

# 119

## MINISTRIES

*“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”*

### Why Apologetics Matters

“You’ve never *seen* God, have you? So why do you believe he exists?”

“How can you be certain that the God *you* worship is the right one? There are many religions to choose from, so what’s so special about yours?”

“You say that God is all-loving. But if that’s true, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?”

“What leads you to believe that the stories in the Bible actually happened?”

“You really believe that some Middle Eastern Jew from 2,000 years ago performed various miracles, was crucified, and then rose from the dead? What evidence do you have to support this belief?”

If you are a Christian, you will undoubtedly be confronted with questions like these at some point. Are you prepared to give an answer to such questions? Because that’s what apologetics is all about—preparing believers with the knowledge they need to answer difficult questions.

### What is Apologetics?

To be clear, the word “apologetics” has nothing to do with saying sorry. We do not apologize for what we believe. But we are called upon to make *an apologetic*—that is, a defense—of what we believe. The Bible says to be prepared to defend the hope you have in the Messiah:

#### 1 Peter 3:15

**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.**

In Greek, the word “defense” in this verse is *apologia*, from which we get our English word “apologetics.” Apologetics is a branch of theology devoted to defending Christianity’s truth claims,

which is precisely what this verse instructs us to do.

Peter says that believers must be prepared to defend the hope we have. Being prepared means being well-informed about our faith, able to clearly articulate our beliefs, and are ready to respond to criticisms. Peter also says that we are to expect that unbelievers will ask for a “reason” for our hope. So, we must be prepared to give the reason for what we believe—we must provide the logic and rationale for our commitment to Messiah. Finally, in Peter’s letter, our “hope” refers to God’s promise of salvation in the Messiah (1 Peter 1:3; 20-21). So, we must be ready and able to explain why we know that the gospel is true and be able to answer all types of questions and challenges from those who don’t share our faith.

How do we get prepared to do this? Again, this is the role of apologetics. Apologetics is about equipping believers with the knowledge, arguments, and evidence they need to be able to defend their faith.

## What are the benefits of Apologetics?

Sadly, some believers fail to recognize the importance of apologetics. They consider the intellectual side of faith to be a waste of time and a distraction from things like loving God and our neighbor. Thus, many modern congregations simply do not teach apologetics.

Although it is possible to focus too much on the intellectual side of faith at the expense of the practical side of it, when apologetics is done right, it is not a distraction at all. In fact, apologetics is one of the ways *we walk out* our love for God and our neighbor!

For instance, love involves seeking someone’s highest good. For human beings, there is no “higher good” than knowing God and having a relationship with him. That is ultimately the entire goal and purpose of our existence (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Apologetics serves an essential role in this endeavor. It helps people think through difficult questions and doubts so they can come to embrace a relationship with the Lord. Apologetics removes barriers to faith so that people can experience the highest good of knowing God and enjoying him for eternity.

This is why the apostle Paul frequently used apologetics in his ministry. He wanted people to know the Messiah so that they could be saved. And according to the Book of Acts, Paul was quite successful at using apologetics to persuade others that Jesus—or Yeshua, as he was known in the first century—is the Messiah:

### Acts 17:1-3

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days **he reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, **explaining** and **proving** that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus [Yeshua], whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

Here we see that Paul offers arguments and evidence to his fellow Jews to support his claim that Yeshua is the Messiah. And because of Paul’s apologetic efforts, “**some of them were persuaded**” (Acts 17:4). Later in this same chapter, when Paul reasons with Greek philosophers, we see the same thing—he successfully persuades some of them (Acts 17:33).

In addition to using apologetics to love non-believers by addressing their doubts and questions, we can also use it to love and encourage our fellow believers. By engaging in apologetics, we can help strengthen and build up the faith of our brothers and sisters. For example:

### **Acts 18:24-28**

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus [Yeshua], though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, **he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus [Yeshua].**

In this passage, we learn about Apollos, a Jewish believer in Yeshua. He was a skilled speaker and well-versed in the Scriptures. After receiving more thorough instruction in the Scriptures from Priscilla and Aquila, he traveled to Achaia. While there, he “**powerfully refuted**” his opponents in public using the Scriptures to prove that Yeshua is the Messiah. Notably, Apollos’ use of apologetics is described as having “**greatly helped**” the other Jewish believers in Yeshua.

