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PREPARING THE MEMBERS OF TABERNACLE BAPTIST
CHURCH CARTERSVILLE, GEORGIA TO
EVANGELIZE APOLOGETICALLY

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
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PREPARING THE MEMBERS OF TABERNACLE BAPTIST
CHURCH CARTERSVILLE, GEORGIA TO
EVANGELIZE APOLOGETICALLY

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To Lori,

whose love and friendship are second only to her heart and trust in our Lord.

To Kaleb, Arabella, and Kyra,

you are the joys of my heart and the knocking at the door while I write.

To Rocky and Ruger,

such loyal devotion displayed through endless hours, sleeping by my desk.

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PREFACE

This project was first and foremost the result of God's refining work in my heart and life. I am thankful to our Lord for the path on which he has directed me and for opening my eyes to the plight of the lost and to the joy of his grace and salvation. The mission trips, witnessing encounters, and heart-breaking conviction the Lord has allowed me to experience molded my heart and life to one that seeks to see people as God sees them. I have been blessed to sit under the spirit-led teaching and preaching of Tabernacle Baptist Church (TBC). Through their dedication to mission I was exposed to what it meant to be an ambassador for Christ.

This project was an effort to push onward for the kingdom of God and encourage the TBC congregation to overcome social and cultural obstacles to engage the world with a reason for the hope we have and to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world.

I am thankful to TBC for their assistance in developing and conducting this project. I am also grateful to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and my supervisors, Dr. Ted Cabal and Dr. Timothy Jones for their instruction, direction, and support throughout this process. Finally, thank you to my family who have supported me through these years. My wife and children have selflessly put my needs above their own to make this possible. They have been a constant reminder of Gods' grace and blessings in my life.

Eric Webster

Cartersville, Georgia

December 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts reveals that believers are to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Scripture also tells of the Great Commission which commands followers of Christ to make disciples of all men and to teach them in everything they have been commanded. Christians are bound to a mission of sharing the gospel at home and abroad and equally responsible for being an ambassador for Christ here in the world—an ambassador which is equipped to lovingly, boldly, and correctly inform, instruct, and defend the faith. Tabernacle Baptist Church is a congregation willing to fulfill this mission and is active in many ministries. This project sought to strengthen Tabernacle's witness by introducing apologetics to the witness and missions training. Tabernacle is well prepared to deliver the gospel; however, training to engage a world ever drifting farther from the things of God needed to be deployed. This project taught and prepared willing witnesses to be loving, well-informed ambassadors to a deceived and lost world in need of the truth.

Context

This project was conducted in Cartersville, Georgia, at Tabernacle Baptist Church. Tabernacle (TBC) has a reputation for being a Bible believing, teaching, and preaching church. The senior pastor is an established leader who has served as president of the Georgia Baptist Convention. In addition to the senior pastor, TBC benefits from education, senior, youth, missions, worship, and children's pastors. These ministers and church staff are supported by a rotating deacon body. Tabernacle is known throughout the community for its rich worship ministry, which often features cross-congregational programs. Multiple churches combine to provide a mass choir, worshipping together as

one. There is also a consistent calendar of Bible studies available for different topics and groups. In the most recent time frame, the church has promoted an initiative to focus on small group Bible study outside of the campus, which is held in homes or off-site locations. This effort is seen as a method to draw others into Bible study that may feel less comfortable with the traditional sanctuary setting.

Recently, the focus of TBC has shifted focus to being an “Acts 1:8 church.” This moniker refers to the commitment of the church to missions as stated in Acts to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Switching to this focus has led to a yearly calendar of short-term mission trips and a handful of community outreach programs. Currently, Tabernacle is the sending church to six International Mission Board missionary families and maintains partnerships with several churches around the world. As a church we also partner with several North American Mission Board and missionaries from a world-wide mission agency, formally known as Sudan Interior Mission. These missionaries are made up of congregation members and the children of church members and staff. This familiarity has brought about the formation of “Holding the Ropes.” This initiative serves to minister to and support TBC teams abroad and has resulted in short-term trips designed for member care. When thinking in terms of Acts 1:8, Tabernacle has thrived with regard to “Samaria” and even the ends of the earth. The area of “Jerusalem,” Cartersville, Georgia, is the primary need of improvement.

The “Jerusalem” for Cartersville is home to a rich multi-cultural population, which surrounds the church on all fronts and by its existence demands an educated and trained ministry effort. There are thousands of unreached and unchurched people within walking distance of the campus. This population is predominately Hispanic and African American, but there also exists a variety of other cultures within the population. This is but one reason that an evangelism training program must be maintained. The program must not mimic a typical outreach program of which Tabernacle has worked with in the

past. These programs refer to the safe and comfortable mentality, which results in little more than sharing a testimony to a coworker or neighbor. Such programs are needed and prove beneficial in introducing people to evangelism and should not be discontinued. However, these programs often prove lacking in preparing one for defending his faith on the street corner with the culturally Catholic atheist. Tabernacle has found itself in a cultural predicament. Tabernacle's congregation is predominately composed of middle to upper class, Caucasian men and women in the middle age to senior age bracket. This is a stunning realization given the contrast of population diversity surrounding the church. The traditional methods of outreach have not reached different ages, cultures, or races living in the shadow of the church's steeple. Current discipleship programs and outreach initiatives are geared toward enhancement of existing churchgoers of similar cultural and social backgrounds.

Tabernacle sought to prepare its people to engage a diverse culture for the gospel, and a deeper apologetic method was required. Race and culture aside, most members have been unprepared to carry out an informed conversation concerning topics such as the biblical canon or evolution. Tabernacle has done well in preparing individuals to share their testimony or present prepared gospel presentations to specific audiences. However, Christians today live in an area and a time where the church must be able to engage the world on topics such as science, ethics, and morality to diverse groups. That is why this ministry project, called *315Faith*, has taken a distinctive apologetic style. The gospel has been and will remain to be first and foremost, but members must defend and converse with others from an informed position. A prominent goal of *315Faith* was to prepare witnesses to remove barriers from hearts and minds so that the gospel may be heard. In addition to preparing the church body to engage, minister, and evangelize the community outside the sanctuary doors, *315Faith* will infuse a deeper understanding of Christianity to members.

Currently, most of the congregation, whether due to fear or disinterest, are not actively witnessing at any level. The youth population perceives the liturgy as outdated and irrelevant. The current approach to Christianity seemingly has failed to provide the answers to the questions they are faced with at school and in life. *315Faith* seeks to continue cultivating a culture that educates, trains, and empowers Christians to provide a defense for the hope they have while lovingly drawing others to Christ.

Rationale

Tabernacle Baptist has committed itself to establishing an Acts 1:8 church, endeavoring to reach the lost for Christ in the community, the nation, and the world. This congregation has seen its commitment to the Great Commission grow over the last decade. This period of evangelistic growth has yielded an increase in local ministries and mission work, as well as a full schedule of volunteer short-term mission trips. This yearly effort sees the ministry of Tabernacle spread around the nation and world. The mission minded culture has seen many receive the gospel in addition to encouraging and strengthening the ministries of pastors and churches in over eight countries. The missional environment has also bore fruit of service as several members who frequented missions have answered the call to ministry, attended seminary for vocational ministry, and others have joined mission organizations. The last few years have seen the congregation become the sending church to six International Mission Board missionary families.

Aside from missions, Tabernacle has started a disciple-making emphasis that focuses on the development of small groups that meet in homes, restaurants, parks, or wherever space is available to study God's Word and be disciplined in what it means to follow Christ. Tabernacle is known in the area for having an orchestra and worship choir recognized for heartfelt and inspiring worship services. There are many strengths to the current ministries. However, these strengths tend to shield from view some glaring weaknesses. The church has a significant member base numbering in the thousands, yet these membership numbers are not reflected in ministry activity. The same subsection of

individuals frequent mission trips, lead worship, teach LifeGroups, and participate in various other tasks throughout the week. This congregation does not behave as one which lacks the passion or desire to share the good news, but rather displays characteristics of being apprehensive about how to approach friends, neighbors, and especially strangers. There seems to be a congregation primed and ready to experience growth in local evangelism and disciple-making, though a few stumbling blocks need to be cleared away. *315Faith* was expected to develop a better prepared and equipped evangelistically minded congregation.

An area within the congregation in need of training was the theological and apologetic knowledge base of the congregation. Theology and apologetics seem to inspire a few members to learn all they can while simultaneously repelling the rest. Believers within a congregation are not all at the same level of spiritual maturity and understanding, especially when it comes to the deeper issues concerning theology and apologetics. The congregation demonstrates a comfort level with the gospel and traditional Bible stories and various New Testament topics. The feeling changes to dread and apprehension when asked to delve into current event topics like race, evolution, same-sex marriage, and the like. These topics are touched upon in sermons but largely remain unaddressed regarding training and education.

This void of witness and knowledge leave many people feeling unprepared to address a lost world that often possesses prepared thoughts and positions on such issues. The hope of Christians should always be based on a foundation made from the gospel, yet when a believer's witness and defense for the faith is solely the resurrection of Christ, that Christian is caught ill-equipped to meet a world looking for answers on an ever-widening array of questions. This narrow field of witness creates the risk of depriving truth from those needing answers. Unprepared or poorly equipped believers presenting a weak witness may scatter the lost away from Christ by an inability to converse over hard questions. The gospel must be the ultimate message and always the primary focus, but if

poorly represented by neglecting pressing doubts or concerns, then the lost will fail to see hope in the message. Engaging in such conversations and debates provide a vehicle that points the way to not only the truth of secular circumstances, but the ultimate spiritual truth found in Jesus Christ. This project built upon the congregation's existing missionary emphasis by addressing apologetic and theological familiarity,¹ which aided Tabernacle in continuing to development a stronger, wiser, capable gospel witness, and as a result, a stronger church body.

To accommodate the requirements for completion of this project and to establish the foundation for a gospel-centered apologetics ministry at TBC, six hours of video lessons were prepared and recorded. These videos replicated the breadth and scope of training classes previously held at TBC while being presented in an online format. This on-demand training covered various topics of Christian fundamentals, such as the reliability of Scripture, biblical worldviews, and denominations focused on increasing the believer's knowledge of Christianity and bolstering confidence to defend faith to a skeptical world.

Finally, the foundation for a periodic training program for gospel-centered apologetics was developed. The ongoing focus of *315Faith* continues to be presenting each member of Tabernacle the opportunity to learn, study, and become familiar with apologetics to properly engage the world. Tabernacle will continue to challenge members to engage and expose themselves to gospel-centered conversations with family, friends, and strangers regardless the topic.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop an instructional ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Church to establish gospel-centered apologetics as a tool for

¹ Peter instructs believers to always be prepared to give an (*apologia*) defense for the hope Christians have. Apologetic training provides knowledge for Christians to defend that hope in situations hostile to the Christian faith.

evangelism by educating participants with the knowledge to better understand their faith and equipping believers to successfully engage the world with rational defenses grounded in Scripture and truth.

Goals

Three goals represent the intended outcome from this project for ministry at TBC. The first goal focused on evaluating apologetic aptitude of Tabernacle members to evangelize utilizing apologetics through a process of evaluating apologetic competency to develop a program to prepare and educate them apologetically. The second goal reflects the material created and presented, which serves as the foundation for the ministry. The third goal focused on the mechanisms developed and put in place to ensure an ongoing training ministry with the ability to expand in scope and material.

1. The first goal was to assess the current level of apologetic knowledge and evangelistic competency of the Tabernacle Baptist Church membership.
2. The second goal was to develop six hours of video lectures focused on foundational Christian doctrine and worldview designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to properly engage skeptics.
3. The third goal was to establish a strategic plan for continued periodic apologetic resources, education, and practical application geared toward the continued development of apologetic-strengthened evangelism at Tabernacle Baptist Church.

To assess the level of success each goal attained, research methodologies were utilized for measurement. These methodologies, along with the developed instruments used, are detailed in the next section.

Research Methodology

Three goals were utilized to determine the completion and effectiveness of *315Faith* at TBC gospel-centered apologetics. The first goal was to evaluate the current aptitude in Christian and apologetic foundations within the population of participants. This was measured through the administration of the *315Faith* Entrance Survey

(*315FaithES*), the initial step of participation.² The *315FaithES* measured each participant's foundational knowledge of Christianity in areas of doctrine and defense. The additional step of evaluation was achieved through a *t*-test for dependent samples to measure if a statistically significant difference resulted from the pre- and post-course surveys. This goal was considered successful through the completed evaluation of participants.

The second goal was to develop six hours of video lectures focused on foundational Christian doctrine and worldview designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to properly engage skeptics. This video lecture series evolved into a dual phase instructional program; a six-hour video lecture series and a forty-week Student LifeGroup curriculum. This year-long curriculum of forty-five minute lessons was created at the behest of the Student Pastor of TBC.³ The curriculum covered basic topics relevant to Christianity and apologetics, including worldviews, the reliability of Scripture, the problem of evil, cults, and world religions. The curriculum was directed by a template designed in conjunction with the TBC Student Pastor and a lesson rubric.⁴ Lessons were reviewed by the Student Ministry and Student LifeGroup leaders. The second collection of training material created was the six-hour, twenty-three video lecture series. This lecture series covered topics similar to the lesson curriculum with an emphasis on the Bible and worldview topics. The video lectures were presented online continuously for forty-one days, ending with the *315Faith* Exit Survey (*315Faith* EXS)

² See appendix 6. All research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

³ During the proposal phase of this project the Student Ministry was contacted for ways to specifically tailor *315Faith* to have a significant student emphasis. Through multiple meetings, a curriculum for an entire church year was requested.

⁴ See appendix 2.

and an optional interview phase.⁵ This goal was satisfied through the existence of educational material and the participation of TBC members.

The third goal was to develop a strategic plan for apologetic resources, education, and practical application training to be continually available and assessable to TBC. This goal required an area of storage and retrieval of the training material as well as the ability for expansion. This goal was achieved through the creation of a website which serves as the landing spot for all *315Faith* resources.⁶ This website provides a method to not only hold the video lectures, curriculum lessons, but also offers the opportunity for expansion of further resources, such as blogs, live events, and more. This goal was considered successful with the creation and implementation of the *315Faith* website and subsequent use from TBC members.

Definitions

Key terms are used in the ministry project, and their definitions are provided in this section.

Apologet. An *apologist* is someone who offers up an apology or provides a defense for faith. An *apologist* is one who offers a defense of the Christian faith in relation to scientific, philosophical, ethical, religious, or cultural issues.⁷

Christian apologetics. The word *apologetics* derives from the Greek word *apologia*, which was originally used of a speech of defense or an answer given in reply. In ancient Athens, the word referred to a defense made in the courtroom as part of the normal judicial procedure. A defendant's reply to a charge made against them was called an *apologia*. This project assumes the definition associated with 1 Peter 3:15 in which believers are called to always be prepared "to make a *defense* to everyone who asks you

⁵ See appendix 7.

⁶ The *315Faith* website is located at 315faith.com.

⁷ Kenneth Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2005), 4.

to give an account for the hope that is in you.”⁸ *Apologetics* focuses on the use of rational defenses to diffuse attacks upon Christianity while establishing Christianity as a credible worldview in an effort to promote the gospel of Christ.⁹

Christian evangelism. *Christian evangelism* is the active calling of people to respond to the message of grace and to commit oneself to God in Jesus Christ. *Evangelism* is derived from the Greek work *evangelion*, meaning “gospel” or good news.¹⁰ The goal of *evangelism* is to bring about the reconciliation of the sinner to God the Father through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.¹¹

Christian witness. The term *Christian witness* is used to identify the follower of Christ who bears witness to the gospel as referred to in Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Curriculum. *Curriculum* is the subject topics, lesson plans, and lesson transcripts used to compile a course of study or instruction for the student ministry.

Instructional video library. The *instructional video library* consists or refers to the collection of informative and instructive online videos used to convey the apologetic topics for this project.

LifeGroup. *LifeGroup* is the term TBC uses for its Sunday school classes. These classes meet during the week for fellowship, discipleship, and Bible study. Members are usually of the same age group with youth divided by age and gender. Classes are usually conducted by a leader and co-leader with the intention to train and encourage members to branch out and begin their own groups.

⁸ Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 4.

⁹ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 83.

¹⁰ Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England, eds., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), 518.

¹¹ Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 410.

315Faith. *315Faith* is the name given to the gospel-centered apologetics training ministry developed through this project for Tabernacle Baptist Church.

Delimitations and Limitations

Two limitations applied to *315Faith*. First, the project was limited by the level of cooperation and commitment displayed by the staff and congregation of TBC. The design of this project and the potential research depended upon participation from four designated age demographics along with the promotion and support of the Pastor and staff.¹² Second, this project's ability to increase knowledge and provide accuracy of survey results was limited by the willingness of participants to fully engage the material and complete the surveys. To mitigate these limitations, two comprehensive efforts were facilitated to decrease the amount of effort required from TBC staff and potential participants. First, marketing materials were created and distributed to the Pastor, Student Pastor, LifeGroup leaders, and remaining staff. Second, the entirety of *315Faith* was conducted online to eliminate schedule conflict and to create a nearly effortless experience for the participant.

Three delimitations were implemented for *315Faith*. First, the entry and exit survey process ran for seven weeks. The online presentation and surveying allowed for a continuous running project through the duration. Second, the apologetic material was limited to a six-hour runtime, which aligned with traditional TBC study content. These studies traditionally fall between six to ten meetings of an hour each. A comprehensive training program would require significantly more content. However, this series sought to be a foundation upon which to build. Third, the congregational participation from TBC was designed to include ten participants from each of the four age demographics with the ten students coming from freshman, junior, or senior classes. An additional ten sophomore students would then be added, giving the research a delimitation of forty-four participants.

¹² The four age demographics were students (age 14-18), young adult (age 19-35), adult (age 36-55), and senior (age 56 and up).

The additional ten sophomore participants served as an independent variable for evaluating the student curriculum.

Conclusion

Christianity is a faith that proclaims that those who refuse to follow will ultimately spend eternity separated from God in a place of torment. The world rejects this notion even though the Bible clearly describes how one might be saved. Scripture is replete with references calling believers to spread the Good News. The Bible also accounts for the rejection believers will face and commands that they defend their faith in hopes others might know salvation. The following chapters show how this project sought to encourage, educate, and equip the willing congregation of Tabernacle Baptist Church to not only share, but also defend the gospel.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS
FOR GREAT COMMISSION EVANGELISM
ORIENTED APOLOGETICS

Introduction

The foundation of Christianity is the message of salvation from the gospel of Christ Jesus. A message which all followers are commanded to share to every nation. Scripture warns this world will reject this message and prepares witnesses to encounter the lost in boldness and love. Four passages relay not only the ultimate command from Christ to evangelize the world, but also how that message will often be received: Genesis 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, and 1 Peter 3:14-15.

**The Commission and the Beginning
of Missions (Gen 28:18-20)**

The words of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20 exemplify God's desire that none shall perish by establishing the mission for all believers through the Great Commission. This commission initiated the order for all followers of Christ to share the message of the gospel with a lost and condemned world so that all nations might know of salvation through grace. The last chapter of Matthew is the culmination of the gospel message. Surpassing creation and the crucifixion, the resurrection of Christ is the main event of Christianity, both in history and theology. The resurrection and Christ's defeat over death exemplifies vindication by God. This miracle surpasses all others and is the most substantial of Christianity. If the gospel is false, then Christians have been duped into following a lie. A lie that promotes a solid moral standard of living, yet still a lie which many have pointlessly suffered over and died. If it is true, then believers have a hope beyond comprehension of salvation and reconciliation with the God of all creation.

All Authority in Heaven and on Earth (28:18)

The passage begins with this complex entrance: “and Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying.” Instead of a simple “Jesus said,” there is this string of three verbs to begin the discourse. R. T. France suggests that this introduction serves two roles. It sets this passage apart as the climatic conclusion to the resurrection account and emphasizes that these words will have an elevated importance. The second purpose is to calm and reconcile the nerves and emotions of the disciples having earlier abandoned Jesus. There was hesitation, guilt, fear, and even doubt. Jesus is restoring fellowship and progressing to what is next.¹

“All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me.” The whole of the universe is embraced in the authority delegated to him. A distinction is provided between he and the Father when Matthew uses the phrase “been given.” Another power was able to bestow this authority to Jesus.² This proclamation is the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy centuries earlier: “He was given authority to rule, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed” (Dan 7:14). Through this authority Jesus is justified and able to command the disciples with the Great Commission to follow.

Baptizing and Teaching All Nations (28:19)

Jesus’ main command is to “make disciples.” Craig Blomberg makes a point to emphasize the overly stated value that “go” receives: “Too little is made of it when all attention is centered on the command to ‘go,’ as in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions are elevated to a higher status of Christian service

¹ R T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 1111-12.

² Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 431.

than other forms of spiritual activity?³ This emphasis on missions abroad in no way is discounting the need to go. For all the nations to be made disciples and for the world to know the gospel, many people will be required to leave their homes and travel elsewhere. The main verb here is not “go,” but rather “make.” Too often the mission field outside one’s door is overlooked.

The essential focus is to enlist believers to duplicate themselves. The goal of any church is to one day birth a church plant and then another, duplicating bodies of believers. It would not be enough for the nations to simply “hear” the message; they must also respond with the same hole-hearted commitment required of those who became disciples of Christ.⁴ The sole act of evangelism does not create disciples. What happens to the people group once the few who “heard” move on or pass away? Lacking a firm foundation, the next religion or belief to pass by will take root. The element of making disciples involves more than simply evangelizing and making the gospel pitch. Jesus included “baptizing” and “teaching” them how to follow all of Jesus’s commandments. Blomberg states, “The first of these tasks is a once-for -all, decisive initiation into the Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.”⁵

Jesus tells the disciples that they are to make disciples of “all nations” (ἔθνη; ethnos). This addition of “all” is a restructuring of the mission. Jesus has not said make disciples of the Jews nor has he said to focus solely on the Gentiles. Here He has added the Gentiles to the already established mission of reaching the Jewish people. No one was being excluded, merely added since reaching “the nations” would require expanding far past Israel and the scope of the Jews. Though it is clear from the book of Acts that the

³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1115.

⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

apostolic church continued the mission to the Jews, this message would be spread throughout the world.⁶

Baptizing would come to be the key first step of a new disciple, as being baptized is the first step of obedience of any new believer. The disciples and people of this time were aware of baptism, but they were familiar with John's baptism—now the act is different. Baptism now is done with the trinitarian formula invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This change in the scope of baptism would have had a large cultural impact on the Jewish people.

John Noland sheds light on Matthew's view of religion and the impact this change in baptism tradition had on Jewish culture: "Matthew shares the general Jewish impulse to view true religion as involving a way of life and not simply a pattern of beliefs. So, what is to be taught is to keep—that is, to implement in obedience—what has been commanded."⁷ When Jesus spoke a task for command for His followers the meaning was not understood as a suggestion, but rather a life defining work with no option to refusal. Given this insight, the idea of baptism would have become cemented into the minds of early believers.

In addition to baptism, there is a second command of "teaching." The disciples and all believers are to teach "everything I have commanded you." In other words, Jesus is saying that all the instruction and wisdom he has given them must be shared and spread to all peoples.⁸ It is important to remember that Jesus includes the teachings of the Old Testament. Matthew 5:17-20 reads,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear

⁶ Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew Fourteen to Twenty-Eight*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 689.

⁷ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 1270.

⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 888.

from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

One must resist the urge to foolishly ignore the Old Testament when dealing with concepts found in the New Testament.⁹

These newly created disciples must be educated in the ways and practices of Christ not just for education, but for a change in the very way they think, act, and live their lives. For the old to truly “pass away and be made new,” the convert must be instructed in what behavior is mandated by this new way. They must be introduced to and instructed in what it means to be in relationship with Christ.

Until the End of the Age (28:20)

The final promise from Jesus recorded in Matthew translates “and look,” or in the NIV as “and surely.” In today’s language, one might say something similar to “and yet” or perhaps, “and what’s more,” all of which signify that there is more to be said before the conversation is concluded. Jesus is not finished and has one more thing to bestow. This last action of Christ was to inform his followers that he is with them till the end: “And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” He does not say, “I could be with you” or “I will be with you,” he states that he “*is*” with you. This promise establishes a new dynamic to the lives and ministries of the disciples and to Christ followers from then on. They are not out in the wilderness of unbelief alone, but they have God with them.¹⁰ Matthew completes his account of Christ not with an ascension account but with a reassurance that Christ is not leaving his followers. How encouraging this must have been for the disciples to hear, immediately after being tasked with such an overwhelming mission. Believers should find comfort in the sharing of Christ’s promises.

⁹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 749.

This relationship with the Messiah is not a temporary situation, but an eternal one, “to the very end of the age” (v. 20).

Missions and Evangelism to All Peoples (Acts 1:8)

Scripture tells in Acts 1:8 that believers are to minister on behalf of Christ to all the earth, and as his witnesses they are empowered to this service by the Holy Spirit. Christians are not left alone to carry out this task, but have been supplied the devices, knowledge, abilities, and the very presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

Powered by the Holy Spirit (1:8)

Acts 1 contains the last recorded words of Christ before the ascension. These verses lay out Christ’s plan for his followers. Later in verse 12, readers see that this meeting was held at the Mount of Olives, as it tells that they are returning to Jerusalem from that location. Over the forty days following the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples and Christ had met together and even shared meals. Jesus in his newly resurrected body would have had no need for food or drink to sustain himself, yet this was done for the benefit of the disciples. The meals were not only a habit of their time together in fellowship, but also served as evidence that Jesus was actually there in the flesh and not a phantom or vision.¹¹ Soon after in the verse 4, Jesus instructs the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for a “promised gift” from the Father; this gift of course being the Holy Spirit (Ἁγίου Πνεύματος). In verse 3, and stressed more in verse 6, the disciples echo a concern that the people were still dwelling upon. That concern being the reestablishing of the kingdom of Israel. Even after the resurrection of Jesus the people are still looking for the “messiah” to elevate Israel. The messiah was expected by many to be a political or military leader; one that would remove the yoke of bondage and captivity from the neck

¹¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 34.

of Israel. Many were confused at the “salvation” that Jesus offered, as it differed greatly from the teachings upon which they based their lives.

