

Evangelizing the Western Mindset - Part 1

by Winkie Pratney

Winkie Pratney's sermon explores the foundations and importance of apologetics in defending the Christian faith against skepticism and misunderstanding.

Duration: 54:51

Scripture: Proverbs 14:15, Proverbs 18:17, Isaiah 41:21, Matthew 10:16, John 5:31-36, Acts 17:22-31, Acts 19:8-10, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Peter 3:15, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Christian Apologetics", "Defending Faith"

Description

This sermon delves into the world of apologetics, exploring the defense and evidences of the Christian faith. It emphasizes the need for a rational, historical, and objective faith in Christ, providing sufficient evidence for an intelligent commitment. The sermon highlights the importance of contending earnestly for the faith, clarifying the truth, and confronting opposing positions with a spirit of reason and conviction.

Transcript

We thank you for a marvelous treasure house of wisdom beyond our worlds. We thank you for yourself. We thank you that in this series we begin to look into the world in which we live and what you've said about it and about us, that we can draw on wisdom from another world.

We thank you that if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all freely and never tells us off when we come back asking again and again. So we come this morning asking for that wisdom, make us teachable, give us the hearts of children and the minds of giants, in Jesus' name, amen. In the book of Isaiah 41, we have a basis for the study series we're going to be looking at this week.

And I'm going to read it to you from the New American Standard Version, there are others. We have the Living as opposed to the Dead Bible. We have the International Version coming to you from around the world.

But this is New American Standard and the study we're going to be beginning this week is called Apologetics. It does not mean how to ask somebody's forgiveness. It does not mean how to say sorry in the right way.

It is actually the study of the defense and the evidences of the Christian faith. In Isaiah 41, in verse 21, God speaks about what He's going to do first in the land. He talks about raising up a person who He will make a sharp threshing instrument having teeth.

And then He goes down and talks about that they may see and recognize and consider and gain insight as well that the hand of the Lord has done this. In verse 21, we have God's basis for apologetics. Present your case, the Lord says.

Bring forth your strong arguments, the King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place. As for the former events, declare what they were that we may consider them and know their outcome.

Renounce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterwards that we may know that you are God's. Now, in this passage, God challenges people to bring facts forward.

And I want to give you, first of all, a definition of this thing called apologetics. I'll give you two or three simple ones here. First one will say apologetics actually looks at two fields.

One field is the field of the world around us. And we could say that would be natural revelation. And when we're looking for evidences of the reality of the Christian position, one of the major sources we have is the world around us.

Actually, God has given us two Bibles. One is nature around us, and it speaks. Scriptures speak about the heavens declaring the glory of God, the firmament showing its handiwork.

God often asks people simply to open their eyes. I remember a man in San Francisco, he's one of the smartest men I know. He was a chief design engineer for International Harvester.

Between him and R.G. Letourneau, another man who was also a Christian, who's passed on to the presence of God now, they held 85% of all the major patents in earth-moving machinery in the world. This guy was the only man that International Harvester ever gave a blank check to, to just simply spend a week in each country and solve the engineering problems that IH were having in each area. And this guy has spent over 45 years in the study of the Scriptures, 18 hours a day in the early days.

In Hebrew and Greek, he's a very smart man. And I remember one time we were in San Francisco and he was talking about God. And a guy came out and he said, this guy says he's an atheist out there, what shall I say to him? I was wondering what he was going to say this man.

He said, why don't you tell him to just look around. The Bible actually is a second source of revelation and one of course that Christians turn to constantly, but most secular people never read the Bible and have no idea what it says. So we have two sources here that God can speak.

God is not just limited to speak through the Scriptures. He can also speak through nature, but nature has some limits in itself. So we'll call these two fields and we will look at some of those.

We'll look at what nature can show us, starting just with ourselves and the universe around us. We can learn or intuit or posit about reality. And then secondly, we can look at supernatural reality, which of course includes the following things.

First, the Bible itself, we will look at the inspiration of Scriptures, why Christians claim that the Bible is a quantum leap above all religious statements and books and holy books. Secondly, the fact of Christ himself, so we've got the Bible and then the Christ it speaks about. The Bible is a history book, it is not a collection of fables.

