



METRO PRAISE INTERNATIONAL

WEEK 2: APOLOGETICS: THE BASICS

301 CLASS: PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS BY PROFESSOR JOE WYROSTEK

1 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV), “15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to **give an answer (apologia)** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

I. UNDERSTANDING PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

1. **Apologetics** is, “giving a defense of the Christian faith to unbelievers.” And a “**Christian Apologist**” is “someone who does biblical apologetics.”
 - a. **Apologetics as Proof:** “Presenting a rational basis for faith or “proving Christianity to be true.” Jesus and the apostles often offered evidence to people who had difficulty believing that the gospel was true. Note John 14:11; 20:24–31; 1 Cor. 15:1–11. Believers themselves sometimes doubt, and at that point apologetics becomes useful for them even apart from its role in dialogue with unbelievers. That is to say, apologetics confronts unbelief in the believer as well as in the unbeliever.” (pp. 1-2, Loc. 918).
 - b. **Apologetics as Defense:** “Answering the objections of unbelief. Paul describes his mission as “defending and confirming the gospel” (Phil. 1:7 NIV; cf. v. 16). Confirming may refer to number 1 above, but defending is more specifically focused on giving answers to objections. Much of Paul’s writing in the New Testament is apologetic in this sense. Think of how many times he responds to imaginary (or real) objectors in his letter to the Romans. Think of how often Jesus deals with the objections of religious leaders in the Gospel of John.” (p. 2, Loc. 938).
 - c. **Apologetics as Offense:** “Attacking the foolishness of unbelieving thought (Ps. 14:1; 1 Cor. 1:18–2:16). In view of the importance of number 2, it is not surprising that some will define apologetics as “the defense of the faith.”²² But that definition can be misleading. God calls his people not only to answer the objections of unbelievers, but also to go on the attack against falsehood. Paul says, “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the

knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Non-Christian thinking is “folly” (ESV), or “foolishness” (NIV), according to Scripture (1 Cor. 1:18–2:16; 3:18–23), and one function of apologetics is to expose that foolishness for what it is.” (p. 2, Loc. 938).

2. **Presuppositions** are “beliefs that people suppose beforehand to use as an antecedent (pre-condition) in logic or fact.” (*Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary*).
 - a. **Everyone has Presuppositions:** “We hold it to be true that circular reasoning is the only reasoning that is possible for finite man when it comes to the “first truth” or “ultimate foundation.” (p. 257, Loc. 6160).
 - i. For example, the scientist argues in a circle when they try to use science to prove science or when a philosopher tries to use reason to prove reason. The non-Christian, especially the non-theist, has a faulty foundation because, “How do they know what they know about science and reason is true?”
 - ii. Therefore, circularity (or foundational presuppositions) are justified only at one point: when they are used as an argument for the ultimate criterion of all knowledge. And they can be proven true because without them in place as the necessary precondition, everything else leads to absurdity (p. 258, Loc. 6189).
 1. It is absurd to believe “nothing” can produce “something.”
 2. It is absurd to believe in an infinite regress. Example, how would you ever reach the present if you had to traverse an infinite amount of time?
 3. It is absurd to believe that your mind and free will are an illusion, because everything you would do and think is meaningless (illusion).
 4. Dr. Alex Rosenberg (philosopher at Duke), answered the following questions in his book, *The Atheist Guide to Reality*: “*Is there a God?* No. *What is the nature of reality?* What physics says it is. *What is the purpose of the universe?* There is none. *What is the meaning of life?* Ditto. *Why am I here?* Just dumb luck. *Does prayer work?* Of course not. *Is there a soul? Is it immortal?* Are you kidding? *Is there free will?* Not a chance! *What happens when we die?* Everything pretty much goes on as before, except us. *What is the difference between right and wrong, good and bad?* There is no moral difference between them. *Why should I be moral?* Because it makes you feel better than being immoral. *Is abortion, euthanasia, suicide, paying taxes, foreign aid, or anything else you*

don't like forbidden, permissible, or sometimes obligatory? Anything goes.” (Rosenberg, Alex. The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life without Illusions (pp. 2-3).

iii. In conclusion, the Christian is valid in saying:

1. Premise 1: Whatever God says is true.
2. Premise 2: God said He in the Bible He is Truth.
3. Conclusion: Therefore, it is true God is Truth.

