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GETTING STARTED

Welcome to the “Tough Questions” apologetics study. We commend you for being a faithful fisher of men (and women) and for desiring to become better equipped in your evangelistic efforts. Apologetics is an intimidating topic to many, but this study will help you discover that even tough questions can be answered simply and conversationally, in a way that guides your listeners to consider the claims of the gospel.

Whether you are encountering questions from friends and family, or you want to be prepared to give answers as you speak with strangers, we trust this course will increase your confidence and provide handy tools for your arsenal while you reach the lost.

Although this course can be used for individual study, it is ideally suited for use in small and large groups. A group setting can provide the needed encouragement and accountability.

For group use, notes for the leader are highlighted in the lessons. Be sure to review these in planning the study and preordering materials. This kit includes one Study Guide and enough tracts to get you started, but be sure to order additional Study Guides so that each participant has their own and sufficient tracts to complete the homework assignments.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Each session includes the following parts:

- **Open in Prayer:** Begin each lesson in prayer, asking God to give you a deeper understanding of His Word and a genuine concern for the lost.
- **Share Your Experiences:** As you put into practice what you're learning each week, and begin sharing these biblical truths with the lost, hearing one another's experiences will build your confidence. Be sure to allow adequate time for this interaction.
- **Ray / For Your Reflection:** Read this thought-provoking text before viewing the video, to prepare your heart for the class.
- **View the Video:** Watch the video as a group. The video sessions are approximately 30 minutes in length.
- **Discussion Questions:** As time allows, discuss these questions to help you recall the information learned in the video and apply it to your life. Depending on your group size, you may want to divide into smaller groups to discuss the questions. Allow each participant to express his thoughts, being careful to avoid arguing or having anyone dominate the conversation.
- **Quote // Unquote:** These words of wisdom, from notable apologists, add insights on the important role of apologetics.
- **A Ready Answer:** These additional questions and answers will further equip you to "give a defense [answer] to everyone who asks you" a reason for your hope. These ready answers have been gleaned from *The Evidence Bible* (compiled by Ray Comfort), where you can find hundreds more.
- **Sharing Made Simple:** Apologetics isn't something to build your intellect in an ivory tower, but to share with the real world on the dusty road of life. These weekly practical assignments are the

most important part of the study. Every week you will be challenged to gradually stretch your evangelistic muscles, interact with others, and share what you have learned with the lost in your community.

To receive the maximum benefit from this study, please commit to completing these activities. You will be expected to share these experiences with others during the next session.

- **Digging Deeper:** This at-home Bible study will delve deeper into the biblical foundations of the topics covered in the video. God's Word is powerful, and in searching it you will discover wonderful truths that reinforce what you're learning in class.
- **Memory Verse:** Each session includes a Scripture verse to commit to memory. These will help guide your attitudes and actions as you prepare to bring biblical truths to the lost.

Whether you're completing this study in a home group, Sunday school class, or discipleship training class, we pray that you will become well equipped with ready answers as you share the message of everlasting life with a world that desperately needs to hear it.

APOLOGETICS DEFINED

OPEN IN PRAYER

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Go around the room and, one at a time, briefly share why you have come to this class. What are you hoping to accomplish by taking this course? Are you wanting to have answers to feel more confident to begin witnessing, or to further develop your current evangelism skills? If you're already sharing your faith and have encountered questions that you can't answer, what kinds of questions were they? How did you respond to the situation?

RAY // FOR YOUR REFLECTION

You're at an office party on the tenth floor of a high-rise when you hear the distant sound of sirens. Everyone rushes to the windows to see what's happening. They are looking at another high-rise about eight feet across a narrow alley from your building.

Smoke is billowing from a window and you can see that a number of people are trapped! You hear gasps from those around you as they come to grips with the reality that within minutes, they are going to see people burned alive in front of their eyes. Suddenly of one your

coworkers turns and runs out of the office in a seeming panic. You wonder why he would be so cowardly as to run away.

