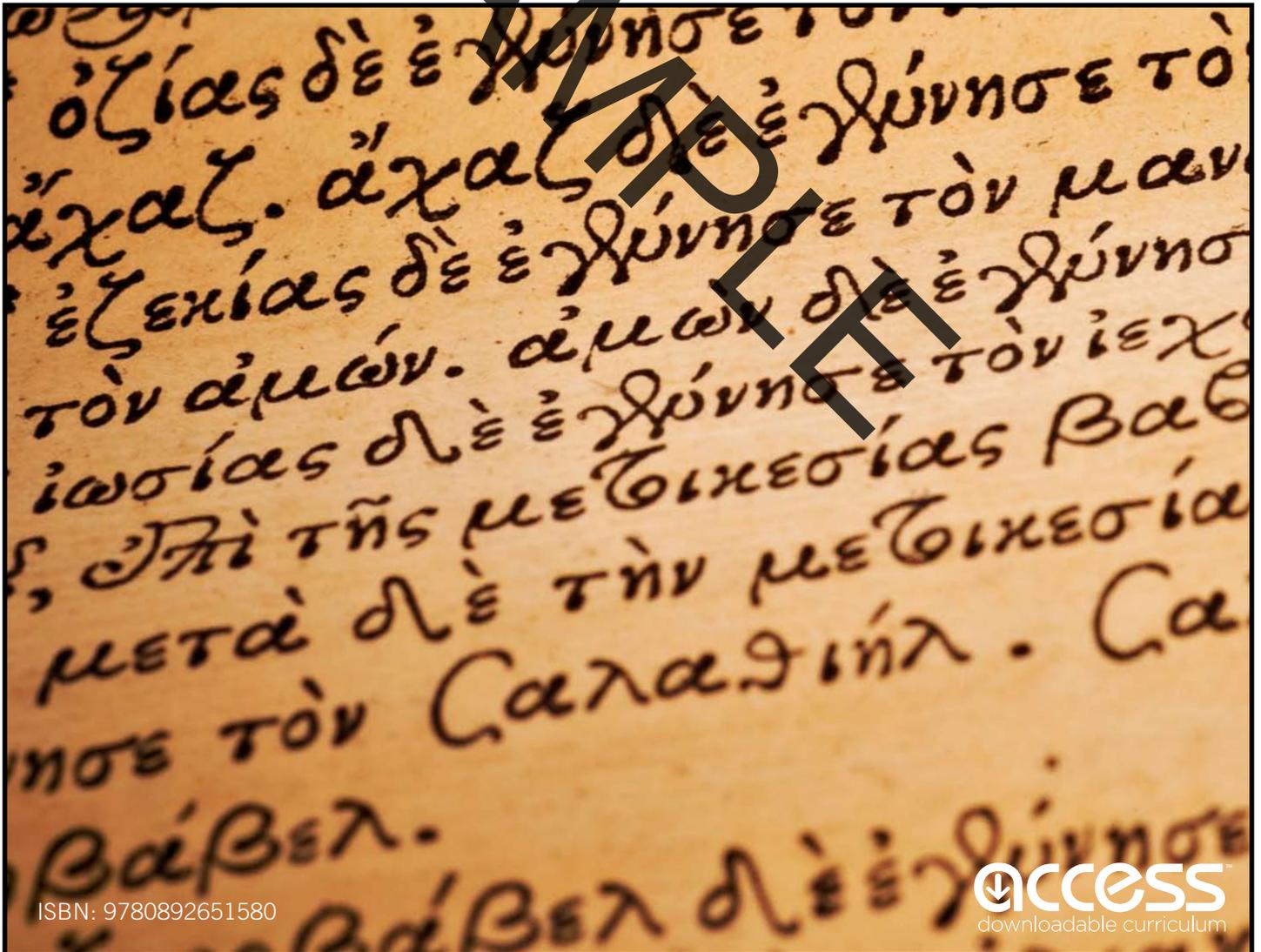


APOLOGETICS

How to Defend the Faith



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downloadable curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Apologetics simply stated is a defense of Christianity. The word comes from the Greek *apologia* plainly defined as “defense.” Thus, the study of apologetics essentially establishes why it is reasonable to be a Christian by presenting and defending the evidence that supports Christianity. The study of apologetics covers a wide array of issues. In today’s society, many attacks come upon Christianity that require believers to be able to defend the faith that they rely upon. This study will help Christians understand and explain their faith.

Session 1: Be Prepared

In this session participants will learn the basic meaning of the study of apologetics while learning the biblical call to know about their faith.

Session 2: What Are the Results?

In this session participants will look at the biblical call of apologetics and knowledge, and the effects these can have on their lives and those around them.

Session 3: Looking Back is a Good Thing

In this session participants will look at a brief history of defending Christianity and understand the impact it has upon the Church today.

