

THE 3D SERIES: DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT

SEASON 2: PRACTICAL EVANGELISM & APOLOGETICS:

How to Spread and Defend the Christian Faith

STUDY GUIDE (2nd Edition)

P.W. Howard, MA, JD



Paul at the Areopagus or "Mars Hill" in Athens, Greece (Acts 17:22)

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE 3D SERIES

THE 3D SERIES: DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT is a teaching series for the study of:

- (1) **DEFENSE** - Learn to spread and defend the Christian faith. In addition to Jesus' Great Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19-20 NASB), the Bible also tells us to "always be[] 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" (1 Peter 3:15 NASB);
- (2) **DOCTRINE** - Learn sound **doctrine** to reinforce your own faith and teach it to others (Titus 2:1); and
- (3) **DISCERNMENT** - Use God's Word to **discern** or distinguish the difference between good and evil in our culture (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:14).

The overall goal of the 3D Series is to teach Christians to become three-dimensional mature Christians (Matthew 28:19–20; Ephesians 4:11–15; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

THE 3D SERIES consists of four Seasons:

Season 1: The Authority of Scripture - Consider what the Bible says about the Bible, what the circumstantial evidence says about the Bible, and how to interpret the Bible.

***Season 2: Practical Evangelism & Apologetics** - Consider the biblical foundations for spreading and defending the faith and learn evangelism methods and how to answer common objections.

Season 3: Doctrine - Study important biblical doctrines like Biblical Inerrancy, Trinity, the Deity of Jesus, the Kingdom, etc.

Season 4: Discernment - Apply Scripture and sound biblical doctrine to cultural issues of the day.

B. DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF THE 3D SERIES

1. Easy to Participate: Read Along, Ongoing & Cyclical

This study guide is designed for read-along use in classes and groups. There is no homework and no prerequisites.

The teacher or group leader simply reads (or asks others to read) a section together, pausing for questions and discussion as they arise.

Sections may take one meeting or several, depending on the depth of discussion.

The goal is sound doctrine saturation, not pages covered per week.

Though all of the Seasons are related and build upon each other, each Season can stand alone. This allows anyone to jump in at the beginning of any particular Season and proceed through the next Seasons until they have finished the cycle.

For example, if you missed **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture** you can start with Season 2 and go all the way through Season 4, and then go to Season 1 when the cycle starts over again.

2. Practical Information

The 3D Series gives practical information to help mature your own faith and to help you spread and defend that faith.

Though many volumes have been written about the topics covered in this series, The 3D Series is not meant to be an exhaustive academic endeavor. It is meant to be practical.

3. Sources

The primary source material for The 3D Series is God's Word. Other sources include relatively recent volumes regarding evangelism and apologetics in general, as well as other theological studies like systematic theology textbooks.

The 3D Series does not reinvent the wheel, nor does it add to or subtract from Scripture. The 3D Series simply attempts to build a solid foundation like a field guide upon which you can build over time from other sources and your own experience.

4. Simplified Citations

Since this Study Guide is not intended to be an academic work, the citations to sources will be simplified, but sufficient to allow you to find them on the Internet.

C. WHY SHOULD ANYONE WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

A simple answer to the question, "Why Should Anyone Want to Be a Christian?" is: To be right with God and receive everlasting life.

D. HOW DO WE FIND OUT HOW TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD AND RECEIVE EVERLASTING LIFE?

The primary source for finding out how to be right with God and receive everlasting life is from God's own Word, namely, the Bible.

The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament of God's written words. The Bible is further divided into "books" or "letters."

The writing of the Old Testament began around 1450 B.C. (Genesis) and was completed around 435 B.C. (Malachi). Thus, the OT took about 1000 years to complete.

Around 475 years later, the writing of the New Testament began around 40-45 A.D. (James) and ended around 95 A.D. (Revelation). Thus, the NT took about 55 years to write.

The world has had the OT for about 3500 years and the complete Bible for about 2000 years.

The NT did not cancel out the OT. Though some of the laws applicable during the OT are no longer applicable today, like dietary laws and ceremonial laws, the moral laws remain applicable (for example, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20).

God wrote the entire Bible through human authors.

However, the Bible itself says in 2 Timothy 3:16 (CSB), "**All Scripture is inspired by God**, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness..."

When the Bible says that "all Scripture is inspired by God," the word "God" means the Triune God that has always consisted of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:1, 26; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3, 14, 14:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21).

Though Jesus didn't live on earth until he was born unto Mary around 2000 years ago, there never was a time when Jesus did not exist (John 1:1-3, 14).

Therefore, not only did God the Father and God the Holy Spirit divinely inspire human authors to write the books and letters of the Bible, so did God the Son Jesus (Matt. 7:24-27; 28:20).

There are many passages throughout the OT and the NT that heavily establish the Bible as the authentic, actual, and consistent Word of God, though written by divinely inspired human authors. For more details on the authority of the Bible, consider participating in **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**.

E. WHAT IS THE BIBLE ALL ABOUT?

The Bible tells the true story of how God created everything out of nothing (Genesis 1:1) and that creation "was very good" (Gen. 1:31 KJV). However, people broke the world and themselves with their disobedience, leading God to set in motion a long-term mission to give people an opportunity to be saved from the consequences of their disobedience and to spend eternal life in heaven.

God made man (Adam) and then woman (Eve) and he made them both in his image (Gen. 1:27).

Our first parents lived in a state of immortality and sinlessness in the paradise of the Garden of Eden. Everything was as it was supposed to be.

God gave Adam and Eve a measure of choice as to whether they would obey him. God gave them one rule, namely, not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17).

After being tempted by Satan (but not forced), Eve, then Adam, disobeyed God (Gen. 3) and broke the world and therefore it was no longer "very good."

Since Adam and Eve broke the world with their sin, they lost access to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22), and therefore they too were broken and subject to trouble, toil, sin, and death.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 3:15 (CSB) that after the first sin, God told Satan, "I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:15 is the first prophecy foretelling the coming of Jesus many, many centuries later.

The Bible says that the sinfulness of our first parents is inherited by every other human who has ever lived (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12) except Jesus, who was fully human and fully God, and never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:22).

There is no human being on earth that is sinless. The Bible confirms this in various ways, including:

(Rom. 3:23 KJV) "[F]or all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God..."

(Rom. 3:10 CSB, citing Psalm 14:3) "There is no one righteous, not even one."

(Eccl. 7:20 KJV) "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."

Because we are all sinners, we have all earned condemnation because God is just and has the supreme right to expect the people he created to obey him. That is the **bad news**.

But the **good news** is, there is a way (and only one way) out of that condemnation.

F. WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The word "gospel" means "good news."

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, the "gospel" refers to the "proclamation of the redemption preached by Jesus and the Apostles which is the central content of Christian revelation."

The Greek word for "gospel" is *euangelion* (you-ang-GHEL-ee-on) which is used about 76 times in the New Testament.

It is from the Greek word *euangelion* that we get the English word "evangelism."

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, "evangel" means the "Christian gospel" and "evangelism" means "zealous preaching and dissemination of the gospel."

Thus, the term "evangelical Christians" refers to Christians who put an emphasis on spreading the "evangel" or "gospel" of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what is the gospel or the "good news?"

The Apostle Paul summarized the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 13, 14, and 17 (NASB) in the following way:

¹ Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas [Peter], then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith is also in vain. ... ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

When we broke ourselves and God's good world with our sins, instead of allowing us all to perish in eternal punishment as we deserve, God had mercy upon us and sent God the Son Jesus Christ on earth to live among us for about 33 years and to allow himself to be killed as payment for our sins.

Jesus said that all we have to do to be saved, to be right with God and to receive everlasting life, is to "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NASB).

Another way Jesus told us of this "good news" was in John 3:16 (KJV): "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

So when you consider this "good news" and how incredibly wonderful and excellent that news truly is, it would make sense that you would want to spread it far and wide, as the Bible tells us to do, by making disciples of all nations and always being prepared to make a case for Jesus.

And that's where evangelism and apologetics come in.

G. WHY SHOULD WE SPREAD AND DEFEND THE GOSPEL?

We should spread and defend the gospel because of our love of God and others and because the Bible tells us to, as we will consider in more depth in this study.

II. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT EVANGELISM AND APOLOGETICS

A. GOD'S CALL FOR EVANGELISM

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20a (NASB): "Go, therefore, and **make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to follow all that I commanded you...**"

B. GOD'S CALL FOR APOLOGETICS

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB), "[S]anctify 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."

The Greek word for "defense" is *apologia* (ap-ol-o-GEE-ah) and means "speech in defense."

"Apologetics" does not mean apologizing, but rather **making a case** for Jesus and **defending the Christian faith**.

C. TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Since the Bible is the actual and consistent Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and since we should interpret Scripture with Scripture, the calls for evangelism and apologetics do not contradict each other.

Evangelism and apologetics are two sides of the same coin.

The primary purpose of both evangelism and apologetics is to help lead others to "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NASB).

Apologetics simply reinforces and complements evangelism. When evangelizing, you are usually faced with dealing with a person's current worldview and apologetics helps to show why someone ought to replace those views with the wonderful truth of the gospel.

Apologetics is **not** simply arguing all the time. "Winning" in apologetics is not merely "winning" an argument or embarrassing someone. "Winning" is bringing people closer to Jesus.

Apologetics does not replace the power of the gospel. Certainly, the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16b CSB).

We cannot bring about saving faith in the Lord Jesus merely by the power of our own reason. However, God certainly can and does work through people in bringing about saving faith.

D. WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

As written in 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NASB): "[W]e are **ambassadors for Christ**, as though **God were making an appeal through us**; we beg you on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God."

An ambassador for Christ does more than evangelize (Matt. 28:19) and stay ready to defend the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15). An ambassador for Christ also strives to be Christlike (1 John 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 Cor. 11:1).

So when we make disciples, we should be loving, patient, reasonable, fair, honest, humble, and graceful.

We are commanded to love others as ourselves (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:8-9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8).

Loving others as ourselves includes wanting everyone to have the love and light of Christ and everlasting life – and to escape the eternal consequences of rejecting the gospel.

So we should be ambassadors for Jesus, representing him well while we spread and defend his gospel.

E. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT EVANGELISM

Remember that evangelism and apologetics are two sides of the same coin with the same purpose. Because of this, many passages involve apologetics **and** evangelism.

In addition to Matthew 28:19-20, we will consider in this section other passages that encourage evangelism in general.

Before we proceed, we should consider that the passages involving apologetics and evangelism use different terms like: preaching, teaching, or proclaiming. Further, usually the biblical encouragement to spread the gospel, whether express or implied, is given by Jesus himself or through Apostles.

First, this doesn't mean that apologetics and evangelism were confined to Jesus and the Apostles.

Second, while it's true that some men qualified by Scripture are called to be preachers, that doesn't mean that only professional preachers or evangelists are supposed to spread the gospel.

It should be clear from the whole of Scripture that God wants **all** believers to spread the gospel, men and women, young and old, in their own unique **but biblically sound ways**.

We now turn to the passages encouraging evangelism.

The importance of Jesus' Great Commission cannot be overstated and therefore it bears repeating:

(Matt. 28:19-20a NASB) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..."

Other passages referencing evangelism, in order of appearance in the Bible, include:

(Ps. 96:3 CSB) "**Declare his glory among the nations, his wondrous works among all peoples.**"

Here is an early OT passage calling for believers to actively tell people from all nations about the truth and glory of God and to authenticate that truth and glory by recounting all of the wonderful works he has done.

This idea holds true today. Counting the ways of the wonderful things God has done through the years -- including personal testimony -- is a great way to encourage others to believe as well.

(Ps. 105:1 KJV) "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: **make known his deeds among the people.**"

Here, we are encouraged not only to thank God and pray to him. We are also called to "make known his deeds among the people." This is another example of telling us to count the ways of the wonderful things he has done for us and for you.

(Ps. 107:1-2 NASB) " Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the Lord **say so**, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary...."

This passage calls us to "say so," or to say out loud that "He is good" and "His lovingkindness is everlasting." This would include saying so not only among Christians, but also to everyone.

This is a form of making disciples and making your case for Christ because you are giving reasons why they too should believe, namely, because God is good, loving, and kind.

(Prov. 11:30 NASB) "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and **he who is wise wins souls.**"

Here, we think of believers who truly attempt to live righteous, Christian lives (with the aid of the Holy Spirit) becoming like trees bearing attractive fruit, fruit that others will want to pick, which helps lead them to become trees themselves, also bearing the attractive, good fruit of Christ.

This passage therefore encourages evangelism (seen from a NT perspective) by telling us that living a Christian life is not only good for that Christian, it can also lead to winning other souls for Christ by being a great example to follow, a form of being an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

(Isa. 6:8 CSB) "Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking: Who will I send? Who will go for us? I said: **Here I am. Send me.**"

During Isaiah's vision of heaven, God asked who would speak for him. Isaiah volunteered to be sent to declare God's word.

We too should be willing to volunteer to stand up and speak for God. What do we say? We spread what he has already said in his Word.

(Isa. 12:4 CSB) "Give thanks to the LORD; **proclaim his name! Make his works known among the peoples. Declare that his name is exalted.**"

Here, again, the Bible encourages us to go out and tell people about God and his great works. This glorifies God and also encourages others to believe.

(Isa. 49:6b KJV; cited in Acts 13:47) "**I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles**, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

This verse might be thought of as the Great Commission of the Old Testament which would be redoubled in the New Testament.

(Isa. 52:7 NASB) "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him **who brings good news**, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, **who announces salvation**, and says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"

Isaiah 52 and 53 record a strong prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ, written about 700 years before Jesus was born of Mary upon earth. In verse 52:7, the prophet Isaiah tells us what a beautiful thing it is to bring the good news of salvation.

And what does "salvation" mean? It means to be saved from the consequences of sin. Isaiah 53:12 (CSB) says of Christ, "he bore the sin of many, and interceded for the rebels."

(Matt. 4:17 KJV) "From that time **Jesus began to preach**, and to say, **Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

Here, the Bible tells us that after he resisted temptation in the wilderness, Jesus began preaching the gospel himself, calling also for repentance.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, we are told to be imitators of Christ.

Based on these two passages alone, we too should spread the gospel of repentance and the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, just like Jesus did.

(Matt. 4:19 NASB) "And He [Jesus] said to them [Peter and Andrew], 'Follow Me, and **I will make you fishers of men.**'"

Right after we're told that Jesus began his ministry, the Gospel of Matthew says that Jesus chose his first two apostles and told them to follow him and he will make them "fishers of men."

Peter and Andrew were fishermen. Jesus used this knowledge to make his commission to spread the gospel real to them by using a work metaphor to encourage evangelism and apologetics.

It would be like telling two beet farmers to follow Jesus and he will make them farmers of men.

We would do well to try to do the same when encouraging others to make disciples by making the case for Jesus. Make it real to them.

(Matt. 5:14-16 CSB) [Jesus] "**You are the light of the world.** A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.**"

In John 8:12 (KJV), Jesus said, "**I am the light of the world:** he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus is saying that believers in the light of Jesus are also the light of the world and that we should let the light of Christ in us shine for others by being godly examples which point to the glory of God as his ambassadors.

If you've ever been outside on a summer night, especially when camping in the deep woods, you know what happens when you turn on a flashlight or lantern. Every flying bug within sight of that light in the black darkness is attracted to it and flies desperately toward it.

In other words, if we take the light of Christ, we reflect that light and therefore attract others to the same light of Christ.

Thus, making disciples and making a case for Jesus not only involves words, it also involves serving as ambassadors who are good examples to attract people to want to be like you trying to be like Jesus.

(Matt. 9:37-38 NASB) "Then He said to His disciples, '**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.**'"

In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples that there are many potential believers out there and that they should ask "the Lord of the harvest" to send out more people or "workers" to help bring about repentance and saving faith in the gospel.

This passage brings to mind John 4:34-38 (CSB):

"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work,' Jesus told them. 'Don't you say, 'There are still four more months, and then comes the harvest'? Listen to what I'm telling you: Open your eyes and look at the fields, because they are ready for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving pay and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' **I sent you to reap what you didn't labor for; others have labored, and you have benefited from their labor.**'"

Considered together, these two passages indicate that the work of making disciples (evangelism) and defending the faith (apologetics) originates with and primarily involves God, who often works through believers who obey his commands in Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Peter 3:15 and elsewhere.

(Mark 16:15-16 KJV) "And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

This passage is another version of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

These passages feature Jesus telling us to "go" (Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:15) and to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19) and "teach[] them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20) or "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15) to "all nations" (Matt. 28:19) or "into all the world" (Mark 16:15) and "to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Further, Jesus tells us in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16 to baptize new disciples as well.

(Luke 4:18 KJV) "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me**, because he hath anointed me to **preach the gospel** to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, **to preach deliverance to the captives**, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..."

This passage features Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah (Isa. 61:1) on the Sabbath in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-17).

It's an example of how God the Holy Spirit, whom God the Son Jesus is citing, helps bring about the spreading of the gospel to help deliver people from captivity to Satan and unbelief.

This is evidence that Christians do not have the power to bring about saving faith on their own. Rather, when you evangelize and defend the faith, God the Holy Spirit works through you.

(Luke 14:23b NASB) [Jesus] "**Go out** into the highways and along the hedges, and **compel them to come in**, so that my house may be filled."

This passage is contained near the end of The Parable of the Great Banquet wherein a man had a great banquet and invited a lot of people. When he sent out his servant to tell the invitees that the party was ready, they made excuses why they couldn't come. The master was angry when the servant returned with this news, so the master asked the servant to go out into the streets and bring in all the poor and disabled people he could find. After this was done, there was still room for more guests. The master then said in Luke 14:23-24 (NASB), "Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner."

One way to interpret this parable is to see the master as God and the servant as a Christian who God sends to spread the gospel to make more disciples because there is enough room for all types of people.

(John 15:8 CSB) [Jesus] "My Father is glorified by this: that you **produce much fruit** and prove to be my disciples."

Here, Jesus indicates that God the Father is glorified when Christians "produce much fruit" by being good disciples who do good works, including spreading the gospel ("make disciples of all nations" Matt. 28:19) which will result in an increasing number of disciples.

(John 15:16 NASB) [Jesus] "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would **go and bear fruit**, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give it to you."

This is another example where Jesus encourages his disciples to "go and bear fruit" which includes making more disciples by making the case for a saving faith in the Lord Jesus.

Again, the fruit metaphor involves consequences of actions (or even inaction).

Consider Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:15-20 (CSB):

"Be on your guard against false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. **You'll recognize them by their fruit.** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree

can't produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit."

Thus, fruit, or the results from actions or inactions, can be good if they come from good intent, but the fruit can be bad if they come from bad intent.

Jesus wants us to "produce much fruit," (John 15:8 CSB) and "go and bear fruit" (John 15:16 NASB), but he wants that fruit to be "good" in the sense that he wants our actions to glorify God, including bringing more people to him.

(John 20:21 CSB) "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, I also send you.**'"

This is the Gospel of John's version of the Great Commission that Jesus gave to the disciples after the resurrection on the evening of Easter Sunday when Jesus appeared within their locked doors.

(Acts 1:8 NASB) "[Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and **even to the remotest part of the earth.**"

Here, Jesus tells his disciples that when they go out to make new disciples, the Holy Spirit will help them make their case.

We can safely take this to mean that God the Holy Spirit will do the same for us.

(Acts 5:42 KJV) "And daily in the temple, and in every house, **they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.**"

In this passage we are shown the ideal, namely, that Jesus' disciples should spread the gospel inside and outside the church as a constant practice rather than never doing it or doing it just once in a while.

(Acts 13:47 CSB) "**I have made you a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation** to the ends of the earth."

Here, Paul and Barnabas were proclaiming the gospel to the people of Antioch when they quoted Isaiah 49:6.

We can take from this that Isaiah prophesied around 700 years before that the gospel would first come from the Jewish disciples of the Lord Jesus who would then spread that good news or "bring salvation" not only to Jews, but also to everyone through "the ends of the earth" or, as stated in the Great Commission, to "all nations." In other words, the gospel is not just for believing Jews, but for everyone to hear.

(Acts 20:20-21, 24 NASB) [Paul] "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and **teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.** ... But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.**"

In this passage, the Apostle Paul tells us that he spread the gospel from house to house, not just confined inside the church, and he spread it not just among people like him (that is, Jews), but to everyone.

Further, we're told that spreading the gospel must include proclaiming the requirement of **repentance**, bringing to mind Jesus' statement that we must "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NASB).

(Acts 22:14-16 CSB) "The God of our ancestors has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the words from his mouth, since you will **be a witness for him to all people of what you have seen and heard.** And now, why are you delaying? Get up and **be baptized**, and wash away your sins, **calling on his name.**"

This passage involves the words of Ananias to Paul after Paul spoke with Jesus and was blinded on the road to Damascus on his way to persecute Christians.

It's another example where God calls us to witness, or to make a case for our belief in the Lord Jesus, to "all people" which should culminate into "calling on his name" and being "baptized."

Note that the words "calling on his name" implicates Joel 2:32 (KJV), "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered..." (see also Rom. 10:13).

(Rom. 1:16a KJV) "For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth..."

This passage is particularly instructive in this day of more open Christian persecution. Many Christians seem to act like they are ashamed of the gospel, or at the very least, afraid to spread it.

Though Paul suffered for spreading and defending the gospel, leading to imprisonment and eventually death, he persevered and did not quit. In 2 Timothy 4:7 (NASB), Paul wrote: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith..."

And so, like Paul, we too should not be ashamed of the gospel. We should recognize that the gospel is literally "the power of God unto salvation" and that its power is available to "everyone that believeth" and repents. And like Paul, we too should "fight the good fight" (2 Tim. 4:7 NASB) and finish the course.

(Rom. 10:13-15a NASB) "For 'whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved.' How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And **how will they hear without a preacher?**"

Here Paul is citing Joel 2:32 when he says "whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved." He then asks rhetorically, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not heard?" This is another way of saying that people have to proclaim the gospel, they have to always be prepared to make the case for believing in the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations, leading to repentance and a profession of faith and baptism as a sign and seal of that profession (1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 1:15).

(Rom. 10:17 KJV) "So **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**"

Here, again, Paul is emphasizing that the gospel, the "word of God," must be spread, defended, and heard in order to bring about faith in people.

(1 Cor. 1:18 NASB) "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

In this passage, Paul is recognizing that the idea of someone being fully man and fully God and rising from the dead to pay for everyone else's sins confounds conventional human knowledge.

But he also assures us that belief in that very thing will save them because that's the Truth and the very "power of God" since this man Jesus was, is, and always will be God the Son who was prophesied to defeat Satan as far back as Genesis 3:15.

(1 Cor. 2:4-5 KJV) "And **my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.**"

Though Paul is referring to preaching, the message of this passage can apply to any Christian who tries to spread the gospel, even if not by formal preaching. It is not the "enticing words of man's wisdom" or the power of a person's personality that saves, but rather the "power of God," including God the Holy Spirit, who works through the spreading of the gospel in multiple ways.

(1 Cor. 9:19-23 CSB) "Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, **I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people.** To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law -- though I myself am not under the law -- to win those under the law. To those without the law, like one without the law -- though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ -- to win those without the law. To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. **I have become all things to all people, so that I may be every possible means to save some.** Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings."

One lesson from this passage is that those who would seek to spread the gospel and make disciples should be willing to serve in addition to speaking.

Another lesson is that we might "become all things to all people" by trying to take people as we find them and teach them the Truth, never compromised or wavered, in a manner they might better understand.

This doesn't mean that we should ever water down the Word of God or compromise it in any way to suit the preferences of a particular group.

The core message to everyone should be the same, though it can be delivered in different ways. It is like delivering the same gift to people, but wrapped in different wrapping paper.

(2 Thess. 2:13-14 CSB) "But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. **He called you to this through our gospel**, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Regarding evangelism, this passage indicates that God chooses believers to be saved both "through sanctification by the Spirit" and by "belief in the truth," or in other words, God "calls you through our gospel."

In order for one to be called by the gospel, to believe in the truth, and to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, one has to be exposed to God's Word in the first place.

Once you are called and sanctified, it then becomes your duty as well to obey the command to spread the gospel.

(1 Pet. 2:9 CSB) "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that **you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**"

In this passage, the Bible tells us to "proclaim the praises" of the same God that saved you to save others.

(Jude 1:23 NASB) "[S]ave others, **snatching them out of the fire...**"

Here, the Bible gives us a great metaphor of what Christians are actually doing when making disciples by making their case for Jesus, namely, they are literally and figuratively working toward saving nonbelievers from the fires of hell.

That is a simple truth we can all understand.

F. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT APOLOGETICS

In addition to 1 Peter 3:15, consider the following additional passages regarding defending the Christian faith, in order of appearance:

(Ps. 14:1a NASB) "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

This verse is straight to the point and is addressed to anyone who resists belief in, and obedience to, God.

As written in Proverbs 9:10 (KJV), "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Considering Psalm 14:1, Proverbs 9:10, and 1 Corinthians 1:17-31 (discussed below), the irony is that those who say they do not believe in God believe they are wise and that believers are fools. However, the Bible says it's the other way around.

(Ps. 19:1 CSB) "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands."

This is a great verse referencing the plain evidence of the order in the universe as proof for God. Consider this passage in light of Romans 1:19-20 discussed below.

(Prov. 15:23 NASB) "A man has joy in an **apt answer**, And how delightful is a **timely word!**"

This is a good example of the Bible encouraging godly debate and discussion.

(Isa. 1:18 KJV) "Come now, and **let us reason together**, saith the LORD...."

Since God created reason and uses it himself, there is no reason we shouldn't either. However, remember that "reason" is subject to God, not the other way around.

(Mark 12:13-37) [The Lord Jesus reasoned and debated opponents on many topics, including paying taxes to Caesar, the resurrection and marriage, the greatest commandment, whose son the Christ is, etc.]

Here we have examples among many in the Gospels where Jesus himself evangelized and defended faith in him by reasoning and debate.

(Acts 6:8-10 NASB) "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But **they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.**"

Here is another example where the Bible speaks with favor upon those who use godly wisdom to defend their case for Jesus, even at synagogues and, by extension, churches.

It's also another example of the Holy Spirit aiding us in defending the gospel.

(Acts 17:16-34) [Paul reasoned and debated with Greek philosophers in Athens and at the Areopagus or Mars Hill]

(Acts 17:17 NASB) "So he [Paul] was **reasoning** in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present."

(Acts 18:28 NASB) "[H]e [Paul] **powerfully refuted** the Jews in public, **demonstrating** by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

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

These are four examples where the Apostle Paul reasoned, debated, "powerfully refuted," demonstrated, and persuaded Gentiles and Jews inside the synagogues and outside to make the case for the Lord Jesus as Christ.

(Rom. 1:18-25 CSB) "For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who **by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**, since **what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them**. For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. **As a result, people are without excuse**. For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, **their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened**. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. Therefore, God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. **They exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen."

This is a powerful passage for the proposition that all men, even atheists, really know God deep inside and that unbelief is a deliberate rejection of him and embracing of lies.

(2 Cor. 10:5 NASB) "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..."

Here, the Bible is clearly calling for Christians to specifically address and defeat anti-Christian arguments.

We're also told to consider all issues in light of obedience to Christ, and by extension, God's whole counsel in his Word.

(Eph. 6:14-17 CSB) "**Stand**, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit -- which is the word of God.**"

In this passage, God is telling us to be courageous and to stand firm against spiritual attacks (including criticism) by preparing and arming oneself, figuratively speaking, with the truth of the Bible.

This means not only using the Bible as armor to protect yourself, it also means using the Bible as a sword to actively fight against unbelief with the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

(Philippians 1:16 NASB) "I [Paul] am appointed for the **defense of the gospel.**"

Here, Paul makes plain that God not only wants him to spread the gospel by preaching and teaching it, he is also supposed to defend it against unbelief as we are told he did in the Book of Acts and elsewhere in the Bible. This would seem a principle all Christians should heed.

(Col. 2:8 NASB) "See to it that no one takes you captive through **philosophy** and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

This passage warns us that there will be many competing ideas against the gospel, including secular philosophy, but we should not be misled by it.

Two quotes come to mind:

"Philosophy is a chunk of cloud bank buttered with the night wind." Pastor R.G. Lee (1886-1978), Bellevue Baptist Church (1927-1960)

"Philosophy is a system that tells us what we already know in words we cannot understand." Pastor Adrian Rogers (1931-2005), Bellevue Baptist Church (1972-2005)

(Col. 4:5-6 CSB) "**Act wisely toward outsiders**, making the most of the time. **Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.**"

In verse 5 is another example where the Bible cautions Christians to not be naive and to know how the world works without being stained by it. Consider this along with Jesus' statement in Matthew 10:16 (CSB), "Look, I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."

In verse 6, we're cautioned to be gracious when making our case for Christ (like when the Apostle Peter said to defend the faith with "gentleness and reverence" in 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)).

But not only should we be gracious (and gentle and respectful), sometimes our defense should be "seasoned with salt" in the sense that we are able to graciously defend the faith against attack and to actively attack the unbelieving position.

(2 Tim. 2:15 NASB) "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth.**"

We can take from this passage that there's a right way and a wrong way to handle God's Word. We can determine the right way and the wrong way by considering the whole of Scripture, especially the verses considered herein.

(2 Tim. 3:16-17 CSB) "**All Scripture is inspired by God** and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

This very important passage is one among many that authenticates the entire Bible, the OT and NT, as the very Word of God.

