

# Christian Apologetics

## Week three

### Methodological apologetics

I want to open with, as much as I have thought about Reasonable Faith and looked back on the years I have been walking with our Lord, I cannot in all my imagination believe that any of my walk with our Lord has been without reason. I came to God in my mid-thirties, having grown up in a Presbyterian church in the fifties and early sixties. Like most of us, I wondered why God never called me for advice, I had a lot of good ideas, but I went into the Air Force and never denied God, Jesus, or the Holy Ghost, but I wasn't walking in them.

When my daughter was born, my second child, I was thirty-eight; I had my son at twenty-two from a previous marriage just out of high school. It would be seeing my daughter born that I left the hospital that day, and with tears in my eyes, I asked God to make me the best father I could be for my daughter. He began His work, it took about four years, but one day I was feeding oats to our horses, standing in the middle of fifteen of them, when two began to fight. Hooves were flying, and biting was going on; I threw up my hands and swore, and all the horses bolted and ran off. I realized then it had been a long time since I lost control of my temper and swore. I prayed for forgiveness that day and realized God was doing His work in me. I then knew I had reason to believe. Psalm 37:4; Delight yourself also in the LORD, "And He shall give you the desires of your heart." NKJV.

### Classical, Evidential, Cumulative Case, Presuppositional, Slide 5

**Classical – God exists; God raised Jesus from the dead. A two-step process, we look to God and Jesus. Criticisms – Man cannot rationally know God, the theistic proofs are unnecessary, the arguments are not persuasive. Slide 7**

As God has distributed much faith to a hungry world, many still refute the gospel accounts and seek to diminish the truth of Jesus, who He was and remains to be. The sentence, man cannot rationally know God seems a fool-headed statement for those who walk in the Spirit of God. In a conversation with one of our friends, we were discussing, can we have faith without reason? This person replied yes, "I believe the sun is going to come up tomorrow," I asked at this point do you believe because of experience, or did you believe because you always see it come up? What if, as a child, one day, the sky was dark and cloudy, and you saw no sun? Would you think the sun had failed? And so, which comes first, the evidence of things around us or faith? How often do we love someone and put faith in them without knowing them? Not too often in love or faith.

So, when it comes to faith, which He has blessed me with, I know with all my heart that God exists, that He raised Jesus, and that the Holy Spirit resides within me. The only thing I have any question about is, why me, Lord?

Of course, these are not the apologist examples we find every day or read of in our books, but a person's conversion and testimony are authentic experiences, and to try to rob that from one is to think yourself higher than God. That can never be. And so, if we had only that to debate over, we could all walk away and say you believe what you believe, and I will do the same. Game over. But that is not enough; Paul left for dead outside of the city Acts 14:19; "Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead." NKJV. What did Paul do? He got up, returned to the city, and left the next day. How can we ever be ashamed of the gospel? We have much work ahead of us.

**Evidential - A one-step process in which we do not argue that God exists, just that Jesus was raised from the dead. The same criticism remains. Man cannot rationally know God, the resurrection cases fail if God's existence is not established, and the arguments are not persuasive. Slide 8,** This process seeks to establish the facts in both a historical manner, records from within the Bible, and records of those outside the Bible. Many of those close to receiving and understanding the Scripture will find these proofs adequate; however, those fighting against the work and conviction of the Spirit will find it simple to dismiss all the facts presented for no good reason. Many disbelievers today do not want to believe because they feel they have to give up something, such as believed freedoms, not realizing their slavery to sin. How appropriate the verse, 2 Corinthians 3:17; Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. NKJV.

One and perhaps the more difficult struggle for us today in the evidentiary process is the denial of the Bible itself; we are witnessing a time when people genuinely believe the Bible is a good book but not absolute, that Jesus may have been a real man but not Godman or the Son of God. A universalism and achieving oneness with such seems attractive to many. When questioned about how oneness with the universe works, those who claim it are pushed to give a decent answer but formulate none.

Although evidential apologetics renders much factual historical support, it is not a problem for people to deny it. The drive to dissolve the truth of the Bible began in Jesus' time, but it has gained a level of denial today. I believe it to be in more significant percentages than ever before. When we review the Pew Reports and others, we find a considerable decline in faith; "The latest Pew Research Center survey of the religious composition of the United States finds the religiously unaffiliated share of the public is six percentage points higher than it was five years ago and 10 points higher than a decade ago." December 14, 2021. [Article](#) concerns grow even more in 2022, as seen from a religious/political view. This loss of faith is a strange and contorted understanding, but we can look at the number of churches afraid to speak out about political and liberal agendas. There has never been one person born in America who has not benefited from our nation's being established on a Judeo/Christian ethic. Evidence has confirmed the truth and strength of our religious blessings, making our country the most vigorous, productive, and giving people ever. [Article](#)

When exercising evidential theology, is it improper to view it in past and present times? One should consider how the evidence of who we once were and who we are today as a Christian nation shows a massive breakdown in our faith in our Lord. For our government leaders to no longer require the oath of testimony before house or senate hearings demonstrates a significant shift in our nation's religious history, along with disrespect for our God.

