

**IN**  **NEXT**  
**LEVEL**

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## Session 1: What is apologetics?

1. Definition: Apologetics is the discipline of *defending* and *commending* Christian belief.
2. What does the practice of apologetics assume about the nature of Christian faith?
3. Apologetics in the New Testament:
  - a. 1 Peter 3:15-16 – Reflect on what this passage tells us about the practice of apologetics:
  - b. Some other passages relevant for learning about apologetics:
    - i. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Titus 1:9; Jude 3 – What do these passages say about the importance of contending for the truth?
    - ii. Acts 17:16-34 – Reflect on Paul’s method when speaking to a pagan audience in Athens. What strategies does he use/not use? What would it look like if we employed the same type of strategies today?
  - c. Was Jesus an apologist? How did Jesus answer skeptics? What sort of arguments did Jesus employ in the gospels?
4. Different methods of apologetics:
  - a. Evidential – To offer specific arguments and evidence supporting the truth of Christian belief. This method is typically *negative* meaning that it will typically address specific objections to faith.
  - b. Worldview (Presuppositional) – To address unbelieving presuppositions with the sufficiency of the gospel. This method is often a *sharing of stories* with a skeptic with a mind towards exposing inadequacies in non-gospel stories. This method is typically more conversational than argumentative.
  - c. Testimonial – To offer personal testimony of how the gospel has proven itself to be true in a believer’s life. This method, while relying on more subjective experience, can be very effective with unbelievers. Testimonial apologetics is typically *positive* meaning that it will typically commend the faith rather than defend it against attacks.
  - d. Reflect on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach. In what circumstances would each one be appropriate?
5. How do I talk to a friend who doesn’t believe or is struggling with belief?
  - a. Don’t argue. Debating rarely works to convince the skeptic. What does work is presence, listening, and strategic questions.
  - b. Model the gospel. Remember that a skeptic typically uses intellectual questions as a mask for deeper existential dilemmas. Therefore, they may say that they need intellectual answers, but so often they are really looking for authentic expressions of faith. In other words, does it make a difference in your life?
  - c. Know what matters. Don’t fall for the trap of arguing over issues that ultimately are not essential for the faith. Make sure that you identify and can talk about matters of importance. You don’t have all the answers! Admit it. Direct conversations back to issues of simple and fundamental importance.
  - d. Become a lifelong learner. Talking to friends and family who don’t believe is an invitation for you to growing deeper in your own faith. Dig your well deep by continuing to learn and study so that when the time comes you will have the wise answer that is needed.
  - e. Share some stories of conversations you’ve had with unbelievers/doubters. What lessons did you learn in the process?

**Books Worth Reading:** (\*introductory, \*\*intermediate, \*\*\*advanced)

- \*Beilby, James K. *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*.
- \*\*Bird, Michael, Craig Evans, Simon J. Gathercole et al. *How God Became Jesus*.
- \*Boyd, Gregory. *Letters from a Skeptic*.
- \*\*Chamberlain, Paul. *Why People Don't Believe: Confronting Seven Challenges to Christian Faith*.
- \*\*Chesterton, G. K. *Everlasting Man*.
- \*\*\*Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision*.
- \*\*Dembski, William. *Intelligent Design*.
- \*Evans, C. Stephen. *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion*.
- \*\*Evans, Craig. *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*.
- \*\*\*Geivett, Douglas R. and Gary R. Habermas, eds. *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*.
- \*\*Habermas, Gary. *The Historical Jesus*.
- \*\*\*Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions*.
- \*\*\*\_\_\_\_\_. *The Experience of God*.
- \*Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God*.
- \*\*Kreeft, Peter. *Christianity for Modern Pagans*.
- \*\*\_\_\_\_\_. *Making Sense of Suffering*.
- \*Lamb, David T. *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?*
- \*Lennox, John C. *Seven Days that Divide the World: The Beginning According to Genesis and Science*.
- \*\*Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*.
- \*\*\_\_\_\_\_. *The Abolition of Man*.
- \*\*McGrath, Alister E. *Intellectuals Don't Need God and Other Modern Myths*.
- \*\*\_\_\_\_\_. *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith*.
- \*\*\_\_\_\_\_. *Surprised by Meaning: Science, Faith, and How We Make Sense of Things*.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. *Doubting*.
- \*Metaxas, Eric. *Miracles*.
- \*\*\*Moreland, J.P. and William Lane Craig. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*.
- \*\*Moreland, J.P. *Love Your God With All Your Mind*.
- \*Qureshi, Nabeel. *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*.
- \*Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ*.
- \*\_\_\_\_\_. *The Case for Faith*.
- \*Sunshine, Glenn S. *Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Home*.
- \*Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*.
- \*Wilkens, Steve and Mark L. Sanford. *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories that Shape Our Lives*.
- \*Willard, Dallas. *The Allure of Gentleness: Defending the Faith in the Manner of Jesus*.
- \*\*Wright, N.T. *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*.

