M20U1 Using Apologetics

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MBS0010010021/11

How To Use Apologetics

Attitude is critical in Christian apologetics. We represent God. Becoming harsh, egotistical, or sarcastic betrays our witness.

We must avoid the urgency to compete. Winning matters less than does modeling the character of Jesus. In should be our intention to quietly disarm our critic, not to display our superiority. We seek community, not compelled acquiescence. We seek to dialogue with others, not to silence them. “The goal and purpose is to help the unbeliever accept the gospel and the believer to be strengthened in his faith.” -lecturer

We must avoid attempting to prove the Bible is the word of God. We simply attempt to lead people to deduce based on an array of evidence that God is real, especially that he is real in our lives and that he can be real in their life.

What Is The Purpose of Christian Apologetic?

Most people have questions about God and the Bible. Their only source is a Christian communicator. A Christian trying to help genuine inquirers becomes a Christian apologist, usually without realizing his role in apology. Most people hear common complaints about God and many Christians may try to evade becoming involved in the discussion.

The successful apologists uses the tools of apology to silence or correct the criticism. He helps the unbeliever to find reasonable answers to their doubts about God and the Bible and perhaps lead them to an active faith in Christianity. They gain trust in the Bible and can grow in their spiritual life.

Stages In An Apologetic Confrontation

Assess the opposition

Recognize a hostile audience and step back until a better time. Matthew 10:14 “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.”

Assess the opponent.

If your opponent is basically honest, even though he may be biased in his background, you can engage in discussion. If he is dishonest or evasive, little good will result from engagement.

Know The Topic

Christian apology deals with an unbelievable range of subjects. Only engage within those areas in which you're knowledgeable. In a public presentation, you should know in advance the topics. If you’re not knowledgeable in science, avoid scientific debates. “If a Neuro-surgeon is not embarrassed when he refuses to speak on Pediatrics, a Christian philosopher should not be embarrassed in refusing to debate topics related to Physics.” -lecturer

Know or speak to your audience.

Avoid, or at least explain your technical jargon when speaking with less sophisticated or mixed audiences.

Share your sources

In this age of the internet it is easy for listeners to confirm your evidence if you provide the sources. Printed to take home may be best. You could also have a personal or professional website where listeners can go to see your linked list of sources. This is similar to pastors providing Bible texts to his congregants to read along with him or to study at home after the service.

Encourage Ongoing Study

Recommend magazines, books, websites, and podcasts for followup study. I could recommend Amazing Facts at <https://www.amazingfacts.org/media-library/read/c/2/l/english/t/bible-study-guides#(grid%7Cfilter)=.18>;

Appeal For A Verdict

Ask for a personal response appropriate to the discussion. Otherwise people get busy and the opportunity is lost.

Public Debate Or Private

Christian Apologetics is most often personal. But a skilled apologist will sometimes find himself invited to a public venue. He should carefully evaluate the occasion, place, topic, audience and freedom for presenting his views. Otherwise you may likely find yourself painted into a corner. Your critic may have participated in planning the event, choose to go first, and considerably overextend his allotted time. He may rush to conclude the event, giving you little more than time enough to introduce yourself. Once the program is over, the crowd begins leaving and the sound system is turned off.

While it wasn’t an apologetic debate, my wife and I know the experience of having the sound system turned off while we were singing a duet in a Christian music festival. We were in a church we’d previously been a member of. The sound person hadn’t liked me and ordered our accompaniment soundtrack turned off. While not completely off, it was turned down by a friend too low to benefit us. We managed to carry on to the conclusion. And the program continued normally for the remaining singers. The intention was to embarrass us before the audience. Instead, we knew the song well enough to finish without stumbling.

In private discussions there is no previously given time constraint, no organizer to curtail the apologist. There is no sound system to be turned off. You have a fairer opportunity to ask questions and be heard. This works best with a one to one conversation or perhaps up to five participants.

The Troublemakers

The worst trouble maker is the persistent interrogator who may possibly be knowledgeable but may not have come to a meaningful decision on the evidence. Or perhaps he is a Christian who isn’t as converted as he pretends to be. The intention of the persistent interrogator is to frustrate the apologist, possibly to the point of anger. He wants to portray the apologist as incompetent.

The apologist, if he recognizes this situation, may be able to soothingly suggest that it seems the interrogator seriously has good questions that take more time to answer than the time available for this presentation. The apologist wishes to proceed with his planned outline but will be happy after the meeting ends to meet with this questioner to better answer his specific questions. He gets the good will of his audience by respectfully treating his interrogator as a genuine inquirer.

Be careful to not give someone trying to derail your presentation to get away with showing off in front of people.

Handling Tough Questions

No one can spontaneously answer all questions on the spot. Many answers require ground work, background information to explain. Be careful you don’t wade into areas of expertise you don’t have. Your questioners may lead you, intentionally or not, into these areas you are less competent in.

When you don’t know an answer, you will gain most by admitting you don’t know. You lose when you pretend to give answers that you only vaguely understand. People read your body language, the tics you unknowingly reveal when speaking less that completely with honesty. People want authoritative answers and will likely soon recognize it when we start making up answers on the spot. We no longer live in an age of generalized knowledge.

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1. How this module helped your studies?

If you can, avoid crowds in apology. Be sure invitations are genuinely seeking and providing for fair debate. I think I recognize that an honest apology requires no formal opponent. And that for successful results, the audience should be made up of persons seeking truth.

I find questions 1, 2, and 4 to be closely equivalent.

2. What new lessons you learned?

Be prepared. Be willing to decline invitations that aren’t a good fit for you.

3. Your critical evaluation on the topic. We mean what is the shortcoming you see in the text, your suggestions for improvement.

I’d have preferred these 19 courses to have addressed specific topics and arguments. I feel much, or at least some, of each course comes across as redundant. Of course, we learn through repetition.

4. How does this lesson help you?

Debates, formal ones at least, might come off better with a panel of Christian apologists, each with specialized understanding and preparation. Avoid jack of all trades in apology. You may be expert in none.

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Date: 09-04-2022