

An Apology ? – No, An Apology!

Introduction

Good morning! I am Kerry Gilliard from Ellicott City, Maryland – about 15 minutes outside of Baltimore City. I bring you greetings from my new church family at Gaithersburg Community Church where Tony Arnold is the pastor. I'd like to thank everyone for coming out this morning and Calvary OPC for hosting this function. It is my hope and desire that the information you gather from these three presentations today will help you to be a better witness for Christ in your daily life. Not only knowing what you believe, why you believe and how to defend it, but also to realize that one of the strongest arguments for Christianity is a consistently visible Christian life. I have a saying plastered on the banner for my ministry website at theologically correct dot com – LIVE your theology. Belief without application and practice isn't really belief – it's self-deception and hypocrisy. It's what James called 'being a hearer of the word and not a doer'. But that's a sermon for someone else's church.

During my talk this morning, I'm going to give you basic information on the who, what, when and why of apologetics. I'm going to spend a little bit of time on the 'how', but not as much, since Mr. Osgood's presentation will tackle that at length. Now if you hear some of the same themes repeated in my presentation, Mr. Osgood's and Mr. Downs' presentation, it's on purpose. God has Sovereignly decreed that we should impress upon you some of the same basic facts again and again so that you will be reminded of them when adversity and questions arise in your interactions with non-Christians. Further, it is hoped that these truths will drive you to the scriptures and that your entire thinking about life, interactions with others, but most importantly, an accurate presentation and defense of all that scripture teaches will become your desire if it is not already.

That said, short prayer and let's begin.

Misconceptions

What is an apology ? Well, outside of the correct definition, there's usually four misconceptions that come up in regard to apologetics.

The first one is that apologetics means "saying you're sorry for being a Christian." It's true that the most of the modern meanings of the word 'apology' carry the definition of feeling and expressing remorse for something done wrong or for some offense caused against someone. Related to this is also the misconception

that some parts of the Bible are really REALLY offensive, so we need to ignore them or tone down the message to 'help God out'. Both of these are wrong.

The second one is that we're making up subjective reasons for being Christian....i.e. - "It just seemed true to me at the time." While there is a subjective element to the Christian faith (and I'll discuss that at the end of this presentation), that is not the primary focus of apologetics.

The third misconception, usually made by some well-meaning believers, is that evidence, reason and logical arguments are contrary to faith. Of course, this misunderstands what Biblical faith is. Some of you may have already noticed that the assertion "evidence, reason and logical arguments are contrary to faith"... is itself, a logical argument, though a flawed one.

Lastly, some people believe that since many things in the Christian faith are simply believed by the authority of God without any apparent evidence, ANY attempt to defend or prove anything in the Christian belief system is an attempt to 'prove the unprovable'. But as we will see in Psalm 19:1-6 and Romans 1:18-23, faith is not held "in spite of contrary evidence" or "in the place of no evidence." Rather, Biblical faith is held (at least from an intellectual standpoint) on the basis of sufficient evidence and past trustworthiness.

With these covered, let's get into what apologetics IS.

What's an Apology ?

The greek word for 'a well reasoned defense' (apologia) is found both in ancient greek literature all throughout the ancient world. The word is a legal term, found frequently in official proceedings and ancient court documents. One of the more popular 'apologies' written was Plato's Apology, in which Socrates defended himself against charges of corrupting the youth of Athens and not believing in the traditional gods.

In the early church, men like Justin Martyr wrote book-length defenses of the Christian faith to respond to questions and charges against Christians. Justin, for example, wrote his famous "Dialogue with Trypho" (A 2nd Century Jewish Philosopher).

Irenaeus, a mid to late 2nd century church father, church wrote an entire document in defense of Christian beliefs and refuting the early heresy of Gnosticism called "Against All Heresies". Irenaeus' work sought to cover all areas of Christian theology.

Irenaeus' mentor, Polycarp (who was a disciple of John) was martyred during his 86th year of life for refusing to blaspheme Christ and say 'Caesar is Lord'. Under threat of wild beasts and burning to death, Polycarp answered "Eighty-six years I have been His servant and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Polycarp even told the Proconsul that if he wished to learn of Christianity, set a date and time and he would present a defense of it to him.

In 1521, Martin Luther came before the church synod – the Diet of Worms (diet being another name for church council) to defend the doctrine of justification by faith and the scriptures as the final infallible authority for the believer to the Roman Catholic church. Rome refused to hear the words of scripture and excommunicated Luther.

All of these historical examples should give you an idea of what an apologia is. In Christianity and when discussing Christian theology, belief and practice, apologetics is *a well reasoned defense for what you believe*. It's knowing what you believe, why you believe it and being able to defend it when questioned.

I. Working Definition And Terms

In the New Testament, we find four words which give us Biblical examples of the defense of the faith in action. We're going to look at a few examples in scripture and see exactly how these 'defenses' of the faith were conducted.

The first of these, we have already examined a bit – *apologia* - the legal term. It means well-reasoned defense and is generally translated as 'answer' or 'defense'

At 1 Peter 3:15-16 in the NASB, we read:

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.

