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APOLOGETICS I

A Method of Apologetics

Host: Reid Monaghan

Dates: January 10 – February 14 (6 weeks)



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WELCOME

This class will serve as an introduction to the theological discipline of defending the Christian faith. We will look at a way of life which integrates apologetics with communicating the gospel with those around us. No need to be an expert philosopher or theologian to follow along, but we will all be challenged to think deeply, to care for others, and to Love God with our minds. We will simply be asking God to stretch us and take us deeper in our understanding of His truth so that we might give it away generously with gentleness and respect.

This class has intentionally been segmented into two parts. This class will give us a method of engaging with others, a framework for putting to use knowledge gained in the discipline of Apologetics. Apologetics II will give us the reasons and arguments for our faith that can be put to good use because we spent time building a framework here in Apologetics I.

There will not be any assigned homework, but there will be recommended reading associated with some Sessions that, well, we recommend you read. I have also included a glossary of terms to assist you with some of the lingo we may traverse together. The Book *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* is a resource to help you grow in your effectiveness as an Ambassador for the gospel. We will not be using it as a text book, though I will make reference to it from time to time.

Most importantly, I ask you to offer your heart and mind to our Lord Jesus Christ, that he may equip us for useful service in his Kingdom. The defense and articulation of our faith in our world is a task we do not undertake without his help, so I pray you beg of Him to lead us.

As in all of life, I ask you to pray that Christ might grant us power to bring glory to God as we mature in the faith being equipped to give our lives away.



Reid S. Monaghan
January 10th 2005

SESSION I – AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

SOME FUN QUESTIONS

Could you know anything about God through reason alone if you did not have a Bible? Is there a Knowledge of God that can be arrived at by human reason pondering God's creation apart from the revelation of the Scriptures?

Answering in the NEGATIVE

“What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians”¹ Church Father - Tertullian 200AD

“The God of the Philosophers is not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”² Blaise Pascal

And for the AFFIRMATIVE

“There is, therefore, no reason why another science should not treat of the very same objects, as known by the light of divine revelation, which the philosophical sciences treat of according as they are a knowable by the light of natural reason”³. – Thomas Aquinas

“Good Philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered”⁴ – C.S. Lewis

THE DIFFICULTY AND NECESSITY OF INTER-BELIEF DIALOGUE TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD

- There are a large amount of religions competing for the hearts of people
- There is constant and widespread warfare
- The family unit is suffering in the largest civilized areas
- Christians are a marginal group little or no influence
(This is the culture facing the first century church)

What is necessary in order to talk to someone of another religion, belief, philosophy etc?

- Some common ground of agreement
- Assumption that there are rules of the game – that people can all reason in a similar way
- The assumption that God can and must work in someone's heart to change their beliefs – it is not just a mind game – but this is no excuse for us not to be prepared to talk to them and allow God to use us

SCRIPTURAL ADMONITIONS

1 Peter 3:14-16

Definition Apologia: to give an answer or a defense

This exhortation is given in the context of suffering and resistance. We are to have confidence in the truth of the gospel even in these difficult circumstances. We also should have a certain **confidence** and **readiness** to defend the faith. At the same time we need to respond to people in a certain manner; we should do so with **gentleness** and **respect**. Our ready defense unfolds from our relationship with God and others. The reason we do apologetics is not just to reinforce our own beliefs, although this is important, but for the sake of those who are lost.

Jude 3 – Requires us to stand for the truth and refute falsehood – we must use reasonable arguments and lived out demonstrations of the truth in order to do this.

Philippians 1:7,16 – Paul’s activity included the **defense** and **confirmation** of the gospel. He is in fact in prison because of this.

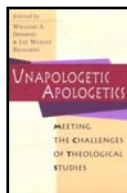
Titus 1:9 – Hold firmly to the message...**Refute** those who oppose it.

Colossian 4:2-6 – The whole atmosphere of our witness is described. It is not simply having a better argument or idea!

*False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the Gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a Reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.*⁵

J Gresham Machen

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?



*To sum up, the task of the apologist is to find counterarguments to the arguments being used to attack the faith...Apologetics is defending the “core” of the Christian Faith.*⁶

WHAT IS THE CORE?

What every Christian, all the time, everywhere have always believed – Vincent of Lérins⁷

Seven essential doctrines

1. God – Our creator who is a being of Tri-unity, the Trinity
2. The deity and humanity of Christ
3. The bodily resurrection
4. Man's fallenness and guilt
5. Salvation by grace through faith by the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ

6. Belief that Jesus is the Messiah.
7. And you have a seventh doctrine that strikes me as a functional necessity, that is the ultimate authority of Scripture without which none of the other truths can be affirmed or asserted with confidence. ⁸

WHY DO APOLOGETICS?

- God commands it – 1 Peter 3:15, Phil 1:7, Jude 3, Titus 1:9
- Reason Demands It – A reasoned faith in which we understand what we believe
- The World Needs It – What will people believe in? Truth!⁹

DOING APOLOGETICS – WE MUST MAINTAIN THE MARRIAGE OF APOLOGETICS AND EVANGELISM

1. The task of witnessing to the gospel requires the witness be prepared.
2. The burden of speaking the gospel to others in a language they understand, thus compelling their interest is the job of the witness.

“Our efforts cannot compel their belief, but we can and must compel their attention” – Thomas Aquinas

3. Our defense involves **explaining** the relevance of Christ to life as well as the **reasonableness** of the gospel.
4. We need to be surgeons addressing that which actually ails them, not an intellectual klutz with a tool shed full of sledge hammers.

The apologist needs to keep two things in focus:

- The **message** and richness of the **gospel**.

The deeper we ourselves go into the gospel, the more effective we will become at communicating it – it is great that you are in a class like this

- The **culture** - the whole world that the unbeliever lives in. The ideas, attitudes, sensibilities etc. that are manifest in people's lives. What are the major barriers and obstacles that people are dealing with?



We have the task of “clearing the bushes” so that people can look clearly at the cross.

APOLOGETIC METHODOLOGIES

Defensive Apologetics (also Negative Apologetics)– Answering specific objections to the faith,

Positive Apologetics – Building a positive deductive/inductive case, for truth, theism
– God’s existence – best explanation of observable world.

Offensive Apologetics – Bringing down central strongholds of unbelief and demonstrating the superiority of the Biblical View.

The need for each approach

KNOWING VS. SHOWING – WILLIAM LANE CRAIG’S DISTINCTION¹⁰

- How we Know Christianity is True – The Self-Attesting Witness of the Spirit, The **Confirming** Role of Evidence
- How we argue for the truth of Christianity – Rational **Argument** and Demonstration, The Christian Faith is not **Irrational**, We **show** how Christianity is true

A SKETCH OF APOLOGETIC METHODOLOGIES

Table 1: Meta-Apologetic Issues¹¹

	CLASSICAL	EVIDENTIAL	REFORMED	FIDEIST
MODE	Proof	Defense	Offense	Persuasion
GROUND	Reason	Fact	Revelation	Faith
FORM	Rational	Empirical	Transcendental	Paradoxical
PRECURSORS	Anselm, Aquinas	Butler, Paley	Calvin, Reid	Luther, Kierkegaard
20TH CENT	CS Lewis, Geisler	JW Montgomery Richard Swinburne	Van Til, Plantinga	Barth, Bloesch
GOD	God exists	God has acted	God has spoken	God loves me
KNOWLEDGE	Internal coherence	External coherence	Scriptural Fidelity	Fidelity to Christ
THEOLOGY	AP as Prolegomena	AP as Polemics	AP as Theology	AP as persuasive Theology
PHILOSOPHY	Uses Phil ideas	Uses Phil Tools	Confronts false Phil	Confronts all Phil

Table 2: Apologetic Issues¹²

	CLASSICAL	EVIDENTIAL	REFORMED	FIDEIST
SCRIPTURE	Is the subject of AP Rationally Verified Authority of God	Source of AP Factually Verified Story about Christ	Standard for AP Self-attesting Authority of God	Story of AP Self attesting story about Christ
RELIGION	Disprove the Worldviews Underlying Religions	Present the unique, factual, and miraculous character of Christian Religion	Presents the antithesis between Christian and Non- Christian principles.	Explain Christian faith is not religion but relationship
GOD	Show that theism is the only or most rational worldview	Use various lines of argument and evidence to build a case for Theism	Show that God’s existence is basic or foundational to all knowledge or proof	Explain that knowing God is a relational matter
EVIL	Deductive Prob Is Theism Inconsistent?	Evidential Prob Is Theism Likely?	Theological Prob Is God Sovereign Over Evil?	Existential Prob Can God be trusted Despite Evil?
MIRACLES	Miracles are Possible if God exists – validate special revelation	Specific Miracles are probable – serve as evidence in Biblical History	Biblical Miracles are Prophetical – miracles are credible to those who accept Biblical authority	Miracles, internal and external are given to those who respond in faith.
JESUS	Alternative Views of Jesus cannot be rationally held	Detail evidence for Jesus’ resurrection, fulfilled prophecies etc.	Jesus’ claim to be God as His self-attesting Word, confirmed by Spirit	Call people to meet God’s Love in Jesus

AN INTEGRATIVE APOLOGETIC APPROACH

- **Truth** – Refuting relativism and skepticism – **Offensive** Apologetics
- **Worldview Apologetics** – which worldview provides the most satisfying explanation of some of the most fundamental questions of life – origin, meaning, morality, and destiny? Engagement in **Offensive** Apologetics and **Inductive Positive** Apologetics
- **Theistic Apologetics** – the existence of an infinite perfect being with certain attributes that created and sustains the universe is more reasonable than naturalism/atheism or pantheism/monism. Engagement in **Offensive** and **Positive Apologetics**.
- **Christian Apologetics** – the God of Reason IS the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who became a human being and walked among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

Positive Apologetics – The Case for Christ – the Historical Jesus is the Christ of Faith.