**Websites Worth Visiting:**

Reasonable Faith: [reasonablefaith.org](http://reasonablefaith.org)  
Ravi Zacharias Ministries: [rzim.org](http://rzim.org)  
Peter Kreeft: [peterkreeft.com/home](http://peterkreeft.com/home)  
Gary Habermas: [garyhabermas.com](http://garyhabermas.com)  
The Poached Egg: [thepoachedegg.net](http://thepoachedegg.net)  
Lee Strobel: [leestrobel.com](http://leestrobel.com)

## Session 2: What is faith?

1. Consider this quote from Sam Harris: Tell a devout Christian that his wife is cheating on him or that frozen yogurt can make a man invisible and he is likely to require as much evidence as anyone else... (However) tell him that the book he keeps by his bed was written by an invisible deity who will punish him...for eternity if he fails to accept its every incredible claim about the universe, and he seems to require no evidence whatsoever.
  - a. How does he define faith?
  - b. How does that differ from your understanding of faith?
  - c. This is a great example of a “straw man argument” which is a way of arguing in which you characterize opposing views in an intentionally false and easily defeated way.
2. Two points to consider:
  - a. Everyone lives by faith every day. To be human is to believe. Consider all of the important truths that we live our lives by every day for which we don’t have absolute certainty. For instance, do you have absolute certainty that you are loved by those closest to you? Even committed naturalists like the late Carl Sagan cannot resist the language of faith. Notice how easily you could substitute the word “God” for “Cosmos” in the following quote: The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be. Our feeblest contemplations of the Cosmos stir us — there is a tingling in the spine, a catch in the voice, a faint sensation of a distant memory, as if we were falling from a great height. We know we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.
  - b. The question isn’t whether you live by faith. The question is *are you justified in your belief*. In other words, do you have sufficient reasons for your faith to be considered reasonable? This is the question that apologetics seeks to address concerning Christian faith.
3. What is needed is a proper, biblical understanding of the nature of faith. Read Hebrews 11 and make a list from that chapter what faith is and is not according to the author.
4. Insufficient and dangerous Christian understandings of faith:
  - a. Faith requires certainty. What is the proper role of doubt in faith? Does doubt serve any useful purpose? When does doubt become destructive?
  - b. Faith has no need for evidence. Christian faith is not blind. Christian faith is *trust* grounded in the character and work of a trustworthy God.
  - c. Faith is merely intellectual. Faith does call you to believe in some things while rejecting other things as false. But biblical faith cannot *merely* be intellectual. What are the potential dangers of a merely intellectual faith?
  - d. Faith is situational. Our culture has bought into a *fact/value split*. The consequences of this split are that issues related to faith and morality are treated as private and situational truths as opposed to matters of science and reason which are treated as public truths. As a result, many Christians live out their faith in situational/private ways rather than allowing it to integrate their entire lives both public and private.
  - e. Faith is relative. This is the idea that all religions basically lead to God. The important thing is to have faith. It does not necessarily matter what you have faith in. This thinking is flawed for the following reasons:
    - It doesn’t make sense: Religions make contradictory claims about God. To say that they are all correct is really to say that they are all wrong. Relativism empties all religion of meaning and makes merely a personal feeling.
    - It doesn’t conform to Scripture: The God of Scripture does not tolerate the worship of false gods. Similarly, Jesus makes numerous exclusive claims for himself.
    - It misunderstands the nature of God: God is not a *place* to get to. God is a *person* to know. How does this fact challenge the notion of religious relativism?