There is also the fact that Jesus had just been resurrected. I. Howard Marshall poses the perspective that the disciples could have seen the resurrection of Christ as marking the beginning of the last stage in God’s plan. It would be natural to assume all Jesus had spoken of previous was now being set into action.¹² Also, before this meeting Jesus had told the disciples to await a baptism of the Holy Spirit. This outpouring of the spirit had strong eschatological associations. Passages such as Joel 2:28-32 were interpreted in nationalistic terms that saw a general outpouring of the Spirit as a mark of the final great messianic Day of the Lord when Israel would be “restored” to the former glory of the days of David and Solomon.¹³ These views appear to paint the disciples as representatives of Luke’s readers who had not realized that Jesus had changed the meaning of the kingdom of God by purging it of the nationalistic and political elements. Marshall points out that this question of the coming kingdom is still prevalent today. People attempt to determine the timing of end times events. The desire to know the hour or the day is a human obsession which Scripture tells is in vain: “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt 24:36). Efforts are better spent to follow the path which was commanded—to be witnesses of Jesus.¹⁴

F. F. Bruce suggests this questioning of the kingdom’s returning as possibly the last flicker of their former burning expectation of an imminent theocracy with themselves as its chief executives. It was not much earlier that they petitioned Jesus for elevated positions in the kingdom to come.¹⁵ Christ in verse 8 redirects the conversation

¹² I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1980), 60.

¹³ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 84.

¹⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 60.

¹⁵ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 35-36.

away from speculation on the finalization of God’s plan and possible political ambitions. He tells them of a power far greater and nobler that will be theirs. The Holy Spirit will infuse them with heavenly power.¹⁶ Jesus uses the key term here, “but” (ἀλλὰ), symbolizing that the next thing he is going to say is what he wants them to pay attention to. He is redirecting the focus. Basically, do not fret over the kingdom being established. That is not a concern for the present. Instead, believers should focus on another issue. Jesus never gives an answer to their question. He does not confirm nor deny, but rather redirects. He tells the disciples that such knowledge is not theirs to know; that it belongs solely to the Father. Jesus denied not only them but also himself such knowledge while he was on earth. The next words harken back a couple of verses to a previous meeting when Jesus tells them of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus transitions from kingdom fulfillment predictions to what is preparing to happen to the disciples. John Polhill elaborates that the disciples themselves were to be the true “restored” Israel, fulfilling its mission to be a “light for the Gentiles” inasmuch that God’s salvation might reach “to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6).¹⁷ When Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive “power” (δύναμη), He is referring to supernatural power imparted by the Holy Spirit. Through this supernatural “δύναμη” mighty works were wrought and the preaching made effective.”¹⁸ Richard Longenecker explains, “Here the mandate to witness that stands as the themes for the whole of Acts is explicitly set out. It comes as a direct commission from Jesus himself- in fact, as Jesus’ last words before his ascension and, therefore, as one that is final and conclusive.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36.

¹⁷ Polhill, *Acts*, 85.

¹⁸ Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 103.

¹⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 6 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 52.

Next comes the word “witness” (μάρτυρες). Jesus foretells that the disciples “will be” or “shall be” his witnesses. The root word meaning of testimony, “witness” comes to have an almost legal sense to bearing one’s testimony to Christ. In this way, it is applied to Stephen and to Paul. The background of this concept is probably the servant psalms of Isaiah, where God called on his servant to be a witness (Isa 43:10; 44:8). Christ is calling them to testify to the gospel. The disciples stand in unique circumstance in that they alone could give eyewitness testimony to all the accounts of Christ, including the resurrection. The commission lays an obligation on all Christians and comes as a gift and a promise. Longenecker goes on to describe this verse as concerning “a person, a power, and a program—the person of Jesus on whose authority the church acts and who is the object of its witness; the power of the Holy spirit, which is the *sine qua non* for the mission.”²⁰ This verse is in essence the beginning of God’s mission program which will begin at home (Jerusalem) and spread to other lands (Judea and Samaria) to encompass the entire world (the ends of the earth).

This passage, along with the Matthew 28:18-20, establishes the mandate for the Christian to witness on behalf of the gospel of Christ. This is a declaration that those who claim Jesus as Lord “will” be His witness to the nations. This is Jesus’ closing statement. There was no room left for discussion. He set forth the task and provides the instructions in full knowledge that through the Holy Spirit they would have all the assistance they needed. He then left to make room for the helper, the advocate (John 16:7) and ascended to the Father.

The verse ends with the phrase, “and to the ends of the earth.” This phrase is often interpreted to refer to Rome, since the story of Acts ends in that city. However, the phrase is often found in the prophets as an expression for distant lands, and such is the meaning in Isaiah 49:6. Polhill suggests a position for “distant lands” by stating that in Acts 28:31, with Paul preaching “without hindrance” in Rome, suggests that the story has

²⁰ Longenecker, *Acts*, 52.

not reached its final destination—the witness continues as does the mission.²¹ Jesus is establishing encouragement through the promise of always being there for those who carry out the commission he has established. The disciples, as are all believers, are being asked to travel to and experience the unknown. All who take this path experience the fear and anxiety of the unknown. Jesus is giving his servants assurance that they are never alone.

On Guard for Attack on the Faith (1 Tim 4:1-5)

This world rages against God, and Scripture warns believers to expect the lost to behave illogically and rebelliously against all that is holy. An exegesis of 1 Timothy 4:1-2 reveals that believers are to remain focused and diligent to guard against the onslaught of attacks against Christianity from Satan, but also the misguided and ill-informed false teachers so that all may hear a true message that proclaims the saving grace of Christ.

Be Aware of False Teachers (1 Tim 4:1-2)

The books of 1 and 2 Timothy (along with Titus) are classified as pastoral letters. They were written by Paul and labeled as such due to their nature of detailing the qualifications and duties of pastors. Timothy was born at Lystra and had a Greek father and Jewish mother (who taught him the Scriptures from childhood). He went with Paul on his second missionary journey and from then on helped Paul in his work. When Timothy received this letter from Paul, Timothy was working as the teacher and the leader of the church at Ephesus.

Timothy was quite young to be pastoring a church, so Paul wrote this letter to give him advice concerning the work that must be done. Paul warned Timothy of false teachers and the teachings that are opposite from the commands of God. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits

²¹ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (vv. 1-2). These verses apply to the purpose of preparing and equipping Christian witnesses to evangelize to a lost and sometimes hostile world.

Paul points out to Timothy that the behavior of heretical people should not be surprising as the Holy Spirit had prophesied this would occur. Of course “the Spirit” (Πνεῦμα) Paul refers to is the Holy Spirit. The “clearly says” refers to the Holy Spirit earlier prophesizing of apostasy at an earlier date.²² Gordon Fee explains that it is unknown how the Spirit has clearly said anything. Whether this was prophetic speaking within the church or directly revealed to Paul is unknown. However, it is known that there was common knowledge of the heretical behavior people would display and the Holy Spirit was the messenger.²³ There are many examples of apostasy warnings in Jewish literature, so Timothy should not have been astonished at the revelations. Timothy would have been well aware that heretical behavior would occur. Timothy’s shock comes not from the possibility, but from the reality of apostasy being within the church he ministered.

First Timothy 4:1-2 warns of what will happen in later times; with “latter” (ὅστέροις) meaning finally or later and “the times” (καιροῖς) referring to the season or period of time. Paul is forewarning Timothy (and all believers) to be prepared for the day when people will turn to beliefs and teachings that are not of God. Mounce notes that “in the last times’ seems to refer to a time in the future, but closer examination shows that Paul sees Timothy and himself as being presently in the last times.” Paul was considering his present day as those “later times” of which the Holy Spirit had previously prophesized.²⁴

²² William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2000), 233-34.

²³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 97-99.

²⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 234.

Fee attempts to explain Paul's perplexing use of "time." The Christian is living in the "end times" or "latter times" already. The end scenario has started; the believers are people of the future living in the present age even though what will happen in the future has yet to occur. Christians belong to a time yet to come.²⁵ Another view of Paul's writing suggests that the use of prophetic form (as in "end days") emphasizes both the inevitability of people falling away from the faith and also serves as a shock statement to bring a sense of seriousness to the issue of this rise of heresy. Marshall states the use of end times vernacular associates this current issue with those disasters linked with the last days: "What was prophesied as a fearsome future evil is now taking place."²⁶

Paul is revealing much about the opponents to the Christian message. The opponents are hypocritical liars who know that what they are teaching is wrong and yet continue to teach. They claim to be Christians and yet bear Satan's brand of ownership. Paul tells Timothy that believers have fallen away, but it is of no surprise as it was Spirit predicted. He goes on to give two reasons for the falling away. First, they are devoted to spirits and their teachings—*Spirits* (πνεύμασι) often translates as deceiving or deceitful spirits. Second, they have given over to hypocrisy and liars. Paul reveals earlier in 1 Timothy 1:6 that, during this historical period, Christians were indeed leaving the faith. So, there were the opponents, the false teachers and liars. There were also Christians who had been seduced away.²⁷ The "some" who were falling away from the faith were apparently professing Christians. They were turning away from the orthodox doctrine which they had earlier accepted. Griffin and Lea point out, "A mere profession of faith

²⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 301.

²⁶ I. Howard. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 538.

²⁷ Charles Augustus Briggs, Alfred Plummer, and Samuel Rolles Driver, *Timothy and Titus*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 235.

does not guarantee the actual possession of eternal life. This emptiness of mere profession would become clear by the departure from Christianity.²⁸

Paul labels these people with clear and viscous descriptive language: “devoted to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” and “liars whose own consciences have been branded” (vv. 1-2). Fee explains that the Greek is a bit vague on “whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (v. 2). It is possible that these false teachers are “unable to discern truth from falsehood.”²⁹ However, it is just as viable that the passage refers to those teachers belonging to Satan and intentionally teaching false doctrine.³⁰ These people may have deliberately pretended to be teachers and to be speaking the truth in order to deceive. These are serious deceptions, but such deception can be seen today with pastors and speakers promoting a gospel and an orthodoxy opposed to orthodox beliefs and the traditions of church and Scripture.

Fee mentions Paul’s teaching to Timothy that Satan and his demons are the cause of the apostasy issues at Ephesus.³¹ Timothy must fight the righteous battle for his congregation who is being lured away through Satan’s lies. Mounce points out that Paul has alluded to such a battle before in Ephesians 6:12: “For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”³²

The pastor, teacher, missionary and apologist must realize that “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So, it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor 11:14-15). Believers must be ever vigilant

²⁸ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 128-29.

²⁹ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 97.

³⁰ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 98-99.

³¹ Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 540.

³² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 236.

to remain in the Word and fellowship of God to guard against deception and the advancement of heresy and apostasy. This warning is vital information to remember not only for this project, but for ministry in general. Not all enemies to the spread of the gospel and to truth are so obviously identified. Many people claim to be “Christian” while devising their own personal Christianity constructed of false teachings, while others are true believers but are leading others astray out of ignorance and lack of preparedness. Failing to seek instruction, knowledge, and understanding of orthodox theology and teaching does not excuse one from being a false teacher.

It is the Christian’s responsibility to always be in God’s will when instructing and teaching. Jeremiah 23:1 says, “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture! declares the LORD.” The church must guard against the attacks of Satan, but the more challenging danger is Christians who are unknowingly involved in heresy and apostasy. These misguided souls trudge forward, spreading false truths all the while believing they are fighting the good fight. The reality of such false teachings reinforces the need to train believers in defending their faith, recognizing misconceptions, and eliminating false doctrine, while being able to correct and teach in love. Paul uses verse 14 of this chapter to encourage Timothy by reminding him that he has the gifts necessary to perform this ministry and encourages him to perform this task. As with Timothy, the Lord provides and equips Christians today to fulfill ministry in his name.

A Reason for the Hope All Christians Have (1 Pet 3:14-15)

The Bible enlists all believers to reach the lost, yet this lost and dying world rejects all that is good. An exegesis of 1 Peter 3:14-15 reveals that witnesses must be equipped to uncompromisingly encounter this rejection through boldness and love.

Do Not Fear What They Fear (3:14)

First Peter 3:14 instructs the believer in how to respond to the imposed suffering on account of being a witness of Christ and ultimately how to act in faithfulness: “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats, do not be frightened.” Peter is presenting a truth that suffering for the believer is a reality that will stalk all those who follow Christ until this present evil age comes to an end. There is the ever constant “but” (ἀλλ’) at the beginning of verse 14, yet instead of contrasting, the usage here is to clarify. Peter wants Christians to know that there is the possibility of experiencing trials, and even death. Peter is emphasizing that the Christian suffering on account of zeal and faithfulness to God is and will be blessed by God³³

Peter uses an interesting verb, “suffer” (πάσχω), which has caused some level of confusion in that this particular form of suffering is defined as rare or unusual. Such suffering is not the case for Christians today, nor was it even in Peter’s time. The focus for this statement is again not to suggest that Christians will not suffer, but rather that the suffering will not be perpetual. Any suffering will be for a season. In addition, those who suffer will also be blessed.

Peter follows up this section with a command: “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” Thomas Schreiner offers some clarification on this interesting manner of thinking: “Since no one can ultimately harm believers and since even their suffering is a sign of God’s blessing, then it follows that they should not fear what others can do to them.”³⁴ Indeed, believers can experience harm, but in Peter’s perspective it is only earthly harm. The Christian witness should not read this passage and suddenly expect to be bullet proof. Discernment is required in all situations. The being expressed here is that the world can only do so much, even to death. Ultimately, believers belong to God and he will bless those that suffer on his account.

³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 170.

³⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 172

How can suffering be considered a blessing? Matthew 5:10 reads, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Blessings may encompass the joys and riches of life, but for Peter the privilege of living rightly because of Christ and suffering for it is nothing less than a blessing, a sign of God’s favor and evidence of one’s salvation.³⁵ This idea also harkens back to Isaiah 8, “The Lord commands his people not to fear the plot hatched by Israel and Aram. They should only fear Yahweh, the God of Israel, and put their trust in him alone. Those who trust in him will find him to be a sanctuary, but those who fail to trust will stumble, fall and be broken” (vv.11-15). Those in Christ are to fear God alone. This “holy fear,” or respectful awe focused on Christ, drives out other fears and makes possible an honest and effective response to suffering or hardship.³⁶ Paul Achtemeier responds to this line of thinking: “The one whom Christians must regard as holy is Christ. Thus, any reverence for (Since Christ alone is holy), or fear of any other (since Christ is the one who determines the Christian’s final fate), is forbidden.”³⁷

For those in faith, the only true fear should be fear of the Lord, though as humans of flesh and blood there can be times of fear for what this world can do. Rejection, persecution, beating, and even death are all possibilities to those who serve God in a world that rejects him. There is comfort, however, in knowing that the Lord also provides encouragement, protection, provision, and safety for his people, and blesses the righteous who suffer.

³⁵ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 228.

³⁶ J Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 187.

³⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 232.

A Prepared Defense with Hope and Love (3:15)

First Peter 3:15 reads, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asks a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Peter is providing a statement of reverence and intentionality. The “sanctify” (ἀγιάσατε) used here is often thought to mean “make holy” but refers to “acknowledge or declare to be holy.” The declarative aspect is important in Jewish literature as in Peter. Michaels elaborates this point: “Just as God’s holiness is made known among the Gentiles through his people, Israel, so too is Christ’s holiness made know be Christians who confess him as Lord, even in the face of threats, dangers and death.”³⁸

This passage takes a serious position in preparation for the Christian. First, once the issue of fear is addressed, Peter goes further by encouraging preparation for active witness with an effort to win the unbeliever to Christ. Peter addresses the need for the believer to be equipped and prepared to respond to allegations or charges against the faith.³⁹ First Peter 3:15 says, “Be prepared at all times to give a defense to everyone who asks you about the hope that is in you.” This section of verse 15 is a foundational scripture for the act of Christian philosophy and apologetics—Peter did not have the academic or professional fields in mind. Karen Jobes remarks, “Though there is a hint of legal terminology, Peter’s main emphasis here is that Christian believer be able to humbly and respectfully defend their hope in Christ to anyone who might ask, even in hostile or legal situations.”⁴⁰ Believers are to be ready at any time to make or provide a defense (*apologia*; ἀπολογία) to anyone who asks them about their Christian faith. As Jobes mentioned, Schreiner elaborates that yes, there is an indication of legal or courtroom

³⁸ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 187.

³⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity, 2009), 161.

⁴⁰ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 230.

language, but Peter's main emphasis with this statement is focused at informal, spontaneous circumstances when believers are asked about their faith.⁴¹

Believers are to reframe from fear and be ever vigilant to defend their hope. The concern for their "hope" (ἐλπίδος; elipidos) refers to the hope every Christian holds for their salvation. The common bond that makes up the Christian community. Peter here is referring to the Christian life. Believers are to give a full account of their life in Christ, and the reason or expectation that they have of salvation in Christ Jesus.⁴² A Christian life should be so noticeably different from that of the world that unbelievers will be prompted to ask, why are they so distinctive? What do they have that makes them live with such joy, handle heartache with hope, and not fear what tomorrow may bring? The lost should look upon Christians and even without knowing why, desire to have what they have. Grudem adds a word of caution: "In hostile situations the opportunity for witness to Christ often comes unexpectedly; the Christian who is not always ready to answer will miss it."⁴³

The final part of the verse, "yet with gentleness and reverence," refers to meekness and humility. Reverence and humility are required to ensure the Christian remains in the proper perspective. Giving a reason for and defending the hope believers share will not be productive if presented without a heart of love and respect. Avoid attempting to overpower the unbeliever with the force of human personality or aggressiveness, but trust the Holy Spirit to quietly persuade the listener.⁴⁴ Peter is giving an evangelism lesson on how the Christian witness is to be fearless of this world and what it can do because the mission to share Christ trumps any inconvenience, discomfort, and even suffering one might endure on his behalf. Followers of Christ are to not to shy

⁴¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 174.

⁴² Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 234.

⁴³ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 161.

⁴⁴ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 161.

away from the crowds or feel intimidated by man. Instead, Christians are to be prepared, which includes knowing what is true, and being able to recognize false doctrine and to defend truth. All the boldness in the world does not grow the kingdom of God if not driven by love. Believers are to love the lost as God does. Each person is a creation of the Lord who needs grace. Attitudes or personalities should take a back seat and allow truth and the Holy Spirit to draw the lost to Christ.

Conclusion

Christianity is a faith that proclaims that those who refuse to follow will ultimately spend eternity separated from God in a place of torment. The world rejects this notion with a mentality of self and an obsession of fairness. Unfortunately, the world in which all believers live fails to perceive the true reality of God. The “vengeful” or “hateful” god nonbelievers envision sending good people to hell is a fearful construct of the devil which seeks to drive people away from the one true God. If Paul and Timothy perceived themselves as living in the “latter times,” should not all believers follow suit? Christians live in a time when the teachings of demons are prevalent. In many societies, it is not the sinful, evil, apostate actions or beliefs that are rare and taboo, but rather the things of God that are rarely discussed or seen. The advice given to Timothy is a vital treasure of wisdom and just as valid for believers today. Modern ministries are at battle with those same unseen spirits of darkness.

The world rebels and wars against the gospel because of an instinctual desire to reject the idea that there is indeed a God and he is in complete authority. He is worthy and authorized to make the rules and each person has a choice to follow those rules or to reject God. Too many people seek to go their own way; they fail to perceive or properly understand that Christ is the only way.

Christians are commanded to spread the truth of the gospel and attempt to lovingly correct the mistaken beliefs about God. Paul speaks in Ephesians of the enormity of this task and how every believer must strive to reach the lost: “Pray also for me, that

whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (Eph 6:19-20). Paul gives a reminder here that believers are indeed ambassadors to the gospel and representatives of Christ. Those who believe are the witnesses who proclaim the truth the world must hear, depending on the Holy Spirit for strength and wisdom. It is a task that is not without trial.

The commission spoken of in Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8 make it clear that Christians are commanded and compelled to share the salvation of Christ to all who will listen so that as many as will may be saved. The church is without excuse and bound to this mission. One must only contemplate how followers of Christ, having been saved and experienced the love and grace of Jesus, could possibly do anything else?

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL
ISSUES RELATED TO GREAT COMMISSION
EVANGELISM ORIENTED APOLOGETICS

Introduction

Jesus came to earth to minister as a missionary to the people. He confirms this purpose over thirty times in Scripture. Moreover, he calls all believers to be missionaries as well, saying, “As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world (John 17:18). He solidifies this purpose of missions when he tells readers, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). In seeking to evangelize in the world today, the Christian must be equipped with the knowledge and ability to not only accurately relate the gospel and scriptural doctrine that make up Christianity, but also be able to defend Christ from multiple fronts. Before the witness ever gets to the sinner’s need for grace, the questions of biblical accuracy or the existence of evil in the world will surface. Some enter the discussion of Christ weighed down with misconceptions from a background of another religion or faith. Believers seeking to share Christ and defend the truth must see those they encounter as God sees them—lost souls in need of a savior. The Christian witness must possess a heart that longs to see the lost person reconciled through Christ. As such, believers must be willing, equipped, and skilled to share. A witness must testify in loving compassion while being prepared to boldly defend the faith without compromise.

The Origin of the Hope Christians Have

Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:15, “always be ready to give a defense for the hope you have.” This command holds a few assumptions. First, is the presumption that an individual is truly a saved and a follower of Christ with a “hope” to defend. Without

Christ as Lord there exists no hope and by default no requirement for a defense. “Always” infers that a Christian is to ever be on the ready; prepared, willing, and able to share, defend, and pronounce truth. The reality is that many Christians have never provided a defense of their faith. This project sought to provide the initial foundation to equip believers at Tabernacle Baptist Church with the knowledge and training to stand for their faith. This effort depended on believers addressing what they believe, not what they *think*. They must sort through their mind and heart to reach what they believe and evaluate those beliefs against the truth of Scripture. The worst thing believers can do is lead someone astray. The Christian witness must not promote ideas or opinions as “The Gospel Truth.”¹ Failure to evaluate the understanding of faith can lead to such false teachings. The Christian witness must possess extensive knowledge of his faith, including the Bible, church doctrine, and interpretation of Scripture, to accurately convey truth. This requires knowledge of not only scriptures but the Bible itself, in addition to a firm grasp of Christian doctrine. This project covers subjects such as salvation, baptism, Jesus, and the Trinity. However, this chapter addresses various positions and possible responses to providing an apologetic to questions on the Bible itself.

The Bible

The Bible contains 66 books written by 40 authors over a period of 1,500 years and composes God’s revelation to man. The pages were written by man but inspired by God. Charles Spurgeon, describes the collection of writings: “This volume is the writing of the living God . . . everywhere I find God speaking: it is God’s voice, not man’s.”² A Christian’s witness may be the first defense for God’s Word an individual has ever heard.

¹ As a child I often heard how Christians were to not “mix the tribes.” This was understood as marrying outside of culture, race, or any number of qualifications. An idea was loosely formed, not by scripture or biblical context but by personal belief and preference. That idea in turn was passed on to others as truth in doctrine and led other to believe the idea was scriptural.

² Charles S. Kelley, Richard D. Land, and R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2007), 9-10.

It is easy to say, “I just believe,” and for many that is enough and perfectly sincere. However, this response does not help others to understand nor aid them in believing. Voddie Baucham has given a solid, intellectual, and apologetic answer to why believers can trust the Bible: “I choose to believe the Bible because it is a reliable collection of historical documents written down by eyewitnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report [of] supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies and claimed that their writings are divine rather than human in origin.”³

Accuracy

Many claim that they cannot place their faith in the Bible since there are so many errors, mistakes, and contradictions within its pages. They have heard a misguided teacher or watched a documentary from a skeptical source and arrived with a presupposition that the Bible is flawed, and error filled. The accepted Protestant doctrine claims the Bible to be inerrant and infallible. This belief goes beyond being free of errors and takes the position that the Bible is incapable of error. The question often arises concerning the perceived collection of contradictions between science and Scripture.

Timothy Jones addresses this perception:

Inerrancy does not require Scripture to be scientifically precise, and inerrancy certainly doesn't rule out figurative language or numeric estimates in the Bible. Scripture is inerrant, not in sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed⁴.

The events predicted by the Bible did occur and what it says will happen in the future, we have every reason to believe will indeed come to pass.

³ Voddie Baucham, “Why You Can Believe The Bible” (sermon delivered at Antioch Baptist Church, Fountainbleau, Randburg), accessed March 25, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15EoR6O-rUA>.

⁴ Timothy P. Jones, *How We Got the Bible* (Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2015), 14.

Translations

There exists a phenomena of Christ followers who have established a foundational belief that any other translation other than the King James is to be avoided. Others find that the availability of so many translations and versions of the Bible must dilute the message over time. The original Old Testament manuscripts were written in Hebrew predominately with a bit of Aramaic. While the New Testament was primarily written in Greek, the early church and the ruling monarchy preferred Latin. English provided the people an opportunity to not simply be told about the Word of God, but to read the Word themselves.

English translations today can be divided into two extremes, functional and formal. Functional is easier to read and maintains the meaning, but is less focused on the word count or grammar; an example is the New Living Translation. The formal versions focus on grammar, word count, and construction. As is the nature of languages, attempting to force ancient structure into a modern language results in a slightly different read, as with the King James or New American Standard. The New International Version falls nearly in the center of these two spectrums.⁵

Preservation

A favorite attack of skeptics against Christianity is that the Bible itself is full of what are mistakenly called “errors.” Mistakes derived from thousands of years of copying and translation. The presupposition is that the Bible may have previously once held the revelation of God to man, but the version currently possessed is a corrupted shadow of the original. This position fails when confronted with the massive amount of manuscripts that exist for Scripture, over five thousand manuscripts for the New Testament. In the case of the New Testament, when the various fragments and pieces of these manuscripts are compared and studied it soon becomes apparent what the original message was.

⁵ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 69-73.

