



## In The Defense of Our Faith "Three Schools of Apologetics" 1 Peter 3:15

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Christian or Biblical apologetics is the term used to describe the method by which Christians explain and defend our faith to others.

- We know what we believe about the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, but how to explain our faith to those who do not share our biblical foundation?
- How do we answer an unbeliever's questions about the Bible, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – the Three in One?
- How do we defend Jesus' words in John 15:6, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."***
- How do we answer their questions about heaven or hell, or why a loving God would send a person to hell?
- How do we answer their questions about why a loving God allows people to endure such pain and suffering in this life?

- Sigmund Freud called religion ***“an illusion humans invent to satisfy their security needs.”*** How do we refute that?
- How can we answer the skeptics, doubters, and disbelievers, without using the words “think” or “feel?”

**There are three main schools of apologetics:**

- **In Presuppositional Apologetics**, the Christian presupposes the validity of the Trinity, the truth of the Bible, and the work of Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection. From that presuppositional base, the person demonstrates that only the Christian worldview can provide the necessary foundation to derive the laws of logic, the proper examination of evidence, absolute morals, universal truth values, and more.
- In Evidential Apologetics, the Christian presents evidence for the validity of the Christian faith, such as the reliability of the Gospels, including eyewitness accounts of Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection. It presents archaeological and historical evidence and can touch on things like biblical miracles and fulfilled prophecies. Many other pieces of evidence can be given, but the main idea is to convince the hearer that while salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, our faith is based upon facts.
- **In Classical Apologetics**, Christians rely heavily on logic and rational arguments. They seek to establish the truth of God’s existence and the validity of the Christian faith using various arguments, such as:
- **Cosmological Argument** – This argument posits that the universe must have a cause, and that cause must be God. It often points to the idea that everything that exists has a cause, and since the universe exists, it must have a cause, which is God.
- **Teleological Argument (Design Argument)** – This argument suggests that the complexity and order found in nature indicate intelligent design, implying a designer (God).
- **Ontological Argument** – Unlike the first two, this argument is based on logic and reason alone rather than empirical observation. It suggests that the very idea of God, as a perfect being, necessitates God’s existence, as existence is a perfection. This argument often relies on defining God as **“that which nothing greater can be conceived”**.

However, regardless of the form of apologetics, the ultimate goal is to present the truth of what Jesus did on the cross so that God can use the power of the gospel message (Romans 1:16) and the power of His Word (Isaiah 55:11) to glorify His name and to draw people to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

- **As an Apostle** – Paul took the gospel message to those areas where the people had never been exposed to it at all.
- **As an Evangelist** – Paul shared the gospel with those who were pagans; those who did not believe in the God of the Bible, or Polytheists, who believed in multiple gods, or the Jews, who rejected Jesus as the God-promised Messiah, or the heathens, who loved their life of sin, and with false Christians, who added to or took away from the true gospel.
- **As a Church Planter** – Paul had to know how to defend the gospel against all kinds of opposition, and teach those he placed in charge to do the same.

All of this is bound up in that word apologetics; Therefore, Paul is the model apologist for the Christian Faith.

- Paul’s preaching/teaching ministry, as well as his personal witnessing, is recorded in the Book of Acts. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, Paul showed us how to use the various methods of apologetics:

**Acts 13:14-41 – Paul went to the synagogue in Pisidia.**

- His audience was well-schooled in the Old Testament, so he used several passages from the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the God-sent Messiah.
- He also appealed to John the Baptist's testimony, Jesus' innocence, and His physical, resurrection from the grave, which was witnessed by many people. Therefore, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection fulfilled prophecy.

#### **Acts 14:8-17 – Paul used a different approach to the pagans at Lystra.**

- After refusing to receive their recognition as deities, Paul used the teleological argument to declare the truth about the One Living God who made heaven and earth and everything in it.

#### **Acts 17:1-4 – Paul preached the gospel at Thessalonica.**

- Realizing this mixed group of people had been saturated in Judaism, after sharing the gospel message, Paul took the time to reason with them and to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior sent from God.
- Realizing this group would have respected the Hebrew Bible as the divinely inspired Word of God, Paul began where they were, and used what they already knew, to convince them that Jesus was the God-promised Messiah.

#### **Acts 17:22-30 – Paul preaches in the Areopagus before the Greek Philosophers.**

- After sharing the gospel, rather than reasoning with these intellectuals from the Scriptures, Paul could reason with them from the evidence of general revelation.
- Paul even quoted some of the Greek sources that his audience trusted, which increased their trust in Paul.
- Paul used all three fundamental arguments for Christianity.
- **Cosmological** – rather than worship multiple gods made by hands, we can worship the one true God who created man.
- **Teleological** – rather than relying on the limited knowledge of poets and philosophers, we can trust the one true God, the Master Designer.
- **Ontological** – rather than trust the false gods who are absent, and unconcerned, we can trust the One True God ***“in whom we live and move and have our being.”***

#### **Acts 20:33-35 – Paul speaks to the elders at Ephesus.**

- This is where Peter's admonition to sanctify our heart comes in, for in his defense of the gospel, Paul points to his own lifestyle, i.e., his own testimony, as the evidence of the truth of the gospel.

#### **Acts 22:1-21 – Paul shares his personal testimony.**

- Notice Paul's appeal to his dramatic conversion from one who persecuted Christians to proclaiming Jesus Christ as both Savior and Lord. This is where our personal testimony comes in, and we need to focus on our transformed lives.