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# Answering Objections

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Free media and discipleship resources for pastors, leaders, and growing disciples.

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## What Is Apologetics?

In the book *Therefore Stand*, Wilbur Smith defines apologetics as “a verbal defense, a speech in defense of what one has done or a truth which one believes.”

First Peter 3:15 says, “But 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.” The Greek word *apologia* means “a speech of defense.”

*Theologian John Stott said, “We cannot pander to a man’s intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity.”*

I once shared Christ with a person who was studying for a doctoral degree in psychology. I gave him some evidence on the resurrection of Christ and of Jesus being God by showing him that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord and that it makes far greater sense to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be (Lord, God). The man said he had never heard answers like this before, and I often wonder if later on he made a profession of faith in Christ. Our aim is to make the gospel clear and answer people’s questions as best we know how.

Consider buying some books for your church members to give out to their non-Christian friends. Your church might have a budget for buying large quantities of books such as *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell, *The Case for Christmas*, and *The Case for Easter* by Lee Strobel, and *One Second after You . . .* by Mark Cahill. If I give a book or booklet to a Christian, I ask them to read it, and then I ask them to give it to a non-Christian to read.

## A Different Worldview

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are saved, it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Expect people who have not been brought up in a church or have never read the Bible to have a different worldview than yours.

## How to Give an Answer

You don't have to know all the answers to every question. If someone asks a question you don't know the answer to, be honest, and tell them you don't know. Then say, "Let me research this, and let's get together again for coffee to discuss it." That could lead to more dialogue. Invite the person to read a book such as *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel. Our main goal is to introduce the person to Christ, and that may take many conversations and a lot of time.

Tim Muehlhoff, a professor at Biola University and author of *I Beg to Differ: Navigating Difficult Conversations with Truth and Love*, suggests asking yourself four questions when sharing with people who may be averse to Christianity or the Bible.

1. Exactly **what** does this person believe?
2. **Why** does this person believe what they believe?
3. **Where** do we agree?
4. Based on this knowledge, **how** should I proceed, or what is the one thing I should say?

Aaron Pierce in *Not Beyond Reach* recommends following this process: affirm, reframe, challenge.

- **Affirm** whatever is true or admirable about the person's viewpoint.
- **Reframe** their viewpoint and point out any false assumptions.
- **Challenge** the untruths that stand in the way of the gospel.

## Win the Relationship

You can never argue anyone into the kingdom of God. It may be that the person is a tire-kicker and just wants a friendship or wants to see if Christ is displayed in your life.

At some point in your discussion with someone, you might ask them, "What would it take for you to receive Christ into your life?" or "What is holding you back from receiving Christ?"

You may be surprised at their answers. It could be something simple or a misconception about the Bible or the Christian faith.

## **Ignorance**

Often people who raise questions have either never heard the gospel or their ignorance is self-imposed. When the Apostle Paul preached to the Athenians on Mars Hill in Acts 17, some of his audience believed, but some did not and then mocked Paul. As the old saying goes, the same sun that hardens clay softens butter.

## **Lean into Disagreement**

Sam Chan, author of *How to Talk about Jesus*, recommends leaning into disagreement because being vulnerable to disagreement shows unconditional love. Jesus often ate and drank with people who disagreed with Him. The gospel by its very nature is offensive because people will react to the notion of sin and their need to repent.

## **Avoid Endless Rabbit Trails**

If people you share Christ with keep bombarding you with questions, you could ask them, “If I answer that question, would you be ready to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior?”

Greg Laurie said, “People will try to take you down endless rabbit trails . . . but the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing which is the gospel faithfully delivered.”

When Lee Strobel encounters a skeptic, he suggests that they do a cost-benefit analysis. He tells them to take a sheet of paper and list what Christ offers on one side—forgiveness, peace of mind, eternal life, fulfillment, power to live the Christian life, and so on. On the other side, he asks them to list their current lifestyle—lack of purpose, no peace, no pardon, no power, eternal separation from God, and so on. He wants to show them the difference so they can see what Christ offers compared to what they are experiencing. That can be a good exercise to give to someone who is hopefully searching despite their smokescreens.

“We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments” (2 Corinthians 10:4 NLT).

## What about Scoffers?

Jesus warned against those who treat the gospel with scorn. “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” (Matthew 7:6).

