

What is Apologetics?

a·pol·o·get·ics

1 Peter 3:15 (GW)

15 But dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord. Always be ready to *defend* your confidence {in God} when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect. [This verse is the Biblical statement on apologetics. The word "defend" is the translation of the Greek "*ἀπολογία*."]]

Acts 17:17 (NAB)

17 So he **debated** in the synagogue with the Jews and with the worshipers, and daily in the public square with whoever happened to be there.

Acts 17:17 (NASB)

17 So he was **reasoning** in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

Our word "**apology**" is an interesting one. It is not a translation but a transliteration of the Greek *apologia*. In our day it is frequently used to designate an expression of regret for some improper or injudicious remark or act. This was not its original sense at all. Instead, it referred to a statement, either oral or written, in justification or defense of one's conviction about a matter under challenge.

ἀπολογία [See Strong: <G627>] apología; gen. apologías, fem. noun from apologéomai <G626>, to give an answer or speech in defense of oneself. A plea, defense before a tribunal or elsewhere (Acts 22:1; 2 Tim. 4:16). Generally (2 Cor. 7:11; Phil. 1:7, 17). Followed by dat. of person, against whom (1 Cor. 9:3; 1 Pet. 3:15); by perí <G4012>, concerning, and the gen. (Acts 25:16); with prós <G4314>, toward, and the acc. (Acts 22:1).

Syn.: apókrisis <G612>, the act of answering; apókrima <G610>, an answer, sentence; eperótēma <G1906>, an answer in the form

of an interrogation.

Ant.: sigé <G4602>, silence; hēsuchia <G2271>, quietness.

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament.

In its early days, Christianity became under attack by pagan philosophers and politicians who were masters of the art of ridicule. Many of these were brilliant men in positions of authority in heathen schools and governments. But there were also men of ability who wrote in behalf of the faith, and the second and third centuries of the Christian era produced some noble apologists. From their replies we can ascertain the charges made against the followers of Jesus, and can determine how these accusations were countered.

In these latter days, Christianity is still under attack. The grand opportunity of the church today is comparable to that of the Apostles Peter, Paul, and John; and to that of the Christian apologists of the first three centuries. This exciting opportunity means the church can spread like wild fire if we catch the vision of those men and women.

Christian apologetics is the branch of theology that deals with answering any and all critics who oppose or question the validity of Christianity. It can include studying such subjects as biblical manuscript transmission, philosophy, biology, mathematics, evolution, logic, history, etc. But it can also consist of simply giving an answer to a question about Jesus or a Bible passage. The later case is by far the most common and you don't have to read a ton of books to do that.

Apologetics can be defensive and offensive. Phil. 1:7 gives us instruction on the defensive side:

Philippians 1:7 (NASB)

⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

2 Cor. 10:5-6 gives us instruction on the aggressive side,

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

⁵ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

⁶ and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

The apologist can and should defend his reasons for believing (1 Pet. 3:15, above). But, he can also go on the attack. He can seek out those who oppose Christianity (2 Cor. 10:5, above). Of course, he should be prepared to do this before hand with gentleness.

Apologetics is the work of convincing people to change their views. In this it is similar to preaching because its goal is ultimately the defense and presentation of the validity and necessity of the gospel. It is an attempt to persuade the listener to change his beliefs and live in conformity to biblical truth. This means he will come to a saving relationship with Christ.

Apologetics can be, basically, evidential, classical, or presuppositional. Evidential apologetics deals with the evidence for Christianity: Jesus' resurrection, the biblical manuscripts, fulfilled prophecy, miracles, etc. Jesus defended his resurrection with the use of evidence.

John 20:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus **came*, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you."

²⁷ Then He **said* to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Classical apologetics focus on using reason combined with

evidences. Paul reasoned with the Jews in the temple:

Acts 17:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

The Greek word for "reasoning" in this verse is **διαλέγομαι**.

διαλέγομαι [See Stg: <G1256>] *dialégomai*; fut. *dialéxomai*, aor. pass. *dialéxthēn* with mid. meaning, mid. deponent from *diá* <G1223>, denoting transition or separation, and *légō* <G3004>, to speak. To speak back and forth or alternately, to converse with, reason, present intelligent discourse.