It is rooted in history, so if you're going to deal with Christianity, you have to deal with historical facts, not a philosophy, nor just a feeling. You're going to have to deal with hard and stubborn historical facts. We're dealing here then with a Scripture, a Christ, and then the unique thing about the Lord Jesus is the resurrection in which the whole crux of Christianity stands or falls.

If Christ be not risen, then you are yet in your sins, your faith is vain. These areas all come under the supernatural, the Bible is a supernatural book, Christ is God who became man and the resurrection is something that is just a completely unique event in history. As a matter of fact, one young man I talked to who had been 15 years in an Eastern thought form and became a Christian, he was asked, why did you leave what you were doing and get into Christianity? He said, if you were going down the road and you came to a fork in the road and you had to make a decision, there were two men there to ask the way and one was living and one was dead, which one would you ask? So apologetics then traditionally considers these two areas.

We're going to look at five major areas later on in the week, but today I want to give you just the base of this whole thing. We go now to a definition of apologetics before we begin, get our lexical statements down. First, let's say apologetics is a reasoned defense of the Christian faith.

It involves facts and logic and statement and argument. By argument I don't mean argumentative spirit, I mean a reasoned defense of the Christian faith. The word we'll look at in a second means a verbal defense, a speech on what you believe.

It is used sometimes in a court of law when a person cross-examines somebody, then the answer is given as an apologetic. This is the reason why I am saying what I'm saying is true. Here's a slightly broader definition, to clarify and defend the total system of biblical Christianity against attacks on that system or parts of it.

To clarify or defend the total system of biblical Christianity against attacks on that system or parts of it. Because, you see, really God challenges people to... Here is the thing, if something is really true then it ought to be able to be challenged. They ought to... They call it the falsification test.

If something is really there and really true you ought to be able to challenge it. You ought to be able to see in any way if you can falsify that statement. And God doesn't mind.

He doesn't mind being examined at all. He says, here, check me out and I'll check you out. C.S. Lewis I was reading this morning talked about... Happy agnostics sometimes speak about seeking God.

He said, I sought God somewhat like a mouse seeks a cat. People say, you know, I've been looking for God for years and I tell them, that's funny, I didn't know He was lost. When God came to Adam in the garden He didn't say, Adam, Adam, where am I? God knows where He is.

As a science, apologetics is basically collecting data. This is as a science, and it is a science. Apologetics is collecting data common to all Christians in a consistent whole.

That's really what it is. You just get together the essential facts of the Christian faith and in a systematic way lay them out. It explains basically why Christians are Christians, and though many Christians have never even thought about this, and it doesn't really matter in some ways, it's quite possible to become a Christian without studying any of these areas that we're looking at, though you should have an experience in at least a couple of them.

It explains also why non-Christians should become Christians. And that is a science. Somebody said, if theology is the queen of the sciences then apologetics is her handmate.

Another way we could say it is apologetics gives structure to a believer's hope that before has only been experienced but never defined. Now when we're finished this week you should know, I'd say 90% more than most unbelievers do and 75% more than most Christians do, about why Christians say what they say. And we will touch at least briefly on all these major areas in which the Christian faith touches the world.

Bob Jones Sr. said this, you see it's quite possible for people to know something in reality without ever having the right words to put it in. And this is not going to be a complicated course. This is not a deeply theoretical thing in which your brains will blow right out of you.

They will do that too, but this is not because we're going to make it a very heavy thing. It's just that many people have never been able to articulate, to put into words, what they believe. Bob Jones Sr. said, I would rather hear a man say I've seen something when he really saw something than to hear a man say I have seen something when he actually saw nothing.

So it's better to have the real thing and not be able to say it right than to be able to say everything right and not have the real thing. Why apologetics? Why do we get into this? Some people actually question the use, Christians actually question the use of apologetics. They say this is a waste of time because the real problem with people is not facts.

And that is actually true. I've worked for over 21 years now in universities as a Christian, as an evangelist, and I've come to this conclusion that the major and basic reason why people reject the gospel is not because of lack of evidence. I heard Josh McDowell say in one of his studies in apologetics that in all of his ministry, and he's done an immense amount of college apologetics in particular, he said in all of my ministry I've only met five or six people who had genuine intellectual questions.

He said I've met many people with genuine intellectual excuses, but I've only met five or six people with real, it was actually the facts of the matter that were holding them back from making a commitment to God. There are three major reasons why people don't give their lives to God. When I was not a Christian, it was kind of fun to argue with Christians, I would have enjoyed that a great deal, but the main three reasons why people do not give their lives to God is first ignorance.