### Session 3: Does God really exist?

Romans 1:20 – For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1 – The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Sometimes the first question asked by a skeptic deals with the existence of God Himself. To this question, thinkers have offered a wide array of arguments for the existence of God. These arguments shouldn’t be understood as “proof.” They also shouldn’t be understood as being sufficient in pointing to the Christian God. But they are very effective when properly explained and understood in making the belief in God reasonable. These arguments typically begin from *general revelation*. In other words, they begin with facts generally available to all people.

Some of the most commonly made arguments for the existence of God:

1. The Ontological Argument: This argument for God’s existence was first articulated by Anselm of Canterbury in the 1100s. Ontology is the study of being.
  - a. Mankind has an idea of a maximally great being.
  - b. Existence is a necessary part of being maximally great.
  - c. A maximally great being exists, since the very concept of being maximally great requires existence.
2. The Cosmological Argument: The cosmological argument is an argument of God which takes the existence of the universe as its starting point. It assumes that something (the universe) exists and argues from its existence to the existence of a First Cause or a Sufficient Reason of the cosmos.
  - a. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
  - b. The universe began to exist.
  - c. Therefore, the universe has a cause.
3. The Teleological (Design) Argument: The teleological argument for the existence of God takes as its starting point the purposive (teleological) character of the universe. The argument is often termed “the argument from design.”
  - a. *Specified complexity* confers design.
  - b. Design implies an intelligent designer.
  - c. The universe exhibits specified complexity.
  - d. Therefore, the universe exhibits design.
  - e. Therefore, the universe has been designed by an intelligent designer.
  - f. We call the intelligent designer of the universe God.
4. The Moral Argument: The moral argument takes as its starting point the existence of moral values and duties and argues for the existence of God as the only possible source for this shared morality.
  - a. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
  - b. Objective moral values and duties exist.
  - c. Therefore, God exists.
5. The Spiritual Longing Argument:
  - a. Every natural, innate desire in us corresponds to some real object that can satisfy that desire.
    - i. C.S. Lewis: “A man’s physical hunger does not prove that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man’s hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called “falling in love” occurred in a sexless world.”
  - b. But there exists in us a desire which nothing in time, nothing on earth, no creature can satisfy.

- i. Augustine: You have made us for you, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you.
    - ii. Pascal: There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.
    - iii. N.T. Wright illustrates this well: There are “echoes of Eden” that live on in each one of us. We deeply long for things which are ultimately unattainable in this world. He lists four such things: *justice*, *spirituality*, *community*, and *beauty*. These exist as pointers to a reality that we were ultimately made for. Naturalism cannot account for these super-physical longings in the human heart.
  - c. Therefore, there must exist something more than time, earth and creatures, which can satisfy that desire.
    - i. Pascal again: What else does this longing and helplessness proclaim, but that there was once in each person a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? We try to fill this in vain with everything around us, seeking in things that are not there the help we cannot find in those that are there. Yet nobody can change things, because this infinite abyss can only be filled with something that is infinite and unchanging—in other words, by God himself. God alone is our true good.
    - ii. Ecc. 3:11 – He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
- 6. You may want to watch the following short videos for a more complete treatment of these arguments:
  - a. Ontological argument: [youtube.com/watch?v=RQPRqHZRP68](https://youtube.com/watch?v=RQPRqHZRP68)
  - b. Cosmological argument: [youtube.com/watch?v=6CuIBuMCLg0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=6CuIBuMCLg0)
  - c. Teleological argument: [youtube.com/watch?v=UplilaC4kRA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=UplilaC4kRA)
  - a. Moral argument: [youtube.com/watch?v=OxiAikEk2vU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=OxiAikEk2vU)
  - d. You may also find a summary of some of these arguments here: [peterkreeft.com/featured-writing](https://peterkreeft.com/featured-writing)
- 7. Questions:
  - a. Which of these arguments do you find the most satisfying? Why?
  - b. How would you express any of these arguments in a way that the average skeptic would understand?
  - c. What further questions do you have about any of these arguments?