This comparing and contrasting effectively weeds out the stray random writing and groups the majority of like texts, providing a final version of the accepted original message. In lieu of “mistakes” or “textual inaccuracies” there are upwards of 137,000 “differences” amongst the manuscripts. This seems unbelievable and quite damaging to a case in favor of biblical accuracy until one considers the majority of these differences are sentence structure, meaning the words are rearranged or even misspelled. The vast majority of issues are what can be equated to formatting errors and spell checking. The New Testament has been found to be 92.6 percent accurate with the other 8 percent being those formatting issues.⁶ As Jones words it, the Bible can be trusted: “Scripture is inerrant in its inspiration, sufficient in its preservation, and dependent on interpretation and illumination for its application.”⁷

Canon

The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD is often mistakenly referenced as the meeting that determined the canon. There exists a skeptical mentality that the Bible is simply the collection of writings that a group of men selected, which would best suit their selfish agendas for power. There existed no overarching council that determined the canon of the Bible. There were indeed many councils of this sort throughout history, though none of which determined the canon nor which gospel Christianity should claim. These were regional meetings of affirmation. They were not selecting writings in which to approve or discard, they simply were recognizing officially what the church had held as authoritative all along. They “determined” nothing. A vote was not held nor was there consensus to invent a new belief or interpretation. There was no all-powerful council meeting for all of Christianity. Michael Kruger, an expert on the canon of Scripture, puts it this way: “These councils did not create, authorize, or determine the canon. They

⁶ Jones, *How We Got the Bible*, 108-9.

⁷ Jones, *How We Got the Bible*, 18.

simply were part of the process of recognizing a canon that was already there.” What does the phrase “already there” mean? Essentially, society and especially the church already had an accepted collection of writings they knew to be authoritative. They were not always labeled as “canon,” that came later. All the many councils accomplished was to simply align themselves or the groups they represented with the collection of writings already in place by the church.⁸

The shape of the New Testament canon and the gospel was not determined by a man, a leader, a vote, or by a council, but by a broad and ancient consensus. Believers trust the canon and the Gospels held today by acknowledgement of their content and by the confidence of the early church to their origins.

This World of Beliefs

The acquisition of a strong understanding of what Christians believe and what God reveals through the Bible about those beliefs is without question the foundation for all Christians. The church is not without debate, misunderstanding, or even disagreement. These instances, however, are usually handled internally and hopefully with loving compassion, as any disagreement among fellow believers. Such issues should be identified and handled as detailed in Albert Mohler’s “Spiritual Triage.” This triage is a method of categorizing church disagreements into three levels or orders. The first order being doctrinal issues that to deny equates to denial of Christ—these are nonnegotiable. The second order concern issues strong enough to divide a congregation, yet both groups are still able to view each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. A second order issue would be the method of baptism. Third order issues are lower on the scale. They include issues a congregation may disagree upon within itself, but not enough to question a group’s view

⁸ Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 204-7.

of Christ.⁹ Tabernacle has a pastor, staff, deacon body, and a congregation to sort through such matters. Discussion in this section does not focus on Christianity, but rather other beliefs. Christianity is just one of many worldviews that a believer will encounter. Christians cannot expect to become experts in every philosophy, worldview, or religion. However, one can be familiar with prominent views in Christianity and be able to recognize the weaknesses, fallacies, and open doors to the gospel presented through witnessing encounters. The Christian witness must be equipped with foundational theological principles to interact and engage the various non-Christian worldviews and religions in such a way as to adequately defend against false teaching and misconceptions while being intentionally persuasive with the gospel.

Worldviews

The term *worldview* has been mentioned previously, but just what does this mean? The word originates from the German word *weltanschauung* (a union of two German words, *welt*—meaning world; and *Anschaung*—meaning perspective).¹⁰ James H. Olthuis defines a worldview as a “vision of life”; a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which believers view the world.¹¹ It would be correct to say a person’s worldview is their perspective of the world. Everybody has a worldview, whether they realize or not. Each person has opinions, thoughts and perspectives of the world, the people residing in it, and ideas on how it all relates to one another. People hold presuppositions on virtually everything. A worldview is the framework of beliefs that

⁹ Albert Mohler, “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity,” July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>.

¹⁰ Edward E. Hindson and Ergun Mehmet Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 498.

¹¹ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 18.

make up those ideas which are presupposed.¹² An individual may hold a worldview that animals should not be subservient to humans. This person would probably be vegan and support animal rights groups. They see the world through the lens of their beliefs concerning animals. Their beliefs and ideas about animals form the foundation of their identity. The same is true in terms of religion and philosophy. A person may not reject Jesus or the Bible, but the tenants to which Christianity holds clash with their worldview. This worldview is the culmination of their allegiance to what they hold most valuable.¹³ When Christianity begins to question or infringe on that allegiance, the skeptic turns to rejection.

The following is an evaluation of a few worldviews of note, illustrating various aspects of the beliefs Christians should be aware. These evaluations are simply broad overviews and examples of the type of information this project includes. Any worldview requires a vast amount of study and cannot be accurately depicted in a few paragraphs nor in an hour study over the course of a few weeks. The goal of this project was to introduce Christians to worldviews and how to use the knowledge gained from this study for apologetics and ministry.

Catholicism

The congregation of TBC currently has two IMB missionary families serving in Rome, Italy. As such, TBC has multiple trips per year to Rome to support, learn, and minister. In addition, TBC is located in the midst of several highly populated Hispanic communities where a majority of residents identify as catholic. As such, the congregation of TBC would benefit from an understanding of Catholicism, the Pope, the Catholic Bible and how this belief mirrors and differs from the Protestant and Southern Baptist

¹² Philip Graham Ryken, *Christian Worldview: A Student's Guide*, Reclaiming the Christian Intellectual Tradition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 17,19.

¹³ Bernard van den Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross Cultural Dialogue* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 180.

doctrines of Tabernacle. There is an enormous difference between what may be read in a Roman Catholic text concerning beliefs and the practiced beliefs of the Catholic neighbor living down the street.¹⁴ Many Catholics in the area know little about Roman Catholicism and are culturally religious.¹⁵ Their relationship to God is built on a foundation of liturgy and ceremony. They have been instructed since birth that any deviation from this tradition results in punishment. I have yet to speak to a local professing Catholic who has the slightest fear of hell. They will eventually get to heaven thanks to purgatory. This idea greatly limits their desire for anything of Christ; they simply see no need. Considering this alternate understanding of life after death leads to the question, “are Catholics saved?” The answer is “yes,” if they have repented of their sins and acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord of their life. This issue with Roman Catholicism is their view of salvation, Christ, the church and even Scripture presents a faith and theology that is quite different.

Mary. The virgin Mary is viewed by Roman Catholicism in a manner quite different from that of the Protestant church. A doctrine known as the Marian dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950, through his *Encyclical Munificentissimus Deus*. A distinction needs to be made between *ascension* and *assumption*. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Risen Lord, ascended into heaven, a sign of divine power. Mary, on the contrary, was elevated or assumed into heaven by the power and grace of God. This doctrine assigns various levels of purpose and importance to Mary that go beyond the Protestant accepted understanding. Within Catholicism, Mary

¹⁴ Reid Karr, missionary to Rome, took me to Padua to see the Basilica of Saint Anthony. The amazing beauty of the architecture was overshadowed by the observations found within. I had never witnessed people sobbing, praying, worshipping, and giving offerings to relics. I stood in wonder and disbelief as they prayed to these pieces of cloth and samples of preserved tissue. This Catholicism was different from what I saw at home in the United States.

¹⁵ Cultural Christianity is religion that superficially identifies itself as “Christianity” but does not truly adhere to the faith. A “cultural Christian” is a nominal believer—he wears the label “Christian,” but the label has more to do with his family background and upbringing than any personal conviction that Jesus is Lord. Cultural Christianity is more social than spiritual. Got Questions? “What Is Cultural Christianity,” accessed August 11, 2017, <https://www.gotquestions.org/cultural-Christianity.html>.

holds an active role in salvation and receives special devotion from the church. This devotion is not “worship” (*Latria*), for that is reserved for God, but rather a type of “super-veneration” (*hyperdulia*), which can be described as a special type of reverence.¹⁶ Catholics often deny that they “pray” to Mary. This is an example of defining the terms. There is a thin line at best between what is determined “reverence” and full worship.

The Papacy. The Catholic Church has the Pope. To many Protestants the Pope appears to be the senior pastor of the Roman Catholic Church. This assumption is far from accurate. The Pope holds many titles that are equally interesting and confusing. One such title is “The Vicar of Christ.” The Pope (under the Catechism of the Catholic Church), is the very voice of Christ. He enjoys infallible teaching, authority, and exercises full, unhindered, supreme power over the church.¹⁷ It is difficult for many to understand that this title makes the Pope a supreme ruler (as Jesus is King); an infallible teacher when he speaks from the *ex-cathedra* (from the seat as Jesus is Prophet). This infallibility equates to, whatever the Pope teaches or speaks holds the same authority as Scripture.¹⁸ Protestants believe in Christ alone *solus Christus*; for the Catholic there is Christ, but on earth there is the Pope.¹⁹

Islam

Immediate presuppositions arise when one considers Islam and the Muslim religion. While Islam is not as prevalent in the region around Tabernacle Baptist, the town of Cartersville does have an Islamic Prayer Center, and a growing middle eastern population in a neighboring community hosts a much higher Muslim population with a

¹⁶ Gregg R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 190-91.

¹⁷ Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 425.

¹⁸ Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice*, 186-87.

¹⁹ Leonardo De Chirico, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to the Papacy: Its Origin and Role in the 21st Century* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015), 5.

prominent mosque in downtown. Proximity is an issue, but the more urgent issue is Islam in culture and conversation. When a Christian finds himself in a discussion with Muslims or about the Islamic faith, will he know what to say? Is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the same deity as Allah in the Qur'an? Is Jesus the son of Allah? Questions like these and many more make up the debate between Christianity and Islam.

God. A common misconception of the relationship between Christianity and Islam is a shared god. "Allah" is simply the Arabic translation for the term, God. However, proponents against Christianity will say that the two faiths share the same God, and as such, they worship the same deity. What is an acceptable response to such a claim? Is the "god" who claims to be the prince of deceivers (Sura 7) really the first person of the Trinity and the father of Christ? Words have meaning, and in any apologetic, it is foundational to define the terms and clarify what is being said. Can the prince of lies be the same god as the one who proclaims himself to be the "truth?" (John 14:6).

Islam holds that Jesus (or Isa) was a prophet like Muhammad. He was not divine and even denies being God (Sura 19). Isa is considered not to be the son of Allah nor part of any Trinity. The Qur'an does tell how there was an attempted crucifixion, but Allah raised him to himself before it could be carried out.²⁰ (Sura 4) There are several "accounts" of the crucifixion in Islam, all of which tell a story of Jesus avoiding or faking death. The point of note here is that "Isa" is not the Jesus of the Bible. Islam is replacement theology—a worldview or religion that attempts to "correct" or "replace" Christianity.

Muslims pose a difficult witnessing problem through their view of the Bible. They see the Christian Bible as corrupt. Paul and John are viewed as compromised so their writings are not valid. In addition, most Christians push toward discussing salvation found through the grace of Jesus Christ. This falls on deaf ears as Muslims have no concept

²⁰ William E. Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, World Religions Series (London: Routledge, 2009), 63.

of such an act from God.²¹ A final thought on Islam, and especially the great differences between the two faiths, comes from James P. Dretke, who states, “In Islam, man’s salvation rests on his own shoulders and his obedience to the law, while in Christianity, it rests purely and solely on the grace of God. Islam tells man what to do to earn salvation; Christianity tells man what God has done to give him salvation.”²² This is an interesting take when considering the work-based, five pillar system of possible salvation of Islam when compared to the salvation through grace of Christianity.

Qur’an. It is of great benefit to read the Qur’an to gain an understanding of Islam, Allah, and the worldview held by Muslims. This however will hold little sway with Muslims if read an English translation. They view all “translations” as corrupt, as nothing can accurately capture the beauty and message of the Qur’an like the Arabic language.²³ Study of the Qur’an should be attempted with caution and accountability. As with venturing into any worldview aside from Christianity there is a danger of losing focus on Christ. This project and curriculum employed Christian commentaries like the work by Raouf Ghattas and Carol Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur’an*. Guides like this offer Christian explanation, contextual insight, and rebuttal scriptural references to aid the Christian navigating the confusing labyrinth that is Islam and the Qur’an. This particular book offers a cautionary warning: “For every hour you spend in the Qur’an, spend another two or more in the Bible and in prayer to remain strong against the attacks of the Evil One.”²⁴

²¹ Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 280.

²² James P. Dretke, *A Christian Approach to Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979), 38.

²³ Mateen Ellass, *Understanding the Koran: A Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 28.

²⁴ Raouf G. Ghattas and Carol Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur’an: Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 14.

What to Expect When Providing That Defense

Alister E McGrath writes, “Even though human words are inadequate to do justice to the wonder and majesty of God, they are nevertheless able to point to him— inadequacy does not imply unreliability. Human words possess a capacity to function as the medium through which God is able to disclose himself and to bring about a transformational encounter with the risen Christ.”²⁵ The witness must use “human words” to share the gospel and defend the truth of Christianity, but this technique is not without caveat: people do not always want to listen, much less believe. They not only lack the desire to listen but will be defensively and passionately against the discussion of Christianity. Why attempt adding apologetics into the mix when methods of evangelism have been tested and proven effective over the years? In today’s culture, the population will not or would not respond to traditional evangelistic approach. The suggestion here is not that the traditional “share Jesus without fear” or the classic “Roman Road” methods are not valid; however, these methods require a bridge to bring the conversation to the things of God. Apologetics is the method that builds such a bridge to sharing through traditional methods. The Christian witness must be trained and experienced in actual conversations, encounters, and debates with those of varying worldviews. Christians must also develop educated defenses and responses aimed at diffusing attacks and cultivating witnessing opportunities.

The apostle Paul practiced various methods throughout his ministry. He was relational as he spent considerable time making tents and developing relationships to promote the gospel. A view held in the church today is that relational is the only way to approach the lost. There was a time when people knew what was right and true even though they chose to not practice such beliefs. All that was required for evangelism was to awaken them to life in Christ. This may have been a gospel tract, a testimony, or sermon. Today, the church observes a different type of worldview and belief from a people who

²⁵ Alister E. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God and Other Modern Myths: Building Bridges to Faith through Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 19.

are not aware of what is “true and right.” Tim Keller, comparing today’s need for a different approach to the gospel, refers to the boy in Mark 9 when he says, “Jesus is saying, the demon is in too deep for your ordinary way of doing ministry.”²⁶ Paul used the tool the job called for at the time. He was developing relationships, but also stood in the town square and boldly corrected false ideas and preached truth. The present age provides a unique collection of “this kind” of worldview(s) which requires a more contextualized approach alongside more traditional forms of evangelism.”²⁷ As scripture instructs, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person” (Col 4:6).

Believers must not only remember their goal, but especially what their goal is not. McGrath writes, “Effective apologetics does not so much impose Christian truth on people as draw them into that truth in such a way that they can appreciate and appropriate it.”²⁸ In seeking to be compassionate and winsome, it is possible to veer away from boldness. Christian society today is petrified of venturing outside of the everchanging boundaries of political correctness. The gospel by its very nature is offensive as people are informed of their position outside of God’s standard. Anything less than the truth of the gospel is unacceptable. Franklin Graham drives this point home: “This is the key: Everything must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. When we begin to brush God to the side because it might offend someone, our purpose is gone.”²⁹ Getting people to agree or accept a watered-down gospel or compromised grace draws people away from Christ.

²⁶ Tim Keller, *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 104.

²⁷ McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God*, 103. Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached a revival in 1959 in which he expounded Mark 9 and how Jesus was able to succeed in casting out the demon when the disciples had failed. Lloyd-Jones emphasized where Jesus told the disciples that “this kind of demon can only be cast out through prayer” (Mark:28-29) We live in an environment today where we are dealing with a new type of worldview of which to witness to. “This kind” will require different methods as well.

²⁸ McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God*, 194.

²⁹ Christian Buckley and Ryan Dobson, *Humanitarian Jesus: Social Justice and the Cross* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 146.

How does a Christian witness deal with this conundrum of not offending people with an offensive gospel? The answer is not to avoid the crushing blow of the gospel—that experience is vital to understanding the need of a savior. Instead the believer should focus on helping individuals separate themselves from the conversation long enough to recognize the truth. The goal then becomes personal discovery of an intimate relationship to the gospel as opposed to someone thrusting it upon them. Alister Magrath writes, “Often during the course of an apologetic discussion, the person begins to feel attacked. They see it as though you are not questioning their beliefs on a subject, but rather you are questioning them.” McGrath calls the answer to this “person-centered apologetics.” He suggests making the effort to separate individuals from the personal aspect of the discussion and to focus on the truth and reality of their situation. Allow them to see their need from a third person view so they can perceive objectively.³⁰ Once they understand God’s view of sin objectively, then they can start to piece together how that relates to them personally.

The idea of the “conversation” can be daunting. However, defending faith will require running toward the tough questions and setting your face as flint to engage in difficult debate. I once met Ravi Zacharias at a book signing and asked how he could be so calm and assured on an arena stage fielding tough questions, one after another. He told me that all through the years there have only been so many questions asked. Those questions may have been presented differently, but when it came down to it, people would ask one of a finite number of topics. The longer a believer does this and encounters the same questions asked, and the stronger that defense and answer will become over time. Prepare, read, and study, but above all, engage in discussion.

Voddie Baucham suggests that believers looking to learn apologetics should actually study the methods and techniques provided by the gifted minds of other believers: “If there are a limited number of objections to the gospel message, and these objections

³⁰ McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God*, 89-94.

have been answered by biblical authors under the inspiration of the Holy spirit, then their answers will certainly be more effective and authoritative than any we could devise on our own.”³¹ Why not take full advantage of the centuries worth of brilliant minds working on these topics. This project sought to expose Tabernacle Baptist to the possibilities available to them. The problem of suffering is an example of one of the most commonly asked questions about God and Christianity. The topic of a loving God creating a world with suffering will be briefly discussed with possible reactions and examples of apologetic, which can be practiced.

Why Does Suffering Exist in This World?

If God is so loving and all powerful, why is there evil and suffering in the world? Logically, God could create a world where there is no suffering. He could just “make” it that way. Could the response be one of doubt? “Can He really?” The idea here is that God can do anything he wants, including the illogical, but this is not entirely true. God cannot counter act himself. In the case of this question, yes, God is capable of creating a world without evil or suffering, but He is not able to create such a world if there is free will in the equation. God cannot create a world where he “makes” people do things “freely.”

Another way to approach this—God cannot do the logically impossible.³² This question often comes from people suffering from loss, trying to make sense of why some painful event has happened. William Lane Craig points out that though the most effective method is through the “emotional,” many of these defenses are highly “intellectual.” The reason being that most people think their position is intellectual so therefore it requires showing them through intellectual means that they are actually looking at things

³¹ Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 21.

³² William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 155.

emotionally. Once the emotional argument is presented, the conversation moves away from apologetics and closer to evangelism and counselling. People are finite creatures, but God can see all of time from before it began. Referring to this question, Keller remarks, “If you have a God great and transcendent enough to be mad at because he hasn’t stopped evil and suffering in the world, then you have (at the same moment) a God great and transcendent enough to have good reasons for allowing it to continue that you can’t know.”³³

These debates have already been addressed extensively by theologians and apologists. Start there and develop an educated and personal stance. Having such knowledge (or at least knowing the knowledge is out there to utilize) takes much of the stress and apprehension away from engaging the world for the gospel. Baucham formed an apologetic method out of this perspective called “Expository Apologetics.” Basically, he suggests that believers develop a firm grasp of the basic truths and then focus on developing those truths into a clear defense that is looking to engage conversationally with a goal of gospel presentation. This was the goal at Tabernacle as we sought to become aware and prepared by knowing the basics and developing a foundation for the more advanced in an effort to conversationally evangelize apologetically. Craig remarks, “People who lack training in apologetics are often afraid to share their faith or speak out for Christ out of fear that someone might ask them a question. But if you know the answers, then you are not afraid to go into the lion’s den—in fact, you’ll enjoy it!”³⁴

Paul asks the church of Ephesus, “Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (Eph 6:19-20). Christians are to be ambassadors of Christ, bound to the sharing

³³ Tim Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in the Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 25, quoted in Ravi K. Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Why Suffering? Finding Meaning and Comfort When Life Doesn’t Make Sense* (New York: Faith Words, 2014), 197.

³⁴ Craig, *On Guard*, 19.

of the gospel as if in chains. David Wheeler says that one of the first steps to being an ambassador for Christ is to simply remain silent and pay attention to the other person.³⁵ Where are they coming from and what are they saying? Wheeler tells that there are all types of listening, such as *pretend* and *selective* listening, where a person waits for a turn to speak. There is also the *Dr. Phil* and *one-up* listening, where the speaker is simply waiting to “fix” a person with some perfect solution. Christians must strive for *epithetic* and *attentive* listening. The response—the method of sharing or apologetic employed with this discussion—should entirely be driven by what “they” say. This technique may require more listening and possibly more questions. A witness is looking for the unveiling of personal truth.³⁶ McGrath calls these revealing truths, “points of contact.”³⁷ They serve as the springboard for where the discussion will go.

Engaging people and listening to hear and learn who they are and what they are about is one step in gauging how to address the topics of God. Another step in discovering what a person thinks about specific things is by asking leading questions, such as “what do you think of this” or “do you agree with that?” One could hope and wait around for them to eventually get there (if they ever did) or the witness could ask them questions. Greg Koukl offers several of what he calls “tactics” or methods to aid the direction of a conversation. These tactics are not deceptions nor tricks, but simply conversational tools. One such tool is to employ *Columbo*, a method styled after the television detective who would simply ask folks to repeat their comments or to clarify what they had said. What

³⁵ McGrath writes, “The effective apologist is one who listens before speaking and who makes every effort to link the resources of the Christian apologetic tradition both to the needs of that person and to the level of that person’s ability to handle argumentation and imagery.” McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God*, 11

³⁶ Dave Earley and David A. Wheeler, *Evangelism Is . . . How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 228-32.

³⁷ A “point of contact” is a God-given foothold for divine self-revelation. It is a catalyst, not a substitute, for God’s self-revelation. It is like the advance guard of an army, preparing the ground for the major force that follows. McGrath positions that these “points of contact” are there to stimulate people to ask questions about the meaning of life or the reality of God. McGrath, *Intellectuals Don’t Need God*, 16.

seemed like pointless queries, shockingly revealed more evidence and answers. Questions like, “So, you’re saying . . . ?” “Could you please run that by me again?” or “Could you clear this up for me, I get lost sometimes with the facts?” Using simplistic leading questions that can effectively guide a conversation is an effective way to go on the offense without being offensive. Believers can use this method in engaging people in discussion. Another method is to “put a stone in their shoe,” which refers to giving the person something to contemplate after the conversation is over; a question or fact that sticks in their mind and makes them ponder long after the meeting. Koukl remarks on the use of this tactic: “When God opens a door for opportunity for me. I pray quickly for wisdom, then ask myself this: What one thing can I say, what one question can I ask, what seed can I plant that will get the other person thinking? Then I simply try to put a stone in the person’s shoe.”³⁸ The goal of believers should be to place a stone of curiosity for Christ in the shoe of everyone they encounter with the gospel.

Conclusion

Christians live in a world full of lost people, existing without Christ. They will die and are destined to either spend eternity with God or separated from him in a place called hell where there is torment and suffering. The distinction between which destination these individuals will reside hinges on their acceptance or dismissal of Christ. Believers have but a brief time in this life to be a light to the world. This project sought to prepare, enable, and encourage Tabernacle Baptist Church and others to serve as good stewards to the Great Commission assigned to all who follow Christ. God has placed his church during this period of time to engage the world for the sake of his gospel. May the goal of Tabernacle Baptist and all those who follow Christ be to make the name of the Lord known to every tribe and nation.

³⁸ Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 40.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The purpose of this project (*315Faith*) was to develop an instructional ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Church (TBC) to establish gospel-centered apologetics as a tool for evangelism by educating participants with the knowledge to understand their faith better and equipping believers to successfully engage the world with rational defenses grounded in Scripture and truth. The project's completion hinged on the realization of three goals. The first goal was to assess the current level of apologetic knowledge and evangelistic competency of the Tabernacle Baptist Church membership. The second goal was to develop six hours of video lectures focused on foundational Christian doctrine and worldview designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to properly engage skeptics. The third goal was to develop a strategic plan for apologetic resources, education, and practical application training to be continually available and assessable to TBC. This strategic plan promotes the continued development of apologetic-strengthened evangelism at TBC.

Preparation Phase

The *315Faith* project initially endeavored to include the entirety of the student and adult congregation. Further investigation of ethics requirements and council from church staff yielded the decision to restrict participation to high school students through senior adults. This range of demographics required ethics approval but allowed the inclusion of high school teenagers. This inclusion was necessary as the project sought to divert considerable focus toward students. Phase 1 was content creation, specifically, writing the student LifeGroup curriculum. This stage took the better part of a year, and

while time-intensive, the curriculum set a foundation for the video library and set a course for the program to follow in the future. A secondary step of phase 1 was writing, recording, and editing the videos included in the library.

Consequently, the library was the catalyst for phase 2: development of a website. Having a video library of apologetic content required a method of delivery. Creating the website supplied not only the needed delivery method but also created a repository for the research surveys. The next step was to acquire approval from the Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Permission was granted to proceed with the course and to utilize human subjects on July 22, 2019, and by the Research Ethics Committee on September 10, 2019.

Curriculum Development

The proposal process of the project brought about the decision to include the participation of the student ministry. Multiple design meetings resulted in the request from the Student Pastor to develop an apologetics curriculum that would sustain a tenth grade LifeGroup for the entire year. Additional meetings with the Student Pastor led to identifying prospective authors and the creation of a curriculum schedule that would correspond to the church calendar.¹ This church calendar changed over time and only allowed for a collection of forty lessons.² The combined effort of myself the pastor, student minister, and student LifeGroup leaders resulted in an approved curriculum list of lesson topics. The student and education pastors wrote eight of the forty lessons, with one lesson supplemented by a group presenter.³ Each lesson submitted to the church followed

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 5.