Evidence demonstrates changes that affect our religious convictions; we see the persecution of the early church was even worse then than it is now. While it seems so prevalent in modern times, the fact that it was a theocracy in the ancient world shows that politics played a prominent role in making laws and persecuting those who disagreed. Religious leaders who instilled hatred, fear, and political posturing demonstrate a power battle for control, not just physically over the people but also the need to control religious beliefs and practices. Jesus was a threat; for many, He still is today. So we can look back through the theological changes that have occurred through the evidence of history as to where our faith has come from and where it is today. Through this, we can better understand how our faith changes through outside forces. We have witnessed God's hand on our nation; I believe for those who have carried on the faith, this is one of the most vital and potent truths we have to argue for God.

**The cumulative case for apologetics.** We are looking at the separation between classical and cumulative apologetics; It would be difficult not to define this as a systematic study. We gather and make many more notes than we do with quick research, say of the Holy Spirit, Pneumatology. When we seek to know the basics of how the Spirit works in our lives, we might miss much about His attributes and character if we study only those verses that look merely for the title of the Holy Spirit, such as using only a concordance. I have repeatedly reminded our congregation to dig further than a concordance, look for themes, situations, etc., to search out all available on any specific topic. 'Holy Spirit' shows up nine times in Strong's Concordance, 'Spirit,' five hundred times, yet there are still places where the Spirit is not directly named but is present. As we read Ester, we do not find any of the members of the Godhead mentioned, yet everything in the epic points to God and His people; we must believe the Holy Spirit was at work.

In the opening of this lesson, Professor Hunter goes back to addressing students wanting to get to the fun stuff, but as building a house, we must begin with the foundation. How do we prepare? Professor Hunter uses the image of a mosaic, we grab pieces here and there to build our defense, but then we find the "Leaky Bucket" problem. We are on a good path if we are vigilant about the building and selective in the pieces we choose and how to fit them in. However, I have found that many people establish their theology in parts, past and present, and fall short of explaining their reasoning. We must always consider context; whether you call it rational or reason, the process must be in context. Far too many like to pull out snippets to make the verse say something doesn't, and this is a dangerous road. We must constantly teach a forty-verse study, twenty before and twenty after the verse.

At this point, we are discussing much more than a casual discussion amongst believers; we are building a defense for why we believe as we do. Most congregations will have many who know the Scripture and cite many verses, but can they offer a good synopsis for their understanding and use proper context? When we read Romans 13:1-4, we find how we are not to resist the government, basically understanding whether good or bad, we have a calling to abide by their rules or bring punishment upon ourselves. I have listened to many instruct and preach this, no matter what, do as the government says, for they are appointed by God. 13:2; whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God. Is this what Peter did when imprisoned for going out and preaching again? And when challenged about the issue, he said, in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." However, there is a quantifier in verse 13:5; "Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake." So there is a reason we respect the government as we do so that it will be good with our conscience. In Peter's case, he knew his conscience would plague him if he surrendered to the demand of the leaders.

The apologist must be a bit more defined than most Christians. The apologist doesn't necessarily run out and into the battle, which would be prideful, but instead is capable and ready to offer a defense against those who seek to twist the Scripture and cause confusion amongst believers and those yet to be believers.

A professor once told us in a crisis class that this would be the best opportunity to proselytize when a person is in the hospital and their attitude is down. I thought about that and prayed over it, and disagreed. I was serving as a volunteer chaplain at a local hospital, and it dawned on me, no, it is not; the best time to proselytize is when the Holy Spirit moves you to do so. The appropriate time to convert is when the Spirit has opened the door, and the person you are working with is open to hearing. I discovered that over the years I served, people were always receptive when I waited on the Holy Spirit; on my own accord, things seemed never to come out the way I thought they would. However, when I surrendered, I found words and verses coming out of my mouth as though I was a puppet; the patients' reaction was always good. So this has been the same attitude I have learned to use when I address others. Surrendering is challenging but very rewarding.