1 Peter 3:15 teaches us that the Lordship of Christ comes before being ready to give an answer to anyone. That is in our thinking, setting Christ apart as Savior and Sovereign God over all things. After this, we move to giving a well-reasoned answer for the hope that lies in us. Next, we are told to do this with gentleness and with respect. Verse 16 tells us to keep a good conscience by keeping good behavior. So our outward, consistently lived Christian lives are *also* a part of our 'defense'.

Both points are important. Too many times, Christians to rely on 'a well lived life' and no well-thought out responses or to have well-thought out responses to questions from

unbelievers, yet live lives that don't reflect the profession of their faith. Both extremes are wrong.

In front of a large Jewish crowd in Acts 22, Paul spoke to them and said "'Brothers and Fathers, listen now to my defense.'" Paul went on to recount his training under Gamaliel, his persecution of the church, calling upon members of the Sanhedrin as witnesses to his prior behavior, his zeal for God, his encounter with Christ and his conversion, restoration of sight and his commission by God to be a witness to the Gentiles.

Two chapters later in Acts 24, Paul was brought before Felix, Governor in Caesarea. Charges were brought against him, to which he was given an opportunity to respond. He first repudiated the lies told on him by the Jews that brought charges against him, mentioned that the Jews that had been spreading lies on him should be brought forward from Asia and admitted that his only 'crime' was that he was a follower of 'The Way' (the early name for Christianity)."

Our next word is the greek word *dialegomenou*, which means to ponder, discuss, such as a discussion at a convention for judicial purposes. The word is found in Acts 24:25 when Paul shared the gospel with Felix's wife, Druscilla. It's a compound word made from the word *dia* (through) and *lego* (words or speak). It's translated variously as discourse or consider. Think of it as presenting words to make people think. Hebrews 12:5 tells us " And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses (*dialegetai*) you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you," These words are words put for our consideration, deep thought and to help us come to a conclusion about the Lord's chastening of us when we go astray – namely that the Lord does so out of love for us because we are His children.

Our third word is *peitho* – translated as persuade or convince (depending on your translation) in Acts 28:23-24. It's meaning and connotation is the same as that of its English translation – to reason or argue with the object of convincing men of your viewpoint.

Acts 28:23-24 tells us that the Jews in the temple "...having appointed him a day, they came, more of them unto him, to the lodging, to whom he was expounding, testifying fully the reign of God, persuading them also of the things concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses, and the prophets, from morning till evening, and, some, indeed, were believing the things spoken, and some were not believing."

I've given these passages and brief descriptions of what's going on in each of them so you can see not only the *usage* of the words associated with apologetics, but also the *content* of what these men presented as a defense of the faith.

Our last word is the word where we get our English word 'agony' from. It is found at Jude 3 – *epagonizomai* - and is translated as 'earnestly contend'. It's a combination of two words – the preposition *epi*, and *agonidzomai* which variously can mean:

- 1) to enter a contest: contend in the gymnastic games
- 2) to contend with adversaries, fight
- 3) metaph. to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers
- 4) to endeavour with strenuous zeal, strive: to obtain something

It is translated as reproach in 1 Tim. 4:10 in reference to the suffering of believers for preaching the gospel. Other places are

Lu 13:24 **Strive** to enter in at the straight gate ;

Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants **fight**

1Co 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**

Col 1:29 **struggling with all his energy**

Col 4:12 **wrestling** in prayer for you

1Ti 6:12 **Fight** the good fight of faith

2Ti 4:7 I have **fought** a good fight

These passages give deeper meaning to what Jude 3 commands believers to do – 'earnestly contend for the faith'. Why ? Because false prophets have infiltrated the church and denied Christ and misled many. **DO NOT TAKE THIS COMMAND LIGHTLY.** We are called not to treat the defense and proclamation of the faith as simply 'differences of opinion', but as WAR.

Now when I say 'war', many of you immediately have Ephesians 6:12-18 come to mind, but I'm not going since most of you have heard a sermon on it already. Instead, I want to focus on the word 'WAR' and make it our working model for describing apologetics. WAR for the faith is *every* believer's commission.

II. Every Believer's Commission and Command – W.A.R.

WAR – that is, apologetics as a interaction with various **WORLDVIEWS**, **ATTACK** on those faulty worldviews and **RESPONSE** to them with the Biblical gospel.

Ozzie will go into more detail on this, but up front we need to know exactly what a 'worldview' is. Everyone has a 'framework' or a 'filter' that they look at everything through and try to make sense of their surroundings, events in the news, determine wrong and right, etc... This is called a 'worldview'. 2 Cor. 10:4-5 points out where the Christian's head should be in regard to this.

"_The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

I hope you caught that. EVERY thought captive. Not just your thoughts about how to approach salvation, but your views on politics, your views on social issues, justice, work, interracial relations, multiethnic relations, foreign policy, the creative arts, entertainment,

who you marry, how you raise your kids, where you move to, how much money you give on Sunday (assuming you don't already tithe), your structure of church government, evangelism and much more. Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper *"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"*

Our thought life should be shaped by and subservient to the Lordship of Christ. That includes our approach to the defense of the faith. Often, you will hear some atheists say that we should 'approach things with an open mind' or 'approach them from a neutral standpoint'. My friends, let me make it clear – Jesus Himself said there IS no neutral ground. In John 3:18, we read that the person who does NOT believe in Christ is *already* condemned because of their unbelief. Non-belief and unbelief are the same in scripture. So the person who claims to be an agnostic is just as much at war with God as the atheist, freethinker, Buddhist, Hindu, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon or any other religious expression that rejects Christ as God and Savior and rejects justification by faith in Christ alone. Do NOT be deceived.

