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Defending The Christian Faith: Why It Is Important And Helpful Resource



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Defending The Christian Faith: Why It Is Important & Helpful Resources

INTRODUCTION

Defending the Christian faith was greatly needed in the infant New Testament Church and undoubtedly is still needed today. The defense of biblical truth is necessary because it has been and will always be under attack. Knowing what you believe and why you believe it is important in a world where seemingly everything is challenged. Without knowing biblical truth and how it can be defended, we are more vulnerable to fall prey to the warning in *Colossians 2:8*.

Colossians 2:8 “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

Christians have the wonderful privilege of responding to challenges raised against the Christian faith and its’ beliefs, which are derived from scripture. Knowing scripture and why scripture is true is essential to defending the Christian faith. This is desperately needed in a world that is so confused about what truth actually is. Our young people, particularly in high school and college, are assaulted on every side by a variety of worldviews; we want to help them be prepared to stand for biblical truth.

1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”

Defending the Christian faith is at the very heart of *1 Peter 3:15*. The aim and purpose of this document is to highlight the importance of defending biblical truth and to point the reader to helpful resources. These resources present a well-reasoned basis for the Christian faith, defend it against objections, and expose the flaws of other worldviews. For some, the idea of defending the Christian faith may feel new or uncomfortable, but it is encouraged throughout Scripture. One example of this is *Acts 17*, where Paul challenges the idolatrous Athenians for worshipping false gods and then teaches them the truth.

Acts 17:16-24 ¹⁶Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. ¹⁷Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. ¹⁸Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? ²⁰For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. ²¹(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) ²²Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. ²³For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. ²⁴God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;”

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WHY NOW?

Western civilization, which in the past has been known as predominately Christian, is being influenced by contrary worldviews (i.e. Eastern Religions, Agnosticism and Atheism) as never before. These worldviews either believe in a god(s) other than the God of the Bible or do not believe God even exists. Knowing what we believe and why we believe it is true can be helpful to recognize the influences of these worldviews and how to respond to them. If we as God's children do not help defend truth, who will? The void that is left when biblical truth is not taught and defended causes much hurt and confusion. Not only do we, as believers, desire to teach truth to a hurting world, we also want to equip others (especially our children) to stand against the "wiles of the devil". Satan seeks to destroy all and in our current culture he has been effectively using lies to undermine the faith of many. Now is the time to stand for and defend biblical truth.

God's command to Israel was to teach their children that which they themselves had learned and held in their hearts.

Deuteronomy 6:7 "...thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Jesus gave the main reason for defending the truth of Christianity in declaring that He alone is the way, truth, life, and that no one can come to God except by Him (*John 14:6*). How can we know Him as Truth without being taught through Spirit-led study? Likewise, how can we adequately defend the truth without knowledge of it?

The Apostle Paul reminded the Romans that everything written in the Word was for their learning. They needed to apply themselves so they could be exhorted from the Scriptures and have confidence through abiding in Christ. In addition, Paul challenged Timothy to study the Word so that he could discern the truth.

Romans 15:4 "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

2 Timothy 2:15 "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

PRACTICAL DEFENSE OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Practically applying truth doesn't require great intellect, but it does require biblical understanding. In *2 Peter 3:1* we read, "...I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." How can we bring to remembrance an appropriate defense if we have not studied? Consider the following scenarios that Christians are likely to experience at some point in time:

- What do you say to your coworker who asks how you know the Bible is true?
- How do you answer your college student who has heard in Philosophy 101 that faith is a sign of weakness and an excuse for a lack of self-confidence?
- How do you answer your neighbor who claims that Jesus never really arose from the dead?
- How do you answer your child who comes home stating their friend says that Allah and God are the same but just have different names in different religions?
- What do you tell your child whose friend is a Mormon and believes that the Book of Mormon overshadows the Bible?
- What do you tell your dying friend who doesn't believe in life after death?
- How do you respond to Satan when he questions your faith?

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When defending the Christian faith keep the following helps in mind:

Prepare

1. Grow your relationship with Jesus through consistent study of the Word and time in prayer.
2. Gain understanding of Christian apologetics.
 - Apologetics is less about debating beliefs within the Christian faith and more about defending the existence of God and who He is described to be in the Bible.
3. Consider how Christian apologetics are relevant to you and your life.
4. Get equipped with helpful knowledge in areas of interest.

Engage, Be Present, or Disengage

There are times to engage dialogue for the purpose of defending the Christian faith, times to silently hurt with those who are wrestling with difficult questions, and times to walk away from these situations. Below are some things to consider.