³ The student pastor wrote four lessons on Christology and two on homosexuality. The education pastor authored a lesson on the roles and expectations of the church. The presenter, the head of the Bartow County Women's Resource Center, spoke on Sanctity of Life Sunday.

the Student Pastor's supervision.⁴ This template proved to be a fluid document allowing for edits as experience dictated. The curriculum was stored on TBC online storage, notifying each member of a new lesson to review. The Student Pastor, Middle School Pastor, and the five Lifegroup leaders to be presenting the lessons reviewed each lesson. Finally, the Student Ministry and LifeGroup leaders utilized a rubric for appropriateness in the topic, scope, and ease of presentation, along with scriptural and doctrinal correctness evaluated the lessons.⁵

The curriculum lessons endeavored to cover a range of topics to develop a foundation of knowledge in Christianity while pushing into the deeper areas of apologetics and theological issues. Forty weeks supplied ample time to establish students' familiarity with the Bible, God, and the church. The curriculum provided a look into the history of Christianity and explained the methods of worship believers use today. These lessons covered a range of topics from the canon of Scripture and intelligent design to homosexuality and the occult. The curriculum looked to be an additional variable when analyzing the effectiveness of the *315Faith* program to the congregation. Results from students who participated in the curriculum were compared not only to students outside of the tenth-grade curriculum but also to the remaining adult congregation.

Video Library Development

This project developed the foundations for an apologetics ministry, which would grow, educate, and train the congregation of TBC to be defenders of Christianity with an emphasis on sharing the gospel. *315Faith* aspired to reach as much of the congregation as possible. The initial design of a teaching series or weekly Bible study failed to provide full and open access to the congregation on a long-term basis. By design, a teaching series or Bible study proceeds for a certain period and is replaced with

⁴ See appendix 3 for the lesson template used in creation of the curriculum.

⁵ See appendix 2 for lesson rubric.

another study. The video format arose as a feasible option to provide the most content in an assessable and sustainable manner.

Bible studies held at TBC are for one hour per week over six to twelve weeks. The video library would endeavor to contain at least six hours to provide a comparable amount of content as a standard weekly Bible study. The video topics selected for the initial library provide foundational information, such as the Bible, the gospel, and the church. This video library sought to establish a program that would grow over time.

Videos were scripted, recorded, and edited for eight months with an emphasis on maintaining a play length average of fewer than fifteen minutes. The resulting outcome was a library of twenty-three videos uploaded to YouTube with a play length of slightly under six hours.

Video 1 Synopsis: Introduction

Video 1, “Introduction,” was developed to be the second video of the collection, which followed the “Request for Participation.” This “Introduction” video explains the idea behind gospel-centered apologetics. The video reviews the mandate that believers are bound to the Great Commission. If TBC is to be an Acts 1:8 church, then the congregation must be able to share this faith and defend against attacks and false teachings. Video 1 runtime is 11:43.

Video 2 Synopsis: The Bible

Video 2, “The Bible,” is another introduction video that establishes the foundation for future videos on the Bible and Scripture. This video also aids in presenting the importance the reliability of Scripture holds in most or all Christian apologetic defenses. The video provides an overview of the makeup and history of the Bible, ending with a rundown of the various possible discussions available in terms of the Bible, such as Scripture translations, manuscripts, and rejected books of the canon. Video 2 runtime is 7:31.

Video 3 Synopsis: Translations

Video 3, “Translations,” looks at the Bible’s various translations and seeks to explain how the need for translations came about as the outcome of two main circumstances. First, the original writings existed in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Believers unable to read these languages require a translation in the language they understand. Second, languages change and evolve, requiring updates or new translated versions. The message and meaning from the original manuscripts provide the closest translation possible. Video 3 runtime is 16:35.

Video 4 Synopsis: How Do I Answer That?

Video 4, “How Do I Answer That?” the video looks at a scenario used in a previous video and looks at the various methods for forming and presenting a response based on a Christian worldview and backed by a clear understanding of Scripture. The scenario in question was a hypothetical conversation where the viewer has contemplates if it is scriptural for a church to require abstinence from drinking alcohol of its staff and leaders. The video encourages listening and speaking from a position of Scripture and fact, as opposed to opinion. Video 4 runtime is 11:15.

Video 5 Synopsis: Spiritual Triage

Video 5, “Spiritual Triage” is taken from the writings of Albert Mohler and his article, “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity.”⁶ The video gives a rundown of the three tiers of theological triage: gospel fundamentals, church essentials, and non-essentials. An introduction of these steps precedes a video closing with a message from John 17—a message that believers are to be united and any division should be taken seriously and evaluated against Scripture and standards such as these three triage steps. Video 5 runtime is 9:43.

⁶ Albert Mohler, “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity” Albert Mohler, July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity>.

Video 6 Synopsis: Translators

Video 6, “Translators,” is a continuation from the “Translations” originating in the exciting lives of believers responsible for bringing Scripture to people in a language they can understand. The video looks at the lives and translations of Caedmon, Bede the Monk, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and John Huss. The video seeks to add context to the names of the translators and to enlighten believers to the amazing events that have led to the Bible believers are blessed to have today. Video 6 runtime is 12:45.

Video 7 Synopsis: Gnostic Gospels

Video 7, “Gnostic Gospels,” looks at the ancient writings of those following Gnosticism—the belief of specialized knowledge. The video looks at the various books of the heretical offshoot of the second-century church. This discussion investigates reasons the Gnostics were rejected and gives examples of the writings, such as the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Thomas. The video concludes by evaluating the feasibility that the apostles could have lied. Video 7 runtime is 13:31.

Video 8 Synopsis: Canon

Video 8, “Canon,” continues the look into the Bible by introducing and explaining what the canon is, how Christianity arrived at the canon the church currently possesses, and why believers accept it. This video simply introduces the canon and establishes the premise that it was not determined as much as formally recognized. Further discussion on the reliability and canonical relevance of writings takes place in other videos. Video 8 runtime is 12:46.

Video 9 Synopsis: Copycat Religions

Video 9, “Copycat Religions,” begins by describing a list of life events that seem to tell the story of Jesus, only to reveal that the circumstances referred to other character’s stories from other religions and belief systems. This section begins the conversation that many origin stories for deities seem to share similar characteristics.

Many of these stories teach that Christianity is just another in a long list of rehased mythology. The video explains the common characteristics supposedly shared among Horus, Dionysus, Attis, Mithra, Osiris, Krishna, and Jesus Christ. Next, the lesson focuses on the failure of false gods to share the supposed characteristic of Christ. Also, the false gods in question display misinterpretation (or exaggeration) that led to the comparison with Jesus. The video ends with a look into the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ and challenges the readers to research the other gods and mythologies then compare them with the person of Jesus. When honestly evaluated, Christ rises as uniquely verified. Video 9 runtime is 22:15.

Video 10 Synopsis: The Apocrypha

Video 10, “The Apocrypha,” continues the look into the Bible by discussing the books found in the Catholic Bible, which are not in the Protestant canon. However, this video looks at the difference between the Protestant Old Testament and the Jewish texts. Next, the video explains that the books of the Apocrypha are a collection of writings found in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox New Testaments. What follows is a discussion of the pros and cons of the apocryphal books before ending with an introduction to pseudepigrapha writings. Video 10 runtime is 21:24.

Video 11 Synopsis: Mistakes in the Bible

Video 11, “Mistakes in the Bible,” seeks to address the claims by skeptics that the Bible is full of errors and, as a result, is unreliable. The video begins by introducing some skeptical claims of an error-filled Bible before making it clear that the terms “error” and “mistake” are misused. Though there are hundreds of thousands of incongruities, the Bible is indeed inerrant and infallible as the overwhelming majority of issues are textual or scribal. This discussion places a practical perspective on evaluating Scripture against three discussion questions: (1) how can I trust the Bible when I find or hear of a mistake?

(2) if the Bible is so perfect, why are there scientific errors?, and (3) did God mess up?

Video 11 runtime is 17:36.

Video 12 Synopsis: Lost Books

Video 12, “Lost Books,” continues the look into the Bible. In this case, the subject matter is the lost books. Books that are mentioned in the Bible, though lost to the world. This lesson references a list of over twenty books, of which the Bible refers or quotes. However, these books are not just omitted from the canon but lost to the world altogether. These books include the likes of the book of Jasher, Acts of Solomon, Annals of King David, Visions of Iddo the Seer, and the Book of Jehu. This video does relate to defending the Bible directly, but mostly intends to increase one’s fascination with the mystery and overall exciting nature of the Bible. Video 12 runtime is 10:19.

Video 13 Synopsis: Manuscripts

Video 13, “Manuscripts,” furthered the discussion concerning the reliability of Scripture. The analysis focuses on showing that the Bible has a fantastic amount of manuscript evidence to support the claim that today’s translations are reliable. The video concludes with a takeaway for believers to understand that they may not recall each fact or point of interest, but the realization that these facts exist builds confidence and faith in the Bible. The recollection of facts and statistics will come, but believers must start with realizing the evidence is staggering and more than enough to merit confidence. Video 13 runtime is 15:51.

Video 14 Synopsis: Denominations

Video 14, “Denominations” references Ephesians 4:1-5 in that there is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. This video looks at how believers in Christ went from believers astonished at the risen Christ to the vast array of denominations of today, beginning with the Great Schism of 1054 and the Protestant Reformation. The video looks at Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian, seeking to explore the

differences and then evaluate the significance of those differences. The video explains that denominations develop through church divisions over organizational and doctrinal issues. These divisions would include matters of the organization such as liturgy or governing. Doctrinal issues would consist of items such as baptism and communion. In closing, the video takes each of the listed denominations and evaluates their beliefs and practices. Video 14 runtime is 26:01.

Video 15 Synopsis: Worldview

Video 15, “Worldview,” focuses on demonstrating that all people have a perspective from which they gauge the world. These perspectives derive from the combination of variables stemming from their life. Such factors would include culture, background, and family heritage. The video then looks at how a Christian worldview relates to the topics of Christ and the Bible before ending with a practical example worldview conversation. Video 15 runtime is 14:42.

Video 16 Synopsis: Resurrection

Video 16, “Resurrection,” focuses on the reasons and logic available to the believer when considering the resurrection of Christ. The video begins with a look at various points of interest to justify belief in the resurrection. One such position was just how strongly the apostles believed that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. The apostles believed so strongly that nearly all of them died a violent martyr’s death. Another point of interest is other writers who recorded that the apostles’ death over their beliefs. Next, the video looks to Paul—the skeptic of skeptics who makes a complete change of heart regarding Jesus. This persecutor becomes the most outspoken advocate for the gospel. The video concludes by looking at a couple of skeptical claims: (1) that “He lives” refers to the message and not the man himself, and (2) Jesus survived the crucifixion. Video 16 runtime is 15:20.

Video 17 Synopsis: The Only Way to Heaven

Video 17, “The Only Way to Heaven,” looks at the belief of other paths to God besides Christ. The video begins with an introduction into the discussion and then poses the reasonable question of, “if there are so many beliefs, how can you be so sure about Christianity?” The final section of the video looks at commonly held secular positions including, “all paths lead to Heaven,” “we all live in spheres of belief. It is how you live in that sphere that determines your afterlife,” and “I have my own relationship with God.” The video concludes with a takeaway that Christian faith should not be the question of whether the belief is fair or too exclusive, but whether the belief is true. Video 17 runtime is 26:23.

Video 18 Synopsis: Age of the Earth Debate

Video 18, “Age of the Earth Debate,” looks at the discussion and often disagreement over the understanding of what Natural and Divine Revelation must show regarding the age of the world. The video merely introduces the topic, providing the basics of a Young Earth versus Old Earth debate. The focus of the video is twofold: to inform that such a debate exists and to establish the question of whether the discussion should be a dividing issue among believers. Video 18 runtime is 16:27.

Video 19 Synopsis: Catholicism A

Video 19, “Catholicism A,” serves as the first of two videos on the Catholic faith. This first video discusses the perceptions of Catholicism, the similarities to Protestantism, and then the differences. Specifically, the differences concerning baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, reconciliation, Holy Orders, and the Authority of Scripture. Video 19 runtime is 15:30.

Video 20 Synopsis: Catholicism B

Video 20, “Catholicism B,” is the second video discussing the Catholic faith. This video looks at four doctrines from the Catholic perspective. (1) The lesson gives an introduction to the Pope, detailing his role, titles, and place as the head of state for the Vatican. (2) The discussion moves to the belief of purgatory and comparing this belief against Protestant Scripture. (3) The focus shifts to the four dogmas of Marianism: divine motherhood, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, and (4) the assumption, the entering into Heaven of Mary body and soul. Video 20 runtime is 21:56.

Video 21 Synopsis: The Gospel

Video 21, “The Gospel,” gives a simple explanation of the gospel and what it means to be a Christian by establishing who God is, what sin is, and that sin is personal to every person. Finally, the good news of the gospel is explained as what God has provided to allow reconciliation through repentance of sin and faith in Christ. Video 21 runtime is 6:15.

Video 22 Synopsis: Salvation Topics

Video 22, “Salvation Topics,” was the second video under the “Gospel” heading of the website. The gospel videos were separated from the first collection of videos to distinguish this discussion from the other teachings. The four topics covered in this video came from previous witnessing encounters and conversations from church members, and family. The first topic, “I’m A Good Person,” looks to establish the idea that the only standard of good that matters is that of God and human errors in thinking any other standard will prove worthy of salvation. The second topic addressed was the often-turned phrase of, “Aren’t We All God’s Children?” This response focused on the scriptural truth that all people being created by God does not make all people children of God. Third, the idea that “My God Wouldn’t Send Somebody to Hell” was addressed. Finally, the idea of baptism was discussed, motivated by past students who have expressed

complete readiness to give their life to Christ but hesitate when faced with baptism.

Video 22 runtime is 13:40.

Video 23 Synopsis: Request for Participation

Video 23, “Request for Participation,” was designed with a short duration to facilitate ease of project promotion. The video introduced viewers to the project explained their role in participation by taking the two surveys and watching the videos, and sought to ease the hesitation of possible participants by showing the website and surveys during the explanation. An email sent to specific individuals contained a link to the site and an attached video that explained the *315Faith* project. Video 23 runtime is 2:13.

Website Development

One benefit of a weekly Bible study is that the audience comes to the designated location at a predetermined time. However, the decision to forego a Bible study format in place of a video library created a distribution problem. When planning the implementation of the project, TBC had little online or social media presence. There arose a need to develop a method for distributing the project materials. Authoring a website provided a solution that would allow the project to be assessable, controlled, and managed from one designated location. Once the *315Faith* domain was acquired the website needed to be constructed and tested. This website took two months to complete, though it successfully became the landing spot for the project. *315Faith.com* provided easy access to the videos, surveys, and parental consent forms.

Project Implementation

The first task for the project was to promote the website and surveys to the congregation. This effort began in January with emails and conversations with TBC staff and continued until June. *315Faith* sought to facilitate participation while providing participants the freedom to participate in the study on their schedule. As such, entry surveys

were accepted along with exit surveys until the process was closed. Both surveys utilized a six-point Likert scale, covering fifteen questions designed to evaluate apologetic aptitude.⁷

This project introduced the congregation to the areas of evangelism and Christianity theology from an apologetic viewpoint. The teaching was assessable to the entire congregation through the provision of a video library, consisting of six hours of education and instruction.⁸ This lesson series provided easy access to discussion of topics relating to apologetics and evangelism. Videos were kept to a runtime around fifteen minutes to promote viewer retention. Participants completed surveys before viewing and upon completion of the video series. Participants who completed the video series with consent to post-project follow-up were selected for interviews by a random sample. This selected group was then individually interviewed.

Curriculum Presentation

Tenth-grade boys' and girls' LifeGroup classes used the curriculum for an entire church year. The curriculum lessons accounted for forty of the fifty-two weeks of that year. Four of the remaining twelve weeks applied a four-week lesson series covering an introduction to LifeGroups presented to all student classes. Another eight Sundays held no LifeGroup classes due to holiday or other church scheduled events. The LifeGroup leader moderated each lesson alongside assistant leaders. The forty-five-minute meeting time proved too short for in-depth study for most of the selected topics. However, the development of a twofold approach provided proper treatment to each subject while maintaining the class timeframe. The first part of this solution was to introduce the lesson quickly through graphics. The second part was to provide leaders as much commentary

⁷ See appendix 6 and 7.

⁸ The extent of the video lessons was narrowed to six hours to best reflect the same amount of information that would be presented in a traditional weekly Bible study. TBC typically presents studies for one night a week for a duration of six to eight weeks.

and background material as possible from which they could choose to include in their presentation.

Project Presentation

The project was self-sufficient and required little effort once initiated. The style chosen for *315Faith* required the most energy in the preparation and development stages. The curriculum was written and presented to students. Next, the video was recorded, edited, and uploaded to YouTube. The creation of a website facilitated the storage of videos, surveys, and parental consent forms. This website provided an automated project without the time constraints of the traditional Bible studies. In contrast to once a week Bible studies, *315Faith* was available continuously for forty-one days.

Post-Project Follow-Up

The follow-up phase consisted of soliciting and monitoring the progression of exit survey responses. One requirement for participation was the completion of two surveys. Participants received reminders for survey completion a week before the project survey phase was to conclude to complete the exit survey. All participants received an additional reminder the day before the survey phase conclusion. The exit survey was identical in subject matter as the entry survey to allow for comparison to determine any statistically significant change resulting from the video library. The exit survey also inquired whether participants would agree to an interview. Participants that completed both surveys and consented to an interview were contacted and given three options for participation: (1) meet at TBC for an in-person interview; (2) schedule an online interview video meeting; or (3) complete an online Google form questionnaire. All three choices utilize the same set of fifteen questions designed to offer insight into various areas of theology and apologetics aptitude.⁹

⁹ See appendix 8.

Conclusion

This project included the creation of a LifeGroup curriculum, video library, and website through overlapping development cycles spanning over twenty months. The *315Faith* project ran continuously over forty-one days. The project was open to the congregation from the age of fourteen and up and sought to develop, implement, evaluate, and maintain a gospel-centered apologetics ministry for Tabernacle Baptist Church, Cartersville, Georgia. The fundamental apologetic aptitude for participants was analyzed through an entry survey then compared after the project through an exit survey. Sixty-five TBC members completed the entry survey with thirty-six following through to complete the exit survey. Once the exit survey was closed, the project results were gathered and evaluated. Finally, the project concluded by conducting follow-up interviews and questionnaires.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

In this final chapter, the ministry project's success will be reviewed. First, the purpose of the project will be evaluated by comparing the proposed design with the final results. Second, the project's goals will be evaluated along with survey and interview results to determine the project's level of success. Third, the strengths and weaknesses of the project will be reviewed along with a suggestion of changes if I were to conduct the project again, along with plans for the further expansion of *315Faith*. In closing, the chapter will review the theological and personal reflections realized through the journey that was this project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop an instructional ministry at Tabernacle Baptist Church to establish gospel-centered apologetics as a tool for evangelism by educating participants with the knowledge to better understand their faith and equipping believers to successfully engage the world with rational defenses grounded in Scripture and truth.

The introductory chapter of this thesis established the purpose and chapter 2 set the theological rationale and justification for the project. Chapter 2 established that believers are to be prepared and ready to defend their faith. Scripture provides a mandate for believers which is illustrated in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, and 1 Peter 3:14-15. These passages establish the mandate that all followers of Christ are to engage in conflict with a world-rejecting truth. Scripture clearly shows that the charge to every Christian is to actively engage from a position of confidence, knowledge, and

compassion to provide a strong and reasoned response for the hope they have. This charge is a vital element to the lives and spiritual walk of believers at TBC.

In chapter 3, three ideas were explored that provided insight into apologetics topics and aided in facilitating a foundation from which to build the *315Faith* training. One idea was the essential need of knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. Establishing a known and defendable trust in the authority and reliability of Scripture creates a base from which many defenses of the faith are anchored. Second, the reality is that many people do not share a biblical worldview of Christianity. In the interest of providing the best ministry and witness, believers are best served to have a familiarity and understanding of these worldview and beliefs. Third is the idea that a defense for the faith is not simply an argument but an exchange of logic and reason to draw another to the truth. These ideas were the basis for which *315Faith* was designed and implemented. Throughout the process of creating and presenting this information it became apparent from participant responses that further study and application of these ideas was both needed and appreciated.

Chapter 4 detailed the development and implementation of the project, as well as a thorough analysis of the construction of various instruments and the large amount of created material used in the project. This final chapter evaluates the project of *315Faith* as a whole with an analysis of survey and questionnaire results. The project was reviewed for strengths, weaknesses, and acknowledgments of aspects which would have been approached differently. Next, plans for future development of *315Faith* are discussed before closing with theological and personal reflections gained from the entire process of completing this project. *315Faith* developed an instruction ministry for gospel-centered apologetics that is available to TBC, which fulfills the proposed purpose of the project.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The success of *315Faith* rested upon the development and completion of three goals. The section will explore the success of each of these goals.

Goal 1

The first goal was to assess the current level of apologetic knowledge and evangelistic competency of the TBC membership. This goal was accomplished through the online entry survey which utilized a fifteen-question Likert-scale to assess participants' acumen in addressing apologetic and theological topics.

The entry survey was analyzed against the exit survey results of participants who completed video series with *315Faith*. Since the entry and exit surveys utilized the same questions, the results could produce a valid comparison. The results of the participants' answers to each question on both surveys were recorded through an Excel spreadsheet.¹ In addition, each question was reviewed by comparing that question's average score from both surveys.² This comparison of scores unfortunately yielded an average change in score from entry to exit survey of (-.5).

Results of the paired samples *t*-test revealed a mean increase of 0.03 points on the post-test. The significance was recorded as 36 = number of samples, -.0146 = *t*-stat and .979 = *p* value. A *t*-test for dependent samples did not indicate a significant positive change in participant knowledge concerning Christian apologetics based of the collected survey results; ($t(10) = 2.339, p = .979$).³

Post-project interview and questionnaire efforts resulted in sixteen entries.⁴ Thirteen of the 23 submitted a completed questionnaire, 2 opted for in-person interviews, and 1 participant conducted an online interview via Zoom⁵. The interviews and questionnaires provided a unique view into the instinctual responses of the participants. Some answers displayed emotion as a defense against a question. This reaction, while

¹ See appendix 9.

² See appendix 8.

³ See appendix 10.

⁴ See appendix 11 for a summary overview of the collected responses.

⁵ See appendix 13, 14, and 15 for interview transcripts.

expected, is not as effective as providing a reasoned, logical response. An example of such responses is seen in the question that asks if the OT is still applicable to believers today. One answer was, “human nature has not changed.” While this may be accurate, it fails to answer if the OT is applicable, and this response offers no reason for how.

Alternately, another participant answered that the OT was indeed applicable and then offered several reasons to support this answer. The evidence given included the fact that Jesus quoted from the OT, the prophecies fulfilled by Christ adding to the reliability of the NT, and how the OT law illustrates the need for a savior. These questions were a strong indicator of the need for practical exercise and practice. The participants already knew many of these answers, but many had never been asked to articulate these answers into words. Experience is needed in developing a thought-out approach to presenting those answers. The results of analysis through *315Faith* surveys provided a statically insignificant result that points to the need of improvement in lesson material and evaluations. However, this first goal was successful in completing an evaluation of participants from TBC.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop six hours of video lectures focused on foundational Christian doctrine and worldview designed to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to properly engage skeptics. Drawing upon research and subject matter acquired from the creation of the Student Ministry curriculum, the video library was created and uploaded to YouTube where it was then embedded into the *315Faith* website and successfully completing the second goal.

Goal 3

The third goal was to establish a strategic plan for continued periodic apologetic resources, education, and practical application geared toward the continued development of apologetic-strengthened evangelism at TBC. This was primarily achieved

through the creation of the *315Faith* website. The addition of an online repository for educational and training material allows 315Faith to expand and adjust as required to the needs of TBC. This website provides the foundation for continued apologetic education, which satisfies the third and final goal.

Evaluation of the Project Overall

Each of the three goals were developed and met with varying degrees of success. The participants' apologetic knowledge was assessed, and the project created a vast amount of lesson material which was presented to the congregation. This material was brought together through a website, which has established a base for apologetic learning and training and is assessable at all times and opened-ended for future expansion. An increase in participant knowledge, as shown through the *t*-test analysis of the entry and exit surveys, was statistically insignificant. This result is most likely a combination of two factors. First is inconsistent participation in viewing the entirety of *315Faith* content. Videos on the 315Faith website are embedded through YouTube, and as such, the videos' watch history is analyzed through YouTube analytics. This analysis, along with participant responses from the exit survey, reveals that not a single participant completed all the video content. Second, the survey questions have been scrutinized by some participants as being too vague. The wording of survey questions could have contributed to confusion, yielding inconsistent results.

In the end, this *315Faith* project created a year's worth of apologetic student lessons and six hours of video lectures, both of which are stored and accessed through a website that can be used to grow the ministry of *315Faith* to become more effective and farther reaching. Over one thousand people were contacted for participation (many of this group were contacted multiple times due to inclusion within multiple ministries and email lists) and from that number, 65 completed the entry survey. Sixty-five people were interested enough to give *315Faith* a try with little more than an email or two of instruction and introduction. Of this group, 36 participants went on to complete the exit survey with

23 agreeing to participate in the questionnaire/interview phase. I am reminded of what the Lord was able to accomplish with a dozen individuals. I am excited and faithfully optimistic of what the Lord will do with three dozen. It is with this mindset and prayer that 315Faith will proceed and grow.

Strengths

This project sought to lay foundations for a ministry that would teach and train the members of TBC to think and evangelize apologetically. The project underwent many adjustments from the initial proposal. These changes, coupled with the original elements, produced an outcome with a few noteworthy strengths. First, an area of the project requiring an immense effort to complete was the Student Ministry curriculum. The creation process involved in writing and editing forty lessons that covered forty topics to a level acceptable for presenting to students was incredibly challenging. Creating the curriculum required a weekly regimen of research, study, and writing. Fear of failing to provide enough information for the LifeGroup leaders led to an excess of commentary, which while perhaps unnecessary, forced deeper contemplation of each subject than I would have on my own. The curriculum exposed not only the instructors, but the students involved, to a wide range of apologetic and theological content. One week may involve covering Islam or Protestant denominations while the next holds a debate on absolute truth or discussing the characteristics of the occult. Without the creation of the curriculum, the production of the video library would have suffered a greater level of difficulty in completion.