Defensive Apologetics – Defense of Miracles and authority of the Bible

Dangers of Apologetics - we load up with bullets and feel cocky intellectually. We then can abuse others; that is not the ethos of Jesus. Our posture with any person is to serve them. Help them to hear with a different kind of openness to the message of Jesus. In the world, no one believes that this is our posture. They need to think – Those Christians really just want to serve people.

Remember - **1 Corinthians 8:1** – Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

SOME SUGGESTIONS ¹³

- **Tell the Truth** -Don't **Exaggerate**, say when you don't know
- **Recognize the Mysteries** - Heaven?, **But Stand upon the Certainties**

It's not the things in the Bible I don't understand that trouble me, it's the things that I do understand – Mark Twain

- **Look for Questions Behind the Question**
 - Some are **Smokescreens** to Real Issues (John Jenkins)
 - **Clarify** before Answering anything – Sometimes answer with Just a Question (article)
 - Laser **Surgery**, not Junkyard **Demolition**
- **Don't Force Agreements** – You don't like it, neither do others



"It's their privilege to disagree with me, but I consider it to be my fault if they misunderstand me."¹⁴

- **Don't try to prove yourself at other people's expense**
 - Win **People**, not **Arguments**, this can be tough if God has given you a mind and a competitive spirit – **Humility** in **Sovereign Joy**

- **Be aware that you answer will influence the next question**
 - We want to get to **Jesus** (not just faith, Christianity, or my Church, but Jesus)
- **Use Lots of Stories and Illustrations** – Mine them from God’s **Word, Your Life, Their Life**
- **Remember You are never alone** Let the Holy Spirit **Guide** your **Study** and **Evangelism**

NOTES

¹ Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 7.

² Norman Geisler and Paul Hoffman *Why I am a Christian – Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe* (Grand Rapids: MI, 2001) 81.

³ *Summa Theologica* Ia, I, I, ad 2.

⁴ CS Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, “Learning in War-Time” (1939) p 28.

⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *What is Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 1951) 162

⁶ William Dempski and Jay Wesley Richards, *Unapologetic Apologetics*, Ch 1 The Task of Apologetics (Downers Grove, IL: Intersivity Press, 2001) 42.

⁷ “Vincentian Canon” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingston, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 1443.

⁸ Greg Koukl, *Stand to Reason* Commentary, *Essential Doctrines* – available online http://www.str.org/free/commentaries/theology/ess_doct.htm

⁹ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Chirstian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids:Mi, Baker Book House 1999) 37-41.

¹⁰ See William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith, Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton: IL, Crossway Books, 1984) 31-50.

¹¹ Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr, *Faith Has Its Reasons, An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs: CO, NavPress, 2001) 542,543.

¹² *Ibid.*, 544

¹³ These suggestions follow Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (Downers Grove, IL: Intersivity Press, 1997) 122-129.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 126

SESSION II - EVANGELISM UNDER GIRDED BY APOLOGETICS

EVANGELISM UNDER GIRDED BY APOLOGETICS

Methodology – Engagement with others and Positive Deconstruction

Content and Truth – Apologetics II

The Context Colossians 4:2-6 – Prayer, Artful Preaching, Power of the Spirit, Truth, Experience

EVALUATE YOUR TRAINING

- **Break into groups of 4 or 5 and discuss together your training in evangelism**
 - Training you have received through the local church
 - High School or College Ministries
- **Brainstorm some themes of the gospel** – revolution, liberation, kingdom, suffering, unity, family, adoption, birth, judicial themes, farming, darkness and light, death and life
- **Brainstorm how you can communicate the message of the gospel in terms familiar to today's culture**

Communicate the message of adoption through propitiation in terms familiar to today's culture:

- Wholeness, Family metaphors, Use the stories of Jesus, Write/Tell stories to BE the good news, Finding God IN your questions, Enter through the existential gates
 1. Emotional Pain...why does life hurt
 2. The world is messed up...we know it always needs to be fixed - desire for a better world.
 3. Why do mean people suck?
 4. Loneliness – What Zacharias calls the inner ache of loneliness – we are made for relationships...why?
 5. Nobody is perfect...how do we know? Can people make moral improvements?
 6. Mystical reality...why is man building alters?
 7. Why not ask some of the big ones - Origin, Meaning, Morality, and Destiny.

THE TASK OF EVANGELISM REQUIRES ENGAGING OTHERS

- The **challenge** of reaching the **interested** – 10 min talking to unbelievers led to 10 hours of study¹
- The **CHALLENGE** of reaching the **uninterested**. Reaching the “**happy unbelievers**” as Ravi Zacharias likes to say



- First Principle of Evangelism – It involves talking to the interested and the uninterested about Jesus and his gospel. **Friendship and Initiative**

Read from Pollard Page 21 – How to Loose Friends and Irritate People 2

BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

- Survey Together the Book of Acts

Stephen – The First Martyr



Acts 6, 7

The Apostle Paul



Acts 17 and 22, 23

- **Stephen Acts 6,7 – The Problem of Implausibility – Read Together**
 - What was Stephen's audience? Was it a friendly crowd?
 - The obstacle of **Implausibility – Acts 6:13,14**
 - Law and the Temple to be done away with?
 - It went against the core beliefs of their culture. After all the law of Moses was given by the finger of God...the instructions for the temple were given by God. **God was very specific!!!**
 - The approach Stephen adopts - Acts 7
 - He calls them brothers and fathers, He speaks from a common source of authority, He retells their own story
 - Abraham in Mesopotamia, Joseph in Egypt, Burning Bush in Sinai,

Tabernacle in the Wilderness...He is breaking down the prejudice against "geography"

- What are the beliefs/obstacles that would be keeping them from hearing the gospel?
- Today – **Relativism** about Truth, **Pluralism** in Religion, **Naturalistic** Worldview , An obsession with **novelty**
- **Paul, Acts 17:16-34 – Making Cultural Observations**
 - The Apostle Paul as a Cultural Anthropologist in Athens
 - What is Paul doing in Acts 17:16?
 - He is an active waiter; observing the idols
 - Where did he go?
 - Synagogue and the marketplace – centers of culture – **Universities, the Arts, Media?**
 - What did he do there?
 - He engaged and reasoned with the Jews and the God-fearers (Gentiles, who would go to the Synagogue). He began to engage because he was distressed...SO...he reasoned with them
 - Finally, he engaged the philosophers...Stoics and Epicureans

Paul's Method of Engagement

- **Verse 18** - Paul finds some resistance from the philosophers – babbler = “seed picker” Greek – **σπερμολόγος** sper-mol-og-os
- **Verse 22** - He weaves his message from the observations he made earlier. What were the resources Paul had gleaned?
 - The people were very religious - the city was full of idols.
 - The nature of their religion - idols and temples made by human hands.
 - Dictates the path - they were religious and philosophical.
 - He was very positive about their religious pursuit - he didn't speak from ignorance.
 - He recognized their openness to novelty
 - The topic has emotional intensity for them - what are the things today that people care about.
 - He also notes a point of weakness from which he can depart to the gospel – It provides the point of contact and contrast. **Verse 28 – He quotes their own poets**

- He didn't take on directly the Stoics and Epicureans and all their arguments...He didn't get sidetracked. **There was already disagreement with these two groups – Paul did not want to debate for the sake of debate.**
- **Verse 24,25** - His starting point was creation, not the OT Scripture
- What are the beliefs that need to be challenged? He blew up their categories with a UNIVERSAL deity. He captures their small deities with a large God
- **Paul, Acts 22, 23 - Addressing Hostile Crowds**
 - He addresses them as brothers and fathers
 - He uses Aramaic – spoke their language – The Crossans in the Czech Republic – 2 years language school
 - I am a Jew, I used to be radically against this message
 - He then gives his testimony
 - Why this is crucial?
 - It is our own personal story of conversion...