Some people, no matter how much evidence you give them, will choose not to believe (John 3:19; Romans 1:21, 2:5). Case in point is Judas who saw Jesus perform countless miracles, heard amazing teaching, and yet denied the Lord. It took Noah, a preacher of righteousness, 120 years to build the ark, and only his family turned to the Lord. Jesus said, “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37).

Don't get discouraged if people reject your gospel presentation. Our responsibility is to declare the good news of salvation regardless of how people respond to it. The only hope for a scoffer is the healing touch of the Holy Spirit who can open their blind eyes to the gospel.

In Luke 14, Jesus shares the parable of the dinner. Many who were invited gave excuses and did not come. Finally, “the master said to the slave, ‘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.’” (Luke 14:23-24). This is a picture of God the Father wanting us to urge non-believers to come to Christ so they will participate in the glories of heaven forever. We must urge them to respond to the Father's invitation and then leave the results in God's hands.

## Reasons People Object to the Gospel

### Moral Issue

People's basic problem ultimately is not intellectual. It's moral. “But the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

I witnessed to a guy who kept bringing up objections to the gospel. Finally, he asked me what the Bible said about premarital sex and abortion. I found out later that he had gotten his girlfriend pregnant, and she had had an abortion. I was honest about

premarital sex and abortion being wrong but focused on what happens when we receive Christ—He forgives us and cleanses us of all sin.

Paul Little once wrote, “Alleged intellectual problems are often a smokescreen covering moral rebellion.”

*The famous atheist Aldous Huxley wrote, “For myself, as no doubt for most of my friends . . . we objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.”*

## **Emotional Issue**

I shared the gospel with a young lady who said she was an atheist. When I asked her how the universe came into being, she admitted that the main reason she rejected a belief in God was because her mother had tried to slam religion down her throat. She had an emotional issue with her mom. Prior to coming to Christ, many atheists such as Lee Strobel and Josh McDowell had emotional barriers.

## **Pride and the Will**

In John 7:17 (ESV), Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.”

The reason most educated people don’t believe is the same reason most uneducated people don’t believe. They don’t want to believe. Randy Newman in his book *Bringing the Gospel Home* states that when Jesus spoke to the religious Jews, He said, “Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me” (John 8:45 NIV). He did not say “although I tell you the truth.” The religious Jews failed to believe because they had a pride issue.

Years ago, I gave a book on the evidence for Christ to an atheist airline stewardess. She responded, “Dave, thank you for your kindness. I am returning this book to you. Pass it on to someone who might like it. I’m afraid I am hopeless to change my opinion.” Part of my reply to her was this: “God will never impose His will on anyone. There may be reasons why you have chosen not to seek God, but we’re all getting older, and someday you and even I may find ourselves staring death in the face— whether through health issues or even an accident. My counsel to you is to ask the Lord to come into your life, to forgive you, and to give you eternal life. The most famous verse in the Bible says, ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting

life.’ You may be passionate about the government, but I am passionate about the awesome privilege of having a personal relationship with the Lord. People are often incapable of solving real needs. I would rather you express how you feel than not. God bless.”

## **Idols**

The rich young ruler asked Jesus: “Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. The rich young ruler “Went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property” (Mark 10:17, 22).

People have various idols in their life. I emailed Mark Cahill, author of *One Heartbeat Away*, regarding his witness efforts to Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan and their need for Christ. Mark wrote back, “Amazing how money, wealth, and fame can make someone put God in the back seat.” The well-known athlete Deion Sanders had tried everything— parties, women, expensive jewelry—but had no peace and was on the verge of suicide before he found Christ.

## **Know Why You Believe**

We need to know why we believe what we believe. There are many reasons why the Christian faith makes total sense, but ultimately it comes down to a personal encounter with Jesus and the empty tomb.

Paul Little in his classic book *Know Why You Believe* makes this profound statement: “‘Little, how do you know you haven’t been taken in by a colossal propaganda program? After all, you can’t see God, touch him, taste him, or feel him.’ And then I go on to ask myself how I know the gospel is true. I always come back to two basic factors: the objective, external, historical facts of the resurrection, and the subjective, internal, personal experience of Christ that I have.”

## **God Is Patient**

Chuck Swindoll said, “When you think you know someone who is too far gone to believe in Christ, remember the centurion. If that hardened, toughminded Roman soldier could become aware of the truth, so can your lost loved one.” When the centurion saw Christ die on the cross, he said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54).

I encourage you to do your own research for the answers to some of the questions people commonly ask.