(I) Of an argument meaning to dispute, discuss. Used intrans. followed by the dat. as in [Jude 1:9](#) with the prep. *prós* <G4314>, toward or with, and the acc. *allélous* <G240>, each other ([Mark 9:34](#) [see [Mark 9:33](#)]; Sept: [Isa. 1:18](#); [Judg. 8:1](#)).

(II) To teach publicly, discourse, present intelligent arguments, akin to *lógos* <G3056>, intelligence, word, to discuss or argue, used intrans. and in an absolute sense ([Acts 18:4](#); [19:8, 9](#); [20:9](#); [24:25](#)); followed by a dat. ([Acts 17:2, 17](#); [18:19](#); [20:7](#)); followed by *prós* <G4314>, toward, with the acc. ([Acts 24:12](#); Sept.: [Ex. 6:27](#); [Isa. 63:1](#)). Figuratively of an exhortation meaning to address, to speak to, followed by a dat. ([Heb. 12:5](#)).

Deriv.: *diálektos* <G1258>, language, tongue.

Syn.: *suzētéō* <G4802>, to discuss; *apologéomai* <G626>, to make a verbal defense; *homiléō* <G3656>, to speak, talk; *laléō* <G2980>, to talk.

Ant.: *siōpáō* <G4623>, to keep silent; *sigáō* <G4601>, to keep silent.

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament.

When you reason with someone, you use logic. Presuppositional apologetics deals with the presuppositions of those who oppose Christianity because presuppositions effect how a person views evidence. This approach is very useful when dealing with atheists

as you'll find out later. Jesus used a presuppositional approach when He spoke to the woman at the well:

John 4:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ The woman *said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰ "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus *said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

Some areas of debate within Christian apologetics deal with the use and relationship of evidence, reason, philosophy, presuppositions, etc. Should the apologist use only those criteria acceptable to unbelievers? Are we allowed to use the Bible as a defense of our position or must we prove Christianity without it?

Which form of apologetics is best? Should we use evidential, classical, or presuppositional approaches? Is reason alone sufficient to prove God existence or Christianity's truth? How much should reason and evidence be used in light of the Scriptures teaching that it is God who opens the mind to understand? What part does prayer, using the Bible, and the sinful nature of the unbeliever play in witnessing? How do these factors interrelate to bring an unbeliever to faith? The questions are easy. The answers are not.

Jesus chose one highly educated religious person as an apostle. That was Paul. The rest were fishermen, a tax collector, a doctor, etc. They were regular people who were available and willing to be used by the Lord. They were filled with the Spirit of God and they were used as vessels of His righteousness. God uses all things for His glory. So, we do apologetics by faith, in obedience to His command, and we expect that God will be glorified. As far as which approach is best, I recommend you pray, trust God, and give the best answer you can. Let the Holy Spirit guide you.

As you can see that different apologetic approaches were used in

scripture depending on the situation, you too will adapt to the issue at hand.

The Lord has called every Christian to be ready to make a defense of his faith. That means you are called to give reasonable answers to questions regarding Christianity. This does not mean that you must have a Ph.D or that you have to go to seminary. But it does mean that you should be willing to at least give an answer for your beliefs. If you find you cannot, then prayerfully talk to God about it and start studying.

You pray and ask the Lord to teach you what He wants you to know. Ask Him to give you a burden for something to learn. Whatever you become interested in is what you should learn about because it is probably something God wants you to know for later use.

Another way to find out what God wants you to study is through circumstances.

Let's say a friend asks you how you know the Bible is true? If you don't have a answer, pray, and start researching. Talk to your minister, and ask for material to study. You'll learn.

Or maybe a Jehovah's Witness comes to your door and debates the deity of Christ with you and you find you don't know how to defend it biblically. In that case, you know you need to study verses that teach Jesus is God in flesh. Again you can ask your minister for material to study.

Sometimes a verse or subject in the Bible "come alive" to you and it might strike you as odd or interesting. You could get a commentary and read up on it. You could ask others about it. In so doing, you are preparing yourself through learning to be ready to answer questions and point people to the truth. You'd be surprised how many details God can use to help you in your witness, even through those apparently odd times when verses suddenly "come alive."

Make a Want to Know Notebook

It's simple. Get a 3 ring binder and fill with blank pages. Then ask God to fill it with what you need to know. As in the examples above, God will put burdens on your heart, or cause you to find places where you are lacking in knowledge, or a Bible verse will strike you.

Write down what you learn in your notebook. Date the pages as you go. Again, you'll be amazed at what you learn.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.