Note – when Really in Trouble – 22:25 Played the Roman Citizen Card. 23:1, 2 – He gets smacked just for saying he has a good conscience. 23:6 – time to be shrewd and get my butt out of trouble.

THE CONCEPT OF ENGAGEMENT

- **The Ethos of Engagement** – In the early church apostles were charged with **gaining** an audience. We are in a Post-Christendom era; our task is to **regain** an audience with secular people, people of other religions, those who have left “church” etc. So engagement has to be a critical element.

Engagement Involves **Connection** and **Communication**

- **The Holy Spirit is the primary agent, but how can we be used by Him** – What is our role? We have to overcome people's **resistance** to listening to us. This burden has to be laid at our feet. The mission of the **incarnation** should be a model to us - the ultimate in initiation and engagement
- **What are the various ways we bear witness – Actions** – the difference in our lives and **Words** – what we say is the reason for our hope and life

NEGLECTING ENGAGEMENT WITH LOST PEOPLE

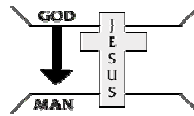
Some Reasons of Neglect

- Lack of understanding the fullness of our role and the gospel to connect
- We Take a Reactionary Stance – Culture War mentality

- Ravi Zacharias – Don't cut off someone's **nose** and then give them a **rose** to smell
 - People think we are closed minded bigots that dislike everyone different from us
 - Does **NOT** mean we cannot stand strong for truth with conviction and preach the gospel with **boldness**. We want to leave others thinking : *That was interesting. I want to find out more. I must talk to him again about this.*³
- Misreading the signs of the times - not realizing the nature of the task in our age, because we haven't recognized the nature of the age. A **reaping** age? A **sowing** age?
 - We do not know anyone but believers

ENGAGING THE UNINTERESTED

- Embrace Your Current Training in Evangelism



- Nick Pollard – Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult, Curtis Chang – Engaging Unbelief⁴
 - Introduce a way to think about talking to uninterested people
 - Enter, Capture, Retell
 - Enter - On their terms, with their language, by their authority.
 - Retell - Retell it in order to expose the tragic flaw – positively deconstruct it. Gather the echo beliefs/clues along the way.
 - Capture – Tell their own story but correcting the tragic flaw by capturing it with the larger story of the Gospel. Retell the story they tell us about...
- **Examples** – social injustice, government oppression, environmental issues, racism etc. The gospel speaks to all of these issues

NOTES

¹ Pollard, Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997) 20.

² Ibid., 21.

³ Ibid., 22.

⁴ Curtis Chang, Engaging Unbelief, A Captivating Strategy from Augustine and Aquinas (Downers, Grove: IL, 2000)

SESSION III – WHIRLED VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

Can anyone give us a definition for the term worldview?

Colson and Pearcey “...the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the “big picture” that directs our daily decisions and actions. What we assume or believe becomes the lens through which we then see everything around us.”¹

James Sire “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

WORLDVIEW DEFINITIONS

- **BOTTOM UP – “VIEW OF THE WORLD”**

How we answer the big questions – our answers then form our worldview

Ravi Zacharias Framework

- Origin, Meaning, Morality, Destiny

Colson and Pearcey

- Where did we come from? What went wrong? What is the solution?

- **TOP DOWN – “WAY OF SEEING”**

We each have certain core beliefs or “grids” which determine the way we see the world

- **DEFINITION 3: A BIG STEW OF STUFF PEOPLE ABSORB AND BELIEVE (MOST WITHOUT MUCH THOUGHT)**

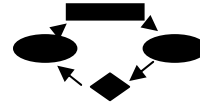


From peers, from religion, from popular culture,
from news media, from sinful minds

Example – George Werner – Lesto Company – Czech People Don’t Know the Rules

THE PROBLEM WITH WORLDVIEWS

Worldview Feedback Loop
Example - People who NEVER talk about God



THE PROCESS OF BREAKING FREE – SALVATION

Breaking Free is Possible! Breaking free from our own *Lived Out Parables of Depravity* ³

- By the Grace of God – **Ephesians 2:1-5**, By the Spirit of God – **Romans 8:1-4**, Preaching of the gospel – **1 Cor 1:18**, Through many means – **1 Cor 9:22,23**
 - Loving witnesses, Tragedies which gain our attention, Reasons and Truth, Fervent Prayer for God to open eyes – **2 Cor 4:3,4**

BASIC WORLDVIEW CATEGORIES

Some Definitions for Fun

- Theism: God created All
- Pantheism: God is All
- Panentheism: God is in All
- Atheism: No God at All
- Finite Godism: God is beyond the world but is limited in power/perfection
- Polytheism: There are many finite gods.

A Word of Caution – People don't always live in tidy little boxes

- Naturalism/Materialism, Postmodernism, Do it Yourself Spirituality (Oprahism), Various Religious Traditions – Christianity, Islam, Forms of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age etc.
- A Mixture of many of the above
 - Understanding where people are coming from and “how they see” will be invaluable to us as witnesses for Christ

NATURALISM

Someone give us a definition for Naturalism:



Naturalism is the belief that the material world of nature is all there is, all there ever has been, and all there ever will be – that nothing supernatural is real.”⁴

What are some of the ways that a naturalistic worldview opposes a Christian worldview?

Patronize It

Talk down to It

Don't Mention It

Some people will openly and angrily put down Christianity as “backward thinking” or “harmful.” Finally others, will simply try to make a caricature of Christian thought and belittle it with statements like: “As we know...there is not life after death” Or “It was once thought that we received moral laws from God or gods, but we know that we make them up ourselves.”

BE AWARE OF NATURALISTIC PRESUPPOSITIONS

Lewontin – “We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs,...*in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for *we cannot allow* a Divine Foot in the door.”⁵

Nagel – “I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that *I hope there is not God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that....*My guess is that this cosmic authority problem is not a rare condition and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time.”⁶

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism – An often used, seldom understood term. What do you think when you hear this term?

- **Budziszewski** – “Postmodernism is the belief that nothing hangs together (*or coheres*)—that everything is in pieces. A postmodernist thinks that truth is fragmented. He doesn't believe in a truth that is the same for everyone, only in 'stories' or 'narratives' or 'discourses' that are different for every group.”⁷
- **Sire** “No longer is there a single story, a metanarrative (in our terms a worldview), that holds Western culture together. It is not just that there have long been many stories, each of which gives its binding power to the social group that takes it as its own. The naturalists have their story, the pantheists theirs, the Christians theirs, ad infinitum. With postmodernism no story can have any more credibility than any other. All stories are equally valid.”⁸

An Athletic Illustration

Some quick game definitions: By “pre-modern” we mean classical thinkers

like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and many of the great early Christian philosophers. By “modern” we mean thinkers who think scientific observation alone leads to knowledge about reality.



- The **Pre-modern** baseball umpire says: “There are balls and there are strikes and I call em **as they are**”
- The **Modern** (the materialist) baseball umpire says: “There are balls and there are strikes and I call em **as I see em**”
- The **Postmodern** baseball umpire says: “They ain’t nothing **til I call em**”⁹

The New Absolutism?

Some thinkers claim that Postmodernism is nothing more than a new absolutist philosophy with its cardinal virtues being pluralism and tolerance.

"Feinberg closes his essay with some thoughts on post-modernism. But it seems to me that he (like the Zondervan editors who insisted that we address this issue) gives this faddish movement far more credit than it deserves. We do not, in fact, live in postmodern times, as Feinberg asserts. Indeed, if he is correct in his contention that postmodernism is unlivable - and I think that he is - then there can be no postmodern society. Rather we live in post-Christian times, and **what has replaced Christianity is not postmodernism but rather what has been aptly called "the new absolutism."** Today the absolute values of openness and tolerance are cherished and even demanded.¹⁰

If postmodernist claims are objectively true, then those claims are themselves the mere products of social forces, and so are not objectively true. Of course, if postmodernist claims are not objectively true, then they are just the arbitrary opinions of certain people that we are free to ignore. Postmodernism is thus an attempt to cut the feet from under one's opponents without having to engage one's opponents' arguments, a strategy that is ultimately self-refuting.

It would therefore be terribly tragic if, out of deference to this incoherent, faddish, and widely repudiated movement, the church were to conclude mistakenly that we are now living in a postmodern era and that we therefore need a new postmodern apologetic for our time. Such realignment would be not only unnecessary, but counterproductive, for the abandonment of objective standards of truth and rationality could only undermine the Christian faith in the long run by making its call to repentance and faith in Christ but one more voice in the cacophony of subjectively satisfying but objectively vacuous religious interpretations of the world.¹¹

See Appendix A – Michael Horton – Pop Postmodernism

DO IT YOURSELF WORLDVIEWS – PEOPLE MAKING THEIR OWN STEW

Today it is not uncommon to find someone who **believes in Jesus** and **Astrology** and **Reincarnation**

We are called by God to reach out to them!!! In approaching non-Christians, especially those who are from a different culture, we want to “listen well” to what people believe and discern how they are seeing – this will greatly assist us in our witness.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME?