It also tells us that we should use "all Scripture," not just parts of it, to teach, reprove, correct, and train others.

The word "teaching" refers to "**what to believe**," "reproof" refers to "**what not to believe**," "correction" refers to "**what not to do**," and "training" refers to "**what to do**."

In other words, the whole Bible is profitable for all aspects of life, namely, what to believe and not believe and what to do and not do.

(Jude 3b-4 NASB) "[C]**ontend earnestly for the faith** which was **once for all** handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Here is another passage indicating that sometimes we have to "contend for the faith," or actively engage in debate not only outside the church but also within when false doctrine creeps inside the church.

G. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SPREADING AND DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

1. Evangelism and Apologetics Are Two Sides of the Same Coin

The passages above strongly support the idea that Jesus' Great Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19 NASB) includes "always being ready to make a defense" of the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15 NASB) and vice versa.

These passages also amply demonstrate that we should all want to shine the light of Christ on others so that they too can be in the light, they too can be saved from the fires of hell, and they too can shine the light to others.

There is no fight or contradiction between evangelism and apologetics. It is not an either/or question. Instead, the question is: What is the relationship between evangelism and apologetics?

In evangelism, we are to spread the gospel to others in order to help lead them to repentance and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes evangelism itself **is** apologetics when evangelism involves making a case for why someone should repent and believe in Christ.

Sometimes apologetics involves defending the faith against attacks -- either from those who are being evangelized or from those who seem to see Christian-attack as a sport.

Defending and contending for the faith strengthens the faith of Christians and helps them, in turn, to defend and contend for the faith to others.

Sometimes making a case for Jesus involves solely teaching God's Word. Certainly the power of the gospel itself is sufficient to win a soul for Jesus because God brings about the saving faith through the hearing of the Word. God through the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:16 (CSB) wrote that "the gospel ... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

But sometimes, making a case for Jesus requires us to **defend** that case **against objections**. That is where apologetics comes in, but always with "gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15 NASB) and sometimes "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

2. What Apologetics is Not

We should be clear about what apologetics is not. Always being prepared to make a defense or case for Jesus does not mean "arguing" all the time in the sense of browbeating or unpleasant and unloving quarreling.

On the other hand, if you believe that Christians are never supposed to discuss, debate, or contend for the faith in response to objections, the Bible clearly says otherwise, as we have seen.

It's also important to remember that we can't compel saving faith by the power of our own arguments. Defense of the gospel acts as **support** for evangelism. The evidences defending the truth and authenticity of the gospel aren't themselves the gospel.

In any event, we don't spread and defend the faith alone. God works through us.

"Winning" doesn't mean merely "winning" an argument. It means "winning" a soul to Jesus with his help.

However, success doesn't necessarily mean that every attempt at making a case for Jesus has to result in a clear profession of faith. Any attempt, no matter how small, is an act of godly gardening that, over time, may combine with other attempts by you or others that result in a blossoming faith.

Jesus certainly wants us to evangelize and defend the faith, but he also advised that we should be wise about how to do it and when to cut our losses and move on to evangelize someone else.

3. You Have to Know When to Hold Them and Know When to Fold Them

In Matthew 10:16 (NASB), Jesus warned his disciples that when they went out to make disciples, they should be prepared to do so among hostile minds and not assume it would be easy:

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.

Another way to understand this verse is that Christians should avoid being willfully naive. You can be wise about the realities of the world and still remain innocent.

This verse should be read in light of Jesus' earlier admonition in Matthew 10:14 (CSB):

If anyone does not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town.

In this same regard, Jesus said earlier in Matthew 7:6 (NASB):

Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Taken all together, when we go out in the world and evangelize and defend the faith, we should be wise about the world out there, especially by learning the most common objections to Christianity. We should make our case for Jesus with "gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15 NASB), but we should also know when to let it go, when to fold -- for the time being, anyway.

III. EVANGELISM PHILOSOPHIES AND METHODS

A. INTRODUCTION

1. What is Evangelism?

The word "**evangelism**" comes from the Greek word *euangelion* (you-ang-GHEL-ee-on) which means "gospel."

The word "**gospel**" means "**good news**."

Evangelism refers to spreading the **good news** of the **redemptive work** of Jesus Christ.

Redemption means becoming **right with God**.

Another way of putting it is, we need a Savior because we need to be saved.

Why do people need a Savior? Why do we need to be saved or made right with God?

Because we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NASB), "none is righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10; Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3) and the "wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23 NASB).

2. What's the Difference Between Evangelism and Discipleship?

Evangelism is the process of spreading the gospel to help lead people to repent and follow Jesus as their Savior and God.

Discipleship involves teaching what the Bible says as a whole (Acts 20:27) and how to obey and apply it, which comes **after** the success of evangelism.

In other words, evangelism spreads the gospel to help lead someone to become a Christian, and discipleship involves teaching that person how to live and mature as a Christian after they have become one.

3. Core Elements of the Gospel

a. Short Versions of the Gospel

A short summary of how to become a Christian was given by Jesus in Mark 1:15 (NASB); see also Acts 20:21:

"[R]epent and believe in the gospel."

Another way to summarize the gospel is that anyone can be saved from the terrible and eternal punishment for their sins by doing two main things:

- (1) believing in Christ, including who the Bible says he is and what he did for us (e.g., John 3:16) and
- (2) repenting of, or confessing and turning away from, their sins (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 20:21).

b. Longer Version of the Gospel

A longer version follows with minimal denominational positions. In other words, the following core elements have been agreed upon by orthodox Christianity for many, many centuries. To become a Christian, one must:

1) Believe Jesus Was and Is Who He Said He Was.

In John 3:16 (NASB), Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in Him** should not perish but have eternal life."

To "**believe in**" God's Son means to believe that:

- (a) Jesus actually lived on earth.
- (b) Jesus is fully God and fully man (Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-11);
- (c) Jesus is and always was God the Son (John 1:1-2), a person of the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19);
- (d) Almost two thousand years ago the Triune God voluntarily allowed people to kill God the Son Jesus (or God the Father "gave his only begotten Son" Jesus per John 3:16) as a sacrifice to pay the justly deserved punishment for sin committed by people, though Jesus himself never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5);
- (e) Jesus' earthly body died (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; Acts 5:30) as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2; Isa. 53:5) but Jesus' body did not decay (Acts 13:35; Ps. 16:10);
- (f) Jesus was resurrected (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24:39; Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:3-4) and lived again on earth and appeared to over five hundred people over a span of forty days (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:4-8);
- (g) Jesus ascended back to heaven whence he came (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9) and remains there spiritually and bodily to this day and sits on the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33, 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22);

(h) Jesus will one day return to earth (John 14:1-3; Matt. 24:27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19, 5:23; James 5:8; 1 John 2:28, Rev. 1:7, 19:11-13) to judge everyone for their sins (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:22; Acts 17:31);

(i) resulting in the final and permanent vanquishing of Satan (Rev. 17:14; 20:7-10); and

(j) sending those who repented and believed in him to enjoy "eternal life" in heaven (e.g., Rev. 21:4).

2. Repent.

To repent means to turn back or away from sinning which involves agreement that:

(a) The Bible is the authentic, authoritative Word of God (including reasonably accurate translations) and contains God's laws;

(b) God is the highest sovereign and has the highest right to make laws;

(c) We are required to obey God's laws;

(d) We must admit to God that we have sinned by breaking his laws;

(e) We regret sinning;

(f) We must ask for forgiveness;

(g) We truly desire to sin no more; and

(h) We should try our actual best to "sin no more" (John 8:11), trusting that God the Holy Spirit helps us to do this in the process of sanctification (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:2).

Bible passages that summarize the gospel include: Isa. 53:5; Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 10:43, 13:38-39; Rom. 4:25; 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3-6; 2 Cor. 5:19; 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:8; Titus 2:14; 3:4-7; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 4:10.

4. The Call for Evangelism

The Bible commands **all Christians** to evangelize or to spread the gospel. Therefore, the Bible says all Christians are supposed to be "evangelical Christians."

The most commonly cited passages for the Great Commission to Evangelize include:

(Matt. 28:18-20 NASB) "And Jesus came up 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 the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age."

(Mark 16:15 NASB) "And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**"

(Luke 24:45-47 CSB) "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He also said to them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and **repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations**, beginning in Jerusalem.'"

(Acts 1:8 KJV) [Jesus] "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and **ye shall be witnesses unto me** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, **and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**"

As covered at length in a previous chapter, other passages regarding spreading God's Word include: Ps. 96:3; 105:1; 107:1-2; Prov. 11:30; Isa. 6:8; 12:4; 49:6; 52:7; Matt. 4:19; 5:14-16; 9:37-38; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 4:18; 14:23b; 24:46-47; John 15:8; 15:16; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 5:42; 13:47; 20:20-21; 22:14-15; Rom. 1:16; 10:13-15, 17; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:4-5; 3:6-9; 9:18-23; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 2:9; Jude 1:23.

5. All Christians Should Evangelize

The **Great Commission** is a term used to describe Jesus' calls to spread the gospel (see especially Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8).

Some maintain that the Great Commission was only given to the original remaining eleven apostles and does not apply to all Christians. However, consider the following passages which are addressed to all Christians:

(2 Cor. 5:20 NASB) "Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

(1 Pet. 2:9 CSB) "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **so that you may proclaim the praises** of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

(1 Pet. 3:15 NASB) "[B]ut 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...."

Consider also that at the end of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said in verse 20 (NASB): "I am with you always even to the end of the age." By saying "to the end of the age," Jesus implied that the duty of making disciples would extend well past the lives of the remaining eleven apostles.

Finally, consider the first and second most important commandments. In Matthew 22, Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment. Jesus responded as follows in Matthew 22:37-40 (CSB):

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind [citing Deut. 6:5]. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself [citing Lev. 19:18]. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, this love includes counting the ways of that love to others so that they too would love God.

Similarly, if you love your neighbor as yourself, that love includes wanting them to be saved from the consequences of their sins by following Jesus as their Lord God and Savior.

Consider the opposite. If a person started walking on a railroad track into a dark tunnel, and you knew for a fact that a train would be coming long before the person could possibly make it out of the tunnel, what does love look like there? What if they didn't believe you? What if they didn't want to listen to you?

Why would God so love the world that he would give his only begotten Son as a sacrifice to pay the price for sin, and that whoever believed in him and repented would not perish and have everlasting life, and not also want people to spread that way, truth, and life?

Would spreading the gospel work best if only hired evangelists or preachers did it, or if all Christians did it?

According to 2 Peter 3:9, God doesn't wish anyone to perish. People can only avoid perishing by repenting and following Jesus. Therefore, why would God want to minimize the spread of the gospel by confining it to a select few?

The overwhelming weight of authority in the Bible demonstrates that all Christians should spread the gospel.

6. Reasons People Don't Evangelize

The Gideons estimate that fewer than five percent of professing evangelical Christians actually evangelize. Others estimate that it is less than two percent. When you consider all professing Christians (including "evangelical" and "non-evangelical"), the percentage is even lower.

Whatever the actual number is, it's certain that the number of Christians who evangelize is far, far less than the Lord Jesus wants it to be.

There are several reasons for the low number of Christians who evangelize or spread the gospel.

As mentioned above, some say that the Great Commission doesn't apply to all Christians, but only to a select few like preachers and missionaries.

However, this view doesn't take sufficient account of what the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) contained in the entire Bible says on the matter as we have seen.

Some people believe that only people who have the spiritual gift of evangelism should evangelize.

According to Matt Queen, Recapturing Evangelism: A Biblical-Theological Approach (2023), "The Bible never mentions 'a gift of evangelism'" (p. 5) and "[n]owhere in the Gospels does Christ appoint only 'spiritually gifted evangelists' to fulfill the Great Commission on their own." Queen, at 6.

"Paul does," Queen writes, "identify grace-gifted evangelists (Eph. 4:11), whom he explains equip the saints in local churches for ministry along with grace-gifted apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:12-13)." Queen, at 5.

In other words, though the Bible mentions in Ephesians 4 that some people are gifted evangelists, that passage is referring to men who are particularly gifted not only to spread the gospel, but also to preach, teach, and encourage evangelism among other Christians.

Probably the most common reason Christians do not evangelize is because of **fear** -- fear of not knowing how to do it and fear of rejection.

The fear of not knowing how to evangelize can be resolved in the same way you resolve test anxiety: by studying and practicing.

The fear of rejection can be solved by prayer and obedience to God's Word.

This chapter will provide the whys and the hows to evangelize by covering basic evangelism philosophies and methods.

7. Evangelism Has Different Tools for Different Situations

While there are different evangelism philosophies and methods, they all serve the same purpose: to spread the gospel and to help bring people to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, you might think of an Evangelism Toolbox with different tools for different situations.

Sometimes a simple gospel presentation will do. You might use a gospel tract or memorize a short gospel presentation like The Romans Road or the Gideon method.

Other times you will need to supplement your evangelism with apologetics to defend the faith against objections (such as denying the existence of God and the authenticity of the Bible).

Evangelism and apologetics are two sides of the same coin. They complement each other and have the same ultimate goal.

Sometimes evangelism will be quick and immediate, like when you are handing out gospel tracts.

Other times, evangelism will be gradual and more long term. The situation might call for you to work with someone over a long period of time with many conversations. Or you might be one among many different people God uses over a period of time to bring about saving faith.

But always remember that whatever philosophy or method of evangelism you use, you need to pray before, during, and after the encounter that God will help you know what to say and what to do and that he will close the deal by bringing about a genuine profession of faith.

When you evangelize you are not on your own. God is working through you. Consider this:

(1 Cor. 3:6-9 CSB) "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building."

Finally, whatever evangelism method or philosophy you use, as long as it's biblically accurate, it's better than not doing it at all.

8. Sources Consulted for this Chapter

The primary and most important source of information for the whys and the hows of evangelism is the **Bible**. Any philosophy or method that contradicts the Bible should be discarded.

Other sources consulted for this chapter include the following works:

J.I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961, 2008)

Ray Comfort, You Can Lead An Atheist to Evidence, But You Can't Make Him Think (2009)

John MacArthur, Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully (2011)

David & Norman Geisler, Conversational Evangelism: Connecting with People to Share Jesus (2009, 2014)

Ray Comfort, et al., The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2004, 2018)

Randy Newman, Mere Evangelism: 10 Insights From C.S. Lewis to Help You Share Your Faith (2021)

Matt Queen, Recapturing Evangelism: A Biblical-Theological Approach (2023)

Randy Newman, Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did (3d. ed. 2023)

B. EVANGELISM PHILOSOPHIES

We now turn to consider some basic philosophies of evangelism.

1. Who Should Evangelize?

As discussed previously, one major area in evangelism philosophy involves **who** should evangelize.

Some say, or at least act as if, only official evangelists and missionaries should evangelize. This is especially true in many mainline denominations.

Other Christians, especially those who call themselves "evangelical Christians," agree that the Bible requires all Christians to evangelize.

2. Whom Should We Evangelize?

A second major area in evangelism philosophy is **whom** to evangelize. The short answer is: Everyone.

An enduring question is the relationship between **predestination and free will**.

The Bible clearly teaches predestination (for example, Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:4–5, 11) **and** genuine human choice and responsibility (for example, Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; John 7:17; Rev. 22:17).

How can both be true? The same way God is one (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5–6; 1 Cor. 8:4), and God exists as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

There remain mysteries (Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 13:12), but we should accept what God's Word says even if we don't understand the mysteries (Prov. 3:5; Isa. 55:8–9; Rom. 11:33–34).

In other words, the question isn't whether there is predestination or free will since both are taught by Scripture. The question is **what is the relationship between predestination and free will**. But that question doesn't have very much practical effect on whether all Christians should spread and defend the gospel.

Summarizing J.I. Packer in his seminal work, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God (1961), though certainly God's sovereignty comes into play regarding who will become believers, the evangelizer is not going to know who God elected and who he didn't. Therefore Christians shouldn't worry about it and act as if everyone is potentially elect to follow Jesus through human evangelism.

So whom should Christians evangelize? Everyone. You're not going to know if they're predestined or not anyway.

3. How Should We Evangelize?

A third major area in evangelism philosophy is **how** to evangelize.

Traditional views of how to evangelize usually center around (a) professional preachers preaching evangelistic messages, (b) professional missionaries going inside and outside the country to evangelize, and (c) non-professional Christians spreading the gospel to their neighbors, friends, co-workers, and strangers through simple gospel presentations either memorized or contained within gospel tracts.

Newer philosophies in contemporary Christianity include (a) focusing on evangelizing through a questioning style rather than through simple, straight-forward gospel presentations; and/or (b) focusing on a relational style where one seeks to establish a friendly relationship first and then introduce the gospel at a later time.

4. When Should We Evangelize?

And finally, a fourth major area in evangelism philosophy is **when** to evangelize.

The traditional view of when to evangelize more often than not involves quick gospel presentations.

New philosophies focus more on gradual evangelism where evangelism is done more slowly through a relationship, instead of quick gospel presentations.

5. The Main Philosophy of Evangelism Is To Evangelize

There are many right ways and wrong ways to evangelize. Test your evangelism method by the Bible to make sure it's being done in a right way (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21).

As long as your evangelism philosophy is biblically sound, you should primarily **focus on doing it rather than merely talking or thinking about it.**

C. EVANGELISM METHODS

1. Basic Elements and Considerations for Personal Evangelists

Before we consider various evangelistic methods, we should consider the basic elements and considerations that should be present in **all** methods.

a. All Christians should evangelize, not just preachers, missionaries, or people who are apparently gifted in teaching and inspiring evangelism.

b. Evangelize to everyone with the understanding that though God's sovereignty is involved, only God knows who is elect. **Act as if everyone is elect.**

c. Always be prepared to make a defense. As we're told in 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB), we should "sanctify Christ as Lord in [our] hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you..." That means we should actually prepare ourselves for evangelism and defending the faith so we can meet that standard of "always" being prepared. Study the Bible. Study and practice evangelism methods and defending against objections.

When you set out to evangelize, consider making a gospel presentation first so that you can demonstrate priority of God's Word over your own.

Remember Romans 1:16 (NASB): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...."

If someone objects to that gospel presentation, it is then that you can defend the faith by addressing their objections with practical apologetics.

d. Make your case with gentleness and respect. As also required in 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB), we should always make our case for Jesus "with gentleness and reverence" -- which is defined by how Jesus and others evangelized in the New Testament.

Therefore, it doesn't violate the "gentleness and reverence" standard to help convict a person of sin and demonstrate why they need to be saved in the first place by using the Law and bringing it home to them that they (and everyone else, including you) have broken the Law and therefore need saving.

e. The Holy Spirit will help you when you evangelize.

(Acts 1:8 CSB) [Jesus] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth."

(John 16:8 NASB) "And He [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...."

f. Pray before, during, and after. Pray that you will have opportunities to spread the gospel (Col. 4:3), that you will know what to say (Eph. 6:18-20), and that the person will be receptive (Isa. 55:11).

(Col. 4:3 CSB) "At the same time, **pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word**, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains..."

(Eph. 6:18-20 NASB) "With all prayer and petition **pray at all times in the Spirit**, and with this in view, be on alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and **pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel**, for which I am an ambassador in chains; **that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**"

(Isa. 55:11 NASB) "So will **My word** be which goes forth from My mouth; it **will not return to Me empty**, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."

Consider also this verse regarding prayer and evangelism:

(Matt. 9:37b-38 CSB; see also Luke 10:2) [Jesus] "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, **pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.**"

g. Know the gospel. In order to persuade someone of something, you need to know all about it -- especially the core elements as we have discussed previously.

There's an old saying that one of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to others. If you don't know exactly what to say, consult gospel tracts to see what others have done, or better yet, write your own gospel tract. We'll consider gospel tracts more fully later.

h. Encourage Baptism and Church Membership. At some point in making your case for Jesus, usually at the end, you should specifically encourage the person that after they have repented for their sins and professed faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they should seek baptism and then membership at a Bible-preaching church.

They should be cautioned about two things in particular.

First, though you are certainly free to encourage them to seek membership at your own church, you should at the very least caution them to find a Bible-preaching church that preaches and teaches sound doctrine and to beware of churches that have become more like self-help social clubs that do more damage than good.

Second, you should encourage them to seek baptism at that church and caution them that baptism itself does not save but is a "sign and seal" of their faith -- that is, baptism is a sign that they have submitted to Christ and a symbol of "sealing the deal," so to speak. In other words, **you get baptized because you are saved, not to get saved.**

You should also explain to them the importance of faithful attendance and serving in a Bible-preaching church. Strong passages encouraging church participation include, in order of appearance:

(Matt. 18:20 CSB) [Jesus] "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

(Luke 4:16 NASB) "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and **as was His custom**, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read."

(Acts 2:42 CSB) "**They devoted themselves** to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer."

(Acts 2:46-47 KJV) "And they, **continuing daily with one accord in the temple**, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the **church** daily such as should be saved."

(Rom. 12:4-5 CSB) "Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way **we who are many are one body in Christ** and individually members of one another."

(1 Cor. 12:12-13 NASB) "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

(1 Cor. 12:18-20 NASB) "But now **God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired**. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now **there are many members, but one body**."

(1 Cor. 12:24-26 NASB) "But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."

(1 Cor. 12:27 KJV) "Now **ye are the body of Christ**, and members in particular."

(Heb. 10:24-25 CSB) "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, **not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing**, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

i. Encourage Discipleship. After you have made your case for Jesus and have encouraged the person to be baptized and become a member of a Bible-preaching church, you should remind them that **once they have become a Christian, their path in following Jesus has just begun**. They have been born again and now should seek to grow up to mature Christians.

Consider these passages regarding the need to grow and mature as a Christian:

(2 Pet. 3:18a KJV) "[G]row in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

(1 Pet. 2:2 NASB) "[L]ike newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow in respect to salvation...."

(Heb. 5:12-14 CSB) "Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature -- for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil."

(1 Cor. 3:1-3a NASB) "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly."

j. Pray again. After you have made your case for Jesus, after you have presented the basic gospel and advised the person to seek baptism, a Bible-preaching church, and discipleship, pray with that person that they will truly repent and embrace Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

k. Ask if the person is ready for a decision. Remind them that the Bible says that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" according to Romans 10:13 (CSB) and Joel 2:32.

l. Pray again. Whatever their answer is regarding whether they are ready to become a Christian, pray as the encounter ends that the person will have a genuine conversion experience. After that, consider putting that person's name on a list and keep praying for them in your daily prayers for salvation.

2. The Role of God's Law In Evangelizing

Before we consider specific examples of evangelism methods, it's important that we pause to closely consider the role of God's law when evangelizing.

Traditional evangelistic methods feature demonstrating how the bad news makes the good news so good.

In other words, why would anyone think they need to be saved if they don't believe they are sinners and that they are essentially good people and that God -- with a wink and a nod -- will just let them in to heaven without repentance and following Jesus as their Savior and Lord?

To show why they need to be saved in the first place, it's been traditionally believed that people should be shown (or "convicted" of) their sins so that they will understand why they need to be saved from the consequences of those sins.

The Bible says in 1 John 3:4 (KJV) that "sin is the transgression of the law." And so, to lead people to realize they are sinners or law-breakers, they need to know what the laws are that they've broken and how they've broken them.

Traditionally, this has been done by going through some or all of God's Laws.

In this section we will consider (a) what God's law is; (b) what the New Testament says about repentance being a requirement for salvation; and (c) what prominent Christian preachers and theologians have traditionally said about the role of the law and repentance in evangelism.

a. What is God's Law?

God's Law or God's commandments generally refers to the Ten Commandments as well as the first and second most important commandments confirmed by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-40 (NASB):

"'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Based on Exodus 20:3-17, the Ten Commandments can be summarized as follows:

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3 KJV).
2. You shall not make and worship idols of any kind, real or imagined.
3. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" (Ex. 20:7 NASB).
4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8 KJV).

5. "Honor your father and your mother..." (Ex. 20:12 NASB).
6. "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13 NASB).
7. "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14 NASB).
8. "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15 NASB).
9. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16 NASB).
10. "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 NASB).

Consider also that Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

(Matt. 5:21-22 CSB) "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, 'Do not murder,' and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment."

(Matt. 5:27-28 NASB) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

The New Testament expressly confirms nine of the ten commandments (Mark 10:17-19; Rom. 13:9; 1 Tim. 1:8-10; 2:5; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 8:6; 1 John 5:21; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:5; Eph. 6:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:15; Rev. 21:8).

The New Testament does not expressly confirm the Fourth Commandment regarding the Sabbath. Traditionally, many Christians have believed it is still fully applicable.

Other Christians hold that Christians were released, at least in part, from the Fourth Commandment because of the redemptive work of Jesus (Col. 2:16; Heb. 4:1-11).

b. New Testament Scripture Requiring Repentance

There are at least 22 New Testament passages requiring repentance, including:

(Matt. 3:8 NASB) [John the Baptist] "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with **repentance**."

(Matt. 4:17 KJV) "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, **Repent**: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(Mark 1:15 NASB) [Jesus] "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel."

(Mark 6:12 CSB) "So they [the Twelve] went out and preached that people should **repent**."

(Luke 5:32 NASB) [Jesus] "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to **repentance**."

(Luke 13:3,5 NASB) [Jesus] "[U]nless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish."

(Luke 15:7 NASB) [Jesus] "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance**."

(Luke 24:46b-47 CSB) [Jesus] "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and **repentance for forgiveness of sins** will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

(Acts 2:38 NASB) "Peter said to them, '**Repent**, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

(Acts 3:19 CSB) [Peter] "Therefore **repent** and turn back, **so that your sins may be wiped out**."

(Acts 5:31 NASB) [Peter] "He [Jesus] is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant **repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

(Acts 8:22 CSB) [Peter to Simon the Sorcerer] "Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your heart's intent may be forgiven."

(Acts 11:18 NASB) "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the **repentance that leads to life**.'"

(Acts 17:30 NASB) [Paul at the Areopagus] "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God now commands all people everywhere to repent**."

(Acts 20:21 CSB) [Paul] "I testified to both Jews and Greeks about **repentance** toward God **and faith** in our Lord Jesus."

(Acts 26:19-20 NASB) [Paul to King Agrippa] "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also to Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, **that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance**."

(Rom. 2:4-5 NASB) "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to **repentance**? But because of your stubbornness and **unrepentant** heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God..."

(2 Cor. 7:9-10 CSB) "I now rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because **your grief led to repentance**. For you were grieved as God willed, so that you didn't experience any loss from us. **For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret**, but worldly grief produces death."

(2 Tim. 2:24-26 NASB) "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them **repentance** leading to the knowledge of truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

(2 Pet. 3:9 CSB) "The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to **repentance**."

(1 John 1:9 KJV) "If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins**, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(Rev. 3:19 NASB) [Jesus] "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and **repent**."

c. Quotes Regarding Using the Law In Evangelism

What follows are quotes from prominent evangelists, preachers, and theologians referencing the importance of using God's Law in evangelism. These were drawn primarily from Ray Comfort's The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2004, 2018), in order of year of birth.

Martin Luther (1483-1546): "'I was alive without the law once; but when the commandments came, sin revived' (Romans 7:9). So it is with the work-righteous and the proud unbelievers. Because they do not know the Law of God, which is directed against them, it is impossible for them to know their sin. Therefore also they are not amenable to instruction. If they would know the Law, they would also know their sin; and sin to which they are not dead would become alive in them."

Martin Luther: "As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell and the thunder of God's wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sounds of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ. The gospel of free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous. This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs an axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff."

Martin Luther: "The proper effect of the Law is to lead us out of our tents and tabernacles, that is to say, from the quietness and security wherein we dwell, and from trusting in ourselves, and to bring us before the presence of God, to reveal his wrath to us, and to set us before our sins."

Melanchthon (1497-1560): "There are many who speak only of forgiveness of sin, but who say little or nothing about repentance. If there is nevertheless no forgiveness of sins without repentance, so also forgiveness of sins cannot be understood without repentance. Therefore, if forgiveness of sins is preached without repentance, it follows that the people imagine they have already received the forgiveness of sins, and thereby they become cocksure and fearless, which is then greater error and sin than all the error that preceded our time."

John Bunyan (1628-1688): "In my preaching of the Word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where His Word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God, by the law, doth belong to and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin."

Isaac Watts (1674-1748): "I never knew but one person in the whole course of my ministry who acknowledged that the first motions of religion in his own heart arose from a sense of the goodness of God, 'What shall I render to the Lord, who has dealt so bountifully with me?' But I think all besides who have come within my notice have rather been first awakened to fly from the wrath to come by the passion of fear."

John Wesley (1703-1791) advised a young evangelist, "for effective evangelism, preach 90 percent Law and 10 percent grace."

John Wesley: "Before I can preach love, mercy, and grace, I must preach sin, Law, and judgment."

George Whitefield (1714-1770): "That is the reason we have so many 'mushroom' converts, because their stony ground is not plowed up; they have not got a conviction of the Law; they are stony-ground hearers [referring to Jesus' Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13]."

William Booth (1829-1912): "The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell."

C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), "The Perpetuity of the Law of God" (1882): "I say you have deprived the gospel of its ablest auxiliary when you have set aside the law. You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring men to Christ. No, it must stand, and stand in all its terrors, to drive men away from self-righteousness and constrain them to fly to Christ. They will never accept grace til they tremble before a just and holy law; therefore the law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose, and it must not be removed from its place."

C.H. Spurgeon, "A Plain Man's Sermon" (1886): "I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the Law. The Law is the needle, and you cannot draw the silken thread of the gospel through a man's heart unless you first send the needle of the Law to make way for it."

