

Battle Plans

“I Charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make a full proof of thy ministry. (II Tim 4.1-5)

Introduction

- ❖ Over the past 9 weeks we have surveyed briefly the topic of Christian apologetics. Today I would like to briefly review the main points from each topic we looked at and draw it all together into a cumulative argument before offering some thoughts on witnessing and critical thinking.
 - We will also look at a few hand outs that I will explain time permitting.

Review

- ❖ I would like to take a couple minutes and review what we have studied so far and highlight the main points.
- ❖ Apologetic task
 - In lesson 1 we learned that **ALL** Christians are called to ministry. Not just those who are pastors or missionaries.
 - We learned further that ...
 - This calling requires us to preach, teach, evangelize, rebuke, exhort, reprove, and prove what is good and acceptable.
 - The ability to do these things well demands we know doctrine and apologetics very well.
 - Doing them well in addressing heresies leads to saints being “approved” for the positions of Bishops and Deacons.
- ❖ Problems, pitfalls and perplexities
 - Lessons 2-3 we looked at some of the issues surrounding apologetics and learned that..

- Many Christians who object to apologetics do so either out of ignorance of what it is, what it is trying to accomplish, or of Biblical doctrine in general. This is why sound Bible doctrine is so important. We must strive to instruct and correct fellow saints with respect and love. We must also teach the next generations the same.
- We saw also that there can be a tendency to become ungracious and lose sight of the goals of apologetics to defend, confirm, and to witness, all pertaining to the gospel. Our main focus is to always relate back to the amazing hope found in Christ and our necessity for a savior.
- Further we saw many issues in the naturalist/atheist camp which we discussed more in other lessons. Deifying the Dot

❖ The Cosmos is calling

- Lesson 4 we surveyed the Cosmological arguments and considered the implications of them.
 - According to Philosophy, Science and Theology the universe had a beginning and came into existence at a definite point in the past.
 - We saw that the universe could not have created itself
 - No impersonal force could “do” anything with nothing to effect
 - The only logical explanation and scientifically sound is a self existent, non-physical, non-temporal, immensely powerful, and wise, personal, creator.

❖ DNA to Galaxies

- We discussed the Teleological arguments in lesson 5
 - The incredible complexity in the universe demands a supreme designer
 - This is supported by the intelligent design movement, information theory, and design inference in math.
 - In the negative we argued that Darwinian evolution does not come close to explaining what we see in the biological world.

❖ Good Greif

- Lesson 6 we delved into the issue of the moral argument
 - The cultural and time transcendent moral law demands a moral law giver.
 - This law cannot possibly evolve by any means without a purpose or design or end goal.
 - The fact that we know good and evil on a scale means there must exist a standard of perfection. That standard is God.

❖ Whose Evil is it Anyway?

- Lessons 7 and 8 we studied the problem of evil as one of the few positive arguments against the existence of God. In the end we saw that...
 - Evil is an internal issue that the Bible answers very well.
 - This answer lies in the fact that only though evil is God capable to show his full power, wisdom, grace, mercy, justice and love.
 - Only with a choice can we love God back.
 - Biblical Christianity is the only world view that takes the issue of evil and suffering seriously.
 - The fact that evil exists actually proves God exists in the end. Since only if he does can evil exist at all.

❖ Jesus, the Man, the Myth, the Lord

- In our last lesson, we took a look at Christ and the scriptures.
 - Christ and the Biblical authors claimed divinity for Jesus.
 - Secular historians and archeology prove that Christ did in fact exist and that the Bible is extremely accurate and reliable as a historical document.
 - Christ was not a legend but an actual historical figure
 - From studying the facts it is highly unlikely that he was a liar
 - No indications of being a crazy person exist

- The only option left is that he was telling the truth

Cumulative Argument

- ❖ The cumulative argument would be then to take all of the touch points we just gave and present them as an argument. The sheer weight of the facts and data they represent is an argument in and of itself. Truly one must have a tremendous amount of faith to abandon Christianity for atheism. When you combine them all together and view the results in light of scripture I cannot see how anything short of Biblical Christianity makes sense.
 - When one considers that Math, Logic, Physics, Anatomy, Cosmology, Biology, Sociology, History, Archeology and the Christian Bible all line up hand in hand, it is easy to then look at all the “problems” with Christianity in a skeptical light.
 - What I mean is that in every way we learn about the universe whether by divine revelation, or observation, or reflection on the human condition, we see that God is. Just as he was in the beginning he is and we are his. No truer phrase could ever be spoken than, God is.