- **Learn** about other worldviews – study other belief systems. **Listen** to people! Even some sloppy stews.
- **Earnest prayer** to not just be a useless vat of knowledge – 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, To use what you learn to love people and help them come to the cross
- **Share** knowledge and training with other Christians

Follow The Paths God Provides – God is there before us, allow him to take the person from where they are now to the gospel.

NOTES

¹ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey *How Now Shall We Live* (Wheaton: IL Tyndale House 1999) 14.

² James Sire *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. (Downers Grove: IL Intervarsity Press 204) 122.

³ “Lived out parables of depravity is a phrase from John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001) 21.

⁴ J. Budziszewski, *How to Stay Christian in College* (Colorado Springs: CO Navpress 1999) 43

⁵ Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions” *The New York Review of Books*, January 9, 1997.

⁶ Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: NY Oxford University Press, 1996) 130-131.

⁷ Budziszewski, 45.

⁸ James Sire *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog: 3rd ed.* (Downers Grove: IL Intervarsity Press 1997), 174.

⁹ Adapted from a message given by Ravi Zacharias at the 1998 conference “Evangelizing Postmoderns” at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Tape set available under the title “Truth, Evangelism and the Postmodern Mind” at www.rzim.org.

¹⁰ William Lane Craig, *Four Views on Apologetics*, 181.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

SESSION IV – THE FRAMEWORK OF POSITIVE DECONSTRUCTION¹

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to talk about a practical framework, a method of engaging those who are currently not interested in Jesus Christ. We want to help another person hear the gospel and make up his or her mind.

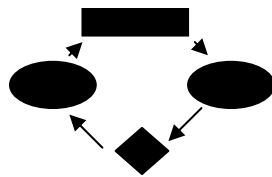
A QUICK REVIEW

The Task of Evangelism Requires Engaging Others

- Can someone remind us what we mean by engagement
- We need to share the gospel with **THIS** individual person/audience

The Challenge of Worldviews

- Describe the worldview feedback loop



- How can someone “break free?” Salvation – Grace, Spirit, By all possible Means etc.
- List some of the common worldviews we may encounter – Naturalism, Postmodernism, Religious, Stews.

EVANGELISM MADE SLIGHTLY LESS DIFFICULT – CHAPTER 3 – POSITIVE DECONSTRUCTION

Positive Deconstruction

1. Deconstruction – **To tear down**
 2. Positive – **in a way that is good**
- Positive Deconstruction is a **dialogical** method to ask questions of an unbeliever in order to help them see the **inadequacies** of their worldview.
 - This process **recognizes** and **affirms** the elements of **truth** an unbeliever holds, but helps them discover for **themselves** the inadequacies in the beliefs they have **absorbed**.

Combined with earnest prayer, clear gospel presentation, reasoned apologetics and genuine relationships demonstrating practical love, positive deconstruction will help us find evangelism slightly less difficult.²

Examples of Negative Engagement

- How can you believe that \$#%@!
- Saying all kind of crazy stuff without any context – For example – **That guy who loves to hold signs saying “God hates fags!”** This hurts the hearing of the gospel
- Anytime non-Christian music starts playing, **you** huff and puff and leave the room
- Someone tells you about a movie they love – you promptly respond – that rated R movies are evil
- If all you do is deconstruct other people’s views – you will begin to “loose friends and irritate people.”

IDENTIFY BELIEFS/WORLDVIEWS

- Listen and Observe Well – Paul in Acts 17, Jesus in John 4
- Pray for discernment of the real issues
- Hear what makes the person **passionate, excited, hurt, or frustrated...**Make mental note of it
- Listen for areas of belief – what are the presuppositions, do they find origin in a certain worldview? **Naturalistic, Relativistic, Islamic, Pantheistic, etc.**

HELP YOUR FRIEND ANALYZE HIS OWN BELIEFS

- Tests for Truth
 - Coherence – **Logical Consistency**



- **An example of an incoherent statement**

I don't believe in astrology because I was born under the sign Aquarius and Aquarians don't believe in that sort of thing.

God exists and God does not exist.

Sometimes the more sophisticated form goes like this *God exists for you but does not exist for me.*

- Why not accept contradictions? Could they be a sign of deep truths?
- Eastern vs. Western Logic – **Ravi Zacharias story**

Appendix C – Answering Objections to using Logic in Theology from Geisler and Brooks Come let us Reason

- Correspondence – **Empirical Adequacy**



This is god and you should worship him! **Read Pollard bottom of 94**

- Will it Work – **Existential Relevance** – **Don't leave out "even in the midst of suffering"**

Some Suggestions as You Analyze Beliefs

- Take a journey together – do not be the know it all
- Do not create **straw men** out of other people's beliefs
 - Seek to understand the actual view – **this takes hard work**, If someone can make a major worldview/religion look bad in just a minute or two, he probably doesn't understand it, You make yourself look ignorant
- Do not oversimplify issues
 - It takes more faith to be an atheist and believe in evolution than to believe God! Does it?
- Pray through your own doubts – John 6:66-69 and 2 Timothy 1:7-12

Affirm the Truth and Discover Error – Talk about Jesus

- Why would it be good to affirm the truth in someone's worldview?
 - Provides some common ground for further dialogue
 - It makes them feel like you really are interested in what they think
- How can you reject error but do so in humility?
 - Help me understand...this doesn't make sense...
 - If that is truth then this must be true...
 - Wouldn't it make more sense if...Christian gospel
 - It is OK to act humbly confused

Keep in Mind

- Hebrews 4:12, Rom 1:16 – We are not trying to hide the fact we are Christians and believe in revealed truth
- 2 Timothy 3:16 – teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness

THE PROCESS OF PD – A QUICK SUMMARY

- I. Identify Beliefs/Worldviews
- II. Help your friend analyze their own beliefs
 - **Coherence** – *Logical Consistency* – *Does it make sense?*

- **Correspondence** – *Empirical Adequacy* – *Is there any reason to believe this or that?*
- **Pragmatic value** – *Existential Relevance* – *Does it work?*

Examples of why all three are needed:

- Coherence is necessary for any communication – We cannot talk about round squares.
- Good coherent stories may or may not correspond to reality – There are fairy tales.
- If it does not work in practice – what good is it?

III. Affirm Truth – in the person’s view where it is found.

IV. Identify Error – help them see.

Does this seem difficult? It requires something of us, but you know what... We are called to reach people and love cannot turn a blind eye towards Jesus’ teaching about Heaven and Hell.

Note – You can share the gospel with anyone at any time – my suggestion is to first listen to the person and to the Holy Spirit so you will know how to best proceed.

PD IN PROCESS – LEARNING TO LIVE IT OUT

USING POLLARD’S CHART

“One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”

		Affirm Truth	Discover Error
Identify:			
Analyze:	Coherence		
	Correspondence		
	Work?		

1. Identify

- Ask clarifying questions
 - What do you mean by terrorist? By terrorist do you mean someone who is doing something wrong? Is this really so? etc.
- Yep, we have a moral relativist

2. Analyze

- Affirm Truth
 - Some things can seem relative
 - Opinions (Chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream is the best)
 - Hebrews midwives in Exodus, Rahab in Joshua
 - The value of goods relative to time.
 - Note: Clarification is possible to make all truth claims objective. Give example using the above bullet points**
 - Truth does need to be personal, we need to know and experience it
 - Sometimes it is tough to know what is right and wrong
- Discover Error
 - **Coherence?** Is Relativism Coherent?
 - There are no absolute truths about morality? Is that true about morality? Isn't that like saying "There are no absolute truths about morality...here's one!"
 - Relativism is "self-referentially incoherent" – It is a self-defeating statement, to affirm it you deny it at the same time.
 - **Correspondence?** Does Relativism Correspond to Reality?
 - We do not create our own reality...there is a real world out there.
 - In my reality, Al Gore is president, and God does not exist. Well it doesn't really matter what you believe – Bush is president and God exists.
 - **Does it Work?** Is Relativism Livable
 - How do we make the world better? Correct injustices?
 - Do you think that intolerant non-relativists are just holding another valid view?
 - Do you want your professor to grade this way?
 - Carefully and humbly use extreme examples – the Holocaust, Western slavery of Africans etc

3. We pray the question will come...

- Well why do you believe in moral absolutes? Would you be prepared to give an answer?
- The person is open to talk about the Lord, Categories of real guilt before God are now available, Forgiveness and grace can be clearly understood

NOTES

¹ The term Positive Deconstruction is used by Nick Pollard in *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (Downers Grove: IL Intersity Press, 1997)

² *Ibid.*, 46

PRACTICUM

You are having a conversation with someone and she makes the following claim:

- “All religions teach the same things, they agree on the major issues, they only disagree on the minor ones”



- Break into groups of 5 or 6 and put into practice the process of PD – use Pollard’s chart if you so desire

WHAT NEXT?

