

Apologetics 101

Introduction to Apologetics Week 1

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Welcome!!!

- SO glad you are here!!
- These next 8 weeks could radically change your life – AND – radically prepare you for the next chapter of your life.
- **STAY THE COURSE!!!** These topics form a complete thought. If you only hear some of them, you will leave with an incomplete thought!
- **NOTE:** I will do my best to lead us through some complex material, but I am NOT an expert or scholar!!

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Course Objectives

- Learn how to think in reasoned argument fashion
- Create rational, logical, sequential discussion
- Be exposed to the major areas of thought in Apologetics
- Learn to own **your** faith in confidence
- Increase your preparation to **share** and **defend** your faith with confidence
- Learn how to effectively engage with people outside the faith who think differently – Remove Obstacles to Faith
- Pursue excellence in being an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor 5:20), carrying his aroma to the world (2 Cor 2:14-15)
- Cultivate the maturity and ability to have productive and meaningful dialogue with people you disagree with

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Intro Q&A

- How many of you have close family and friends who are unbelievers?
- Have you ever tried to share your faith with them? If so, how? How did they respond?
- Are there certain things that make it difficult for you to share your faith with others?
- What do you think would make you feel more confident or comfortable doing so?
- Are there parts of Christianity you have a hard time with? What difficult questions do **you** have regarding your faith?
- What are some common roadblocks **you** face?

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Apologetic Strategy

This course is structured to introduce the Classical Method of Apologetics

- The first half of the course might be thought of as ***playing offense*** and making the case for theism:
 1. Introduction to Apologetics
 2. Challenging the Atheist
 3. The Case for Theism – Natural Theology
 4. Faith and Science
- The second half of the course might be thought of as ***playing defense*** and establishing Christianity as the highest form of theism:
 5. The Reliability of Scripture
 6. The Case for the Resurrection
 7. The Exclusivity of Christ & Pluralism
 8. The Problem of Evil and Hell
 9. Difficult Passages of the Old Testament

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Apologetic Strategy

This course is structured to teach you the Classical Method of Apologetics

- The **Classical Method of Apologetics** has two main steps:¹
 1. Make the case for theism in general
 - Demonstrate the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and personal Creator by employing natural theology. Natural theology provides arguments for the existence of God based on his general revelation in nature, without an appeal to Scripture. This would include arguments such as the cosmological, teleological, ontological, and axiological arguments (which will be covered in this course). If theism is valid, it follows that miracles, namely the resurrection, are possible
 2. Make the case that Christianity is the highest form of theism
 - Demonstrate the reliability of Scripture, which provides the accounts of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection
 - Demonstrate the case for the resurrection

1. Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), 353-354.

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Tonight's Objectives

To introduce...

- definition of apologetics
- biblical case for apologetics
- current cultural climate
- objectives of apologetics
- rules of engagement for apologetics
- apologetic strategy this course employs

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Definition of Apologetics

*"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me." **Phi 1:7 NIV***

- 'defending' – *apologia* (Greek)
- A verbal defense, a reasoned statement or argument
- During the time of the New Testament, "an apologia was a formal courtroom defense of something (2 Timothy 4:16)"¹

Christian Apologetics is simply the discipline of giving a reasoned defense, or argument, for the truth of Christianity!

1. L. G. Whitlock Jr., "Apologetics," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 68, quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 24.

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Biblical Case for Apologetics

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”

1 Pet 3:15 NIV

- ‘answer’ – also *apologia* (Greek)
- *apologia* (or verb form *apologeomai*) is used 8 times in the New Testament (Act 22:1; 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Cor 7:11; Phi 1:7,16; 2 Tim 4:16, 1 Pet 3:15-16)
- 3 of these times it is used in the context of providing a rational defense for the gospel (Phi 1:7,16; 1 Pet 3:15-16)¹

We are instructed to always be ready to give a reasoned defense, or answer for the hope we have!

1. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 24.

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Biblical Case for Apologetics

“Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”” **Mat 22:37 NIV**

“let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity,” **Heb 6:1 NIV**

“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, . . . See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” **Col 2:6-8 ESV**

*We are to pursue both spiritual **and intellectual** maturity in the faith.*

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Biblical Case for Apologetics

Faith and Reason – So what do we mean by a ‘reasoned’ answer?