And when we say ignorance I don't mean just a lack of knowledge, it can be willful ignorance. Scripture speaks in Romans 1, and it's easy to make just a description of what we look like outside of truth in God. In the book of Romans 1 there is a statement in verse 18, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man who suppress or hold under the truth and unrighteousness.

In order to live a life in which you do wrong you must constantly suppress truth, you must push it down, hold it under. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them for God or to them, for God has showed it to them. And then God points right back first to the natural order, the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

We'll look later at what that means. So that they are without excuse, because that when they did know God, they did not give Him glorious God, neither were thankful, but they became vain in their imaginations,

their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and so on. I want you to see here that the root of becoming deceived mentally is a moral rejection.

So we tend to think that the reason why a person is living wrong is because they think wrong. In other words, bad thinking leads to bad living. The Bible flips it.

It says bad choices lead to silly thinking. That intellectual rejection or intellectual deception, shall we put it this way, follows moral rejection. It begins in the heart.

It begins in the choices. It begins in you turning your back on what you already know is true. Now I'm convinced this, that if a man or a woman will set themselves to follow whatever the cost to them morally, truth, wherever it is, they will ultimately end up in Christ.

Because I believe He is the center and sum of all reality. He is the center of the systems of reality. Now C.I. Scofield, the guy who did the Scofield reference Bible, said a lot of dumb things, but he said one great thing.

At least one. He may have said others. He said truth is fibrous, not crystalline.

By that I think he meant that truth is like a tree. You can get any one of the roots or any one of the branches, and providing you follow it down, you know, or wherever, you'll eventually hit the main branch. So it doesn't matter where you're coming from.

You can come in from the world of natural order. You can come in philosophically. You can come in historically.

The whole world is a playground to the Christian apologeticist, because the whole world speaks of the glory of God. So following truth, the only difference between scientific truth and we'd say Christian truth here is not in that one deals with facts and the other one deals with fantasy. The difference between the two is that Christian truth requires a moral cost.

It requires change for you to proceed. And that's the scary part about it. That was my chief hang-up, not giving my life to God.

I really didn't want to change. I was quite happy for the way I was, thank you very much. So truth is fibrous, not crystalline.

You can't mine truth out and just leave a piece isolated from the rest of truth. Christian truth is a whole. It's not just true religiously.

It's true in science. It's true in art. It is true in sociology.

It's true in anthropology. It's true in philosophy. It's true across the board.

And that's an incredible claim, but it is the one that is made quite off-handedly by the Lord God. After all, if He put the thing together, then He is the center and sum and source of the whole thing. All right, now I want to give you two second reasons.

Second reason is a very simple one, just pride. That's a simple reason. John 5, I think there is a little dialogue that goes on.

Let's see if I can find it. Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, He said, You will not come to me that you might have life. I do not receive honor from men, but I know you, you have not the love of God in you.

I am come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. For another shall come in his own name, whom you will receive. How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Do you know one of the biggest battles from giving your life to God is what other people will think of you? In the university campus, that is a major holdback for people to give their lives to Christ, and it is the cultural pressure of your peers.

What? You know, I think, you're a Christian, you're a jerk, I mean, I don't want to be one like that. So, it's a simple pride thing, it is, you know, I don't want to take the shame and the dishonor of saying I believe in this God or Christ or something, when it doesn't seem like most of my peers are into that. It's much cooler just to go, well, yes, I'm not into anything, actually.

I'm into my own philosophy, whatever that is. Still working it out, and I will be for an awful long time. The third one is a strange one, and that is immorality.

By morality, I mean more broadly immorality than just sexual, but particularly sexual. You understand that immorality doesn't just mean sexual immorality. A person can say, well, he steals, he kills, he lies, but at least he's not immoral.

By morality, though, we focus on sexual immorality because when sexual immorality takes place, there is a process, and Bill Gothard goes into this a little bit, and it's kind of a neat thing. It shows that when you reject light designed to show you your walk with truth, then a process goes on that creates for you a philosophy that allows you to live the way you want to live by justifying that which you've done. Scripture talks about, it's as if the conscience... I have this little weird diagram I do of, how do I do it, I've forgotten how to... It goes something like this, it's called Man, a Triple Trinity, and this is his physical systems here, the body, the bone, and the blood, and the flesh, and then here, the personality, and then here, the spirit.