## Session 4: Did the resurrection happen?

There are typically two issues that skeptics have with Jesus. These two issues happen to be at the absolute center of our faith: the divinity of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

1. Was Jesus divine? This is a point that must be finally accepted on faith – but that doesn't mean that we can't provide some sort of justification for this belief.
  - a. What did Jesus say about himself?
    - i. Read Mark 14:60-64 and note Jesus' claims about himself at his trial.
    - ii. Jesus claims equality with the Father. (John 5:17-18; 10:30-33; 14:8-10)
    - iii. Jesus accepted the worship of men. (Matthew 14:33; John 9:35-38; 20:27-28)
    - iv. The "I Am" statements of John's Gospel. (There are at least 12, but notice especially 6:20; 8:58; and 18:5)
    - v. Jesus also claims he is the fulfillment of Scripture (Matthew 5:17; John 5:45-46), is able to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12), has unique authority (Matthew 7:28-29; 28:18), is the judge of the world (Matt 7:21-23; 25:31-32; John 5:22), has the power to raise the dead (John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25), and saves from sins (John 8:24; 10:9; 12:47; 14:6).
  - b. What did the earliest Christians say about Jesus?
    - i. There are many passages like Philippians 2, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1, and John 1 make it explicitly clear that Jesus was God in the flesh.
    - ii. The early confession that Jesus is Lord in the mouths of disciples in Acts and in the mouth of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 10 must be regarded as astounding for people raised in Jewish monotheism.
    - iii. As one further example, the first Gospel written was likely Mark. In the first words of this Gospel (Mark 1:1-3), he quotes Isaiah 40 and applies it to Jesus even though the context of this Old Testament passage is clearly about Yahweh.
    - iv. NT does resolve the mystery of the incarnation, but it also does not shy away or apologize for that mystery.
  - c. Even non-Christians recognized that Jesus was worshipped by early Christians. Pliny the Younger was a Roman magistrate and not a believer. He said: They (the Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, *when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god*, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.
  - d. C.S. Lewis introduced a famous "trilemma" that still makes a powerful point today. Because of the things that the New Testament clearly records, Jesus must be regarded as either a liar, a lunatic, or in fact the Lord. There are really no other alternatives.
2. Did Jesus raise from the dead? Four things to keep in mind:
  - a. The testimony of the witnesses
    - i. The resurrection is testified by no less than five independent sources.
    - ii. Those sources are very early (1 Cor. 15 probably dates from as early as 10 years after Jesus). There are simply no known, non-resurrection sources from the first century.
    - iii. Those sources are uniform.
    - iv. Those sources contain embarrassing and even incriminating evidence. Can you think of some of this embarrassing evidence?
    - v. Those sources contain surprising detail. Can you think of any examples? Read John 20.
  - b. The testimony of the empty tomb
  - c. The testimony of the transformation in the disciples including Paul
  - d. The testimony of the Church – The continued existence of the Church today makes no sense without the resurrection.
3. So what? Arguing for the divinity and the resurrection of Jesus is important. But what difference do these two doctrines make? Spend time reflecting on the important consequences of these two beliefs.