Moments later, he comes crashing through the door like a madman, runs across the office, and smashes the window with the front of a ten-foot ladder. The group rushes to help him to secure the ladder into the window of the opposing building. It is then that you see the wisdom of what he was doing as those trapped people begin, one by one, to crawl across the ladder to safety.

What was it that caused people to crawl across a ladder? It was fear! It was the knowledge of what would happen to them if they stayed in the building.

Now think what this same gesture would have meant to them if they didn't know that their building was on fire and their lives at stake. If they thought that they were safe, someone in another building shoving a ladder into their building would be more than meaningless. It would be alarming harassment, worthy of a call to the police.

In this study we will be looking at apologetics arguments, which should be seen as a means to an end. We are hoping that unbelievers will believe us when we move from arguments to the wonderful claims of the gospel. What we want is to say, "Your building is on fire!" and have them understand their predicament.

Apologetics alone does little to alarm sinners. Our arguments and answers can serve as an attention-getter, but they don't show the lost world their terrible plight. They merely sound a distant alarm. What sinners need is to smell the smoke, feel the heat, and think of their terrifying fate.

The whole sinful world is in a burning building, in danger of being engulfed in flames. But sin is seen as a pleasure rather than a pain. The gospel is foolishness to them (1 Corinthians 1:18), and they see our pleading as nothing but harassment. We talk of everlasting life being a free gift of God, and they accuse us of "pushing religion down their throats." Their rejection of the best news they could ever hope to hear is unbelievable—unbelievable, that is, until you under-

stand what is happening. They love their sin. And what's more, in their view God doesn't seem to be bothered by it, so it's no big deal. Lying, stealing, lust, blasphemy, fornication, and even adultery don't bring any evident divine lightning. And so they remain in their sinful stupor until the Law, in the hand of the Spirit, awakens them. (We will look at that subject in the next session.)

Apologetics, therefore, should always be seen as a means to an end—and the end is salvation through the gospel.

VIEW THE VIDEO // Apologetics Defined (26 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Define the word “apologetics” and give its origin. Should we be apologizing for our faith?

2. Discuss the meaning of 1 Peter 3:15. Does it imply that we should wait for people to ask us about our faith before engaging them in conversation?



3. Name two basic types of apologetics and explain the differences. What are the times we should use each one?

4. What is the foundation of the Christian's authority?

5. Using Romans chapter 1, explain why we can know that everyone believes in the existence of God. Why don't many people acknowledge it?

6. In what way can we focus too much on apologetics?

7. Should we answer every question we are asked? Why or why not?

8. What is your typical response when someone knocks on your door? How does that compare to the way Mark and his family respond, and how can you do something similar?

9. Why shouldn't we ask for permission to start a conversation? (See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.) What can happen if we do?
10. How could you respond if someone says, "There's no such thing as absolute truth"?

QUOTE // UNQUOTE

“The only way [to] become truly 'prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks' (1 Pet. 3:15) is by wrestling personally with the questions. Ironically, those who have never grappled with diverse worldviews are actually the most likely to be swept away by them. As G. K. Chesterton wrote, ideas can be dangerous—but they are far more dangerous to the person who has never studied them... We should always couch discussions of Christianity in the language of reasons and evidence. We should be giving apologetics from the pulpit and in the Sunday school classroom. Every course in a Christian school should be an opportunity to show that a biblical perspective does a better job than any secular theory of accounting for the facts in that field, whether psychology, biology, government, or business. Apologetics should be naturally woven in to all our discourse.”

—Nancy Pearcey

A READY ANSWER

“Your religion is all about faith.”

Much of what we do in life has its foundation in trust. We trust our dentist when he drills, our taxi driver when he drives, our pilots when they fly us. We trust our history books, our teachers, and some still even trust politicians. Marriage is a trust relationship. So are business partnerships and friendships. We trust elevators, planes, cars, brakes, chairs, doctors, surgeons, brokers, and television anchors. We place our faith in these items and people based on evidence that they are trustworthy. It’s therefore hard to understand why skeptics mock the thought of trust in God.