How does one get a 'Christian worldview' ? God Himself provides the answer to us in the scriptures.

Romans 12:1-2 tell us " Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Psalm 119 gives us the means of this daily renewal of our minds so that we may know the will of God – His Word. No, I'm not going to read all 176 verses of Psalm 119 to you. I'm going to touch a few key passages and then move to the 'A' in our WAR acronym. I invite you during your quiet time with God to read through and meditate upon Psalm 119. Develop a love for God's word like the writer of this Psalm.

Verses 23-24 –" 23 Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees. Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors."

We know that counselors inform you on the best advice. In this case, though rulers and authorities speak wrong things about him, the writer makes meditation on God's word His delight and it becomes the standard by which he determines right and wrong.

In verses 33-37, we find the Word as the standard for his daily living. In verses 59 and 60, we read " I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands." This is nothing more than the command to renew our minds lived out. Verses 97-105 show the wisdom of God's word in comparison with the foolishness of human wisdom. Enemies,

elders, teachers – all of their knowledge pales in comparison to the knowledge he has gained by the keeping of the Word of God. It has renewed his mind and shaped his view of the world. In short – " The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." (v. 130)

God's special revelation of Himself forms the basis by which we gain insight, understanding and properly interpret everything in creation – from evil to good, beauty to ugliness. The Christian's mission is to promote this 'worldview'.

Next, we come to the A in WAR – attack. I should expound upon it a bit – Attack, Offense and Proclamation. We've examined Jude 3-4 already so I won't return there. In 2 Timothy 4:2-5, we read the following charge given to Timothy:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

This comes immediately after 2 Tim. 3:14-17, which establish the authority of the scriptures for the believer. Timothy is given the charge by Paul to go on the offensive - correct, rebuke and encourage – but to do this with great patience and careful instruction.

Finally, Paul gets a hearing during his trip to Athens in Acts chapter 17. His entire presentation in verses 24-31 are a magnificent example of a Christ-centered apologetic. He first establishes the Christian worldview over and against the worldview of the greek culture of his day and shows how inconsistent their own viewpoint is in light of the evidence around them. He leads up to the gospel message in verses 30-31.

Finally, we come to the R in our acronym - Response and Defense.

Aside from 1 Peter 3:15-16, which we've talked about earlier, we this well-reasoned response and defense played out in Psalm 119 in the Old Testament. The Psalmist says " May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word.....I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, for I delight in your commands because I love them. (verses 41-42, 46,47)

We see the apostle Paul living this out repeatedly in the New Testament, which we won't spend time rehashing. You are invited to read the book of Acts for many of these examples.

I've spent a lot of time talking about the commands in scripture for believers to be active in the defense of the faith and proclamation of faith in Christ. But let's be sure of one thing – God does not NEED us to spread the gospel.

- Paul – CONVERTED! (Acts 9) by Christ Himself on the road to Damascus, sans an evangelist of any sort.
 - Job & accusations against God – ANSWERED! (Job 40-42)
 - Jeremiah – ORDAINED and COMMISSIONED and TRAINED. (Jeremiah 1:4-9) God put His words in Joshua's mouth.
 - Moses – EXPENDABLE (Deut. 34, Joshua 1). Unbelief kept him out of the promised land. Joshua chosen to lead.
- God grants men the honor of being the means by which faith in Christ is proclaimed.
- Matthew 28:19-20 - command to make disciples.
 - Matthew 10:19, 2 Timothy 4:16-17 - The Power to spread the gospel message comes from God, not our human acumen or intelligence alone.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:16 – the command to spread the gospel and defend the faith is a serious one. There should be a burden upon your heart for the lost.
 - Romans 10:14-15 - there is beauty and glory in being used as one sent to preach the gospel – whether it is *sent* to Africa, Asia, China, Greenland, York, Philadelphia, Pittsburg or Times Square.
 - Titus 2:14, Ephesians 2:10 – It is God's will that we do good works – among them, the spreading of the gospel message and the defense of the faith. God's grace teaches us to deny unrighteousness and live holy until His appearing.
 - Matthew 5:14-16 (salt and light) Mark 9:50 - Finally, God has left us here to be both salt and light to the culture. Salt was not only used as a preservative in OT times, but also as a sign of being set apart. Salt also represented wisdom – have salt in yourselves (Mk. 9:50). Light represents salvation. Like the moon reflects the light of the sun and keeps darkness from overpowering the night, believers are placed in the world to reflect the light of Christ and push back the darkness by preaching salvation and making disciples.

III. Loving God with your whole mind and apologetics

I'd like to talk about the mind of the believer for a moment. In Deuteronomy 6:5 we hear the great command: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

This verse is comprehensive. It means that every aspect of who we are should be brought into conformity with God's word and His revealed will. We read in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 earlier that we are to take *every thought captive* and submit it to the Lordship of Christ. I'd like to build on these two themes by adding the

command of Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." And 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 " Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

All of these verses include the intellectual discipline of the mind for the purpose of furthering the gospel. Too much of modern Churchianity discourages engaging the mind of the believer to think critically. Book distributors tell writers not to write beyond an eighth grade level and many popular preachers discourage serious study of the *whole* Word of God...except on their pet doctrines. The result has been, as Os Guinness's book title suggests, *Fit Bodies and Fat Minds*. George Barna did a survey last year that showed only (on average) 9% of church goers held to a consistently Biblical worldview. Only 51% of pastors held to a consistently Biblical worldview. That should alarm you. It should also explain much of why modern Christianity is so out of wack.