- one might associate reason with things like logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences. Though it is a part of these things, it is not limited to them and is much greater than them
- reason has to do with how humans apprehend and perceive things, judge what they are, and determine causes and effects¹
- it is *“how the human creature comes to understand, process and decide how to live one’s life given the multiform of ways in which reality can be apprehended and the ways in which we are shaped by competing narratives”*² -Craig Boyd

Reason should be understood broadly, and as inextricable from how humans come to believe, trust in, or know anything

1. Steve Wilkens, *Faith and Reason: Three Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 146-147.
2. *Ibid.*, 138.

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Biblical Case for Apologetics

Faith and Reason – Then what does it mean to have ‘faith’?

- Scripture tells us faith is *“the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* and that *“without faith it is impossible to please him (God), for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists.”* **Heb 11:1,6 ESV**
 - ‘faith’ – *pistis* (Greek): belief, assurance, or moral conviction of religious truth
 - derived from primary verb *peitho* - to convince by argument, rely on by inward certainty, have confidence in, or trust.¹
- recall that reason is inextricable from how we come to believe or trust in anything
- faith, therefore, is never blind, it is *believing* and *trusting* in something upon some type of justification, or good reason (personal experience, revelation, empirical observation, science, logic, etc.) *(Paul’s faith was built on Christ’s appearance to him)*
*“faith is relying on what you have reason to believe is true and trustworthy. Faith involves the readiness to act as if something were so.”*² -J.P. Moreland

1. James Strong, *Strong’s Greek Hebrew Dictionary*, 2012
2. J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 70.

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Biblical Case for Apologetics

Examples of the employment of reason to further the gospel in Scripture¹

- Jesus appeals to miracles and fulfilled prophecies as evidence that he was who he claimed to be (Joh 14:11, Luk 24:25-27)
- The apostles also appealed to miracles and fulfilled prophecy (Act 2:22-32)
- Paul often reasoned with others to spread the gospel (Act 17:17, 19:8)
 - He sought common ground with unbelievers (Act 17:22-23)
 - He appealed to the evidence of prophecy (Act 28:23) and eyewitness testimony of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-8)
 - He believed evidence for God exists in nature such that unbelievers are without excuse for rejecting God (Rom 1:19-20)

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 15.

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Current Cultural Climate

The Changing Religious Landscape

- Over roughly the last decade, the % of U.S. adults who identify as:¹
 - Christian has decreased from 77% to 65%
 - Atheist, Agnostic, or “Nothing in Particular” (the religiously unaffiliated) has increased from 17% to 26%
- Over roughly the last two decades in the U.S.:²
 - Practicing Christians have decreased from 45% to 25%
 - Weekly church attendance has decreased from 42% to 29%

1. “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An Update on America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center, October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

2. “Signs of Decline & Hope Among Key Metrics of Faith” Barna: State of the Church 2020, March 4, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/changing-state-of-the-church/>. *Note that Practicing Christians were considered those who identified as Christian, agreed strongly that faith is very important in their lives and had attended church within the past month.

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Current Cultural Climate

The Prevalence of Pluralism

- Pluralism is the belief that all religions can be affirmed as valid or true
 - 8 in 10 members of mainline Protestant churches and Catholics believe many religions can lead to eternal life.¹
 - 6 in 10 of those who are members of evangelical and historically black churches believe the same.
 - 7 in 10 Americans with any religious affiliation whatsoever agree.

1. "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices," The Pew Forum, 2008, 58, <https://www.pewforum.org/2008/06/01/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-beliefs-and-practices/>, quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 2011), 567.

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Current Cultural Climate

The Dropout Problem - Teenagers and Young Adults

- 3 out of 5 young Christians (18-29 year olds) drop out of church after attending regularly due to 6 primary reasons: ¹
 - 1. Doubtless** They feel the church is not a safe place to express doubts and its response to doubts is trivial
 - 2. Anti-Science** They believe faith and science are incompatible yet see the benefits of science in advancements in medicine, technology, and other things. They also feel science is accessible, whereas many matters of faith are not
 - 3. Shallow** They perceive Christianity as mere slogans, platitudes, and proof texting. They do not understand the way Christianity answers life's deepest existential questions. They do not connect it with using their gifts, talents, and passions for their overall purpose or calling

1. David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me.: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 24. For a summary of this study see also <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-Christians-leave-church/>. These teenagers and young adults drop out of church either permanently or for an extended period of time.

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Current Cultural Climate

The Dropout Problem - Teenagers and Young Adults

- 4. Exclusive** They have a hard time with Christianity's exclusivity claims. They esteem acceptance, open-mindedness, and tolerance as paramount and gloss over differences with others
- 5. Repressive** They feel stifled by Christianity's religious rules, or mores, particularly sexual mores
- 6. Overprotective** They feel Christianity discourages creative expression and cultural engagement. They do not know how to marry their faith with their desire to re-create, re-imagine, take risks, innovate, and be involved in culture¹

Apologetics addresses these issues!