So, apologetics is needed so that believers can be strengthened in their faith. We need to be assured that what we believe is factual and has a solid intellectual basis. It is not enough to say, “Just have faith!” It is unreasonable to expect people to believe something blindly—we need to be able to offer sound evidence and arguments for what we believe and also demonstrate why other worldviews and religions fall short of the truth.

Statistics support the importance of apologetics. In a recent study, 15,000 adults ages 18 to 35 were interviewed about their faith. According to the survey, 47% of respondents with some connection to Christianity say they feel the Church “cannot answer their questions” or spiritual doubts (SOURCE: <https://theconnectedgeneration.com/key-findings/>). Almost half of Christians are unsatisfied with how the church addresses their questions and concerns.

This is a tragedy in light of the Bible’s direct command to “have mercy on those who doubt” (Jude 22). The book of Jude describes believers who were struggling with their faith because of false teachings. Jude says we must take these struggles seriously! We must be willing to minister to these believers and help them navigate their difficult questions and concerns. Apologetics helps us love those who struggle with doubt and gives us the tools to minister to them effectively.

We have seen how apologetics helps us love our neighbor, but how does it help us love God? Well, Yeshua mentioned the importance of loving God not only with all our heart and soul, but also with all our mind (Matthew 22:37). So, this great commandment—loving God with our mind—involves seeking to grow in the knowledge of God and his word through studying and thinking.

As believers, we cannot neglect the intellectual side of our faith:

### **Proverbs 1:7**

The fear of the LORD [YHWH] is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

As you study apologetics, you may discover that it can be a powerful tool for deepening your faith and growing in your relationship with God. Like Jacob, who struggled with God and refused to let go until he received a blessing, engaging in apologetics allows us to struggle with God over big questions. There is a blessing for us in that struggle! The process of learning about God, the Bible, and overcoming nagging doubts can be very rewarding spiritually.

## A Word of Caution

Although studying apologetics is an important aspect of our Christian life, like any good thing, it can be misused. Some people might use their knowledge to belittle others or engage in debates solely for the purpose of winning an argument so they can feel good about themselves, rather than doing it out of love for God and others. The apostle Peter recognized this potential harm, which is why he included this important qualification in his command to engage in apologetics:

### 1 Peter 3:15

**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.**

We must do apologetics out of love and in a spirit of gentleness and respect, not out of a desire to serve our own interests. So, before you give an argument for your beliefs, ask yourself: “What is my motivation?” Also, consider your tone and approach. Are you being gentle in how you explain the flaws in someone’s argument? Are you respecting your opponent, even though you strongly disagree with them?

If you are not being gentle and respectful, you are not engaging in apologetics the way Scripture defines it. True Christian apologetics involves these things. And that, by the way, is another benefit of apologetics. It challenges us to be not only thoughtful and informed but also kind and gentle. It provides us with opportunities to be loving and to practice patience and self-control in the midst of heated debate.

## Conclusion

So, why does apologetics matter? Apologetics is all about preparing believers with the knowledge they need to defend their faith. Apologetics helps us love our neighbors by removing barriers to faith and helping people experience the highest good of knowing God and enjoying him for eternity. Apologetics helps us love our fellow believers by strengthening them in their faith and helping them overcome doubts. By engaging with apologetics, we can fulfill the command to love God with our minds by increasing our understanding of him and his word. True apologetics involves not only being informed but also being gentle and respectful; thus, apologetics helps us develop character.

We hope this teaching has shown you the value of apologetics and has inspired you to delve deeper into this aspect of your faith. We hope that your study of apologetics will enrich and strengthen your faith for God’s glory and your good.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

**EMAIL:** Info@119ministries.com

**FACEBOOK:** www.facebook.com/119Ministries

**WEBSITE:** www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

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