

The Apologetics of Peter

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Renewing the Mind, Equipping the Church, Engaging the World

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What Is Apologetics?

- Apologetics – comes from the Greek word **apologia** meaning ‘a defense’, ‘a reasoned argument’
- *“Apologetics is the rational defense of Christianity. Christian apologists use reason and evidence to present a convincing case for Christianity, challenge unbelief, expose errors, and defend the message of the gospel.”* Pat Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus*
- The heart of apologetics is not about winning a debate.
- The heart of apologetics is about removing objections that cloud people’s minds to allow them to clearly understand the good news leading to eternal life.

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The Apologetics of Paul

- Paul is often looked to as a model for apologetics
- Paul used the word twice in Philippians:
 - for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in **the defense** and confirmation of the gospel. Phil. 1:7
 - I am here for **the defense** of the gospel Phil. 1:17
- He encouraged us to defend the gospel as well
 - “Conduct yourselves **with wisdom toward outsiders**, making the most of the opportunities. Let your speech always be with grace, **seasoned with salt**, so that **you may know how you should answer everyone.**” Col 4:5-6
 - “I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by **contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not being intimidated in any way by your opponents.**” Phil 1:27-28



Peter: A Leader in Apologetics

- Peter is often thought of as the brash fisherman whose mouth was always several steps ahead of his brain.
- Peter demonstrated himself a leader in **effective apologetics**
 - Recognized Jesus as the Christ early on. When others doubted, Peter declared, “*To whom shall we go, (Jesus) you have the words of eternal life.*” John 6:68
 - The primary spokesperson presenting a reasoned argument for the gospel before the crowds, the Jewish authorities and the first Gentile converts.
 - The one Paul approached to discuss his theology and apologetics with before sharing them with the entire Roman world
 - The one that commanded us to be prepared to give an effective, reasoned argument for our faith; introducing the term “*apologetics*” to our vocabulary as important for every believer



An Exhortation from Peter

- In his first letter to Asia Minor, Peter tells us all to be apologists
- When anyone asks for the reason you believe
 - *always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.* 1st Peter 3:15b



The Hope In You

- What is the hope you are defending
- Peter doesn't make us guess
 - *By God's great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that is, into an inheritance imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for you, who by God's power are protected through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* 1st Peter 1:3-5
 - A living hope through: the resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - A living hope for what: an eternal inheritance
 - A living hope where: reserved in heaven for you
 - A living hope ensured by: God's power
 - A living hope completed when: in the last time



To Everyone Who Asks

- As Paul tells us in 1st Corinthians 1:22-24 :
 - *For Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks ask for wisdom, 23 but we preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. 24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
- The person asking the question may have many different reasons for asking
 - Why do you believe in a God and insist on calling yourself a Christian?
 - How can Jesus have the power to offer you eternal life?
 - Do you think I need to change my religion?
 - How can the creator God have enough love for us to allow Jesus to be crucified for us?



Always Be Ready

- Does Peter say “Don’t think about this topic beforehand. Instead, just wait for the question and let the Holy Spirit speak through you.”
- What can we do to be ready?
 - Think about moving someone from a side topic to the main event: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - Know why we are sure the death and resurrection is a real historical event?
 - Know the stumbling blocks prevalent around you.



Always Be Ready

- What can we do to be ready?
 - Think about the aspects different types stumbling blocks would need to hear to begin to focus on the resurrected Lord.
 - Have a clear testimony of how faith in Christ has changed your life now and for eternity
 - Practice by talking/role playing with fellow Christians
 - Don't worry about tearing down their arguments. Focus on the truths of the gospel.



To Make a Defense (apologia)

- Any defense should focus on the resurrection
 - *“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved.”*
- This is not an argument or a debate
- Adjust the topic asked to make sure it is true
 - “Why do you think I should worship your Western god?”
- Reword their question to a valid question about our faith
 - I don't worship a Western god. I worship Jesus the creator of the universe and only true God. Is your question really, why do I believe Jesus is God and your gods are not truly gods.



To Make a Defense (apologia)

- If possible, quickly make them understand that their question is answered by answering these two
 - **Why did Jesus die for us if He was already God?**
 - **Was Jesus really resurrected from the grave conquering death?**
- His death shows us that we can never be righteous enough to earn a place with a holy God
- **Give a defense for the resurrection being a real event**
- Ask them if they want to learn more about what Jesus did for us.