## Session 5: Why do I suffer?

“If God is, why is there evil? But if God is not, why is there good?” -Augustine

1. First, some key terms:
  - a. Suffering: Amoral discomfort and pain experienced in sickness, injury, natural calamities (tornados, earthquakes, etc.), or loss.
  - b. Evil: Moral pain experienced through violence, injustice, indifference, hostility, etc.
  - c. Anguish: Mental or spiritual pain experienced through longing or unrealized hopes and expectations. (Anguish is what separates the pain from childbirth from the pain of cancer.)
2. The problem: Suffering, evil, and anguish exist. A powerful and loving God is also said to exist. Either this God is not powerful or He is not loving.
3. Some initial responses:
  - a. We should admit that we are not in a position to say that it's improbable that God lacks good reasons for permitting the suffering in the world. In other words, we don't have a "God's-eye" perspective on suffering. We aren't really in a position to fully comprehend the meaning or purpose of suffering.
  - b. Relative to the full scope of the evidence, God's existence is probable. Suffering does not render null the arguments previously made for God's existence and the resurrection.
  - c. Choosing to stop believing in God because of suffering doesn't really satisfy the problem. The suffering will still exist even if you choose to stop believing in God. All that disbelief does is render the suffering pointless. Cancer may be unfortunate, but it cannot be pronounced "bad" in any final, moral way without the existence of God. Cancer is simply something that happens in this world.
  - d. Christianity entails doctrines that increase the probability of the coexistence of God and suffering. Christianity doesn't hide from suffering. It addresses it directly. Can you list what some of these key Christian beliefs might be?
4. Two prominent "theodicies" - (An answer to the problem of evil that attempts to "justify the ways of God to man" by explaining God's reasons for allowing evil.)
  - a. The free will theodicy. Evil is the result of man's free will choice against the good. A world of evil would be better than a world that did not include significantly free creatures.
  - b. The "soul-making" theodicy. God uses suffering, evil, and anguish for our good and for the good of His purposes.
    - i. Consider Scripture: Romans 5:3-4; 8:18-24a, 28-29; 1 Peter 4:12-13; James 1:2-4, 12; Hebrews 12:7-11; John 15:2
    - ii. Consider experience: Why are those who suffer so often the most joyous while those who have not suffered are often the most miserable?
  - c. Which one of these theodicies makes sense to you? What additional questions do you have?
5. One final word: We don't suffer as philosophers. For most people going through pain and suffering, it is an emotional problem not an intellectual one. The Christian trying to help someone struggling with pain should avoid easy clichés and instead learn to listen and pray. What other wisdom do we need to hear when it comes to ministering to those who are hurting and feel betrayed by God?

## Session 6: Does religion poison everything?

“Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience.” -Christopher Hitchens in *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*

This quote is a great representation of a currently popular series of accusations made towards religion and faith in general – the accusation is that religion is a destructive force in the world – a destructive force that modern people would do well to outgrow and leave behind.