1. David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 92-93.

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Objectives of Apologetics

1. Impact the Culture¹ – “You are the salt of the earth” *Mat 5:13 ESV*

- Secularism and postmodernism are becoming increasingly prevalent in the U.S.
 - Truth and morality are subjective. They are seen as socially constructed and culturally relative (there is no absolute truth, nor right or wrong)
 - The only legitimate way to gain knowledge is through the natural empirical sciences.
- Christians are often portrayed poorly in the public sphere as bigoted, anti-intellectual, and intolerant.
 - *“If we are going to be wise, spiritual people prepared to meet the crisis of our age, we must be a studying, learning community that values the life of the mind.”*² -J.P. Moreland

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 15-18.

2. J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 40.

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Objectives of Apologetics

2. Strengthen Your Faith¹ – *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial”* Jam 1:12 ESV

- Apologetics can help you remain steadfast in your faith during times of doubt, trial, and spiritual dryness.
 - Proactively working through difficult questions and intellectual obstacles to the faith cultivates a deeper trust in God and prepares you to better endure times of doubt and despair.²
 - This type of study should strengthen your foundation!!

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 18-22.

2. James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What it is and Why We Do it* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press: 2011), 28.

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Objectives of Apologetics

2. Strengthen Your Faith¹ – *“be wise as serpents and innocent as doves”* Mat 10:16 ESV

- Apologetics will increase your confidence in engaging with unbelievers.
 - By doing the work and taking the time to sort out *what* you believe and *why* you believe it, you will be more prepared than many people in our culture today to engage in constructive discourse:

“We are driven by our deepest beliefs and interpret the world according to them often almost automatically. . . . these beliefs are often held in a pre-reflective and unexamined manner, . . . many people fail to bring their worldviews into critical focus. . . . a torrent of social forces encourages us to be unconsciously swept along with the surging culture that we might obediently consume its products, endorse its ideology and generally do its bidding.”²—Douglas Groothuis

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 18-22.

2. Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2011), 75.

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Objectives of Apologetics

3. Convince the Unbeliever¹ – *“he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus” Act 28:23-24 ESV*

- **Convince** (*peitho*) – to persuade by words to believe!!²
- Apologetics should be one component of a wholistic evangelical strategy (along with prayer, personal testimony, relationship, and sharing the simple gospel)
- Apologetics should not be overinflated and should be employed appropriately
- To be clear, a new Christian should share the gospel as the Spirit leads and provides opportunities! One does not need to have extensive philosophical and theological training to be used by God!
- Long term, however, a maturing Christian 10 years down the road should be more equipped with tools to be effective in their ministry than when they first received Christ.³

1. William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2010), 22-24.

2. James Strong, *Strong's Greek Hebrew Dictionary*, 2012.

3. J.P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 150-151.

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Rules of Engagement

1. Reverence for the Spirit – God’s Role in Convincing the Unbeliever

- God is ultimately the one who draws and convinces the unbeliever
 - Jesus said: *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” Joh 6:44 ESV*
- His Spirit convicts the unbeliever of their sinful condition, His righteousness, and their condemnation before Him¹
 - Jesus also said, *“it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment,” Joh 16:7-8 ESV*

1. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 72. Scribd.

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Rules of Engagement

Reverence for the Spirit – God’s Role in Convincing the Unbeliever

- When we see people seeking God with an open heart, it is evidence of his Spirit at work in them, drawing and convicting them¹
- Scripture tells us God is always at his work in this way
 - Jesus said, *“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” Joh 5:17 NIV*

1. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 73, Scribd.

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Rules of Engagement

Reverence for the Spirit – Our Role in Convincing the Unbeliever

- We are free agents through which God accomplishes his work
 - **We are to be conduits.**
- We freely choose to participate in God’s ministry of reconciliation such that we allow his Spirit to work through us
 - We are tasked to do this:
 - *“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; . . . Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” 2 Cor 5:18,20 ESV*

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Rules of Engagement

Reverence for the Spirit – Our Role in Convincing the Unbeliever

- It is the Holy Spirit who works through our use of apologetics for the sake of the gospel.
 - *“When one presents reasons for his faith, one is not working apart from or against the Holy Spirit. . . .Of course, it is true that we can never argue anyone into the kingdom of God. Conversion is exclusively the role of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit may use our arguments to draw people to himself.”¹ -William Lane Craig*
- WE are helping to remove intellectual obstacles! **(SK ILL)**

