

Introduction to Apologetics

That You May Believe: Apologetic Series Part 1

John 20:31; Luke 16:31; Mark 12:28-31

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Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 1.23.19

Introduction

- What are some of your greatest faith struggles? In other words, what barriers have arisen in your life that keep you from trusting fully in the Lord? What has been some of your greatest struggles you've experienced in your relationship with God?
 - Get into groups of 2-4 people and discuss this for 1 minute.
- We will begin a new series tonight on apologetics entitled "That You May Believe" with the hope of helping to strengthen your faith.

Apologetics

- How would you define apologetics?
- "What is apologetics? Apologetics (from the Greek *apologia*: a defense) is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith."¹
- When you practices apologetics, you are defending your faith.
- Apologetics is most useful when you are struggling with you faith, have doubts or questions, someone is challenging your faith, and when you talk with someone who is not yet a Christian and has questions or concerns about the Christian faith.
- Apologetics are very important.
- In years past I've changed a lot of views on the usefulness of apologetics. When I was in college I thought apologetics was pretty much evangelism. I thought that I could argue anyone into heaven. Then the pendulum swung for me. I had little use for apologetics. Since then I think I've grown a more (I think) appropriate understanding of apologetics.
- Apologetics is a tool. A tool to evangelize and to strengthen and defend faith.

The Need of Apologetics

- It's no secret that people in our generation are leaving the church. And it is no secret that our generation are leaving their Christian faith. Percentagewise the Millennial and Gen Z generations are less Christian than previous generations.
- College-aged people are the least-religiously active people in America.
 - "Teenagers are some of the most religiously active Americans. American twentysomethings are the least religiously active."²

¹ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* 3rd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 15.

² David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 22.

- “Overall, there is a 43 percent drop-off between the teen and early adult years in terms of church engagement. These numbers represent 8 million twentysomethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers but who will no longer be particularly engaged in a church by their thirtieth birthday.”³
- Many of you may have friends who, if you grew up in church, were active in your youth groups, but are no longer engaged in their Christian faith.
- Many of you have and will be challenged during your college years by peers, professors, and culture to leave your faith.

“That you May Believe”

- We’re entitling our series “That You May Believe.”
- “That you may believe” comes from *John 20:31*, when the author of the Gospel of John states the purpose of his book.
 - “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so *that you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
- I hope this series will help you to grow in your confidence and trust in the Lord.

Goals and Hopes for this 8-week series on apologetics.

- We hope this study will empower your faith.
 - We hope that this study will reinforce your confidence in God, the resurrection, and scriptures.
 - In this room I am sure there are many people with doubts.
 - You don’t always have to “just have more faith.”
 - We don’t have all the answers. But there are some answers.
- We hope this study will equip you to answer tough questions.
 - There are tough questions.
 - If we just gave easy answers to tough questions, they would not be tough questions.
- We hope this study will embolden you to share your faith with others.
 - My prayer is that through this study you will be emboldened to share your faith with others.
 - You don’t need to know everything. Just share what you know.

Overview of That You May Believe: Apologetic Series

- Introduction to Apologetics (1.23.19)
- Doubts (1.30.19)
- Faith and Science with guest speaker Patrick Mead (2.6.19)
- Resurrection (2.13.19)
- Arguments for the Faith (2.20.19)
- The Problem of Evil (2.27.19)

³ Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 22.

- The Reliability of the Bible (3.13.19)
- Q&R (Question and Response) (3.20.19)
 - You can submit questions online. We will text out a link.

One caveat: You can not argue someone into the Kingdom of God.

- I used to think that. I used to think if I responded to someone's objection to Christianity witty and quick enough then I could convert anyone. That's not the case. And Jesus believed this, too.
- Jesus tells this story often called "The Rich Man and Lazarus" in *Luke 16:19-31*. The rich man (who remains unnamed) has great feasts every day. Lazarus, a very poor man, begged to receive food from the rich man, but the rich man never gave him food. Both men died. Lazarus was carried to Abraham's side. The rich man was tormented in Hades. Because of his fear that his brothers would also end up in torment, the rich man asked if he could go back and warn his brothers. Abraham answered, "If they do not receive Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (*Luke 16:31*).
- Some people would not believe Jesus was the resurrected Messiah even if they saw him face-to-face.

Resources on Apologetics

- Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008).
- Gregory A. Boyd and Edward K. Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic: A Son Wrestles with his Father's Questions about Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008).
- Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).
- William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd edition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

The Greatest Apologetic

- When reaching people, apologetics alone won't work. You might have the best of intentions, but you can not argue someone to heaven. You might have the best of intentions, but you still might not reach them.
- Illustration: My wife, Katelyn, bought me this new sweater/jacket/cardigan. She really liked it. After work a few days ago we needed to meet up at a store. I thought I'd impress her by wearing my cardigan. So I put it on and headed to the store. When she saw me in the store her first words were this: "You wore navy and black?! Blavy?!" She wasn't impressed.
- If you think you're going to win someone over simply by arguing with them or only offering only counterpoints to their beliefs, you won't get very far.
- Being argumentative could potentially drive them further away.

- William Lane Craig, who one scholar called, “the finest Christian apologist of the last half century,”⁴ said this: “This ultimate apologetic involves two relationships: your relationship with God and your relationship with others.”⁵
- Love God. Love people.
 - Jesus was asked by a religious leader, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (*Mark 12:28*)
 - Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (*Mark 12:29-31*).
- Augustine - “So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up his double love of God and neighbor, he has not succeeded in understanding them.”⁶
- N. Clayton Croy - “Thus the dual love of God and neighbor serves as a check on biblical interpretation.”⁷
- I once heard Patrick Mead, who will be speaking to us in two weeks, said that it’s possible to win arguments, but not win people.
- God uses people to reach people. Think about how you came to faith. I bet God used a person to draw you to Himself.

⁴ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, back cover.

⁵ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 405.

⁶ N. Clayton Croy, *Prima Scriptura: An Introduction to New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 157.

⁷ Croy, *Prima Scriptura*, 157.