

Apologetics: Not what you think it is

Some of you don't know what apologetics is. Others possess a proper understanding of the term. However, many think they know, but are unaware they have an erroneous perception. In which category do you fall? Let's find out.

According to Merriam-Webster, apologetics is, "a branch of theology devoted to the defense of the divine origin and authority of Christianity." I'd say that's pretty accurate. However, many Christians have an inaccurate view of what apologetics means in a practical sense.



The word itself is not commonly known or used within secular society. You may have met someone who thinks apologetics has something to do with apologizing. It's not difficult to understand why they might come to that conclusion. Personally, I don't use the word very often because (1) non-Christians are almost certain not to be familiar with the word and (2) surprisingly, even many Christians don't know what it means.

Where did this word come from? It traces back to a Greek word in the New Testament; the word "ἀπολογία". It is pronounced ap-ol-og-EE'-ah and is found in a number of verses, such as Philippians 1:17 ("knowing that I am set for the **defence** of the gospel" KJV) and 1 Peter 3:15 ("be ready always to **give an answer**" KJV).

So, what does the word apologetics actually mean if it doesn't mean what many think it means? Good question!

To some, what I am going to discuss may seem like "splitting hairs", but we do ourselves (and God) a disservice if we miss this.

Many people believe apologetics is all about proving the existence of God or the Divine inspiration of the Bible. In short, defending God and His Word. Guess what? God doesn't need us to defend Him (or His Word)! That may sound harsh, but it's true. You will often see apologetic resources with titles along the lines of, "Proof for the Existence of God" or "Proof the Bible is the Inspired Word of God." You even see headlines such as, "Researchers recently discovered scientific proof for the existence of God." That all sounds great, but it is misguided.

First of all, science can't "prove" God exists or that He created the universe. It's incapable for two reasons. (1) God is a spirit, a non-physical entity. Since science is limited to dealing with physical entities, such as matter and energy, how can it "prove" that a non-physical thing exists? What scientific test would you use? What laboratory equipment is necessary to carry-out an experiment? There's nothing wrong with science; it's just limited in its scope. (2) Regarding the origin of the

universe (whether a result of supernatural involvement or not), we are dealing with a one-time event that happened in the past when no humans were around to observe and test. We cannot repeat that event in a laboratory. Therefore, beliefs about the event cannot be scientifically determined with any certainty. We can only make educated guesses and try to support them with what we currently do know about science. (We make observations in the present and assume what MAY have happened in the past, but we cannot be certain.)

Secondly, when we claim certain evidence “proves” God’s existence, or proves God created the universe, etc., we are elevating science above the authority of God’s Word. In essence we are saying, “We know God exists because science has shown it to be true.” This makes science the ultimate arbiter of truth. Potentially, we may discover something tomorrow that would indicate God does NOT exist because scientists are always in the process of discovery. God does exist; God doesn’t exist. We would have to constantly look to scientists to tell us what the “view of the day” is. And guess what? Science doesn’t actually say anything! Scientists do! And scientists are biased human beings (like all of us) who don’t know everything, make mistakes, and sometimes even lie about their findings. We should be leery of relying heavily on scientists’ conclusions to figure out what God’s Word actually means. Conversely, we can (and should) use God’s Word to properly understand science. (I am referring to what is known as “historical” or “origins” science. I am not implying the Bible was written for the purpose of telling us how to design cell phones or improve cancer treatments. These are fascinating topics for another discussion.)

You can read the Bible from cover-to-cover and nowhere will you find any imperatives telling us we need to prove God’s existence or the authority of God’s Word!

The reason you don’t need to defend the existence of God is that everyone already knows God exists! Why would I say that? Because God says it in Romans 1:19-20 (and other places). Some have decided to reject that knowledge and there are associated consequences (see Romans 1:21-32).

The reason you don’t need to defend God’s Word, is the same reason why you don’t need to defend a lion; you just let it loose! It defends itself!

So, if we don’t need to defend God’s existence or the authority of His Word, what exactly is apologetics all about? Here it is in a nutshell. Apologetics involves two major aspects.

1. Sharing the truth of God’s Word with others. His Word will never return void but will always accomplish His will (Isaiah 55:11). One way of looking at this verse is that when you actually share Scripture with people, it will either be used to (a) convict and convert them, which is what God wants, but He’s not going to force them, or (b) it will be used to condemn them, meaning they heard it but chose to reject it. It’s not up to you which way they go. The Holy Spirit does all the heavy lifting!
2. Giving reasons why we personally believe the Bible is what it claims to be (“be ready always to give an answer,” 1 Peter 3:15). In other words, we share evidence we find convincing and which we believe would be very intriguing to them. It will be up to them to decide what they do

Question of the Month

with the evidence. They may work hard to deny it, reluctantly consider it or embrace it wholeheartedly.

Apologetics is not about helping God out by proving to others His existence or the authority of His Word, but simply sharing very compelling, well thought-out reasons why we believe in the existence of God and in the supernatural inspiration of the Bible. We want people to know the Christian worldview is not just one of many religions we have to choose from or one that requires blind faith against all reason. It is the only true belief system and is accompanied by powerful evidence from internal consistency, history, prophecy and numerous scientific disciplines. It offers the only real solution to mankind's problems today through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Now that you have a better idea of what apologetics is all about, pray for opportunities to share your faith with those around you and watch how God uses it in amazing ways! It can change someone's eternity!

If you have any questions about this or any other issue, please don't hesitate to [contact us!](#)