With Gentleness and Respect

- To give a defense of your faith is a divine opportunity.
- You are interacting with a soul who desperately needs Jesus.
- Your objective is not to beat the other person into submission but rather to gently lead them into an understanding of the gospel.
- You can present hard truths, e.g. “Your sin separates you from your creator” with gentleness and respect.



With Gentleness and Respect

- They may be belligerent, but we are called to share the truth in love.
- Showing respect begins with bringing God into the situation through prayer and relying on His word.
- Remember we had no part in providing our way to heaven –no good deeds, no clever plan, no great accomplishments.
- We humbly accepted what God had done for us. Our hearer can do the same.



The Secular Naturalist

- **Question to Defend:** Science shows we are strictly the result of random mutations and selection of the fittest. Why do you hold to this idea there is a God who cares about us?
- **Redirect:** Science does not show what you suggest. After all these years, there is no credible theory as to how life appeared on this planet by random chance.
- **Real Question:** I think you really want to know why I believe there is a creator who cares about mankind.
- **Key Answer:** The primary reason is that I know Jesus lived on this earth, was crucified to pay for our sin and resurrected to give us eternal life.
- **Key Follow up:** Can I explain to you why I believe Jesus is our resurrected savior?



The Postmodern Thinker

- **Question to Defend:** Since there is only subjective truth, how can you say that everyone needs to believe in Jesus?
- **Redirect:** I agree mankind is not the source of truth. But a creator existing outside our universe can know what is absolutely true in our universe.
- **Real Question:** I think you really need to know why I believe Jesus is what He says He is “the way, the truth, and the life”.
- **Key Answer:** Jesus lived on this earth, was crucified to pay for our sin and resurrected to give us eternal life. His resurrection shows he exists outside the universe we can observe.
- **Key Follow up:** Can I explain to you why I believe Jesus is our resurrected savior?



The Muslim

- **Question to Defend:** We believe that Jesus was a prophet from Allah. How can you believe Jesus is equal to God and yet came to earth as a human?
- **Redirect:** I believe in an all-powerful God and it was no issue for Him to have part of the God-head lay aside his glory and come to earth as a human.
- **Real Question:** I think you really need to know why God chose to do this and why I believe it.
- **Key Answer:** God is holy and cannot overlook our sin. Because of His great love, He came to earth to take our sins upon Himself offer forgiveness and rising from death to give us eternal life.
- **Key Follow up:** Can I explain to you why I believe Jesus is our resurrected savior?



The Hindu

- **Question to Defend:** Obviously there are many ways to oneness. Why do you say there is only one way through Jesus Christ?
- **Redirect:** No matter how many spiritual beings exist, there is only one creator God. If God had another option, He never would have undergone the extreme suffering of the separation of the cross.
- **Real Question:** I think you really need to know why God chose to do this and why I believe it.
- **Key Answer:** God is holy and cannot overlook our sin. Because of His great love, He came to earth to take our sins upon Himself offer forgiveness and rising from death to give us eternal life.
- **Key Follow up:** Can I explain to you why I believe Jesus is our resurrected savior?



Living a Life Supporting Your Defense

- Having a good defense of the gospel includes living a life than unbelievers will notice
 - They may revile you
 - But in the end, they will glorify God because of your good deeds
- The continuation of 1st Peter 3:15 says
 - *having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.* 1st Peter 3:16
- Earlier in his letter Peter wrote
 - *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* 1st Peter 2:12



Living a Life Supporting Your Defense

- In his letter Peter outlines what conduct contributes to our defense of the gospel
 - Our excellent behavior 1st Peter 1:14-15, 2:12,15
 - Our loving relationships 1:22, 3:7-8, 4:8
 - Our response to suffering 2:18-21, 3:17-18, 4:1,16
 - Our servant's heart, and 4:9, 5:5-6
 - Our devotion to prayer 4:7



Conclusion

- Sometimes it is worthwhile to debate an unbeliever over the origins of life, the source of suffering, and other topics.
- The use of apologia by Peter and Paul is referring to a defense of the gospel
- The ultimate purpose is to “*destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God*” (2 Cor 10:5) with the truth of the gospel
- For that purpose, we need to be sure we have a strong grasp of the evidence for **the physical and spiritual reality of the resurrection of Christ.**

