

Apologetics and Evangelism – Part 1

What is “apologetics?” It is the branch of theology that is concerned with the intellectual defense of the Christian faith. “Apologetics” comes from the Greek noun: *apologia* which refers to making a speech in defense of something – more specifically in a courtroom setting.

What is “evangelism?” It is preaching the gospel to non-Christians.

The Biblical mandate to defend the Christian faith intellectually: 1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense (*apologia*) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” Notice 3 components: *defense, for the hope, with meekness and fear.*

The Biblical mandate to preach the gospel: Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” **Acts 8:3-4** “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” **Who went everywhere preaching the word?**

Apologetics and Evangelism are always tied together when considered biblically.

Acts 22:1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.”

Philippians 1:7 “just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the **defense and confirmation of the gospel**, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

Philippians 1:17 “but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the **defense of the gospel.**”

2 Timothy 4:16 “At my first **defense** no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, **so that the message might be preached** fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”

We will look at both Apologetics and Evangelism. But under the category of Apologetics, there will be two major sections: **Method** and **Practice**. They will be intertwined throughout. Right after doing some **Method (or “theory”)** there will be concrete examples of this in action.

The Key to Effective Apologetics and Evangelism is: *Biblical Methodology*. Rather than get bogged down in a zillion particulars and details related to methods other than the one I will be teaching you, let me illustrate the key difference by way of a contrast. In the recent past, two big debates took place between a prominent Christian and a prominent atheist. The first was Christian, Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen against atheist Dr. Gordon Stein. The second was Christian Dr. William Lane Craig against atheist Frank Zindler. The approaches taken to the issue of God’s existence in each debate could not be more at odds with one another. If you listen to both debates, yes, you can tell both men are Christians, but the *methods* used by each of them could hardly be more different. Here’s how I would summarize their basic arguments:

1. **Craig’s basic argument** – The available cosmological scientific evidence, the fine tuning of the balance of life, the existence of moral absolutes humans tend to agree upon across cultures, the

uniqueness of the person of Christ in history, and the strong evidence in favor of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead all favor the *probable existence of a god*. The evidence leans strongly in our favor, and therefore the reasonable man can hardly be faulted if he believes there is a god somewhere. The evidence seems to indicate that a god *probably* exists.

- 2. Bahnsen's basic argument** – In order to debate at all, we must be able to justify logic, reason, science, and morality. Atheism can justify none of these things. Only the Biblical Christian worldview is able to. And therefore, Dr. Stein, by showing up to the debate, you've already abandoned your own worldview and embraced mine, and therefore you've lost.

Apologetics – part 2

Is apologetics neutral (i.e. independent) or is it tied to theology? Historically, there is great disagreement among Christians on how to answer this question. What is the proper method of defending the faith and answering objections and questions? We will get to specific types of objections, doing worldview analysis, how to test people’s worldviews for: inconsistencies, arbitrariness, consequences, and preconditions of intelligibility... but not yet. For now, we’re going to focus on *method* – How do we go about defending the faith? Do we do so entirely committed *at the outset* to the Bible as God’s infallible Word, or do we set the Bible aside and try to argue on *other grounds* for the truth of the Christian faith? That is the great question Christians do not agree on among themselves. My position: *We do everything related to apologetics and evangelism entirely committed to the Bible alone as the infallible, clear Word of God.* Let us now consider why we must do it this way.

How extensive is Christ’s authority?

- A. **Matthew 28:18-20** “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.
- B. “All **authority**” – Greek: *exousia*. How extensive is Christ’s authority? **All** – heaven and earth. He doesn’t qualify the statement. The point here is: *Christ’s Lordship and authority must still be firmly in place as we defend the faith.* And we must maintain this against all who would ask us to set the Bible and the Christian worldview aside so that we might argue on “neutral” grounds. We will cover the “pretended neutrality fallacy” later on.

The difference between believers and unbelievers: Ignorance v. knowledge.

- **1 Peter 1:14-16** “as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” All our conduct must be holy – all our conduct – including doing apologetics.

How much of my behavior should honor Christ?