Do you know the Gospel well?

- Knowing your Bible
- Knowing where the gospel intersects all of life

Are you willing to learn what others believe?

- Hear people out before we “give our answers”
 - What **baggage** can become **luggage** to put them on the road to Jesus?
 - Reading Appendix D – **Stop Answering Questions!**

Remain humble and willing to allow God to use you in another person's life?

Fill in the Blanks – Apologetics II

Identify:
Analyze:

Affirm Truth

Discover Error

Coherence

Correspondence

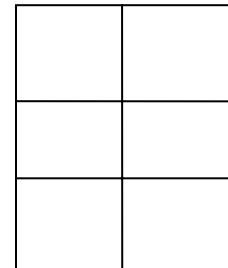
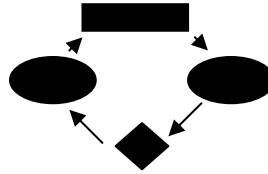
Work?

SESSION V – COURSE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

- Last week of Class
 - Becoming a **lifelong** passionate **laborer** for the Gospel
 - Putting into **practice** what we have learned in whatever context we are called by God
 - **Vocational Ministry**
 - **Politics**
 - **Business**
 - **Teaching**
 - **Professional**
 - **Entertainment**
- Preparing for Ministry “Out There”

COURSE SUMMARY IN PICTURES



Apologetics – Defending the Core of the Christian Faith, Clearing the Bushes so that people can hear and see The Cross.

Evangelism as Engagement – Connecting and Communicating the Gospel with Different Audiences. Apologetics serves to under-gird the evangelistic task of the church.

Whirled Views – People have certain worldviews which affect the way they see life. Addressing worldviews helps us to know where a person is currently “coming from” and helps us to connect and communicate the gospel.

Positive Deconstruction – A dialogical method to ask questions of an unbeliever to help them see the inadequacies of their worldview. Combined with earnest prayer, clear gospel presentation, reasoned apologetics and genuine relationships demonstrating practical love, positive deconstruction will help us find evangelism slightly less difficult.

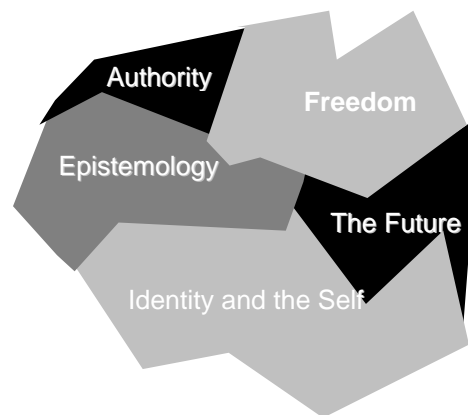
BE WISE IN THE WAY WE ACT TOWARDS OUTSIDERS...

- Colossians 4:5 – Advice in our witness
 - Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity
 - Opportunity to **share** the gospel
 - To be a **living gospel** to others
- 2 Chronicles 1:11,12 – God looks **favorably** on those who ask for wisdom
- 1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. **I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.**



ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL FAULT LINESⁱⁱ

Where's the Rub in Contemporary Culture?



Epistemology - the state of knowledge and of knowing in our current culture. What are people assuming? Example - Faith has nothing to do with rational discourse. Rationality has nothing to offer faith. How do we move to bridge the fault lines...we can't make assumptions about the "generation" but fault line is moving and always being discussed. We do need to realize that epistemology is an issue.

Authority - Where does authority for belief lie? *Science - science is about Facts, religion is about FAITH.*

Newsweek - God and the Brain - Conclusion is the classic difference between faith claims and "science" claims.

Self-Authority – Example of the book “**Conversations with God**” - locates the **authority** in ME!!

Freedom – Entitlement - Self-determination

Some may see Christianity as an oppressive force...not a source a freedom.

Identity and the Self

- The **goodness** of the self
- The emphasis on **self-expression**.
- The **disintegration** of the self

The Future

- Future of self-fulfillment
- A **godless** future? Or a simple **hat tip** to God
- Afterlife?
- Literature and Movies – in Futuristic Movies, where is God?
- People think they are going **somewhere** – but **where?**

INTENTIONAL SHREWDNESS



“Presenting ourselves to friends, associates and coworkers etc. in a profitable, wise, and effective way”

Matthew 10:11-20 11

“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. 12 as you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; If it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. 15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. 16 I am sending you out like **sheep** among **wolves**. Therefore be as **shrewd** as **snakes** and as **innocent** as **doves**. 17 “Be on your guard against men; They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the spirit of your father speaking through you.

SHREWDNESS REQUIRES AWARENESS

- What is the Soil we are working with
 - Listening to people and looking for **bridges** and **deficiencies**
 - Bridges
 - They are asking you about God
 - They are feeling guilty about something
 - They are feeling hopeless

- Deficienciesⁱⁱⁱ
 - Ignorance of the Biblical Worldview
 - Prejudices against the gospel
 - Personal Issues (look for bridges)
 - Inadequate Worldviews
 - No **Truth**, Moral **Relativism**, **Cannot Know** History, Naturalism
 - Remember what we did with **PD**
- What do they **not need to know** now
- What do they need **to know next** to take them to the Cross

YET INNOCENT AS DOVES

- 2 Corinthians 4:1,2 – Tests for **Authentic** Ministry
 - Renounce **secret** and **shameful** ways
 - We do not use **deception**
 - We do not **distort** the Word of God

Notes

ⁱ Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made Slightly Less Difficult* (Downers Grove: IL Intersity Press, 1997) 46

ⁱⁱ Fault Lines Analogy from Dave Mahan – Rivendell Institute of Christian Thought and Learning at Yale University

ⁱⁱⁱ Tim Downs, *Finding Common Ground* (Chicago: IL, Moody Press 1999) 110-119

APPENDIX A – PAUL’S PHILOSOPHICAL INTERLOCUTORS IN ACTS 17

From the Catholic Encyclopedia <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/>

The Stoics

The Stoic doctrine, of which Zeno laid the foundations, was developed by Chrysippus in 705 treatises, of which only some fragments have been preserved. In addition to the principles accepted by all thinkers of their age (the perception of the true, if it exists, can only be immediate; the wise man is self-sufficient; the political constitution is indifferent), derived from the Sophists and the Cynics, they base the entire moral attitude of the wise man conformity to oneself and nature, indifference to external things on a comprehensive concept of nature, in part derived from Heraclitus, but inspired by an entirely new spirit.

The Epicureans

Philosophy was described by Epicurus as "the art of making life happy", and he says that "prudence is the noblest part of philosophy". His natural philosophy and epistemology seem to have been adopted for the sake of his theory of life. It is, therefore, proper that his ethics should first be explained. The purpose of life, according to Epicurus, is personal happiness; and by happiness he means not that state of well-being and perfection of which the consciousness is accompanied by pleasure, but pleasure itself. Moreover, this pleasure is sensuous, for it is such only as is attainable in this life. This pleasure is the immediate purpose of every action. "Habituate yourself", he says,

to think that death is nothing to us; for all good and evil is in feeling; now death is the privation of feeling. Hence, the right knowledge that death is nothing to us makes us enjoy what there is in this life, not adding to it an indefinite duration, but eradicating the desire of immortality.

APPENDIX B – POP POSTMODERNISM

From Modern Reformation Magazine (July / August Issue, Vol. 12.4). 2003, © All Rights Reserved.

Pop Goes Postmodernism

By Michael Horton

An advertisement has appeared in a number of evangelical magazines for yet another Bible translation. Looking smart and sophisticated, a woman stares intently at the reader. The caption reads, "If you want to attract me, you'd better watch your language." The ad goes on to relate how busy this young professional is these days, so the Bible needs to be suitably tailored to her lifestyle. In many respects, this captures the mood of mission these days: unswerving devotion to the adage that the customer is king. Furthermore, this woman is treated as the definitive norm and rule for ministry in a postmodern era. Are we postmodern? Should we be?

Naming "Postmodernism"

What is "postmodernism"? It depends. To an architect, sculptor, painter, or novelist postmodernism often refers to the specific artistic movement that reacted against the International Style and High Modern art and literature. To political theorists, it can refer to the end of utopian ideologies. To philosophers, it usually signals a transition away from a particular way of thinking about what we know and how we know that it is called "Cartesian foundationalism." And to economists, it may mean the shift from an industrial-age economy to an information-age economy in capitalism's current global phase. (For more on some of these uses of the term postmodernism, see D. A. Carson's article in this issue.)

