

September 2010

WHAT IS APOLOGETICS?

By Henry Middleton, PhD and Phil Johnson, MCE

Is apologetics all about saying you're sorry about something? Of course not; it is derived from the Greek word *apologia*, which refers to giving a reason. Christian apologetics includes both 1) defending the Christian faith when speaking with non-Christians and 2) encouraging and strengthening the faith of believers. Christians are encouraged, actually commanded, in the scriptures to be able to give the reasons for why they believe and have the hope in them.

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;...*¹ (I Peter 3:15)

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," should be the foundational motivation for all behavior of the Christian. This should be behind all we do, including apologetics. He is Holy and complete, and He has given us sufficient information and power to accomplish any task He would command us to do. When we honor Christ as Lord, we will have the proper mindset for defending our faith.

The phrase, "and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you," is the "why" or reason for apologetic study. It is also one reason why Christians should engage in scientific study and research. Science is the study of the physical reality as God created it, and as believers it should be done as a defense of God's work of creation.

Defending the faith is an intellectual process.



Dr. Henry Middleton presented talks for the youth group meetings at Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.²

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15)

Study of God's Word to give a reason for our hope also includes proper application and interpretation of God's Word. Bad theology is a result of not rightly dividing the Word of God.

The aim of apologetics is evangelism and discipleship, not winning an argument. The aim is to spread the Gospel and to make those who already are believers stronger in the faith so that their light so shines before men that even more are drawn to repentance. It is the defense "for the hope that is in you." It is why you believe, what you believe. Our "hope" is that because Jesus came to Earth, died on the cross, and rose again, we by faith and repentance can be with Him in glory. The proper attitude is to honor the Lord Jesus and to study to know why you believe what you believe and how to present that to anyone who asks, yet "with meekness and fear."

You cannot argue somebody into the Kingdom of God. Faith and repentance are heart issues, volitional issues, more than intellectual issues.

No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."

¹ All Scriptural references are from the New American Standard Bible.

² On June 9 and 16, 2010, Dr. Middleton gave an *Introduction to Apologetics* and returned the following week to do a presentation on *World views and the Myth of Neutral Ground* along with Lisle's apologetic procedure. TASC has many speakers that provide talks for churches or other organizations. Contact us at <http://www.tasc-creationscience.org> or call 919-341-8004 to arrange for a speaker.

It is written in the prophets, "AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. (John 6:44, 65)

A Christian should: 1) present the Gospel, 2) deal with objections in a biblical manner, 3) leave the rest to God. You have not failed if the person does not believe. It is not your job to win or save anyone. Only the Holy Spirit can bring someone to salvation. It is your job to present the Gospel as clearly as possible.

A Biblical example of apologetics is Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17. First Paul shows the Athenians' ignorance.

And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." (Acts 17: 22-23)

He then explains the biblical God.

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things; and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, "For we also are His offspring." (Acts 17: 24-28)

He then shows the folly of idolatry.

Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. (Acts 17: 29)

Finally he presents the Christian worldview and calls for repentance.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17: 30-31)

Paul used this approach because the Athenians had a false understanding of the nature of God which significantly affected their entire worldview.

Another Biblical example is Peter at the time of Pentecost. Peter did not have the same starting point as Paul did at Mars Hill because the Jews already believed in the biblical God. He did not have to explain creation by God and the fall of man. They were already aware of those truths. Peter cited prophecy that pointed to Jesus as the Christ, and he called them to repentance. Peter did not need to build a monotheistic worldview for them; they already understood it.

The Epistles of Galatians and Hebrews are also examples of apologetics. Galatians defends salvation by grace apart from works. Hebrews shows how the Gospel fulfills the temple and sacrifices and is the complete fulfillment of the law.

Apologetics incorporates history, science, other religions and cults, theology, philosophy, and ethics. In historical studies we defend the historical reliability of the Bible, background information, and the writing and transmission of the Bible. In the area of science we defend Creation in six literal days, evidence of the complexity of created things and the necessity of a Creator providing the structure and information in the physical universe.

Christians need to know how to respond to false religions that are quite willing to fill the spiritual void in man. This void results because of man's rejection of God. Islam, materialism, and atheism all try to counterfeit the truth and fill that spiritual void. Theology dictates our response to cults and other denominations.

In Christian philosophy we use logic and the foundation of knowledge. In any ethical decision or debate we must use Biblical standards and principles. God's standards are the only absolute standards on which to base ethical and moral decisions. He will never vary on what is right and wrong, but the opinions and attitudes of man will change frequently and cycle throughout history.

The Bible is the foundation for a Christian understanding of everything. Therefore, learn to think Biblically.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 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,... (II Corinthians 10:3-5)

Thinking Biblically includes a true love for God.

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your minhd, and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)

weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (I Peter 3:7)

When our minds understand the things of God we are better equipped to love and serve God with all our being. ☞

A LITTLE PHRASE

By Phil Johnson, MCE

Last month I had the joy of being the best man at my son's wedding. As best man you give a toast or charge to the new couple during the reception, and while it was not delivered in the polished manner as was hoped, here is what was charged to them and to all married folks celebrating their union with them.

A little phrase sometimes encompasses a great deal of information or a fantastic conformation of a given truth. These little phrases even appear at times as an afterthought to what was just stated. Genesis 1:16 is a good example that contains a small five word phrase that almost appears as an afterthought or an "oh yeah, I almost forgot." *"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also."* He made the stars also! Such a small phrase that covers the creation of the vast majority of the heavenly bodies we can see in the universe. In the original Hebrew text the phrase is only three words, "the stars also." So much creative power in such a little phrase!

There is another little phrase in the book of I Peter that is only six words long, yet just as *"he made the stars also"* encompasses so much of what God created, this phrase encompasses extreme influence over the majority of your spiritual life once you are married.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the

"That your prayers be not hindered" is an interesting phrase in that it makes it very clear that the marital relationship also greatly affects the spiritual well being of the marriage partners. In one translation the phrase is *"your prayers will not be heard."* Just as we are told before we partake of the Lord's Supper we are to analyze our hearts to see if we have anything against anyone else and to make it right before we partake, we must be right with our spouse to keep our prayers from being hindered, or even *"your prayers will not be heard"* is implied. If your prayers are "hindered" or "not heard" then as a believer you have lost power to live victoriously in the spirit. I have witnessed the decline in the effectiveness in a man's prayer life when they refuse to live at peace and harmony according to I Peter. But the same is true for the wife if she refuses to honor her husband and live in harmony with him, even though this is written specifically for the husband. A believer with their prayers being hindered is like a tire that will not hold air, powerless to be of any use. It's just a small little phrase, almost an afterthought of the consequences for not treating your wife properly; but if forgotten about could have dire consequences for all believers. The charge here is to make sure all of us as believers are mindful of this "small little phrase" and the consequences to our spiritual lives for failing to live in harmony with our spouses. ☞

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 9, 7:00 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 631

We will interview Dr. Henry Middleton on apologetics. What exactly do we mean by "apologetics?" Why is it important? What are the different approaches to applying apologetics? These and other questions will be discussed at the meeting. Dr. Middleton will also answer questions from the floor after the interview.

Contributions can be made at the TASC web site at www.tasc-creationscience.org through any of these major credit cards or through PayPal.



Or mail your contribution to: TASC, P.O. Box 12051, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2051