Matthew 22:35-38 “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ This is *the* first and great commandment.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

- A. **And our “minds”** – it is possible to think in an *unloving* way about God and neighbor and everything else. Our thinking, the way we reason, logical deductions and their validity – all of it is either loving or unloving to God.
- B. **Thinking, reasoning, drawing conclusions are all things we do.**
- C. **Eve was attacked via reasoning.** Satan tries to get her to believe that God has selfish motives for withholding that fruit.

The “Brick by Brick” versus the “Entire Biblical / Christian Worldview” approach to apologetics:

- A. **The “Brick by Brick” approach** – This was William Lane Craig’s approach (and most Christians’ approach). It means: *trying to build your case for the faith one small brick at a time.* Instead of bringing the entire Christian *worldview* to bear upon the unbeliever, we first try to make him a

theist, then to believe the Bible is unique, then to believe that Jesus existed, then to believe that Jesus rose from the dead, etc. Piece by piece, we try to bring the unbeliever in. We will be rejecting this approach. Yes, we do need to be able to argue for all of those things, *but the way we argue for them will be distinctly Biblical and committed to the Bible as the authoritative Word of God*. The point is: It accomplishes nothing except to confirm the unbeliever in their unbelief if we set the Bible aside as we try to defend the system of belief spelled out in its pages. **Example:** Michael Martin and the resurrection of Christ from the dead – facts do not speak for themselves – facts are *always* interpreted through the individual's particular *worldview*.

- B. The “Entire Biblical / Christian Worldview” approach** – Since God has spoken only in Scripture and the Scriptures teach that if you reject Scripture you are reduced to foolishness in your reasoning, I am going to show that everything you take for granted is destroyed by your own presuppositions. By “everything you take for granted” I mean: *logic, knowledge, induction, science, reason, morality, human dignity*. By rejecting the Christian God, you have destroyed your right to use *anything* in that list. God is to be believed on His own, self-authenticating, self-authorizing authority and *on no other basis*. Only God can speak for God. His Word is not subjected to probability arguments based on external evidence.

Apologetics and Evangelism – Part 3

What is a “Worldview?”

1. **Definition of “worldview”:** “A worldview is a network of presuppositions (which are not verified by the procedures of natural science) regarding reality (metaphysics), knowing (epistemology), and conduct (ethics) in terms of which every element of human experience is related and interpreted.” [we’ll talk more about ‘metaphysics,’ etc. later]
2. **Definition of a “presupposition”:** “An elementary (or foundational) assumption in one’s reasoning or in the process by which opinions are formed. It is not just any assumption in an argument, but a personal commitment that is held at the most basic level of one’s network of beliefs. Presuppositions form a wide-ranging, foundational perspective (or starting point) in terms of which everything else is interpreted and evaluated. As such, presuppositions have the greatest authority in one’s thinking, being treated as one’s least negotiable beliefs and being granted the highest immunity to revision.”
 - a. **Example:** My friend’s dogmatic statement: “God cannot talk in a book.” When I asked, “Why?” there was no response. When someone asserts something contrary to Christianity and you ask them *why* they believe this way and their answer is silence, you have more than likely uncovered one of the *presuppositions* in their *worldview*. Remember, a presupposition is not something that can be proven. It is, literally, *pre*-supposed – assumed ahead of time.
 - b. **Another Example:** The atheist, Dr. Atkins, whose worldview would only allow for the following two explanations as “plausible” for the disciples’ strong proclamation that they were themselves eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead: 1) the disciples were liars, 2) they were hallucinating. Why isn’t “Jesus actually rose from the dead by the power of God” on Dr. Atkins’ list? His worldview does not allow for natural laws to go out of their course by the finger of God. “Naturalism” is the presupposition that the laws of nature are constant and inalterable. “Materialism” is the presupposition that the only reality that exists is *matter*. There is no spirit, no spiritual realm, no gods, angels, or demons. These two unprovable “presuppositions” are at the center of Dr. Atkins’ worldview.
1. **Worldview analysis is potent when done well.** All non-Christian worldviews will have the same types of problems – and herein *lies the potent power of this method of doing apologetics*. All forms of unbelief will have at their center *worldviews* whose *presuppositions* are **contradictory, inconsistent, arbitrary, and if followed consistently would lead to devastating consequences**. As our study progresses, we will look at examples of how to identify these kinds of *internal problems* with unbelieving worldviews. This is often called “doing an **internal critique**” – i.e. forcing the unbeliever to deal with the consequences of his own stated beliefs.
 - a. **Example:** Moral absolutes cannot be justified and are rendered completely relative and arbitrary without God speaking in the Bible. You must train yourself to never allow unbelievers to “borrow” from your worldview. If you know someone rejects the God of the Bible and rejects the Bible as the Word of God, they have forfeited their right to consistently use words like: “ought,” “right,” “wrong,” “immoral,” etc.