C.H. Spurgeon: "God appointed a day in which He will judge the world, and we sigh and cry until it shall end the reign of wickedness, and give rest to the oppressed. Brethren, we must preach the coming of the Lord, and preach it somewhat more than we have done, because it is the driving power of the gospel. Too many have kept back these truths, and thus the bone has been taken out of the arm of the gospel. Its point has been broken; its edge has been blunted. The doctrine of judgment to come is the power by which men are to be aroused. There is another life; the Lord will come a second time; judgment will arrive; the wrath of God will be revealed. Where this is not preached, I am bold to say the gospel is not preached. It is absolutely necessary to the preaching of the gospel of Christ that men be warned as to what will happen if they continue in their sins. Ho, ho sir surgeon, you are too delicate to tell the man that he is ill! You hope to heal the sick without their knowing it. You therefore flatter them; and what happens? They laugh at you; they dance upon their own graves. At last they die! Your delicacy is cruelty; your flatteries are poisons; you are a murderer. Shall we keep men in a fool's paradise? Shall we lull them into soft slumbers from which they will awake in hell? Are we to become partakers of their damnation by our smooth speeches? In the name of God we will not."

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917): "All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ, all hell terribly afraid of it, while men are the only beings who more or less ignore its meaning."

Oswald Chambers: "Conscience is the internal perception of God's Moral Law."

A.W. Tozer (1897-1963), The Knowledge of the Holy: "God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings, we dare not trifle with our eternal future."

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963): "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than the doctrine of hell, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, especially in our Lord's own words; it has always been held by the Christian Church, and it has the support of reason."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981): "The trouble with people who are not seeking for a Savior, and for salvation, is that they do not understand the nature of sin. It is the peculiar function of the Law to bring such an understanding to a man's mind and conscience. That is why great evangelical preachers 300 years ago in the times of the Puritans, and 200 years ago in the time of Whitefield and others, always engaged in what they called 'Law work.'"

Paris Reidhead (1919-1992): "If I had my way, I would declare a moratorium on public preaching of the 'plan of salvation' in America for one to two years. Then I would call on everyone who has use of the airwaves and the pulpits to preach the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, and the Law of God, until sinners would cry out, 'What must we do to be saved?' Then I would take them off in a corner and whisper the gospel to them. Don't use John 3:16. Such drastic action is needed because we have gospel-hardened a generation of sinners by telling them how to be saved before they have any understanding why they need to be saved."

Walter Chantry (1938-2022), Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?: "The absence of God's holy Law from modern preaching is perhaps as responsible as any other factor for the evangelistic impotence of our churches and missions. Only by the light of the Law can the vermin of sin in the heart be exposed. Satan has effectively used a very clever device to silence the Law, which is needed as an instrument to bring perishing men to Christ. It is imperative that preachers of today learn how to declare the spiritual Law of God: for, until we learn how to wound consciences, we shall have no wounds to bind with gospel bandages."

John MacArthur (1939-2025): "We need to adjust our presentation of the gospel. We cannot dismiss the fact that God hates sin and punishes sinners with eternal torment. How can we begin a gospel presentation by telling people on their way to hell that God has a wonderful plan for their lives?"

John MacArthur: "Grace means nothing to a person who does not know he is sinful and that such sinfulness means he is separated from God and damned. It is therefore pointless to preach grace until the impossible demands of the Law and the reality of guilt before God are preached."

R.C. Sproul (1939-2017): "Scratching people where they itch and addressing their 'felt needs' is a stratagem of the poor steward of the oracles of God. This was the recipe for success for the false prophets of the Old Testament."

Ray Comfort (1949 - present): "One function of God's Law is to stop the mouth [Rom. 3:19], to keep sinners from justifying themselves by saying, 'There are plenty of people worse than me. I'm not a bad person, really.' No, the law stops the mouth of justification and leaves, not just the Jews, but the whole world guilty before God."

Ray Comfort: "The Law doesn't help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn't justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God."

Ray Comfort: "Paul sought to persuade his hearers about Jesus using both the Law of Moses and the prophets. He did this because fulfilled prophecy, which proves the inspiration of the Scriptures, appeals to the intellect, while the Law appeals to the conscience. Prophecy produces faith in God's Word, and the Law produces knowledge of sin."

Ray Comfort: "Before someone is told the good news he should be taken through God's Moral Law, the Ten Commandments, to show him that he has offended a holy God. He must first understand precisely how he has violated God's Law and be convinced that he is a transgressor. Then the good news will make sense."

Ray Comfort: "God's Law stops sinners from justifying themselves (Rom. 3:19) by thinking that they're not really a bad person or they're not as bad as other people. The Law shows them their own sin according to the holy Standard and leaves them guilty before God."

Ray Comfort: "The necessity of repentance underscores the importance of going through the Law with a sinner. If a man doesn't know what sin is, how can he repent?"

Ray Comfort: “It’s important to take the person through the Ten Commandments to strip him of his self-righteousness [“I’m basically a good person”] and his false sense of assurance of salvation. As you do so, you may feel bad that you are making him uncomfortable, but if you care about his eternal salvation, you must ask yourself, ‘Which is worse: a few moments of conviction under the sound of God’s Law, or eternity in the Lake of Fire?’ Unless there is a knowledge of sin (which comes by the Law — Romans 7:7), there will be no repentance.”

Ray Comfort: “The Day of Judgment is the reason men are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30-31). If we don’t preach that God will judge the world in righteousness, we shouldn’t be surprised that men and women are passive about responding to the Savior. If we tell them that they need only believe, then neither should we be surprised when the church fills up with false converts who believe they don’t even have enough fear of God to obey. Therefore, we must remember that it isn’t enough to preach the Moral Law. It must be preached in conjunction with future punishment.”

Ray Comfort: “Law without consequences is nothing but good advice.”

Ray Comfort: “If we think eternal punishment is horrific, what should we do about it — shake our fists at God?”

3. Specific Methods of Evangelism

What follows are **six examples** of evangelism methods. There are many other methods out there. As long as a method is biblically sound, choose the one that fits you, them, and the situation. Think of the methods as tools in the Evangelism Toolbox. **Consider also crafting your own method.**

a. Jesus' Short Version - "Repent and Believe in the Gospel"

One short and simple way to evangelize is to use what Jesus said in Mark 1:15 ("repent and believe in the gospel") as a blueprint.

First, pray (a) that God will give you opportunities to spread and defend the gospel, (b) that he will draw (John 6:44) the person you are presenting the gospel to, and (c) that he will help you to accurately and effectively communicate the gospel.

Second, find a way to introduce the question whether the person has been saved. Perhaps they will ask you what you mean by being saved.

Third, consider saying that being saved is becoming right with God. Ask if they would like to be right with God. If they say they would, tell them that Jesus said they could be right with God by repenting and believing in the gospel.

Fourth, explain what repenting and believing in the gospel means.

Use the law (the Ten Commandments) to explain why we all need saving (including you, the evangelist) and why we all need to repent (or turn away from further sinning).

Explain that believing the gospel or "good news" means to believe that (a) Jesus is and always has been God (a Person of the Holy Trinity) (b) that he voluntarily died by crucifixion to pay the price for our sins, (c) that he was dead for three days and (d) rose from the dead, (e) that he appeared to many for a time after his resurrection, and (f) then went back up to heaven where he came from and where he is right now, and (g) he will one day come back down to earth to bring a final judgment upon everyone who has ever lived, (h) and those who have repented (or turned back from their sins) and professed their faith in Jesus and what he did for us and (i) followed Jesus as their Savior and God (j) will spend eternal life in heaven and (k) those who have not will be consigned to hell forever based on their own choice to reject the gospel.

Fifth, ask them if they believe this and if so, would they like to officially proclaim that faith out loud to God. And if they would, encourage them to do so and then tell them to seek baptism as a sign and seal of their proclamation of repentance and faith at a Bible-preaching church and to regularly attend that church and study and do God's Word.

Sixth, pray for them in their presence and then pray for them later that the profession of faith will be genuine. If they did not proclaim their faith then and there, pray that they will. Check on them later, if you can get their contact information.

b. The Romans Road - Longer Version

The Romans Road to Salvation is a long-used method to present the gospel to someone using key verses from the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Romans and explaining them.

Before you present The Romans Road, **pray** for help and effectiveness.

How you introduce The Romans Road depends on the person and how well and how long you have known them.

An example of introducing your gospel presentation follows:

"You know, you are a very important person and I am very interested in you having the best life you can have. I would like to tell you something that is the best and most important news I have ever heard in my life. In fact, this news is so amazing that it changed my life forever and it can change your life too in the very best way. Have you ever needed directions on how to get somewhere on a road? I would like to tell the amazing news on how you can get to the best destination you'll ever find. The way to get there is by using The Romans Road, which means a few key verses from the Bible that were written to the Romans two-thousand years ago. It won't take long and I would be so grateful to you for the opportunity to tell you about that road to eternal life in heaven that I've been on myself for some time. The first stop on the Romans Road is ..."

(Rom. 3:23 NASB) "[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

(Rom. 3:10 NASB) "There is none righteous, not even one."

Begin by establishing that everyone sins, including you and all Christians. It's very important to explain that none of us are any better than anyone else because we all have sinned and therefore we are "just another beggar telling another beggar where to get bread," as the old saying goes. You need to avoid giving the impression that you think you are morally superior to them.

Don't forget to explain what sin is. Sin is transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4 KJV).

It is here you can give examples of common sins by going through the Ten Commandments and pointing out how we (and they) have all broken them.

(Rom. 6:23 NASB) "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here, explain that since every single person has sinned, we have all earned the death penalty because God is a just God and it wouldn't be just to simply let criminals go free without payment of the punishment they have earned. Remember, **it is the bad news that makes the good news so good**. The good news is, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we can avoid the death wages of sin. That such news is good is an understatement.

(Rom. 5:8 NASB) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Another great passage to cite at this point is John 3:16 (KJV): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

It's important to emphasize with John 3:16 that when we say that God "gave his only begotten Son," we mean that God the Father sacrificed God the Son when he was not required to. God the Son Jesus had never, ever sinned and therefore was like a spotless lamb whose death could pay for the sins of others, much like the lambs of sacrifice in the Old Testament.

This is important because Jesus was and is not only God's eternal Son, he is also God, a Person of the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (e.g., Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3, 14; 10:30). Therefore, **God the Son sacrificed himself** to pay for our sins against God.

There may be people who balk at the idea that God would even require the death of someone to pay for the sins of others. That's a matter of judging God. You might say that you trust that God is just, knows what he is doing, and has the supreme right to demand anything he wants, which is why he is God with a capital "G."

(Rom. 10:9 NASB) "[I]f you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved..."

(Rom. 10:13 NASB) "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

With these two verses, you are turning it over to the person by telling them that if they "declare" or embrace that Jesus is God (which is what "Lord" means) and that God raised him from the dead, and if they "call on the name of the Lord" or call on the name of Jesus, then God will draw them to him and they will be saved from eternal punishment for their sins.

(Rom. 5:1 NASB) "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

(Rom. 8:1 NASB) "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

These two verses emphasize that when you repent and believe in the gospel or good news of what Jesus did for us and who Jesus is, you will be "justified" or be made right with God (including Jesus) -- not for anything you did to earn such justification, but because you acknowledged that Jesus paid your fine for you.

And not only will you be justified or made right with God because of what Jesus did, you are no longer "condemned" to eternal punishment and you will no longer chase after your own desires, but after what God wants.

(Rom. 8:38-39 NASB) "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, no principalities, no things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is a powerful verse that gives assurance to a new believer that if they actually repent and believe in the gospel, nothing can ever take them away from Jesus.

Now tell them that if they'd like to embrace Jesus' offer of eternal life and repent or turn back from their sins and follow Jesus as their Lord God, they should seek a Bible-preaching church (explain what that is) and get baptized (explain what baptism means) and then continue on the path of discipleship, or learning how to grow up to be a mature Christian.

After you have told them this, ask them if they have any questions. If they do, try to answer them as best as you can. If you don't know the answers, try to get out your smartphone and look it up, like at GotQuestions.org. If not, tell them you will get back to them and ask a pastor or teacher you trust.

Finally, if you get the feeling that they might be ready to make a proclamation of faith (a feeling put there by the Holy Spirit), ask them if they are ready to proclaim their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and to repent and turn away from their sins and follow Jesus.

If they are, ask them to say it out loud and help them if they need it.

If they are not ready, pray with them for God to draw them to him.

When you depart, pray again to yourself and keep praying for them.

c. The Romans Road - Shorter Version

(Rom. 3:23 NASB) "[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

We are all sinners, you and me and everyone. Sin is transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4 KJV).

(Rom. 6:23 NASB) "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Standing alone, our sins deserve the death penalty because God is just and requires payment for everyone equally for their sins. However, God gives us a way to settle out of court by giving us a gift that is free to us but was not free to him.

(Rom. 5:8 NASB) "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God loves us so much that even though we have sinned against him and punishment is due, he sacrificed God the Son Jesus Christ to pay the debt we owe for our sins. Greater love has no one than when they give their life for their friends (John 15:13). Jesus is indeed our greatest friend.

(Rom. 10:9 NASB) "[I]f you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved..."

If we repent or turn back from our sins and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15), if we declare that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, then we can be saved from the eternal punishment we have earned for our sins.

(Rom. 10:13 NASB) "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Call on God to draw you to him (John 6:44).

After you have presented these truths, suggest that if they want to become Christians, they should repent and turn away from their sins and embrace Jesus as their Savior and God. Then they should study the Bible every day and obey it and seek baptism and membership at a Bible-preaching church where they can learn discipleship, or how to mature as a Christian.

d. Gospel Tract Method

Consider Matthew 4:18-20 (NASB): "Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, '**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."

The late Adrian Rogers (1931-2005) said, "I don't know of anything more thrilling, more exciting than to know that God can use me and God can use you to be a fisher of men. There is no greater fulfillment on this earth than to bring somebody else to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when we fish for fish we take fish out of a beautiful life unto death, but when we fish for men we take men out of death into a beautiful life with the Lord Jesus."

And so, when you think of evangelizing, you might think of yourself as going fishing. When you go fishing, you need some bait or a lure of some kind. If you know anything about fishing, you know that there are many, many different kinds of bait and lures. But they all have the same purpose: to catch fish.

When you evangelize, the bait is the gospel and there are many different ways you can deliver that gospel.

The best and most effective gospels are the Gospels contained in your Bible.

Another type of effective bait are gospel tracts -- short papers that you can hand out to people.

Another metaphor Jesus used to describe the process of evangelizing -- that is, spreading the gospel -- can be seen in the Parable of the Sower found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

In Matthew 13:3-9 (NASB), Jesus gave us the Parable of the Sower:

"And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, 'Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.'

In Matthew 13:18-23 (NASB), Jesus then explains the meaning of the Parable of the Sower:

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately

receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

The Apostle Paul expanded on the idea of planting seeds and how God attends to the whole process from seed to plant in 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (NASB):

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

And so, whether you like the metaphor of the "fishers of men" or sowing seeds, the bait or the seed is the gospel -- and God works through fishermen and gardeners to draw people to him, including through personal evangelism.

Practically speaking, you are not going to have time to read all of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John to a person in a single setting. And so, you need to be able to summarize the gospel in an accurate but effective way.

You can memorize your own presentations (such as using The Romans Road or other methods), or you can hand out gospel tracts.

You can either hand out gospel tracts from trusted sources or you can write your own and hand them out.

There are many advantages to using gospel tracts, including:

- 1) Well-written and accurate gospel tracts can help you remember what to say in the event you become nervous before or during the gospel presentation.
- 2) Knowing you can fulfill the Great Commission with a gospel tract when you are just starting out or otherwise nervous can take the edge off and give you more courage to evangelize.
- 3) When someone finds or is given a gospel tract, they can read it when they want to, taking the pressure off.
- 4) Gospel tracts present the gospel without the need for debating.

Regarding gospel tracts, Spurgeon observed, "When preaching and private talks are not available, you need to have a [gospel] tract ready. ... Get good striking tracts, or none at all. But a touching gospel tract may be the seed of eternal life. Therefore, do not go without your tracts."

Billy Graham said: "Nothing surpasses a tract for sowing the seed of the Good News."

Don't forget to pray on a daily basis for opportunities to spread the gospel, to fish for people, to spread seeds, and the discipline and courage to do it.

When you approach someone to personally hand them a gospel tract, especially if it is a stranger, consider saying something like, "Hello. Did you get one of these?" Ray Comfort says that asking something like that instead of asking, "Would you like this?" will minimize the chance that someone will reply with, "What is it?," which then forces the situation and increases the chance they will just hand it back to you.

If it is someone you know, you could say something like, "I came across this the other day and thought it was fantastic. I'd like to give it to you to see if you agree."

Another idea is to be prepared to give gospel tracts to anyone you meet, including people who are expecting a tip. At the end of the service (such as a restaurant), you might say, "I'll make a deal with you. I will give you a 30 percent tip if you will simply agree to read this during your next break."

If you do that with a smile and you actually give them a bigger tip, the odds are they will read it.

You might also place gospel tracts anonymously wherever you go. Think of yourself as a Johnny Appleseed of sorts, carrying a bag of gospel seeds and spreading them out where some won't grow, some will dry up, and some will take root.

Consider leaving them in the doctor's office or dentist's office in the chair when you leave since someone is going to have to pick it up to sit there next.

Place gospel tracts at the gas pump where you replace the pump, since it will probably fall out when the next person takes out the gas pump, which will make them more likely to grab it.

Put gospel tracts in random places and packaging at the grocery store (such as the box of beer cans or soft drinks), in the pockets of clothes at clothing stores, or inside newspapers, books, and magazines -- maybe even in books and magazines that cater to non-believers.

Hand out gospel tracts with candy to trick-or-treaters. Leave them in hotel rooms.

There are endless possibilities. The main thing is, remember to think of gospel tracts like bait or seeds that you can use to obey Jesus' Great Commission. Though over time with prayer and practice the Holy Spirit can embolden you to evangelize face-to-face with or without gospel tracts, you can always hand them out anonymously too.

(Sources for Gospel Tracts)

A quick internet search can reveal many sources of gospel tracts.

One especially great source of gospel tracts is LivingWaters.com, which features tracts written by Ray Comfort. Consider their Tract Sample Pack (\$10.00 as of August 2024) which has a sample of all of their 40 to 50 tracts. After you read through them, pick the ones you like the most and buy more of them.

Consider also searching online for Billy Graham gospel tracts or others.

You might even consider writing your own gospel tracts and getting them printed on a simple business card or some other small document to hand out.

All gospel tracts are not created equal. Ensure a gospel tract is faithful to the Bible and features the core requirements of repentance and belief in the gospel (Mark 1:15).

In other words, be skeptical of gospel tracts that do not address why the bad news makes the good news so good and why we need saving in the first place.

e. The Gideon Method

The Gideons are well known for ensuring there are Bibles in hotel rooms and for evangelizing by handing out small Bibles on school campuses and elsewhere.

Their basic method of evangelism serves as a great example. This method is summarized as follows, drawn from The Gideons International booklet: Conversations: A Simple Approach to Sharing the Gospel (2023):

- 1. Pray** for opportunities to spread the gospel, and to recognize and act upon those opportunities in a biblically sound way (1 Sam. 3:8-10; Acts 11:5-12; Col. 4:3).
- 2. Pray** that you will boldly share the gospel and that God will help you with what to say and how to say it (Eph. 6:18-20).
- 3. Use the L.E.A.P. acronym** to "LEAP" into Evangelizing:

L - Listen - Let the person do the talking and listen carefully as they share. This is a conversation, not a presentation.

(Prov. 18:13) "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame."

E - Empathize - Look for an opportunity to empathize with the person and make a connection.

Give Your Own Testimony - When you encounter a "pre-Christian," be ready to give your own personal testimony about your faith in the Lord Jesus, which is more effective than simply giving a presentation.

A - Ask - Ask for permission to share the Good News using transitional questions that lead to key scripture verses.

What do you believe happens to us when we die?

How sure are you God would welcome you into heaven after you die?

Would you like to be 100% sure?

What do you know about the man Jesus of Nazareth?

Will you read this verse out loud?

What does that verse mean to you?

Have you ever done that before?

Would you like to right now?

Will you pray out loud with me?

P - Pray - If the pre-Christian is spiritually ready and willing, pray a prayer of salvation together.

Sample prayer from the Gideons:

"God, from my heart, I admit to You that I am a sinner and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe that Your Son, Jesus, took the punishment I deserve by shedding His blood on the cross. He gave His life as the full payment for my sins and rose again from the dead. Thank you for changing my heart. I now confess and turn from my sins and receive Your Son, Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. -- Amen."

4. Use a small Gideon Bible in witnessing.

If you are not a Gideon, you can obtain copies of their small Bibles without the Gideon symbol on the cover from one of their websites: FriendsOfGideons.org. Go there and become a member (at no cost) and you can get access to their store and buy small KJV, ESV, and Spanish Bibles for about \$2.00 per Bible (as of August 2024).

These Friends of Gideons Bibles feature the New Testament as well as Proverbs and Psalms.

The following is the basic method Gideons use when they evangelize in person with their small bibles (bring your reading glasses if you need them):

a. Use the "Helps" Section in the Front

The first few pages of a small Gideon bible features the "Helps" section which involves certain topics in alphabetical order with references to Scripture.

This is where you can begin with someone by asking them if they are having any particular troubles bothering them. If they say they do, you can go to the "Helps" section together and then you can find the relevant section(s) and then either read it to them or get them to read it to you.

Then, ask them to explain what the passages mean to them. After they give an explanation, you can supplement with additional information or otherwise help them to understand what the passage means.

b. Lead Them to the Last Two Pages in the Back

The last two pages feature passages that explain the basic propositions of the gospel and gives the verse number and page number in case they don't know how to look up passages by verse numbers.

Like with the "Helps" section, encourage the pre-Christian to read and explain out loud what the passages mean to him or her.

The following propositions are contained on the last two pages of the Friends of the Gideons Bibles (all citations from the KJV):

God Loves You

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

(Rom. 5:8) "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

All are Sinners

(Rom. 3:10) "There is none righteous, no not one."

(Rom. 3:23) "[F]or all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

God's Remedy for Your Sin

(Rom. 6:23) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(1 Cor. 15:3-4) "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Your Response

(Rom. 10:9) "[I]f thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(Rev. 3:20) "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Receiving Christ

(Mark 1:15) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the gospel."

(John 1:12) "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

A Personal Prayer

"God, from my heart, I admit to You that I am a sinner and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe that Your Son, Jesus, took the punishment I deserve by shedding His blood on the cross. He gave His life as the full payment for my sins and rose again from the dead. Thank you for changing my heart. I now confess and turn from my sins and receive Your Son, Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. Amen."

Seeking a Local Church

"After praying to receive Christ, we encourage you to seek a local church, congregation or assembly that will assist you in growing as a new Christian by the faithful teaching of the Bible."

God's Promises

(John 5:24) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

(John 20:31) "[B]ut these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

(John 10:27-28) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

f. The Three Circles Method

Consider using the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention's gospel tract called the **3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide** (2014).

The 3 Circles method can be summarized as follows:

The **first circle** is that **God originally designed the world to be good and perfect.**

(Gen. 1:31a KJV) "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

(Ps. 19:1 NASB) "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

We broke the perfect world when we sinned by disobeying God and we are now separated from God because of that sin.

(Rom. 3:10 CSB) "There is no one righteous, not even one."

(Rom. 3:23 CSB) "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The **second circle** is the **brokenness of the world** and all the people in it.

(Rom. 1:25 NASB) "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

(Prov. 14:12 NASB) "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

The **third circle** is the **remedy** we need to save us from the brokenness and our separation from God by our sins. That remedy is the Gospel.

(John 3:16 KJV) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

(Col. 2:14 CSB) "He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross."

(1 Cor. 15:3-4 NASB) "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

In order **to get the remedy**, we have to admit we are sinful and that we need to be rescued.

(Mark 1:15b NASB) "Repent and believe in the gospel."

(Eph. 2:8-9 NASB) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

When our relationship with God is **restored** through repentance and belief in the gospel, we can go back to seeking God's design for all aspects of our lives.

(Phil. 2:13 CSB) "For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose."

(Eph. 2:10 NASB) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

After considering the three circles, there's a "**sinner's prayer**" where the person can repent and profess their faith in Jesus.⁶⁶

(Rom. 10:9 NASB) "[I]f you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

(Rom. 10:13 CSB) "[E]veryone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Finally, there is a section about **what to do after you've become a Christian**, namely, pray, find a local church, study the Bible, and share the gospel with others.

(John 20:31 CSB) "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

(Matt. 6:33 NASB) "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

(Col. 2:6 KJV) "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."

Curiously, the 3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide, which was published by the Southern Baptist Convention, does not mention baptism.

D. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING EVANGELISM PHILOSOPHIES AND METHODS

In the Introduction of this section, we considered: (1) what is evangelism; (2) what is the difference between evangelism and discipleship; (3) the core elements of the gospel; (4) the Bible's call for evangelism; (5) all Christians should evangelize; (6) reasons people do not evangelize; (7) evangelism has different tools for different situations; and (8) sources consulted for this chapter.

In the Evangelism Philosophies section, we considered: (1) who should evangelize; (2) whom should we evangelize; (3) how we should evangelize; and (4) when we should evangelize.

In the Evangelism Methods section, we considered: (1) the basic elements and considerations of personal evangelism; (2) the role of God's Law in evangelism (including many quotes from prominent Christians regarding that role); and (3) specific methods of evangelism (including The Romans Road, the gospel tract method, the Gideon Method, and the 3 Circles Method).

As amply demonstrated throughout this Study Guide, the Bible clearly commands **all** Christians to spread and defend the gospel.

Spreading and defending the gospel is a process that is attended to by God. And though God draws believers to him, we aren't in a position to know who will believe and who won't. Therefore, we should act as if each and every evangelism encounter might end with a profession of faith -- even if not today.

It may take several evangelism encounters over a period of many years to bring about saving faith.

We should begin in obedience to the Great Commission with simple gospel presentations. If the other person raises objections, we should "always be ready to make a defense" of the gospel by being able to anticipate the most common objections and learn how to deal with them.

If we don't know how to answer the objection, don't worry. Just tell the other person that you will get back to them. Then go seek for an answer from reputable sources, like **GotQuestions.org** as well as from trusted pastors and teachers.

With study and practice, you can learn when and how to use each tool in the Evangelism Tool Box.

IV. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Practical Versus Academic Apologetics

Apologetics might be divided into two main types: informal and formal.

Informal apologetics could be thought of as practical, while formal apologetics might be thought of as more academic.

Often **practical (informal)** and **academic (formal)** apologetics overlap.

Both types have the same ultimate purpose: to defend the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15) and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19).

The difference lies in the context, which primarily includes who is involved and in what setting.

Examples of **practical apologetics** include a parent making their case for Jesus to an unbelieving older child, a Christian at work who hopes to evangelize to a longtime work friend, or even a pastor or Sunday School teacher who hopes to help bring about saving faith within a curious newcomer with tough questions.

Examples of **academic apologetics** include historical apologetics as an academic discipline in high church and university settings, as well as public debates between prominent apologists and atheists.

Practical apologists usually focus on defense against common cultural objections to Christianity. Popular practical apologists would include C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, Francis Schaeffer, Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, and Greg Koukl.

Academic apologetics is usually steeped heavily in philosophy (whether Christian or secular), especially the philosophical fields of epistemology (the study of knowledge and what is knowable) and metaphysics (the study of existence and reality).

Importantly, the same Christian apologist can engage in academic apologetics and practical apologetics interchangeably and sometimes the line between the two is a fine one.

Even though apologetics has been mostly an academic discipline from the early church until around the mid-20th century (especially with C.S. Lewis), this doesn't require apologetics to always be merely academic.

In other words, even though academic apologetics usually involves apologetics *for* academics, that doesn't mandate apologetics *as* academic.

There is nothing wrong with academic apologetics. But given that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and the Apologetics Commission (1 Peter 3:15) is addressed to **all** Christians, apologetics **as** evangelism (sometimes called pre-evangelism) should not be limited to high-level academic endeavors between scholars.

Does that mean academic apologetics has no value for the rank and file Christian? No.

However, the everyday Christian is far more likely to have a copy of the Bible and perhaps a book from C.S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, Josh McDowell, Lee Strobel, or Greg Koukl than they are to have an extensive library of academic apologetic works such as those by Justin Martyr or Søren Kierkegaard.

That is where this Study Guide comes in.

2. Roadmap of This Section

In this Overview of Christian Apologetics, we will consider:

- 1) A thumbnail historical sketch of apologetics as an academic discipline from the early church period to the present by listing the most influential Christian apologists; and
- 2) The different schools or focuses of apologetics (classical, evidential/historical, presuppositional, and experiential).

B. A SHORT HISTORY OF APOLOGETICS

1. Defending the Faith and Making Disciples From the Beginning

Defending the faith and making disciples has always been part of God's plan.

God has always wanted his image bearers to know him, believe in him, obey him, and to lead others to do so as well.

The Old Testament begins with how God created everything out of nothing and created it all "very good," only to have the world broken by human sin.

The rest of Old Testament and the New Testament tells the long and true story about how God revealed himself to his image bearers over time, how he picked a particular family (Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac) from whom would one day come Jesus of Nazareth, fully man and fully God, who would fulfill many ancient prophecies and all of God's previous laws, how he would sacrifice himself to save us all from the consequences of our sinful lives and broken world, and how he would rise from the dead and go back to heaven to wait for believers and one day return on earth for the Final Judgment of all humanity, living and dead.