- b. **Everyone has Presuppositions, but Only the Christian's are Justified:** “When we adopt the Word of God as our ultimate commitment, our ultimate standard, our ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, God's Word then becomes our “presupposition.” That is to say, since we use it to evaluate all other beliefs, we must regard it as more certain than any other beliefs.” (p. 3, Loc. 963).
3. **The Myth of Neutrality:** “To tell the unbeliever that we can reason with him on a neutral basis, however that claim might help to attract his attention, is a lie. Indeed, it is a lie of the most serious kind, for it falsifies the very heart of the gospel—that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is no neutrality. Our witness is either God's wisdom or the world's foolishness. There is nothing in between. Even if neutrality were possible, that route would be forbidden to us.” (p. 8, Loc. 1038).
- a. **Unbelievers are Rebellious, Not Neutral:** “The point is not that unbelievers are simply ignorant of the truth. Rather, God has revealed himself to each person with unmistakable clarity, both in creation (Ps. 19; Rom. 1:18–21) and in man's own nature (Gen. 1:26ff.). In one sense, the unbeliever knows God (Rom. 1:21). At some level of his consciousness or unconsciousness, that knowledge remains. But in spite of that knowledge, the unbeliever intentionally distorts the truth, exchanging it for a lie (Rom. 1:18–32; 1 Cor. 1:18–2:16 [note esp. 2:14]; 2 Cor. 4:4). Thus, the non-Christian is deceived and “led astray” (Titus 3:3). He knows God (Rom. 1:21) and does not know him at the same time (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:14). Plainly, these facts underscore the point that God's revelation must govern our apologetic approach. The unbeliever cannot (because he will not) come to faith apart from the biblical gospel of salvation. We would not know about the unbeliever's condition apart from Scripture. And we cannot address it apologetically unless we are ready to listen to Scripture's own principles of apologetics.” (pp. 7-8, Loc. 1080).
- b. **Don't Give Up Your Ground, Stand on the Rock of God's Word:** “In apologetic argument, as in everything else we do, we must presuppose the truth of God's Word. We either accept God's authority or we do not, and not to do so is sin. It doesn't matter that we sometimes find ourselves conversing with non-Christians. Then, too—perhaps especially then (for then we are bearing witness)—we must be faithful to our Lord's revelation.” (p. 8, Loc. 1038).

4. **Presuppositional Apologetics:** The discipline of defending and presenting the Christian faith to unbelievers with the presuppositions that God exists and is revealed in the Bible.
 - a. **Scriptural Basis for Presuppositional Apologetics:** Acts 17:23-31, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Peter 3:15-16 & Jude 1:3. Also, consider the life of Jesus.
 - b. **Basic Understanding of the Christian's Presuppositions:** God's rationality is the basis for human faith and human faith (in God and His Word) is the basis for human reasoning. (p. 10).
 - i. C.S. Lewis' Argument from Reason (Longer Version):
 1. Premise 1: Since everything in nature can be wholly explained in terms of nonrational causes, human reason (more precisely, the power of drawing conclusions based solely on the rational cause of logical insight) must have a source outside of nature.
 2. Premise 2: If human reason came from non-reason it would lose all rational credentials and would cease to be reason.
 3. Premise 3: So, human reason cannot come from non-reason (from 2).
 4. Premise 4: So human reason must come from a source outside nature that is itself rational (from 1 and 3).
 5. Premise 5: This supernatural source of reason may itself be dependent on some further source of reason, but a chain of such dependent sources cannot go on forever. Eventually, we must reason back to the existence of eternal, non-dependent source of human reason.
 6. Conclusion: Therefore, there exists an eternal, self-existent, rational Being who is the ultimate source of human reason. This Being we call God (from 4-5). (Lewis, *Miracles*, chap. 4)
 - ii. My simple version:
 1. Premise 1: Reason is valid if it can be proven true without man's reason.
 2. Premise 2: God is the only option to validate man's reason.
 3. Conclusion: Therefore, either God's exists and reason is valid or God doesn't exist and reasoning is invalid and thus you cannot understand this argument.

- c. **The Absurdity of Life without God:** To reject God and His Word is to reduce everything (including reason) to absurdity. Below is Dr. William Craig’s argument from meaning.
 - i. Premise 1: If God exists, life has meaning.
 - ii. Premise 2: Life has meaning.
 - iii. Conclusion: Therefore, God exists.

II. RELATED VIDEOS & ARTICLES

1. *Science and God*, by Dr. John Lennox, <https://youtu.be/DoLTcv-RPdM>
2. *The Myth of Neutrality*, by Dr. Jason Lisle, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jWjX9-jwCU>
3. *Never Give Up Your Ground*, by Dr. Jason Lisle, <https://youtu.be/jIfdyKdZs-4>
4. *The Absurdity of Life without God*, by Dr. William Lane Craig, Article: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-absurdity-of-life-without-god> & Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWRoJ9myovY>

III. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is apologetics and who is an apologist?
2. What are the three aspects of apologetics?
3. What are presuppositions? Explain how everyone has them but only the ones Christians have are justified.
4. What is the “myth of neutrality” as it’s related to apologetics?
5. What is presuppositional apologetics? Explain why it’s biblical to do apologetics this way.
6. Practice the Lewis’ “Argument from Reason” and Craig’s “Argument from Meaning.”