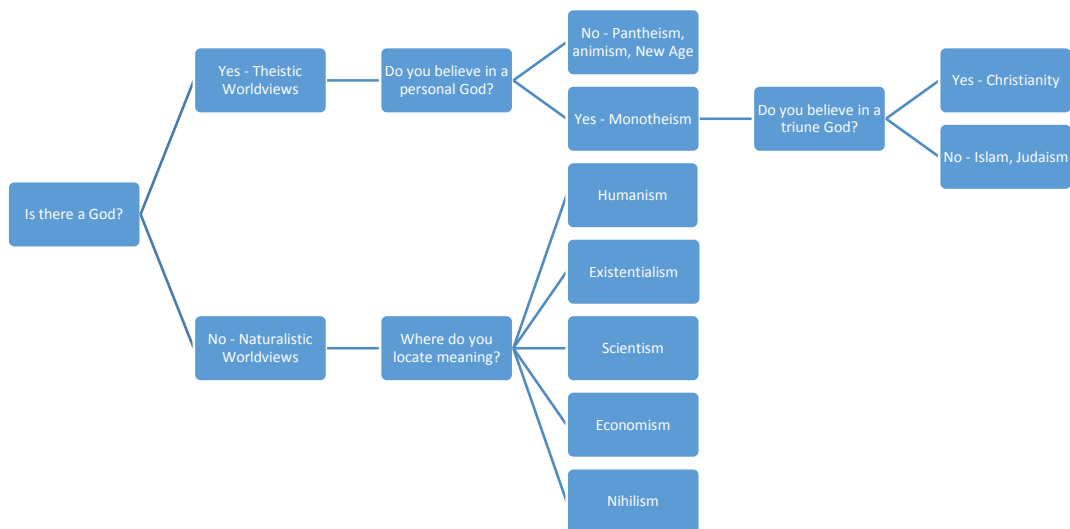
1. Skeptics will often use Scripture and history to their advantage here.
  - a. The Bible, they say, is full of bloodshed, violence, genocide – and often this is encouraged and perpetrated by God Himself. Of course the ultimate example of the bloodthirstiness of God is Hell itself.
  - b. And history is full of war, violence, and oppression committed in the name of God. Everything from the Crusades to the slave trade to the actions of modern terrorists is trotted out as evidence that religion is barbaric and dangerous to progress and civilization.
2. What about Scripture? We would be wise to acknowledge that there are in fact difficult passages of scripture. Anyone who has read Scripture “from cover to cover” has encountered strange, difficult to understand passages. But are these passages a justification for rejecting all of Scripture? Can you think of any such passages?
  - a. Many of the difficult passages of Scripture could find a resolution with good hermeneutics (the discipline of proper interpretation):
    - i. Is the supposed immorality of the passage described or prescribed? Scripture reveals the whole spectrum of human sin in all of its grossness. But we should not assume that simply because it is in scripture that it is endorsed by God.
    - ii. Does the historical background provide any help in understanding the passage? The fact is that the Bible was written many thousands of years ago in a culture very different than our own. It is simply illegitimate to impose contemporary cultural norms on an ancient text (see the example of Deut. 22:28-29 and 2 Samuel 13:1-20).
    - iii. It may be warranted in allowing some poetic license with certain texts. This is especially true of the “imprecatory” (cursing) psalms.
    - iv. There is a long history among Christians of interpreting all of the scripture through the lens of Jesus. So we should always interpret difficult passages in light of the revelation of the Gospel in Jesus. In other words, always start with Jesus.
  - b. It is unjustified to reject all biblical morality because of a handful of difficult passages.
    - i. Skeptics say that the Bible is misogynistic. But how does Scripture actually promote the dignity and worth of women especially in light of the prevailing ancient culture?
    - ii. Skeptics say that the Bible is racist. But how does Scripture actually promote equality among the races?
    - iii. Skeptics say that the Bible teaches violence. But how does Scripture actually promote peace and reconciliation?
  - c. One has to wonder what skeptics would base their moral outrage upon. The fact is that when skeptics rail against the supposed “immorality” of Scripture they are actually assuming the morals of Scripture often without even realizing it.
3. What about Hell? How would you talk to a skeptic who is struggling with belief in God because of the existence of Hell?
  - a. Consider the fact that we are all indignant when evil and injustice goes unpunished in this world.
  - b. Consider the fact that the gospel says that we all are evil sinners. In comparison to the holiness of God, we are all worthy of judgment.
  - c. Consider the fact that God is perfect in holiness. To ignore the existence of brokenness and sin would require Him to deny His character. To ignore the existence of brokenness and sin would also require Him to abandon His love for what He has made.