1. Realize emotions, both yours and theirs, are potential obstacles to engaging a productive conversation on truth.
 - When your belief system comes under fire from others it will raise strong emotion. It is helpful to recognize these emotions and not let them dictate your response. Often emotions of anger or fear are evoked when questions about biblical truth arise. Anger can lead to becoming aggressive whereas fear can lead to disengaging. Keep this in mind and recognize when you are responding from your emotions and when you are responding from biblical principles.
2. Know – other’s salvation is not based on your ability to respond perfectly or at all.
 - We are to be concerned about the salvation of all men, but we are not to feel responsible for the conversion of anyone.
 - Not having an answer is ok. If an answer is available, search for it and be prepared for the next time the topic arises.
 - Not all questions have direct answers; this is part of living a life of faith.
3. Remember the biblical principles of kindness, patience, love, gentleness, giving a soft answer, etc.
4. You will become more comfortable with defending the Christian faith as you practice.
5. There will be those who attempt to discredit biblical truth by pointing out wrong behavior of those who are Christians or claim to be Christians. Remember, you do not have to defend others’ actions; you are defending the Christian faith and not the actions of others.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Defending Christian beliefs is sometimes referred to as “Christian apologetics.” The English word “apologetics” comes from the Greek word *apologia* and related words that are used in the New Testament and mean “*in defense of.*” Put simply, apologetics means defending biblical Christian beliefs.

Philippians 1:7 “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.”

Apologetics is about teaching and defending truth. It uses both faith and reason to defend and explain Christian beliefs. This document and accompanying annotated bibliography are designed to serve as an introduction to the biblical basis of apologetics and as an explanation to why this topic is so important for believers and servants of Christ. The annotated bibliography contains descriptions of selected books and resources that have been reviewed and found to be helpful. The reviews include a summary and audience recommendation that can help the reader decide which books or resources are most helpful or interesting.

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RESULTS OF APOLOGETICS

- Sanctified believers:
Through a deeper understanding of God and His Word, believers can more distinctly recognize Christ working in their lives, setting them apart for His service as a holy people.
- Steadfastness in afflictions and suffering:
By understanding Who God is and who they are in His sight provides believers with courage and faith as they persevere in trials and tests.
- Spiritually growing and energized believers:
In reading and applying God's revealed truths, believers can grow in grace and faith unhindered by the expectations of others or the deception of Satan.
- Stable families:
Through Bible study and application, parents can lead the way by example for their children to learn biblical precepts and to seek their own souls' salvation.
- Younger believers are disciplined to mature in their walk with Christ:
Young believers who put their spiritual "roots" deep into the word by knowing what they believe and why they believe it eventually grow into mature Christian pillars in the church.
- Implementing the Great Commission:
Christians appropriately taught in the Scriptures can be effective in spreading the Gospel message to the lost.

AREAS OF APOLOGETICS

This document is expected to expand over time as more reviews are conducted and recommendations are made. Our objective in this resource document is to eventually address four areas of apologetics:

- Essentials of the Christian Faith
- Cults and World Religions
- Current Cultural Apologetics (For example: A biblical response to homosexuality and abortion.)
- Christian Perspective on the Academic Teaching of Philosophy (To help college students facing this challenge.)

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Annotated Bibliography of Selected Christian Apologetics Resources:

Disclaimer: The accompanying materials have been reviewed by ACCFS staff and have been found to be helpful for people wanting to learn about certain issues. While this information has been screened and can be helpful, readers are encouraged to be discerning of any doctrinal concerns. Distribution of these materials is not meant to imply an endorsement by the Apostolic Christian Church of the author, publisher, or organization that created the materials. If you have any questions or concerns about these materials please contact ACCFS directly or speak with your Elder.

Essentials of the Christian Faith.

Strobel, L. *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Summary: The author, a journalist and self-proclaimed spiritual skeptic, conducted a personal investigation of the evidence of Jesus Christ in anticipation of supporting his atheistic views. In his quest for evidence, he interviews thirteen experts in fields ranging from Bible historians to medical doctors. He presents his exhaustive findings in three separate categories: Examining the Record, Analyzing Jesus, and Researching the Resurrection. He came to the final conclusion that it requires more faith to be an atheist than to be a Christian. This book presents well and is a good choice for someone having no faith in Christ as well as for Christians who want to strengthen their faith and ability to share Christ with others.

Understanding Level: The reading and comprehension level of this book is late teen to adult. The level of spiritual understanding required is minimal, making it a good choice for the interested seeker as well as the believer.

Strobel, L. *The Case for Christ Student Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Summary: A simplified version of the original book.

Understanding Level: Jr. High to High School-aged

Strobel, L. *The Case for Christ for Kids*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Summary: An even more simplified version of the original book. Good for parents to read with their children.

Understanding Level: Ages 8-12

Strobel, L. *The Case for Christ*. - DVD

Strobel, L. *The Case for Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Summary: As a former atheist, the author conducts interviews with many to investigate why a loving God would allow suffering and evil and could condemn souls to hell. He weaves together a convincing argument for having faith in God and Jesus Christ His Son as Lord and Savior. He discredits the theory of evolution and provides solid support for faith in a Creator. His approach in the book is to take a statement of doubt and expose the fallacies of it, effectively leading the reader to a greater confidence in choosing to believe. In fact, the author's conclusion is that it takes more faith to not believe in God than to simply accept His sovereignty.