I don't need to expound further on the problems. I'm going to focus on the solutions. With the commission to *do* apologetics, it's a given that we need to be equipped. Being equipped means we need to put Jabez, Wild at Heart, Purpose Drivel-Life and all these other 'fad' books down and get into something that will make us think critically about and seriously about our commission.

Books that teach us about the holiness of God, the nature of God, the work and person of Christ, and various other areas of systematic theology should be at the top of any believer's book buying list. Believers have a responsibility to exercise their minds and inform themselves of current popular objections to Christianity. Paul was not ignorant of the philosophies of the folks at Mars Hill in Acts 17. He quoted one of their own poets to them.

Today, the 'Mars Hill' is a square box sending images and sounds into your living room. Or a little white and silver box with an apple on the front. Or a digital device that scrolls through frequencies from 87.9 to 107.9. And ALL of them seek the minds and hearts of believers and the children of believers to turn them away from the God of scripture. So when Mars Hill broadcasts, we are commissioned and commanded to be ready to respond. It begins with our theology, which is what I'll touch on now.

IV. Apologetics, Theology and Life: A Broader View

I'd like to introduce you to what I call "wholistic apologetics". There is a huge mistake in Christian circles today to separate apologetics and theology and classify it all as 'abstract ideas with little or no impact on my daily living.' Nothing could

be further from the truth. What you believe directly impacts how you live on a daily basis. Knowing what you believe, why you believe it and how to defend it will have lasting impact on how you deal and interact with people who have questions about the Christian faith.

If, for example, you are led to believe that the 'last days' are very near and that Christ will soon return, your belief in the stewardship over your possessions may be impacted. You may run up bills and spend as though you would never have to worry about paying the money back....because Jesus is going to come back soon! Your theology - dispensational premillennialism - affects how you approach life, what you think and how you act.

Likewise, if you believe that the church will eventually be triumphant upon the earth and usher in an age of peace (postmillennialism) and then Christ will return, your concern may be for voting for candidates who most closely reflect your Biblical standpoint. You will seek to have legislation enacted that reflects a distinctly Christian viewpoint, in an effort to have the church be triumphant on the earth.. Your theology - postmillennial reconstructionism - affects how you approach life, what you think and how you act.

If you believe that "since God will save whom He will save, there is no need for missions or evangelism", you are espousing a heretical system of belief called hypercalvinism. Your overemphasis on the Sovereignty of God at the expense of human responsibility is a theological system of thought. The results are that you will not seek to spread the gospel, you will, more than likely, have a cold, wicked and uncaring heart in regard to the unsaved and you will view your service to God as strict duty, not with joy. Your theology - hypercalvinism - has an impact on how you live, view life, and interact with others.

All theological ideas have consequences.

A striking example of this involves the Lordship Salvation controversy. Does such a thing as a 'carnal Christian' exist? By 'carnal Christian', I mean can a true believer live with little or no visible evidence of being a Christian and live in pattern of consistent, unrepentant sin? C. Ryan Jenkins' of Sola Gratia Ministries had an example in his masters' thesis on this point. He had a pastor of a local 'megachurch' get caught in an adulterous affair for many years. He isn't happy about having to resign and his wife has forced him to get counseling to save the marriage. He blames his wife for his affair and seems more upset that he lost his pastoral job and lucrative publishing ministry than anything else. He tells his pastoral counselor that he doesn't believe that repentance is a part of the gospel message when asked about his testimony. The counselor cites Luke 24:47 and the unrepentant pastor says "I know that verse. What you don't understand is that the

gospel of John – which is the only evangelistic gospel – never has the word 'repentance' in it. So repentance isn't a part of the gospel. John 'trumps' all the other gospels, since it's the only one that's evangelistic on purpose.'

If you were a counselor, how would you approach this man ? As a non-Christian needing salvation or a Christian needing to repent ?

A 'close to home' example on this is from the 2001 talk I did on the WoF movement's teaching on healing. A friend of mine's mother passed away prior to the conference. My friend attended a charismatic church which taught physical healing in this life was a part of the atonement. Her mother also attended. So when her mother got sick, her mother refused medical treatment, claiming that God told her He was going to heal her. She held on to that hope until she passed away a few months later. No autopsy was done (the family refused). My friend was devastated for months on end. She was angry at God at some points and had a 'rollercoaster' experience in regard to church attendance and involvement over the next few years. Her mother's beliefs and hers, sincere as they were, had consequences.

What about eternal punishment ? I once had someone ask a question on a discussion board (because their mother wasn't saved) about how could saints in heaven be happy, knowing that their loved ones who rejected Christ and died in their sins would be burning for eternity ? They even asked how could Jesus be happy ? How would you answer them ?