I'm a hopeless trichotomist when it comes to this. And then we put the emotions here, and we put the reason here, and then in the center, the will, and then on this side, we have the conscience, it's right up there, and then on this side, we have intuition, and on this side, we have devotion. So man really has two dimensions to his personality, one of them speaks to a space-time universe around him, this thing, and then the other part connects up to an invisible world.

So he is able to pick up things that aren't known by normal senses, that we say, I just had a bad feeling about this, as Han Solo said, going out of his light jump, and then devotion. We are able to express worship. Most dogs do not collect around a statue of Lassie or Snoopy and go, ala, ala, it's just boom, woof, woof, they don't do that.

They just basically get into, you know, just ordinary doggy things, but human beings worship. The conscience here, I put it right here in the reason, right at the junction of reason, because the Scripture speaks about when a person commits themselves to sexual immorality, what happens there is the conscience is damaged, it is hurt, and it bothers people. Conscience comes from two Latin words, con with and sciento to know, so conscience means alongside of with, to know alongside of with.

It is a comparison standard, like this watch is, the watch is not a standard in itself, it's supposed to be constantly compared to another standard, Greenwich Meantime or Big Ben or, you know, Big Ben, it's not

a standard either, but anyway, you're supposed to compare that constantly, that keeps this thing straight. But what happens when Big Ben gets a slug put into it? What happens when a monkey climbs up in the game and Big Ben stops? If this conscience standard is violated or hurt, one of two things happen, either you check back to the source and get the thing straightened up or else you start running on a new time and you start to define the world according to your time. You say, I don't care if you think it's 12, my watch says 1 and that's the way it's going to be.

So what happens is when you hurt your conscience, one of two things happen, either accusation or excuse. You do something wrong, your conscience will say you're wrong, you have moved out of what you know to be right. And you will either say, yeah, that's right and try and take steps to get back to where it's right or else you will begin to excuse, you'll come up with good reasons why.

As a matter of fact, nobody in this room and nobody outside of this room can do wrong unless they believe three things. Number one, that in their case it's not really wrong, it might be wrong for somebody else, but in their case there are special exceptions. Number two, if you do believe it is wrong, you believe that you will not be found out, you will not be caught.

And number three, if it is wrong and you will be caught, you will be found out, you will not be punished for it. Nobody can do wrong without in some way going through those three sets of excuses in their head. It's not really wrong, it's wrong for others, but in this case not for me because actually I'm a special case.

I alone of all people deserve to do this. And then I will not be found out and if I am found out I will not be punished. If you can't convince yourself of one or more of those things, you will find it very hard to do wrong.

So that excusing process that goes on is what we mean by immorality. When a person violates, especially sexual immorality, they create for themselves a philosophy in which they are allowed to live the way they want to live, because it gives you a mindset or a world frame or a paradigm or a way in which you can view the world in which your conscience, which has been bothering you, no longer bothers you. And it gets worse.

By the way, it's not real, so apply it to life, it breaks down, but it's still there. I'm telling you that simply because of this. You will assume as you go out with facts that by simply giving facts to people they will become overwhelmed and get saved all over the place.

You will assume wrong. I spent a whole year at a secular university in New Zealand with that assumption. Boy, when I went to university I was so loaded for beer, man.

I had coat pockets with apologetics tracks here and backslider tracks in my back pocket. I was loaded. Boy, I went in, I'd just seen a tenth of my high school give their lives to the Lord.

I got saved the last three months of my senior year or upper sixth year or whatever. I'd gone back in for another year, because there was no rule that said you had to leave after you got saved. I felt I'd wasted most of my time at high school, so I asked the teacher if I could come back for another upper sixth or senior year.

Yeah, they said sure, you know, no rule says you have to leave. So I went back in and I found one other friend, and in our school, which as far as I knew had no Christians, I never saw any Christian stickers on anything, nobody ever rode fish shaped bicycles to our school, I just went out and preached the gospel

and saw a huge chunk of our school give their lives to the Lord. So I was ready for university.

