

Why We Believe

An Introduction to Apologetics
Week 1: Evaluating Evidence

I. What is Apologetics?

A. Apologetics comes from a Latin legal term which means to give a defense during a trial.

B. I Peter 3:15b-16 Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

1. It must have hope.
 - a. No one wants to be lead into a hopeless quagmire of rules.
2. It gives a reasonable answer not an exhaustive one.
3. It answers with gentleness and respect.
4. It answers with a clear conscience.
5. It is accompanied by behavior that stands under persecution.

II. What Apologetics is not.

- A. An intellectual half-nelson.
- B. An apology, though it may include one.
- C. An argument.

IV. Definitions

- A. Truth - The quality of being in agreement with experience, facts, or reality.
- B. Fact - A verifiable event, condition, or assertion.
- C. Wisdom - Following the best course of action based on knowledge, experience, and understanding.
- D. Intellectual Honesty - Seriously weighing all the facts at your disposal not just the ones that support your bias.
- E. World View - A comprehensive personal philosophy or conception of the world. A series of assumptions by which reality is understood.

VI. How do you find Truth?

- A. Several methods have been proposed/developed.
 1. The Philosophical/Logical method
 2. Divine Revelation/Enlightenment
 3. Scientific Method
 4. Legal/Historical Method
 5. Just Give Up Method

VII. The Philosophical/Logical Method

- A. Weighs questions on their adherence to logical principles.
- B. The best evidence is in agreement with the strongest logical arguments, and has the least exceptions.
- C. Mathematics is the most successful branch of this approach.

VIII. The Devine Revelation/Enlightenment Method

- A. God tells you the way it is.
- B. Very convenient if God chooses to speak to you.

1. Difficult to defend without other methods.

IX. The Scientific Method

- A. Uses a process of observation, hypothesis, testing, re-hypothesis, and theory. To establish facts and truth.
- B. The best scientific evidence is from multiple randomized, prospective, blinded studies.
- C. Followed by single well designed studies.
- D. Followed by limited studies.
- E. Followed by observed data.
- F. Followed by opinion.

X. Legal/Historical Method

- A. Uses a system of comparisons between evidence based on the number, quality, proximity, bias, and acceptance of facts.
- B. The best evidence is based on multiple, unbiased, eye-witnessed, observations, close in time to the events in question, and consistent with accepted processes.
- C. Lower quality evidence is lacking in one or more of these traits.

XI. The Just Give Up Method

- A. There is no truth or the truth is unknowable.
- B. No further pursuit of the truth is warranted.

XII. Which is better?

- A. Depends on what you want to know.
- B. The Philosophic/Logical Method has great limitations without external verification by the Scientific Method or Legal/Historical Method. We will use it sparingly.
- C. The Devine Revelation Method is helpful for finding truth, but must be verified.
- D. The Scientific System is designed to test and evaluate repetitive physical phenomena. It does very poorly when evaluating one time events, and non-physical questions.
- E. The Legal/Historical System is designed to test documents, physical evidence, and eye-witness accounts. It does poorly if asked to answer the causes of physical phenomena.

XIII. Mistakes

- A. G.I.G.O.
- B. Garbage In Garbage Out
- C. Asking the wrong question.
- D. Category mistakes.
- E. Bias.
- F. Asking for an inappropriate level of evidence.

XIV. Evaluating the Canon

- A. The 66 books in the Bible were added based on their authorship, authenticity, consistency with the rest of scripture, prophecy, and their acceptance by the people of God.