The protagonist, or hero, of the whole Bible is Jesus. The antagonists of the whole Bible are sin, death, and Satan, and Jesus defeated them all (John 12:31; Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:54-55; Col. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 1:18).

As observed by the late pastor Adrian Rogers (1931-2005), "Cut the Bible anywhere and it will bleed. The blood of Jesus stains every page."

And so, the Bible tells us a true story that has been long written down for the very purpose of spreading and it has been spread by evangelism and apologetics, in one form or another, since its writing began around 1450 B.C. through Moses (about 3500 years ago).

And not only has God's Word been spread for thousands of years, if you know it and believe it, you'll love to spread that Word, too.

As the old hymn puts it: "I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory to tell the old, old story, of Jesus and his love."

2. Apologetics in the Bible

As discussed in more depth in Section II: WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT EVANGELISM AND APOLOGETICS, the Bible features apologetics (or defending the faith with evidences and reasoning) throughout its pages and therefore bears repeating.

a. Apologetics in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, for example, God used the plagues upon Egypt not only to convince the Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves (Exodus 7:17-12:30), but also to give evidence of God's glory. For example, in Exodus 9:16 (NASB) God said, "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth."

In 1 Kings 18:20-40, God led his prophet, Elijah, to demonstrate before the followers of Baal that only Yahweh is the one true God. Elijah challenged them to summon Baal to supernaturally light a fire in the woodpile under a sacrificed bull while Elijah did the same. The "fire of the Lord" (v. 38) supernaturally set fire to Elijah's woodpile, while there was no fire, or any other answer, from Baal.

Another OT example of God using reason to convince people of his truth can be seen in Isaiah 1:18 (NASB): "'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD...."

b. Apologetics in the New Testament

There are many more examples in the New Testament involving the use of reason and evidences to demonstrate the truth.

i. Jesus

Jesus' ministry as a whole was meant to actually demonstrate to people that he was God the Son and that people should repent and believe in him. His very life on earth was meant to make his own case and to evangelize by his words, deed, signs, wonders, and fulfilled prophecies.

The Lord Jesus defended his deity in various ways, including:

- 1) Saying, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30 NASB);
- 2) Saying, "Truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58 CSB), where "I AM" references the name used by God for himself in Exodus 3:14 (NASB) ("God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM.");
- 3) Saying, "[T]he Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10 NASB);
- 4) Saying, "My Father is still working, and I am working also" (John 5:17 CSB) leading John to write further: "This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God." (John 5:18 CSB); and
- 5) Just before he raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me" (John 11:41-42 NASB).

Instead of simply dying, being buried, and ascending back to heaven, Jesus took the trouble to return among his followers to prove his resurrection.

Jesus said in Luke 24:39 (CSB), "Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have."

Luke says in Acts 1:3 (CSB) of Jesus: "After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them **by many convincing proofs**, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."

ii. The NT Authors

In Mark 16:20 (NASB), it is written of the apostles: "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and **confirmed the words by the signs that followed.**"

The Apostle Peter's sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-36 made a defense of the early Christians speaking in tongues.

Included in Peter's sermon is the statement in Acts 2:22-23 (CSB), "Fellow Israelites, listen to these words: This **Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him**, just as yourselves know. Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him."

Peter is also the Apostle who wrote the strongest apologetics admonition in 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB), "[B]ut 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..."

Both John and Peter defended their right and duty to proclaim the Gospel to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:18-20.

In Acts 14:6-20, when Paul and Barnabas were healing people in Lystra, they challenged those who alleged that the Roman gods were behind the healing by making a defense of God.

In Hebrews 2:3-4 (NASB), the author cited signs and wonders as evidence of God, saying, "After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both **by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit** according to His own will."

In Acts 6:9-7:60, Stephen made his case for Jesus in Jerusalem despite being charged with blasphemy and being put to death.

Jude appealed to his readers "to **contend for the faith** that was delivered to the saints once for all" (Jude 3 CSB).

Finally, we're told throughout the book of Acts and Paul's letters that the Apostle Paul routinely made his case for the gospel, both affirmatively and in defense.

In Acts 17:1-3 and 19:8, Paul reasoned with the Jews.

In Acts 17:16-34, Paul debated the Greek philosophers.

In Acts 22:1-27, Paul defended the faith to a Jewish mob and in Acts 24:10-21 to Governor Felix.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (CSB), Paul wrote: "For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God**, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ."

In 2 Corinthians 12:12 (NASB), Paul also wrote, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, **by signs and wonders and miracles**."

And so, since the Bible itself commonly features defending the faith in various ways, we should always be especially mindful of those biblical examples which carry more weight than any mere human attempt or explanation on how or why to always be ready to make a defense of your faith.

3. Apologetics as an Academic Discipline

The focus of apologetics depends on the time, place, and people involved.

Although apologetics and evangelism have been around in one form or another since Genesis, Christian apologetics as an academic discipline began its evolution in the early church period, often referred to as the patristic period, and continues to this day.

What follows is a basic thumbnail historical sketch of academic apologetics as a discipline through descriptions of the most prominent apologists during each period.

This sketch has drawn primarily from three books, unless otherwise indicated:

Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, Alister E. McGrath, editors, The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction (2020), hereinafter referred to as "Forrest, at ____."

Norman L. Geisler, The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide (2012), hereinafter referred to as "Geisler, at ____."

H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden, Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences (2006), hereinafter referred to as "House, at ____."

a. The Patristic Period (95 A.D. to 451 A.D.)

The patristic period ("patristic" means "fathers") generally refers to the period from the completion of the NT writings (around 95–100 A.D.) to the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

During this period, the early church recognized and affirmed the Canon of Scripture—that is, which books belonged in the Bible and which did not—and more formally articulated a cohesive theology drawn from that Canon, including doctrines such as the Trinity and the truth that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.

One example of a statement showing what the church fathers settled upon regarding the very basic biblical things all Christians should believe is the Nicene Creed, originally written in 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicaea and amended in 381 A.D.

The **Nicene Creed (325 A.D. as amended in 381 A.D.)** reads as follows:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And we believe in one holy catholic **[meaning "universal" church, not the Roman Catholic Church]** and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

During the patristic period, the early church fathers had to make their case for Jesus not only among themselves, but also to the other religions, like Judaism and traditional Roman religion, as well as to secular philosophical systems of the Greco-Roman world.

What follows is a biographical sketch of the most prominent patristic apologists, in order of birth.

Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.)

Justin Martyr was an early patristic period theologian and apologist who focused on defending the Christian faith from criticism arising from the Jewish faith as well as from followers of Greek philosophy.

In his book, Dialogue with Trypho (155-165 A.D.), Justin argued that Judaism was fulfilled by Christianity.

Justin also defended the Christian faith with reason and argued that Greek philosophy only partially revealed the truth. He observed, for example, that unlike students of the Greek philosophers, Jesus' disciples were willing to die for him (all of the apostles were killed for Jesus other than John), thereby making the case for Christianity considerably stronger than the philosophers.

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Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.)

Irenaeus was a Greek bishop who focused on defending the Christian faith against the rise of gnosticism.

His main published work was Against Heresies (around 180 A.D.) with special attention to dispelling gnosticism.

Gnosticism (which is based on the Greek word *gnosis* which means "knowledge") began its rise in the first century and continued to grow during the next few centuries. The early church came to see gnosticism as a significant threat, which, combined with other heresies, led to important church councils to distinguish between orthodoxy and heresy (for example, the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.).

Compared to early Christianity, gnosticism was unorganized and therefore as a movement it demonstrated a variety of beliefs. Some gnostic views remain alive today - especially among New Age believers.

Gnosticism's beliefs in the patristic period included: (1) there are two distinct worlds, the good spiritual world and the evil material world, and therefore physical matter is evil; (2) most humans don't know spiritual truth because they lack the secret *gnosis*, or "knowledge," which Jesus gave after his resurrection; (3) Jesus was not fully man and fully God, but rather started as a man, then became divine at his baptism, then returned to being only a man again when he died on the cross, and then became God again after the resurrection which was merely spiritual, not physical; and (4) while some gnostics advocated willful sexual immorality, early gnostics for the most part appear to have advocated total sexual abstinence based on their view that women are evil and having children just made more people to live on the evil world who lacked the secret *gnosis* or knowledge of how to obtain salvation.

Athenagoras of Athens (133-190 A.D.)

Athenagoras was a Greek philosopher who converted to Christianity. He was an early church father and apologist who defended the Christian faith against Romans who blamed Roman political decline on Christians who were supplanting traditional Roman religion. Among other things, he addressed Roman allegations of Christians being atheists (because they did not believe in the Roman gods) and cannibals (based on the practice of communion).

His most famous works were Apology, On the Resurrection from the Dead, and A Plea for Christians.

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Tertullian of Carthage (155-220 A.D.)

Tertullian was an early Christian apologist and lawyer from North Africa.

He reasoned from secular philosophy, the Bible, and evidences (such as historical records and fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies) to defend the truth of Christianity against gnosticism, Judaism, and non-believing philosophers.

Tertullian's works include: Apologeticum, Against Marcion, Against Heretics, and Against Hermogenes.

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Origen (185-254 A.D.)

Origen was an influential early church father and apologist who defended the faith among skeptics, including secular philosophers.

Origen is problematic, however, since he held several unorthodox views, including denial of the physical resurrection of Jesus, belief in the preexistence of souls and that everyone would eventually be saved, and denial of full inerrancy of the Bible.

Among other things, the Second Council of Constantinople (553 A.D.) condemned the aforementioned views as heretical.

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Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 A.D.)

Athanasius was an early influential apologist who attended the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and later became a bishop.

Often in the face of great opposition, Athanasius strongly defended the deity of Jesus in a time when the Arian heresy, which denied the deity of Jesus, was gaining ground.

His works De Incarnatione and Contra Gentes featured apologetic methods, including using reason to demonstrate the cohesion of the Christian faith, citing historical evidences, and focusing on the fulfillment of biblical messianic prophecies by Jesus and the circumstantial evidence surrounding Jesus' deity and resurrection.

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Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)

Augustine was the most influential early theologian and apologist of western Europe.

He regularly used human reason to proclaim and defend the Christian faith while also recognizing that reason was from God and that saving belief primarily came from God.

Augustine's works include: Of True Religion, The City of God, Confessions, On the Freedom of the Will, Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, and On the Correction of the Donatists.

A massively important event happened in or around 312 A.D. when Roman Emperor Constantine (280-337 A.D.) converted to Christianity. Constantine issued the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) which allowed Roman citizens freedom of worship, thus officially ending over 300 years of Roman persecution of Christianity.

Thus, the same Roman government that officially executed Jesus Christ and heavily persecuted early Christians would become Christianity's champion, leading to a massive spread of Christianity throughout the West and beyond.

Augustine anticipated the decline of the Roman Empire (which would officially fall in 476 A.D.) and considered how Christianity would adapt. His theological and apologetics work would be widely used to secure Christianity's place in western Europe.

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b. Medieval Apologists (476 A.D. to 1500s A.D.)

Western European history is traditionally divided into three main periods: antiquity, medieval, and modern. Our present period is usually classified as post-modern.

The 1000-year medieval period was essentially from the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. to the Renaissance in the 1400-1500s.

The medieval period itself can be divided into the Early or Dark Ages (476-900s), High Middle Ages (1000-1300), and Late Middle Ages (1300-1500).

The Dark Ages (from the fall of Rome until the 900s) is so called, not so much because of a distinct "dark" period of evil, but because western Europe lost the "light" of scholarly and written works that usually only exist in a developed civilization. We call it the "Dark Ages" because we don't know a lot about the period because there is a lack of written work from the time.

In other words, with the Fall of Rome came also a fall of learning and study.

But Christianity continued on after the Fall of Rome and became a major source of "light" by the reestablishment of learning centers throughout western Europe, especially during the "Carolingian Renaissance" beginning when Charlemagne became the Holy Roman Emperor (of the former western Roman Empire) on Christmas Day in 800 A.D.

Monasteries played a crucial role in copying and maintaining books from antiquity.

The 1100s would also see the rise of universities in the West.

i. Western Medieval European Apologists

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 A.D.)

Anselm was an Italian monk and apologist who became the Archbishop of Canterbury in Catholic England.

Anselm strongly advocated that Christian theology could and should be defended rationally and therefore was worthy of intellectual pursuit in addition to its more important spiritual mission.

In other words, Anselm recognized that reason was an important tool for defending and proclaiming the Christian faith, but that reason alone was insufficient to obtain salvation.

His most significant work, Cur Deus Homo? (Why the God-Man?), used reason to defend the incarnation of Christ as fully man and fully God.

Anselm is perhaps best known today for originating the **ontological argument** for the existence of God (see Objection 1: "There's No Proof That God Exists" below covering the most common arguments for the existence of God).

As a classical apologist, he began his defense of the gospel with theistic proofs for the existence of God and then proceeded with historical evidences and miracles.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.)

Thomas Aquinas was a priest and lawyer, and one of the most influential theologians and apologists of all time.

His best known written work is Summa Theologica, which functioned as a highly influential systematic theology text.

His work Summa Contra Gentiles was an apologetic defending the reasonableness of the Christian faith against Jewish, Islamic, and secular objections.

Interest in Aquinas has been renewed as of late, especially among evangelicals.

Aquinas confirmed that though saving faith comes from God, reason is a legitimate tool to better understand the Christian faith and to proclaim and defend it.

ii. Eastern Medieval European Apologists

In western Europe, the fall of the western Roman empire in the late 400s began a long period of stagnation in terms of civilization and learning (which is why it's called the "Dark Ages") all the way until around 800 with the rise of Charlemagne.

In eastern Europe, however, the eastern half of the Roman Empire didn't fall until the Muslims conquered Constantinople in 1453 A.D. -- about a thousand years after the fall of western Rome.

During this period, there developed a distinct "Byzantine" Christian theology in the eastern Mediterranean (that is, Greece and Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey).

John of Damascus (675-749 A.D.)

John of Damascus was an Arabian Christian monk, priest, and Christian apologist.

After the death of Mohammad in 632, Islam spread quickly throughout the Middle East -- especially by military conquest. Eventually, as mentioned above, the Muslims conquered Constantinople in 1453. Many of the areas conquered by Muslims were Christian, especially Antioch, Alexandria, and Damascus.

John of Damascus was one of the earliest defenders of the Christian faith to Islamic thinkers.

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Timothy I of Baghdad (740-823 A.D.)

Timothy I of Baghdad was an early church father of the eastern church.

Timothy I's work Apology defended the Christian faith to the caliph of Baghdad. This work came to function as a model for Christian defense in response to Islam.

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Theodore Abu Qurrah (750-825 A.D.)

Theodore Abu Qurrah was a Christian bishop in northern Syria who routinely defended the Christian faith among Muslims. He especially focused on the deity and substitutionary suffering of Christ, which Islam denies as blasphemy.

iii. Conclusions Regarding the Medieval Period

As Christianity became the dominant religion in western Europe, transforming Roman Europe into "Christendom," the role of apologetics waned or lessened since there were few left who openly challenged the Christian faith.

Eventually, however, the apologetic tool box would be required once again -- especially beginning in the 1500s.

c. Early Modern Apologists (1500s to 1800)

The **modern period** is generally from 1500 A.D. to around World War I (1914-1918), after which is widely considered the "post-modern" era.

The **early modern period** in Western history is from around 1500 to 1800 and is traditionally characterized by the Age of Discovery, the Age of Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution.

During this early modern period, Christian apologetics was primarily focused on defending the faith against objections from so-called "Enlightenment" thinkers who tended to see Christian faith as irrational and superstitious and the cause of unnecessary wars.

In England, Christian apologists were tasked with defending the faith against deism and science-based atheism.

Deism is based on the belief that God created the universe with certain laws to operate on its own, like a clock, and that after the creation, God is uninvolved in the universe. Therefore, the deists claim, there are no miracles, including the Bible as the actual Word of God, the Trinity, and the incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus.

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Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

Blaise Pascal was French mathematician, scientist, theologian, and apologist whose defense of the Christian faith advocated not only the use of reason, but also urged the importance of the heart in religious matters.

Pascal's apologetic used evidences, fulfilled prophecies, and his famous wager.

"Pascal's Wager" argues that if you bet on the existence of God, then you have much to gain and nothing to lose, even if he does not exist; alternatively, if you bet on atheism, and you are wrong, then you have everything to lose.

Pascal wrote, "Let us assess the two cases; if you win you win everything, if you lose, you lose nothing. Do not hesitate then; wager that he does exist." Geisler, at 429.

Norman Geisler cautions that Pascal's Wager does not prove God, but rather indicates that based on probability, it is unwise to reject belief in God. Geisler, at 429-430.

In this regard, the Bible itself states in Psalm 14:1 (KJV): "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

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Joseph Butler (1692-1752)

Joseph Butler was the Anglican Bishop of Durham in England and one of the most influential apologists of the 1700s.

His most prominent work was The Analogy of Religion (1736), wherein he defended the Christian faith against the rising popularity of deism in England.

Butler urged that **probability** was the best way to proclaim and defend Christianity, rather than focusing on rationalistic theistic proofs since most people use probability to make decisions in every day affairs rather than complex philosophical argumentation.

=====

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Jonathan Edwards was a highly influential American preacher, theologian, and apologist.

Edwards is perhaps best known today for his 1741 sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which contributed to the First Great Awakening of Christianity in the American colonies in the 1730s to 1740s.

Edwards used reason to proclaim and defend the faith and was partial to the teleological proof for the existence of God from the design and order in the universe.

However, Edwards also believed it important to appeal to "religious affections," rather than merely on rational argumentation.

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William Paley (1743-1805)

William Paley was a leading English clergyman and apologist in the last half of the 1700s.

Paley's arguments for Christianity remain heavily influential on apologetics today.

Paley's two most influential apologetic works were Natural Theology (1802) regarding the existence of God and A View of the Evidences of Christianity (1794).

One of Paley's most memorable arguments was the **watchmaker analogy**. If you were walking in a field and found a watch, it would be reasonable to conclude that some designer made the watch, rather than the watch having made itself or evolved on its own. Similarly, the complexity of the human eye or the universe in general inherently implies an Intelligent Designer. This is a form of the classic **teleological argument** for the existence of God, namely, order necessarily implies a God that made the order.

Skeptics of the teleological argument quip that even if there was intelligent design, it could have been done by a committee of designers, not necessarily one designer.

Paley countered that only one Designer is implicated given the massive uniformity throughout nature.

Regarding proof of the miracles involved in the resurrection, Paley argued that the real issue is the reliability of the witnesses, which is strongly corroborated by their willingness to endure persecution and even death.

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Conclusions Regarding Apologetics in the Early Modern Period

Christian apologetics became more important in the early modern period because of the steep rise in "scientific" objections.

The onslaught of "scientific" atheism against Christianity would continue to grow exponentially.

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d. Nineteenth-Century Apologists (1800s)

In stark contrast to the successful American Revolution, the communist-style French Revolution in 1789, combined with the Napoleonic Wars thereafter, strongly shook the foundations of politics and Christianity throughout Europe.

Traditional views -- especially Christian ones -- faced a quantum leap in open challenges, especially from the violent French Revolutionaries (Jacobins) and Karl Marx.

Prominent Christian apologists taking up the charge during the period include the following.

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Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853)

Simon Greenleaf was an American lawyer and Christian apologist.

Unlike the French Revolution, the American Revolution wasn't a rejection of Christianity. In fact, the Great Awakening (quickenened by Jonathan Edwards's famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God") acted to renew and solidify America's devotion to the Christian faith.

A growing conviction that Christianity encouraged a meritocracy based on the equality of all men led the colonists to reject British despotic, non-democratic rule.

Therefore, apologists in America focused on different issues than those in Europe.

As Americans adapted from a monarchical system to a self-rule republic, the rise of the importance of a new legal system led apologists to adapt their approach to a legal style similar to the standards of proof in courtrooms based on evidences and probability.

Simon Greenleaf was prominent among these new, legal-style evidentialists and advocated that **the Christian faith could be proven to be true beyond a reasonable doubt.**

This legal style of apologetics continues to inspire many contemporary apologists like Josh McDowell and John Warwick Montgomery.

=====

John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

John Henry Newman was an English academic and theologian who was also an Anglican-turned-Catholic priest.

In the face of an increasing shift toward liberal protestantism, especially in the British universities in the 1830s, Newman defended the reasonableness of the Christian faith within the university setting.

His most popular work was The Idea of a University (1852, 1858).

=====

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

Søren Kierkegaard was a Danish theologian and philosopher, usually considered the first existentialist.

Existentialism is a philosophical focus on the questions of why are we here and what is the meaning of life.

Kierkegaard was especially concerned with the political drift of the 1800s in Europe away from Christianity toward secularism.

Though he didn't deny that the Christian faith could be defended with reason, he advocated that saving faith was not based solely on intellectual agreement with the gospel, but also on the heart.

In other words, Kierkegaard focused on the **experiential apologetics approach**, concentrating more on what the heart says in response to the gospel, rather than merely what the mind says, without rejecting the latter.

Kierkegaard's experiential apologetics did not become more widespread until after World War I (1914-1918) when his works were translated into English and German.

=====

James Orr (1844-1913)

James Orr was a Scottish Presbyterian minister who was also a professor of apologetics and theology.

One of the early evangelical fundamentalists, Orr urged Christians to learn to defend the faith against the exponential growth of theological liberalism based on the rising tides of biblical criticism and Darwinism during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Orr, like C.S. Lewis, believed in theistic evolution. In his 1910 work Revelation and Inspiration, however, Orr argued that there was no inherent conflict between evolution and Christianity.

=====

B.B. Warfield (1851-1921)

B.B. Warfield was an American professor of theology at Princeton Seminary.

Warfield maintained that apologetics was a crucially important aspect of the Christian faith, both to strengthen the faith of believers and to defend its rational and historical reliability to nonbelievers.

Warfield didn't see apologetics as something that should be a separate field of inquiry in theology, but instead the very gateway to theology.

Warfield stressed that though proofs and evidences cannot themselves bring saving faith, the Holy Spirit worked through such apologetic endeavors to aid in the evangelism process.

Warfield was especially keen on defending the authority, inerrancy, and reliability of the Bible as the very Word of God, and therefore the very foundation of the Christian faith.

This would remain a common theme for American Protestant apologists into the 20th century.

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e. Twentieth-Century American Apologists

Christian apologetics became more prominent in America in the twentieth-century than in Europe, due in large part to the constant rise of the culture wars in a backdrop of the many Christian colleges and seminaries unique to America.

Most prominent American apologists in the twentieth-century were from the Reformed tradition.

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J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937)

J. Gresham Machen was an American New Testament scholar who led a break from the liberal theology that overtook Princeton Seminary, resulting in the formation of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929 and creating the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

As was the case with Warfield before him, Machen saw it as a crucial endeavor for Christians to defend orthodox, biblically-based faith from the rising onslaught, not only from secularism from outside, but also theological liberalism from within.

In his best known work Christianity & Liberalism (1923), Machen set out to demonstrate that liberal protestantism was incompatible with orthodox Christianity to the point of being two different religions. Another problem he saw was that liberalism rejected the supernatural and bowed to skeptical science, while fundamentalists seemed to embrace the supernatural while rejecting Christian intellectual pursuits entirely.

Thus, Machen advocated rejection of both liberalism and fideism (rejection of an intellectual approach to Christianity) in favor of orthodox Christianity enriched by intellectual defense. Machen was sure to remind people, however, that reason alone cannot give saving faith. This was one of the primary errors of liberalism.

=====

Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987)

Cornelius Van Til was a theologian and apologist who began teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary in 1930, shortly after its founding.

Van Til was the pioneer of the **presuppositional apologetics approach** (explained at length below) where the apologist is urged to always "presuppose" the truth and prominence of Scripture as the very Word of God and to defend the faith from there, rather than attempting to reason from outside Scripture to authenticate Scripture. Van Til believed that the classical approach, where theistic proofs are used first, essentially put human reason above Scripture.

Gordon Haddon Clark (1902-1985)

Gordon Haddon Clark taught Christian philosophy at Wheaton College. He disagreed with some of Van Til's approach.

While Clark himself was also a presuppositionalist, he believed, against Van Til, that there was some common ground between human and divine reason and that therefore apologetics should be able to use reason (as grasped by humans) to demonstrate how the Christian worldview was logically coherent while non-Christian views were incoherent.

For Clark, **the law of noncontradiction** was the key to establishing truth and therefore Clark might be called a rationalist presuppositionalist.

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984)

Francis Schaeffer was an American evangelical theologian, a Presbyterian pastor, and one of the most prominent American apologists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Schaeffer thought of himself as an evangelist first and foremost, who used apologetic methods in support of his evangelism, that is, as "pre-evangelism."

He believed that apologetics should be used both to defend the Christian faith against objections and to evangelize by demonstrating rational coherence and historical evidences.

Schaeffer studied under Cornelius Van Til and J. Gresham Machen at Westminster Theological Seminary.

Three of Schaeffer's prominent apologetic works are: The God Who is There (1968), Escape from Reason (1968), and He is There and He is Not Silent (1972).

In his work No Final Conflict (1979), Schaeffer strongly advocated biblical inerrancy as the most important foundational issue and played a large role in bringing about the International Council of Biblical Inerrancy, which later produced the 1978 Chicago Statement on Inerrancy.

Edward John Carnell (1919-1967)

Edward John Carnell was a **Baptist** pastor, theologian, and apologist who served as the president of Fuller Theological Seminary.

A student of Gordon H. Clark, Carnell preferred the presuppositional approach rather than the classical apologetics approach.

However, in his book The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life (1965), Carnell argued that there was no one-size-fits-all apologetic method. Rather, defense of the faith had to be tailored to the situation, but needed to be done not only to reinforce Christian belief but also to aid in evangelizing culture.

Carnell published eight books, including An Introduction to Christian Apologetics (1948) and Christian Commitment: An Apologetic (1957).

Carnell also wrote a significant three-part article, "How Every Christian Can Defend His Faith" in Moody Monthly (January, February, March 1950).

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f. Twentieth-Century European Apologists

Apologetics in Europe during the twentieth-century was more eclectic and less organized compared to the schools of apologetics in America, like the presuppositionalists, evidentialists, and classical apologists.

Many European apologists were also literary authors.

=====

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Clive Staples Lewis was an English professor at Oxford and Cambridge who was helped along to the Christian faith by his friend J.R.R. Tolkien, author of The Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings trilogy.

Lewis is very likely the most popular and influential Christian apologist of modern memory.

Lewis continues to be highly influential not only for his literary works like The Chronicles of Narnia, but also his many apologetic works like Mere Christianity (1952, based on radio talks from 1941-1944), The Abolition of Man (1943), and The Problem of Pain (1940).

If one were to give an unbeliever one book in addition to the Bible, Lewis's Mere Christianity would be one of the best.

=====

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was an English author and Catholic Christian apologist who wrote apologetic works and the Father Brown detective series.

Chesterton's religious works include Heretics (1905), Orthodoxy (1908), The Everlasting Man (1925), and Avowals and Denials (1934).

Chesterton's apologetic approach sought to engage the imagination by demonstrating Christian beliefs in easily understandable and witty language, while also criticizing objections as nonsensical.

=====

g. Contemporary Academic Apologists (1970s to 2020s)

Christian apologetics has become more popular than ever in the United States in the face of ever-increasing open and notorious attacks upon Christianity by secularists in the public square and by popular institutions, like the universities, the media, and the entertainment industries.

What follows is a list of the more well-known contemporary apologists, in order of birth, who often blur the lines between academic and practical apologetics.

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John Warwick Montgomery (1931-2024)

John Warwick Montgomery is an American-British lawyer, professor, Lutheran minister, and evidentialist apologist.

Montgomery wrote of his strong opposition to liberal protestantism in his books Crisis in Lutheran Theology (1967, 1973), The Suicide of Christian Theology (1970), and God's Inerrant Word (1974).

Like Simon Greenleaf, Montgomery uses a legal approach of defending the faith by using evidences and legal standards for burdens of proof with a focus on the strong historical probability of the divinity of Jesus.

=====

Norman Geisler (1932-2019)

Norman Geisler was an American theologian and apologist who authored over 100 books and even more articles, most of which were apologetic in nature.

Geisler focused heavily on defending the inerrancy of Scripture. Along with R.C. Sproul, Francis Schaeffer, and John MacArthur, Geisler was among the primary movers for the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Geisler's classical apologetic approach was not only meant for academics, but also for the average person. He is therefore one of the more popular sources for those currently interested in learning about apologetics, especially from the classical approach (that is, beginning with theistic proofs and then proceeding with evidences).

One very useful work by Geisler is his The Big Book of Christian Apologetics (1999, 2012).

=====

Alvin Plantinga (1932 -)

Alvin Plantinga is an American Christian philosopher and professor.

His most influential works include God and Other Minds (1967), The Nature of Necessity (1974), and Warranted Christian Belief (2000).

Plantinga has strongly defended the reasonableness of the Christian faith from a philosophical point of view.

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Richard Swinburne (1934 -)

Richard Swinburne is an English Christian philosopher who has defended the reasonableness of the Christian faith, especially with his position that the simplicity and coherence of Christianity helps to increase its probability of being correct.

His most influential books are The Coherence of Theism (1977, 2016) and The Existence of God (1979, 2004).

=====

R.C. Sproul (1939-2017)

Robert Charles Sproul was an American pastor and theologian and founder of Ligonier Ministries. He helped produce the Ligonier Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which evolved into the 1978 "Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," whose primary authors were Sproul and Norman Geisler.