I went up there and then I came to an awful discovery about two thirds of the way through after witnessing to an entire chemistry class of 400 people. It was weird, you know, you have breaks in between lectures, and I was in one before that, and there was a whole hour break, and then the next class, chemistry class, and so I'm just sitting there and somebody asked me something and started talking, and more people came, and talking more, and more people came, and then as the class began to fill up for the next thing, it just kept growing, and I started preaching, and it was really a lot of fun, but finally the lecturer was there, and all 15 minutes before the class I got a chance to lay out some basic facts, some of the things we look at here. At the end of the time there were no objections, nobody went, ah, but there was just that sort of silence and turn away, and I went away, I went away at the end of that weeping.

I remember on the bus going home, my eyes filled with tears and I said to God, why? I don't understand that. I do not understand why there was not, you know, I was expecting conviction, people falling on me, why not? And the Lord said, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. He showed me that apologetics is actually a different thing from evangelism.

It's a preparatory, it's prime purpose is not commitment but clarification. It's a different thing. These facts are not going to basically, I don't know of any facts per se that will change people's lives.

It's the Holy Spirit who uses His word that brings ultimate change. These facts are nevertheless important. So with all of this, the fact that most people aren't moved by facts, another assumption we make is that on college campuses particularly, that the more facts you give kids the better it is because they're really into facts.

But I haven't found that to be true. Most college kids haven't got time to think. They've got so many assignments and stuff, they haven't got time to think about anything.

Just make it, help me make it through the next class. So I haven't had a bunch of, it's usually the dropouts that have time to think. Yes, I've got time to think why I dropped out.

So if this is all true, then why, if this is true that basically people aren't even interested in facts, then why in the facts should we study something like this? Why don't we just go on to something else? And a lot of Christians have asked that. They said apologetics is a waste of time, only the Holy Spirit can change somebody. So, well it's a very good reason why.

And the reason just goes like this, God commands us to do it. That's a simple reason. So if God commands, we'd say this, why reason with people who will not accept reasons? Well, why should we use reason to refute reasons and ignore reasons that they can't? Why should we do that? Because God commands Christians to give a reasoned defense.

And that ought to be a reason enough for any reasonable Christian. I want to give you some examples now of the way God works. Because He's into examples of things and giving reasons for things.

And confrontations in areas of truth. First of all, a classic example is Elijah. And you don't have to look all these up, but in 1 Kings 18 we have a confrontation between two mutually exclusive truth claims.

Here is the prophets of Baal, they say Baal is God. Here is Elijah, he says Jehovah is God. They are put in conflict and God tells Elijah to do this.

So his simple statement is this. God tells him to do this. It wasn't just a little idea he cooked up overnight.

God said to him, I want you to do this. You make an altar, you challenge these men who claim exclusive truth to Baal. You set up an altar, put wood there and a sacrifice on top and ask them to do the same.

And then call on this God who is supposed to be there. Let them call on Baal. If he is God, let him answer by fire and like that sacrifice.

And if Jehovah is God, then you know, do that. So that's exactly what he did. He set up a confrontation with an evidence there.

This was the first evidence that demands a verdict in the book, it came later. And he didn't really stack the odds in favor of Jehovah either. Prophets of Baal spent most of the day dancing around, cutting themselves up and getting all their nice suits rotten.

And when Elijah built that altar, the 12 stones, one for each tribe of Israel, and he put the wood on, killed a cow, and then he had a trench dug around there, asked somebody to get water and put it over the top. Somebody in the University of Babylon said, wait a minute, if you put water on the wood it doesn't burn so well. And he said, right, just do it.

So they kept doing it, a bunch of water, until that thing was soaked and the wood was soaked and the rocks were soaked and the water filled up the trench. And then he prayed a very small prayer, very short depending on the size of the print of your Bible, and just said in effect, let it be known, I've done this according to your word, this is what you told me to do, hear me O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are God. That's evidence, a demand for it.

And he said to those people, how long do you stagger between two opinions? If God be God, serve him. See that is a confrontation, and of course, I don't know what happened there, out of that blue dome of heaven, a livid finger of laser lightning, no cow, stones become magna, cleaned out the trench. And the people who were pretty thick up until that point said, oh the Lord, he is God.

That is called your basic evidence. Now the scripture we began this thing with, set forth your case. God is challenging people.

You, if you've got a case against me, I want to see it in fact, so you lay it out for me. You claim to be God, and let's see your description of what's going to happen if you really know what you're talking about. That's fair enough, you want to play God, why don't you prove it.