Many now breathlessly announce that we have entered a postmodern age. Yet few are willing to pause and define how the term postmodernism is being used. Most often, it is just a code word for something new, for a supposed break with the past and the dawn of a radically new era. Of course, given that the word modern means what is new, a more modern description of an era could hardly be sought. In many ways, much of postmodernism is little more than "most-modernism." For instance, it was the modern philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) – and not postmodern philosophers Jacques Derrida (b. 1930) or Richard Rorty (b. 1931) – who introduced the view that the "world" conforms to the knower's conceptual categories rather than vice versa. There is just too much of the modern in the postmodern to be able to speak in sweeping terms of a major paradigm shift in culture.

Suffice it to say for our purposes that there are two over-arching types of postmodernism: academic and popular. There is great variety among the former. On a host of points that we cannot pursue here (namely, notions of tradition, language, the critique of autonomy, progress, presence and absence, etc.), thinkers generally classed as postmodern in the academy today have a lot to teach us about the very dangers that so many popularizers of postmodernism embrace. Remarkably fruitful discussions and debates abound in these deep waters and I find myself among those who enjoy wading in them.

There is also great variety among the popular versions of postmodernism, but I cannot bring myself to acknowledge that they are either sufficiently distinct from modernism or that they are sufficiently coherent to place under one label. Much has changed since the storming of the Bastille and the invention of television, some of it for the better and some of it for the worse. But pop-postmodernist cheerleading for the idea that we have entered a radically new era – a utopia of unprecedented opportunity – fails to move me. This is not because I am a stodgy conservative. I just do not believe the hype. I think every historical period has its pluses and minuses. Typecasting them just leads to knee-jerk demonization or equally impulsive lionization, making it hard to conduct cost-benefit

analyses in particular cases. History and Scripture remind us that no era can be regarded as either an unmixed blessing or an unmixed curse. Human sinfulness and God's common grace coincide throughout the ages between the fall and the consummation. Knee-jerk conservatism and breathless progressivism can both become cop-outs for serious evaluation.

Call me dismissive, but I cannot get beyond the notion that pop postmodernism is little more than the triumph of popular culture with its obsessions with technology, mass communications, mass marketing, the therapeutic orientation, and conspicuous consumption. Postmodernism – or whatever one wishes to designate our brief moment in history – is the culture in which *Sesame Street* is considered educational, "sexy" is the term of approbation for everything from jeans to doctoral theses, watching sit-coms together at dinner is called "family time," abortion is considered "choice," films sell products, and a barrage of images and sound bites selected for their entertainment and commercial value is called "news." This easily translates into hipper-than-thou clubs passing for youth ministry, informal chats passing for sermons, and brazen marketing passing for evangelism, where busyness equals holiness and expository preaching is considered too intellectual. It can account in part for homes where disciplined habits both of general domestic culture and of instruction in Christian faith and practice give way to niche marketing and where churches become theaters of the absurd.

If modernity is pictured as the crusty tyrant, wrinkled with the fatigue of old age and faded dreams, postmodernism's visage is that of a child who refuses to grow up and accept the challenges as well as the opportunities of wisdom, truth, righteousness, and having responsibilities as well as having a good time. Stated in such intentionally simplistic terms, one can hardly distinguish postmodern from boomer – that post-war generation that has been so aptly described by David Brooks, in his *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, as one who insists on having his cake (the fruit of hard labor and genuine community) and eating it too (absolute freedom of individual choice).

This take on postmodernism is hardly new. Marxist intellectual Alex Callinocos's illuminating analysis of postmodernism concludes that it is little more than the result of the self-obsessed flower children of the revolutionary sixties now taking their place in the professional new middle class. In other words, postmodernism and boomer go hand-in-hand. There is no epochal change in Western culture, Callinocos insists. "Moreover, much of what is written in support of the idea that we live in a postmodern epoch seems to me of small caliber intellectually, usually superficial, often ignorant, sometimes incoherent."

Fatalism or Reformation?

Callinocos's appraisal fits perfectly with what I see in contemporary Evangelicalism. In contemporary Evangelicalism, postmodernism is the new code word for mission, a new way of enforcing not just change but particular changes that involve particular ideological assumptions. There is even a note of fatalism in these challenges that verges on bullying: "Get with it or get left behind." This is just the way things are now, so we had better adapt.

If a church still thinks that the means of grace appointed by Christ as the Lord of his church are sufficient for the conversion of sinners and the edification of the saints, then critics must show from Scripture why this is not still true although we have reached the dawn of space travel. Why must change in the faith and practice of Christians parallel change in technology? Is there any relevant connection between the patterns of ministry established in Scripture and the surrender of dial-up providers to broadband Internet? If there is, then I fail to see it.

Superficial appeals to "our postmodern era" too easily cause us to capitulate before that worst of all threats: obsolescence. Frank Kermode calls postmodernism "another of those period descriptions

that help you to take a view of the past suitable to whatever it is you want to do." This is like references to the "Dark Ages," which – in spite of their wealth of discoveries, advancing technologies, the founding of universities, and so forth – were effectively nicknamed by the scions of the Renaissance. They thereby sold subsequent generations on the spin that they were in fact breathing new life into Western civilization.

In contemporary Evangelicalism, psychological categories overwhelm confessional ones; managerial models of ministry outstrip the pastoral; categories of consumption, sometimes brazen and at other times indirect, reign over a more discipleship-oriented paradigm. Furthermore, ministers are constantly told these days that they must be market-driven rather than product-driven. The pragmatic takes precedence over the deliberative, autonomy over authority, the individual over the community, and the new and improved over the tried and tested. All of these trends have their roots in modernity, even if pop postmoderns have uncritically embraced them.

It is not so much the modern versus the postmodern but the total capitulation to pop culture that John Seebrook identifies as "the culture of marketing and the marketing of culture." Evangelicals obsessed with family values in a vaguely moral context often reflect the opposite values in the practice of their faith as niche marketing breaks up the generations, entertainment drowns out catechesis, and the attraction of the customer edges out the communion of saints across all times and places – and I am just talking about evangelical attitudes about what should happen in the youth group!

Pop postmodernism today assumes that "is" implies "ought"; that "the way things are" is itself neutral, benign, or perhaps even an unmixed blessing. We do not take the trouble to analyze the ways in which, for example, the culture of marketing is fraught with peril for both culture and church, because being "cutting-edge," "effective," "successful" – or, in more pious terms, "missional," simply requires it.

C. Peter Wagner argues, "Traditional church models no longer work in our fast-changing world. A commitment to reaching the lost is driving new apostolic churches to find new ways to fulfill the Great Commission." In this outlook, "our fast-changing world" – what the Bible identifies as this fading age – becomes the norm and church models are viewed in thoroughly relativistic terms, as if the Lord had left the twenty-first century church to find "ways to fulfill the Great Commission" other than Word and Sacrament. Just how does a faith that is passed down "from generation to generation" survive being marketed by a pop culture that declares, "This is not your father's Oldsmobile"? According to George Barna, it is "critical that we keep in mind a fundamental principle of Christian communication: the audience, not the message is sovereign." Is this the same evangelical movement that castigated the World Council of Churches for its slogan, "The church follows the world's agenda"?

A Different Typology

What if, instead of adopting the division of history into "modern" and "postmodern" in our evangelism and outreach, we followed the New Testament distinction between "the present evil age" and "the age to come" or between life "in the flesh" and "new life of the Spirit"? Jesus and Paul drew these contrasts (see Luke 18:30; Rom. 7:5-6; 8:5-9; Gal. 1:4). No matter what generation is currently rising, its members belong either to "this passing age" or to "the age to come." In fact, a good mark of being "conformed to this world" rather than being "transformed by the renewal of [our] mind" (Rom. 12:2) is that we think of ourselves and our generation "more highly than [we] ought" (v. 3). Every generation since the Fall (just think of Cain's proud city and Babel's tower) has sought to "conspire against the Lord and against his anointed" in spite of God's declaration that he has "set [his] king on Zion, [his] holy hill" (Ps. 2:2, 6). Neither modernity nor postmodernity comes out a winner in that

contest. To all our kings and kingdoms – read, the "experts" and the imaginary "generations" that they have created for niche marketing – the King in heaven still laughs, charging all those who pride themselves in breaking their chains to "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled" (see Ps. 2:4, 12). Whether modern or postmodern, the truth is that "the present evil age" is fading away and the truly new age that is dawning is the kingdom that comes down from heaven in the glory and power of Christ's resurrection. "Blessed are those who take refuge in him" (Ps. 2:12).

If "the age to come" is breaking into even "the present evil age" through the preaching of the cross and resurrection, we really are in the presence of the One who has the power to disrupt our vain plots, to "rescript" us and take us "nowhere" people – we "aliens and strangers" – and give us a place around the Lamb's table with Abraham and his children from every time and place. No longer confined to the narrow vision of the modern or the postmodern, we are "raised... up with [Christ] and "seated... with him in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6) from where we announce the new creation that has appeared in these last days. For those who have been filled with God's Spirit there is no need to be bullied by the spirit of this age, whatever its form.