Sproul wrote more than 100 books, including his expositional commentaries on the Gospels, as well as on Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1-2 Peter.

In his book Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics (2009), Sproul demonstrated a classical approach rather than the more common presuppositionalism practiced by Reformed theologians.

Sproul continues to be very popular among conservative evangelicals with his scholarly yet accessible manner in his many books and articles, as well as his sermons and lectures on youtube.com and ligonier.org.

=====

John Frame (1939 -)

John Frame is an American Christian theologian, philosopher, presuppositional apologist, and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

He was a long-time faculty member at Reformed Theological Seminary at the Orlando, Florida, campus who taught, among other things, apologetics.

Frame is especially known for interpreting and critiquing the presuppositional apologetics of Cornelius Van Til.

Frame has written many books, including his Systematic Theology: An Introduction of Christian Belief (2013), Apologetics to the Glory of God (1994) and its update, Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief (2015).

=====

John Lennox (1943 -)

John Lennox is a Christian apologist and mathematician from Northern Ireland and is currently an emeritus professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford.

Lennox has publicly debated many prominent atheists, including Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins.

He has written many books on the relationship between science and Christianity, for example, God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God (2009, updated edition) and Can Science Explain Everything (2019).

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J.P. Moreland (1948 -)

James Porter Moreland is an American theologian and Christian apologist and is a professor at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University.

He signed the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

His apologetic works include Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity (1987), Love Your God With All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul (1997), and The God Question: An Invitation to a Life of Meaning (2009).

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William Lane Craig (1949 -)

William Lane Craig is an American philosopher, Christian apologist, and Methodist.

Craig's defense of the faith has been particularly popular among college students.

Craig is especially known for revitalizing the *kalam* cosmological argument for the existence of God.

As explained in more depth later in this Study Guide, the cosmological argument for the existence of God demonstrates God as being the First Causer of all Causes.

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Gary R. Habermas (1950 -)

Gary Habermas is an American New Testament scholar, theologian, and apologist at Liberty University who focuses on the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Habermas uses the historical evidential approach to defend the Christian faith, especially for audiences that do not accept biblical inerrancy.

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Alister McGrath (1953 -)

Alister McGrath is a Northern Irish, Anglican priest, scholar, and Christian apologist.

McGrath focuses on defense of the faith against those, like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, who hold that the natural sciences allegedly disprove the Christian faith.

McGrath argues that there is no contradiction between science and faith when properly understood.

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h. Contemporary Popular American Apologists

The following are among the most popular American apologists whose approaches are less academic and more practical with a general audience in mind.

Josh McDowell (1939 --) is a popular American Christian classical and evidentialist apologist and evangelist whose most famous and influential works are Evidence That Demands a Verdict (1972) and More than a Carpenter (1977).

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Greg Koukl (1950 -) is a Christian author, apologist, and radio talk show host who founded Stand to Reason, a Christian apologetics organization.

His most popular books include Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions (2009), The Story of Reality: How the World Began, How It Ends, and Everything Important that Happens in Between (2017), and Street Smarts: Using Questions to Answer Christianity's Toughest Challenges (2023).

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Lee Strobel (1952 --) is an American Christian apologist who was formerly an investigative journalist. His most popular books include his "The Case for ..." series, especially The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus (1998).

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Frank Turek (1961 -) is an American Christian apologist, radio host, and founder of the Christian apologetics ministry CrossExamined.org. His most popular book is I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist (2004).

C. OUTLINE OF APOLOGETIC APPROACHES

God's Toolbox Has a Variety of Tools for Different Jobs

There are different ways apologists approach Christian apologetics -- especially in the academic camp.

The differences in the most common apologetic approaches usually boil down to the starting point, that is, whether you start with reasoning from outside the Bible to the Bible, or from inside the Bible to the outside.

Unfortunately, it often seems like academic apologists focus more on debating the proper approach among themselves rather than focusing on the larger task at hand, namely, defending and proclaiming the faith to unbelievers and reinforcing the faith to believers.

The better approach -- especially in the realm of practical apologetics -- would seem to focus more on whatever seems to work in the situation.

In other words, those engaging in practical apologetics and evangelism would be better served if they viewed all of the available methods and sources as tools in God's toolbox to use when it seems appropriate -- as long as the tool is biblically warranted.

This section will outline the main apologetic approaches, namely, classical, evidential (or historical), presuppositional, and experiential, with the first three being the most common.

The reader is cautioned at this point to be mindful of who is defining or explaining a particular apologetics approach. A classical apologist, for example, will likely describe the presuppositional or classical approaches differently than the other way around.

Therefore, this Study Guide will attempt to describe the approaches by advocates of the approach and then consider objections from advocates of other approaches.

We should be mindful of the inherent bias in how almost anyone explains almost anything. Even if one isn't deliberately biased, one may not have enough information or time to fully understand another approach, which more often than not, leads to misunderstandings.

Interestingly, that is what we are trying to do in the first place in the apologetic task. We are trying to use our gospel-bias to lead an unbeliever to exchange their unbelieving-bias for the truth, as God through the Apostle Paul indicates in Romans 1:25 (NASB) ("For they exchanged the truth for a lie...").

And why should we even try to do this anyway? Because the Bible tells us to do so (Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Peter 3:15).

Are all biases created equal? No. We're supposed to be biased in favor of the Bible because it is the truth.

There is no neutral ground.

Sources consulted for this section include the following works:

John Frame, Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief (2015, an updated second edition of Frame's Apologetics to the Glory of God (1994)), hereinafter referred to as "Frame, at ____."

Benjamin K. Forrest, Joshua D. Chatraw, Alister E. McGrath, editors, The History of Apologetics: A Biographical and Methodological Introduction (2020), hereinafter referred to as "Forrest, at ____."

Norman L. Geisler, The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide (2012), hereinafter referred to as "Geisler, at ____."

H. Wayne House and Joseph M. Holden, Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences (2006), hereinafter referred to as "House, at ____."

1. Classical Apologetics

As the name implies, the "classical" apologetic approach has been the norm for a very long time and is commonly associated with early apologists like Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Joseph Butler.

Many more modern and contemporary apologists continue to use the classical approach, including William Paley, B.B. Warfield, C.S. Lewis, R.C. Sproul, William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, and Norman Geisler.

As Norman Geisler puts it: "Classical apologetics stresses rational arguments for the existence of God and historical evidence supporting the truth of Christianity. Stress is placed on miracles as the confirmation of the claims of Christ and the biblical prophets and apostles." Geisler, at 93.

Thus, classical apologetics typically involves two main steps:

- 1) First, use **theistic arguments** to establish the existence of God apart from (but with respect for) the Bible; then
- 2) Second, use **evidences** to establish the authority of the Bible and the historical reliability of the life, death, resurrection, and deity of Jesus.

According to Geisler (who is himself a classical apologist), classical apologists do not necessarily "accept *all* traditional proofs for God. For example, many reject the validity of the ontological argument. But most accept some form of the cosmological argument and the teleological argument. Many also believe the moral argument is valid." Geisler, at 94.

For an overview of the theistic arguments for God, see **Objection 1: "There's No Proof That God Exists"** below.

R.C. Sproul, another classical apologist, believed that "the best starting point for apologetics is with the existence of God." R.C. Sproul, Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics (2003), 18.

Sproul's classical apologetics approach features three steps:

- (1) first consider the principles of knowledge (epistemology), then
- (2) establish the existence of God with those principles, and then
- (3) establish the authority of the Bible as God's Word.

Sproul cautioned against a common objection to apologetics called **fideism** which he describes in the following way: "I don't need to have a reason for what I believe. I just close my eyes like tiny Alice and take a deep breath, and if I try hard enough, I can believe and jump into the arms of Jesus. I take a blind leap of faith.' The Bible never tells us to take a leap of faith into the darkness and hope that there's somebody out there. The Bible calls us to jump out of the darkness and into the light. That is not a blind leap." R.C. Sproul, Defending Your Faith (2003), 25.

Objections to the Classical Approach

According to presuppositionalist John Frame, classical apologists "tell the unbeliever to think neutrally during the apologetic encounter, and they ... seek to develop a neutral argument, one that has no distinctively biblical presuppositions." Frame, at 5.

However, Frame argues that trying to engage in apologetics on neutral ground (that is, assuming for the sake of argument that Scripture is not the standard of truth, but rather "reason" as if it exists independently of the Triune God of Scripture) is unbiblical. Frame, at 6.

Another limitation to the classical approach is that the traditional theistic arguments for God and the objections levied against them are complicated and usually require an advanced knowledge of logic and philosophy.

Because of the heavy philosophy involved, classical apologetics often ends up being confined to the academic arena.

2. Evidential (or Historical) Apologetics

The evidential apologetics approach (also known as historical apologetics) focuses primarily on historical evidence as sufficient to establish the truth of Scripture.

The method is similar to how lawyers marshal the alleged facts during a trial to establish truth as more likely than not.

Proponents of the evidential approach include: Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Joseph Butler, William Paley, Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, Edward Carnell, John Warwick Montgomery, Josh McDowell, and Gary Habermas.

Both the classical and evidential approaches use historical evidence to establish the truth of Scripture.

The main difference between evidential apologetics and classical apologetics is that the evidential approach doesn't usually use the theistic arguments for the existence of God like the classical approach does.

According to Geisler: "Usually, the historical apologist sees the resurrection of Christ as the linchpin of apologetics." Geisler, at 230.

The historical approach often employs the following steps:

- (1) establishing the authenticity and reliability of the NT;
- (2) considering what the NT says about Jesus being God the Son and his miracles (especially the resurrection);
- (3) defending Jesus' miracles; and
- (4) from these three steps, concluding that Jesus is the Son of God (and therefore a person of the Triune God) and that therefore the Bible is the Word of God since Jesus said it was, and it should be read, believed, and obeyed accordingly.

Objections to the Evidentialist/Historical Approach

Though the classical approach also uses historical evidences to help establish the truth of Scripture, the classical apologist would object that the evidentialist/historical approach needs to establish God first with theistic arguments in order to make sense of the historical evidence.

The presuppositionalist would argue that, though historical evidences supporting the truth of Scripture are fine and even valuable, the apologist should always begin with assuming (or presupposing) the truth of Scripture since that is the standard of truth upon which everything -- including the historical evidences and the human evaluation of those evidences -- rests.

Thus, the presuppositionalist in general does not object to using evidences to support the authenticity of Scripture, but rather objects to the idea that there is neutral ground (whether theistic proofs or historical evidences) from which to judge the authenticity of Scripture rather than the other way around.

3. Presuppositional Apologetics

The presuppositional apologetics approach, pioneered by Cornelius Van Til, "presupposes" or assumes the truth of Scripture and **reasons from Scripture** rather than trying to use autonomous human reason to **reason to** Scripture.

Autonomous human reason refers to the idea that we can think "neutrally," or act as if human reason is the standard of truth rather than Scripture.

There is, however, no neutrality. Both the believer and the non-believer have their own biases and "presuppositions." If you agree with a non-believer to act as if human reason decides whether Scripture is the basis for reason, you are giving the impression to the non-believer that autonomous human reason is king.

According to prominent presuppositionalist John Frame, God "calls us to give him all our loyalty and not allow any other loyalty to compete with him (Deut. 6:4ff; Matt. 6:24; 12:30; John 14:16; Acts 4:12)." Frame, at 7.

"We obey this law," Frame goes on to say, "even when it conflicts with lesser laws (Acts 5:29). Since we believe him more certainly than we believe anything else, he (and hence his Word) is the very *criterion*, the ultimate *standard* of truth. What higher standard could there possibly be? What standard is more authoritative? What standard is more clearly known to us (see Rom. 1:19-21)? What authority ultimately validates all other authorities?" Frame, at 7.

Scripture tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 (CSB): "So, ... whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (see also Rom. 14:23; 2 Cor. 10:5; Col. 3:17, 23; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Accordingly, Frame concludes that "our Lord's demand upon us is comprehensive. In all that we do, we must seek to please him. No area of human life is neutral." Frame, at 7.

Essentially, the presuppositionalist argues that (1) Scripture is the ultimate standard of truth and (2) that the problem with unbelief is not a lack of knowledge of God (because all people innately know God and are therefore without excuse, Romans 1:19-20), but rather the **noetic effects of sin** on the unbeliever's thinking.

In other words, in spite of that innate knowledge of God that he puts within everyone, "the unbeliever intentionally distorts the truth, exchanging it for a lie (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16 [note especially 2:14]; 2 Cor. 4:4)." Frame, at 8.

Unlike the classical approach, the presuppositionalist doesn't begin with proofs of God since God is presupposed.

Unlike the historical evidential approach, presuppositionalists begin with presupposing God and Scripture rather than reasoning from historical evidences establishing the authority of Scripture.

Using the presuppositional approach doesn't mean, however, that you can't use proofs or evidences. Instead, it's a matter of priority. As long as the presuppositionalist makes it clear at all times that Scripture is the main source of truth, it is fine to reinforce that idea with circumstantial evidence.

Objections to Presuppositional Approach

Many classical apologists object to what they believe is the rejection of using theistic proofs by presuppositionalists.

According to Frame, "presuppositionalists are often accused of rejecting the use of evidence. This simply is not so. The use of extrascriptural evidence ... may be seen as part of a godly use of Scripture itself." Frame, at 24.

Frame also urges that presuppositionalism "does not reject the use of evidences, even the use of theistic proofs. We only insist that these be *scriptural* arguments -- that is, arguments that appeal to scriptural criteria. In Scripture's teaching, nature points to God; so the obedient Christian apologist will show the unbeliever the various ways in which nature reveals God, without claiming neutrality and without allowing the use of non-Christian criteria of truth." Frame, at 25.

"Granted this approach," Frame argues, "there need be no competition between presuppositionalism and evidences. Our scriptural presupposition authorizes the use of evidence, and the evidence is nothing more than the application of Scripture to our situation." Frame, at 25.

4. Experiential Apologetics

Experiential apologetics focuses on bringing about Christian faith from the "experience" of faith instead of using reason.

In other words, the experiential approach assumes a necessary distinction between faith and reason and that only faith can bring one to God and not "reason."

This approach focuses more on the power of God to bring about faith rather than on the efforts of man.

Prominent experientialists include **Søren Kierkegaard** (1813-55) and **Karl Barth** (1886-1968).

"In the modern period," wrote Geisler, "existentialism (Kierkegaard) and neo-orthodoxy (Karl Barth) place high value on religious experience and its proofs of Christianity. Classical liberals and modernists reject objective Christian truth, so a general experiential religion is virtually the only possible foundation on which to build a Christian apologetic." Geisler, at 156.

"While usually remaining outside apologetics discussions, experiential apologetics characterizes Pentecostal, charismatic, and some pietistic movements." Geisler, at 156.

Experientialists are often referred to as "fideists," meaning that the Scriptures can only be understood with faith and that no reason or proof is necessary to establish one's faith or to defend it.

According to Geisler, the experiential approach "appeals to the Christian experience as evidence for the truth of Christianity. In its appeal to internal, as opposed to external, evidence, it contrasts sharply with other apologetic systems." Geisler, at 156.

Experientialists have different approaches.

Some focus on general religious experiences which are not confined to Christianity (for example, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Paul Tillich).

Other experientialists focus on special religious experiences such as mystical experiences and Christian conversions. "For those who do have such experiences, they can be a powerful demonstration of the truth of Christianity." Geisler, at 157.

Objections to Experiential Approach

Though such individual experiences may be convincing to the person who experienced it, to get others to believe based on your own experience requires reason and persuasion.

While it's true that one cannot use human autonomous reason alone to gain a saving faith, and while it's true that God is certainly the primary source of belief in him, God works through people who proclaim and defend Scripture. Further, Scripture calls for making disciples (Matt. 28:19-20) and for defending the faith (1 Pet. 3:15).

The experientialist assumes that faith and reason are separate and that only faith can lead one to God. If by "reason" one means human autonomous reason apart from God, that is true. But if by "reason" one means God-derived and God-created reason, including the reason used in Scripture itself, then there is no contradiction between faith and reason.

After all, God himself said in Isaiah 1:18 (NASB1995), "Come now, let us reason together."

Ironically, the experientialist uses reason to demonstrate why reason should not be used to defend Christianity -- this violates the law of noncontradiction and is therefore self-defeating.

According to Geisler, "General religious experience is not specific enough to support the unique claims of Christianity. At best, it can only support some vague claims about a transcendent 'other' but not the unique claims of a trinitarian God who has revealed himself in Scripture. Nor are special religious experiences objective or verifiable. They afford no critical, rational scrutiny. Objective criteria are needed for all subjective experiences to be meaningful to anyone other than the person who has them. Objective testing is certainly needed before they can be used to establish a truth claim. The mind must understand and scrutinize what the heart is feeling. Otherwise, we cannot know whether it corresponds to reality." Geisler, at 158.

"This is why the Bible warns against false prophets (Matt. 7:15) and teachings (1 Tim. 4:1ff; 1 John 4:1ff). Indeed, it even provides objective criteria by which falsehood can be known. (cf. Deut. 18:9-22)." Geisler, at 158.

Conclusions Regarding Apologetic Approaches

We just covered the main apologetic approaches used today, namely, the classical, historical/evidential, presuppositional, and the experiential approaches.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, apologists -- especially academic apologists -- often get bogged down in debating with each other about which approach is best rather than keeping the eye on the ball, namely, proclaiming and defending the faith among nonbelievers and reinforcing the faith for believers.

Think of the apologetic approaches as tools in God's Evangelism Tool Box for spreading the gospel. Use whatever tool you think will work in the situation with the particular person.

V. TEN COMMON OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY

A. INTRODUCTION

Now that we've considered (1) what the Bible says about spreading and defending the gospel, (2) evangelism philosophies and methods, and (3) an overview of Christian apologetics, we now turn to consider **ten common objections** you are likely to encounter when spreading and defending the Christian faith.

As stated throughout this Study Guide, usually the biggest reason why Christians don't spread and defend the gospel is that they fear they won't know how to answer objections and that people are going to get angry with them.

Antidotes to fear start and end with prayer and God's help. But in between, the antidote you can take on your own is the same antidote for any type of test anxiety: study and practice.

Few people can pass a math or history test without learning the math or history in the first place and then studying it. Most people cannot simply walk on a football field, play, and win the game without ever having even seen the game played. They have to learn how to play the game and practice it.

Let's learn together how to defend against the following ten common objections to the Christian faith:

- 1) "There's No Proof That God Exists."
- 2) "The Bible is Not The Word of God."
- 3) "All Religions Lead to Heaven."
- 4) "I Can't Believe In a God Who Allows Evil."
- 5) "God Would Not or Should Not Send People to Hell."
- 6) "Christians Are Hypocrites."
- 7) "People Are Essentially Good and Don't Need Saving."
- 8) "Religions Have Killed the Most People."
- 9) "Evolution Proves That Christianity Is Wrong."
- 10) "I Only Believe In Science."

B. OBJECTIONS AND DEFENSES

1. Objection: "There's No Proof That God Exists."

The Objection

The most common objection to the Christian faith is that there is no God in the first place, or at least insufficient evidence to prove that God exists.

What the Bible Says

Passages regarding **the very existence of God** include the following:

(Psalm 19:1 CSB) "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands."

(John 1:1-3, 14 NASB) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

(Rom. 1:18-21 CSB) "For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts became darkened."

(Heb. 3:4 NASB) "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God."

(Ps. 14:1a KJV) "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

Defenses

Defenses to this objection can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it.

First, we'll consider the simpler defenses and then we'll proceed to the more in-depth defenses.

(Simple Defenses)

1) You might start by asking questions like, "What kind of proof would satisfy you?" or "Give me an example of something you believe is true and what it took to prove it to you?" or "What does proving God mean to you?"

2) One simple but powerful defense to this objection is that the order in the universe conclusively shows that there must be a Creator. If you walked upon a cabin in the middle of the woods, you can conclude there was a builder and that the cabin didn't just appear from nothing. Only someone who stood outside of reality could create something from nothing. This someone is God.

3) Another quick answer is that God is the great cause of all causes. As Greg Koukl puts it, "The Big Bang needs a Big Banger."

4) Another simple answer is that God is implied by our innate sense of morality. In other words, we all have a sense of morality which points to an ultimate Moral Giver.

How do we get from establishing that the Creator, Moral Giver, and Big Banger is the Triune God of the Bible? The historical, biblical, archeological, and circumstantial evidence, all combined together, weighs by far the heaviest in favor of what the Bible says about God.

(In-Depth Defenses - Traditional Theistic Arguments)

Below we'll consider in more detail the most common historical theistic arguments, or arguments for the existence of God.

A **theistic argument** is an argument or rationale based on logic meant to prove the existence of God.

Classical apologists rely heavily upon theistic arguments as the first step in their apologetic approach.

However, theistic arguments are not confined to the classical approach. They remain good tools for all those who are inclined to answer the commission in 1 Peter 3:15 to always be ready to defend the faith.

The main traditional Christian theistic arguments include the following:

- 1) **Cosmological Argument** (argument from cause)
- 2) **Teleological Argument** (argument from order and intelligent design)
- 3) **Moral Argument** (argument from the inherent sense of morality)
- 4) **Ontological Argument** (God exists as the greatest that can be thought of)

After covering these arguments, this section will conclude with the **transcendental argument** (that is, that God transcends or is above and beyond human argument) advocated by presuppositionalists.

Christian theistic arguments reigned largely unchallenged in Europe from the 1100s until the 1700s when the philosopher Immanuel Kant appeared (to many but not all) to have demonstrated that the underlying logic for all of the traditional theistic arguments was flawed. **Kant did not, however, disprove God. Rather, in his view, the only valid theistic argument was the moral argument.**

The main traditional arguments for the existence of God currently accepted today by most classical apologists are the **cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments**.

The ontological argument pioneered by Anselm has fallen out of favor for the most part today.

There is no single theistic argument that "proves" the full Triune God of Scripture outside of Scripture.

However, theistic arguments remain valuable tools in the Christian's toolbox to be used when the job of defending the faith appears to need it -- remembering that God is the one doing most of the work through you anyway.

1. Cosmological Argument (Argument from Cause)

The **cosmological argument** for the existence of God essentially argues that everything, including the "cosmos" or universe as a whole, had a cause since nothing can cause itself; and some causes were caused by previous causes, and so on, all the way back to a First Cause of All Causes which was not created and always existed. That First Causer is God.

In other words, the cosmological argument for the existence of God is that since there is something, that something had to have been created *by* someone since something cannot come *from* nothing. The Creator of the first something is God.

The most popular version of this argument is often called the ***kalam* cosmological argument** ("*kalam*" means "speech or discourse" in Arabic) and involves how the cosmos or universe came to be in the first place, as opposed to how the universe remains in existence.

Apologist William Lane Craig has been the contemporary champion of the *kalam* cosmological argument.

The most common objection to the cosmological argument is that even if it proves a First Causer, it doesn't establish the Triune God of Scripture as that First Causer.

A common counter to this objection is that the cosmological argument isn't meant to be considered on its own, but is meant to be used in combination with other evidence and theistic arguments, like the teleological, moral, and other arguments.

Another common objection to the cosmological argument is that, since everything needs a cause, so does God.

The counter to this objection is that law of causality does not apply to God because he is an infinite being. Causality only applies to finite things.

2. Teleological Argument (Argument from Order and Intelligent Design)

The teleological argument essentially says that the intricate design and order in the universe isn't random and points to an Intelligent Designer.

In other words, design itself is the evidence of an Intelligent Designer.

The teleological argument gets its name from the Greek word *telos*, which means "in the end" or "purpose."

A popular form of the teleological argument from design is William Paley's (1743-1805) watch analogy: if one were to walk in a field and find a watch, it is reasonable to conclude there was a watchmaker since it would seem impossible that the watch, with its intricate combination of parts, created itself or came to exist out of nothing.

Another example of a teleological argument from design is a joke from former president Ronald Reagan. He said that he always had trouble understanding atheism and would one day like to host a dinner with prominent atheists who would be served a fancy, multiple-course dinner. After dessert, he would be sure to get everyone's opinion about how wonderful and complex the dinner was, after which he would ask them if they believed a chef was involved.

The Bible itself uses the teleological argument from design:

(Psalm 19:1 CSB) "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands."

(Psalm 8:3-4 NASB) "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"

(Heb. 3:4 NASB) "For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God."

The main objection to the teleological argument from design is that even if it indicates an Intelligent Designer, how do we know it was not a committee of designers?

As mentioned previously, William Paley countered that only one Designer is implicated given the massive uniformity throughout nature.

The answer to this objection is that no theistic argument based on logic alone will satisfy everyone. The teleological argument, like others, should be used in combination with other theistic arguments as well as evidences.

Another common objection is that creation came about by chance. However, as explained at length later in this study guide, chance is not an entity and has no power to create something from nothing.

3. Moral Argument

The moral argument for the existence of God is that since all humans have an innate sense of right and wrong, there must be a source of the morality, namely, a great Moral Giver. This Moral Giver is God.

The moral argument could be expanded to say that everyone has an innate sense of right and wrong and that we *ought* to act right and if we act right this is good and if we act wrong this is bad and there should be justice. Therefore, logically there must be a Moral Giver who made right right and wrong wrong and who will ultimately ensure justice at some point and in some way.

Though Immanuel Kant rejected the cosmological and teleological theistic arguments (a rejection that is not necessarily established once and for all), he did believe that the moral argument was persuasive to show the existence of God.

Essentially, Kant argued that morality makes no sense without God.

C.S. Lewis gave a popular form of the moral argument in his work Mere Christianity (1952).

The Bible gives a moral argument for the existence of God as well, especially in Romans 1:18-32 (CSB):

¹⁸ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, ¹⁹ since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. ²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

²⁸ And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right. ²⁹ They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. ³² Although they know God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

One common objection to the moral argument for the existence of God is that humans may have developed morality from evolution and natural selection.

However, if evolution and natural selection involves survival of the "fittest," or more exactly the "meanest," it would seem that whatever is the most straight-forward, practical solution to a problem for someone to survive would be the most desirable. Morality would often just get in the way of the most practical solutions.

For example, if there were limited food on an island, the most effective and practical solution to ensure survival of the "fittest" would be to kill anyone who would compete for the food, without regard to the "morality" of it. However, normal people would strongly hesitate to use that as a first option since it would offend their innate sense of morality. Thus, morality would seem not be a product of evolution based on stone-cold natural selection.

4. Ontological Argument

Ontology involves the study of being, how things come to "be" and what it means to "be".

"To be or not to be," Hamlet asked, "that is the [ontological] question."

The ontological argument originated with Anselm (1033-1109 A.D.) and might be stated as follows: **God is that which nothing greater can be conceived, and since he would not be the greatest thing that can be conceived if he did not exist, God exists.**

Another way of stating the ontological argument is: God is perfect in every way. One way of being perfect is to exist. Therefore, God exists.

The ontological argument has been generally out of favor since Immanuel Kant in the 1700s.

Alvin Plantinga is one example of a contemporary Christian philosopher who accepts a version of the ontological argument.

One of the first objections to the ontological argument was from Gaunilo, a contemporary of Anselm. Gaunilo's objection was that this argument could be used to prove a perfect anything, like a perfect island.

Anselm countered that the ontological argument only applies to God since only God is perfect in every way as an infinite being, not an island or any other finite thing.

Another objection to the ontological argument is that it can be used to defend any type of God or gods.

As with the other theistic arguments, consider the ontological argument as a tool among many different arguments and evidences.

5. Argument from Motion

One of Thomas Aquinas's theistic arguments was the argument for the existence of God from motion.

Motion exists. Motion must be caused by an external force. There cannot be an infinite backward sequence of motion causers. Therefore, there must have been an original Motion Causer or "Unmoved Mover." This Unmoved Mover is God.

It would seem the argument from motion is a variation of the cosmological argument from cause.

6. Argument that God Is Inherently Known

The argument that God is inherently known by all humans was urged by Augustine and John Calvin.

The argument is derived from Romans 1:19-20 that everyone has an innate knowledge of God so that we are without excuse when we refuse to believe in him.

7. Transcendental (Presuppositional) Argument

The transcendental argument for the existence of God is that God transcends (or is above and beyond) being confined by and proven by human argument or reason, since reason makes no sense in the first place without God.

The transcendental argument is the main theistic argument used by presuppositionalists and was pioneered by Cornelius Van Til and currently championed by John Frame, among others.

Though Van Til appears to have believed that the transcendental argument is the only valid theistic argument to the exclusion of all others, more contemporary presuppositionalists, especially John Frame, allow for use of other theistic proofs to supplement the transcendental argument, while still viewing the transcendental argument as the most important and persuasive.

One memorable way Van Til used to illustrate the core of the transcendental argument was likening atheists to a child slapping their father while sitting in his lap. The child wouldn't be there in the first place if the father were not supporting him and had not played his role in creating him in the first place.

The transcendental argument could be seen as the core basis for the presuppositional approach in general.

The presuppositionalist "presupposes" from the outset that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore the standard of all truth since, they argue, trying to reason outside of the Bible to validate the Bible is submitting God's Word (and therefore God) to human ideas of what is reasonable. And since God created reason in the first place, non-believing, human autonomous reason makes no sense.

Thus, the presuppositionalist insists that there is no such thing as a neutral standard to judge the Bible as the standard.

If the God of the Bible is God, then he is the ultimate standard to judge himself, not anything created by him. Man is made in God's image, not the other way around.