Look at the way that Jesus dealt with the paralytic for instance. It's in Mark 2, in the Gospels, a man, comes a man sick of the palsy there, and Jesus is so popular that they had to, everybody closed the door, and they only had two and a half thousand tickets, and couldn't get out. So these guys were pretty desperate, they ripped the roof off, and you look up and you see the roof ripped off, and this guy coming down on a stretcher, you know, you make room, whether there's, there or not.

In neat scripture, when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the sick of the palsy, son, your sins be forgiven you, it shocked everybody, and the certain of the scribes sitting there reasoning in their hearts, why does this man speak blasphemies, who can forgive sin but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit, they reasoned within themselves, he said, why do you reason these things in your hearts, whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, your sins be forgiven me, or to say, arise, take up your

bed and walk, but that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. He says to the man sick of the palsy, I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go into your way into your house, and immediately arose and took up his bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, we never saw it like this. He said, I'm going to forgive your sin, sin is forgiven.

They said, who can do that except God? He said, which is easier to say, that thing, or get up and walk, but that you may know that I know what I'm talking about, get up and walk, and he did. See that's evidence, it's not a necessary thing, he didn't have to prove it, but he did. Just demonstration.

In John 5, 31 to 36, there's a principle here, if I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that bears witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesses of me is true. You sent unto John, and he bore witness to the truth, that I received not testimony from man, but these things I say that you might be saved.

He was a burning and a shining light, and you were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. Now John Wimber mentions the three kinds of presentations of the gospel that are popular in the world.

One is program, which we're really into in the west, providing a nice program for people to get saved by. And then we have the proclamation one, which is the preaching of the gospel, and which apologetics is a handmaiden to, we'll look at that in a minute. And then the power confrontations he calls them, which is what Jesus is testifying here.

He's saying somebody spoke about me, that was John, you liked what he had to say, whether you liked it or not, you listen. And he testified of me, that he said the works that I do too. There is more than one testimony to his truth, he didn't just stand up and say I'm true and I just want you to accept that I'm face value.

He said if you don't believe me for what I say, then look at the other things. And that is the role of apologetics. You can simply proclaim, you can say this is the gospel, you can lay it out to people, but sometimes there's an extra thing which could be added.

This isn't apologetic, power isn't apologetic, it is an evidence of the reality of the living Christ. It is one you won't see in evidence that demands a verdict, but it is still there. It is a testimony as an apologetic.

Everybody uses apologetics. Somebody said why are you a Christian? He said I was miserable and I gave my life to Jesus and my whole life changed. That's an apologetic.

It is a statement. In this case there are more than one reason, and that's a principle with Jesus. If you don't believe me for what I say, or the testimony of others, then believe me for the works sake.

Now let's look at the way that Christians did this, and what I want to finish on this thing is to show you the spirit in which apologetics are to be carried out. Paul spoke on the resurrection, just scribble these down, 1 Corinthians 15 is an apologetic on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15. It is a reasoned series of facts on the resurrection of Jesus, which again is the core of the gospel.

If Jesus did not rise, then what are we wasting our time here for? In Acts 17, on Mars Hill, Paul presents to a group of the philosophers of his day, some of you have been to Mars Hill, you know it is kind of a trippy

experience being up there and looking down and seeing the same marketplace that Paul preached on, the same temples that were there in his time, and knowing that all the philosophers of the day used to sit around and talk about why is there error and other heavy philosophical questions, and in the middle of that Paul came and presented the gospel. What he does is he does an apologetic. So sometimes, as a matter of fact, if I was going to a culture that knew nothing at all about God, I would start basically with an apologetic, I would start with what God is like in the universe, which is exactly what Paul did, he spoke about the world, how big it is, obviously God, if he made all of this, is not going to fit into a little box like this dumb little temple that you have made, and he is certainly not going to be contained in any of these little statues you have got here, but I notice here that you have got a place for an unknown God, who has no form or shape, I want to tell you about that one because this is the one who put the world together, and he is the one who wants to live in you, and that is an apologetic, he is giving reasons why they should trust this unknown God.