This skeptic’s statement implies that Christians are living by a naïve, “blind” faith based on something for which we have no evidence, when the opposite is the case. Our faith is rational and reasonable, and is based on credible, verifiable, historical evidence. The God who created us has given us all the evidence we need to come to know Him, and He invites us, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).

The fact that some do not recognize the evidence doesn’t mean it is not there. God has given light to every man (John 1:9)—through this wonderful creation, through the undeniable voice of the conscience, and through plain old common sense. We have the Bible’s thousands of fulfilled prophecies, as well as “many infallible proofs” of the resurrection (Acts 1:3), and He even promises to reveal Himself to those who obey Him (John 14:21).

It is also important to explain the difference between believing something (the Bible) and trusting Someone (Jesus Christ). Skeptics think that a Christian is someone who simply “believes” in God’s existence. When the Bible speaks of “faith” in God, it is not a reference to an intellectual acknowledgment that He exists (we all intuitively know that). It is speaking of an implicit trust in His person

and His promises. There's nothing difficult about having trust or "faith" when the One you are trusting is utterly trustworthy.

(Excerpted from *The Evidence Bible*.)

SHARING MADE SIMPLE

➔ **Group Leader:** *Provide enough tracts to give each person ten. Samples were included in the kit; order more as needed.*

Throughout this course, we're going to be taking steps to share the gospel with those who desperately need to hear it—one simple step at a time. This week, your first task is to think about the reality of Hell for two whole minutes. This will take discipline, because your mind will want to wander, especially because these are not pleasant thoughts.

Think of the worst pain you've ever experienced—toothache, a broken arm, a headache that brings you to tears, or perhaps a painful burn that kept you awake all night. Then think of what Hell is going to be like for the unsaved. Put yourself in that terrible place, and think of the utter despair and hopelessness of eternal damnation. That means the pain and anguish will never stop.

The object in doing this unpleasant exercise is to move from a concern to a painful empathy—your own mental anguish as you think of the fate of the lost. If you find yourself in that state of mind, hold onto it as you would precious gold. This is because it will help you to overcome paralyzing fear at the thought of witnessing. It is empathy that causes a courageous firefighter to run into a burning building to save perishing strangers. It goes hand-in-hand with love.

Empathy will help you to love your neighbor as yourself and therefore be concerned for his salvation as much as you're concerned for your own. Don't let it go because you're especially going to need it when you hear of this week's assigned step.

Here it is: Go to your local university, get up on a soapbox and plead with this dying and Hell-bound world. *Just kidding*. I wouldn't ask you to do that. Not just yet. But by thinking for a moment that it was this week's task, it should make it easier for you to hear what the

task actually is. It is simply to leave ten gospel tracts where people can find them. Compared to going to your local university, getting up on a box and pleading with sinners, this step is a piece of cake. A very small piece.

As we heard in the video, “If you don’t get to the gospel, you’ve lost the argument—it doesn’t matter how eloquent your words are.” And gospel tracts are the easiest way to start sharing the message of eternal life. This isn’t a marathon you are being asked to run; it’s just one simple step of faith. If you don’t take your first step, you will never run the race.

DIGGING DEEPER

1. In the following verses, record everything the Bible says about our responsibilities in witnessing (what, when, and how):

Philippians 1:17

1 Peter 3:15

Jude 3

Colossians 4:6

2 Timothy 4:2

2. In the above admonitions, which aspects would you say you most need help with (knowing what to say, or how to say it)?
3. Truth is what corresponds to reality, yet the world today increasingly claims there is no such thing as “truth.” In contrast, write what the Bible tells us about the source of truth:

John 1:17

John 14:6

John 17:17

4. Read what Jesus said about truth in John 18:37,38. Why do you think Pilate questioned what truth is? Why would he walk away before hearing the answer? How is this like our society today?

5. First Timothy 2:4 assures us that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. What can we learn from the following verses about why the lost reject the concept of truth?

John 8:44

Galatians 3:1

Romans 1:18,25

2 Timothy 4:3–5

MEMORY VERSE

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” —**2 Timothy 2:15**