Strategic Engagement

- ❖ Recall from lesson one our three points for studying Apologetics
 - To defend the faith against objections or alternate worldviews II Cor. 10.3-5
 - To communicate the Gospel II Tim. 2.24-25
 - Confirm the truth of the Gospel to yourself Heb. 11.1-3, Phil. 1.7,17
- ❖ As we have come through these last 9 weeks we have been mostly learning to confirm and defend but we must always attempt to communicate the Gospel as well. I have included two handouts which we will go over in a minute. First I would like to go over some strategy in presenting the Gospel apologetically.
 - First of all one must by necessity be liberally educated. As Christians and as adults we ought never to stop seeking education. I believe we must constantly be asking each other what book we last read, what we are reading currently and what we plan to read after that. For as Robert Hutchins stated in *The Great Conversation*

- “If leisure and political power are a reason for liberal education, then everybody in America now has this reason, and everybody where democracy and industrialization penetrate will ultimately have it. If leisure and political power require this education, everybody in America now requires it, and everybody where democracy and industrialization penetrate will ultimately require it.”(ch3 p17-18)
- Hutchins imagines that in a place such as America every citizen has the responsibility to see to their own liberal education. More over it is required if the country is to continue to thrive. Just as this is true of the country it is also true of the church. As Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix similarly state in *Power in The Pulpit*
- “Formal education is a wonderful opportunity for you to hone the gifts God has given you. You will benefit from a broad, general education. Comprehensive studies in the arts and sciences will prove invaluable. Study psychology, history, biology, and sociology. Remember that all truth is God’s truth, even though it may not be that which He ordained to be a part of the sanctifying words of Scripture....In other words, the Bible-collage-trained preacher **should not** confine himself to biblical and theological studies.(pg74-45 emphasis mine)
- I am not sure why anyone would seek to deprive himself/herself of a better education given we have the time and resources to have one here in America. The first requirement of witnessing apologetically is to be educated enough to hold an intelligent conversation.
- Know the Scriptures in their context, or engage in proper hermeneutics.
 - This one should go without saying. To give a good account of the Gospel one must be educated enough to speak persuasively and besides this know what he is trying to persuade the other person of. You must gain a working knowledge of scripture that allows you to both ask and answer critical questions.
 - A good start is the Right Division 101 series on the church website.
- Develop a game plan for approaching people before hand.
 - Getting caught off guard can be costly. Know what you will say beforehand. Better yet know what you will ask beforehand. Take time to reflect on these lessons and books of similar nature, as you do anticipate meeting persons who hold different views. Then debate them in your mind. (if out loud, do so in private so you don’t look crazy) Practice ready responses, this is the appearance of being quick on your feet.

- Learn to ask questions
 - Several reasons why this is imperative to ask good questions
 - Grows knowledge – As you ask you learn. The more you ask the more you learn about the subject and peoples beliefs about it. This experience is something you can reflect on and use to build a better argument in the future
 - Gives clarity – asking questions makes sure you understand the other person’s position accurately. This leads to a better response from you. You will not commit a straw man fallacy by accident.
 - Gains time – asking questions gives you time to think of how to respond. Conflict of beliefs is nerve racking especially if there is an audience present. Give yourself time to think.
 - Generates doubt – forcing the other person to say their beliefs out loud makes them think about them critically. (possibly for the first time) This can make the person doubt the truth of their beliefs and become more accepting to your position.
 - Guides conversation – asking the right question keeps the burden of proof on the non-believer and not on you. You can also guide the conversation to a certain end that you desire to get to.
 - Great for respect – Disagreement though questions can help keep a respectful demeanor that will in turn give you more opportunity to witness to the Gospel. If you offend the person they will not likely listen to anything you have to say.

Asking Tough Questions

Dr. Jeff Myers

Francis Scott Key, the man who penned the words to the Star Spangled Banner, was also a great Christian apologist. He once wrote, "I do not believe there are any new objections to be raised of the truth of Christianity. Men may argue ingeniously against our faith, but what can they say in defense of their own?" Accordingly, we ought to ask others to defend what they believe even as they ask us to defend what we believe. Jesus used this technique. Do you recall the Bible story of Jesus visiting the temple as a twelve-year-old boy. The Bible says that his parents found him "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at this understanding and his answers." (Luke 3:46-47). Apparently, Hebrew students could demonstrate their learning by responding to a question with an equally well-phrased and ponderous question. To this day, those who ask good questions are seen as more intelligent and well-informed.