The agenda of the church in postmodernity is its task in every age: to *tell* the story, *be written into it* ourselves through Word and Sacrament, and to *live* that story in the power of the Spirit who incorporates us into its unfolding plot. Thus are we made participants in and living witnesses to the in-breaking age-to-come that relativizes all of our failed plots, all of our ages, and all of our eras, as they spin out under the sun.

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Professor Horton has quoted from Frank Kermode, *History and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 132; John Seebrook, *The Culture of Marketing and the Marketing of Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000); C. Peter Wagner, "Another New Wineskin," *Next* volume 5, number 1 (January-March, 1999), p. 3; and George Barna, *Marketing the Church*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), pp. 41, 51.

APPENDIX C – OBJECTIONS TO THE USE OF LOGIC DISCUSSING GOD

The following is an excerpt from Geisler, Norman L., and Ronald M. Brooks. *Come, Let Us Reason : An Introduction to Logical Thinking*, Page 17. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1990. 17-20

Objections to Logic in Theology

Just as some object to studying logic, there are also those who decry the use of logic in theology. In fact, using logic in theology is not very popular in some circles. Some theologians revel in “paradox” and “antinomy,” as if it were somehow more spiritual to believe in the absurd. However, the objections to using logic seem to be based on misunderstandings. Answering these questions should clarify things.

Using logic puts logic before God. No. We use logic in the process of knowing God, but that does not mean that God came after logic in reality. Without God, nothing could have existence. God is the basis of all logic in reality and he is in no way inferior to logic. Logic comes from God, not God from logic. But when it comes to how we know things, logic is the basis of all thought, and it must come before any thought about anything, including God. For example, I need a map before I can get to Washington, D.C. But Washington must exist before the map can help me get there. Even so, we use logic first to come to know God, but God exists first before we can know him.

Using logic makes God subject to our logic. First, it isn't *our* logic. Man didn't invent logic, he only discovered it. God is the author of all logic. So, technically speaking, God does not flow from logic; logic flows from God. Second, it isn't God that we examine using logic; it is our statements about God. No one is trying to judge God. It is the statements that we make about him that we analyze with logic. Logic simply provides a way to see if those statements are true—if they fit with the reality of who God really is. Finally, in applying logic to those statements, God is not being tested by some standard outside himself. Logic flows from God. It is part of his rational nature, which has been given to us in his image. Using logic in theology is simply applying God's test to our statements about God. It is God's way for us to come to the truth.

Using logic is a form of rationalism. Being reasonable and being a rationalist are quite different. A rationalist tries to determine all truth by reason. Reasonable Christians only try to discover it. A rationalist won't let any empirical data change his conclusion; he doesn't want to be confused by the facts. A reasonable person takes account of the facts, incorporates them into his views, and sometimes changes his conclusions when new facts become known. Further, some rationalists won't even let the Bible change the conclusions they have reached by reason.

A reasonable person, by contrast, will take contradiction as a sign that his statement about God is wrong. Rationalists set the limits of what can be true about God. Reasonable people only use logic to test the truth of their statements about God.

The Bible says that God can do the impossible. Doesn't that mean he is not bound by logical limitations? God can do what is *humanly* impossible, but not what is *actually* impossible. Some things are impossible because of our human limitations, such as walking through walls, raising the dead, and being in two places at once. But these things are possible for God, who has no body, is the giver of life, and is always everywhere. He is not subject to human limitations. But this does not mean that God can literally do anything—including what is actually impossible. Hebrews 6:18 says that it is impossible for God to lie. James 1:13 says that God cannot be tempted, and 2 Timothy 2:13 says that it is impossible for him to deny his own oath. These things are impossible for a perfectly good God who cannot do evil.

Neither can God make a square circle, nor a triangle with two sides; nor can anyone else. Those things can't possibly exist because they are self-contradictory things. No circle can be a square because squares have four straight sides and circles don't. All triangles must have three sides or they aren't triangles. These things are impossible ideas—you can't even imagine what they would be. They are *logically* impossible. The same goes for the mountain so big that God can't move it. How can anything be too big for the infinite power of God to handle? If God can make it, he can move it.

Teaching this has brought some unusual responses. One student asked, “Is it possible for me to jump over the moon?” The teacher responded, “That’s logically possible, if you could get a really good jump and break the earth’s gravity. But it is humanly impossible because nobody can jump that way.” Certain that God must be able to do something that he can’t, the fellow asked, “Well, can God jump over the moon?” He recognized that God should be able to do what is logically possible, even if it is humanly impossible; he just forgot that God is everywhere all the time. God does not need to jump over the moon. He is already over it. God is not a here-or-there type of being, so he can’t jump *from* here *to* there. Only later did we realize that the simpler response was to tell the student, “No, God can’t jump over the moon because he doesn’t have any legs.”

If God created the laws of logic, then why can’t he break them? After all, he created the laws of nature, and he breaks them every time he does a miracle. There is a big difference between the laws of nature and the laws of logic. Natural law is really only a description of how things normally *do* operate; but laws of logic are more like ethical laws that tell us how our minds *should* operate, even if that is not the way we always think. Natural laws deal with the way things are; logical laws deal with the way things ought to be. In this sense, logical laws are *prescriptive*, calling for our obedience, since we ought to think logically. But natural laws are only *descriptive* and make no such demand. Also, logic flows from God’s rational nature, and he cannot change his nature. That would be going against all that he is. It would be betraying himself. It would be like God’s breaking a moral law, which also flows from his nature. Can you imagine God being unjust? Or unloving? Then how can you imagine him breaking the laws of logic?

Don’t some doctrines, like the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, and predestination, involve contradictions? In each of these cases, it can be shown that there is no real contradiction involved. Some theologians have used words like *antinomy* or *paradox* to describe the problems encountered in these doctrines, but those words imply a contradiction. Surely these things are mysteries that go *beyond* human reason, and we cannot grasp them fully, but they are not contradictions that go *against* reason.

For example, the doctrine of the Trinity, if understood as saying that God is three persons yet only one person, would be self-contradictory. However, the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity says that there are three persons in one being. There is no self-contradiction in that. We have only seen one person per being with human nature here on earth, but that does not mean that an infinite being with God’s nature couldn’t exist as more than one person. How it works is beyond us, but it is not a contradiction.

The doctrine of the incarnation would be self-contradictory if it said that Christ had both a human and a divine nature in one *nature*. But it doesn’t. We say that Christ had two natures united in one *person*. *Who* Christ is as an individual is the same for both his deity and his humanity, but *what* he is divinely is different from what he is humanly. This is a mystery that has been revealed only partially, but it is not a paradox that cannot be resolved.

Predestination also confuses some people. As a morally perfect being, God cannot *force* free people to do what they do not choose. Furthermore, forced freedom is a contradiction. But it is not contradictory for God to *determine* what people will do with their free choice. In this way, God can control and determine the choices we make, but he does not force those choices on us. God works persuasively, not coercively. We still experience our choices as free—as our decisions—even though God both knew what we would decide and chose that we would decide it long before we did. Forced freedom is a contradiction, but God determinately choosing that I make a free choice is not.

APPENDIX D – STOP ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Stop Answering Questions by Randy Newman
Discipleship Journal, Issue 127 January/February 2003

I like answering questions with questions. Maybe it's because I'm Jewish. I grew up with dialogues that went like this:

Me: How's the weather down there?

Granny Belle: How could the weather be in Florida in the middle of July?

Me: So, how have you been?

Uncle Nat: Why do you ask?

Me: How's your family?

Aunt Vivian: Compared to whom?



I'd like to think I answer questions with questions because I'm trying to follow the example of Jesus. Isn't it uncanny how often our Lord answered a question with a question? When a rich man asked Him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded, "Why do you call me good?" ([Mk. 10:17-18](#)). When religious leaders asked if it was right to pay taxes, Jesus asked whose portrait was on the coin ([Mt. 22:17-20](#)). When the Pharisees were "looking for a reason to accuse Jesus," they asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Jesus' response was a question: "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?" ([Mt. 12:9-12](#)).

But the most likely reason for my use of questions is that I'm tired. After years of answering nonbelievers, I'm simply tired of realizing that an answer is not what they really want. There have been times (far too many, I'm afraid) when I have given what I knew was a biblically accurate, logically sound, epistemologically watertight answer—only to see the questioner shrug his shoulders. Instead of moving him closer to salvation, my answer pushed him further away. Rather than engaging his mind or urging him to consider an alternate perspective, it gave him ammunition for future attacks against the gospel. So, I've started answering questions with questions and have gotten far better results.