Presuppositionalists also argue that in addition to God transcending or being beyond human "proof," it is the non-believer's sin that is getting in the way to God, not the lack of understanding or knowledge as discussed in at length in Romans 1.

We are to subject ourselves, including our intellects, to the lordship of Christ, not the other way around.

Many Christians act as if their intellects are separate and apart from their biblical duties, or as if there is faith and reason and never the twain shall meet.

However, Jesus said that the most important commandment (Matt. 22:37-38) was to love God not only with all our heart, soul, and strength, but also with our **minds** (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

Christians, including Christian intellectuals, often appear to shrink with embarrassment when criticized by the so-called "best" secular scholars of our time.

However, Jesus warned in Mark 8:34-38 (CSB): "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Further, the Bible tells us that we should guard against allowing non-believing "respectable" opinions from clouding our judgment (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16).

We're told in 1 Corinthians 1:18-19 (NASB): "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.'"

By this, the Apostle Paul was warning against secular "wisdom" that believes itself to be "autonomous" or "neutral" and not subject to God or his Word.

Consider also the admonition in 1 Timothy 6:20-21 (CSB): "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding irreverent and empty speech and contradictions from what is falsely called knowledge. By professing it, some people have departed from the faith."

Conclusions About Theistic Arguments

We've just considered the main theistic arguments for the existence of God, especially the cosmological, teleological, moral, and transcendental arguments.

There is no one single theistic argument that can "prove" the Triune God of Scripture **outside** of Scripture.

However, the theistic arguments can be used in combination to help establish that God exists. This is the first step urged by classical apologists. Establishing that God is the Triune God of the Bible will involve additional arguments and evidences.

But you're not required to use theistic arguments at all. You can choose to concentrate on making the case for Jesus based on historical evidences, or by arguing from the Bible by presupposing the truth and authority of the Bible from the outset, or by a combination of these methods.

Regardless of what tools we choose from the Evangelist's Tool Box, the goal is the same: to allow God to work through us to spread and defend the gospel.

In defending the faith, we should remember to:

- (1) subject our minds (as well as our hearts, souls, and strength) to the lordship of Jesus (Mark 12:30-31);
- (2) to not be ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16);
- (3) to make our case for Jesus with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15) while seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6); and
- (4) to recognize that God will work through us - especially when we pray for his help.

The Bible tells us that all men know God (Rom. 1:19, 21), but some choose to reject him. Some people will allow their sinful pride to keep them in darkness regardless of what arguments or evidences you give them, while others will be drawn to the light of Christ you help shine upon them by obeying the Bible's commissions to evangelize and defend the faith.

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2. Objection: "The Bible is Not the Word of God."

a. The Two Objections Within the Objection

Probably the second most common objection to the Christian faith is that the Book it is founded upon is not what it says it is.

This objection has two distinct, but interrelated parts, and so there are two objections within the main objection.

First, the objection alleges that the Bible is not the Word of God because the copies we have of them are not sufficiently accurate compared to the original copies that are not known to currently exist.

Second, the objection alleges that even if the copies we have are accurate enough, there are too many contradictions in the Bible as a whole to make it true enough to believe it is the actual Word of God because most people would agree that God would not contradict himself.

b. What the Bible Says

Consider this primary text in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB):

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Not only is the Old Testament "Scripture," so is the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:37-38; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15-16).

If the Bible is the Word of God, it is true (e.g., John 17:17; 2 Sam. 7:28; Ps. 12:6; 119:151, 160, 172; Prov. 30:5), authentic, and without substantive error since God is good (e.g., Mark 10:18), he knows everything (e.g., 1 John 3:20), and he does not lie (Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

It follows that if the Bible is the Word of God, it is the very standard of truth and we should believe it and obey it.

In his parable of The Two Foundations in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus said that if you build your life on his Word, then you will have a strong rock foundation that will weather all storms. If you don't build your life upon God's Word, then you have built your life upon sand, and it will wash away when the storms come.

A plot was set into motion long, long ago to twist and sow doubt about God's Word to prevent it from being anyone's foundation. That plot continues in earnest today.

In Genesis 3:1-5 (NASB), we're told:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden"? The woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Notice how Satan twisted the truth in verse 1 when he characterized God's Word as "You shall not eat of **any** tree of the garden?" when in fact God had only said not to eat of only one tree. In other words, Satan effectively said, "Did God really say that you can't eat of any of the trees," combining the doubt part with the words "Did God really say" and the twisted part "you can't eat of any of the trees" when God had only prohibited one.

Then in verses 3 and 4, after Eve told Satan that God's Word said they would die if they ate of the tree (there was no death at this point), Satan first called God a liar ("You surely won't die," even though Eve told him God had said so) and then continued the lie by telling Eve she and her husband could eat of the tree and gain wisdom to "know good and evil" and more importantly, "be like God."

Satan's early plot to sow doubt and twist God's Word tempted Eve and then Adam to deliberately disobey God (though the devil didn't "make" them do it, he only tempted them to do it, which is why God held Adam and Eve responsible).

Satan's temptation led to death being a possibility for the human race. This is why Jesus refers to Satan as "a murderer from the beginning" and "the father of lies" in John 8:44 (CSB).

And so, in Genesis 3, Satan attacked God's Word and tempted our first parents to disobey God's Word by substituting their own Word for God's Word. In other words, Satan tempted Eve, then Adam, to decide what truth is, what right and wrong is, so they could try to "be like God."

This resulted in humans — those God created in his image — breaking God's good and perfect world. We call it "The Fall" and we're still falling and that's terrible news.

But God put in motion a new plan, a rescue plan, in Genesis 3 after The Fall. When he confronted our first parents and Satan for what happened, God said in Genesis 3:15 (NASB) "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

Who is Eve's seed that God is talking about that's going to bruise Satan's head? Jesus.

And so, Satan has sought from the beginning to fool us into not believing God's Word. This plan led us to introduce sin and death to break God's perfect world. Then the rest of the Bible, the rest of history, involves the working out of God's long-term redemptive plan, first referenced in Genesis 3:15, culminating into the redemptive hard labor of God the Son Jesus Christ with his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection to pay the price believers owe for their sins so that God could provide a way to save us from what happened in the Garden so long ago.

That is a long introduction to this first objection, but that is rightly so because it is what the Bible is all about in the first place.

No wonder Satan wants to attack the Bible. That was the first thing we read of him doing and that remains his main plan.

The late Adrian Rogers said in his sermon "Four Lies that Ruined the World": "Anyone who causes skepticism concerning the authority, accuracy, infallibility, and authenticity of God's Word is doing the work of the devil."

c. Season 1 of The 3D Series "The Authority of Scripture"

Season 1 of The 3D Series and its Study Guide covered "The Authority of Scripture" at length.

In Season 1, we considered (1) what the Bible says about itself; (2) the doctrine of biblical inerrancy; (3) a short history of the Bible; (4) circumstantial evidence regarding the authenticity of the Bible; and (5) interpreting the Bible.

The Study Guide for "The Authority of Scripture" also features appendixes: (A) Excerpts from the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy; (B) Books of the Bible and the Human Authors; (C) Basic Bible History Timeline; (D) Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies as Evidence of Biblical Authority; and (E) The Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method.

d. Defenses to the Objections Against The Bible as the Word of God

We will now consider basic answers to the two most common objections to the Bible being the actual Word of God.

Objection 1: "The copies of the Bible are full of copy errors and are not accurate enough to the originals."

Short Answer: The best and oldest copies of the Bible available are over 99.5% accurate to the originals

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy can be summed up as follows:

The Bible, in its original copies, is the actual, authentic Word of God, completely **inerrant** ("without error") and **infallible** ("incapable of error").

Though we don't have the original copies, according to theologian Wayne Grudem, what we do have is over 99.5% accurate to the originals based on an overwhelming amount of scholarly proofs.

During his February 25, 2024, lecture for the Montgomery Lecture series at First Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, prominent New Testament scholar Dan Wallace said that the best copies we have are more than 99.9% accurate since there are less than 1/10 of 1 percent of "meaningful variants" and none of those affect any essential beliefs.

Wallace said that we could reconstruct all of the New Testament many times over from the over one million writings from the early church fathers alone.

Referencing Bart Ehrman's disturbingly popular 2007 book Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why, Wallace points out that even though the entire book focuses on alleged errors, on page 252 in the appendix to the paperback edition, Ehrman admits "Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament." It would therefore seem that Ehrman is the one misleading and misquoting.

Accordingly, any of the alleged errors in the less than 1/2 of 1 percent (less than 1/10 of one percent according to Wallace) in the best copies we have of the Bible are mere copyist or translation errors and do not affect anything important.

Therefore, one can say confidently that even with the tiny number of copy errors, the best copies of the Bible we have today are over 99.5% accurate as far as staying true to the original copies and 100% true regarding the substance.

In other words, the Bible is 100% **substantively inerrant**.

Quoting Sir Frederick Kenyon, Wallace assured in his lecture that "we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God."

No other ancient book comes even close to the proven authenticity of the Bible. According to Wallace's lecture, we have over 1000 times more evidence for the original New Testament writers than any other ancient writings.

Therefore, those who reject the Bible as not being authentic enough should throw out all ancient documents for the same reason.

When people object that "the Bible is full of errors," gently get them to define what they mean by "errors," since though there are copy errors, there are no substantive errors materially affecting a significant doctrine.

Also, be sure to ask them to give you some examples of errors. It is likely they do not know. If they do give examples and you don't know how to answer the objection, tell them you will get back to them and research it (ask a pastor or teacher you trust or conduct internet research).

Regarding those who question whether the entire Bible is divinely inspired, even including some professing Christians (even seminary professors), Adrian Rogers once observed: "Some believe the Bible is inspired in spots and that they're the only ones who are inspired to spot the spots."

Objection 2: "Even if the best copies we have are sufficiently accurate, the Bible has too many contradictions to be God's Word."

Short Answer: Contradictions are in the eye of the beholder. Alleged contradictions are only apparent inconsistencies, that is, they only appear to be inconsistent. If you understand and study the Bible as a whole, any apparent inconsistency can be resolved in favor of consistency.

There are "apparent" inconsistencies in the Bible. By "apparent" is meant that there are some things that appear to be inconsistent on the outside.

How someone resolves apparent inconsistencies totally depends on their assumptions regarding the authenticity of the Bible.

People who are convinced that the Bible is flawed in parts, at best, and totally unreliable, at worst, are going to find what they want to find. Their bias is the lens through which they view the Bible and therefore they look to confirm that bias.

However, if you believe that the Bible is the actual Word of God, sufficiently proven to be over 99.5% accurate in the best copies we have today, then the logic is rather simple: It's the Word of God and therefore it doesn't actually contradict itself.

Skeptics scoff at such an idea as simple-minded. But just because something is simple does not make it untrue. One either believes that the Bible is the Word of God, as it says it is and the circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly supports, or one does not.

And so, when someone objects that they don't believe the Bible is the actual Word of God because it has contradictions, one way to answer the objection is to admit that if one does not believe the Bible is the Word of God or if one does not know it well, then, yes, there are some parts that would seem to be inconsistent on the surface. But if the skeptic actually studied the Bible as intended -- namely, by understanding that the whole Bible is consistent and tells the larger story of how God created everything out of nothing, including us, and we broke this world and the rest of the Bible tells the long story God's rescue plan culminating into the redemptive work of Jesus Christ -- then apparent inconsistencies can be understood as consistent, especially when Scripture is used to interpret other Scriptures (like Jesus did).

In other words, the Bible is perfectly consistent if you study it and assume it is what it says it is. If you assume it is not the Word of God, then you will see what you want to see.

The answer to whether the Bible is the Word of God depends on if you believe it is or not.

Another way to answer the objection that the Bible is not the Word of God because it has contradictions is to reverse the burden of proof (as Greg Koukl would say) and ask them to give you examples and their evidence proving that the Bible is wrong.

Consider the following example of a big apparent inconsistency whose resolution wholly depends on whether you believe the Bible or not.

The Bible says in various ways that Jesus is fully man and fully God which has been an accepted, orthodox doctrine for centuries.

There are many passages evidencing that he was human (for example, those saying he was born, got hungry, and could be killed) and there are many passages expressly saying he was God. How can they both be true, that Jesus was fully human but also fully God?

If you put on your skepticism glasses, you are going to conclude that such a contradiction means that Jesus was not (and is not) God.

If you put on your believing glasses, you can resolve this apparent inconsistency as consistent by using the following method.

e. The Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method

The "Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method" consists of the following basic steps:

(1) **Pray for wisdom to understand the passages** (James 1:5 KJV: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.");

(2) **Always assume that the Bible is consistent and true and therefore there is a right answer, even if you cannot figure it out** (2 Tim. 3:16 NASB: "All Scripture is inspired by God"; John 17:17 KJV: "Thy word is truth");

(3) **Consider that "all Scripture is breathed out by" the eternal Trinity** (for example, Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:18-20; John 1:1-3, 14). Therefore, (a) Jesus always spoke on behalf of the Triune God as a person of the Triune God and therefore did not contradict what God has said before Jesus was physically born of Mary, (b) everything God has ever done in the OT and NT involved Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14), and (c) the red-letter-only philosophy contradicts Jesus' own opinion of Scripture (e.g., John 10:35b);

(4) **Do not subject the Bible to your own judgment but rather submit to the Bible** (Col. 2:8 KJV: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.");

(5) **Consider we may not be meant to know** (Deut. 29:29 KJV: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law.");

(6) **Consider what others have said about it and study the issue more** (Prov. 11:14 KJV: "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"; Josh. 1:8 CSB: "meditate on [the word] day and night"); and

(7) **Interpret Scripture with Scripture** since all Scripture is consistent, but do not take passages out of context.

Let's apply the Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method to the apparent inconsistency that Jesus is fully man and fully God at the same time.

First, pray for the wisdom to resolve it.

Second, assume that the Bible's proposition that Jesus was fully man and fully God is consistent and true and therefore there is an explanation, even if we cannot figure it out.

Third, since God has always included God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit, even before Jesus came down to earth (John 1:1-3; Matt. 28:19-20), then the word "God" in the passage "all Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16) includes Jesus. Therefore, Jesus had a part in the writing of the Bible, which includes what Jesus was recorded as saying, and he indicated multiple times that he was God (e.g., John 10:30, the seven "I AM" statements in John).

Fourth, you should subject the apparent inconsistency to what the Bible says, not to your own judgment. If you do the opposite, then you are effectively judging the Bible.

Fifth, consider that we are not meant to know every detail of how Jesus can be fully human and fully God because it is a "secret thing" that "belong[s] to the LORD our God" pursuant to Deuteronomy 29:29.

Sixth, consider what others have said about Jesus being fully human and fully God. This issue is known as the hypostatic union. It has been accepted as a settled, orthodox doctrine for over 1500 years, first made formal at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

Seventh and finally, when going through the other steps, you should avoid cherry-picking verses for only one side of the apparent inconsistency (for example, that Jesus was born with a human body to Mary and therefore he was only human on one hand, or on the other hand that he said he and father were one in John 10:30 and therefore he was only God in a body that appeared human) and interpret passages for each of the propositions together and therefore as consistent.

We now turn to the next common objection to the Christian faith.

3. Objection: "All Religions Lead to Heaven."

a. Introduction

One particularly common objection to the truth and exclusivity of the Christian faith today is that all religions are valid and are merely different ways to go to heaven.

This objection has risen in prominence in contemporary America, even among professing Christians, as religious and philosophical pluralism increases.

In other words, the idea that Christianity is just one way of many ways and is no more valid than any other way was born from political correctness, one cardinal rule of which is to avoid offending anyone -- especially non-Christians (though it is curiously acceptable to offend Christians) -- by trying to convert them from their current worldview to Christianity.

If you're scratching your head as to how all religions can all be true, you're not alone.

b. What the Bible Says

As usual, we should start with what the Bible says first because believers must presuppose the supremacy of the Bible over human judgments, like a Bible Supremacy Clause.

What does the Bible say regarding whether Christianity is exclusive?

(The First Commandment)

What should be the most obvious statement the Bible makes about the exclusivity of Christianity is in the very First Commandment in Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7 and confirmed in the NT:

(Ex. 20:3 CSB) "Do not have other gods **besides me**."

(Deut. 5:7 KJV) "Thou shalt have none other gods before me."

(1 Cor. 8:6a NASB) "[Y]et for us there is but one God"

(1 Tim. 2:5a CSB) "For there is one God..."

That **Jesus is God** is confirmed clearly throughout the Bible (Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23; John 1:1–3, 14; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30–33; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:15–17; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:3, 8–12; 2 Pet. 1:1), and **Scripture reveals the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** (Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; John 14:16–17; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:2).

(The Second Commandment)

The Second Commandment is found in Exodus 20:4-6 and Deuteronomy 5:8-10 and can be summarized as prohibiting worshipping idols.

The text in Exodus 20:4-5 (NASB) says: "You shall not make for yourself an idol ... You shall not worship them or serve them..."

Consider also 1 John 5:21 (KJV): "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

What is an idol? Anyone or anything that you effectively worship or otherwise put before God, including false and unbiblical versions of Jesus.

(The Greatest Commandment)

In response to a question from a Pharisee about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus said:

(Matt. 22:37-38 CSB) "'Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and most important command."

(The First, Second, and Greatest Commandments Considered Together)

Considered together, the First and Second Commandments and the Greatest Commandment complement each other and combine to say that we are to have only one God, the Triune God of the Bible, we are not to worship idols (literally or figuratively) of any kind, and we are to love "the Lord your God" with **all** our heart, soul, and mind, and "all" does not leave room for any other type of god or religion or competing philosophy.

(What Does Jesus Say About the Exclusivity of the Christian Faith?)

As we have seen, Jesus confirmed in Matthew 22:37-38 that the greatest commandment was to love (and therefore recognize) God as requiring all of your attention, leaving no room for any other gods.

And with that term "God," Jesus includes himself, as we have already covered (for example, John 8:58; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3; 10:30).

What does the NT say about whether there was any other way to God other than through Jesus? Consider especially:

(John 14:6 NASB) "Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

(Acts 4:12 CSB) "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."

c. Other Defenses Regarding the Exclusivity of the Christian Faith

According to Josh and Sean McDowell, "most professed Christians in America no longer claim that Christianity is exclusive. A 2008 Pew Forum survey among Americans found that 65 percent of all professed Christians say there are multiple paths to eternal life, with 80 percent of the respondents citing at least one non-Christian religion that can lead to salvation." 77 FAQs About God and The Bible, 111.

According to Alex McFarland, "68 percent of evangelical Protestants say a good person who is of a different religious faith will still go to heaven." The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity, 148 (citing Newsweek / Beliefnet poll of 1,004 adults, www.beliefnet.com).

G.K. Chesterton observed: "When people cease to believe in God, they do not believe in nothing, they believe in anything."

In response to the objection that Christians are arrogant to believe that their way is the only way, consider saying that **it was Jesus that made these claims and that you are merely repeating what he said.**

Jesus being the only way to heaven is **the main point of Christianity**. And the entire point of defending and spreading the gospel is to defend and spread the word that Jesus is the only way. Therefore, any "professed Christian" who says there are multiple ways other than Jesus to heaven needs to reexamine what it means to be a "Christian."

This is one example of the importance of **keeping the main thing the main thing. You cannot take the exclusivity of "Christ" out of "Christianity."**

Another simple answer to the objection that all roads lead to heaven is that such a proposition is illogical because it **breaks the rule against noncontradiction**. If you have more than one religion that says there is only one way to heaven, and those ways are different, they simply can't all be right.

Perhaps the simplest example is Judaism versus Christianity. Judaism still maintains that Jesus was not the Messiah. Christianity maintains he was. Either he is or isn't. He cannot be the Messiah and not the Messiah at the same time.

Though it may be popular, even among professing Christians, to believe Jesus is only one way among many to heaven, you should "stand firm in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13 CSB) and **do not give in to peer pressure.**

Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:16a (KJV): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Never concede that there is any other way to heaven than through Jesus and always defend that faith -- your life and their life depends on it. Stand firm against the tide.

4. Objection: "I Can't Believe In a God Who Allows Evil."

a. The Objection

A very common objection to the Christian faith involves questions like "How can a loving God allow so much evil and pain in the world?" or "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

This is such a difficult question that is often referred to the "problem of evil," the "problem of suffering," or as C.S. Lewis titled one of his books: The Problem of Pain.

It is called a "problem" because it is difficult to answer.

b. What the Bible Says

The Bible says that God is good and is not the author of evil.

(Luke 18:19b NASB) [Jesus] "No one is good except God alone."

(1 John 1:5b KJV) "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."

(1 Chron. 16:34 CSB) "Give thanks to the LORD for he is good; his faithful love endures forever."

God doesn't tempt people with evil.

(James 1:13 KJV) "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

God works "all things" "for good" for his people.

(Rom. 8:28 NASB) "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

The world started out as "very good."

(Gen. 1:31 KJV) "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was **very good**."

But, when our first parents sinned, they broke the "good" world and therefore introduced sin and death and evil. Consider:

(Rom. 5:12 NASB) "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

(Rom. 6:23 KJV) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The **biblical short answer** to the question of the Problem of Evil is that God is good and never evil; he created the world originally as "very good." When our first parents sinned by disobeying God, they broke the "very good" world which allowed entry of sin, evil, and death. Because God doesn't want to force us to love and obey him, he has allowed us and the broken world to bring in evil.

That's what the Bible is really all about. The entire rest of the story after the Fall is God's long-term plan to offer us a way to be saved from our sins and brokenness, culminating into the redemptive work of God the Son Jesus which offers us salvation -- with repentance and trust in and obedience to Jesus as God. With that salvation we will live forevermore in heaven, made worthy not by our own works, but only by Jesus.

c. Other Defenses Regarding the Problem of Evil

(Doctrine of Common Grace)

Though we brought evil into the world when we sinned and continue to do evil, God puts a limit on evil. Theologians recognize this as the **doctrine of common grace**.

According to theologian Wayne Grudem: "Common grace is the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation." Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: Second Edition (2020), 803.

Common grace is different from saving grace since God gives blessings to both believers and unbelievers, but he gives saving grace only to those who repent and believe in the gospel by trusting and following Jesus. You might think of common grace as a governor that God puts on potential sin in the world, like a governor on a truck engine that only allows a lower maximum speed than the engine is capable of.

Verses indicating common grace to everyone, believer and unbeliever include:

(Matt. 5:45 KJV) "[H]e maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

(Acts 14:16-17 CSB) "In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own way, although he did not leave himself without a witness, since he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts with joy."

(John 1:9 NASB) "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man."

(Rom. 2:14-15 NASB) "For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or defending them..."

(Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?)

Adrian Rogers addressed the Problem of Evil in a sermon on the Book of Job: "There's the question of why do bad things happen to good people, but there's also the question of why good things happen to bad people."

The answer to the first question is because of the sin that broke the "very good world" letting in evil, sin, and death.

The answer to the second question is, because, as we're assured in John 3:16 (KJV), "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The Book of Job is all about the Problem of Evil. One lesson we can take from the Book of Job is to approach the question of why God allows bad things to happen with respect, remembering that God is God after all, and we do not have the right to judge him or to demand he answer our questions.

(Condemned if He Does and Condemned if He Doesn't)

Consider pointing out that on the one hand, many people condemn God for allowing evil to flourish on earth, but on the other hand, the same people condemn God when he does punish sin, whether on earth or in hell.

It bears repeating that God created a "very good" world. Our sin broke the very good world and brought evil and death upon the world. God continues to give blessings to all through his common grace, but still allows people to choose to sin or obey, and he allows the consequences of those sins to occur. Sometimes those consequences act as punishment, and sometimes God directly punishes people on earth.

But in the very end of the world, God will end evil (2 Pet. 3:7-13), and believers will go to heaven where, according to Revelation 21:4 (KJV), "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

(Sometimes Suffering Can Bring About Blessings)

Though no one wants to suffer, sometimes suffering can bring about good. Consider these passages:

(Rom. 5:3-5 CSB) "And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

(Rom. 8:28 KJV) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

(James 1:2-4 NASB) "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

(James 1:12 CSB) "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

(How Can Atheism Explain the Problem of Evil?)

When an atheist or agnostic asks you to explain the Problem of Evil, that is, how a loving God could allow so much evil and suffering, consider gently reversing the question by asking them: "How can atheism explain the Problem of Evil (or even the phenomenon of good, for that matter)?"

The truth is, it can't. There's no reason or hope for anything in atheism.

According to this view, everything evolved from nothing (somehow) for no reason and our lives have no meaning and there is no afterlife, no truth, no good, no evil, no right, and no wrong.

And so, for the atheist, why ask the question? Only with the Triune God from the Bible is there truth and hope in the face of the Problem of Evil.

5. Objection: "A Loving God Should Not Send People to Hell."

a. The Objection

One of the Bible's fundamental messages is that if someone doesn't repent and believe in the gospel by trusting and obeying Jesus as their God and Savior, they will not go to heaven and will instead go to hell forever, with no possibility of getting out.

That is indeed a harsh message, but only for someone who refuses to repent and believe. It's a glorious, wonderful message for those who do repent and believe.

The objection to this usually comes in the form of something like, "I can't believe that a loving God would send people to hell," or "A loving God would not or should not send people to hell."

Remember that with this objection, the person is substituting their own judgment for what God says through the Bible.

b. What the Bible Says

It's becoming more common among professing Christians today to shy away from the doctrine of hell precisely because it is so harsh for unrepentant sin and unbelief of the gospel.

Some seem to believe that God, especially God the Son Jesus, is too "nice" and loving to send people to hell. The facts do not support that idea.

The Greek word *gehenna* is used in the New Testament (which is translated in English Bibles as "hell") twelve times.

Eleven of those twelve times are used by Jesus himself. Here are those references by Jesus:

(Matt. 5:22 NASB) "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery **hell**."

(Matt. 5:29 NASB) "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**."

(Matt. 5:30 CSB) "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into **hell**."

(Matt 10:28 KJV) "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**."

(Matt. 18:9 KJV) "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into **hell fire**."

(Matt. 23:15 NASB) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of **hell** as yourselves."

(Matt. 23:33 NASB) "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of **hell**?"

(Mark 9:43-48 CSB) "And if your hand causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go to **hell**, the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to fall away, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into **hell**. And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into **hell**, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched [citing Isaiah 66:24]."

(Luke 12:5 KJV) "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into **hell**; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

The twelfth time *gehenna* is used in the New Testament is by Jesus' brother, James:

(James 3:6 NASB) "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by **hell**."

There are many other references to hell in the New Testament using different words like "unquenchable fire," "destruction," "Hades," "fiery furnace ... [where] there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," "eternal fire," "eternal punishment," "in Hades, being in torment," "anguish in this flame," "wrath of God," "resurrection of judgment," "fire," "flaming fire," "fury of fire," "punishment of eternal fire," "the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever," "lake of fire," "lake that burns with fire and sulphur," including Matt. 3:12; 7:13; 11:23; 13:41-42, 49-50; 16:18; 18:8,9; 25:41, 46; Luke 10:15; 16:22-25; John 3:36; 5:28-29; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Thess. 1:8-9; Heb. 10:26-27; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 1:17-18; 14:9-11; 19:3, 20; 20:10, 13, 14, 15; 21:8.

References to hell in the Old Testament include: Num. 16:33; Ps. 9:17; 16:10; 37:20; 86:13; 139:8; 145:20; Prov. 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; Eccl. 9:10; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; 47:14; 66:24; Ezek. 18:4; Ezek. 31:17; Dan. 12:2.

Therefore, **the Bible clearly describes and warns of hell as the consequence of unrepentance and unbelief.**

Though it is a harsh truth, it is truth nevertheless and we all must deal with that truth. If we deal with the truth of hell in life by repentance and belief in Jesus Christ, we won't have to deal with it up close and personal in eternity. If we refuse, then we will have to deal with it forevermore.

This is another example where the Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method comes in handy.

The apparent inconsistency is: God is loving but he sends people to hell.

First, we pray for wisdom to understand how to resolve it (James 1:5).

Second and Third, we assume that the Bible is the consistent and true Word of the Triune God (2 Tim. 3:16; John 1:1-3) and therefore there is a right answer, even if we cannot figure out each and every aspect.

Fourth, we should not subject God or his Word to our own judgment but rather we should do the opposite: we should submit our opinions to the Word of God in righteous humility and obedience.

Fifth, we should consider whether we may not be meant to know. In this case, the Bible throughout wants us to know about hell and that is the destination for unrepentance and unbelief.

Sixth, we can consider what others have said about hell, but since it is so well covered by Scripture, there is no need to consult anyone else to verify the truth of clear teachings in Scripture.

Finally, we should interpret Scripture regarding how God is good and also sends people to hell with other Scripture.

And so, applying the Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method to the question of how God can be loving and also allow people to go to hell results in the following conclusion:

God, including God the Son Jesus Christ, clearly wants people to fear hell as one incentive to repent and believe. If he did not want hell as an incentive, it would seem strange that he would emphasize it so much.

But though the fear of hell is one incentive to repent and believe, it is not the most important incentive. The best incentive is the love of God and spending eternity in heaven with him.

c. Other Defenses Regarding Why God Allows People to Go to Hell

As we've seen, the Bible -- especially the New Testament -- is very clear that hell is a real place and is the punishment all people (believers and nonbelievers) deserve for disobeying God.

(Hell is a Fundamental)

Hell is one of those "fundamentals" that seems patently obvious from Scripture. This word "fundamental" brings to mind "fundamentalism," a word when applied to Christians is said as an insult by many, even among professing Christians.

