



APOLOgetics

equipping us to share our faith



Since the very beginning of Christianity, there has always been **APOLOGETICS**—the practice of understanding and defending the faith. The Apostle Paul, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Irenaeus were some of the Church’s first apologists. Over the last century, there has been an increased interest in apologetics. Being able to understand and articulate our faith is a critical part of our Christian discipleship. After all, Jesus commanded His followers to love God with not just all their hearts and souls, but also with all their minds (Matthew 22:37).

For all of its benefits, however, the study and practice of apologetics has its limitations. When we apply reason to our beliefs, we’re using our culture’s 21st Century, Western, modern (or postmodern) worldview. As is the case with all human reason, the logic we impose on our faith is imperfect. As such, we should be cautious when looking at apologetics as though it is the “end all” for our faith. Apologetics can be a help to understand our faith better, but viewing our faith through the lens of human reason is not without shortcomings.

In addition, the purpose of apologetics is not to rid us of our doubts or to create uncontested beliefs. Apologetics reminds us that life is full of difficult questions, but not all of these questions can be answered with our limited human knowledge. Unfortunately, the word “faith” has become somewhat of an “F-word” in the world of apologetics. Twentieth-century British author and theologian C. S. Lewis wrote that “we apologists take our lives in our hands and can be saved only by falling back continually from the web of our own arguments, as from our intellectual counters, into the Reality — from Christian apologetics into Christ Himself” (“Christian Apologetics” (1945) included in *God in the Dock* (Eerdmans, 1970) 101). Logic, reason, and even wisdom do not save us. We must continuously remind ourselves that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).

Throughout our **APOLOGETICS** study, let’s think well, ask good questions, and learn how to engage our culture. And when reason has its limits, let’s trust that God is at work revealing Himself to us.

The future of the Church depends on it.

guidelines

Read together before your group meets every session

We will make this space a safe place for everyone in the group to express their convictions and opinions by observing the following guidelines:

- We will listen to each other with grace and love, respectful of the different ways Christian faith can be expressed. We are free to disagree, but our commitment to relationship with each other supersedes our commitment to being “right.”
- We will be humble, submitting ourselves to the journey and process of discovering God’s truth as revealed through God’s Word and God’s world together.
- We will submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allowing His presence to shape and mold us into the image and likeness of Christ.
- Other (decided upon by the entire group):



SESSION ~~one~~



I Want Proof

According to The Pew Research Center, the majority of Americans say science clashes with religion. Strangely, 68% claim science doesn't clash with their own religious beliefs.

Ever since it was first penned, Jews and Christians have read and interpreted the opening creation account in the book of Genesis in many different ways. Some view this text as a literal depiction of history, while others view it as ancient poetry that reveals theological truth rather than scientific fact. Both perspectives fall well within the realm of orthodox Christianity. In this week's session, we will give consideration to the many different Christian perspectives and discuss ways we can work together to communicate God's truth. We are, after all, on the same team.

Most Americans Say Science and Religion Conflict, But Fewer Say Their Own Beliefs Conflict With Science

% of U.S. adults



Survey of U.S. adults Aug. 15-25, 2014. Q7, Q8. Those saying don't know are not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Watch Session One Video

Dr. Lee Ann Coutts is a Methodist neuroscientist. She is the dean of the School of Natural and Social Sciences at Mount Vernon Nazarene University where she teaches a class about the relationship between faith and science.

- In the video, Dr. Coutts discussed how her church never talked about science while she was growing up. Why do you think many churches are hesitant to talk about science? What danger might arise when we as Christians avoid the topic of science?
- Why do you think most Americans believe science and religion are incompatible? Discuss any tensions you may have felt (or not felt) between your Christian beliefs and scientific findings.
- According to Dr. Coutts, conflicts arise between faith and science when we don't have enough information. Either we must reexamine our findings in Scripture or we must investigate our scientific data further. Despite our hundreds of years of research, neither biblical nor scientific study is complete. Does this make you excited, uncomfortable, or a mixture of both? Why?
- In the chart that Dr. Coutts provided on the next page, we see there are many different perspectives on creation. The majority of perspectives (about 95%), however, believe that there is some divine involvement. We have much more in common than we realize! Why do you think we tend to view this as a debate between one extreme (young earth creation) and the other (atheistic evolution)?
- What are some ways we can use science to start conversations about our faith?
- Read Psalm 19:1-6. Like this psalmist, we sing praise songs about creation with poetic and sensory words. How might thinking about creation scientifically draw us into the presence of God, as well?

Closing Prayer

Thank God for the ways He has revealed Himself to us in the world. Ask the Spirit to equip us with humility and courage when we converse with others about our faith.

Views on the Origin of the Universe & Life

~95%

~5%

	Young Earth Creation "Creationist" Position 6 Day Creation	Progressive Creation Day-Age Theory	Evolutionary Creation Theistic Evolution	Deistic Evolution (Deism = Impersonal God)	Dysteleological Evolution "Evolutionist" Position Atheistic Evolution
Teleology	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Intelligent Design	Yes Points to a Designer	Yes Points to a Designer	Yes Points to a Designer	Yes Points to a Designer	No Design a delusion
Age of the Universe	Young 6000 yrs	Old 14 billion yrs	Old 14 billion yrs	Old 14 billion yrs	Old 14 billion yrs
Evolution of Life	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
God's Activity in the Origin of Universe & Life	Yes Miraculous events over 6 days	Yes 1. Miraculous events for life over billions of yrs 2. God uses natural processes for inanimate universe	Yes God uses natural processes	Yes God uses natural processes	No Blind chance & natural processes
God's Activity in the Lives of Men & Women	Yes Personal God	Yes Personal God	Yes Personal God	No Impersonal God	No No God
Interpretation of Genesis 1	Strict literalism Creation days = 24 hrs	General literalism Creation days = Geologic ages	1. Divine Messages 2. Ancient science 3. Ancient poetry	Irrelevant myth	Irrelevant myth

For Further Study:

The Language of God by Francis Collins // *The Lost World of Genesis One* by John Walton
Can a Scientist Believe in Miracles? by Ian Hutchinson // BioLogos.org