- d. Consider the fact that Hell is ultimately our choice. Hell is God finally giving us over to our desire to be free of Him. As C.S. Lewis observed, Hell is locked from the inside.
  - e. Consider finally the fact that the true scandal of the Gospel is *heaven* and not *hell*. While we believe that Hell is an unfortunate reality for those who have rejected God, the gospel tells us that even though we all deserve Hell we have been offered Heaven instead. Any apologetic discussion that gets focused on Hell without a mention of Heaven is not being fair to the gospel.
4. What about history? Is history full of violence and oppression committed by religious people?
- a. Is it true that some violence has been committed in the name of Christ? Yes. Unfortunately it is true. But it is a hasty generalization to assume that because some violence has been committed in the name of Christ; Christian belief is therefore violent.
  - b. This argument ignores the complicated causes of much of the violence that is produced in the world. For instance, to simply say "Islam caused September 11" is lazy reasoning and ignores the fact that real causation is often very complicated.
  - c. This argument obscures or totally ignores the evil that has been perpetrated by secularists. The fact is that tens of millions of people have died within the last 100 years mostly at the hands of leaders who were avowed atheists or statist.
  - d. This argument also ignores or dismisses the good that has been done by the Church through the centuries. See the book by Alvin Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, for a thorough treatment of this topic. The fact is that Christianity has had a positive transformative impact on every culture where it has taken root.

## Session 7: What is a worldview?

One way to approach apologetics is by offering evidences to support Christian belief. Another way to approach it is to take a worldview approach. A worldview approach to apologetics is more like the swapping of stories than presenting an argument. In worldview apologetics, we help the skeptic understand the implications of the worldview that they are living out as we also hopefully get to show them how the story of the gospel better accounts for what we experience in our lives.

1. A definition: A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.
2. The function of worldview...
  - a. Like contact lenses. My worldview causes me to see and interpret my world in a particular way – oftentimes unconsciously. It is only when my prescription causes me trouble that I become aware of the deficiencies of my worldview. Worldview causes me to see everything from history, other people, creation, death, beauty, etc. in a particular way. See the attached chart summarizing how the Christian worldview sees these particular things.
  - b. Like a map. My worldview helps me to make sense of the world around me and also provides directions forward. A worldview provides the basis for my values and priorities. It also helps me to adjust to the new or unexpected.
3. What are the questions that worldview answers? In general, people answer some of life’s most important questions with their worldview.
  - a. Who am I?
  - b. Do I have a purpose?
  - c. What is broken with this world and what is the solution?
  - d. Where am I going?
4. Generally speaking there are three major worldviews:
  - a. Theism – The belief in one, personal God.
  - b. Pantheism – The belief that all is God.
  - c. Naturalism – The belief that the Universe is God. (Often mistakenly called “Atheism” but atheism doesn’t really exist because everyone worships some god.)



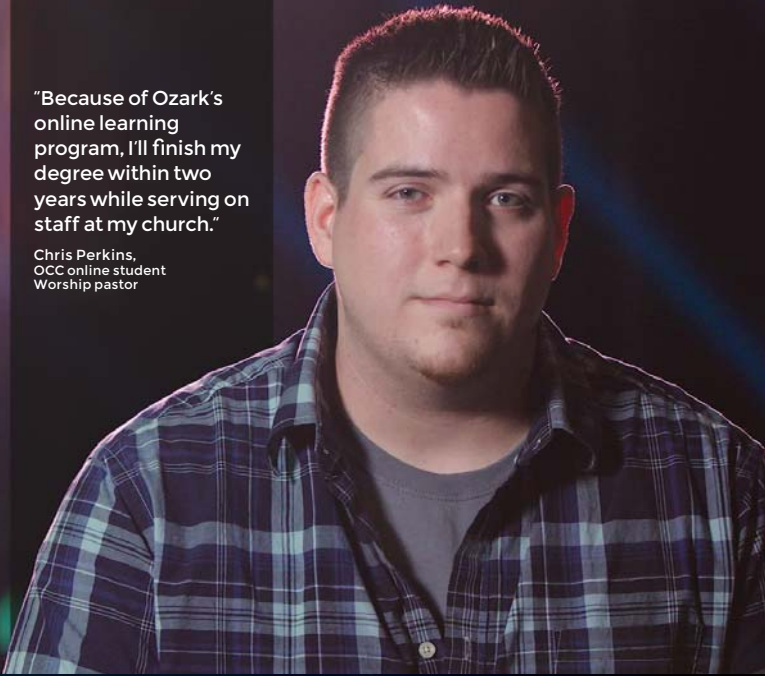
5. Definitions:
  - a. Humanism – Meaning is found in human progress and civilization.
  - b. Existentialism – Meaning is found in authentic experiences and the choices that I make.
  - c. Economism – Meaning is found in the accumulation of wealth and status.
  - d. Scientism – Meaning is found in scientific pursuits or technology aimed at promoting civilization.
  - e. Nihilism – Meaning is a lie that we tell ourselves. There is no ultimate meaning to be found. This is the worldview of Walter White and the author of Ecclesiastes.
6. The three essential commitments of a Christian worldview:
  - a. We believe the only God created this world good and humankind in His own image.
  - b. We believe that the world (and humankind) is fallen and subject to evil.
  - c. We believe that God has personally redeemed the world through the willful sacrifice and resurrection of His divine Son, Jesus Christ.
  - d. What are some of the *implications* of these worldview commitments? What does/should this mean for our lives?
7. Why does worldview matter?
  - a. It matters for discipleship. Do a survey of the book of James and note how frequently James talks about being consistent in our faith. James is not concerned just that we believe certain things but that we actually live out those truths with our lives. This is a dominant theme in the New Testament. There should be a consistency between what we believe and how we live. It is important to talk about worldview so that we can evaluate our own worldview. Are we being consistent and intentional *or* have we actually smuggled in elements of other worldviews into our faith?
  - b. It matters for evangelism and apologetics. We can train ourselves to recognize the worldviews being lived out by those around us. We can learn to see how different worldviews are in conflict with each other in our culture. This awareness will allow us to not just diagnose the worldviews of others, but it will also allow us to have fruitful conversations that get to the heart of belief. We can help others to see the worldviews they are living and how the gospel is a much more satisfactory story.
8. Questions:
  - a. Where do you see evidence of different worldviews in our culture today? How are these being lived out?
  - b. To what extent are other, non-Christian worldviews being smuggled into the Church?
  - c. What are some constructive ways that you can go about having a worldview type of conversation with someone who is not a believer?

Worldview Categories	Christian Theism
<b>God/Prime Reality</b>	God is infinite and personal, rational, creator, transcendent, immanent, sovereign, and good. Further, Christians believe that God exists in Trinity.
<b>Cosmos</b>	Created out of nothing ( <i>ex nihilo</i> ) with uniform natural laws in an open system. Therefore the universe is rational, but miracles remain possible. Further, Christians believe that the universe is fallen and in need of redemption.
<b>Humans</b>	All are created in God's image ( <i>imago dei</i> ) and therefore possessing rationality, personality, morality, and creativity. Originally good, now fallen, but capable of restoration.
<b>Knowledge/Revelation</b>	It is possible to know about the world because God has given us this capacity. Further, God has revealed himself in both general and special revelation and supremely in His Son.
<b>Ethics</b>	There are objective moral standards based on the character of God and revealed in his word.
<b>Death</b>	Death is the gateway to either eternal life or eternal separation from God as determined by one's relationship with Christ. Individuality is retained after death, and eventually our bodies will even be restored after death.
<b>History</b>	Linear and guided by God's supernatural providence and intervention. History has been forever altered by God in Jesus Christ, and we look forward to its final resolution.
<b>Beauty</b>	God has endowed His creation with rich and diverse beauty and has given man the ability to both appreciate and create beauty to the glory of God. Art mirrors and transcends earthly beauty.



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