

Introduction to apologetics

I. Why Apologetics?

A. What is apologetics?

1. Apologetics is not apologizing for your Christian faith.
2. Apologetics is a transliteration of the Greek word *apologia* (ἀπολογία).
 - a. A verbal defense or speech in defense
 - b. A reasoned statement or argument
3. Definitions.
 - a. Douglas Groothuis – “An apologist, then, is a defender and an advocate for a particular position.”¹
 - b. Joshua Chatraw & Mark Allen - “Apologetics, in its most basic form, is the practice of offering an appeal and a defense for the Christian faith.”²
 - c. Douglas Groothuis - “Christian apologetics is the rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling and existentially or subjectively engaging.”³
4. Usage of the word *apologia* in the New Testament.
 - a. Apologia occurs eight times in the New Testament. (Acts 22:1, 25:16, 1 Corinthians 9:3, 2 Corinthians 7:11, Philippians 1:7, 16, 2 Timothy 4:16, 1 Peter 3:15).
 - b. Four times Paul speaks of his defense against false charges (Acts 22:1, 25:16, 1 Cor. 9:3, 2 Tim. 4:16).
 - c. Once he commends the Corinthians for their vindication (defense) of their character (2 Corinthians 7:11).
 - d. Three times apologia is used specifically for a rational defense of the gospel!
 1. Philippians 1:7, “...in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.”
 2. Philippians 1:16, “...I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.”
 3. 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.”
5. Observations from 1 Peter 3:15
 - a. The heart of an apologist – *Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*. Personal relationship with Christ is the foundation for any service we do for Him.
 - b. The preparation of an apologist – *Always being ready to make a defense*. Work hard to be prepared.
 - c. The message of an apologist – *An account for the hope that is in you*. Our lives should reflect Christ and open opportunities for us to share why we are different.

¹ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011), 23.

² Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness in Late Modernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 17.

³ Groothuis, *Apologetics*, 24.

d. The attitude of an apologist – *With gentleness and reverence*. How we speak and act makes a difference as to how a person will hear and respond.

B. Two types of skeptics

1. Dishonest – Their mind is already made up before they see the evidence.

2. Honest – They are sincerely seeking to know the truth. God welcomes honest skeptics!

a. They have good questions. Examples:

1. Doesn't science refute the Bible?
2. How can miracles happen?
3. Why can't God control evil?
4. Aren't all religions the same?
5. Why is Christianity so exclusive?

b. Christians have good answers!

“Christianity is true. That means that reality will always be on our side, and we just need to find the appropriate evidence to answer whatever question is asked.”⁴ Norman Geisler

C. Other Biblical Exhortations.

1. Jude 3, “...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.”

2. Titus 1:9, “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

3. 2 Timothy 2:24-25, “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...”

D. Was Paul against apologetics?

1. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 is sometimes used to infer that Paul was against apologetics.

2. Paul was actually speaking against sophism, the idea that rhetorical skill was to be valued above everything else. “Paul refused to allow the gospel message to be judged by the speaker’s rhetorical ability.”⁵ Chatraw & Allen

II. The issue of truth.

A. A proper understanding of truth is essential to Christian apologetics.

“In John 18:37-38, Jesus says, “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”

B. Two theories of truth.

1. Correspondence - Sometimes referred to as realism states, “A belief or statement is true only if it matches with, reflects or corresponds to the reality it refers to. For a statement to be true it must be factual... for a statement to be true, there must be a truth-maker that determines its truth.”⁶ Douglas Groothuis

⁴ Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook On Christian Evidences* (Wheaton, IL: Baker Books, 1990), 11.

⁵ Chatraw & Allen, *Apologetics*, 28.

⁶ Groothuis, *Apologetics*, 124

2. Coherence - The idea that what makes a statement or belief true “is its coherence or consistency with other beliefs... in other words, truth is defined simply as logical coherence.”⁷

C. Worldviews and truth.

1. **Worldview** - A worldview is “...a framework for answering life’s major questions – who is God, how did I get here, why am I here, how do I know, how should I behave, how should I treat others, where am I going... it is a set of ideas, beliefs, convictions, values, and virtues for guiding one’s life.”⁸ David Noebel
2. **Biblical worldview** - George Barna defined a biblical worldview as, “believing that absolute moral truths exist; that such truth is defined by the Bible...”⁹ In a poll where he listed six specific Biblical views he found that only “...9 percent of ‘born again Christians’ possess a biblical world view.” The six specific truths listed by Barna:
 1. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life.
 2. God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe.
 3. Salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned.
 4. Satan is real.
 5. A Christian has a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people.
 6. The Bible is accurate in all of its teachings.
3. **Why a Biblical worldview is fading in our culture.**
 - a. We are moving from a truth based society to a post-truth society. There is a belief, known as Post-modernism, that advocates there is no universal truth. Postmodernism adheres to the coherence theory of truth. Truth is defined by whatever standard I decide to apply.
 - b. Truth has become a matter of perspective.

“Truth, especially spiritual truth, is now widely taken to be a matter of perspective, a mere social or personal construction. Truth no longer concerns the nature of things, nor is it subject to intellectual analysis.”¹⁰

“...truth does not lodge in statements that correspond to reality...it is a matter of perspective only...”

“If this postmodern view is accepted, objective truth is ruled out in principle.” Groothuis

D. The Bible assumes there is knowable truth.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:17 – Paul stakes everything on the objective truth of Jesus’ resurrection!
2. Hebrews 6:18 – “It is impossible for God to lie.”
3. John 17:17 – “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.”
4. John 14:17, 15:26 – The Holy Spirit is referred to as, “The Spirit of truth.”
5. John 16:13 – “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...”
6. John 1:14 – Jesus is, “...full of grace and truth.”
7. 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.”

7

Groothuis, 126.

8

David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times*, 2nd ed. (Manitou Springs, CO: Summit Press, 2006), 504.

9

Groothuis, 120.

10

Groothuis, 117.

E. Postmodernism does not recognize objective truth

1. Postmodern interpretation – Jesus is a way, a truth, and a life. If Jesus works for you, great. But don't try to make Him the only way.
2. Postmodern understanding of truth. "...truth is not determined by its connection to objective reality... and there is no knowable objective reality apart from our languages and concepts."¹¹

F. Objective Biblical truth is foundational. The Bible "...puts God's revealed objective truth at the solid center of spiritual and ethical life and faithfulness."

III. Apologetics in a Post-truth world

A. Be aware of the postmodern, post-truth mindset.

B. Pray. We should heed Paul's prayer in Colossians 4:2-6 so that we can speak clearly with grace, responding to each person in such a way to help them understand the gospel of Christ.

C. Trust God for results. "No human being can...force a person to either 'see' or 'believe.' The apologist essentially says, 'Come and see.' The 'seeing' is out of his or her control. But praying is not."¹²

D. Stand on the truth of the Bible. "To an age that believes that freedom makes you true, the church must respond with a more ancient message: 'You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.'"¹³

¹¹ Groothuis, 128.

¹² James W. Sire, "On Being A Fool for Christ And An Idiot For Nobody." Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1995), 127.

¹³ Roger Lundin, "The Pragmatics of Postmodernity." Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 1995), 38.