"Fundamentalism" is one of those words whose meaning is in the eye of the beholder. Most Southern Baptists would say they are fundamentalists, if by that they mean belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and that it remains our standard of life, the universe, and everything.

Many mainstream professing Christians over the last 100 years use the term "fundamentalist" as a pejorative to indicate that "fundamentalists" cling to their Bibles too much and refuse to get with the times.

The hallmark of non-fundamental, modern, liberal theology is the denial of the inerrancy and supremacy of Scripture, which then opens the floodgates to all sorts worldly considerations that take precedence over what the Bible teaches.

Included among these compromises after unhitching from the Bible are the ideas that all religions lead to God and there is no hell.

Simply stated, mainstream Christianity and an alarmingly rising number of people within the traditionally fundamentalist camp have created a God that suits them, a benevolent Santa Claus-like figure, and a Jesus who is like a hippie whose mantra is something like "I'm ok, you're ok." Surely these happy-go-lucky figures would never require repentance, belief, and obedience. Surely they would never be so mean as to send someone to hell because that would violate man's most important commandment: Thou shalt be nice and let me do what I want.

(Why Would You Want to Teach People About Hell?)

There is a contemporary trend, including among evangelicals, to avoid warning people of hell because it is not "nice" to warn that God will send them to hell for merely disobeying him.

It's true that hell is not nice. It's not supposed to be nice. But hell is real, and Jesus warned of it more than anyone else in the Bible as we have seen.

We have to stand firm for God's Word and ignore the word of culture.

As ambassadors for Christ, as his defenders and evangelists, we have a duty to spread and defend the Truth, and this includes the warning of hell.

Simply put, if Jesus felt it was important enough to warn of it more than anyone else in the Bible, then we should take the hint -- regardless of whether it is fashionable.

Consider also that in one way, God does not send people to hell. People send themselves to hell. Regarding this idea, Jesus said right after the famous statement in John 3:16:

(John 3:17-18 NASB) "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

When you spread and defend the Christian faith, you can certainly focus too much or too little on hell. You should try to find a balance, always remembering that the bad news is what makes the good news, the gospel, so good.

(All You Need is Love?)

Part of the objection to hell is the idea that a "loving" God would not send people to hell.

If someone makes this objection, consider further discussion about what "love" means and what it doesn't mean.

The Bible speaks of God's "love" in many different ways, including:

(John 3:16 KJV) [Jesus] "For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

(John 15:13-14 CSB) [Jesus] "No one has greater **love** than this: to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friend if you do what I command you."

(Rom. 5:8 NASB) "But God demonstrates His own **love** toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The Bible shows God's abundant and patient love from beginning to end. But love is one of those words that has many different facets and it is commonly misdefined.

Love shouldn't be confused with indulgence. Sometimes love must be tempered with justice. Consider these passages:

(Rom. 12:9 CSB) "Let **love** be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good."

(Heb. 12:6a NASB) "For those whom the Lord **loves** He disciplines..."

And so, God's love includes making us, and sacrificing his Son to save us from our disobedience, but it also includes justice.

"Justice" is another one of those words that's hard to define, but we know it when we see it. Essentially, justice is when people get what they deserve.

That's what is so wonderfully good about the good news: we deserve death and punishment because we disobey God, but since God sacrificed himself to pay our fine in full, justice has been satisfied and we are reconciled with God -- as long as we repent and follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

So it's true that all we need is love, but not if by "love" you mean indulgence. We need God's love and to love God with all our hearts, souls, and minds and we need to love others the way we love ourselves.

Like parents who love their children, sometimes love requires discipline.

(Just Judges Have to Uphold the Law)

The objection to God allowing people to go to hell also involves God's role as judge.

We should recall that the Bible says that Jesus will be our judge. Consider these passages:

(John 5:22-23 NASB) [Jesus] "For not even the Father judges anyone, but **He has given all judgment to the Son**, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

(John 9:39 CSB) "Jesus said, '**I came into this world for judgment**, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind.'"

(John 12:31 KJV) [Jesus] "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

According to the Bible, even **believers will be judged at the "Bema Seat of Christ"** where he'll determine our rewards:

(2 Cor. 5:10 NASB) "For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

(1 Cor. 3:12-15 CSB) "If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved -- but only as through fire."

(1 Cor. 4:5 KJV) "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

(Luke 19:12-27 Parable of the Ten Minas)

And for those who are **not believers, Jesus will judge them at the Great White Throne of Judgment:**

(Rev. 20:11-15 NASB) "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and small, standing before the thrones, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Everyone has an internal sense of justice and expects that a judge should be just. When someone is found guilty before a judge of a crime, whether theft or murder or other crimes, most people would find it unjust and unfair for a judge to simply let the convicted criminal get off without punishment. That would feel doubly unjust for the victim of the crime.

Because God is good, he is also just (Heb. 6:10). Therefore, sins (whether crimes or not) require punishment.

But God gave us an amazing gift. Though God has the right and duty to punish sin as the ultimate judge, he put all the punishment on the person of God the Son instead of you.

Therefore, for all those who have repented and believe in the gospel, God has set free from the earned punishment by taking it himself. The punishment was meted out, but not upon the believer. It was meted out upon himself. And so God's justice was served.

For those who won't repent and believe in the gospel, justice will be served by requiring unbelievers to serve their eternal sentence in hell and not in God's presence in heaven.

6. Objection: "Christians Are Hypocrites."

a. The Objection

One very common objection to the Christian faith is that Christians are hypocrites because they often tell others how they ought to act when they themselves do not always act the way they teach.

In other words, people often object that Christians don't practice what they preach instead of preaching what they practice.

b. What the Bible Says

The Bible repeatedly warns against hypocrisy. Consider the following examples:

(Matt. 6:5-6 NASB) [Jesus] "When you pray, you are not to be like the **hypocrites**; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

(Matt. 15:7-9 CSB) [Jesus] "**Hypocrites!** Isaiah prophesied correctly about you when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching as doctrines human commands.'"

(Matt. 23:23 KJV) [Jesus] "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

(1 Pet. 2:1a NASB) "Therefore, put[] aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander..."

c. Other Defenses to the Objection that Christians are Hypocrites

("The Power of So?")

As observed by Christian apologist Greg Koukl in his popular book Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions (2009), one of the best ways to answer the objection to the Christian faith that Christians are often hypocritical is to use the "Power of So?" tactic.

The "Power of So?" means to simply concede what is true, but does not affect the truth of Christianity.

In other words, just because Christians are sometimes wrong doesn't mean the Christian faith itself is wrong.

You might answer the objection with something like:

"Yes, sometimes Christians are hypocrites. Isn't everyone hypocritical sometimes? The Bible says we're not supposed to be. That's one of the most basic points of Christianity, that we're all sinners, even people who are professing Christians. That's not an excuse to sin or to be hypocritical since we're supposed to try as hard as we can to not sin, including avoiding hypocrisy. I'm going to keep trying to obey the Bible and to avoid being hypocritical."

(Judge Not)

Sometimes the charge of hypocrisy is a way to get out of being corrected.

One of the most common misinterpretations of the Bible is a related objection to the Christian faith: "Judge not lest ye be judged."

The problem with that objection is that it does not consider the rest of the story.

Regarding judging others, Jesus said as follows in Matthew 7:1-6 (NASB):

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

And so, Jesus didn't mean that we should never judge anyone's actions. Instead, we are supposed to avoid judging hypocritically. When we've dealt with our own problems, especially if we've been doing the same thing we're criticizing someone else for, we need to first repent from doing it ourselves **and then** we can advise others to do the same.

In John 7:24 (KJV), Jesus also said, "Judge not according to appearance, but **judge with righteous judgment.**"

And so, we should judge righteously and not hypocritically, which is the only way to judge who the dogs and the hogs are referenced in Matthew 7:6.

More often than not, when people object to the Christian faith that Christians act hypocritically, they are really saying that they don't want to be judged at all -- righteously or unrighteously.

(Don't Let Christian Hypocrisy Keep You From Salvation)

Another defense to the objection to the Christian faith that Christians are sometimes hypocrites is to implore them not to allow the sins of others, including the sins of professing Christians, from getting in the way of their own salvation.

Ask them to truly consider the alternative. If you don't repent yourself (including for your own hypocrisy) and trust and obey Jesus as your Savior and God, what will you do to be saved? What else can you do to get to heaven?

Ask them if the Christian faith is wrong, why shouldn't we be hypocrites or any other type of sinner? If everything is relative and there is no truth or morality, why can't I be a hypocrite? Where does it come from, this feeling that it is wrong to be a hypocrite?

Even the worst hypocrite in the world can be saved in the same way that the best hypocrite in the world can be saved.

Don't let others keep you from salvation that is freely given to you, though it was not free for God.

7. Objection: "People Are Essentially Good and Don't Need Saving."

a. The Objection

Many people object to the Christian faith because they say they believe that people are essentially good, and more importantly, that they themselves are essentially good and therefore will go to heaven because only really, really bad people go to hell, like people who hurt children and murderers.

In other words, many people object to the Christian faith because they believe they don't need it because they are basically good.

b. What the Bible Says

Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible says that people are not essentially good:

(Rom. 3:23 KJV) "[F]or all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

(Rom. 3:10 NASB) "There is none righteous, not even one."

(1 John 1:8 CSB) "If we say, 'We have no sin,' we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

All people are born sinners because of the sins of our original parents. Consider these passages:

(Ps. 51:5 CSB) "Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me."

(Rom. 5:12 NASB) "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

(Rom. 5:19 NASB) "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

It's because we were all born sinners that we need to be born again to be saved from the eternal consequences of our sins:

(John 3:3 KJV) [Jesus] "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

c. Other Defenses to the Objection that People Are Essentially Good and Don't Need Saving

First, the Bible clearly states that people are **not** essentially good.

Second, history proves every day that people are **not** essentially good. The history of life on earth is a history of violence, greed, perversion, oppression, lies, and an unending list of a host of sins. Take a good look at news sources on any given day and you will see this.

Third, those who doubt that we're surrounded by evil from all types of people regardless of how "good" they appear on the outside should ask people who work in the justice system (like judges, lawyers, police officers, probation officers, and social workers) what people are really like. Or ask people who work in emergency rooms.

Fourth, go through the Ten Commandments with the person and see if they're actually good. Most people have broken all of them in one way or another, and do so on a daily basis.

[First Commandment: You shall have no other gods besides me.] People commonly worship gods other than the One True Triune God. Even if they don't literally worship an actual, false god, like Zeus or Moloch, they worship themselves as gods.

"Have you ever worshipped a god different than the Triune God of the Bible?"

"Have you ever put yourself before or above God?"

"Have you ever put your own opinions and judgment over what God says?"

[Second Commandment: Do not make and worship idols.] People routinely make idols of things other than the one true God and worship that idol, even professing Christians who have made a God that is not biblical.

"Have you ever put anything as more important than your duties to God?"

"Do you tend to think of or speak of God as different, perhaps more tame, than he is portrayed in the Bible?"

"Do you put culture and popular opinion as more important than what the Bible says?"

[Third Commandment: Do not take God's name in vain.] People commonly say the Lord's name every day ("God," "Lord," "Jesus Christ") as a cuss word though they wouldn't, as Ray Comfort often points out, use their mother's name as a cuss word.

"Have you ever said God's name in vain or as a cuss word?"

[Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy] People commonly do not remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

"Have you always remembered the Sabbath and kept it holy?"

"Do you regularly attend church?"

[Fifth Commandment: Honor your parents.] Contemporary society encourages kids to rebel against their parents.

"Have you always respected and obeyed your parents?"

"Do you take care of your parents when they need it?"

[Sixth Commandment: Do not murder.] Abortion is murder. Anyone who has one or performs one or helps one has aided and abetted murder. Even if someone has not actually murdered another human being, Jesus said in Matthew 5:22 (NASB), "everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court..." Consider also 1 John 3:15 (NASB), "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

"Have you ever performed or had an abortion?"

"Have you ever encouraged someone to have an abortion?"

"Have you ever been angry with someone to the point of hatred?"

"Have you ever wanted someone to not repent and go to hell?"

[Seventh Commandment: Do not commit adultery.] It is adultery for both people who engage in sexual activity when one of the people is married to someone else. It is fornication when people engage in sexual activity between people who are not married to anyone. Not only is sexual action adultery, Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 (NASB) "everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Therefore, everyone is guilty of adultery in some way.

"Have you ever lusted for someone in your heart you weren't married to?"

"Have you ever fornicated outside of marriage when neither of you were married?"

"Have you ever committed adultery with someone you were not married to and at least one of you was married to someone else?"

[Eighth Commandment: Do not steal.]

"Have you ever stolen anything, no matter how small at any time in your life? Even a piece of candy?"

[Ninth Commandment: Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.] God hates lies (Prov. 6:17, 19).

"Have you ever told a lie? Even a 'white' lie?"

"Have you ever lied about someone being guilty of something you knew they didn't do or were recklessly indifferent about the truth?"

[Tenth Commandment: Do not covet other people's things.] Coveting is when you want something someone else has and there is no lawful or moral way for you to obtain it. It's like when a small child walks over to another small child and takes his toy and then brings it back to where he was and stops playing with it, but then screams when you try to take it back. Covetousness also involves always wanting what other people have and never being content with what you have.

"Have you ever been jealous of someone else or something they had?"

"Have you ever wanted something or someone belonging to another and specifically wanted that person to know that you have it and they don't?"

In conclusion, when using the Law to bring light to a person's need for saving, make it clear that you are also a sinner and so is everyone else. **This cannot be overemphasized.**

8. Objection: "Religions Have Killed the Most People."

a. The Objection

Comedian George Carlin is credited as having said, "More people have been killed in the name of God than for any other reason."

This has become a popular objection to Christianity.

This objection comes down to alleging that the Christian faith is invalid because professing Christians have wrongly killed other people -- some of whom were also professing Christians (e.g., Catholics versus Protestants) and some of whom were not (e.g., Christian crusades versus Muslims) -- officially in the name of Christianity.

b. What the Bible Says

The most important passage for this objection is:

(Ex. 20:13 NASB) "You shall not murder."

c. Defenses

(Sins confirm the central truth of the Christian faith)

The Bible says in Romans 3:23 (KJV) "[F]or all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." This includes professing Christians.

Murder is sinful and violates the Sixth Commandment (Exod. 20:13).

Therefore, when professing Christians have sinned by wrongfully killing others in the name of Christianity, they confirmed one of the central truths of Christianity, which is why we need a Savior in the first place.

However, though the Christian faith says that all people are sinners, that does **not** excuse the sins. Christians, like everyone else, are supposed to repent or turn away from sin in all circumstances.

(Atheists have killed more than their share)

History is full of examples of wars and other atrocities done in the name of all types of religions, including Christianity. And those examples were grievously sinful.

But atheists are hardly innocent. History amply demonstrates that more people have been killed in the name of atheist governments than any other source.

When you consider the twentieth century alone, millions upon millions of people were killed in the name of atheist governments, like those in communist countries (approximately 100 million total) as well as those in Nazi Germany (approximately 12 million).

This defense isn't meant to excuse or minimize murder committed in the name of Christianity or other religions. This defense is meant to defeat the idea that the Christian faith is invalid because people have killed others in the name of Christianity.

(Abortion is a grim reaper indeed)

According to a report from the Guttmacher Institute (an organization that supports abortion), over 1 million babies were killed by abortion in the United States in 2023 alone.

Over 1 million babies were killed in one year in one country.

Let's say that only half of those occurred on average since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. The average number per year since 1973 is actually quite a bit higher, but using the 500,000 number allows more certainty and prevents quibbling about numbers.

As of 2026, that's over 50 years since 1973.

50 times 500,000 is 25,000,000. And so, that's 25,000,000 babies in the US alone and that's far below the actual number. Without citing actual statistics, let's just say there are only five countries in the world total that have met that "at least" number each year (the number in China is far higher) since 1973.

That means at least 125,000,000 babies have been killed since 1973 in five countries.

Again, the actual numbers are far higher. And that doesn't even take into account all of the countries in the world (195 countries as of 2024).

And so, if someone says that more people have been killed in the name of God than any other reason, that is clearly not so.

Abortions alone beat that number. Combine that with Nazi and Communist deaths, and the numbers are mind boggling -- at the very least 250,000,000 people, but the actual number is far, far higher. There is no evidence that religious wars come close to that number. This does not excuse unjust religious wars, but these facts overcome the objection that more people have been killed in the name of God than any other reason.

(Conclusion)

We can conclude from all this that the Bible was right after all. All people are sinners. All people need to be saved from the eternal consequences of those sins. We can be saved only through the redemptive work of Jesus, by repenting and turning back from our sins, believing the gospel, and trusting and obeying Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

9. Objection: "Evolution Proves That Christianity is Wrong."

a. The Objection

One of the most common objections to the Christian faith is the allegation that gradual Darwinian evolution proves that Christian faith is wrong because it allegedly proves that the Bible's creation account in Genesis is wrong.

b. What the Bible Says

Regarding this objection, the primary issue is whether God created everything or whether chance did. Regarding this, the Bible says:

(Gen. 1:1 KJV) "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

(John 1:1-3 CSB) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created."

(Rev. 4:11 NASB) "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

c. Defenses

Untold millions of words have been spoken and written regarding whether Darwin's theory of evolution disproves Christianity.

Rather than get bogged down in the details, the situation can be summed up as follows.

(Gradual Darwinian Evolution's Creation Fairytale)

Proponents of the theory of gradual Darwinian evolution as the explanation of the origin of the universe essentially tell the following story.

One day there was nothing. Then there was something that came from that nothing which occurred on its own and for no particular reason. The something that came from nothing formed on its own into a big ball of different elements. One day that big ball of elements exploded on its own for no particular reason and became many pieces of elements, some of which formed on their own into planets. One particular planet, which would later be called Earth by its inhabitants, was filled with gases and elements. One day in a particular spot somewhere on Earth, some amino acids were in some kind of liquid and there was something like a jolt of electricity that turned the amino acids into the very first, most primitive form of life we call a bacillus, and this happened for no particular reason.

From this bacillus, evolved every single form of life on Earth, including plants, fish, birds, and animals -- all for no reason and all done without a creator. From these animals that evolved on their own from that bacillus long ago came primates. And from these primates came human beings.

The fossil record shows evidence of past life forms that are extinct, as well as showing one species changing over time (like wolves into dogs) while still remaining more or less the same basic species. Even though there is no fossil record to prove that one thing turned into an entirely other thing (for example, a fish turned into a bird, or a bird turned into a cat, etc.) we must, say the Darwinists, accept that this is true on faith.

And so, according to the prevailing theory of gradual Darwinian evolution, everything we see today came from nothing for no reason and on its own.

Though proponents of gradual Darwinian evolution would balk at this explanation of their theory, the fact remains that this is the core of the theory.

And the word "theory" is key here because it has not been proven. But despite this lack of proof, ironically it has evolved into a sort of religion that presupposes no intelligent designer and effectively makes Chance in the image of God.

(Inter-species Evolution Versus Intra-species Evolution)

When we say "evolution," we mean gradual Darwinian evolution, not merely the idea that a wolf, for example, can evolve or change or branch out into different types of dogs.

An important distinction should be made regarding the difference between inter-species and intra-species evolution.

Inter-species evolution refers to one species evolving into different species, like a lizard from a fish and a cat from a lizard over time.

Intra-species evolution refers to a change over time within one species, like wolves into the many breeds of dogs.

The available evidence amply supports the idea that species can change over time based on a variety of factors, including human efforts at breeding.

The fossil record does **not** establish inter-species evolution, that multiple, distinct species have evolved from an entirely different species.

The Bible says in Genesis 1 and 2 that God created the plants, creatures of the seas, animals, and people as fully formed. Therefore, the Bible's creation account does not give any indication of inter-species evolution.

(Natural Selection and the Magic Favorable Mutations)

Darwin said that one of the ways that evolution occurs in living creatures is through a process called "natural selection."

An example of this process of natural selection might be summarized as follows.

There were some birds on an island with long, thin beaks and they ate a certain kind of soft fruit exclusively. One day these soft fruits were hit by a disease and started to die off. This left less food for the thin-beaked birds. Meanwhile, one day a thin-beaked bird gave birth to a short-beaked bird, randomly and for no particular reason. This short-beaked bird's beak just happened to be stronger than all the long, thin beaks and therefore short-beak was able to crack open some hard fruits that were not affected by the disease that was killing off the soft fruits. Because the short-beaked bird could eat more, he was stronger and was able to father more birds, some of which were born with short-beaks too. Eventually, all the long, thin beaks died because all the soft fruits died off, leaving only the short-beaks who survived because they were the "fittest" based on their amazingly on-time and favorable mutation.

Natural selection based on mutations presupposes that the right favorable mutations appear at just the right time. This is a strong assumption that is a matter of faith.

Natural selection also fails to take into account what some call "irreducibly complex" attributes, such as blood clotting.

Blood clotting, the irreducible complexity argument goes, could not exist in any other form than it is, because if blood did not clot at all when someone got cut, the person would bleed to death. Conversely, if the blood didn't know where to clot and where not to clot, and therefore clotted everywhere, then the person with a cut would die because all of their blood would be coagulated and unable to flow within.

Accordingly, examples of irreducible complexity serve as a strong foil to gradual Darwinian evolution as an explanation for the current state of things.

(Evolution as a religion)

Effectively, since the theory of gradual Darwinian evolution as an explanation for the origin (and meaninglessness) of the universe and life itself and how there became different species with different attributes suitable for surviving cannot and has not been proven, those who treat it as fact are doing the very thing they accuse Christians of doing.

However, unlike the gradual Darwinian evolutionists, the truth is on our side for the simple reason that all of this order in the universe had to have been the result of an Intelligent Designer, not the result of random chance, which is not an entity and cannot create anything.

10. Objection: "I Only Believe in Science."

a. The Objection

Many skeptics object to Christianity by saying they only believe in science.

b. Defenses

(What "Science" Is and Isn't)

Before debating almost any issue, the parties should make sure they define their terms.

People who object to the Christian faith by saying they only believe in "science" often assume that "believing" in science necessarily means they cannot also believe in Christianity.

In other words, they assume that the Christian faith and science are inherently at odds.

Resolving that issue depends on how one defines "science."

Usually the skeptic who uses the science objection means by "science" that the study and wisdom of men have proven that Christianity is not true because there is allegedly no proof of it.

However, there is plenty of "proof" supporting the truth of the Christian faith if by "proof" you mean evidence.

As this Study Guide has demonstrated, there is plenty of evidence for the Christian faith, such as the theistic arguments, including the argument from the order in the universe, or as the Bible says in Psalm 19:1 (CSB): "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands."

There's strong internal and external evidence showing that the Bible is cohesive and accurate in many different ways.

There's the evidence of the many prophecies that have come true, especially those regarding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

In his book, Science Speaks (1958), scientist Peter Stoner argued that the chance of one man fulfilling **just eight prophecies** is **1 in 10¹⁷**. This is similar to laying two feet of silver dollar coins over the entire state of Texas and sending a blindfolded man to find just one particular silver dollar.

Regarding the odds of fulfilling all 48 prophecies considered by Stoner: "We find the chance that any one man fulfilled all **48 prophecies to be 1 in 10¹⁵⁷**."

To put that in perspective, the approximate number of particles in the universe is roughly 10^{80} .

The real issue for the skeptic is not a lack of evidence. Rather, the real issue is the skeptic does not want to believe and they are unwilling to be skeptical of their skepticism.

When defending the faith against the objection that "science" disproves the Christian faith, first ask them what they mean by "science."

A good practical definition of science might be: **Science is the study by limited humans of preexisting order and the manipulation thereof.**

This definition recognizes that science involves the study by humans who are limited in lifespan, senses, and knowledge of things that humans did not create (such as the elements) and their orderly processes and can result in manipulating that order in useful ways (like engineering and chemistry).

Again, "science" does not create anything out of nothing. Science is a mere study.

Therefore, there is nothing that inherently prevents one from being a scientist and also being a Christian.

There is no necessary contradiction between science and religion.

(Famous Scientists Who Were Christians)

"According to *100 Years of Nobel Prizes*, a review of Nobel prizes award[ed] between 1901 and 2000 reveals that (65.4%) of Nobel Prize Laureates, have identified Christianity in its various forms as their religious preference." "List of Christians in science and technology," [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christians_in_science_and_technology) (accessed August 21, 2024) (citing Baruch A. Shalev, *100 Years of Nobel Prizes* (2003), p. 57).

Famous scientists who were Christians include Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855), Michael Faraday (1791-1867), James Prescott Joule (1818-1889), Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) (1824-1907), George Washington Carver (1864-1943), and Werner Karl Heisenberg (1901-1976).

(Science Does Not and Cannot Disprove the Christian Faith)

Ask the objector exactly how science disproves the Christian faith.

If they counter that science hasn't disproved the Christian faith, but hasn't proved it either, ask if the scientific method has proven the validity of the scientific method.

Since the scientific method cannot prove its own validity, does that mean that science is therefore disproven too?

Ask if science automatically assumes that there can be no God who has supernatural power. If it does, how can science make such an assumption? If something can magically and “supernaturally” create itself from nothing, then why can’t God do it too?

Finally, ask them if skeptics are skeptical of their skepticism and if not, why not?

At the very least, try to gently get the objector to admit that "science" -- that is, human study of preexisting order and the manipulation thereof -- has not and cannot prove or disprove God or the Christian faith. If it could, then the proof itself would be superior to God.

(Scientific Facts in the Bible)

What follows are examples of references to scientific facts in the Bible that were not widely known among humans at the time they were written.

The presence of these now-known scientific facts is strong evidence that God, who knows all facts known and unknown by humans, directly and supernaturally inspired the human writers of the Old and New Testaments.

In other words, the presence of these not-then-but-now-known scientific facts strongly supports the Bible being the actual Word of God rather than the words of mere men.

At the same time, however, the Bible is not a science textbook and the following facts alone cannot bring about saving faith.

These facts function as corroborating evidence that the Bible is the actual Word of God.

The Universe Had a Beginning

(Gen. 1:1 KJV) "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

The modern Big Bang theory, developed in the 20th century by scientists like Edwin Hubble and George Lemaitre, indicates that the universe had a specific point of origin.

The Law of Entropy

(Ps. 102:25-26 NASB) "Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed."

(Isa. 51:6 CSB) "Look up to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and its inhabitants will die like gnats."

The concept of entropy holds that systems naturally tend toward decay or order. This concept was developed in the 1800s along with the second law of thermodynamics.

The Earth is Round

(Isa. 40:22a NASB) "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth..."

This verse speaks to the earth being a circle when many in ancient times believed the earth was flat.

Suspension of the Earth in Space

(Job 26:7 NASB) "He stretches out the north over empty space [a]nd hangs the earth on nothing."

That the earth was suspended in space was not widely recognized until the advent of modern astronomy.

The Expansion of the Universe

(Jer. 10:12 KJV) "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his direction."

The language "he ... hath stretched out the heavens" speaks to the modern theory that the universe has been expanding since the Big Bang. This concept was developed by scientists such as Edwin Hubble in the 20th century.

The Earth's Magnetic Field

(Job 38:31-33 CSB) "Can you fasten the chains of the Pleiades or loosen the belt of Orion? Can you bring out the constellations in their season and lead the Bear and her cubs? Do you know the laws of heaven? Can you impose its authority on earth?"

The references to the "chains of Pleiades [the cluster of stars also known as the Seven Sisters]" and the "cords of Orion [another constellation]" speak to forces governing celestial bodies which can include the magnetic field. The presence and nature of magnetic fields became clearer with the discoveries of geomagnetism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Water Cycle

(Eccl. 1:7 NASB) "All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again."

(Job 36:27-28 CSB) "For he makes waterdrops evaporate; they distill the rain into its mist, which the clouds pour out and shower abundantly on mankind."

The idea of the water cycle, which includes evaporation, condensation, and precipitation, wasn't developed formally until the 1600s by scientists like Bernard Palissy.

Quarantine and Disease

(Lev. 13:46 NASB) "He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp."

The concept of quarantining those with disease and Germ Theory in general are products of modern medicine.

Sanitation and Health

(Deut. 23:12-13 NASB) "You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement."

This passage speaks to more modern ideas of sanitation as important to public health.

The Role of Blood in Life

(Lev. 17:11a CSB) "For the life of a creature is in the blood..."

In the 1600s, William Harvey discovered that the blood circulates throughout the body. The modern understanding of blood confirms that blood plays a vital role in sustaining life because it carries oxygen and nutrients.

The Vast Number of the Stars

(Jer. 33:22 NASB) "As the host of heaven cannot be counted"

Modern telescopes and astronomy confirm that the number of stars is beyond counting.

Atomic Theory

(Heb. 11:3 CSB) "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible."

The Atomic theory, developed in the 1800s, holds that all matter is made of invisible particles or atoms.

C. SOURCES FOR THE TEN COMMON OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIANITY

What follows are some additional sources you might consult for defenses to the most common objections to the Christian faith.

1. Proving the Existence of God

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 1: "There's No Evidence for God," pp. 15-16 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lesson 70: "How to Prove the Existence of God," pp. 454-460 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

Frame, John M., Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief (2015), pp. 67-120.

Geisler, Norman L., The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide (2012).

House, H. Wayne and Joseph M. Holden, Charts of Apologetics and Christian Evidences (2006).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "Questions About God," pp. 22-37 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 1 God is Not Real," pp. 33-50 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

Sproul, R.C., "Section IV; The Case for God's Existence: Four Possibilities," pp. 99-136 in Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics (2003).