I could multiply examples ad infinitum here, but you get the idea. This is why knowing what you believe and how to defend it is important. You cannot 'give an answer' to all areas of life if your theology in those areas is shallow and undeveloped. You are responsible for believing ALL that the Bible teaches. Theology and apologetics impact EVERY area of the Christian life.

In the area of Biblical theology, there are a minimum of FIVE areas you absolutely MUST be prepared to discuss at any given time. Theology proper (The Doctrine of the Trinity and the work of the members of the Godhead), Christology (The Nature, Work and Person of Jesus), The Inspiration and Authority of the Scriptures, A Biblical View of Man, Sin and Salvation (which also covers the doctrines of grace), Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church and the authority of the church) and God's Sovereignty in human history. If these areas are known and known well, other minor areas, such as Eschatology, will fall into place easier.

Coming up on the horizon – debates on gay marriage, the divorce rate and abortion.... first, what do you believe about these areas ? Second, are you ready to

defend it from the scriptures to those who ask ? For example, why are only man and woman considered to be a marriage ? Are you ready to expound the scriptures on these areas to those who ask a reason ? When does life begin according to the scriptures ?

V. Methodology and Sola Scriptura

We've covered the WHO, WHAT and WHY of apologetics. Regarding the HOW, I'd like to state unequivocally that any base for doing apologetics needs to begin with the scriptures. The scriptures are the sole authority for the believer in all areas of life. The scriptures carry God's authority because they are God breathed. They are, in this aspect, self-authenticating. The folks at the councils of Carthage and Hippo didn't 'make' the canon – they simply acknowledged what had already been in practice for many years prior. God said that His sheep hear His voice and follow. His written voice was heard by His followers and they obeyed throughout the years. The scriptures are clear on most issues they teach, but specifically they are clear on Who God is, Who Man is and salvation. Some of the harder teachings of scripture can be discerned with study. And the scriptures are also self-interpreting. More difficult passages are usually better understood in light of clearer ones that teach the same thing. This does not mean we simply lock ourselves in a room with a Bible and ignore history, culture and many other things that influenced the vocabularies of the Biblical writers. Nor does it mean that we cannot consult other authorities, such as church councils that agree with scripture or church doctrinal statements or confessions that agree with scripture. But the point is – they are all subservient to scripture. Scripture alone is the final infallible authority for the believer and sufficient for all areas of guidance and daily Christian living and practice.

This is the protestant principle known as *sola scriptura*.

I've diverted you to sola scriptura for this reason: you as believers in Christ have an obligation of loyalty first and foremost to the scriptures when approaching apologetics. You are called to frame your discussions, examine and present your evidence and answers through the lens of scripture. In other words, you may appeal to scientific discoveries and observations of the created world and show how they fall in line with the scriptures – not the other way around.

Your typical unbeliever will claim you should surrender your Christian worldview when talking with him/her and approach everything from a 'neutral' standpoint. This, however, assumes that human reasoning and autonomy apart from God's revelation of Himself are sufficient in and of themselves to discover truth. Many apologists fall into this trap and give up the Lordship of Christ in favor of 'neutrality'. I recall one website that claimed to believe all the bible taught AND incorporated all of the latest scientific findings into their belief. The result was an allegorized Bible which also denied inerrancy and denied that miracles could happen.

Garden of Eden anyone ?

You judge for yourself whether it is morally right to the believer to adopt any standard – whether it be human logic & reason, preponderance of the evidence, probability, etc.... as the standard by which God's word can be judged ?

Yes, the Bible does have a few spots where God says 'test me'. But notice who sets the standard for testing. Notice what the tests are. God says of the false idols in Isaiah 44:6-8 to declare the future as I do. They can't.

Psalm 19:1-11 are a beautiful example of the basis for apologetics for the believer. Verses 1-6 tell us what we know to be true from Romans 1:18-20 – every 'atheist' knows that God exists. Every 'agnostic' knows that God exists. They have sufficient evidence in natural revelation, but continually hold down the truth of God by means of their unrighteousness'.

We see it with atheist Michael Newdow filing a lawsuit to have the words 'under God' removed from the pledge of allegiance. Why would you fight so vociferously against something you say you don't believe exists ? Even those who still acknowledge some kind of 'god' in their thinking – whether it be the various eastern mystic religions or some of our own home grown cults that deny the Triune God such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses – fight mightily to deny the God of scriptures in place of one they can understand. I see the wisdom of Psalm 14:1 here – only a FOOL would fight against something he says doesn't exist. And only someone darkened in their understanding, as Romans 1 tells us, would fight to hang onto an idol of their own making.

Verses 7-11 of Psalm 19 form the basis of special revelation. Special revelation is God's intended means to show us how to interpret and understand creation and point us to Him. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 tell us that the scriptures are capable of completely equipping the man/woman of God for every good work and every aspect of living the Christian life. This includes interpreting the evidence for God's existence found in nature, science and other disciplines.

Now to put this into practical application (and to tread into Ozzie's presentation a little): the Christian worldview dictates that our world comes from an Absolute Personality. He is the basis for all order, beauty, logic, reasoning and understanding in the world. John Frame points out (rightly) that morality can have no other basis but in a universe with an Absolute Personality. Conscience, for example, does not *create* morality, it only senses right and wrong – much like the human eye does not create color, it only senses it and interprets it. Further, conscience dictates a sense of obligation or 'oughtness'. For example, people 'ought' to be locked up for murder. What makes murder 'wrong' and punishing someone over it 'right' if there is no absolute standard ? What binds our conscience to believing something to be 'out of place' ? Where does our sense of justice (discerning right or wrong) come from ? Personal preference is no absolute basis for moral judgments and moral laws.