The next strength of the project worthy of note was the multifaceted approach of presentation. Conducting this project proved to be an exercise of adapting to change and being open to embracing a “plan-b.” One such alteration occurred early in the project’s design with the decision to forego a traditional Bible study in lieu of an online video library. This switch anticipated the ease of access provided by online instruction, which would result in securing greater participation. This decision proved fortuitous as by the

time of the implementation restrictions due to the novel coronavirus had placed limitations on in-person gatherings. Another alteration to facilitate an easier user experience was the addition of the *315Faith* website. This website proved extremely advantageous as a home for the videos but also the necessary survey forms. Though time consuming and painstaking to create, both were essential to the project's completion and will serve a larger role in the future plans for the ministry.

Finally, the project would have been impossible without those who chose to participate. At the time of project implementation, TBC had a membership roll of about 1,000. The project had an initial involvement of 63 participants. Of that number, only 36 completed the exit survey with 16 completing the optional interview or questionnaire. It is easy to see this as a possible failure, but these individuals answered the request for participation and correctly followed directions. It was a simple act, but one that I have learned is to be valued, as few are willing to commit. My heart is grateful for these individuals, many of which were sources of encouragement through texts and emails along the way. Most of these people serve in multiple ministries and display a faith that is burdened to see the lost know Christ. It is this heart which a ministry like *315Faith* can build upon to be successful for the kingdom.

Weaknesses

The most disappointing weakness of this project was the failure to implement comparisons of students having been taught the *315Faith* curriculum with students using other curriculums. Student involvement was planned from the outset to play a significant role in proving the benefit of apologetic training for students. In the end, this element of *315Faith* was not able to overcome the lack of student interaction and promotion resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown mandates. After spending a year researching, writing, and presented apologetic lessons, there was disappointment at failing to see that effort translated into the project.

The weakness which most effected the implementation of *315Faith* was the decision to promote the project to the entire congregation. This decision led to a heavy dependence upon on TBC for recruitment and promotion to gain participants. Unfortunately, the implementation of this project occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The steps planned in promoting this project to TBC included addressing the congregation during announcements, choir rehearsals, and committee meetings. In-person visits to LifeGroup classes and training sessions were planned and would have reached every age demographic. Other plans to blanket TBC with project awareness included *315Faith* business cards at all entrances, a recruitment video during announcements, and weekly write-ups in the bulletin. Unfortunately, the project was conducted during a period of quarantined lockdown, resulting in all face to face appeals and promotion being impossible. This lack of promotion led to a reduced population of subjects. However, even with less than the 50 desired participants, *315Faith* would have benefited from a small group of enlisted volunteers, committed to watching every video. A group of invested participants, with understood expectations, would have been a better gauge of the project's effectiveness.

One last weakness of note would be the design and scope of *315Faith*. The idea of creating an apologetics training ministry is not revolutionary. There are existing efforts to pattern a training regimen after which would be more attainable by someone working mostly alone. In hindsight, this project should have avoided close to two years of creating and collecting materials and content. *315Faith* could have laid the groundwork for a successful ministry while serving as a better steward of time and resources.

What I Would Do Differently

Hindsight has provided four areas of this project that I would have approached in a different manner. First, if given the opportunity, I would have steered the Student Ministry away from a year-long lesson plan in favor of a dual-weekend student apologetics camp to be held on campus. The camp would be preceded by an eight-week LifeGroup

unit to prepare students for the camp. These lessons and camp would have ensured greater participation and allowed the content to focus on one or two subjects, such as reliability of Scripture or the deity of Christ. This student camp would have allowed all high school grades to take part as the curriculum was relegated to sophomores only.

Second, the *315Faith* training would be stronger if providing practical strategies for engaging topics. The curriculum and video library currently fail to produce strategies and techniques to engage in conversations for the defense of Christianity. The collection of materials may inform a person in evidence for scriptural reliability but lack the equipping nature of a practical approach for sharing that evidence in real-world discussions. Apologists and teachers the likes of Ravi Zacharias, William Lane Craig, and Frank Turek offer not only facts and information but also strategies and techniques. Going forward, this ministry will seek to draw upon existing strategies to develop a witnessing approach for major topics of apologetic debate.

Third, I would not have opened the project to the entire congregation. The original project design was to have 10 participants from each of the 4 age demographics with an additional 10 sophomore students, providing a delimitation of 50 participants. The extra 10 sophomore participants would have served as an independent variable for evaluating the student curriculum. Project proposals anticipated greater interest in participation and sought to incorporate a simple random sample to provide these 50 participants. If starting again, the population would come from a selection of committed volunteers invested in developing a ministry program. This population would have opened a unique opportunity to have participants view a week's hour of video on their own time then meet during a scheduled period for discussion and practical application. Also, a committed group would have eliminated the necessity for promotion and recruitment of volunteers.

Fourth, conducting a project requiring the involvement of many individuals requires clear communication of expectations. Permission and words of encouragement

do not equate to support and participation. *315Faith* suffered from an absence of clearly understood requests. The project would have run smoother and provided a more successful result if some agreed-upon parameters for permission and assistance were part of the planning stages. Future efforts will seek to have all stakeholders aware of expected contributions and timeframes.

Future Expansions

After reviewing the project for strengths and weaknesses, several areas of expansion have come to the forefront. First, this project functions from two central information depots: a curriculum of lessons and a website of videos. While I do not feel that either were polished to a finished product able to sustain a program into the future, both the curriculum and website contain the necessary element to provide future upgrades. One advancement which has begun is the editing and graphical treatment for the curriculum.⁶ This process will take the current lessons and arrange them to present a deliverable workbook for both online and print. The videos cover only a fraction of the topics needed to give a well-rounded knowledge base. The library will benefit from unit blocks that cover a topic in greater detail over the course of several videos. This unit system, along with the enlistment of other qualified members to record content, should allow for a greater array of topics while adequately covering each subject.

Next, the website originated to provide a landing area for instruction. However, to create a culture of ongoing discussion and practical application, there must be a consistent addition of information to draw members. The *315Faith* home page shall continue with a weekly blog, along the lines of Michael Kruger's, *canon fodder* website.⁷ Each week a topic will be discussed through an apologetic lens, giving priority to issues

⁶ Each of the forty lessons will be edited, adjusted, and produced (these examples are done through Adobe InDesign) <http://315faith.com/lessons.html>.

⁷ The website of Michael Kruger, containing the canon fodder blog; <https://www.michaeljkruger.com/>.

surrounding current events. All previous content will remain and continue to be updated and expanded. The blog will supply a needed and consistent impulse of discussion and thought in which TBC members may subscribe and participate.

Finally, the goal for TBC is not only to acquire knowledge and understanding, but to apply those teaching to ministering and evangelism to the community. Moving forward, this ministry will schedule regular workshops with practical application. *315Faith* was an adequate starting point, yet to prepare believers to deliver a strong witness for Christ that can defend the faith with knowledge and compassion, they need to practice. There is a need for practical experience in this program. As J. Warner Wallace writes, “We need to stop teaching our people and start training them.”⁸ This idea is at the base of *315Faith*, preparing believers to engage the world with truth. Small group role play scenarios, debates, and practical discussion would all serve as preparation for outings to the local colleges, parks, and downtown areas for actual engagement of the public through witnessing encounters.

Practical Reflections

Since completing the individual phases of implementation and analysis of *315Faith*, there was been time to consider the project as a collective whole. One element of this process, which proved unique, was when the project occurred, during the global pandemic of the Covid-19 virus and the resulting lockdown. This project’s implementation happened after the suspension of all TBC services and gatherings due to the government-mandated lockdown. However, the project moved forward because of *315Faith*’s fortuitous lockdown friendly design. The original idea of an in-person bible study was revised during the proposal process in favor of an online series of videos. This change in presentation method sought to increase levels of participation. The *315Faith* website became the home for all project content, surveys, and questionnaires, allowing

⁸ J. Warner Wallace, “Stop Teaching Young Christians about Their Faith,” February 20, 2015, <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/stop-teaching-young-christians-about-their-faith/>.

participants safe, on-demand access from any online device while restricted to their homes.

Upon completion, the project yielded a few unexpected outcomes when reviewing the collected data. An observation of note from YouTube analytics revealed that not a single participant watched every video. Google supplied insight that of the 117 families petitioned for parental consent, only six families responded. The only student involvement was a solitary entry survey submission. Contacting over 1000 church members to take part in a ministry project that required little more than playing on their phone during a time of global lockdown resulted in only sixty-five people responding. Thirty-five people progressed to step two, and only sixteen completed all three stages of the project.

These results are frustrating since 315Faith made every effort to create the most direct user experience possible. The odds are favorable that there would be at least one student to complete the project from over one hundred student families. It would also seem feasible that when asking over 1000 church members to watch some videos and answer some online questions, at least one person would complete each task, yet that was not the result in both cases. This peculiar lack of participation may draw some comparisons to the live viewing numbers from the online sermons. Tabernacle reduced three Sunday services to one live stream through YouTube and Facebook Live and should have easily seen several hundred people watching from either platform. This result did not happen as numbers of current viewers rarely peaked forty or fifty at any given time on either platform. While this does not consider people who chose to watch services later, I believe the low viewer count sheds light on the effectiveness of online ministries at Tabernacle Baptist. Ease of access may not be as much a draw as initially thought. Perhaps online bible studies and worship fail to provide the needed connection of an in-person meeting. It is possible that even in a society so intertwined with the digital world, believers could find online and recorded practices of faith to be inauthentic.

The future of 315Faith must account for these observations and not depend on merely streamlining the user experience. One possible path to improving involvement would be to use the recorded content to bolster live online events. The recorded and online training discussions would then support regular in person activities, such as outreach and witnessing outings for practical application. There are many positive aspects to an online training ministry, though it seems clear from this project that TBC requires more than what a website alone can provide. 315Faith will look to expand and include more live and in-person interactions to meet TBC's ministry and educational needs.

Theological Reflections

This long process of study has brought to light several areas of theological relevance. Throughout my efforts in apologetics and missions I have found Paul's words in Ephesians 6:18-20 to be my prayer and reminder that invoke a sense of reverence to the task of being a witness to the gospel: "Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." This passage not only illustrates Paul's commitment to the gospel, but also mandates that all believers are held to the same stewardship for the source of their hope. In fact, it was that reason for hope that inspired *315Faith* by drawing upon 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." These passages illuminate a truth only further emphasized through this project concerning the vital need for a reassessment of the emphasis Christians place on witnessing. All believers are beholden to understand what they believe to the best of their ability and to an extent tasked to be capable of sharing and defending those beliefs. Believers prepared to defend their faith provides an advanced Christianity beyond the too often stagnant and safe occupation of church pews. Churches must be willing to prepare their congregations to be, as Paul says, ambassadors for Christ.

Believers being charged to defend their faith led to a need in the church for apologetics training that not only strengthens a believer's faith but educates them for the task of removing stumbling blocks for the presentation of truth. This training must come from all leaders within the church. Ephesians 4:11-12 validates the order that God has tasked believers for various aspects of "equipping of the saints." Leaders of the church are to work in instruction and preparation of those under their discipleship. Those believers able to advance their knowledge and practical ability should do so, and in kind pass that knowledge and experience onto others. It is easy enough to proclaim the Great Commission as vital and important to a church or congregation. However, carrying out the commission is another effort entirely.

Finally, the Bible has taken on a deeper value and meaning over the course of this project which I had thought impossible. Christians read in 2 Timothy that all scripture is good and profitable, though I have often taken for granted the authority and reliability of the Bible itself. Through this course of study, I have found myself astounded by the amount of evidence and logical reasoning to validate the Scriptures believers hold as canon. In teaching biblical reliability to others, I have seen many believers realize and develop a new appreciation and confidence in the Bible and the revelations held within. Establishing a trust in God's Word opens the door for the heart and mind to overcome the skepticism instilled from a world of disbelief. For many, disbelief was fueled by the consistent teaching portraying the Bible as nothing more than mythology. Apologetics provides the vehicle that can remove this stumbling block, providing the way for evangelism to lead one to truth through the gospel.

Personal Reflections

I have been stretched further mentally, emotionally, and spiritually than ever before through this project. Technically, I was thrust into unexpected areas of learning through creating a curriculum, editing YouTube videos, and authoring a website. The curriculum is not perfect and will be edited and polished over time. The creation of the

lessons cost me an exorbitant amount of time yet brought me to areas of study I had never previously investigated. At the beginning of the project I had no intention of creating videos for an online presence, but as doors were closed, new avenues of presentation were required. Developing these new avenues not only allowed me the chance to learn new technology but revealed another side of ministry I had ignored. The Lord showed me that His truth will never change but the methods used to share and teach that truth can.

The growth in my biblical worldview to see topics apologetically was a surprising and welcome outcome of this process. The topics covered through the project were not necessarily intellectually challenging. Most of the information covered was foundational and basic; however, the practice of enveloping oneself in those fundamentals created a familiarity to engage confidently in discussion. There is now the presence of a first instinct that avoids opinion or preference and defaults to biblical truth, logic, and reason grounded in Scripture.

There were times throughout this process which were overwhelming. This project seemed to consistently demand that one more lesson be written or that one more video be prepared. There were times where it seemed this project would never be completed, leading to discouragement. I kept this quote from Hudson Taylor in mind throughout the process: “God’s work done God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” On more than one occasion I felt as if this project was either not God’s work or I was not following God’s way since I was unable to see God’s supply. True to his character, the Lord did provide. His provision came in methods, degrees, and from individuals I would have never imagined. I was reminded by a previous student of Galatians 6:9, of standing firm when the road becomes difficult: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” Scripture tells that God reveals himself to those who seek him. This project forced me to grow and seek him anew, while leaving me the beneficiary of his provision, in awe of his hand at work through his church, and the grateful recipient of his refining fire.

The primary focus of this project was to draw attention to the need for apologetics in witnessing and evangelism at TBC. The Great Commission has called all believers to share the gospel to a lost world, leading them to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This project sought to instill a foundation of confidence that the Christian faith is defensible in all circumstances. Every effort held the single intention of developing a ministry that would grow TBC members in their knowledge to equip them in engaging a world overwhelmed with skepticism and doubt. To various degrees this project was successful. Had several stumbling blocks along the way been avoided, the project would have yielded more positive analytical results. However, the groundwork exists for a strong ministry. *315Faith* will continue to improve and expand. There is no more significant endeavor than to devote one's life to the defense and spread of the gospel. I am thankful for the opportunity to be part of this effort. I will continue to strive toward supplying beneficial sources of education and training for the congregation of TBC as we seek to reach Cartersville, Georgia, and the world for Christ.

APPENDIX 1

PLANNED CURRICULUM SCHEDULE AND PROSPECTIVE WRITERS

Student Apologetics Curriculum Outline (version 1.4)

48 Weeks 30-45 minutes per session

Purpose: The focus of this curriculum of study is to introduce, educate, and train students as to what it means to be an ambassador for Christ. A believer should always be ready to offer an evangelistic and apologetic application. We endeavor to grow a culture with hearts broken for the lost and a desire to share truth in a world full of false teaching.

APOLOGETICS

Summary: Peter tells us that we are to be ready to offer defense for the hope we have. All believers must defend, correct, and educate this world in the truth. The Lord has commissioned all who believe to be His ambassadors. To properly do this, we must be equipped and willing to interact with the world in a manner consisting of love and compassion. The initial lessons seek to introduce the students to apologetics in a general sense. Each proceeding lesson will then add another layer of understanding and practice.

(Section 1) Introduction to Apologetics Curriculum

What is Apologetics? Why are we doing this? - lesson 1: Aug.12th - (Eric W)

CHRISTIANITY

Summary: What is Christianity? What do those who believe and follow this religion hold as true? Where did this belief originate? How does it relate to other ideas around the world? Students will get an in-depth look at the doctrine, history, and the current state of Christianity. This section serves as a foundation for the entire curriculum.

(Section 1) Introduction:

Overview of the Church: - lesson 2: August 19 - (Richard Brown)

Denominations: - lesson 3: August. 26th - (Eric W)

The Trinity: - lesson 4: September. 2nd - (Eric W)

Jesus Christ:	- lesson 5: September. 9 th - (Benjy Linder)
God the Father:	- lesson 6: September. 16 th - (Eric W)
The Holy Spirit: (Section 2) The Gospel	- lesson 7: September 23 - (Eric W)
The Good News:	- lesson 8: Sept. 30 th - (Benjy Linder)
The Crucifixion:	- lesson 9: Oct. 7 th - (Benjy Linder)
The Resurrection: (Section 3) Eschatology	- lesson 10: Oct. 14 th - (Benjy Linder)
End Times Views:	- lesson 11: Oct. 21 st - (D. Hattaway)
End Times Views:	- lesson 12: Oct. 28 th - (D. Hattaway)

THE BIBLE

Summary: Complete understanding of the Christian faith is impossible without looking deeply at the bible. Scripture is the very revelation of God to His people. The words and truths held within are a window to the very mind and will of our Lord that many Christians have little to no knowledge. These lessons seek to provide a thorough survey of the bible. Students will gain insight into the bible's structure, origin, canon, and reliability. Also, students will have been instructed and participated in defending the bible.

(Section 1) Introduction to the Bible.

GO WEEKEND Nov. 4th

Old Testament - part 1 - lesson 13: Nov. 11th - (M. Gill)

Old Testament - part 2 - lesson 14: Nov. 18th - (M. Gill)

New Testament - part 1 - lesson 15: Nov. 25th - (M. Gill)

New Testament - part 2 - lesson 16: Dec. 2nd - (M. Gill)

Section 2) Canon & Reliability

Canon / Translations - lesson 17: Dec. 9th - (M. Gill)

Reliability - lesson 18: Dec. 16th - (Eric W)

Dec. 23rd Sunday before Christmas

Dec. 30th No Life Group

Excluded Books from the Bible - lesson 19: Jan. 6th - (Eric W)

INHIBITING THE SPIRIT

(Section 3) Addiction - A Slave to Nothing - lesson 20: Jan. 13th - (D. Forbes)

SANCTITY OF LIFE

Summary: There are two lessons scheduled for this session. Two weeks seems too little a section of time for such a vital topic. Our culture today has applied conditions and definitions to “life,” which are contradictory to reality. Believers must know the truth about life and the value it holds to God. We must also be aware of the harsh reality that the world’s view of “life” creates and the consequences that most often follow.

Sanctity of Life - lesson 21: January 20 - (Kim Lewis)

Sanctity of Life (week 2) - lesson 22: January 27 - (Kim Lewis)

SCIENCE & RELIGION

Summary: The constant battle of beliefs often revolves around the world of science. This section will look at four essential topics of science, the ideas these topics promote, and the Biblical understanding and response to each.

Merge Weekend: February 3

(Section 1): Creation - lesson 23: Feb. 10th - (Eric W)

(Section 2): Evolution - lesson 24: Feb. 17th - (Eric W)

(Section 3): Intelligent Design - lesson 25: Feb. 24th - (Ron W)

(Section 4): Age of the Earth - lesson 26: March. 3rd - (J. Lewis)

WORLD RELIGIONS

Summary: An introduction to worldviews and the existing belief systems of the world. Students will learn the differences between types of worldviews as well as gain a basic understanding of the world’s major religions. Separate series of lessons will cover Evangelical Protestantism.

(Section 1) Introduction

Worldviews / Philosophies / Religions - lesson 27: March 10th - (Bro. Steve)

(Section 2) Major False Religions

Judaism - lesson 28: March 17th - (Eric W)

Islam (session 1) - lesson 29: March 24th - (McCombs / Rickmans)

Islam (session 2)	- lesson 30: March 31 st - (McCombs / Rickmans)
Catholicism (session 1)	- lesson 31: April 7 th - (Reid & Josh)
Catholicism (session 2)	- lesson 32: April 14 th - (Reid & Josh)
(Section 3) Cults and Flawed Belief Systems	
April 21 st Easter Sunday	
Atheist / Agnostic	- lesson 33: April 28 th - (Eric W)
Buddhism / Hinduism	- lesson 34: May 5 th - (Josh W)
Jehovah's Witnesses	- lesson 35: May 12 th - (Eric W)
Cults	- lesson 36: May 19 th - (Eric W)

BIBLICAL & CULTURAL VIEWS OF SEXUALITY

Summary: The Bible is very clear about God's view and plan for relationships, marriage, and sexuality. However, our world and our culture perceive these gifts from God in a vastly different manner. Our society is increasingly abandoning traditional definitions of behavior and morality. These lessons seek to promote God's plan and design while pointing out the falsehoods and dangers which come from following the view of the world.

(Section 2) Sexual Immorality (Letters Will Be Sent to Parents Beforehand)

Sex: God's Design Vs. The World's Design	- lesson 37: May 26 - (Benjy)
Sexuality and the Bible	- lesson 39: June 9 - (Benjy)

PRACTICAL APOLOGETICS

Summary: Peter tells us that we are to be ready to offer defense for the hope we have. Prepared believers are to defend, correct, and educate this world in the truth. The Lord has commissioned all believers to be His ambassadors. To properly do this, we must be equipped and willing to interact with the world in a manner consisting of love and compassion. The initial lessons seek to introduce the students to apologetics in a general sense. Each proceeding lesson will then add another layer of understanding and practice.

(Section 1) Sharing the Gospel while Engaging the World with Truth and Love

Witnessing & Missions	- lesson 40: June 16 th - (McCombs)
Listening / Learning / Engaging	- lesson 41: June 23 rd - (Eric W)
Witnessing-Geared "Street" Apologetics	- lesson 42: June 30 th - (Eric W)

COMMON CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC TOPICS

Summary: The six lessons in this section are more practical experience. Each lesson will involve students taking random sides of a debate. Earlier lessons have covered the subject matter used in the debates. Leaders will moderate and participate in the discussions, providing experiences to students for serious discussions on difficult topics with a focus on conducting oneself in a manner honoring to God.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Absolute Truth vs. Post Modernism | - lesson 43: July 7 - (Josh C) |
| If God is so “Good,” why is there “Evil”? | - lesson 44: July 14 - (Eric W) |
| Isn’t Christianity a Copycat Religion? | - lesson 45: July 21 - (Eric W) |
| Why is the Christian God the “Only True” God? | - lesson 46: July 28 - (Eric W) |
| Faith’s Place in Government | - lesson 47 August 4 - (Eric W) |

APPENDIX 2
LESSON EVALUATION RUBRIC

Lesson Evaluation Rubric

Evaluation for Lesson _____

1 = insufficient 2= requires attention 3= good 4 = excellent

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
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The lesson presents material cleanly and concisely.

The lesson is Scripturally and doctrinally accurate.

The amount of information is appropriate for the class duration.

The lesson is age-appropriate in topic and content.

The lesson provides students the opportunity to engage in discussion.

Lesson aids students in developing a Biblical worldview.

The lesson presents the gospel and relates a missional objective.

APPENDIX 3
LESSON TEMPLATE

Lesson Block Name

Lesson # – Title of Lesson –

Lesson Warmup: (5 minutes)

Lesson Warmup serves several purposes in a short amount of time. The focus of the discussion should now shift to introducing the lesson’s topic. Second, the Scriptures and reading/video resources from the previous week aid in reinforcing the lesson topic. Third, students have the opportunity to participate in various trivia activities. This step serves to facilitate retention of the lesson and strengthen their overall knowledge.

Bible Trivia:

Trivia or “Quiz” questions encourage outside study and foster retention of lesson material. The goal focused on students practically engaging the topics.

(Example): Which two books of the bible do not mention God?

(Answer): Esther and Song of Solomon

Topic Background:

When possible, reading and video materials are provided to students the previous week. Extra time with lesson content will allow students to familiarize themselves with the subject matter. When meeting together, the content may be summarized or reviewed to aid with beginning the discussion.

Note: Instructors should review all reading and video links before the presentation to ensure all content is acceptable for the intended audience.

Scripture Passage:

This scripture passage, selected for relevance to the information covered in the lesson serves as an introduction to the teaching.

(Example) For a lesson on witnessing and sharing the gospel to the world. Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

LESSON: (30 minutes)

Key Truth: This is the “take away statement.” The truth you want the students to leave with even if they remember nothing else from the discussion.

(Example): *The Bible is true, and the Gospels can be trusted.*

Apologetic Purpose: This curriculum selected lesson topics based on their popularity and practicality. This collection is not exhaustive, yet it is safe to tell most of the students already have or will soon encounter these topics and discussions. As believers called to be ever ready to defend our faith, it is the goal of these lessons to introduce these issues and ideas. This “Apologetic Purpose” section should offer up a quick layman’s “reason” for why this topic is essential, why there is an argument or disagreement with Christianity, and how the Bible addresses it.

(Example): *What would be the Apologetic Purpose of a lesson focused on the reliability of scripture?*

(Answer): *Scripture is the word of God. The Bible is God’s revealing His truth, promises, and hope to the world. Many people dismiss God because they feel they cannot trust the bible. They will refuse to listen or consider Christ because the bible seems so fictional to them. Some people will have never heard the bible is described as authentic, much less hear evidence on scripture’s behalf. When Christians know and can defend the trustworthiness of the bible, we can remove that stumbling block from unbelievers.*

Introduce the Discussion:

Having gone through the “Scripture Passage,” the “Key Truth,” and the “Apologetic Purpose,” the lesson is somewhat introduced. This section should now unpack and set up the discussion to follow.

Facts/Discussion:

This section is where the focal point of the lesson resides. Here is where the heart of the topic lies. Any “lecture” or information dump will occur here. This section will be the largest and longest of the lesson. These topics can be cumbersome, and there is little time to convey ideas and information.

Attempt to involve the students as often as possible, whether through questions and discussions or participating in presenting. Ideally, there will be questions introduced throughout the presentation. Otherwise, the attention span of the students will wain, no matter the topic. Offer open-ended questions that stimulate discussion.

(Example): *“Why do you think this is the case?” or “Now that we know this, how does this help us in engaging unbelievers?”*

It would be foolish to think one could thoroughly cover these topics in the time frame provided. Leaders should seek to give an overview and select a handful of “must-have” points and address those in the time you have.