2. The Authenticity of the Bible

Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (1981).

Campbell, Charlie H., Questions regarding the authenticity of the Bible include Questions 2, 29, 46 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lessons 52-56 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

Frame, John M., Part Four: The Doctrine of the Word of God, pp. 510-665 in Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief (2013).

Grudem, Wayne, (Theologian and General Editor of the English Standard Version), Part I: The Doctrine of the Word of God (including bibliographies for further sources), pp. 31-166 in Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (2020).

Howard, Parker W., Study Guide: The Authority of Scripture (2026).

Koukl, Gregory, Chapter 13 "The Bible: Ancient Words, Ever True?," pp. 184-206 in Street Smarts: Using Questions to Answer Christianity's Toughest Challenges (2023).

McDowell, Josh, "Part One: The Case for the Bible," pp. 3-118 in The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (1999).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "Questions About the Bible," pp. 145-226 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 3 The Bible is Not Completely Accurate" in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

Wallace, Daniel B., Chapter 1: "Lost In Transmission: How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text," in Daniel Wallace, editor, Revisiting The Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence (2011).

Wellum, Stephen J., Part 2: The Revelation of the Triune God Who Speaks, pp. 151-365 in Systematic Theology: From Canon to Concept: Volume 1 (2024).

1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

3. "All Religions Lead to Heaven."

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 10: "With hundreds of religions in the world, it would be impossible to investigate all of them and know which one is true," pp. 30-31 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

McDowell, Josh, The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict (1999).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "Isn't It Arrogant to Claim that Christianity Is the Only True Religion," pp. 111-112 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 6: Jesus Is Not the Only Way to Heaven," pp. 147-158 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

4. The Problem of Evil

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 20: "The world is a mess! To think there is a loving God who allows all the evil and suffering that takes place is preposterous!," pp. 48-49 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Frame, John M., Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief (2015), pp. 155-188.

Lewis, C.S., The Problem of Pain (1940).

Koukl, Gregory, Chapter 9 "Evil: Atheism's Fatal Flaw," pp. 106-123 in Street Smarts: Using Questions to Answer Christianity's Toughest Challenges (2023).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "Questions About God," pp. 89-93 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 10: A Merciful God Wouldn't Allow Suffering," pp. 193-206 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

5. "God Should Not Send People to Hell."

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 11: "A loving God would never send people to Hell," pp. 32-33 and Objection 40 "I'm a good person. Surely, God is not going to send good people to Hell," pp. 92-93 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lesson 21 "The Certainty of Judgment," Lesson 22 "Judgment Day," Lesson 23 "The Reality of Hell," pp. 129-150 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

Frame, John, Chapter 50 "Heaven and Hell," pp. 1075-1085 in Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief (2013).

Grudem, Wayne, Chapter 56 "The Final Judgment and Eternal Punishment," pp. 1404-1423 in Systematic Theology, Second Edition: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (2020).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell," pp. 84-86 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 7: A Loving God Wouldn't Send People to Hell" pp. 159-174 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

6. "Christians Are Hypocrites."

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 35: "Churches are full of hypocrites," p. 72 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lesson 20: "Hypocrisy," pp. 124-128 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

Frame, John M., Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief (2015), pp. 27.

Grudem, Wayne, Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning (2018), pp. 140, 206

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 9: Christians Are All Hypocrites," pp. 181-192 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

7. "People Are Essentially Good and Don't Need to Be Saved."

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 40 "I'm a good person. Surely, God is not going to send good people to Hell, pp. 92-93 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lesson 24: "Man's Sinful Condition," pp. 151-157 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

McFarland, Alex, "Objection No. 8: People are Basically Good," pp. 33-50 in The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity (2014).

8. "Religions Have Killed the Most People."

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 18 "Religions, Christianity included, are responsible for most of the world's wars, suffering, and atrocities, pp. 44-45 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

McDowell, Josh & Sean, "Is Religion the Real Cause of Violence in the World?," pp. 78-80 in 77 FAQs About God and The Bible: Your Toughest Questions Answered (2012).

9 & 10. "Evolution Proves that Christianity is Wrong." and "I Only Believe in Science."

Behe, Michael J., Darwin's Black Box (2006)

Campbell, Charlie H., Objection 17: "It's a fact that humans are the product of evolution," pp. 41-43 in One-Minute Answers to Skeptics: Concise Responses to the Top 50 Objections & Questions (2023).

Comfort, Ray, et al., Lessons 64-68: "Evolution" pp. 408-447 and Lessons 61-63 "Scientific Facts in the Bible," pp. 389-407 in The School of Biblical Evangelism: 101 Lessons (2018).

Denton, Michael, Evolution: A Theory in Crisis (1985)

Johnson, Phillip E., Darwin on Trial (1993)

VI. LEGAL RIGHTS FOR EVANGELISTS

Thanks to Carter Horton, Esq. for the legal research that contributed to this section.

A. INTRODUCTION

Some Christians avoid evangelizing out of fear of (1) being fired from or otherwise disciplined in government or private employment, (2) being suspended or expelled from school, or (3) facing legal consequences such as fines or arrest.

Christians in the United States generally have substantial legal protection for peacefully sharing their faith. Those rights are not unlimited, however, and the extent of the protection depends upon such things as whether the evangelism occurs on public or private property, whether the evangelist is speaking as a private citizen or government employee, whether the evangelism interferes with employment duties, and whether another person has asked that the evangelism directed toward him or her stop.

The phrase “separation of church and state” does **not** appear in the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment does contain the Establishment Clause, but that clause does not require government hostility toward private religious expression. Religious speech is protected by the First Amendment along with other forms of speech.

This section focuses primarily on legal rights involving evangelism in the United States, including spoken evangelism and the free distribution of gospel tracts. It is merely a thumbnail sketch of a complicated area of law.

The following is general information and does not constitute formal legal advice. No attorney-client relationship is established.

B. CONSTITUTIONAL RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

1. U.S. Constitutional Religious Rights

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states in pertinent part:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech...”

The First Amendment applies directly to the **federal government**, while its protections for freedom of speech, free exercise of religion, and against governmental establishment of religion apply to **state and local governments** through the Fourteenth Amendment.

Both the Free Exercise Clause and the Free Speech Clause can therefore be important to evangelism.

2. Arkansas Constitutional Religious Rights

The Arkansas Constitution provides additional protection for religious liberty.

Article 2, Section 24 states in pertinent part:

“All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences.... **No human authority can, in any case or manner whatsoever, control or interfere with the right of conscience;** and no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishment, denomination or mode of worship, above any other.”

Article 2, Section 25 states:

“Religion, morality and knowledge being essential to good government, the General Assembly shall enact suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of public worship.”

These state protections operate in addition to applicable federal constitutional and statutory protections.

C. EVANGELIZING IN PUBLIC PLACES

1. Public Streets, Sidewalks, and Parks

Some of the strongest First Amendment protection for evangelism exists in traditional **public forums** such as public streets, sidewalks, and parks.

The Supreme Court has long recognized streets and parks as places historically associated with speech and assembly. See *Hague v. C.I.O.*, 307 U.S. 496 (1939); *United States v. Grace*, 461 U.S. 171 (1983); *McCullen v. Coakley*, 573 U.S. 464 (2014).

This generally means that a Christian may peacefully speak about the gospel and distribute free gospel literature in such places, subject to constitutionally permissible restrictions.

The government generally cannot prohibit speech merely because the message is religious.

2. Distribution of Gospel Tracts

Distribution of religious literature receives substantial First Amendment protection.

In *Murdock v. Pennsylvania*, 319 U.S. 105 (1943), the Supreme Court considered religious evangelism involving door-to-door distribution of literature and preaching.

The Court stated: “The hand distribution of religious tracts is an age-old form of missionary evangelism—as old as the history of printing presses.”

The Court further explained that spreading religious beliefs through literature and personal visitation has a high claim to constitutional protection. *Murdock*, 319 U.S. at 108–10.

Accordingly, peaceful distribution of **free** gospel literature in a traditional public forum ordinarily receives strong constitutional protection.

This does not mean that every regulation involving literature distribution is unconstitutional. Governments may impose certain content-neutral restrictions concerning such matters as traffic, obstruction, safety, and the reasonable use of public property.

3. Reasonable Restrictions

The right to evangelize does not give someone the right to block streets, obstruct pedestrian traffic, prevent others from using public property, trespass on restricted property, or disregard otherwise lawful restrictions on the use of public property.

The American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ) similarly cautions that evangelists must use common sense: the right to use streets, sidewalks, and parks doesn't make those places unusable for everyone else.

Government may also impose certain reasonable restrictions depending upon the type of public property involved. Constitutional protection is generally greatest in traditional public forums and can be more limited in nonpublic or limited public forums.

4. Private Property

The First Amendment ordinarily restrains **government**, not private property owners.

Consequently, a shopping center, grocery store, restaurant, business, or other private property owner generally has considerably greater authority to prohibit evangelism or distribution of literature on its property.

State law can sometimes provide broader rights than the federal Constitution, and a private property owner can voluntarily permit evangelism. The ACLJ therefore correctly cautions that public-property rules shouldn't automatically be assumed to apply to private property.

5. The American Center for Law & Justice

The ACLJ is a nonprofit legal organization that litigates constitutional and religious-liberty cases and provides legal assistance concerning First Amendment and other constitutional rights.

The ACLJ has published practical legal guidance specifically addressing Christians who want to share their faith in public. Its April 2024 memorandum, *Sharing Your Faith and Witnessing: Public and Private Entities*, discusses evangelism on streets, sidewalks, parks, and other property.

The ACLJ explains that federal, state, and local governments are substantially restricted by the First and Fourteenth Amendments from interfering with speech on public streets, sidewalks, and parks.

The ACLJ recommends that Christians preparing to evangelize in public familiarize themselves with applicable local rules governing First Amendment activities. It also recommends contacting local authorities when there is genuine uncertainty about applicable requirements.

See *American Center for Law & Justice, Sharing Your Faith and Witnessing: Public and Private Entities* (updated Apr. 2, 2024).

D. EVANGELISM IN PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT

1. Title VII

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 generally prohibits covered employers **with at least 15 employees** from discriminating against employees or applicants because of religion. It also requires reasonable accommodation of an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs and practices unless accommodation would impose an undue hardship. Religious organizations, such as churches, have a special exemption under Title VII that generally permits them to prefer employees who share their religion.

Religious practices protected by Title VII can include prayer, religious observance, religious dress, and **proselytizing or other forms of religious expression**.

Private employers generally aren't subject to the First Amendment because they aren't the government. **The principal federal protection for religious expression by employees of covered private employers therefore comes from statutes such as Title VII rather than directly from the First Amendment.**

2. Evangelism at Work

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is the federal agency responsible for enforcing federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination, including discrimination based on religion. Among other things, the EEOC investigates discrimination complaints and issues regulations and guidance concerning the religious rights and responsibilities of employers and employees.

The EEOC specifically recognizes that religious expression at work can include one-on-one conversations about religious beliefs and distribution of religious literature.

The EEOC states: "Employers should not try to suppress all religious expression in the workplace." U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Questions and Answers: Religious Discrimination in the Workplace*, under "Accommodating prayer, proselytizing, and other forms of religious expression."

Title VII can require an employer to accommodate sincerely held religious beliefs involving religious expression **when doing so does not create an undue hardship**.

This does **not**, however, give an employee an unlimited right to evangelize coworkers or customers.

If evangelism interferes with work, an employer may restrict it. If a particular coworker objects to being evangelized, the employer can require the employee to stop directing evangelism toward that person.

Evangelism directed toward customers can also be restricted when it disrupts business or reasonably appears to represent the employer's own message.

As a practical matter, conducting voluntary religious conversations during breaks or other personal time reduces the likelihood that the evangelism will interfere with the employee's work duties.

3. Requesting a Religious Accommodation

When an employment rule conflicts with a sincerely held religious belief or practice, an employee should notify the employer and request an accommodation.

Written notice isn't always legally required, but putting the request in writing can provide a clear record of what was requested and why.

For example, a Christian who sincerely believes he has a religious obligation to evangelize could explain that belief to the employer and request permission to engage in appropriate religious conversations during breaks or other personal time, while agreeing not to interfere with work or continue evangelizing an individual who asks him to stop.

The ACLJ also provides legal information concerning employee religious-liberty rights and has represented employees in Title VII religious-discrimination matters. American Center for Law & Justice, *Know Your Rights: Employee Religious Liberty Rights in the Workplace* (July 20, 2023); American Center for Law & Justice, *ACLJ Files Lawsuit: Kay Jewelers Employee Fired for "Talking About God at Work" After Answering Questions About Her Christian Faith* (Nov. 27, 2024)

4. The Current Undue-Hardship Standard

Older legal materials—including older EEOC and ACLJ materials—sometimes state that an employer establishes "undue hardship" whenever a religious accommodation imposes more than a **de minimis** cost.

That is no longer the governing standard.

In *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447 (2023), the Supreme Court clarified that merely showing more than a de minimis cost isn't enough. An employer must show that the burden of granting the accommodation would result in **substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business**, considering all relevant factors.

The EEOC now expressly warns readers that *Groff* supersedes contrary statements in its older guidance. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Section 12: Religious Discrimination*, "Notice Concerning the Undue Hardship Standard in Title VII Religious Accommodation Cases" ("Groff supersedes any contrary information on this webpage.")

The ACLJ likewise explains *Groff* as significantly strengthening the standard for evaluating religious-accommodation requests and notes that hostility toward a particular religion or toward accommodating religion cannot itself establish undue hardship. American Center for Law & Justice, *Know Your Rights: Employee Religious Liberty Rights in the Workplace* (July 20, 2023); see also American Center for Law & Justice, *Religious Discrimination in the Workplace (Title VII)*, Memorandum (updated Oct. 2024).

Thus, an employer cannot establish undue hardship merely by pointing to minor inconvenience or coworker hostility toward the employee's religion or religious practice.

E. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Government employment presents an additional consideration because the government itself is the employer.

Government employees may therefore have protections under both employment-discrimination law and the Constitution, although First Amendment protection depends in part upon whether the employee is speaking as a private citizen or pursuant to official job duties.

Government employees do not surrender all religious-expression rights merely because they work for the government.

This area of law has undergone significant clarification in recent years.

In *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 597 U.S. 507 (2022), the Supreme Court held that a public-school football coach's personal religious observance was protected by the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses. The Court rejected the school district's argument that suppressing Kennedy's religious expression was required by the Establishment Clause.

1. Federal Employees

On July 16, 2025, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued government-wide guidance concerning reasonable accommodations for religious purposes in federal employment.

On July 28, 2025, OPM followed with additional government-wide guidance entitled **“Protecting Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace.”** The July 28 guidance states that the First Amendment robustly protects federal employees’ religious expression and addresses such activities as religious conversations, prayer, religious displays, and other forms of personal religious expression.

On September 18, 2025, the Department of Justice’s Office of Legal Counsel issued an opinion addressing federal employee religious-liberty protections. DOJ concluded that the older 1997 federal workplace guidelines largely remain operative, but agencies should no longer apply either the old *de minimis* undue-hardship standard or the old “appearance of official endorsement” test for Establishment Clause questions.

On July 23, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice issued updated government-wide guidance concerning federal protections for religious liberty. The guidance revises and expands upon DOJ’s earlier 2017 guidance in light of more recent Supreme Court decisions and directs federal agencies to respect applicable protections for religious exercise and expression. Among other things, the guidance addresses federal employment, government programs, contracting and grants, rulemaking, and enforcement actions. See U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, *Acting Attorney General Blanche Issues Updated Guidance to Strengthen Federal Religious Liberty Protections* (July 23, 2026).

Thus, under current Supreme Court precedent and federal guidance, the mere fact that a government employee expresses a religious belief doesn’t automatically mean that the government itself has endorsed that religion.

F. PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND STUDENT RELIGIOUS SPEECH

Students in public schools don’t lose all First Amendment rights when they enter school. Schools nevertheless possess greater authority to regulate student speech during instructional activities than the government possesses over ordinary speech on a public sidewalk.

Individual Student Evangelism. Public-school students may speak to other students about their religious beliefs and attempt to persuade them concerning religious matters, just as they may discuss other subjects such as politics. Students may also distribute religious literature, including gospel tracts, to classmates on the same terms that they are permitted to distribute other non-school literature. Schools may impose reasonable rules concerning the time, place, and manner of student speech and literature distribution, and may regulate speech that materially disrupts school activities, but they may not single out religious expression for unfavorable treatment. See U.S. Department of Education, *Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools* (Feb. 5, 2026).

One important federal protection is the **Equal Access Act**, 20 U.S.C. § 4071 et seq. Section 4071(a) provides that a federally funded public secondary school maintaining a limited open forum may not deny equal access or discriminate against students seeking to conduct meetings because of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at those meetings.

In *Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990), the Supreme Court upheld application of the Equal Access Act to protect a student religious club.

In *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001), the Court held that excluding a private Christian children's club from after-hours use of school facilities, while permitting comparable secular uses, constituted unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination.

These cases reinforce an important principle: government doesn't ordinarily cure an Establishment Clause concern by discriminating **against** private religious speech.

G. IMPORTANT SUPREME COURT CASES

Several Supreme Court decisions are especially relevant to religious speech and evangelism:

Cantwell v. Connecticut, 310 U.S. 296 (1940). The Court reversed convictions arising from Jehovah's Witness evangelistic activity involving religious literature and solicitation and applied Free Exercise protections against the states.

Murdock v. Pennsylvania, 319 U.S. 105 (1943). The Court protected door-to-door religious evangelism involving distribution of religious literature against the licensing tax imposed there.

United States v. Grace, 461 U.S. 171 (1983). The Court recognized strong free-speech protection on public sidewalks surrounding the Supreme Court.

Board of Airport Commissioners v. Jews for Jesus, Inc., 482 U.S. 569 (1987). The Court invalidated an extraordinarily broad resolution prohibiting First Amendment activities in the Los Angeles International Airport terminal.

Board of Education v. Mergens, 496 U.S. 226 (1990). The Court upheld application of the Equal Access Act protecting a student religious club.

Capitol Square Review & Advisory Board v. Pinette, 515 U.S. 753 (1995). The Court protected private religious expression in a public forum against exclusion merely because of its religious character.

Good News Club v. Milford Central School, 533 U.S. 98 (2001). The Court held that excluding a religious club from facilities available to comparable secular organizations constituted viewpoint discrimination.

Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc. v. Village of Stratton, 536 U.S. 150 (2002). The Court invalidated an ordinance requiring door-to-door advocates to obtain a permit before engaging in advocacy.

McCullen v. Coakley, 573 U.S. 464 (2014). The Court reaffirmed the special First Amendment significance of public streets and sidewalks.

Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, 597 U.S. 507 (2022). The Court held that a public-school football coach's personal religious observance was protected by the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses.

Groff v. DeJoy, 600 U.S. 447 (2023). The Court clarified that Title VII's "undue hardship" standard requires substantially more than the old **de minimis** formulation.

H. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVANGELISTS

Christians should understand both their rights and their responsibilities when sharing the gospel.

1. **Public streets, sidewalks, and parks.** Peaceful evangelism and the free distribution of gospel literature generally receive strong First Amendment protection in traditional public forums such as public streets, sidewalks, and parks. Don't block traffic, obstruct walkways, interfere with others' use of the property, or violate otherwise lawful rules concerning things such as amplified sound, tables, or large gatherings.
2. **Private property.** Don't assume that First Amendment rights apply on private property. Shopping centers, stores, restaurants, businesses, and other private property owners generally have greater authority to restrict evangelism. **Respect the property owner's rules and obtain permission when required.**
3. **Door-to-door evangelism.** Door-to-door religious advocacy and distribution of religious literature receive significant First Amendment protection. However, respect "No Trespassing" notices and a homeowner's request to leave. Because local ordinances and the meaning of "solicitation" can vary, check applicable local rules before conducting organized door-to-door evangelism.
4. **If police or other government officials tell you to stop.** Remain peaceful and respectful. Don't physically resist law enforcement. Ask, if appropriate, what law or rule they believe applies. Record the relevant facts, including names, agencies, locations, dates, and what was said, and seek qualified legal assistance if necessary.
5. **Private employment.** Don't assume that religious expression is forbidden at work. Title VII may protect sincerely held religious practices, including appropriate evangelism, and covered employers may have a duty to provide reasonable accommodation. However, evangelism shouldn't interfere with your work duties or disrupt the employer's business.

6. **Coworkers.** Voluntary conversations about religion may be protected, but if a particular coworker clearly asks you to stop evangelizing him or her, stop directing evangelism toward that person.
7. **Customers and clients.** Be especially careful when evangelizing customers or clients. Employers may restrict religious expression that disrupts business or could reasonably be understood as the employer's own message.
8. **Request an accommodation when necessary.** If a workplace rule conflicts with a sincerely held religious belief or practice, tell the employer about the religious conflict and request a reasonable accommodation. A written request isn't always legally required, but keeping a written record is usually prudent.
9. **Government employment.** Government employees may have protections under both employment-discrimination law and the First Amendment. Federal employees also have current federal guidance specifically protecting appropriate personal religious expression. Because the rules can depend on whether the employee is speaking personally or as part of official job duties, government employees should be especially careful to distinguish personal religious expression from official government speech.
10. **Know the setting before you begin.** Rights vary considerably depending on whether you are on a public sidewalk, inside a government building, at a school, at work, or on private property. When in doubt, check the applicable rules before beginning.
11. **Get help when needed.** If you believe your religious-liberty rights have been violated, document what happened and contact a qualified attorney or a religious-liberty legal organization.

I. LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS SPECIALIZING IN RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Several nonprofit organizations provide information or legal assistance concerning religious-liberty disputes:

Alliance Defending Freedom (adflegal.org)

American Center for Law and Justice (aclj.org)

Becket Law (becketlaw.org)

Christian Legal Society (clsnet.org)

First Liberty Institute (firstliberty.org)

Thomas More Law Center (thomasmore.org)

VII. CONCLUSIONS

A. IN REVIEW

You have made it to the end and have accomplished a great deal. Let's review.

(Section I. Introduction)

In Section I, we considered a description of The 3D Series whose overall goal is to teach **Defense** (1 Pet. 3:15), **Doctrine** (Titus 2:1), and **Discernment** (Rom. 12:2; Heb. 5:14).

Learning how to spread and defend the Christian faith, how to understand sound biblical doctrine, and how to apply Scripture and doctrine to discern between right and wrong helps us to better obey God's commandments to (1) love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Matt. 22:37); (2) love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31); and (3) love God and our neighbors enough to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20).

In Section I we also considered the simple answers to questions like: "Why should anyone want to be a Christian?," "How do we find out how to be right with God and receive everlasting life?," "What is the Bible about?," "What is the Gospel?," and "Why should we spread the gospel?"

Finally, in Section I we considered basic principles of interpreting the Bible (See Appendix A), including use of the Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method (See Appendix B).

(Section II. What the Bible Says About Evangelism and Apologetics)

In Section II, we considered how the biblical calls for evangelism (Matt. 28:19-20) and apologetics (1 Pet. 3:15) are two sides of the same coin and that we are to be "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20) in fulfilling those complementary calls.

We then considered at length what Scripture says about evangelism and defense of the faith (apologetics).

Next we considered what apologetics is not and how to know when to shake the dust off our feet (Matt. 10:14).

(Section III. Evangelism Philosophies and Methods)

In Section III, we considered what evangelism is, what the difference is between evangelism and discipleship, the core elements of the gospel to spread, the biblical calls to evangelize, that all Christians should evangelize, reasons people do not evangelize, and different evangelism tools and approaches.

Next, we considered basic evangelism philosophies regarding why we should evangelize, to whom we should evangelize, how we should evangelize, when we should evangelize, and that the main philosophy of evangelism is to simply evangelize.

We then turned to consider basic elements and considerations for personal evangelists, the role of God's Law and repentance in evangelizing, and many quotes from prominent evangelical Christians regarding the need to help bring a person to realize their need to be saved by application of God's Law while evangelizing.

Finally, we considered specific evangelism methods, including The Romans Road, using gospel tracts, the Gideon Bible method, and the Three Circles method.

(Section IV. Overview of Christian Apologetics)

In Section IV, we considered an Overview of Christian Apologetics, including distinguishing between practical and academic apologetics, examples of apologetics in the Bible, a historical sketch of apologetics as an academic discipline, and a list of prominent apologists from New Testament times to the present.

We next considered an outline of apologetic approaches, which constitute different tools for different situations just like the various evangelism methods. These common apologetic approaches included classical, evidential, presuppositional, and experiential apologetics.

(Section V. Ten Common Objections to Christianity)

In Section V, we considered ten of the most common objections to the Christian faith, including:

- 1) "There's No Proof that God Exists."
- 2) "The Bible Is Not the Word of God."
- 3) "All Religions Lead to Heaven."
- 4) "I Can't Believe In a God Who Allows Evil."
- 5) "God Would Not or Should Not Send People to Hell."
- 6) "Christians Are Hypocrites."
- 7) "People Are Essentially Good and Don't Need Saving."
- 8) "Religions Have Killed the Most People."
- 9) "Evolution Proves That Christianity Is Wrong."
- 10) "I Only Believe In Science."

At the end of Section V is a list of additional sources for considering defenses to common objections to the Christian faith.

(Section VI. Legal Rights for Evangelists)

In Section VI, we learned a thumbnail sketch of legal rights protecting evangelizing in the United States.

B. PARTING THOUGHTS

The Bible calls all Christians to spread and defend the gospel, which is the good news of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way to get right with God is to "repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15 NASB).

Christians usually fear spreading and defending the Christian faith because they don't know how to do it.

One of the best ways to conquer the fear of evangelizing is the same way to defeat test anxiety: study and practice.

And with spreading and defending the Christian faith you have an additional powerful way to conquer the fear: pray for courage, wisdom, and help and God will give it to you.

God often works through his people. There are different tools to use for spreading and defending the gospel and the more we learn about them and practice them, along with frequent prayer, we will learn to pick the right tool for the particular job.

APPENDIX A: PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

The 3D Series operates on the following basic assumptions regarding the Bible, covered in more detail in **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**:

- (1) The entire Bible, the Old and New Testaments (but not the Apocrypha), is the actual Word of God written by divinely inspired human writers (2 Tim. 3:16).
- (2) Though there have been minor copy errors and translation variations over the years, the Bible we have today is over 99.5% accurate to the original writings.
- (3) None of the copy errors and translation variations seriously affect any doctrinal issue. Therefore, the translated Bible in your hand is "effectively" or "substantively" inerrant (without error) and infallible (incapable of error). Jesus and the Apostles, for example, still respected OT Scripture as God's actual word, even though they didn't have the original copies.
- (4) Since the Bible is the actual Word of God, it is consistent and it is the truth.
- (5) Any apparent inconsistencies are only apparent on the surface and should be construed in favor of consistency. See **Appendix B: The Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method**.
- (6) "Red letter only" Christianity is biblically unsound. Since God has existed as an eternal Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, "God's Word" involves the entire Trinity. Therefore, anything done by or said by God in the Bible involves Jesus (for example, John 1:1-3).
- (7) Because of the eternal nature of the Trinity, it is not true that God is mean and wrathful in the OT and nice in the NT. God has always been loving, but he is also just and has the supreme right to expect obedience and to punish for disobedience.
- (8) The NT does not replace the OT. Though most of the ceremonial and dietary laws have been fulfilled by Christ and therefore are inapplicable to Christians today, and though the Israelite civil laws were primarily applicable to the nation of Israel, the moral laws underlying all of the OT laws are, for the most part, still applicable to everyone.
- (9) If the Bible covers an issue or can be reasonably construed as covering an issue, what the Bible says about it is final over any other opinion. The Bible is the rock upon which our opinions should break, not the other way around. The Bible should not be conformed to culture (Col. 2:8).
- (10) Avoid cherry-picking verses out of context. Scripture should be interpreted in context and by other Scripture.
- (11) Pray for wisdom to understand Scripture (James 1:5).
- (12) Consider that there are some things we may not be meant to know (Deut. 29:29).

APPENDIX B:

THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCY (AIR) RESOLUTION METHOD

What follows is a method a Christian can use to understand difficult passages in the Bible that **seem** to be inconsistent.

The "**apparent inconsistency method**" consists of the following basic steps:

- (1) **Pray for wisdom to understand the passages** (James 1:5 KJV: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.");
- (2) **Always assume that the Bible is consistent and true and therefore there is a right answer, even if you cannot figure it out** (2 Tim. 3:16 CSB: "All Scripture is inspired by God"; John 17:17 KJV: "Thy word is truth");
- (3) **Consider that "all Scripture is breathed out by" the eternal Trinity** (for example, Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:18-20; John 1:1-3, 14). Therefore, (a) Jesus always spoke on behalf of the Triune God as a Person of the Triune God and therefore did not contradict what God has said before Jesus was physically born of Mary, (b) everything God has ever done in the OT and NT involved Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14), and (c) the red-letter-only philosophy contradicts Jesus' own opinion of Scripture (e.g., John 10:35b);
- (4) **Do not subject the Bible to your own judgment but rather submit to the Bible** (Col. 2:8 KJV: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.");
- (5) **Consider we may not be meant to know** (Deut. 29:29 KJV: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law.");
- (6) **Consider what other faithful teachers have said about it and study the issue more** (Prov. 11:14 KJV: "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"; Josh. 1:8 CSB: "meditate on it [the word] day and night"); and
- (7) **Interpret Scripture with Scripture** since all Scripture is consistent, but do not take passages out of context.