A naturalistic worldview cannot account for this concept. Or beauty. Sure beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but what dictates that the concept of beauty even exists ? Further, who ever looked up at a clear day and said it was ugly ?

The ultimate question here is whether the world and the universe we know is impersonal (all things reduce to matter, motion, space, time and chance) or that the universe was created by a Personal being who uses matter, space, time, and motion for His purposes. In fact, to sneak into Jeff's presentation a little, concepts like love and fellowship have NO basis outside of belief in a Trinitarian God. You see, a Trinitarian God would have love for the other members of the Godhead from eternity. He would have fellowship with other members of the Godhead from eternity. So the phrase 'God is love' would make sense here.

But in a non-Trinitarian system, such as Jehovah's Witnesses or Oneness Pentecostals, you have a God who is dependent upon humanity to be able to express love, since love must have an object or person in mind. You would have a God who felt 'lonely' so He created a world.

There's an old story my old pastor used to tell about a group of scientists who progressed so far in their thinking that they could cheat death. So one day, they all stood out on a mountain with their scientific equipment and raised their fists to heaven and said "Look, God! We have learned to cheat death! We have learned to stop sickness – in fact, we can probably make a man better than you can!" God laughed. The scientists continued "We'll have a man-making contest! And if our man is better than yours, we want you to leave us alone and stop interfering with our lives!" God laughed and said "Okay. We'll have your contest." So God reached down to the earth and just as He did with Adam, made a perfect man. The scientists then reached down to the earth below their feet. As they did, God said "Hold up....ah ah ah. Get your own dirt."

In like fashion, you'll find that non-Christians frequently use their God-given logic, intellects, will, emotions and reasoning along with referring to things which could only be if God existed, such as 'contradiction' and 'evil' – in an attempt to prove God doesn't exist or that the Christian God doesn't exist. They don't live like this, though. Steal from an atheist – he'll sue – quick. Talk about his mother. He'll display anger and love for her. None of these things have meaning outside of a Personal Being who gives them meaning.

Naturalism and false religion don't have an answer.

And this is why the believer must NEVER fall into the deceitfulness of assuming neutrality in an apologetic presentation. Your method of argumentation, by Divine Command, MUST begin with the truth of God's word as the starting point for all knowledge and truth.

Now I've mentioned already that not all believers approach the scriptures in this fashion. Some use different methods. We'll discuss them here.

Methodologies and Their Tools

- Classical Apologetics – Bill Craig, Norman Geisler, R.C. Sproul. Line of argumentation: natural theology/revelation -> theism -> historical evidences -> Christianity
Tools: logical criteria (law of non-contradiction, cause-effect reasoning, consistency and coherence)
- Evidentialism – Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, Gary Habermas.
Tools and line of argumentation: data -> scientific method -> logical argumentation to establish high probability of Christianity being correct -> Christianity
- Fideism – Donald Bloesch, Martin Luther, Kelly James Clark. Rational argumentation, empirical proof and philosophy can be used, but are not necessary -> Christianity as relationship -> Appeal to "sense of the divine" -> Deal with the "real issue" for rejecting the faith -> Christianity.
Tools of argumentation: persuasion, relation, intuition
- Presuppositionalism – John Frame, Greg Bahnsen, Cornelius Van Till.
Special Revelation as Basis for Epistemology -> Test worldview versus Christian Worldview -> Other Methods May Be Used -> Christianity
Tools for argumentation: Christian worldview informs all argumentation, logic and reason.
- Examples in scripture using various methods integratively
Acts 13:16-41 – presuppositionalism (v. 13), evidentialism (v. 17-25, 30)
Acts 17:22-31 – presuppositionalism (v. 22-29), evidentialism/classical approach (v. 29-31)

Which one is 'right' ? I believe that as long as you approach the task of apologetics from the standpoint of Sola Scriptura, you'll be okay. Presuppositionalistic framework and use evidences, logic, reason etc.... when necessary.

VI. Ten Do's and Don'ts of Apologetics

DON'T....

1. **Assume you have all the answers & you'll convert someone in one sitting.**
Anthony Flew, world renown atheist...is no longer an atheist. He now accepts a basic 'theism' since his 2003 debate with Gary Habermas. Flew and Habermas have been debating each other in person and in print since 1985. When Habermas asked Flew what inspired his conversion to theism, he said he had to go where the evidence was leading. Now he's only acknowledged that 'a god' exists. Not the God of the scriptures. Flew is 81. Habermas has been working on him for more than a few years now. Flew's arguments have been used by graduate and doctorate level philosophers over the decades (probably close to 40 years) to argue against theism. Change doesn't always happen overnight. Piper, in *Don't Waste Your Life*, cites the example of a man who'd been attending his father's church for 40 years prior to

becoming a Christian. Folks at the church had been working on him at length for 40 years.