Information: “Over the years, the discovery of several other documents and manuscripts tell of a different Jesus and salvation.”

Discussion Question: “Does this mean the Bible we have today is incomplete or inaccurate?”

Please remember that tenth graders are the intended audience for these lessons. The topics will often introduce terms and words that are new or seldom used in everyday language. Attempt to word your discussion and questions in layman’s terms. When the lesson calls for the more advanced vocabulary, define the terms, and explain them clearly. Also, make every effort to avoid “church” words. The world outside of the Church does not speak Christianese (slang and terms commonly used by Christians). There is a benefit to students and adults to engage these subjects without such terminology.

Gospel Final Word: (5 minutes)

Gospel Application:

If believers are to be ambassadors for Christ, we must draw people to Him. Many miss the Grace of Salvation and the fellowship of God because of misconceptions or false teachings about the Bible, Christianity, or God Himself. By design, these lessons look to meet such issues head-on and seek to peer through the confusion to see the truth. This part of the discussion should focus on how knowing this week’s lesson can aid in erasing the stumbling blocks, allowing folks to see Jesus clearly. This section differs from the “Apologetic Purpose” in that we are looking for a Gospel-focused example. This section should efficiently and succinctly answer these two questions:

“How can students take what they learned today and minister to others for the Gospel?”

and

“What are some practical ways I can apply the gospel truths from this lesson?”

Student Final Word:

Each student is allowed to give a short comment, expressing their thoughts, position, or ideas on the day’s discussion. Go around the room, giving each student a few moments before ending with the leader.

Pray: (5 Minutes)

Guide the conversation to a place of prayer. This time provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate prayer. The student should learn how to pray thankfully, reverently, and specifically. Take prayer requests and praise reports. Pray for these things, but also pray specifically regarding the topic covered that day.

Resources: This would be any links to articles, videos, or books that you would recommend to students that offer a background to the topic or which promote further learning.

Online: (example)

- Michael J. Kruger - New Testament Reliability
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5AkDOsc4fA>

Written: (example)

- “*How We Got the Bible*” – Timothy Paul Jones

This book is an easy read with lots of answers to the typical questions a believer will often hear about the bible.

https://www.amazon.com/How-Bible-Timothy-Paul-Jones/dp/1628622164/ref=sr_1_1_sspa?ie=UTF8&qid=1526516361&sr=8-1-spons&keywords=how+we+got+the+bible+timothy+paul+jones&psc=1

APPENDIX 4

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO GOSPEL-CENTERED APOLOGETICS

Lesson Warmup

The time allows attendees to get acclimated to being in the assemble and to introduce the subject matter. These few moments allow for the arrivals of latecomers while allowing the focus to shift from fellowship to study and learning.

Bible Trivia

(Question): In the Bible, this person lived longer than anybody, yet still died before his dad. Who is he? - Who was his dad?

(Answer): Methuselah (969 years!). His father was Enoch. The bible tells us that Enoch was “lifted up” to heaven and makes no mention to him ever actually dying.

Genesis 5:21-24; 27 (NIV)

²¹ *When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah.* ²² *After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters.* ²³ *Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years.*

²⁴ *Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.*

²⁷ *Altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died*

Topic Background

Today we are going to look at the subject matter for this year. *Gospel-Centered Apologetics* is our overall choice of topic. Most of you will recognize *gospel-centered* as focusing on the gospel or the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The second part may not be so familiar to you. *Apologetics* is quite merely defending your faith or beliefs. It is the practice of answering questions and correcting misconceptions concerning Christianity.

Scripture Passage: 1 Peter 3:15-16 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”

Peter is telling us that we should always be ready to explain our beliefs to anyone who asks. Why does he ask us to do this? The end of verse fifteen says to do this with *gentleness* and *respect*. Many conversations involving beliefs and religion can and do evolve into arguments. These topics bring out the passion in people. Feelings can quickly get hurt. Peter is reminding us that we must take care to engage in such discussions with a loving heart.

Key Truth

“Every follower of Christ should be able to articulate their beliefs and provide reasons for that faith-based upon Scripture.”

Gospel: *The “good news” of God’s redemptive plan for reconciling humanity to Himself. Christ paid the sin debt of the world by being the perfect sacrifice, providing salvation for all who repent and declare Jesus as Lord.*

Apologetics: *Is the discipline that deals with the defense of the Christian faith. It comes from the Greek word “apologia,” which means to give a reason or defense.*

That is great, but what is it? These videos are a good introduction.

Background for the word and the discipline:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAFlmUIA-eE>

One Minute Apologist “What is Apologetics?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMj3sKKn6a4>

One can summarize Christian apologetics in two parts:

- (a) objective reasons and evidence that Christianity is correct (it corresponds to reality) and,
- (b) the communication of that truth to the world.

We will seek to answer, “why do you believe what you believe?” Then we will then look at how we can use that knowledge to help others know Christ. The goal is always to draw closer to God and be able to share Him with others.

Apologetic Purpose

Why Apologetics? Why does this rate the entire year? The world is full of different religions and beliefs. Furthermore, our world is full of various interpretations and personal variations of “Christianity.” Christians must know the truth to share it effectively. In sharing that truth, we must also guard the integrity of the gospel against false teachings while correcting misconceptions.

This collection of lessons is not exhaustive, yet it is safe to say most of you guys already have or soon will encounter these topics and discussions. As believers called to be ever ready to defend our faith, it is the goal of these lessons to introduce these issues and ideas. So at least you have been exposed to the ideas and will have at least heard of these topics.

If you follow Christ, you will encounter questions both for yourself and from others. We may not know all the answers and should not expect to, but we can know how to engage issues to find answers, and we should always be able to discuss questions in a manner that glorifies God.

Introduce the Discussion

Each lesson this year will focus on knowing about faith in Christ. Learning what Christianity is and how this faith differs from other beliefs and religions throughout the world. All to be prepared to engage our world with the gospel. Every follower of Christ is responsible for the Great Commission. We are to minister to others and share the good news of the gospel to all who will listen. Christians must always be prepared to tell people why they have faith in Jesus Christ. Every lesson will seek to advance our knowledge and ability to carry out “Gospel-Centered Apologetics.”

Let us take a few minutes and look at a few topics that we are going to cover and consider some situations that, as believers, we might end up having to “defend” our faith.

Example A: You find yourself in a group of people discussing a current news story that involves religious rights. One of the people begins talking about how “*All religions should be banned! Every one of them is a danger to civilized people. Muslims, Jews,*

Christians, they're all the same!" What do you say? Do you say anything at all? Are they correct?

Example B: A classmate mentions how her grandfather is always quoting scripture and talking about God to her. The classmate claims they do not know what to believe, but when it comes to church and the bible, she says, *"I can't bring myself to believe in something science has proven false, you know?"* How do you respond to her? Is she correct about science? If yes, how did science do it? If no, how would you show her science has not proven Christianity to be a false belief?

Discussion Question

"COEXIST" Sticker: (Show the sticker) Have you ever seen this before? It is a very common bumper sticker. Do you know what it means and what it stands for? Are the intentions behind this thought "good," or are they "bad"? Is this view of all beliefs living in coexistence even possible?

Explanation: (pass out the printout explanation then begin talking about it)

The idea of unity is good and even Biblical. Ironically, it is Christianity that promotes, "loving your neighbor." The world naturally rebels against this idea. What misconceptions exist in this line of thinking? This sticker is just one example of false teaching regarding religion and God. Can you think of any others?

Gospel Application

If we are to be ambassadors for Christ, we must draw people to Him. Many miss the Grace of Salvation and the fellowship of God because of misconceptions or false teachings about the Bible, Christianity, or God Himself.

Questions

How can you take what they learned today and minister to others for the gospel?

What are some practical ways I can apply the gospel truths from this lesson?"

Student Final Word

Each student is allowed to give a short comment, expressing their thoughts, position, or ideas on the discussion. Go around the room and give each student a few moments before ending with the leader.

Pray

Guide the conversation to a place of prayer. Pray that God will instill a desire in us all to seek Him more and begin to thirst for answers to questions about our faith and long to share the truth with others.

Verse for Next Week

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. Matt. 16:18

APPENDIX 5

CURRICULUM SYNOPSIS

The curriculum provided forty LifeGroup lessons designed to provide forty-five-minute classes for an entire church year. The focus of this curriculum was to establish a basic understanding of foundational topics in Christianity. As the first lesson has been within this writeup, the following provides a synopsis of the remaining forty-three lessons.

Lesson 2 Synopsis: Overview of the Church

The second lesson, “Overview of the Church,” was written by Tabernacle’s Associate Pastor Richard Brown. This lesson introduced students to the purpose and makeup of the church itself by expanding on the key truth that the church is the body of Christ composed of baptized followers of Jesus Christ committed to obeying His commands. Drawing upon Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:18-20, and Acts 2:42-47, Brown constructs his lesson around five points. Point one: What does the bible say about the church? Point two: What is the mission of the church? Point three: What is expected of me by my church? Point four: We are to support the testimony of the church. Then the lesson concludes with point five: Why should I join the church?

Lesson 3 Synopsis: Denominations

The third lesson was titled “Denominations” and looked at explaining why the church is broken into so many divisions if there is only one God and one Bible. This lesson referenced Ephesians 4:1-5 while detailing the various organizational and doctrinal differences; there remains one body, one Lord. The teaching sought to inform students of the differences and similarities among different protestant denominations.

Lesson 4 Synopsis: The Trinity

The fourth lesson, “The Trinity,” began the complex discussion of studying the nature of God by maintaining the message expressed in the key truth of the lesson. That truth is there is one God. This God exists in three equal persons, with each being fully God, while each not being the other. Scriptural support for the Trinity is was explained to students. The lesson then ranges from several examples of reason and logic to provide a way for individuals to grasp the relationship of three in one mentally.

Lesson 5 Synopsis: God the Father

The fifth lesson, “God the Father,” continued the look into the Godhead by focusing on the first person of this Trinity. The lesson referenced various areas of Scripture where God the Father refers to, or present and what His roles are. This lesson also ventured into a study of God in general, establishing some essential points of His character; omnipresent, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient.

Lesson 6 Synopsis: The Holy Spirit

The sixth lesson, “The Holy Spirit,” continued the look into the Trinity by focusing on breaking down what we know about the Holy Spirit. The lesson proceeds to discusses what or who is this Holy Spirit? Are we allowed to pray to the Spirit? What are the various roles of the Holy Spirit? As with all persons of the Godhead, this topic is vast. In the limited class time available, the lesson attempted to have students see the Holy Spirit on par with the Father and the Son and not as some nebulous theological concept.

Lesson 7 Synopsis: Jesus Christ

The seventh lesson, “Jesus Christ,” was written by the Student Pastor, Benjy Linder. This lesson focuses on the key truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, to be the savior of the world. The discussion begins with taking the class through the “Lewis Trilogy” of evaluating the claims of Jesus being one of only three possible options, liar, lunatic, or Lord. Through the use of scripture, the lesson then

takes the life and ministry of Jesus by addressing His birth, life, teachings, ministry, and miracles.

Lesson 8 Synopsis: The Good News

The seventh lesson of “The Good News” was written by the Student Pastor, Benjy Linder. In this lesson, the topic of the gospel is presented from an evangelic perspective, seeking to show students another side of the gospel; the ability to change lives, families, and communities. The point reinforces our need to share the good news of the gospel.

Lesson 9 Synopsis: The Crucifixion

The Student Pastor, Benjy Linder, wrote the ninth lesson, “The Crucifixion.” In this lesson, Linder first explains what crucifixion entailed and examples of crucifixion throughout history. The teaching uses the scripture 1 Corinthians 1:18 and a key truth that the crucifixion of Jesus changed all of history and allowed man to be back in a right relationship with God. The lesson looks at how Jesus was betrayed, put on trial, beaten, and took our place on the cross where He did indeed give up His life.

Lesson 10 Synopsis: The Resurrection

The tenth lesson, “The Resurrection,” was written by the Student Pastor, Benjy Linder. This lesson takes on the glorious truth that our hope for today and our future depends on the resurrection. The central passage for this lesson was 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, which is broken down verse by verse to lay out Paul’s defense of the resurrection. Three points follow this verse; Jesus was completely dead, his body was not stolen, and finally, the Father resurrected Jesus from the dead.

Lesson 11 Synopsis: Old Testament – Part One

The eleventh lesson, “Old Testament – Part One,” begins a four-week section that will introduce the class to our collection of scripture. This first lesson introduces

students to the history and makeup of our bible. The discussion then explains the ideas of inerrancy and infallibility. Finally, the lesson describes the various sections of the Old Testament.

Lesson 12 Synopsis: Old Testament – Part Two

The twelfth lesson, “Old Testament – Part Two” is the second part of the curriculum’s investigation into the Old Testament. Having broken down the elements and history of the Old Testament, this lesson looks at some of the teachings found in these books. Topics covered included creation, age of the earth, intelligent design, the various laws, and sacrifices. The lesson addressed examples of amazing accounts as the Tower of Babel, giants, and the flood before addressing the reliability of scripture and giving some insight into the vast amount of physical evidence to support the reliability of scripture.

Lesson 13 Synopsis: New Testament – Part One

The thirteenth lesson, “New Testament – Part One,” begins the look into the New Testament. The lesson breaks down the sections of the New Testament; gospels, acts of the apostles, epistles, and eschatology. The lesson then focuses on the authors, various themes, and highlights of the New Testament from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ to the formation of the Church. For classes where time permits, there is a section of the lesson that presents some more mysterious areas of scripture and how to address these topics by focusing on what one knows to be true.

Lesson 14 Synopsis: New Testament – Part Two

The fourteenth lesson, “New Testament – Part Two,” rounds out the look into the New Testament by addressing the various discussion topics from an apologetic perspective. 2nd Timothy 4:3-5 was the foundation to discuss and debate issues such as canon, miracles, salvation, Hell, angels. The class then discusses how the world sees topics versus how the bible sees them. The emphasis being that our opinions and responses must be based upon and reflect the truth of scripture.

Lesson 15 Synopsis: Holy Canon of Scripture

The fifteenth lesson, “Holy Canon of Scripture,” begins the lengthy topic of the canon and reliability of scripture. Matthew 5:18 was the prevailing passage for the lesson, setting the tone that all of scripture is of value. This passage, paired with the lesson’s key truth that the bible is true, can be trusted, and there is an immense amount of evidence to support confidence. Students were introduced to translations and given a quick history before receiving an explanation as to why there are different versions of the bible. The lesson then attempts to convey the bible’s reliability through the number of manuscripts and the accuracy of the creation of those manuscripts. The lesson concludes by providing quick explanations of how we arrived at the canon of scripture we hold today.

Lesson 16 Synopsis: End Times – Week One

The sixteenth lesson, “End Times – Week One,” is part one of a two-part look into Eschatology. This lesson’s goal was to introduce students with the truth that this existence will come to an end. This truth, while bleak in appearance, is triumphant for those in Christ who will spend eternity with God. The lesson introduces the term eschatology before entering more detailed looks at the elements of end times thought and study, the rapture of the church, tribulation, and the antichrist. Each step of the way, the lesson uses scripture for support and explanation. The lesson concludes with a look at the three popular views of the tribulations.

Lesson 17 Synopsis: End Times – Week Two

The seventeenth lesson, “End Times – Week Two,” draws upon Matthew 24:44 to develop the lesson’s key truth that Jesus said He would be returning and upon His return the establishment of a new kingdom. The lesson teaches the three schools of thought derived from scripture concerning the Millennium. These points being; amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. The lesson then addresses the first and second resurrections from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 20:4-6. Next,

the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne of Judgment are used to discuss the judgment of God. The lesson concludes with a look at the eternal state after the millennial reign, the new heaven, and the new earth.

Lesson 18 Synopsis: Sanctity of Life

The eighteenth lesson, “Sanctity of Life” was a Sunday devoted to the preservation of life in respect to the topic of abortion. Kim Lewis, a member of TBC and the director of the Bartow Country Women’s Resource Center, was a guest speaker to all classes. She gave a presentation that addressed the topic of abortion. After the presentation, classes met for a small group discussion. Psalm 139:13-14 served as a platform to launch the discussion around the key truth that this world is increasingly devaluing life. However, God created everyone in His image, and believers must value life, every life. The lesson used the passage of Jeremiah 1:5 in introducing students to the Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life debate.

Lesson 19 Synopsis: Excluded Books from the Bible

The nineteenth lesson, “Excluded Books from the Bible,” looked to provide reasons and answers to refute claims of bias exclusion of various writings from Biblical canon. Using 1 Timothy 6:20-21 to introduce the idea of false knowledge and contradictions, the lesson expands on the key truth that there were extreme qualifications for the sixty-six books in our canon. There exists just as strict reasoning for explaining the exclusion of other books. The lesson gave a refresher on our canon before taking time to not only introduce but also provide reasons for the exclusion of the Gnostic Gospels, the Apocrypha, and the pseudepigraphical writings.

Lesson 20 Synopsis: Creation & Age of the Earth

The twentieth lesson, “Creation & Age of the Earth,” was the first of three creation focused lessons. This lesson focuses on the truth from Colossians 1:16-17 that there is a God who has always existed. This God is the creator of all things which He

created from nothing with a purpose and a design. The lesson begins with an overview of the first eleven chapters of Genesis to establish the concept of creation. Next, the lesson addressed the age of the earth. More to the point, the study and debate over the age of the earth with discussions and explanations of young and old earth ideas.

Lesson 21 Synopsis: Creation & Intelligent Design

The twenty-first lesson, “Creation & Intelligent Design,” was the second of the three creation lessons. This lesson used several passages, including Genesis 1:1, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 1:16. The key truth for the discussion was to communicate that our existence is intentional. The world in which we live is not an accident, but the result of a purposeful design from an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving creator God.” The lesson began by introducing the continuing debate of science versus the bible. Next came an explanation of the theory of intelligent design. This discussion used DNA, flagellum, and cosmic fine-tuning. In closing, the lesson showed how we live in a world described by Romans 1:25 and 2nd Timothy 4:3. All of creation shouts evidence of design, yet many people refuse to accept there must have been a designer.

Lesson 22 Synopsis: Creation & Evolution

The twenty-second lesson, “Creation & Evolution,” is the final lesson in this creative block. Genesis 5:1-2 is the scripture passage for this lesson that presents an understanding of our culture regarding the theory of evolution is flawed and inconsistent with nature, evidence, and the bible. The existence of life evolving, and adapting does occur in our world in a vastly different manner. Humans, as with everything else, were created by God. The lesson introduces students to Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution and natural selection before explaining the idea of universal common descent. Evaluation of Intelligent Design uses concepts of irreducible complexity and evidence from the events surrounding the Cambrian Explosion. Finally, the quotes and videos of Christian apologists and scientists present a Biblical response to the debate of evolution.

Lesson 23 Synopsis: “Living Out Faith in Culture

The twenty-third lesson, “Living Out Faith in Culture,” combined referencing what it means to use apologetics and providing the defense with the practical exercise of defending and attacking a position. Students were divided into two teams and alternated defending or attacking popular apologetic topics. The topics are offered as questions in a discussion, as in, “why would a loving God send people to Hell?”, Isn’t it arrogant of god to insist he is the only way to heaven?, and “Christianity sounds ok, but how could you possibly believe all the things in that bible? The exercise exposed the students to the pressure of answering questions while also receiving a glimpse of a skeptic’s perspective.

Lesson 24 Synopsis: Worldviews, Religions, & Philosophy

The twenty-fourth lesson, “Worldviews, Religions, & Philosophy,” took from Colossians 2:8 to develop the lessons key truth that everyone has a worldview. We all follow some sort of philosophy, belief, or religion. The lesson explains and gives examples of worldviews, philosophies, and religions. Next, came a comparison of Christianity to the patterns of each idea structure. The lesson looked to open the students to the reality that our world thinks and believes many different things, some good and some harmful. The lesson concluded by asking the students for their responses to a list of situational statements.

Lesson 25 Synopsis: Judaism

The twenty-fifth lesson, “Judaism,” looked at the history, faith, and characteristics of Judaism. The faith is then compared with Christianity to illustrate the differences and point out the similarities. This lesson resembled a social studies text more than the other lessons. However, this was fitting, as the idea was to relay information about Judaism. The goal was to introduce and inform students of this other faith and point out the significant areas of difference with Christianity.

Lesson 26 Synopsis: Islam – Week One

The twenty-sixth lesson, “Islam – Week One,” addressed the introduction of the Muslim religion. Inspired by Deuteronomy 12:1-3, the lesson proceeds with the key truth that Islam is a devout and increasingly popular faith. Muslims follow the teachings of Muhamad and honestly believe they are doing the will of God. The difference is their faith removes the deity of Christ, distorts scripture, and represents a god of differing character. Islam is a false religion that leaves its followers separated from God. This first lesson establishes basic definitions and practices of Islam, just as Allah, Tawhid, mosque, Qur’an, Hadith, and other foundational elements of Islam. The lesson lists and explains the five pillars of Islam before giving a brief take on the differences between the Islamic and Christian portrayal of Jesus.

Lesson 27 Synopsis: Islam – Week Two

The twenty-seventh lesson, “Islam – Week Two,” followed up the introduction of the faith with several examples of Islam from a Muslim perspective, through various video resources. The lesson then presented the students with the question of, “if Allah is God, Is Jesus, the son of Allah?”. This discussion allowed the comparison between the Jesus of the Bible through Scripture and the Jesus of the Qur’an. The lesson then proceeds with a comparison of Christianity and Islam based on beliefs and predominant culture. Finally, the lesson presents conversion stories former Muslims who converted to Christianity.

Lesson 28 Synopsis: Catholicism – Week One

The twenty-eighth lesson, “Catholicism – Week One,” focused on the Catholic faith. The lesson began by giving a brief overview of Catholicism and the Protestant Reformation before going down a list of similarities and differences. Next, the lesson looked at the four points of Marianism: divine motherhood, perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, and the assumption. The lesson concluded with a look at the

views of salvation, according to the Roman Catholic Church. The lesson stresses that the two faiths have many areas of common ground, but also differ in many significant ways.

Lesson 29 Synopsis: Catholicism – Week Two

The twenty-ninth lesson, “Catholicism – Week Two” began with looking at the Pope as the head of the Roman Catholic Church. The various roles of the papacy were discussed, including the Bishop of Rome and the Vicar of Christ. The lesson then investigates the idea of Purgatory both in explanation and from a Catholic perspective, seeking to identify aspects of the belief that seem to be contradicted by scripture. From here, the lesson explains the practice of indulgences and relics, giving a history of the practice and providing examples through St. Anthony’s Basilica of Padua and the Holy Staircase of Rome.

Lesson 30 Synopsis: A Slave to Nothing

The thirtieth lesson, “A Slave to Nothing,” used 1 Corinthians 6:12 and Proverbs 20:1 as support for discussing alcohol and possible Christian responses to various situations of temptation. The key truth which permeated the lesson was that the Christian’s battle against the fire of temptation is not won by seeing how close to the heat one can get and not get burned. Victory comes by consciously avoiding the flame altogether. The lesson takes students through the process of forming an opinion that is based on a Biblical worldview and reinforced through facts and wisdom. The discussion was had on contextualization and compromise, focusing on know the difference between the two in example situations.

Lesson 31 Synopsis: Atheist / Agnostic

The thirty-first lesson, “Atheist / Agnostic” uses Psalm 14:1 to establish a key truth that there is indeed objective truth. There is a creator God, and there are folks out there who do not believe in either. This lesson not only describes and explained the basics of atheism and agnosticism but addressed interaction with those who hold such beliefs.

Lesson 32 Synopsis: Absolute Truth

The thirty-second lesson, “Absolute Truth,” used John 8:31-32 to focus on truth and ask the question, “what is truth.” The discussion looks to pose the question of how do we know anything? Students discuss the idea of metaphysics and epistemology and the process of evaluating ideas and subject matter against a recognized standard. The discussion then switched to determining the difference between subjective and objective truth. The remainder of the lesson focused on providing examples and scenarios which the group discussed as either right, wrong, or subjective. The exercise placed individuals in the middle of conversations and challenged them to evaluate what they were told and respond.

Lesson 33 Synopsis: Sexuality in the Bible

The thirty-third lesson, “Sexuality in the Bible,” was written by Benjy Linder and focused on the key truth that God’s design for sex is for our good and His glory. This lesson seeks to present the topic of sexuality by explaining how God has a plan and that though we often see sex as taboo or wrong, that is because we have gone outside God’s plan by going through three points. First, sex was God’s idea (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24). God created marriage, and sex is intended only for a man and woman within holy marriage. Second, Biblical sex is a good thing that facilitates a unique bond and relationship between married couples for the human species to flourish. Finally, the third point was to keep God’s plan for sex. This final point established eight points for remaining pure and faithful to God’s design.

Lesson 34 Synopsis: Cultural Movement in Sexuality

The thirty-fourth lesson, “Cultural Movements in Sexuality,” was also written by Benjy Linder. In this lesson, the focus is on our culture’s views of sexuality, using the key truth that our culture’s view on sexuality changes, but God’s view never changes. The lesson looks to scripture to teach three points. First, using Romans 1:18-25, sexual impurity has always been a problem. Second, drawing from 1st Corinthians 6:9-11, the

redemption of sexual immorality. This point looks to those who have strayed off the path of God's design and reinforces that God offers forgiveness and new beginnings through repentance and grace. The third point addresses the contrast between the view of sexuality from culture contrasted with the view of the bible. Our God does not need to apologize to culture. Four reasons to support this statement. One, God has never asked culture for their opinions. Two, God's intent is always for what is best for people. Third, God never sees someone too far from the cross. Finally, believers show Jesus to others by compassion and not through judgment.

Lesson 35 Synopsis: Rough Side of the Bible

The thirty-fifth lesson, "Rough Side of the Bible," looks at the violence and the seemingly inconsistent treatment found in the bible. There is death, slavery, murder, and more in the bible. This lesson uses a key truth that God is God, and we are not. God does as He wills, and by His nature, that will is right even when we do not understand. Aided by a couple of videos, the killing, and devastation of peoples found in the Old Testament is viewed through the perspective of God. The lesson then adjusts to the practical and looks at discussing such topics from a Biblical worldview by asking, "Is He God?", "Can He do whatever?" "in this case, did it end up working out well for His people?" and "do we have good reasons to doubt His actions?"