Here are some tough questions you can begin using right now!

Tough question #1: What do you mean by _____?

Always begin by asking your opponents (meaning the person on the other side of the argument, not necessarily your enemy!) to define their terms. If they say something like, "there is no such thing as a traditional family in the United States today," then ask "what do you mean by traditional family?"

Tough question #2: How do you know that to be true?

There is no need to ask whether or not they believe in truth. Simply ask them to prove that what they are claiming to be true is in fact true.

Tough question #3: Why do you believe that you are right?

Christians should always be ready, on any given subject, to give rudimentary reasons why they believe as they do. This can be simply saying, "Here is what I believe, and here is why." But we should in turn be ready to ask others, "Why do you believe as you do?" This question forces the opponent to admit that what they claim to be true is merely a belief, and this forces them to present evidence to support.

Tough question #4: Where do you get your information?

We believe that in most college classes, at least 30% of what is said is actually the opinion of the professor, and not based on fact in any way. To see whether this is true, students should be trained to ask, "Excuse me, where do you get the information to prove that what you are saying is true?"

Tough question #5: What happens if you are wrong?

Most people do not like to think that what they believe is wrong. Such a person was Blaise Pascal, a brilliant mathematician. Pascal became a Christian because he thought, "if I become a Christian and live my life in the service of mankind, and then die only to find out that Christianity is not true, I will have lost nothing. But if I do not become a Christian and live my life selfishly, and then die only to discover that Christianity is true, I will have lost everything." This argument has become known as Pascal's wager. It simply asks, "What do you have to lose if you are wrong?"

Tough question #6: Would you give me two sources who disagree with you and explain why?"

Often, college professors hold to one position very strongly over all others. In class, they may assert, either implicitly or explicitly, that what they believe to be true is also the objective truth. Therefore, they may give little or no merit to the other side, and may ridicule their opponents. The astute Christian student will ask such professors to defend the other side as a means of proving that they have weighed both sides and made an informed decision. Either way, the student wins. The professor has two options: give the merits of the other side (thus demonstrating to the class that his is not the only infallible way to think about the issue), or admit that he has not studied both sides, and has thus made an uninformed decision without weighing all of the possible information. This last option is embarrassing, needless to say, because it is a serious logical blunder.

Tough question #7: So what? Why is this significant?

Many professors will fail, unless challenged by students, to provide the connection between their worldview and the point they are making. For example, if they claim that “people are basically good, not sinful, by nature,” you might as “So what?” as a way of getting them to explain that this justifies a socialistic view of the world, and eliminates the need for a savior.

Tough question #8: How do I know you are telling me the truth?

If the opponent has any hidden agenda, it will come out at this moment in time! We should not trust someone simply because he has a “Ph.D.” after his name! All people are fallible, and everyone makes mistakes. (Remember the Bereans who were “more noble” because they checked the Apostle Paul on this very issue!) A poor professor will respond by listing his or her qualifications. A good professor will say “Don't take my word for it. Go check it out for yourself!”

Tough question #9: Why should I believe you?

This is another way of restating the above question

Tough question #10: How did you come to this conclusion?

A propagandist usually makes rash or emotional statements and expects the audience to believe him. Often, he hopes to ridicule or shame others into accepting his position without thinking it through. The pro-abortionist statement, “if men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament,” is one such statement. Asking the speaker to demonstrate how she reached that conclusion forces her to move away from emotional, manipulative arguments, into logical reasoning; something that most people are not prepared to do.

Tough question #11: Give me an alternate explanation for this phenomenon.

Again, this is a good way to move a discussion back onto logical ground. Many liberals will emotionally assert things like “Reagan budget cuts” are responsible for all fo the economic ills in this nation. This is surely an absurd generalization, something which will come out when this question is asked. Chances are, the one who asserts such a position will be embarrassed to be caught trying to make things appear more simple than they really are.

Tough question #12: If you are unwilling to defend a position, how do we know it is defensible?

Especially in college classes, students are often frustrated by professors who, at least on the surface, refuse to take a position on an issue. They try to appear objective, even when they are not. Students should try to force them to defend what they say they believe, and what they claim is true.

Final Note

Asking questions is a powerful strategy, but it must be done with the correct demeanor. We must always question the ideas presented, but must be careful to not challenge the authority of the professor. As you present this material to the students, encourage them to use these strategies as a crowbar to pop open the mids of others, rather than as a club to pound shut the minds of others. As Christians, we must always hold to the admonition to “speak the truth in love.”