

Sunday, September 20, 2026

Youth Apologetics Week 1

1 Peter 3:13-16

Why Do You Believe That?

Main Scripture: 1 Peter 3:13–16

Key Verse: 1 Peter 3:15

Big Idea: Christians should know what they believe, know why they believe it, and be able to talk about it with gentleness and respect.

OPENING: “HOW DO YOU KNOW?”

Start by telling the students:

Tonight we are beginning a new series on something called **Christian apologetics**. That word may sound like we are learning how to apologize for being Christians, but that is not what it means at all.

Before we define it, I want to ask you some questions.

How do you know that God exists?

Let them answer.

How do you know Jesus actually lived?

How do you know the Bible can be trusted?

Why are you a Christian instead of a Muslim, Buddhist, atheist, or something else?

If somebody at school said, “Christianity is just something your parents taught you,” what would you say?

Let the room sit with those questions for a minute.

A lot of Christians know **what** they believe, but when someone asks them **why** they believe it, they struggle to answer.

You might say, “I believe the Bible.”

Okay. Why?

“Because it is God's Word.”

How do you know?

“Because the Bible says it is God's Word.”

But then someone may say, “You are using the Bible to prove the Bible.”

What do you do then?

Those are the kinds of questions we are going to wrestle with during this series.

And I want you to know something from the beginning: **asking questions is not the enemy of faith.**

There are good questions.

There are difficult questions.

There are questions Christians have wrestled with for thousands of years.

You do not have to be scared of them.

1. WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

The word **apologetics** comes from the Greek word *apologia*.

It means a **defense** or an **answer**.

It does not mean saying, “I'm sorry for being a Christian.”

It means being able to explain why you believe what you believe.

Read **1 Peter 3:15**:

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...”

Peter says Christians should be **prepared**.

There should be something behind our faith.

Christianity is not supposed to be:

“My pastor said it.”

“My parents believe it.”

“I grew up in church.”

“I've always believed it.”

Those things may be part of your story, but eventually your faith has to become **your faith**.

Someone should be able to ask:

“Why do you believe Jesus is Lord?”

And we should be able to give them an answer.

That does not mean you have to know everything.

It does not mean you need a theology degree.

It simply means that Christians should care enough about truth to investigate what they believe.

Discussion

- If someone asked you right now, “Why are you a Christian?” what would you say?
- What Christian belief do you think would be hardest for you to defend?

- Have you ever been asked a question about Christianity that you didn't know how to answer?

2. CHRISTIANITY MAKES TRUTH CLAIMS

This is really important.

Christianity is not simply saying:

“This works for me.”

Christianity makes claims about what is **actually true**.

For example:

There really is a God.

God really created humanity.

Jesus really lived.

Jesus really was crucified.

Jesus really rose from the dead.

Jesus really is Lord.

Those things either happened or they didn't.

Paul understood this.

Read **1 Corinthians 15:14**:

“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”

Think about what Paul just said.

Paul does not say:

“It doesn't matter whether the resurrection happened as long as Christianity makes you a better person.”

He says that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, Christianity collapses.

That is an incredible statement.

Christianity invites investigation.

The Bible repeatedly places God's work in history—in real places, involving real people and real events.

Our faith is not supposed to be blind faith.

Biblical faith is **trust**.

And there are reasons for that trust.

Throughout this series we are going to investigate some of those reasons.

We will ask questions like:

Does God exist?

Can we trust the Bible?

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

Why would a good God allow evil and suffering?

What about evolution and science?

What about other religions?

Is Jesus really the only way to God?

And maybe some other questions that **you** want to ask.

3. DOUBT AND QUESTIONS ARE NOT THE SAME THING AS REBELLION

Sometimes students get the impression that good Christians never have questions.

That simply is not what we see in Scripture.

Thomas had questions.

Habakkuk had questions.

Jeremiah had questions.

David cried out to God with questions.

Even John the Baptist, while sitting in prison, sent people to Jesus asking:

“Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

Matthew 11:3

Think about that.

John had baptized Jesus.

John had preached about Jesus.

And yet in a difficult moment, John still had questions.

Jesus did not respond by saying, “How dare John ask that?”

Jesus gave him reasons to believe.

Questions can actually become opportunities for our faith to grow deeper.

A borrowed faith says:

“I believe because everyone around me believes.”

A maturing faith begins saying:

“I have examined this. I have wrestled with it. And I have reasons for trusting Jesus.”

That's part of what I hope happens through this series.

I don't just want you to know the answers that I give you.

I want you to learn how to think.

