

# Week 1: What Is Apologetics?

## (1 Peter 3:15)

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### What You Will Gain from This Class:

Confidence in answering questions; stronger personal faith; tools for evangelism; understanding evidence for Scripture.

Objective: Introduce the meaning, importance, and Biblical foundation of apologetics for everyday Christian life.

### Introduction

- Welcome the class and introduce the series. Who knows what Apologetics is?
- Ask: Have you ever had your faith challenged? How did you respond?
- C.S. Lewis: "Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important."
- Goal: We're going to learn how to give a reasoned defense for our faith, rooted in Scripture.

### What This Class Is NOT

- This is not a philosophy class or academic debate course.
- You don't need special training - apologetics is for every Christian.
- We are not here to attack others or win arguments, but to remove barriers to faith.
- We will not answer every possible question, but we will build a strong foundation.

### What Is Apologetics?

- Definition: From Greek \*apologia\*, meaning "a defense" or "a reasoned argument."
  - Not an apology in the modern sense - rather, a courtroom-style defense.
  - Key Verse: **1 Peter 3:15** "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"
  - NIV uses "answer", ESV uses "defense" (in Greek, apologia)
- Illustration: Think of apologetics like a courtroom lawyer explaining the facts of a case clearly and compellingly.
- Rhetorical Question: If Christianity is true, shouldn't we be able to explain why?
  - Extending the courtroom illustration, shouldn't it stand up to cross-examination?

## Why Do Apologetics?

- Secularism is rising; online skepticism targets youth; culture views faith as irrational. Christians need more than clichés - we need clarity
  - “God sees us as He’d like us to be but loves us as we are”
- Biblical Mandate:
  - **1 Peter 3:15** “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*”
  - **Jude 3** “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, *I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*”
  - **2 Cor 10:5** “*We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*”
- It Strengthens Faith:
  - **Luke 1:1-4** “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, *so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*”
  - God invites examination - **Isaiah 1:18** “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord”
    - Other examples, think of Job, Moses, Abraham, and David
- It Helps Reach Others (remember the “reasoned argument”):
  - **Acts 17:2-3** “And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days *he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”*”
  - But be careful...
    - **Proverbs 15:28** – “The heart of the righteous *ponders* how to answer” (ESV *weighs*)
    - **Colossians 4:5-6** “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; *make the most of every opportunity.* Let your conversation be always *full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*”
- Introspective Question: Have you ever stayed silent about your faith out of fear of not knowing what to say?
  - Or, maybe it was because you doubt it yourself?
- Doubts reveal hidden beliefs. Timothy Keller’s book “*The Reason for God*” (2008)
  - “Let’s begin with believers. A faith without some doubts is like a human body without any antibodies in it. People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do

will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic. A person's faith can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection. Believers should acknowledge and wrestle with doubts - not only their own but their friends' and neighbors'. It is no longer sufficient to hold beliefs just because you inherited them. Only if you struggle long and hard with objections to your faith will you be able to provide grounds for your beliefs to skeptics, including yourself, that are plausible rather than ridiculous or offensive."

## Common Misconceptions

- "Faith doesn't need evidence" → Hebrews 11 disproves this.
    - **Hebrews 11:1** "Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof (evidence) of things not seen."
    - This means biblical faith is not irrational or blind - it is grounded in conviction and reason.
    - Faith is rational, but its reasoning is spiritual rather than empirical. Just as eyesight gives evidence of the physical world, faith gives evidence of the spiritual world.
    - The chapter lists examples - Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses - whose faith was not baseless. Each acted on God's promises with confidence that those promises were trustworthy. Their faith was validated by outcomes (e.g., Noah's ark saving his family, Abraham receiving Isaac).
    - C.S. Lewis: Faith aligns us with reality; it is not blind belief.
  - "Apologetics is only for intellectuals"
    - It's for every believer who wants to give a reason for their hope. At its core, apologetics is simply explaining why you trust God in a way that connects with others. It's not about mastering abstract arguments; it's about living out and articulating faith with clarity and compassion in everyday conversations.
  - "You can't argue anyone into faith" → Apologetics isn't about winning arguments; it's about removing unnecessary barriers to faith.
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- Faith without reason isn't biblical faith - Jesus Himself used reasoned arguments (e.g., Matthew 22).
    - Take for example **Matthew 22:23-33** "That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven,

since all of them were married to her?” Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead - have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.”

- The Sadducees posed a hypothetical about marriage in the afterlife.
- Jesus corrected their reasoning by appealing to both Scripture and logic: “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.” He then cited Exodus 3:6, showing that God is the God of the living, not the dead.
- This is an apologetic argument: He used Scripture as evidence and logical inference to prove resurrection.

## How Apologetics Will Help Us

- Deal with doubts and questions
- Respond to moral and cultural confusion
- Equip our children and grandchildren
- Prepare for evangelism

Remember, Apologetics doesn't replace the gospel - it supports it.

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- Think of apologetics as examining the foundation beneath your faith. Storms will come; only a tested foundation stands.
- Think of it like John the Baptist - apologetics 'prepares the way' for people to meet Jesus.
- Evidence-based faith deepens conviction and clarifies evangelism.
- Illustration: Doctor analogy - explaining why builds trust in truth.

Reflection:

- If someone asked you today why you believe Christianity is true, would you answer with clarity - or habit?
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Take-Home Assignment:

- Write down a question you have about Christianity; talk to someone about why you believe; memorize 1 Peter 3:15.

## Class Engagement

Discussion Questions:

1. What's a question or challenge you've heard (or asked) about Christianity?
2. Why do many Christians avoid apologetics?
3. When was your faith challenged?
4. How can we be both bold and gentle (1 Peter 3:15)?

Next week... "Does God Exist? Design & Creation"