Lesson 36 Synopsis: Cults

The thirty-sixth lesson, "Cults" looked to educate the reality of false prophets (Matt. 7:15-17), false Christs (Matt. 24:5), and false gospels (Gal. 1:8, 2nd Cor. 11:3-4) to establish a key truth that there are many avenues in which to search for the goals of truth, fulfillment, and joy. Any path outside of following Christ as Lord and Savior will lead you away from finding any of those goals. After a lengthy explanation and background on cults in general, the discussion contrasted the essential doctrines of Christianity with the doctrines of a cult. Next, the lessons make a comparison between the social make of

cults and Christianity. Jehovah's Witnesses are the test example in this lesson. Jehovah's Witness's perspectives evaluate each of the previously discussed characteristics of cults. In closing, the lesson discusses that so many people looking to discover life and fulfillment outside of God gravitate to these worldviews.

Lesson 37 Synopsis: The Occult

The thirty-seventh lesson, "The Occult," uses over six Scripture passages with an extensive look into Acts 16:16-18; 19:19 to establish the key truth that magic and the spiritual realm are very much a real thing. Real things that God said to leave alone and avoid. The occult and all actions and beliefs associated with it are considered abominations to God. The discussion led students through our culture's complacency when it comes to the spiritual, especially in terms of magic, demons, and the like. The focus leans toward developing discernment in our choices of entertainment and study. The final thought communicates that people are drawn to mysticism by the attraction and interest of the unknown. The perceived power found within the occult seduces others. Unfortunately, those folks are missing the most powerful, fantastic force ever to exist when they turn their back on God.

Lesson 38 Synopsis: Is Christianity a Copycat Religion

The thirty-eighth lesson, "Is Christianity a Copycat Religion," addressed the claim that Christianity is merely another in a long list of mythologies. Skeptics point to similarities of stories and legends and conclude that Christ must also either be a fabrication or a retelling of a previous god. The lesson takes the most referenced mythologies linked to Christ and contrasts the often-touted similarities to Christ with the more differing reality. The lesson also serves to establish the point that correlation does not equal causality. The lesson comes to close with posing the issue and strategy for a response to the question of "why not consider other religions?" by using a method from Frank Turek. The technique eliminates all nontheistic religions, then contrasts the three

remaining faiths of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to result in the feasible response to be following Christ.

Lesson 39 Synopsis: The Problem of Evil

The thirty-ninth lesson, “The Problem of Evil,” looked to introduce students to the existence of evil. The lesson wanted to have students consider how a world created by an all-powerful, all-loving God could contain evil and suffering. Drawing upon 1st John 5:19, the lesson followed the key truths that God is real, he is all-knowing, all-powerful, all present, and all good. The presence of evil or suffering in the world does not change any of that. Students then discussed how God could not create inconsistencies then led through a classical breakdown of the issue of evil. Through the assistance of several videos, students viewed multiple perspectives on addressing the existence of evil. The lesson then explained sympathy, empathy, and compassion before providing several role-play scenarios to address answering questions about suffering and God from a practical perspective.

Lesson 40 Synopsis: Our Commission

The final lesson, “Our Commission,” used Ephesians 6:19-20 for the key point that believers are to be representatives of Christ, speaking on behalf of the gospel to a world that is lost and foreign to the Kingdom of God. This task requires preparation of mind and willingness of heart. This lesson concludes by making a final point that every commissioned believer an ambassador, teaching and sharing the gospel to the world.

APPENDIX 6

TBC 3:15 FAITH ENTRANCE SURVEY

The survey in which you are about to participate will evaluate the *315Faith* ministry program, currently in development. In this research, you will mark your level of agreement with a list of statements. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Respond to the statements below using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

1. _____ Christianity is one of several pathways to God.
2. _____ Bad things happen outside of God’s control because we live in a fallen world.
3. _____ The Great Commission does not apply to all believers.
4. _____ The early Church impeded the translation of scripture into common languages.
5. _____ Churches can have differences and still share in worship.
6. _____ Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist may have differences, but all are basically the same.
7. _____ God sends unsaved people to Hell.
8. _____ There are different truths for different people, but in the end, it all works out.
9. _____ The Apocrypha is a collection of writings that are not divine in origin.

10. _____ It was hundreds of years before the Canon of Scripture was determined by the church.
11. _____ There is little scientific evidence to support Intelligent Design.
12. _____ Jewish, Catholic, and Baptists all share the same Old Testament.
13. _____ It is challenging to distinguish Christianity from other beliefs.
14. _____ Differences over beliefs in the events and timeline of creation should divide believers.
15. _____ Bible translations only loosely represent the original manuscripts.

APPENDIX 7

TBC 3:15 FAITH EXIT SURVEY

The survey in which you are about to participate seeks to evaluate the *315Faith* ministry program, currently in development. In this research, you will mark your level of agreement with a list of statements. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time.

Respond to the statements below using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

1. _____ Christianity is one of several pathways to God.
2. _____ Bad things happen outside of God's control because we live in a fallen world.
3. _____ The Great Commission does not apply to all believers.
4. _____ The early Church impeded the translation of scripture into common languages.
5. _____ Churches can have differences and still share in worship.
6. _____ Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist may have differences, but all are basically the same.
7. _____ God sends unsaved people to Hell.
8. _____ There are different truths for different people; in the end, it all works out.
9. _____ The Apocrypha is a collection of writings that are not divine in origin.

10. _____ It was hundreds of years before the Canon of Scripture was determined by the church.
11. _____ There is little scientific evidence to support Intelligent Design.
12. _____ Jewish, Catholic, and Baptists all share the same Old Testament.
13. _____ It is challenging to distinguish Christianity from other beliefs.
14. _____ Differences over beliefs in the events and timeline of creation should divide believers.
15. _____ Bible translations only loosely represent the original manuscripts.

APPENDIX 8

AVERAGE RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following tables report the average responses to each question for the entry and exit surveys. The change in points between averages is also reported

Table A1. Average responses to survey question 1:
Christianity is one of several pathways to God

Entry Survey Average	6.500
Exit Survey Average	6.000
Change	-.500
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A2. Average responses to survey question 2: Bad things happen
outside of God's control because we live in a fallen world

Entry Survey Average	4.528
Exit Survey Average	4.278
Change	-.250
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A3. Average responses to survey question 3: The Great
Commission does not apply to all believers

Entry Survey Average	6.000
Exit Survey Average	5.806
Change	-.194
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A4. Average responses to survey question 4: The early Church impeded the translation of Scripture into common languages

Entry Survey Average	2.917
Exit Survey Average	2.889
Change	-.028
SD = 1, D = 2, DS = 3, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6	

Table A5. Average responses to survey question 5: Churches can have differences and still share in worship

Entry Survey Average	4.944
Exit Survey Average	5.194
Change	+.250
SD = 1, D = 2, DS = 3, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6	

Table A6. Average responses to survey question 6: Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist may have differences, but are all basically the same

Entry Survey Average	4.111
Exit Survey Average	3.583
Change	-.528
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A7. Average responses to survey question 7: God sends unsaved people to hell

Entry Survey Average	2.750
Exit Survey Average	3.583
Change	+.833
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A8. Average responses to survey question 8: There are different truths for different people but in the end it all works out

Entry Survey Average	5.333
Exit Survey Average	5.500
Change	+.167
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A9. Average responses to survey question 9: The Apocrypha is a collection of writings which are not divine in origin

Entry Survey Average	4.888
Exit Survey Average	4.500
Change	-.388
SD = 1, D = 2, DS = 3, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6	

Table A10. Average responses to survey question 10: It was hundreds of years before the Canon of Scripture was determined by the church

Entry Survey Average	3.278
Exit Survey Average	3.583
Change	+.305
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A11. Average responses to survey question 11: There is little scientific evidence to support Intelligent Design

Entry Survey Average	5.528
Exit Survey Average	5.528
Change	.000
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 3, A = 2, SA = 1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A12. Average responses to survey question 12: Jewish, Catholic, and Baptists all share the same Old Testament

Entry Survey Average	3.917
Exit Survey Average	3.889
Change	-.028
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6 (Reverse scored)	

Table A13. Average responses to survey question 13: It is difficult to distinguish Christianity from other beliefs

Entry Survey Average	5.667
Exit Survey Average	5.611
Change	-.056
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6 (Reverse scored)	

Table A14. Average responses to survey question 14: Differences over beliefs in the events and timeline of creation should divide believers

Entry Survey Average	5.389
Exit Survey Average	5.056
Change	-.333
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6 (Reverse scored)	

Table A15. Average responses to survey question 15: Bible translations only loosely represent the original manuscripts

Entry Survey Average	4.861
Exit Survey Average	5.111
Change	+.250
SD = 6, D = 5, DS = 4, AS = 4, A = 5, SA = 6 (Reverse scored)	
The overall average score change between entry and exit survey	-.5

APPENDIX 9

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

Table A16 reports each participant's response to the entry and exit survey questions.

Table A16. Participant responses to survey questions

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
P1	6/6	6/5	6/6	3/5	5/6	4/5	6/5	6/6	6/6	3/6	3/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
P2	6/6	6/6	6/6	5/1	5/6	2/2	1/2	6/6	4/6	3/2	6/6	2/5	6/6	6/5	6/6
P3	6/5	6/5	6/6	3/4	6/6	6/5	1/6	6/6	3/2	3/4	3/5	3/5	6/6	6/6	6/5
P4	0/5	1/1	6/6	3/5	5/6	6/5	1/1	5/1	6/1	6/1	6/6	6/1	1/1	4/6	1/4
P5	6/6	6/1	6/6	1/2	6/6	3/3	1/1	6/6	5/5	3/3	6/6	3/5	6/6	5/6	5/6
P6	6/6	4/5	6/6	1/1	6/5	4/2	1/1	6/6	6/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/1	5/4
P7	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/5	1/0	5/5	5/2	5/6	1/6	5/5	6/6	5/6	6/6	5/5	5/5
P8	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	5/4	3/3	1/1	6/6	6/6	5/5	3/6	5/5	6/6	6/6	6/6
P9	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/1	6/1	6/6
P10	6/6	6/6	6/6	2/1	4/4	3/1	1/1	6/6	6/6	5/6	5/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/5
P11	6/6	6/6	6/6	2/1	5/5	3/2	4/6	6/6	6/6	4/6	6/6	5/5	6/6	6/5	4/4
P12	6/6	6/6	6/6	4/1	4/5	5/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	5/1	6/6	5/6	5/6
P13	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	5/6	3/1	4/6	6/6	4/3	3/1	6/6	2/1	6/6	6/6	6/6
P14	6/5	4/6	6/6	5/4	5/6	5/4	2/3	6/6	4/2	2/2	6/5	3/2	6/6	5/6	5/4
P15	6/6	6/5	6/6	3/3	6/6	3/3	6/6	6/6	5/1	2/3	6/6	2/2	6/6	6/6	5/5
P16	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	5/3	5/5	1/1	6/6	6/6	1/6	5/5	6/6	6/6	2/5	6/6
P17	6/6	6/1	6/6	1/0	6/6	1/1	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/4	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
P18	6/6	1/1	6/6	1/0	6/6	5/1	1/1	6/6	2/6	4/4	6/6	1/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
P19	6/6	2/1	6/6	4/5	4/5	4/2	2/2	1/5	5/1	2/3	5/6	5/2	6/5	5/4	6/6
P20	6/6	6/6	6/6	5/4	5/6	2/2	6/6	6/6	3/5	3/2	5/4	2/2	4/6	6/4	5/6
P21	6/6	6/6	6/6	4/1	6/5	4/3	1/1	5/6	5/1	3/1	6/6	4/5	6/6	6/5	5/6
P22	6/6	1/1	6/6	1/1	6/6	6/1	1/1	6/6	5/6	5/5	5/6	2/2	6/6	6/6	6/6
P23	1/5	5/5	5/5	2/5	4/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	3/3	4/2	4/5	5/5	5/2	5/5	5/2
P24	6/6	1/1	6/6	2/1	5/6	5/2	6/6	6/6	5/5	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
P25	6/6	2/2	6/5	4/5	6/5	2/1	1/2	5/5	3/4	3/3	5/5	3/3	2/2	3/3	5/5
P26	6/6	2/6	6/6	5/2	5/5	3/5	1/2	6/6	5/2	3/5	6/6	4/5	6/6	5/5	5/5
P27	6/5	5/4	6/6	5/4	6/5	5/3	6/6	5/6	5/5	3/4	5/5	1/2	5/4	5/5	3/4
P28	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	6/5	6/5	1/1	6/0	6/5	1/2	6/6	2/6	6/6	6/5	2/5
P29	6/6	1/1	6/6	5/5	6/6	4/2	2/6	6/6	5/2	2/4	6/6	1/2	2/6	1/6	1/6
P30	6/6	6/2	6/6	3/4	3/5	6/6	6/2	6/6	3/5	4/2	4/3	6/5	6/6	6/6	5/5
P31	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/2	1/3	5/3	6/6	6/6	2/1	5/5	6/6	2/4	6/6	6/6	6/6
P32	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/2	1/3	5/3	6/6	6/6	2/1	6/6	6/6	2/4	5/5	6/6	6/6
P33	1/2	3/5	0/4	5/6	6/6	1/1	3/2	1/1	4/4	2/2	4/3	4/2	6/2	6/6	5/5
P34	1/1	2/1	4/5	3/2	6/5	4/5	2/2	3/3	3/3	3/4	4/4	2/5	5/6	5/6	5/4
P35	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/2	5/5	0/2	6/6	5/6	5/5	2/2	2/4	2/2	6/6	4/6	5/5
P36	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	1/1	6/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/1	2/3

APPENDIX 10

STATISTICAL RESULTS FOR THE APOLOGETICS
PROJECT AT TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

Table A17. Statistical results for apologetics project

	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	67.472	67.5
Standard Deviation	8.1468	8.0764
Variance	66.371	65.22857
Observations	36	36
T-value	-0.0146	
df	70	
p =	0.978998	

APPENDIX 11

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE TRANSCRIPT

TBC 3:15 Faith

Post Video Viewing Interview

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to evaluate the apologetic aptitude held by members of Tabernacle Baptist Church in the effort to develop a Gospel-Centered Apologetics training ministry. This research is being conducted by Eric Webster for purposes of doctoral research and ministry evaluation. In this research, you will be asked several interview questions and asked to discuss your answers. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Names &/or email addresses are for organizational purposes and will be discarded once results are analyzed. *Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

Structured Question 1:

How would you respond to someone asking how you could possibly believe in the Bible when it is obviously mythology and contains so many errors?

Probing Question 1: Some say Christianity is simply a copy of other ancient myths and beliefs. What is your response to that?

Probing Question 2: Is the Old Testament still relevant and applicable for us today?

Structured Question 2:

In your own words, why do you follow Christ?

Probing Question 1: There are many beliefs, religions, and philosophies in this world aside from Christianity. Are these other beliefs “wrong”?

Probing Question 2: How would you respond to the statement, “You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian”?

Structured Question 3:

There are many Protestant denominations. There are billions of Catholics throughout the world along with Eastern Orthodox churches and their millions of believers. How can so many people share a belief in Christ, yet differ so greatly?

Probing Question 1: There is a common objection to Christianity which references the fact that Jesus never spoke directly on the topic of homosexuality. What would be your reply to that?

Probing Question 2: What exactly is a Biblical worldview? What use does it serve?

Structured Question 4:

In your own words, what is the Gospel?

Probing Question 1: Why are Christians so sure that the only one true God is the God of the Bible?

Probing Question 2: Why would a loving God send people to a horrible place like Hell?

Structured Question 5:

Having undergone so many translations over the years, how is it possible for Christianity to claim any understanding of the Bible's original message?

Probing Question 1: Southern Baptists believe the Bible to be inerrant and infallible. Do you know what that means, and do you believe that to be true?

Probing Question 2: How much of the Bible have you read? What parts do you find the most interesting (which parts do you find troubling)?

Accuracy Disclaimer:

Interview transcripts will be sent to the participants for their review and to ensure accuracy. If within seven days of receipt of transcript the researcher has not received comment, reply, or had the transcript returned, the researcher will assume the interviewee agrees with the accuracy of the transcription.

This concludes the interview. Thank you very much for your participation.

TBC 3:15 Faith 2020

APPENDIX 12

ANALYSIS OF FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

The interviews consisted of five structured questions accompanied by two possible probing questions. The following is each question along with an analysis derived from impressions and observations from reviewing the collections of the results from the questionnaire and the interview responses.

Structured Question 1: *How would you respond to someone asking how you could possibly believe in the Bible when it is obviously mythology and contains so many errors?*

This question produced more emotional than evidential responses from five of the participants with references to scripture passages a defense crafted from life experience. However, several participants provided a reasoned response, drawing upon archeology and the manuscript tradition. A subsection of these reasoned responses went to the next level of forming a discussion tactic such as asking for specifics on the errors and pointing to the secular and historical evidence for reliability.

Probing Question 1: *Some say Christianity is simply a copy of other ancient myths and beliefs. What is your response to that?*

The responses to this question were a bit disappointing and seem to indicate that the majority of these participants did not watch the video on copycat religions. Five of the sixteen responses used verbiage or talking points presented in the *315Faith* material. These responses used ideas such as, fulfilled prophecy, evaluating other gods and traditions against that of Christ, and researching those myths which supposedly mimic the story of Christ to validate the claims.

Probing Question 2: *Is the Old Testament still relevant and applicable for us today?* The group of participants all agreed to the value of the OT, yet mostly gave short, to the point answers with one point of reference. However, the group as a whole was able to refer to fulfilled prophecy, the quoting of the OT by Christ and other NT authors, and the value of the law showing the need for a savior.

Structured Question 2: *In your own words, why do you follow Christ?* This question offered expected passionate, failure, and scriptural responses. This question obviously is one they have addressed before and as such they were prepared to answer. Only two participants failed to offer a semblance of a coherent answer. As there are no other questions with answers which miss the mark, the assumption is these two individuals simply misunderstood or over thought the response.

Probing Question 3: *There are many beliefs, religions, and philosophies in this world aside from Christianity. Are these other beliefs “wrong”?* This question was designed to gauge understanding of the uniqueness of Christianity, but also to challenge the participants to commit to an all or nothing answer. Five participants failed to answer the question as to whether the beliefs were wrong or right, though they did express an opinion which leaned toward Christianity being the only true way. Some answers read as if the participant wanted to clarify their agreement with other beliefs being “wrong”. They seem to want to justify and explain their thinking. I had hoped that someone replying would have addressed the idea of what was meant by “wrong” in the question.

Probing Question 4: *How would you respond to the statement, “You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian”?* Each person responded with overwhelming support for the need of church. Only one response questioned a believer’s salvation for not attending church. Most held that church participation was not mandatory but living without the church was dangerously unwise and offered reasons why. As with some of the previous questions in the review, there were a few people which replied with Scripture. It is encouraging they are so versed in the Scriptures to be able to pull a verse for whatever topic comes up. A mind and heart such as that equipped with prepared responses ready to engage the skeptics of the world would be a formable asset to any church evangelism effort.

Structured Question 3: *There are many Protestant denominations. There are billions of Catholics throughout the world along with Eastern Orthodox churches and their millions of believers. How can so many people share a belief in Christ, yet differ so greatly?*

Probing Question 1: *There is a common objection to Christianity which references the fact that Jesus never spoke directly on the topic of homosexuality. What would be your reply to that?* I hesitated to include this question since only the high school curriculum addressed homosexuality. The videos for *315Faith* did not deal with sexuality at all. The questions were included to evaluate responses to an unexpected challenge. Many of the responses offered a Biblical defense yet using the OT and not referring to Jesus in any way. However, one participant offered the OT reply and backed this up with Christ assurance that he did not come to do away with the law. The group all showed an ability to use the bible to form a response, yet the question revolved around Jesus. This question demonstrates an example of how apologetic knowledge could be honed and focused to specifically address areas, again through practice and instruction.

Probing Question 2: *What exactly is a Biblical worldview? What use does it serve?* Seven participants answered this question with near textbook clarity. Two individuals answered with references to passages in Scripture. Four responders provided interesting replies which involved the gospel and possibly if probed further would reveal they understood a Biblical worldview, yet their answers here did not. Two folks did not answer at all.

Structured Question 4: *In your own words, what is the Gospel?* The responses to this question were encouraging as each participant clearly has an understanding of who Christ is and what he has done for us. There were the usual quick answers of a few words.

However, several of these individuals presented full on gospel presentations. Unlike a few of the other questions, thankfully answering the query concerning the gospel is something they have answered before.

Probing Question 1: *Why are Christians so sure that the only one true God is the God of the Bible?* This question offered some disappointing answers. Answers such as, “faith”, “prophecy”, and “the bible says so” were uncharacteristic to the relatively solid batch of responses to this point. Even so, a few participants demonstrated responses that pointed to the uniqueness of Christ and the overwhelming reliability of scripture.

Probing Question 2: *Why would a loving God send people to a horrible place like hell?* Overwhelmingly, this question was met with responses that placed hell as the result of an individual’s choice of rejecting Christ. The confidence in answering that God does not send people to hell their choices does is in contrast with survey responses to the same question.

Structured Question 5: *Having undergone so many translations over the years, how is it possible for Christianity to claim any understanding of the Bible’s original message?* Having included a video in the *315Faith* material which specifically addressed this topic, it was nice to read responses which referred to issues in the change of languages over the years and manuscript tradition maintaining reliability of message. There were a few answers which were obvious opinions presenting from sentiment alone.

Probing Question 1: *Southern Baptists believe the Bible to be inerrant and infallible. Do you know what that means, and do you believe that to be true?* Each person responding believed the bible is inerrant and infallible and did seem to understand what that means to some extent. Two participants offered thought out replies which addressed that the original manuscripts were without error and what we have today is as well only in matters of doctrine and faith.

Probing Question 2: *How much of the Bible have you read? What parts do you find the most interesting (which parts do you find troubling)?* Ten responders had read through the entire bible with many of those having read through several times. Expectantly, most enjoy the NT and are troubled by the severity of the OT.

APPENDIX 13

PARTICIPANT A INTERVIEW

EricW:

All right. Okay. Alrighty. Now I have to read some legal to you.

Participant A:

Okay. All right.

EricW:

The research in which you're about to participate is designed to evaluate the apologetic aptitude held by members of Tabernacle Baptist Church, in an effort to develop a gospel centered apologetics training ministry. The research is being conducted by Eric Webster for purposes of doctoral research and ministry evaluation. In this research, you will be asked several interview questions and asked to discuss your answers. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with any other responses? Okay, Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you're free to withdraw at any time. Okay, Good deal; now I've got five questions. It's really simple, but also have some follow up questions that may or may not ask.

Participant B:

Okay.

Eric W:

All righty. Question one. How would you respond to someone asking you how could you possibly believe in the Bible? When it is obviously mythology in contains so many errors? What would be your take on that if you were having that conversation?

Participant A:

So, if I was talking to somebody about that I would, I would make it very personal and talk about how I believe in the God of the Bible and the things that he's done for me in my life. And the way the Bible is structured as I know it. And the way that I've read it is, how could all these things have happened? And how could all these people have written all these things? And how could all this come together like it did if there wasn't a god in control of it? Because to me, you've got we can't even as like, if you and I tried to about something and have one other person, we can all three even get together. Yeah. So how did all these people are all these things. Hundreds of years, come up with this information, the ties together How did the people hundreds of years before Jesus even came? Telling details about what happened when he came and things that actually happened. Like how is that possible? If there's not a God in heaven, that is directing all

this, the great conductor, if you will, I mean, there has to be something else. I just don't. I don't see how they don't believe this. I guess that is more my thing, like how do you not how do you explain that? Like, I would be like, how do you explain people talking about Jesus coming, the Son of Man coming to earth, died on the cross and rising again, so far in the Old Testament, when and then it actually happened. And science has proven that if you just believe in science, science has proven that that did that. It did happen, right. So, how do you explain to me that those people knew that? I guess that would be how I would explain it. But I just I don't see how understanding my brain like, I guess I don't people just don't understand it in general. But I think that- I just to me, it's just to put together, you know?

EricW:

Let's see. Okay here we go. Some see Christianity as simply a copy of ancient myths and beliefs. What's your response on that?

Participant A:

Is it a copycat religion? No, because it's personal to me. There's a foundation that Jesus died for us. We have a Bible, which is a standard that we live by, but to make Christianity we have the standard beliefs and we have the Standard Bible that we live by, but God makes it personal to us. Jesus died for me. If nobody else existed, he died for me. And so if you read a verse one day and it means something to you now in in part of your life, yes, an application to your life. You read it in the next week, and it can apply to you in a different way. So, I think that the fact that it can, people I know a lot of people say, well, it hasn't changed with the times. It's living and it evolves every minute and every second that you read it. God is telling you something different in your life. So, I don't see that. How that can copy anything. Because it's, it's always I mean, the foundational truths are the same, but the way that it applies to our lives and the way that God interacts with us, is different every day and is new every day in His mercies are new every morning. So how can that be a copycat of you can't copycat, does that make sense? You know, okay.

EricW:

Now, we're going to look at the Bible. I got one on the Bible. Old Testament, okay? You know, we live in the Age of Grace, right? We have the grace of Christ within us. So, is the Old Testament still relevant?

Participant A:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Well I feel like it's relevant because Jesus for one thing Jesus refers to it in the New Testament so it's relevant to him it's gonna be relevant to me right? Yeah. if for no other reason than that, that is that is one reason he thought it was good enough to me. It was good enough to mention and you know, the 10 commandments are still good as far as I know. You know, God Jesus was still like you know, follies, but um, I think that the Old Testament can show us what Jesus did for us. The Old Testament is there. You talk about the way that people had to sacrifice animals and the all the specific things they had to do for restitution or be reconciled to God and you juxtapose that or whatever, that may not be the right word, but with what Jesus did and he died on the cross and how we don't have to go through a priest and we don't have to go out and find a lamb to atone for our sins, because Jesus was that for us. So, to me, it's like, how do you?