2. ... **Ignore real problems in the Biblical text and your view of it.** One apologetics website got a letter from a visitor regarding Romans 9. The author of the e-mail was asking for an *alternative* answer to "God will harden whom He will harden and have mercy on whom He will have mercy". In fact, the author said he 'hated' that answer. So the owner of the website wrote a long treatise back that chopped apart Romans 9 and taught corporate election as an alternative. This is what we call *ignoring the obvious*. The gentleman who wrote the e-mail has a deeper problem – he doesn't want to believe that God is sovereign in salvation. The real 'problem' isn't the answer he's been getting regarding the text – the real problem is that He has issues with God's Sovereignty.
3. ... **Think more of yourself than you should.** On a secular discussion board I frequent, one of the members related a story of how she was on her way out of the subway one morning in New York and a group of 'church folks' were standing out front, passing out tracts and talking with people about the gospel. One person offered her a tract, to which she calmly said 'no thanks'. The 'church lady' responded rudely and said 'well, go to hell then!' I'd hazard a guess that this particular woman wasn't *really* a follower of Christ. The truth of the gospel – that you and I were hell-deserving, God-hating, non-God-fearing sinners condemned righteously before God - and that the Holy Judge of the Universe stepped down off the bench and took the place of the prisonersthis great and wonderful truth has obviously NOT touched her heart – or she wouldn't have EVER formed her lips to say such a hateful thing to someone she didn't even know. Pray that she repents.
4. ...**seek to win the argument, but lose the soul.** Too many times, apologists get caught up in defending their own egos and displaying the acumen of their argumentative skills and their depth of knowledge. Too often, they get caught up in showing how much they know... and sometimes they succeed. They also succeed in creating an image of Christians as arrogant and not really caring about people, so much as they care about showing how much they know. Seek to win the soul.
5. ... **lose your patience.** Non-Christians will try you. On purpose. They will curse you, insult you, insult Christ, take God's name in vain and think nothing of it. Don't be surprised. Remember Romans 3:8-18. What else did you expect? Now, don't respond in kind. Read Romans 12:17-21.
6. ...**forget the gospel.** The gospel should NEVER be separated from any apologetic presentation. Every apologetics presentation points to God in Christ – Old Testament and New Testament. In Acts 17, Paul didn't just point to 'theism' or even just 'Christian theism' – He pointed to Christ and the need for Christ that the philosophers in the Areopagus had, but didn't realize.
7. ... **waste time on secondary issues.** If you're arguing with a Jehovah's Witness, don't spend time on hell. You're not going there and they don't believe it exists. Spend time on the important issues – the Trinity, the Deity of Christ and salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Don't waste time arguing about tongues with a Oneness Pentecostal. The important issue is their misconception of God and salvation by faith apart from works. Stay focused and force the convo to deal with these issues.

8. **...stay in an unfruitful discussion.** Proverbs 26:4-5 reads: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you become like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." You got two types of fools here – the one who is foolish and chooses to remain so and the fool who is simply misinformed and needs correction. Time, experience, prayer and wisdom will let you know which one is which.
9. **...be afraid to tell the whole truth.** Sometimes some of the truths in scripture just layeth the smacketh down on human pride. They squash all pretensions that human happiness is more important than God's glory. So don't be afraid to tell folks – "It appears that during his life, John Paul II promoted a different gospel than the one in scripture. If he died believing that his good works and baptism made him acceptable to God, he's now burning in hell right next to everyone else who trusts in their good works for salvation instead of Christ alone."
10. **...use questionable materials.** Check and re-check your references. Use reliable materials and reliable authors. When discussing someone else's beliefs, go read materials by the strongest proponents of that viewpoint or according to the official documents of whatever other religious belief you're discussing. Don't cite a Jack T. Chick comic book as your authority for what Catholics teach. You get around a knowledgeable Catholic, they will mock and ridicule your ignorance of their beliefs and then point you to the Catholic Catechism for what they actually believe. Further, they'll make you look foolish because 9 times out of 10, they also have articles written against 'comic book theology'.

DO....

1. **...pray for humility.** Knowledge puffs up. Stay humble. Philippians 2 reminds us what the mind of Christ was – He was God in the flesh, but made no reputation of Himself, willingly became a servant and remained humble and obedient.
2. **...remember: God does the converting, not you.** 1 Corinthians 3 reminds us of this truth. Our job in proclaiming the truth is to plant seeds and water. It is God who gives the increase. It is the Father who enables folks to believe and come to Jesus, as John 6:44-45 reminds us. So that takes the 'pressure to perform' off of you. Have no fear in sharing the whole truth of the gospel. God, in His time, will allow seeds to take root that are supposed to.
3. **Be ready. Read good Christian books.** If a stream of people come to you asking the same question over any period of time, treat it as a sign from God that you need to spend some time studying in this area. God CAN drop all knowledge on the subject supernaturally into your head... but that's not how it normally happens. Instead, we are commanded to daily renew our minds. That also includes picking up good books by decent authors. Pick up books which expand your thinking about God. Pick up books which expound on His Holiness and help you to get a higher view of God. Educate yourself on basic Christian doctrine and then educate yourself some more. Books which immediately come to mind are Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology or his smaller abridgment of it, Bible Doctrine. His language is untechnical and great for new believers to give them a solid foundation in what the scriptures teach. Robert Reymond's Systematic Theology is a bit more technical, but it is so detailed that you will use it as a