In Acts 19 verses 8 through to 10, Paul, the scripture says, as his custom was, would meet daily in the temple, in the school of Tyrannus, and reasoning, it says, and the word reasoning there, Dialogomenos, is a dialogue, it is to conduct a discussion which is likely to end in dispute, so that is not just a proclamation, that is to reason, to step on step, to lead to something where people may challenge it and say, well I don't believe that, that's a load of hogwash, that kind of thing. And it is allied with another word, Python, which means to convince, so it is a discussion designed to convince that involves facts and stuff like this. And now I want to give you some of the heart scriptures for the Christian apologetics.

The major one which we will look at in a little while is 1 Peter 3.15, that is the standard apologetics verse. This word apologetics, apologia, is used 8 times in the scriptures, in the verb form 11 times. So it is used a fair bit.

It is some of the ways that it is used, we will look at Jude 3, would be a good one. Find Jude, that little pistol stuck in there, Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write to you and exhort you that you should, see this phrase, earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Now that is a challenge to apologetics.

The word there, to earnestly contend or contend earnestly, epagonizumai, is to agonize for. And in the illustration is an athlete who is in exceptional training for an Olympic type event. You ever watched, I don't know, those of you Americans, did you ever see the commercials that preceded the Olympics, you know, where there is this guy, you know, and the guy keeps bashing into the pole and never making it over the high jump and then the guy is sort of swimming and he's tied out and they have the coach going, you can do it, you can do it, you know, and then finally the guy, you know, and the guy makes it over the pole, the guy lifts the thing and that, now the agony that went on before, that's this word, contend earnestly, that there is a training to go, a deep training.

Apologetics is not an easy thing, it is not, it's not even a fixed thing, gospel is simple, all you do is you just tell the simple story, Jesus came, virgin birth, he lived a perfect life, he died, he rose again, he ever lives to change people's lives, that's simple, it stays exactly the same. Trouble with apologetics is it doesn't. What I give you this year will be different each time and so you start on a journey when you start in apologetics.

The reason why it keeps shifting is because the attacks keep shifting. The devil is no dumb football player, if you were out, were out playing football and you worked out some strategy and the other team was creaming you every time because they figured out what you're doing and just blocked you, well, you know,

you don't sit around just being creamed, you figured out something else is going to have to happen and you work out something different. Well, you think the devil has been around thousands of years, he's not stupid.

You nail him on one area he's attacking, he just shifts gears and he goes somewhere else and apologetics shifts with him. Gospel stays the same, apologetics keeps shifting. In creation stuff, for instance, I've worked in creation studies now all those 20 years and every year there's a new little wrinkle that people bring in and a whole bunch of the other things that used to be central core are now dumped.

People don't care about those, they don't even want to talk about that, they shift to something else. You ever talk to a cult, you nail them down on one thing and they move to something else, that's the area of apologetics. What is interesting about this word contend earnestly is that it involves, you can write this down if you like, it involves careful and calculated study the opposition, careful calculated study the opposition in order to fully respond to an opposing position.

That's an athletic phrase. You can imagine a football team studying videotapes, a tennis player watching replays on his opponent trying to find where the weakness is, where the attack is going to come from, the strong points. Now that's the word, contend earnestly, it is to give yourself with a solid calculated study in order to fully respond to opposing positions.

Now can we, before we finish this little bit off, can we give you in contrast evangelism and apologetics. We'll put them in a contrast thing. We'll put apologetics on this side and we'll put evangelism here.

Okay, apologetics deals with the entire system. In apologetics we look at everything, you know, sin, suffering, death, the meaning of life, you cover the whole ball of wax. In evangelism we're just dealing with the core message.

In apologetics the basic principle is to provide answers. In evangelism the basic principle is to proclaim a person who is the answer. One's a declaration, one's an explanation.

The purpose in apologetics is to clarify. If a person says, well I don't know, how do you know that Jesus is really God? I mean anybody can say they're God. You clarify, you give evidences.

In evangelism it is confront, you show people that if this is true and Jesus is God then what are you going to do about it? In apologetics the aim is that people will appreciate the truth. They'll begin to say, well I didn't know that. And what you're doing basically is we could call it breaking up the fallow ground.

The reasons behind people's lives, the excuses, are being broken up by apologetics. It doesn't necessarily mean that they will become Christians there, but see the ground will get broken up. It softens.