**Presuppositional apologetics, Slide 10, One must accept the axioms that God exists and has spoken through Scripture to make sense of the world. Presuppositional apologists often point out that when an unbeliever argues against Christian theism, he uses Christian theistic principles to make his case. Sometimes the apologist will compare presuppositions with the unbeliever.**

Presupposing those we are addressing have a fair amount of Biblical knowledge, and this view offers some challenges. We must establish a knowledge base for the conversation or debate to begin. If the opponent and I use the term loosely only as we are looking from possibly two perspectives, we may face closed doors, those who are afraid to cross the threshold of a church. Foundation, from where do we enter into the conversation, Slide 10. "Sometimes the apologist will compare presuppositions with the unbeliever." Discovery seems most appropriate in

forming a more constructive discussion when we better understand how and why one may see things differently; it helps us understand their side of the debate. Even if one walks away from a discussion claiming faith is all we need, a fideism belief, have they indeed not used reasoning? Can anyone honestly say that faith is all that is necessary? The Scripture is far too full of commands, challenges, and callings that say we need more to accompany our faith. There must be action with confidence.

**Reformed Epistemology**, using Romans chapter 1:20, it is assumed that every man is without excuse for not knowing or honoring God. I believe this fact is proven throughout all societies on the face of the earth. Even those who deny God must acknowledge a thing to deny it; if not, why even talk about it? If I were to say that just a hundred yards off of Cape Hope, you can wade in a section of the ocean, and the water temperature is 86 degrees. That being the only time anyone ever heard of such a crazy comment, it would be challenging to demonstrate what I claim. Who then would argue in support of my craziness? The story would most likely end here at this place. However, even those who deny God remain with an intuitive understanding that God does exist.

In an article in Discover Magazine in October 2018, the writer states, "The Human Brain Evolved to Believe in Gods." I disagree; according to Romans chapter one, we are intuitively wired and held accountable to think of a higher power than that of ourselves. We have an intuitive and instinctive knowledge of right and wrong and self-preservation. Born sinful, this is an elementary illustration; the child with chocolate all over his face and hands and one hand still in the cookie jar claims no when asked if he was taking a cookie. We see here both actions, intuitively, that it was wrong to take and instinctively to prevent punishment. An excellent example of this happens between Cain and Able and their offerings to God. Leading up to the death of Able, we find no instruction on how to present the offering, yet both men seemed to understand the first fruits or best of the flock. Cain knew what he did was wrong, and so he tried to hide the body; instinctively, he sought to remove what could have been the death penalty. Cain was not repentant; he was merely remorseful for getting caught.

Back to the child, the question here is often asked, who taught the child to lie? In trying to make excuses and place blame, everyone misses that the child not only knew what he did was wrong, but he also lied, all of this in an innocent rebellion. Jesus cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:43, NKJV. It was not as though the child sat there and gave it great thought, but something told him of right and wrong. If neither mom or dad taught him to do this, then where and how did this young child learn to steal and lie? Intuitive right and wrong, Instinctively self-preservation.

I went through this with my brother. We talked about religion one afternoon, shortly after he finally got a grandson after four granddaughters. We were discussing how we are born sinful, and he said no way, we are not; look at Lincoln, not even a toddler at this point; there is no sin in him; he is innocent and without fault. The following summer, we were all together again, and Lincoln did it; he took a cookie out of the cookie jar without permission. Donny caught him and

took the cookie away, so I asked my brother, did you teach him that? Often, those lived-out examples of human behavior shout out the most substantial evidence we can produce for those attributes that are God-given. My brother understood from that day what I meant when I said we are born in sin. It may be an elementary example, but sometimes people understand these best.

**Atheistic determinism - there is no free will. The universe is a closed system, all things happen due to cause and effect. More data to better draw interest can paint the picture a little better.**

In this situation, it may not be productive to argue against cause and effect, for one could then reasonably counter that we are denying God being the cause of all things. However, when we put this belief into its proper context, we can see and understand how it is being used much better.

First, let's look at the idea that there is no free will. I have heard this point argued in a debate years ago, and I believe it was William Lane Craig who replied to the argument; if this is true, then the one who is seeking to deny free will their thoughts have no meaning or power because there is no difference between academic discussion and flatulence. To debate, it seems reasonable that certain freedoms do exist; if not, then we would have no sensible reason to do so; are we to believe that somewhere out there, a person dropped a rock, which triggered a response that provoked a debate yet in the future? Imagine this for a moment, somewhere in time and space, a rock was dropped, and two unknown people anywhere else in our universe, perhaps who have never met, ended up in this particular debate. How? It very seldom seems challenging to close doors in nonsensical discussions.

Doctrinal differences

Practical differences

Environmental differences

Differences of **intent**

Evangelistic differences