4. APOLOGETICS IS NOT ABOUT WINNING ARGUMENTS

Now go back to 1 Peter 3:15.

There is a part of the verse Christians sometimes leave out.

Peter says:

“...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...”

But then he continues:

“...yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

That matters.

You can have the right answer and give it in the wrong way.

If you humiliate someone...

mock them...

talk down to them...

or treat them like they are stupid because they disagree with you...

you may have won an argument, but you have done a terrible job representing Jesus.

The goal of apologetics is not:

Destroy the atheist.

Own your opponent.

Win every debate.

The goal is to love God, love people, and faithfully point people toward truth.

Jesus was never afraid of difficult questions.

But Jesus also saw the **person** asking the question.

That has to be true of us too.

Ask:

Which is easier for you:

Defending what you believe

or

Doing it with gentleness and respect when someone is attacking what you believe?

Talk about that for a few minutes.

5. THREE THINGS WE WANT FROM THIS SERIES

Tell the students:

By the end of this series, I want three things to be different about us.

1. I want us to KNOW WHAT WE BELIEVE.

Not just:

“I believe in God.”

But:

Who is God?

Who is Jesus?

What is the gospel?

Why does the resurrection matter?

What does the Bible actually teach?

You cannot defend something you do not understand.

2. I want us to KNOW WHY WE BELIEVE IT.

Maybe Christianity is true for reasons you have never even considered.

There are philosophical arguments.

Historical evidence.

Manuscript evidence.

Archaeology.

Eyewitness testimony.

The resurrection of Jesus.

The incredible story of Scripture.

We are going to investigate some of those things.

3. I want us to KNOW HOW TO TALK ABOUT IT.

Knowing information is not enough.

We need wisdom.

We need humility.

We need love.

Sometimes the best apologetic response begins with:

“That's a good question.”

Or:

“What makes you ask that?”

Or even:

“I don't know. Let me look into it.”

You are allowed to say **I don't know.**

In fact, it is much better to say that than to invent an answer.

ACTIVITY: “WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?”

Give the students these scenarios one at a time.

Tell them there is no pressure to give the perfect answer. The point is simply to discover what they already know and what they would like to learn.

Scenario 1

Your friend says:

“How can you believe in God when you've never seen Him?”

What would you say?

Scenario 2

Someone says:

“The Bible has been copied and translated so many times that there's no way we know what it originally said.”

What would you say?

Scenario 3

Someone asks:

“If God is good, why do terrible things happen?”

What would you say?

Scenario 4

Someone says:

“Jesus is your truth. I have my truth.”

What would you say?

Scenario 5

Someone asks:

“Why should I believe Christianity instead of all the other religions?”

What would you say?

After discussing them, tell them:

If some of those made you uncomfortable because you didn't know the answer, **good**.

That's why we're doing this series.

We aren't going to pretend the questions don't exist.

We're going to investigate them.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF APOLOGETICS

There is one phrase in 1 Peter 3:15 that comes **before** Peter tells us to give an answer.

Look at the beginning:

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...”

Before Peter talks about defending Christianity, he talks about **following Christ**.

That means the most important apologetics question is not:

“Can I win an argument about Jesus?”

It is:

“Do I actually know Jesus?”

Because apologetics cannot replace discipleship.

You can know arguments for Christianity and still not follow Christ.

You can know Bible facts and still have a heart far from God.

Peter says the defense begins with Jesus being Lord in our hearts.

Then when people ask about **the hope within us**, we have something to tell them.

Notice that phrase:

“the hope that is in you.”

People apparently saw something in these Christians that made them ask questions.

Their lives created curiosity.

That's powerful.

The best Christian witness combines:

**A life worth asking about
and
an answer worth hearing.**

WRAP-UP

Tell the students:

Over the next several weeks, I want you to bring your questions.

Not the questions you think you're supposed to ask in Sunday School.

Bring the real ones.

Maybe you have wondered:

How do we know God exists?

Can science and Christianity go together?

Why doesn't God show Himself more clearly?

Why does God allow suffering?

Can we trust the Bible?

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

What about people who never hear about Jesus?

What about other religions?

Those are fair questions.

We are not going to be afraid of them.

Because if Christianity is true, then Christians should not be afraid of the truth.

FINAL CHALLENGE

Give every student a piece of paper or an index card.

Tell them:

Write down **one question about Christianity that you genuinely want answered.**

It can be something you struggle with.

Something a friend has asked you.

Something you've seen online.

Something you have always wondered about.

They can put their name on it or leave it anonymous.

Collect those questions.

Use them to help shape the rest of the series.

CLOSE WITH 1 PETER 3:15