Understanding Level: The reading level as well as the understanding level of this book is late teen. This is a good book for anyone questioning the validity of having faith in God, but specifically for someone struggling with the concept of a loving God allowing evil and suffering in the world and who will condemn souls to hell. It is a good choice for nonbelievers and believers alike.

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Strobel, L. *The Case for Faith Student Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Summary: A simplified version of the original book.

Understanding Level: Jr. High to High School-aged

Strobel, L. *The Case for Faith for Kids*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Summary: An even more simplified version of the original book. This is good for parents to read with their children.

Understanding Level: Ages 8-12

Strobel, L. *The Case for Faith*. DVD

Strobel, L. *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Summary: The author systematically disproves and refutes Darwinism and the theory of evolution through careful examination of the arguments for evolution. He does this by interviewing scientists, physicists, and cosmologists, proving convincingly that embracing Darwinism requires more faith than belief in a Creator.

Understanding Level: The reading level and understanding level of this book is late teen. This book is appropriate for people who believe evolution theories and for those who are skeptical about embracing a faith in a Creator God.

Strobel, L. *The Case for a Creator Student Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Summary: A simplified version of the original book.

Understanding Level: Jr. High to High School-aged

Strobel, L. *The Case for a Creator for Kids*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Summary: An even more simplified version of the original book. Good for parents to read with their children.

Understanding Level: Ages 8-12

Strobel, L. *The Case for a Creator*. DVD

Powell, D. *Holman Quicksource Guide to Christian Apologetics*. Holman Reference, 2006.

Summary: Introduces the topic of Christian apologetics and then covers several major areas of Apologetics. The 14 chapter titles give a good overview of what the book covers and are as follows: 1) What is Apologetics, 2) Does God Exist? The Cosmological Argument, 3) Does God Exist? The Design Argument, 4) Does God Exist? The Moral Argument, 5) Which God Exists?, 6) Where Did the New Testament Come From?, 7) Is the New Testament Reliable?, 8) Is the Old Testament Reliable?, 9) Do Miracles Happen?, 10) What About Prophecy?, 11) The Resurrection?, 12) Did Jesus Claim to Be God? Is Jesus the Only Way?, 13) How Could God Allow Evil?, 14) Methodology.

Understanding Level: The reading and understanding level of this book is college level. This book is appropriate for people who have some understanding of what apologetics are and want to broaden their understanding. This book does not dive deeply into the topics covered but does cover multiple areas which could be overwhelming without any prior knowledge of apologetics.

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Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. Harper One, 1952.

Summary: Mere Christianity is an explanation of the core beliefs of Christians throughout the last 2000 years. It is a book that will speak to the skeptic and believer alike. It is a classic apologetic work and a must-read for anyone interested in delving into apologetics. Lewis explains difficult concepts in marvelous ways and provides readers with a clear picture of what Christianity is.

Understanding Level: The reading and understanding level of this book is college level. Mere Christianity is a classic apologetic work that, although challenging to read in places, is also profound in its simplicity. Recommended for Christians and skeptics alike.

Cornish, R. *5 Minute Apologist*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2005.

Summary: *5 Minute Apologist* provides a brief overview of several important areas of apologetics. This book is meant to help equip the believer with a quick understanding of important areas that are often questioned in the Christian faith. Areas covered are as follows: Recognizing and defending truth in thinking; logic and philosophy; understanding what worldviews, other religions and cults are and recognizing how they differ from a Biblical Worldview; identifying questions, confusion, and arguments about the Bible, God, Jesus, the resurrection, and miracles and finding truthful ways to address them; and understanding common questions and arguments from the scientific world and revealing what is true in science and what is not.

Understanding Level: The reading and understanding level of this book is late teen. This book is appropriate for people who want to learn about apologetics and gain a broad base of information for defending the Christian faith.

Craig, W. L. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994.

Summary: The author systematically and thoroughly builds a case for the Christian faith, starting with the relationship between faith and reason and ending with a defense of the Resurrection. In between, Craig deals skillfully with God's existence, the believability of miracles, historical knowledge, the reliability of the New Testament, and Jesus' self-understanding. A unique chapter outlines the absurdity of life without God.

Understanding Level: The reading level and understanding level of this book is advanced college or graduate level. This book is appropriate for people who are skeptical about the Christian faith. For Christians, a solid understanding of what apologetics is and how it works would be helpful before reading this book. This is not a book for those just beginning to explore apologetics.

Current Cultural Apologetics

***What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality?* Focus on the Family, 2014.**

Summary: This is a helpful resource in that it lays out what the bible says about Homosexuality. This resource takes common arguments against the historical Christian belief that Homosexuality is sin and helps the reader understand what the bible teaches on Homosexuality.