This happened in my dialog with my old friend from high school. After discarding the Bible as manmade and corrupt, he suddenly began speaking of the way the world “ought” to be and how all people “should” respect each other and “should” obey the “golden rule.” Of course, I agreed with all of those statements – but what I pointed out to him was this: ***I agree with and believe all of those things wholeheartedly, but what I do not understand is why you do.*** My point: Moral obligations make sense in my worldview, but they don’t make sense in yours.

Neutral Worldviews are not only Impossible, they are Immoral

Matthew 12:30, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” *There is no neutrality with Christ.*

1. The common appeal of the unbelieving world to Christians is: “surrender to neutrality.” Obviously, the Bible demands otherwise. Many scholars both Christian and non-Christian *attempt* to take this approach. They compartmentalize life into “sacred” (worship, witnessing, prayer) and “secular” (physical world, sciences, natural order, sociology). The *neutrality* approach sees the Christian faith as one among many parts of life. H2O is H2O whether or not you believe the Bible, right? Getting a man to the moon and the science and technology needed to do that have nothing to do with the Bible or Christianity – right? These are the common refrains we hear today, but they couldn’t be more wrong.
2. Most people think apologetics (defending the faith) and evangelizing can be done *without being entirely committed to the Bible while doing them.* What unbelievers want is this: “**You’ve got to start with a ‘nobody knows for sure’ attitude.**” The unbeliever has tricked himself into thinking he has no biases, no commitments either way, and hence he is just a neutral observer of facts. And he wants you to pretend to be the same. ***And this is exactly what we cannot do.*** The point is this: the unbeliever is NOT neutral although he thinks he is, he’d like you to think he is, and he’d love for you to discard the Bible as your authority before you start talking to him.

WHEN IT COMES TO **NEUTRALITY** ABOUT GOD AND WORLDVIEWS AS IT RELATES TO UNBELIEVERS AND YOU AS YOU WITNESS, PLEASE REMEMBER THIS SAYING:

THEY AREN’T, AND YOU SHOULDN’T BE.

The devastating consequences of attempting to be neutral as you witness and defend the faith:

- a. Neutrality erases the Christian’s distinctiveness. We are supposed to be “set apart by the truth” – John 17:17.
 - b. Neutrality is impossible. Matthew 12:30 – cited above.
 - c. Neutrality is immoral. Same passage.
1. **The “Lordship” issue.** The Christian – the true Christian – does have Jesus as Lord of His life. All areas of our life are to submit to His sovereign Lordship. There are no pieces or parts left over to the world, the flesh, or the devil. All belongs to Christ – including our thinking and our defending of the faith. We are to be Biblical and to

- behave as Biblically committed Christians in everything we do.
2. Why is the “neutral” approach which sets the Bible aside as the final and ultimate authority so wrong? Because outside the Bible there is only *less reliability*. We would be transferring even greater authority to some standard other than the Bible. If the Bible is the ultimate authority, and I use something else to prove the ultimate authority of the Bible – I have given greater authority to whatever that thing is.
 3. When I used to be asked, “How do you know the Bible is God’s Word?” my response was to throw everything I had memorized from Josh McDowell’s Evidence that Demands a Verdict – fulfilled prophecies, the strong historical case for Christ’s bodily resurrection, the Bible’s uniqueness, coherence over time, and its life-changing power. BUT, were all those things really why I believed the Bible was God’s Word? No. They confirmed my belief, but were not the basis of it. Even when I answered them, I knew that I had accepted the Bible long before I had ever heard any of those lines of evidence.
 4. **There are no “Brute Facts”** – i.e. facts do not speak for themselves. They are always interpreted by one’s worldview – and that worldview is *never* neutral. One’s worldview is either in loving submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, or it is hostile and resolutely opposed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There is *no middle or neutral ground!* Joshua 24:15, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve!”