I know people who have spent years attempting to discredit the Christian faith have eventually come out on the other side. Classic example, Frank Morrison, the man who was the lawyer, who wrote a book to show the resurrection couldn't have taken place and wound up becoming a Christian. And the book became Whom of the Stone.

Josh McDowell, another person who saw on the lives of Christians something that bothered them intensely because they looked like they had something real, set himself to disprove Christianity, wound up one of the most well-known apologeticists. C.S. Lewis, another brilliant Oxford atheist. Malcolm Muggeridge, again here in England, another classic example.

Somebody who always acted devil's advocate as the cynical and brilliant agnostic on television programs. Just eventually the weight of what he had studied in order to refute got to him and quite late in life surrendered his life to Jesus. This is heavy stuff, whether you know it or not, it doesn't matter, it is heavy.

It is the stuff of change of man and history. The point of evangelism is so people can appropriate, so that they instead of just being prepared for something, that they will commit themselves to Christ. And you'll find in speaking and preaching and writing and everything else, you will use mixtures of these things.

Sometimes I find myself throwing in some of these, knowing that there are people out there who really haven't got enough basis to make an intelligent commitment to God. Sometimes everybody knows what they are supposed to do, there are church groups sitting out there, lost, that know enough to get them saved 40 times over, and the point is not to do this, the point is to go to that and demand a verdict. Alright, time is flying.

Can I give you quickly, quickly, the reason why apologetics works. I'll just scribble them down, Josh McDowell has gone into some detail on these, but we'll just put them down. First, because it is a rational faith.

This is not a fairy story. When we say rational, it means that an intelligent person, using the same kind of brains you would to find anything else out in history, can examine the credentials of Christianity. It is open to verification, it is open to falsification, in other words it can be challenged, and it is a rational study.

Because of that, God wants you to use your brains, He says, let us reason together. That means you can think, and He sure does. Two, it is a historical faith.

It is not just a philosophical idea, it is something that happened in history. Jesus lived, He did rise from the dead. The Gospels are historical documents, they are not fairy stories.

If you are going to challenge Christianity, you cannot challenge it just philosophically, you've got to challenge it historically. It is not just a philosophical idea, it is a statement of history. Thirdly, it is an objective faith.

People say to us, well it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you're a believer. That's a bunch of honk-bosh. Of course it matters what you believe, you can believe that the world is a blue banana if you like, but it will make an awful lot of difference to you, though not much to the world.

It is an objective faith. Christianity is faith in a person, not faith in faith. Faith doesn't save anybody.

You can believe anything you like, the devils believe, they're not saved. It is faith in a person, and the object, Christ Himself, is a historical reality, as well as a present one. This happened in history, Christ is a real person.

Now, finish all of this by saying this, our objective in apologetics is to provide, is not to provide absolute proof. Is that sharp, dear? We're not supposed to provide absolute proof, and neither would God. There are forms of coercion which do not involve any trust, and one of them is to swamp a person so there is no opportunity for that.

If God came down and demonstrated Himself to you, that is one form of coercion, which is very heavy. Do you see that? If you have no choice, there is no faith, no trust. So even in the world we live in, we live in a

contingent world, there is no possibility of absolute proof in anything.

I'll give you that in a second, pick this up. But our point in apologetics is not to present 100% proof of anything, but sufficient evidence for people to make an intelligent commitment. When I say sufficient, I mean really sufficient.

Are you absolutely sure that the water you drank this morning is not poisoned? Are you absolutely sure when you get in the tube that it will not crash? That it will not become electrically charged and X thousand volts will run through your body? Are you absolutely sure when you get on a plane, I mean 100%, that it will not crash? No, you are not. You don't do anything by absolute 100% surety, but what you do work on is evidence. If you notice a lot of people die when they drink water in here, you don't drink it anymore.

If you see a plane that happens to be crashing every time it flies, you sure don't get in. If you get in one where the wing is flapping off, you don't get in. You base your commitment on sufficient evidence.

Well, not many people have died drinking the water here, it may be safe to do it. Most people get on the tube and don't die, so I guess I can trust it this time. Do you see that? Every decision you make in life is based on sufficient evidence.

It's not 100% proof, but it's 100% commitment. When you get in that thing, you're in it. You don't leave a little bit out of you, that's the doubting part.

I left my mind behind because I wasn't sure, but my body went. You go, all of you go, based on what you got. All right, time, I suppose we should take a break at this point.

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