
THE ROLE OF APOLOGETICS IN EVANGELISM

INSTRUCTOR: *James Rochford*

WHAT ARE APOLOGETICS?

Ancient attorneys used to have a word for their legal case in a court of law. The word was *apologia* (pronounced apo-low-GEE-uh).¹

(1 Pet. 3:15 NASB) 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.

(2 Cor. 10:4-5 NASB) The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ We are **destroying speculations** and every lofty thing raised up against the **knowledge of God**, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

(2 Cor. 5:11 NASB) Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we **persuade** men.

(Acts 17:2-4 NASB) And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." ⁴ And some of them were **persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women...

(Acts 18:4 NASB) And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to **persuade** Jews and Greeks.

¹ Strong's defines *ἀπολογία* as "answer for (one's) self... clearing of (one's) self... verbal defence, speech in defence... reasoned statement or argument." Strong, James: *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. electronic ed. Ontario : Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996, S. G627

(Acts 18:27-28 NASB) And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,²⁸ for **he powerfully refuted the Jews in public**, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

(Acts 19:8 NASB) And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, **reasoning** and **persuading** them about the kingdom of God.

(Acts 26:25 NIV) Paul told Festus that the Christian faith was “**true** and **reasonable**.”

(Phil. 1:7, 16 NASB) For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the **defense and confirmation of the gospel**, you all are partakers of grace with me... the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the **defense of the gospel**.

(Titus 1:9 NASB) [The overseer holds] 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**.

(Rom. 1:20 NASB) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are **without excuse**.

CONCLUSION

WHY SHOULD WE USE APOLOGETICS?

OBJECTION: “Didn’t Jesus teach that he wanted people to have the faith of a child?” (Mk. 10:15)

First, Jesus used reason and evidence in his interactions with unbelievers.

Second, the context of this passage is concerned with self-righteousness and pride –not stupidity.

Third, children ask more questions than anyone on Earth.

Francis Schaeffer: “But someone will say, ‘Didn’t He say that to be saved you have to be as a little child?’ Of course He did. But did you ever see a little child who didn’t ask questions? People who use this argument must never have listened to a little child or been one! My four children gave me a harder time with their endless flow of questions than university people ever have.”²

OBJECTION: “Apologetics can be used abusively, pushing people farther away from the gospel.”

OBJECTION: “Apologetics don’t lead people to Christ. The gospel leads people to Christ.”

First, this is partially true.

John Stott: “We cannot pander to man’s intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity.”³

MULE TO WATER:

Second, this is a false dilemma.

² Schaeffer, Francis A., and Francis A. Schaeffer. 25 *Basic Bible Studies: including Two Contents, Two Realities*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996. 129.

³ Quoted in Little, Paul E. *How to Give Away Your Faith*. Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966. 65.

Third, God commands both leaders and lay people to use apologetics (1 Peter 3:15; Titus 1:9).

OBJECTION: “If apologetics do not lead people to Christ, then what is their purpose?”

First, Apologetics rouse curiosity in the non-Christian.

EMERGENT CLAIM:

C.S. Lewis: “Nearly everyone I know who has embraced Christianity in adult life has been influenced by what seemed to him to be at least probable arguments for Theism.”⁴

Second, Apologetics give credibility to the Christian worldview.

PLAUSIBILITY STRUCTURE:

PERSONAL CREDIBILITY:

Third, Apologetics remove barriers to belief.

Fourth, Apologetics build up the confidence of young or old Christian workers.

Fifth, Apologetics are useful in educated fields of ministry.

⁴ Lewis, C. S. *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970. 173.

HOW DO WE USE APOLOGETICS?

1. LISTEN CAREFULLY

Paul Little: “The voice any person likes to hear best is his own. Everyone likes to talk, but some do more than others. Many people would give anything to find someone who would just listen to them. When we listen long enough, we not only begin to know and understand an individual; we also gain his gratitude and his willingness to listen to us, enabling us later to speak relevantly to him.”⁵

(Prov. 18:2) “Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.”

(Prov. 18:13) “Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.”

(Jas. 1:19) “Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be **quick to listen, slow to speak**, and slow to get angry.”

(Gal. 5:22-23) “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ **gentleness, and self-control**. There is no law against these things!”

1. *Discover their Worldview.*

2. *Learn about their Background.*

*R*ational experiences.

*S*ocial experiences.

⁵ Little, Paul E. *How to Give Away Your Faith*. Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966. 32.

*V*olitional experiences.

*P*ersonal experiences.

2. COMMON OBJECTIONS

1. *Be Prepared for Common Objections.*

Paul Little: “Leading my first few discussions was a major problem for me because I didn’t know what to expect. But now I can predict, with a high degree of accuracy, the questions that will be asked me in any given discussion with non-Christians. A few of the questions may depart from the pattern, but most of them will fit into one of the several basic categories.”⁶

2. *Express your own Personal Doubts.*

3. *Learn LONG and SHORT responses.*

3. PREPARE FOR ROADBLOCKS

1. *Describe Grace versus Law.*

⁶ Little, Paul E. *How to Give Away Your Faith*. Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1966. 66.

2. *Uniqueness of Christianity.*

3. *Testimony.*

4. *Begin with Presuppositional Apologetics, if the person is extremely hostile.*

Francis Schaeffer: “In this present life it is the same. It is impossible for any non-Christian individual or group to be consistent to their system *in logic* or *in practice*. Thus, when you face twentieth-century man, whether he is brilliant or an ordinary man of the street, a man of the university or the docks, you are facing a man in tension; and it is this tension which works on your behalf as you speak to him. If I did not know this from the Word of God and personal experience, **I would not have the courage to step into the circles I do.** A man may try to bury the tension and you may have to help him find it, but somewhere there is a point of inconsistency. He stands in a position which he cannot pursue to the end; and this is not just an intellectual concept of tension, it is what is wrapped up in what he is as a man.”⁷

Francis Schaeffer: “As I seek to do this, I need to remind myself constantly that **this is not a game I am playing. If I begin to enjoy it as a kind of intellectual exercise, then I am cruel and can expect no real spiritual results.** As I push the man off his false balance, **he must be able to feel that I care for him. Otherwise I will only end up destroying him, and the cruelty and ugliness of it all will destroy me as well.** Merely to be abstract and cold is to show that I do not really believe this person to be created in God’s image and therefore one of my kind. Pushing him towards the logic of his presuppositions is going to cause him pain; therefore, I must not push any further than I need to.

⁷ Francis Schaeffer *The God Who is There*.

If we find the man ready to receive Christ as Savior, then by all means we should not talk about presuppositions but tell him the glorious good news. The whole purpose of our speaking to twentieth-century people in the way I have outlined is not to make them admit that we are right in some personally superior way, nor to push their noses in the dirt, **but to make them see their need so that they will listen to the gospel.**⁸

5. *Offer evidence.*

4. OFFER EVIDENCE

If someone gives you a hearing, what do you begin with?

1. *Predictive Prophecy:*

2. *Big Bang Cosmology:*

3. *Fine-tuning Argument:*

4. *Moral Argument:*

5. GOALS OF YOUR CONVERSATION

1. *Have them offer THEIR explanation.*

⁸ Francis Schaeffer *The God Who is There*.

2. *Force an irrational conclusion.*

3. *Follow the “One-and-Done” rule.*

4. *Explain the nature of faith.*

EVERYONE EXERCISES FAITH:

AIRPLANE ILLUSTRATION:

RESTAURANT ILLUSTRATION:

5. *Explain the stakes.*

PEDOPHILE ILLUSTRATION: