

*Apologetics has two aspects:*

- Communication
- Defence

## Persuasion Evangelism - Apologetics

Tom Price

Email: tom.price@gmail.com

### 1. What is persuasive evangelism/apologetics?

1 Peter 3:15

- This is for everyone (not just a special few)
- Set apart Christ as Lord
- Be prepared to give a reason for the hope
- An apologia (reasoned defence)

2 Corinthians 10:5

- Divine power in weapons God gives Paul
- Ideas, concepts, thoughts
- Demolish arguments and pretensions
- A spiritual activity

#### What is apologetics?

'a reasonable case'

Apologetics is a compassionate branch of Christian theology that seeks to:

- Engage with objections and questions
- Understand and relate to contemporary culture
- Think carefully and critically
- Proclaim biblical truth – not to be separated from proclamation
- Subvert or deconstruct, ideas or worldviews hostile to the gospel

### 2. Why does it matter?

"Christians have tended to despise the concept of philosophy. This has been one of the weaknesses of evangelical, orthodox Christianity -- we have been proud in despising philosophy, and we have been exceedingly proud in despising the intellect. Our theological seminaries hardly ever relate their theology to philosophy, and specifically to the current philosophy. Thus, students go out from the theological seminaries not knowing how to relate Christianity to the surrounding world-view. It is not that they do not know the answers. My observation is that most students graduating from our theological seminaries do not know the questions."

(Francis A. Schaeffer)

#### Why do persuasive apologetics?

- God commands us to do it (1 Peter 3:15)
- Jesus did apologetics (Luke 10:25-37; Matt 27)
- Paul and Peter did apologetics (Acts 17)
- Unbelievers have questions - We have good answers – Christian belief is TRUE
- We risk manipulating people without objective reasons for belief
- Keeps us relevant – engaging with the questions that people have
- The early church did apologetics
- We have questions – What if I am just imagining all this?
- It's great to have some answers to your questions – good to know that its true & strengthens your faith and encourages us to do evangelism
- It encourages a whole of life view of worship and supports discipleship (Romans 12:1-2 – Renewing the mind; all of life under the authority of Jesus)
- As Moreland points out, if we want to meaningfully engage with culture then we need recover the Christian mind
- It's incredibly fruitful and fun – Courses that are making inroads are apologetics courses (Alpha, CE, etc.). Events that engage with peoples questions and culture are the best attended.

### 3. How do we do it?How do we do apologetics? How do we do persuasive evangelism?

This concerns three areas.

- Knowledge – The content of what you say and do
- Character – How you act and how you express love through what you say and do
- Tactics – How you say it, when you say it, when you don't say it

If we are to be effective in evangelism, or effective in life, then we need all three: Knowledge, Character and Tactics. We need the right knowledge, the right character and the right tactics to do persuasive evangelism

So the first question is 'who' are we trying to persuade or reach out to?

You see, it all depends on who we are reaching out to.

Sceptical Sarah (not interested)	Open Ozzy (have questions)	Wondering Wolfgang (no questions)	Near Naomi (ready to respond)
Illuminate (asking questions)	Invigorate (give reasons)	Illustrate (proclaim)	Invite (disciple)

It's all part of the apologetics/evangelism spectrum

Now, we'll consider the remaining three kinds of people. Those who are open with no question, those who have questions and those who are sceptical. Often this will mean carefully blending together:

- Explaining the bible
- Thinking critically, carefully
- Engaging with culture

#### Invite (disciple)

- Give her time
- Perhaps offer to pray with her
- Invite her to cell group, homegroup, church, where she can experience Christian fellowship
- Ask her whether anything is stopping her and help her to resolve it, or encourage her to put it aside for now
- Make sure that she knows that being a Christian isn't about claiming that you know everything, just that you know who Jesus is

#### Illustrate (persuasive proclamation)

- Know what the gospel message is (read 1 Cor 15:1-4)
- Be down to earth
- Don't separate persuasion from proclamation
- Explain how the gospel affects you personally

#### Invigorate (persuade)

- Find the questions and issues under the surface that often drive the questions
- Try to share facts rather than feelings
- Avoid arguing, discuss instead
- Discuss Jesus as a person in history
- Don't preach, be sensitive
- Express your enjoyment
- Ask lots of questions

#### Illuminate (subvert + positive deconstruction)

- Be a cinema goer
- Expect films, music and TV to communicate questions
- Think while you watch: what deeper questions are being asked by this (visit [www.culturewatch.org](http://www.culturewatch.org) for help)
- Ask
- What are your biggest questions?
- Where do you think our sense of right and wrong comes from?
- Did you have a religious upbringing?
- Identify the worldview
- Analyse the worldview
- Affirm the truth
- Discover the error
- Lovingly subvert the worldview
- Find the symbols of authority and raise questions about them
- Using questions - help people understand what they believe more clearly, be like Detective Columbo
- Present reflections and stories from film, art, music, culture, everyday life that could be bridges for the gospel later on

#### Last word...

Peter May writes, 'The New Testament does not distinguish between apologetics and evangelism as though they were different activities. Little enough is said about "the evangelist", but not a mention is made of "the apologist"! They had one approach in evangelism and its central feature was two-way dialogue. They listened seriously to what people were saying. They engaged with the cultural world of their hearers. They tried to understand their difficulties. Tuning in and finding their cultural and intellectual level, they set out to demolish opposing arguments before presenting the gospel in a convincing way, in terms their hearers could understand. The account of Paul at Athens is described in detail as the classic example for us to follow (Acts 17:22-31). Paul summed up their approach to the Corinthians, "Knowing what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others." (2 Cor 5:11). Unargued evangelism had no place on their agenda. Persuasive evangelism is the only example they have set us.'

#### Further reading and study

Pollard, Nick. *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (IVP, 2000)  
 Copan, Paul. *True for You But Not True for Me, That's Just Your Interpretation, When God Goes To Starbucks*  
 Orr-Ewing, Amy. *But Is It Real? Why Trust The Bible?*  
 Craig, William Lane & Moreland, J.P. *To Everyone An Answer* (Intervarsity, 2004)  
 UCCF's apologetics website ([bethinking.org](http://bethinking.org))

#### Apologetics Organisations

Damaris Trust, Southampton ([damaris.org](http://damaris.org), [culturewatch.org](http://culturewatch.org))  
 Zach Trust, Oxford ([www.zachtrust.org](http://www.zachtrust.org))  
 Oxford Centre For Christian Apologetics ([www.theocca.org](http://www.theocca.org))  
 L'abri ([www.labri.org](http://www.labri.org))