Stealing Thunder

There was the time that a team of skeptics confronted me at our weekly Bible study for freshmen guys. The host of the study, in whose dorm room we were meeting, had been telling us for weeks of his roommate's antagonistic questions. This week, the roommate was there—along with a handful of like-minded friends. The inevitable question arose, more as an attack than a sincere inquiry. "So, I suppose you think that people who don't agree with you, like all those sincere followers of other religions, are going to hell!" "Do you believe in hell?" I responded. My antagonist had probably never seriously considered the possibility of hell. He looked puzzled, perhaps because he was being challenged when he thought he was the one doing the challenging. Finally, after a long silence, he said, "No, I don't believe in hell. I think it's ridiculous." I chose to echo his word choice. "Then why are you asking me such a ridiculous question?" I wasn't trying to be a wise guy. I simply wanted him to face honestly the assumptions behind his own question. His expression seemed to indicate that I had a good point. The silence was broken by another questioner: "Well, I do believe in hell. Do you think everyone who disagrees with you is going there?" Again I questioned. "Do you think anyone goes there? Is Hitler in hell?" (Hitler has turned out to be a quite helpful—though unlikely—ally in these kinds of discussions). "Of course, Hitler's in hell." "How do you think God decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell? Does He grade on a curve?" From there, the discussion became civil for the first time, and serious interaction about God's holiness, humanity's sinfulness, and Jesus'

atoning work ensued. Answering with questions turned out to be an effective, albeit indirect, way to share the gospel.

Another time questioning worked better than answering was a lunch-time conversation with a philosophy professor who was an atheist. He served as the faculty advisor for the campus philosophy club; I was a campus minister for Campus Crusade for Christ. We had cosponsored a debate about the problem of evil and were meeting to evaluate how the event had gone. After discussing how we could have publicized the event better and what topics we could address in future forums, I asked his opinion about the content of the debate. I knew I was in way over my head; nothing I could say about the Christian view of evil could top what the brilliant philosophers had said the night before. But I wanted to see if I could get the conversation out of the philosophical realm and into the personal one. I was concerned for this man's soul. He told me he still thought Christians failed to present a decent answer for the problem of evil. So I posed the question to him, "What is your atheistic explanation for why terrible things happen?" He paused and then said softly, "I don't have one." I told him this wasn't just an academic issue for me. As someone who is Jewish, I have had to wrestle with the reality of the holocaust. I recounted my latest visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and how emotionally difficult it was. I again asked him if there was an atheistic way to make sense of such things as the Nazis' slaughter of six million of my people. Again, his answer was a nonanswer. I told him that the Christian answer to the problem of evil may have its shortcomings. While I am not totally satisfied—either intellectually or emotionally—with what the Bible says about such things, my incomplete answer was better than no answer at all. The rest of our lunchtime was a good, respectful conversation that moved us closer to each other and—I hope—moved him closer to seeing some flaws in his worldview.

Questions have their advantages.

Answering a question with a question has some significant advantages over the use of direct answers. As we've seen, it brings the questioner's assumptions to the surface. It also takes the pressure off you, the one being asked, and puts the pressure on the one doing the asking. As long as we are on the defensive, the questioners are not really wrestling with issues. They're just watching us sweat. For example, the chief priests and the teachers of the law challenged Jesus with this inquiry: "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things. Who gave you this authority?" His response was a question, "Tell me, John's baptism—was it from heaven, or from men?" After a short retreat for time to maneuver, they told Him they didn't know the answer. Jesus showed them that their insincere question deserved a nonanswer by declaring, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things" ([Lk. 20:1-8](#)). In reality, the teachers' question was simply an attack posing as a question. Answering these attacks with questions not only takes the heat off us and deflects it to the other person, it also tones down hostility. People usually don't like such temperature changes and will adjust the attack thermostat accordingly. Answering a question with a question also paves the way for a response that might not otherwise be received. When I asked my dormitory interrogators if they believed in hell, I prepared them to think about the concept of divine judgment. Many ideas that are central to our gospel message—God's holiness, humanity's sinfulness, and Christ's atonement—are alien concepts for people today. Questions bring these ideas into clearer focus for them to consider and even accept. Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well ([Jn. 4:1-26](#)) fits this pattern. The woman's notions of righteousness, sin, and worship needed to be challenged before she would accept Jesus' way of seeing those topics. Without His questions, it is doubtful she would have gotten to the point of saving faith. To be sure, there are times when a direct answer is preferable, particularly when the questioner is sincere and would benefit from a clear, biblical explanation. There were quite a few times when Jesus didn't beat around the bush. His direct answer to the teacher of the law who asked which was the most important commandment is just such an example ([Mk. 12:28-31](#)). Yet often we need to hold back our answer and initiate genuine dialog with a question. When your coworker asks you—with an accusatory tone—why you still believe in God in light of all the people dying of AIDS, ask him how he explains such a horrible tragedy. When your cousin asks you why you're so narrow-minded as to think that all those Buddhists are going to hell,

ask her if she's become a Buddhist. Or see if she's studied Buddhism enough to convince her that its adherents are worthy of heaven. When your neighbor asks you why you think Jesus is anything more than just a good moral teacher, don't take out your "Lord, liar, lunatic" explanation just yet. Ask him why he thinks Jesus was a good teacher. Has he read a lot of Jesus' teachings? Which messages impress him the most about Jesus' teaching ability? What would he say was the main message Jesus taught? Recently, I heard a pastor urge his congregation to challenge the prevailing slogans of our day. The next time they heard someone quote, "Image is everything!" he told them they should respond, "No, it's not! The glory of God is everything!" While I agree with his theology, I think his methodology may be flawed. I think it would be better to respond with a puzzled look and a one-word question: "Really?" A follow-up question could be "Do you really believe that?" I think many people would see the point. Then, a few gospel-paving questions could be added: "What do you think is everything? What would you say is the most foundational thing in life?" Our message is too important for it to continue to fall upon deaf ears. Our good news is too good to be ignored. Our answers really are what people need to hear if we could just get them to listen. The Apostle Peter was surely right in imploring us to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" ([1 Pet. 3:15](#)). I would just want to follow Jesus' method of doing so by answering a question with a question.

About the Author

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On Your Own – Try it Out

- Read [2 Tim. 2:23-26](#). What are we to do instead of engaging in foolish arguments? How should we treat our questioners? (v. [24](#)) In these discussions, what is God's portion? (vv. [25-26](#))
- What dialogue-opening question could you ask in the following situations? A fellow student finds out you're a Christian and asks, "Why are you Christians so intolerant of anyone who doesn't agree with you?" A non-believing coworker has a "God Bless America" sign on her cubicle.

BASIC GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Absolutism – Something that is independent of, and unconditioned by, anything external to itself. It is not relative to something else. Usually used in terms of truth or ethics (moral absolutes).

Apologetics – means to give a defense; to give rational justification for one's beliefs.

Coherence – Internal logical consistency.

Correspondence – that which corresponds to the present state of affairs. Associated with a theory of truth that holds that statements must correspond to reality in order to be true.

Existential – dealing with existence, existentialism as a 20th century philosophical movement especially deals individual human freedom, choice, subjectivity, and existence. Individual expression of the will is the highest of values.

Naturalism – The belief that physical nature is the only reality. The philosophy of naturalism is characterized by Monism, antisupernaturalism, scientism, and Humanism.

Positive Deconstruction – A funny term coined by some British guy to teach a way to dialogue with others about their views in order to help them see the inadequacy of their current beliefs. Similar to Francis Schaefer's apologetic method.

Postmodernism – Your guess is as good as mine 😊 Just Kidding, but it is a bit slippery to define. In fact many postmodern thinkers think “defining things” to be THE problem. For ease of use we will follow Budziszewski – “Postmodernism is the belief that nothing hangs together (or coheres)—that everything is in pieces. A postmodernist thinks that truth is fragmented. He doesn't believe in a truth that is the same for everyone, only in ‘stories’ or ‘narratives’ or ‘discourses’ that are different for every group.”ⁱ

Theism/Theistic – The world view that affirms the existence of an infinite, personal God, who is the transcendent creator, and immanent sustainer of the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are examples of theistic religions.

Worldview – We will use James Sire's 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.”ⁱⁱ Sometimes you may see the German word WELTANSCHAUUNG (a conceptual scheme for interpreting reality) associated with this concept.

For other fun definitions please see Greg Koukl's extremely helpful – *100 Basic Philosophical Terms* at <http://www.str.org/free/studies/philosop.htm>. Many of the above are my adaptations of Koukl's.

ⁱ J. Budziszewski, *How to Stay Christian in College* (Colorado Springs: CO Navpress 1999) 45.

ⁱⁱ James Sire *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. (Downers Grove: IL IntVarsity Press 204) 122.

APOLOGETICS II

You won't want to miss the second part of this class. In Part II of the class we will discuss in detail arguments for the truths of the Christian Faith. We will cover such areas as the existence of God, the authority of the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus, the Problem of Evil, Christianity and Islam, and Science and Faith. Make sure to join us for Part II of our introduction to Apologetics!