How do you appreciate what Jesus did so much without having the old testament to see what was going on before he came? I guess I couldn't do it.

EricW:

Okay, here's a here's one. Christianity is all about following Christ, okay? Yes so, Why do you follow Christ? In your own words, your own words.

Participant A:

Well, when I grew up, I grew up Catholic we were talking about earlier about our kids. I grew up in church, I grew up hearing the Bible. I could tell you everything about it and all that, but I realized that just knowing that information wasn't enough. I knew I was a sinner, I mean from pretty early on, I was saved when I was 12. So, I've always felt a connection to Christ and, like, kind of like a friend and somebody that I know I can go to that will help me in that he loves me. He loves me more than anybody more than I love my children, which is astounding to me. But to me, that is just the relationship. Yeah. Like, does that answer the question?

EricW:

Okay. Yeah, Good deal. Ok, next one. This world has a lot of different beliefs, right? There's a lot of different religions, a lot of different philosophies. How, how would you answer the question, "Are these other beliefs wrong?"

Participant A:

Well, initially I want to say yes, just flat out. But, um, and honestly, this I guess this kind of changed a little bit after watching your videos, is it okay if I refer to the videos?, um, like when you were talking about the, the first what you were taught when you were talking about the denominations and you have like the first tier of things that we all need to believe and then you have the second tier of things that you probably still need to really go to a church that believes these and then the third things were things that weren't as that were just more like, you know, minutiae in a way. You know, maybe they really like red carpet and you like yellow or whatever. Yeah, I feel like that. When you look at other religions in terms of that, do they match up with that first line of what Christianity is all about? Do they, do they believe in God or some other thing? Some believe in God. Sure. Do they believe in Jesus? Sure. There's even some that believe in Jesus. Did they believe he died on the cross? A lot of them don't believe he died on the cross. Or they believe that if he did, and he wasn't anything special, he wasn't God's son. He didn't come back to life. He wasn't. He wasn't. He wasn't just a man. He wasn't just a prophet, or whatever. To us to me. Yeah, he's not a lot of other religions believe that. So, I would say I know for a fact that Jesus is the only way to have a believing him his own way to heaven, if they don't believe that they're not going to heaven. And so yes, they are wrong in that sense. They, everything they believe may not be wrong. Maybe we agree on some things. But if they don't believe in that one thing, then that's it for me to do that, and that's what I was looking for. Instead of a yes or no, right?

EricW:

Yeah, absolutely. Way better than simply "yes" or "no". Let's see here, next question. What's your response to, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian?" What's wrong with that or is it even wrong at all?

Participant A:

So, what's in the Bible, you have to believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins in order to get to heaven. That makes you a Christian. Hmm, the second command after that is he wants you to be baptized. And I know there's controversy about this amongst some people, but I believe once you do, number one, you're Christian. Number two is the first thing you're supposed to do. Yeah. I feel like that we are supposed to go to church and be with other believers because it benefits us because it helps us grow. It helps us tell people who don't know the first thing helps us reach those people better than we could reach them on our own. But I don't think you have to go to church to be a Christian. No, you have to believe in Jesus to be a Christian. The rest of it is just the Great Commission and what God wants us to do. After we accept the first things like that, that's another well thought out answer there.

EricW:

That's, that's one of those deals where it's kind of like, you know, Scripture says, you know, don't forsake the gathering of believers. Do you have to go to church to be a Christian, or you don't have to go to church, or you don't have to, right but it's almost one of those things. Why would you not? Why would you not want to? Yeah, it's two things that don't go together if you've come to Christ, and you're a new creation, Christ, you kind of drawn to the things of Christ, but then I think I'm in the body of Christ.

Participant A:

I think if people too who are Christians that have unfortunately because we are humans have had bad experiences or they have fallen out of church. They don't believe because of their bad experiences; they don't believe that they believe they're better off on their own. Now, I don't necessarily agree that they're better off on their own. I think that you're better off with other believers who can lift you up when you're down, I can help teach you because think we're always learning. And other people can do can teach me more than I can teach myself. But, um, so no, I mean, I definitely don't think that you have to go to church to be a Christian. I think that's just something that people say when they're just trying to get folks to Jesus.

EricW:

There are many Protestant denominations. Billions of Catholics, I can't even imagine how many Protestants. I think I have the numbers somewhere on how many Protestants are in the world but there are billions of Catholics right and a million of Eastern Orthodox. So, so many people believe in in same Christ, for the most part, the same Bible. Some have added to it, some taken away – but they've got the basic core. How could there be so many differences?

Participant A:

Because God made us all different and we have different brains. And um, for example, we immerse for baptism and Methodists sprinkle you in some churches baptize you when you're born. Now, I don't think that makes you a Christian. But I don't think that admit that if you have truly accepted Jesus that being sprinkled versus being dumped

underwater. God doesn't care either way, if as long as you're his child, necessarily, but so I think that it's just because we're just different people and we have different things that we're drawn to and different ways that God reaches out to us. And there's some things with Catholicism and other religions that I don't necessarily agree with. I don't know all about it. But, you know, that's not for me to judge them necessarily to do but I know what, what I believe and what works for me in terms of my walk with God.

EricW:

Okay, here we go. Next question is for an elevator pitch, you're on the elevator, somebody's just got a couple, a couple of minutes before they leave. You have just a few minutes. What's the gospel?

Participant A:

Did they ask me? Or am I just bringing it up?

EricW:

It has come up in conversation, offhand comment or remark and the response would be to give a quick rundown of the gospel.

Participant A:

To me, the gospel is that Jesus loves you and He died for you and that you are a sinner. And that means Christ can't be... Jesus can't... God can't be around sin, and we are sinners, but he loves us so much that He wants us to be with him in heaven. And so, He sent His Son Jesus to die for us as a sacrifice for our sin. So that when we do sin, we can say please God forgive me for doing this and help me to do better. And but initially you have to make that decision that you're going to listen to God, giving your life to Jesus is not just something you do one day, and then you're like, hey, I've done this, and I'm over it.

That is, you're saying, okay, I give my life to God, Jesus. I asked Jesus into my heart, I am now a child of his. I'm still going to do things that he doesn't like. But I also want to make sure that I am learning from that experience, that I'm listening to what God wants me to do, and figuring out how he wants me to live my life. Just because you turn on that magic bulb and say, ok.. Jesus is in my heart now...you're not going to automatically know what you're supposed to do. So, it's a relationship. It's not just something you do. It's a relationship like you have with your spouse or your parents only it's on steroids about a million times to, you know, figure out how he wants you to live your life in some way. He's a friend, he's somebody can always talk to. One that loves you and will never, no matter what you do, he's never going to stop loving you

EricW:

Okay? God is all loving, he's all good. Why would he send people to hell?

Participant A:

Because they choose not to love him back. They choose not to believe that all the good things that he's given to them this world, the beautiful trees, the sky, the fact that he sent his son so that they could view him in a in heaven. They chose to reject that. And God doesn't choose people to reject Him. We as humans, because we are humans were born

with a sin nature. There is a devil. He would love to have us all join him in hell. And he wants to make sure that we don't listen to God.

EricW:

Yes. Um, ok. Here is one; how much of the bible have you read?

Participant A:

Probably, I would say not even half.

EricW:

So, you'd say you've not read all the way through it.

Participant A:

Oh, no. I've not done that.

EricW:

Got'ya

Participant A:

I have not read all the way through it.

EricW:

Two, two questions here.

Participant A:

Okay.

EricW:

Of what you've read. You know, I mean, there's always the gospels and there's Jesus. Aside from that, what are your favorite parts of the bible from what you've read? And what are the parts from what you've read that you found the most; I don't know, troubling or confusing.

Participant A:

Okay. So, my favorite, the favorite, I guess the best part was my favorite parts that I've read are like the Gospels that talk about the story of Jesus, but I like the way that they I like to see it from the different viewpoints of each of the men.

EricW:

Yeah, the different the different sides

Participant A:

Yeah, that they compare Jesus crucifixion in three different 'cause it was three it was in three of them; Matthew, Mark and Luke, right? And compare how they all saw the thing I mean, that's another way it's like you have these three different people running about the same thing and they're all very similar depictions actually. They're just have their own little nuances. So, I like that. I like reading about Romans. Romans is actually my

favorite book though because I like romans verse 8:28. Yeah, for all things, you know, work for good and all that. I like that book. I like the New Testament reading it better. I feel like it's an easier read. And if I'm looking for if I'm looking for quick application in my life, I can usually go to something like that and not to think about it too hard. sounds bad. But anyway, now it's out there for the world to hear.

EricW:

Yeah, the Old Testament is harder.

Participant A:

I like reading about the good stuff about Jesus. I like doing Bible studies about the Old Testament, usually in a group setting.

EricW:

Good deal. Let's call it there. That went pretty good. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX 14

PARTICIPANT B INTERVIEW

EricW:

All right. Okay. Alrighty. Now I have to read some legal to you.

Participant B:

Okay. All right.

EricW:

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Participant B:

Okay.

EricW:

So, and these are just discussion questions, what comes to you? What comes to your mind? How would you respond to someone asking how you could possibly believe in the Bible, when it's obviously mythology and contain so many errors?

Participant B:

I would tell them that the Bible was written over a period of hundreds of years. And some of the authors of these different books, didn't even know each other. And they were writing in reference to God and it was amazing how the different ideas and the inspiration for these different men came together. Even though they weren't like sitting side by side, but they were, they were stretched out over sometimes geography or sometimes time. So there was no way that it could be where people just made this up and talking about mythology, some of the stories in the Bible, um, you know, if it was made up, if it was mythology, they would have a good spin on it, but they're, the Bible's very true about the sins of people and the dire mistakes they made. They don't try to sugarcoat it they, they tell the truth, and the Bible just flows which could not have happened if God hadn't been part of it?

EricW:

The Bible paints its central characters in a very unfavorable light, which is ancient literature never has done that. Yeah, Jesus dies a criminal's death. You know, Paul tells you everything he's done wrong. And you see that you see all the haphazard things that Peter does, and it's, it's, it adds validity to it. I like that. Ok, next question. Some say Christianity is simply a copy of other ancient myths and other religions.

Participant B:

Some of these questions, I would say, I put it back on that person and say, Okay, give me some examples of what you're talking about. And of course, they wouldn't be able to.

EricW:

They may have heard that somewhere, but don't remember where.

Participant B:

Right, I would say, you know, the Bible starts at the very beginning. Granted it wasn't written right at the very beginning when Adam and Eve were there, but it traces mankind down through the centuries, down through the, down through ages and tells the whole story about mankind though. So how could it if anything was copied it was another religion copying off of Christianity, not the other way around. And certainly, you might see some similarities, but that doesn't mean that they're copied. It's just it you know, Just similar in some ways, but in no way it's there. You know, the Bible is a living book. No other book can claim that. Well, I used to have a professor that was, if you brought up something off the wall, he said chapter book, book and chapter, chapter verse, show it to me.

EricW:

If you can't show it to me, forget it.

Participant B:

But a lot of times if you did say that they, you know, somebody says, well, there's errors in the Bible. Well, could you show it to me? Yeah, let's talk about them. Where are they?

EricW:

And that's something we were talking about. things to learn. And, you know, afterwards, it's, for me, it's one thing to have gone through and you learn about this topic or that topic or you learn about a lot of the Bible and the manuscripts and you know these things, but how do you have those conversations? You know, if you're getting into a conversation with someone about the errors in the Bible. What would be the things that you'd want to tell? What would be that? And I thought that's something that I need to work on. Yeah, and I think that a copycat religion deal or the mythology is one of those.

EricW:

Ah, we kind of we were kind of talking about this earlier. How would you respond to the statement that you don't have to go to church to be a Christian?

Participant B:

That's true. You don't. But are you actually worshipping or you say you can worship on the lake. Are you? Are you worshipping? How do you have a place altar at you're home, and are you and your family gathered around with a Bible. So, you're right, you can do that. Yeah, but then also the Bible says that we should forsake the gathering together. And so, we it's not that we're going to church because we have to, we're going because there's something important about corporate worship. There's something important about being with the family of God. And you need to go and you need to hear your pastor. And if you have a good pastor, and you need to get, find out what God is telling you for this week. So that's what I'd say.

EricW:

Man, I like that one. I've heard that before. "You know my church is a deer stand.

Participant B:

Really? ha, ha,

EricW:

man, you know, I mean, there's a lot of thinking that goes on, sitting out there, or on the lake or wherever. That is completely valid. No, you can get really close and you can get really quiet you can hear God. Places like that. But if that's your only church, that's your you are your own pastor. Yeah, you're your own worship leader. That's not good. That's not good because you, you have to have faith that these folks are being led by God. Men led by the Spirit to deliver the word that they've been given or to deliver the worship that they've been laid out.

Participant B:

What? I had a professor that taught. He also pastored a church and he said that this man, he went to go visit said, I can't come on church on Sunday. I'm too tired. It said he told the man. I bet Jesus was tired when he carried that cross up to Calvary.

EricW:

What did that man say?

Participant B:

He said, Oh, he didn't like it.

EricW:

Yeah, that's a hard one. Let's see here. Okay. There are there are many Protestants, lot of Protestants, there are billions of Catholics throughout the world. There's millions of Eastern Orthodox is they all supposedly worship Jesus, believe in the same Jesus believe in the same God and share quite a bit of the same Bible. We know there's apocrypha on some of the Gnostics but that aside, how could they have the same God the same Christ and mostly the same scripture and be so different?

Participant B:

I would say that it's, it's where people like with the Protestant you know, breaking off from the Catholics years ago. I think it's some of it is a man thing that men have come in and with their own interpretations of things, and taking the original, what I'd say the New Testament and they've added to it, like the Catholics in purgatory, and they've added things to it. And I think that's why people have branched off into... and for some people, it's people are looking for something that they can agree with. And so, if they don't like this religion, maybe they don't agree with that, well, they're going to keep looking until they find somebody that's going to have the same thoughts as they do. about God and everything. So um, yes, maybe the they, you know, I always feel like it's like I've told people it's not the Catholics can't be saved. But the Catholic Church makes it hard. Because there's a you're relying on a pope and you're relying on your freeze. And so it's not that they can't be saved, but it's almost like the Catholic religion interferes. But anyway, so I would say the answer to that is, you know, man has, I mean, just like, Henry the Eighth coming up with the Church of England. That was totally a selfish reason he wanted to start that had nothing to do with God or anything. Yeah. Because he wanted to get a divorce.

EricW:

Yes, not that he was so devout.

Participant B:

No,

EricW:

He saw, he saw a loophole.

Participant B:

Yes. Yes.

Participant B:

Okay. All right. How am I doing? Am I earning an "A" so far?

EricW:

Oh yeah, straight "A's". Ok, why would a loving God send people to a horrible place like hell?

Participant B:

He doesn't. People send themselves. I used to work with an organization, and we graded Bible lessons and people would make comments and as a grader, I would write a little notation. Depending on their incorrect answers, why it was incorrect. And you know, there was some question like that. And they'd say, Yes, God, you know, sends people to hell, and I would say, No, we send ourselves to hell. Because we have every opportunity prior to death, to accept him to accept his son. But once we die, it's over. But God doesn't send us to hell. He does everything possible. To get us not to go to hell, the Bible says, you know, he doesn't want anyone to perish, but I like that when you get a lot of folks that will, because that's my answer to it. And you'll get a lot of folks who get into that... Well, you have to understand what sin isn't. No, no, no, we're not. That's why is there hell?...not how does someone end up in hell? They've got the whole questions wrong.

And then you get the you'll get the conversation. "Well, he doesn't give you a good option... You either take him or nothing."

Participant B:

Someone has answered that way?

EricW:

Oh yeah. More than once. Ok, here we go... Southern Baptist Southern Baptists believe the Bible to be inerrant and infallible.

Participant B:

Uh huh.

EricW:

What does that mean; inerrant and infallible?

Participant B:

Well, it means the original manuscripts for there have been some little miss spellings or numbers fill done wrong by scribes since it was copied so many times, but the book Bible in its original form, was the word of God wouldn't let there be errors. It was inspired. And the people, the men who wrote the Bible, of course, they got used their personalities to write in certain fashion. But it's it's all God's work. And it doesn't contradict itself. And like I said earlier, you had people that were separated by time or geography. And yet they were still writing the same message. The same God.

EricW:

Good. I had a teacher once said like the original message, the original manuscripts are inerrant, the message is infallible, and the preservation is sufficient.

Participant B:

That's a good thing. Oh, wow.

EricW:

How much of the Bible Have you read

Participant B:

the whole thing numerous times? Is that one of the questions?

EricW:

Yeah.

Participant B:

Oh, I hope if you go to seminary, you better read your Bible, several times

EricW:

I've asked a lot of people that question. I use that one all the time. Just to try to get a gauge because if someone if you're talking to someone, and you're having these theological debates or interested conversations, like we have here, just checking the

random topics, and you kind of start to get a feeling one way or the other. Maybe, I'm not totally sure they know what they're talking about, or that they really are sure themselves. I'll ask them, "How much of the Bible have you read?" You know, because you can kind of tell.

Participant B:

And people tell you they haven't?

EricW:

Oh yeah. It's actually pretty rare to get someone that has read it all.

Participant B:

Yeah?

EricW:

They'll say, well...I've not read it all, but I've read quite a bit. I'm like...you're 50 years old or you're 35 years old or you know, your dentists or that you've never you've never actually went through it once and or you'll hear people go, I know my grandpa. Oh, good. Oh, grandpa. That's great for grandpa. Yeah.

Participant B:

Any more?

EricW:

Nope. That'll do us.

Participant B:

Already? That wasn't hard at all.

EricW:

Great! Wasn't supposed to be. That should work out well. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX 15

PARTICIPANT C INTERVIEW

EricW:

Okay. Before we start. Alrighty. Before we start, I have to read some legal to you.

Participant C:

Oh yeah, whatever. Go for it.

EricW:

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Participant B:

That all sounds fine. I'm good with all of that.

Eric W:

Excellent. Thank you. All righty. Question one. How would you respond to someone asking you how could you possibly believe in the Bible? When it is obviously mythology in contains so many errors? What would be your take on that if you were having that conversation?

Participant C:

So, I would say that it does not have errors in it based on what I've read and studied, and that it is the Divine Word of God that it's this my interpretation that the books of the Bible, what's written in the Bible is and I believe it is the words of God. And that I believe it. And that I do not believe the the people who argue that they that it's got things that are wrong.

Eric W:

Good Deal

Participant C:

That's what I'd say.

Eric W:

Cool. I like it. Um, Christianity, Jesus. Some say that Christianity is very similar to pagan myths that are out there pagan mythologies, and some even say that Jesus is basically a copy of previous Gods like Horus, or Mithra or even Krishna, you know, and they'll, they'll, they'll throw out little ideas here and there. And they'll say, well, Christianity is nothing but a rehashing of a bunch of other beliefs from the past. What would you say to that?

Participant C:

I would say that I think those things are a rehashing, that Christianity is, is the, the, the only true, I guess, belief or account of how we're to live and in and of God Himself. And that yeah, there's other things that are similar or that sound like it or whatever. But that to me, it's more that they've copied that than us copying them.

Eric W:

Good Deal...The Old Testament, we live in a time where we, it's called we live in the Age of Grace, because we have Jesus we, we live on the opposite side of the cross. So, is the Old Testament even useful anymore?

Participant C:

I was taught once that the Old Testament made up of a lot of rules and a lot of do this and nobody that and do this and don't do that, because that was God tried to set some boundaries for us to for our own good to protect us like what they should and shouldn't eat, for example. And so, although we do not have to follow what's in the Old Testament about the sacrifices because the ultimate sacrifice was already done for us on the cross. A lot of those things in the Old Testament, they're still guidelines or they're still good. You know, they're still the way to live. They're still right. It's just we don't have to. We've got as you said, we've got grace so we don't have to worry about the sacrifice part of all of that. But, the other part is still useful. Absolutely.

Eric W:

I like that. I liked it. I've heard this one said before. Listen now how many times Jesus quoted from the Old Testament? If he thought it was worthwhile, then I will too.

Participant C:

I always think about, like, for example, don't lie. Well, yeah, it's good not to lie, but I have learned by lying before that when you do lie, dang, you get yourself an office mess. And so, it's not God saying don't lie, just 'cause, not to lie. I mean, although it's good not to. It's because he knows when you do, all this junk happens, people get mad at you. You get caught in a mess. So, all this stuff. So, if you don't do it, you just don't have to worry about it. So, I'll use that as an example of it wasn't just rules just to be strict on you, it was to it was out of love to protect you and keep you out of messes.

Eric W:

Ha ha, yeah. I like that. Another good definition for Well, okay... What would be your definition for holy?

Participant C:

For what?

Eric W:

Holy?

Participant C:

Oh holy, to me holy it is to try to be more like Christ

Eric W:

It's like, I've heard I should have said I was starting to say I've said, No, I've heard set apart for God.

Participant C:

Okay. All right.

Eric W:

There are many beliefs in the world. Right. There are tons of religions, there are philosophies there's all sorts of beliefs outside of Christianity. Are these other beliefs wrong?

Participant C:

I believe they are. I believe there's one way to heaven there's one way and it's it's through Jesus. These others may be similar. They may be parts of them kinda like ours, but not all of it. Like some of them will say good works and some of us say you don't have anything to do with it. It's just chance. But I believe they believe Christianity is the only one that's right.

EricW:

Well, let's, let's stay in with Christianity there for a minute. And see last, here we go. There are Oh, wow, there hundreds of Protestant denominations, right. I mean, like if you look up Baptist, I think there's 400 different types of Baptist.

Participant C:

I saw that in the video.

EricW:

Oh, did you really? Oh, neat. So there's all these different kinds of Baptists. And that's not getting into the Methodist and Presbyterian, Episcopalian Lutheran and all this stuff. But think about how many people that encompasses over the world, right? Yeah, well, they're billions of pounds. Plex. And I think there's close to a million Eastern Orthodox and all that stuff. Well these are people are considered Christians. And even though East Eastern Orthodox and Catholic have, you know, extra books in their Bible that we don't have even though different denominations, they vary some it's one God, it's Christ. It's predominantly the same scripture. How can they differ so greatly?

Participant C:

Well, they differ because of how they've interpreted things. Uh, they believe one God and they believe there's one way to get to heaven. But they differ in like some of their interpretations of things like and if I remember correctly. For, example, like the Protestants came up, came about because they protested the infant baptism of the Catholic Church. I learned that and I thought that was kind of interesting. I didn't know that I found that very interesting. And so, it was made to just be a protest, but then it ended up being Protestant. I had another whole thing it didn't. They just made to fix Catholicism. But they ended up with another whole thing. Am I right on that?

EricW:

Yeah, Martin Luther he, he didn't wake up. I'm gonna, I'm gonna split off from the church. It was I see something that shouldn't be. This is a false.

Participant C:

...that but it ended up splitting off. Well, so that's how I kind of think about the nominations within it all. I mean, like we grew up Free Will Baptist but then we went to a Missionary Baptist now me the Southern Baptist. And I think it has more to do with their interpretations of some of the differences. They do like, like Freewill Baptist, the washing of the feet. And some of the others don't you know Free Will Baptist does not believe in eternal security but we do as Southern Baptist. And I'm not sure about Missionary Baptist. But I think it I think it's just that they there's pieces of it they interpret differently, but the main piece they interpret the same way I look at it. The big piece, the most important piece, I think they say the same, but it's a little it's a little things they don't.

EricW:

Okay, here's a good one. There's a common objection to Christianity that Jesus never spoke openly about homosexuality. Does that make it ok?

Participant C:

No, that doesn't make it ok. I'm trying to think of how to argue that backwards though. I mean, no...it's not ok. I mean, so...

EricW:

Well, look at it like this. Christians are so hardcore against homosexuality, yet Jesus never spoke about it. What do ya got to say about that, Christian?

Participant C:

I'd say it's wrong. It doesn't mean he doesn't love homosexuals. He doesn't love what they do. Even though he doesn't speak about it, it's wrong. It's in the bible that's its wrong. Even though he doesn't speak about it, it's wrong.

EricW:

Ok, so

Participant C:

I need to know where to quote that.

EricW:

Ok, so...Why would a loving God send people to a horrible place like hell?

Participant C:

God doesn't send people to hell. God gives people a choice.

EricW:

Wow, you're one of the very few people to answer that questions like that.

Participant C:

God gives us a gift and we choose to accept it or reject it.

EricW:

Ok, here's one; Why are Christians so sure there is only one God and that it's the God of the bible? How can you be so sure it's the God of the Bible and not one of these other religions or that there is a creator yet, we have never heard from him?

Participant C:

I think you just have to have faith. I'm not smart enough to know it all, I know there is science and such, but I've seen God work in my life in so many ways that I have that faith in him and that trust in him. I have that faith. That is one of the biggest things about Christianity, you have that faith in your heart. That's what I believe.

EricW:

Ok, last one. How much of the bible have you read? What were the parts that you find are your favorite and what are the parts that give you trouble?

Participant C:

Ok, Leviticus gives me trouble, King gives me trouble, I've read the majority...I've tried to read the bible all the way through. I think I've probably read 85 to 90%. Not in order or anything. One of these day's I'll read it all. My favorite is 1st John.

EricW:

Ok, Perfect. I think we can call it right there. Thank you so much.

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ABSTRACT

PREPARING THE MEMBERS OF TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH CARTERSVILLE, GEORGIA TO EVANGELIZE APOLOGETICALLY

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The focus of this project to equip members of Tabernacle Baptist Church of Cartersville Georgia to apologetically evangelize to their community. Chapter 1 presents the current ministry context of Tabernacle and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of four passages of Scripture (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Tim 4:2-5; 1 Peter 3:14-17) to show that every believer has been commissioned ambassadors charged with boldly defending Christ. Chapter 3 presents the abundance of resources available to Christian witnesses compared to the philosophies and practices which guide evangelists and apologists. Chapter 4 describes the project itself, recounting the content and instruction methodology of the video series. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. This project has sought to equip Christians intellectually and practically to minister, share and defend their faith with boldness, confidence, and compassion to reach the lost with the gospel.

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Sony Online Entertainment/989 Studios, San Diego, California,
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