1. William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 92-93. Scribd.

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Rules of Engagement

1. Know Your Role!

- Our responsibility is to be faithful participants in God's ministry of reconciliation. We are to pursue excellence in giving an account of our faith
- God handles the rest. Belief or disbelief does not hinge solely on intellectual arguments
- *“The reasons for unbelief are incredibly diverse, and many of these reasons are hidden deep under psychological and personal baggage. Apologists must be sensitive to such issues, and they must realize that arguments alone will typically be powerless to overcome such deep-rooted anger and resentment. The road to healing for such people may include a healthy dose of apologetics, but it will likely be a long road and the majority of the freight will be carried by relationship and the inward working of the Holy Spirit.”¹ -James Beilby*

1. James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What it is and Why We Do it* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press: 2011), 25.

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Rules of Engagement

2. Know Your Audience!

- *“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, . . . Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” Col 4:5-6 ESV*
- Consider the method below for engaging in conversation with unbelievers ¹

Question 1: What does this person believe?

“To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.” Pro 18:13 NIV

Asking questions helps people become aware of their own assumptions and blind spots

Question 2: Why does this person believe it?

Ask the unbeliever why they’ve come to believe their way is right. *“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” Pro 16:25 NIV*

Question 3: Where do we agree?

Seek to affirm where God’s universal truths reveal themselves in other peoples’ views

Question 4: Based on this knowledge, how should I proceed?

Is there a particular matter they really struggle with? Are their impediments to faith intellectual or emotional? Are they due to a misunderstanding of Christianity?

1. Sean McDowell, *A New Kind of Apologist: Adopting Fresh Strategies, Addressing the Latest Issues, Engaging the Culture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2016), 23-28.

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Rules of Engagement

3. Know Your Posture!

- Understand that you are answering a person and not just a question
- What we say is just as important as how we say it¹
 - *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” 1 Cor 13:1-2 ESV*
- The goal is not to win an argument, it is to patiently and gently usher people into a life changing relationship with God²
 - *“the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,” 2 Tim 2:24-25 ESV*

1. Sean McDowell, *A New Kind of Apologist: Adopting Fresh Strategies, Addressing the Latest Issues, Engaging the Culture* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2016) 12. See McDowell’s story of answering a hairstylist’s question on the problem of evil.

2. Ibid., 12-13, 19.

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Rules of Engagement

4. Know Your Tips!

- Exude confidence with humility, not certainty with haughtiness
- Don't give people the impression you're patronizing them
 - *don't treat people in a way that is apparently kind or helpful, but evidences, or implicitly conveys a feeling of superiority. Be careful not to make people feel like they are your project*
- Agree before disagreeing and help people come to conclusions themselves
- See things with sufficient nuance. This helps to find common ground with people!
- It's okay to ask tough questions and subject Christianity to critical inquiry, it is robust enough to handle it.
- Get comfortable being uncomfortable! This is a healthy part of growing intellectually in the faith.

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GREAT RESOURCES

Top 2 Books to Start With

- *On Guard* - William Lane Craig
- *10 Answers for Atheists* - Alex McFarland

Apps

- Reasonable Faith - William Lane Craig
- Cross Examined - Frank Turek
- Unbelievable (Premier Christian Radio) - Justin Brierly
- Got Questions

Websites

- <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/> (William Lane Craig)
- <https://reasons.org/> (Reasons to Believe)
- <http://www.veritas.org/> (The Veritas Forum)
- <http://classicalmonotheisticchristianapologetics.com/apologetic-resources/websites/> (one stop shopping for apologetics websites!)
- <https://www.rzim.org/site/help/apologetics>
- <https://beliefmap.org/>

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GREAT RESOURCES

Other Books

Accessible

- *Love Your God with All Your Mind* - J.P. Moreland
- *The Reason for God* - Timothy Keller
- *Is God a Moral Monster* - Paul Copan
- *Confronting Christianity* - Rebecca McLaughlin
- *The Case for Faith* - Lee Strobel
- *The Case for Christ* - Lee Strobel
- *Cold-Case Christianity* - J. Warner Wallace
- *Unbelievable?* - Justin Brierley
- *Mere Christianity* - C.S. Lewis

Advanced

- *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for the Christian Faith*
- Douglas Groothuis
- *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*
- William Lane Craig
- *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*
- Norman L. Geisler & Frank Turek
- *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* - Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell
- *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*
- J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig
- *Neighboring Faiths: A Christian Introduction to World Religions*
- Winfried Corduan

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**Thanks for Coming!!!
See You Next Week!!!**

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