resource for DECADES. Pick up John Piper's book 'Don't Waste Your Life'. Piper is Christ-centered, Christ-focused and shows that the point of all life's work is 'To serve God and enjoy Him forever'. Pick up Arthur Pink's book 'The Sovereignty of God'. Pink's book will aid in showing that God is God, doing as He pleases in the world and human history. Pick up J.I. Packer's classic volume, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God. Pick up J.C. Ryles' book on sanctification entitled Holiness. All of these books (and many more like R.C. Sproul's Grace Unknown and Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification) should be highly recommended. When your friends engage you in conversation and ask what you think about a particular social issue, political issue, you should be ready with a Biblical answer. Buy books that teach you how to argue for the Christian faith in a logical and rational manner. John Frame's book "Apologetics to the Glory of God" and Greg Bahnsen's "Always Ready" are GREAT books in this regard.

4. **Be the Right Jesus for the Right moment.** Yes, you're wondering 'what does he mean 'the right Jesus ? There's only ONE Jesus!' Yes, there is only one Jesus. But Jesus tailored His approach to the people He spoke to without compromising the message. In John 4, He spoke calmly with the woman at the well, telling her the truth of whom He was as well as telling her to turn from her sin. In John 6, He spoke a bit more sternly to the crowd, plainly telling them that they must believe His words for eternal life. He even told them the reason for their unbelief. Some didn't like it and walked away. In fact, *most* didn't like it and walked away. In John 8, He told the Pharisees the truth and told them of their sin. He presented them with the ultimatum in John 8:24 – if you do not believe that I AM – the same I AM of Exodus 3:14 – you will DIE in your sins. He held back no punches telling them they were children of the devil and really didn't love God. There are times to be Isaiah and curse the darkness and there are times to be Daniel or Joseph and influence change through relationship. May God give you the wisdom to know which 'Jesus' to be at which time.
5. **Establish relationships when possible.** Seems like Paul managed to establish enough of a relationship to be heard again in Acts 17:32. Change doesn't happen overnight, as I mentioned earlier with the Anthony Flew example.
6. **Pray for opportunities.** Your heart may drop out from under you to hear me say this, but pray for opportunities to share the gospel. Pray that you'll be put in that heated conversation about gay marriage going on in the next cubicle. Pray that you'll get a chance to talk to that teenage mother considering killing her unborn child. Pray as Paul commanded the Colossians in chapter 4:3- *And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains."*
7. **Examine yourself before engaging others.** Many of the articles I have on my ministry website, I have had to learn the hard way. In fact, 90% of the do's and don'ts I mention to you in this presentation – I've done the opposite of at one point or another with very embarrassing results. The Lord has a way of humbling and teaching at the same time. When in doubt, measure yourself against the standard of Matthew 7:1-4. Don't go off talking about homosexuality being a sin and you're carrying on an affair. God will, as some of the old down south preachers would say, pull the covers off your mess. And He will do so at a time LEAST convenient for you and most embarrassing.
8. **Seek to make disciples, not converts.** Altar-call evangelism is unbiblical. Simply seeking to have someone come down an aisle is not the Biblical model of conversion and

discipleship. The reason we have so many 'fall aways' from our churches or nominal Christians is because we emphasize conversion, not discipleship. Well, Christ's disciples were not all converted during their time with Him. He pointed this out plainly to them in John 6:36 and 6:64 and even in John 14. Instead, the Biblical model was to keep teaching them the truth and the whole counsel of God – and when it so pleased God to move upon their hearts, they would believe. Thomas believed after seeing the risen Christ – not before. This is the process of *discipleship* – not just drop you off at the altar, say a quick prayer and you're saved – but continue to teach the truth on a consistent basis. And in your one on one conversations with folks, this is what you should seek to do and pray that God would open their hearts to the truth of His gospel. Now, I'm in an OPC church, so in one sense, I'm preaching to the choir. Well, one of my favorite Christian rappers has said (in regard to preaching to the choir) "They need to be preached to – there's heathens in the pews, it's treason that they use, looking for reasons to abuse God's grace – walk to the altar at the age of eight, live like the world after that and think they'll make it through the gate – that theology is STRAIGHT from the father of lies."

9. **Question the question behind the question.** What does that mean? Well, behind every question and challenge to Christianity, there's another question that hits the REAL issue hiding. The former pastor whose mother was killed in a plane crash and is now a confessed atheist really doesn't question the authority of the scriptures. His real issue is 'How could a Holy and Good God take my mother from me?' The real issue for the person who claims there is no absolute truth is not whether truth exists – they obviously believe that what they believe is true and that it's absolutely true. The real question is what moral actions do they want to excuse under the banner of no absolute truth. Show them the inconsistency of their views.
10. **Be honest.** If you don't know, don't act like you do. There's nothing wrong with saying 'I don't have the answer to that question, but if you go to www.theologicallycorrect.com' (shameless website promotion) and look in the Q&A section, I saw a great article on it there. Or head to www.carm.org because Matt Slick (owner of the site) has written on probably every Christian topic known to man, including what you think may be a Bible contradiction. And if he doesn't have an article on it...wait a few days. He will.

My time's up. Thanks for listening and I hope I've given you much to think on and use. May God bless you as you set forth to defend and proclaim our Savior's life, death, resurrection and Lordship!