just a series of statements leading to a conclusion.” – (William Lane Craig, On Guard loc 157)

Christian apologetics focuses on building formal arguments for the validity of the Christian faith.

The Biblical Case for Apologetics

The idea of Apologetics is rooted in the Bible.

1. We are commanded to defend the Christian faith appropriately. (1 Peter 3:15)
2. We are commanded to refute false ideas about God. (2 Corinthians 10:5)
3. We are commanded to discern true spirits from false. (1 John 4:1)
4. Jesus refuted Error (Matthew 22:29)
5. Jesus Refuted false teaching. (Matthew 15:6-9)
6. Paul Reasoned With People (Acts 17:16-17)
Dispute – to lecture; converse, argue, discuss
7. Paul supported convincing those who had wrong viewpoints. (Titus 1:9)
Convince – reprove, expose, convict
8. We are commanded to rebuke false Teachers. (Titus 1:13)
9. Paul Defended the Gospel. (Philippians 1:7)
10. We are Commanded to Contend for the faith (Jude 3)
Contend – *Struggle, fight*

Two types of Apologetics

- **Offensive (Positive) – Building a Case**
- **Defensive (negative) – Answering Objections**

A good defense is not the best offense in Apologetics.

“Even if one could succeed in refuting all known objections to Christianity, one would still be left without any reason to think that it is true.” (Craig, RF, p. 24)

II. Understanding the Cultural Backdrop

Subjective Truth vs. Objective Truth

Objective - Based on observable phenomena; having reality independent of the mind.

- Based on facts that do not change
- **Characteristics of an objective statement:**
 - It is either true or false
 - Often could be proven
 - Is based on facts

Subjective - Proceeding from or taking place in a person's mind rather than in the external world.

- Based on the opinion of each person
- **Characteristics of a subjective statement:**
 - It is not universally true
 - It cannot be proven
 - It is based on belief

Modernism - naturalism

- Denies the supernatural upon which Christianity is built
 - God
 - Miracles
- Popularized by German Rationalism
- Leads to Humanism

Humanism – An attempt to explain the existence and purpose of the human race without God.

When pushed to the extremes of their position modernists crumble. If There is no God there is not right and wrong. There is no value in life, and there is no reason for existence.

Postmodernism – relativism

- Denies absolute truth
- Truth is internal, not external
- Holds to a fact value split
 - That which cannot be tested empirically cannot be verified as true

Truth About Truth

Truth- That which is in accordance with fact or reality

- Truth is discovered, not invented.
 - You don't make it you learn it.
 - The body of truth is established

- Truth is transcultural
 - Postmodernism leaves right and wrong in the hands of individuals and cultures
- Truth is unchanging
- Truth is not affected by the attitude of the one professing it.
- Truth is non-contradictory

Principle of non-contradiction – “No two contradictory statements can both be true at the same time and in the same sense.”

The "Road Runner" tactic – Identifying and refuting self-defeating statements

- **"There is no truth"**
 - "Is that True?"
- **"All Truth Relative."**
 - "Is that a relative truth?"
 - "Is that true for you and me both?"
- **"That's true for you but not for me."**
 - "Is that true for everybody?"
- **"There is not truth in religion, only science."**
 - "Is that a scientific truth?"
- **"Nobody has the truth."**
 - "How do you know that is the true?"
- **"Everything is meaningless."**
 - "What do you mean?"
- **"You should doubt everything."**
 - "Should I doubt that?"
 - "Are you sure?"
- **"You ought not judge."**
 - "Isn't that a judgment?"

“Other religions depend on subjective experience and blind faith, tradition and opinion. Christianity stand or falls upon the objective reality of gigantic supernatural events in history and the evidence that they really happened.” (Morris. Many Infallible Proofs p. 9)

III. Reasons for Apologetics - Why study it?

1. It helps shape culture

“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 no defense but us against intellectual attacks of the heathen.”

"Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered...The learned life is then, for some, a duty." – C.S. Lewis

“The gospel is never heard in isolation. It is always heard against the background of the culture in which one lives. **A person raised in a culture in which Christianity is still seen**

as in intellectually viable option will display an openness to the gospel which a person who is secularized will not.” – William Lane Craig

2. It helps strengthen believers

3. It helps evangelize unbelievers

We must remember our goal is to reach people, not just to know facts.

Romans 1:16

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The goal is not to win someone with your argument but to help prepare them to receive the truth by removing obstacles that would keep them from hearing and believing it.