Session 4: Which Way?

In this session, participants will look at the beliefs of other religions and how Christians should respond.

Session One

**Apologetics simply stated
is a defense of Christianity.**

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BE PREPARED

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bibles
- Copies of student handout #1
- Copies of student handout #2

LESSON OBJECTIVE

In this session participants will learn the basic meaning of the study of apologetics while learning the Biblical call to know about their faith.

CONNECT

Divide the participants into two different groups. Tell one group they have five minutes to defend the position that leprechauns (or any mythical figure of your choice) exists. Tell the other group they must argue against the existence of leprechauns. After five minutes, allow each side to present their arguments and evidence. At the end, ask the groups what the hardest part of the exercise was and why. Then say: *Just as there were two sides in our debate about leprechauns and their existence, there are many people who argue against the existence of God. It is the duty of Christians to be prepared to answer these objections and to defend their faith. Today, we will talk about the basics of what this study of apologetics entails.*

CONSIDER

What is apologetics?

- The existence of God
- Christ's divinity
- Christ's existence
- Biblical reliability, and
- The "problem" of evil and suffering in the world.

This list does not even come close to covering the vast topics that the study of apologetics covers as a whole. Essentially, the study of apologetics covers the defense of the foundational beliefs of Christianity. Distribute the handout "Foundations of Our Faith."

Ask something like: *In our postmodern world, what other areas of Christianity need to be defended? What areas of Christianity have you had to personally defend? Do you feel as though you were able to defend sufficiently, and how did/didn't you do it?*

The Biblical Basis for Apologetics

The Greek word *apologia* is used eight times in the New Testament: 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 22:1; Acts 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7; Philippians 1:16-17; 2 Timothy 4:16.

The most popular use of *apologia* in regards to a defense of one's faith is 1 Peter 3:15. In this verse the word *defense* is used in a way that requires one to respond to a question such as "Why are you a Christian?" A believer's life of holiness is very strange to nonbelievers and will lead to questions. It is imperative that we live a pure life in Jesus Christ, so we may have a chance to share our faith. The leader can ask: *Why is it essential for someone to be striving after a pure Christian life in order to be able to defend their life?*

The use of apologetics can actually be traced back to the Old Testament. As stated earlier, apologetics presents and defends the evidence that establishes Christianity as a reasonable religion to put one's faith in. Looking at Exodus 3, we find Moses encountering the same situation of sorts. Read Exodus 3:13-15.

After God has told Moses at the burning bush that He will use Moses to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, Moses begins to make excuses as to why he will be unable to do so. Moses asks what makes him so special and God simply replies that He will be with Moses. Moses then asks God what he is supposed to say whenever they ask for the name of the God that has sent him. Moses realizes that people worshipped numerous gods in this culture. Moses is told by God to answer, "I AM."

Just like Moses, many people are required to not just defend their belief in a god, but specifically their belief in the God of the Bible. Like Moses, we must be able to explain to others who the God is that we worship.

The Knowledge of One's Faith

After realizing the biblical basis for apologetics, the next step is for one to begin understanding his or her faith. In today's society, the dominant attitude is to question everything. Gospel believers must realize that we live in a land of skeptics. Ask something like: *Are there any areas of your faith that you feel you could have a better knowledge of? Is there anything about the Bible, Christianity, or theology that you really want to know more about? Have you ever been asked something about your faith in God, your church, or any other thing having to do with Christianity, in which you were unable to answer sufficiently?*

While 1 Peter 3:15 calls us to be prepared to defend our faith, the first step to being able to defend the faith, is to simply have the knowledge of our faith. This message is made clear throughout the Bible. There are numerous research studies that have shown that many Christian young men and women leave the church when they graduate high school. When many of the studies have shown this, church leaders have asked the question as to why this exodus has occurred. The overwhelming consensus shows that many people have no firm grounding in their faith.

While apologetics is a defense of Christianity, there are very few people with knowledge of Christian apologetics who will engage in debates with atheists and people of other faiths. The greatest benefit that one can receive by study apologetics is a better understanding of the faith they proclaim.

Ask someone to read Hebrews 5:11-14 aloud to the class. The writer of Hebrews deals with the Biblical knowledge that Christians should attain throughout their spiritual walk. Using the images of milk and meat, the writer points out that different people require different depths of teaching in order to gain knowledge of Christianity. One

would never feed a newborn a t-bone steak for dinner, but instead the infant lives on a diet of milk. This is how the newborn gains his or her nutrition, and it is also the only food that the newborn can eat. It isn't until the baby is more mature that it can begin to eat solid food.

Using this picture, the writer points out that the Christians reading the letter are in need of milk (verse 12). They are seen as spiritually immature. In fact, the writer says that those who live on milk are unskilled in God's word. Yet, the writer of Hebrews contrasts this idea of spiritual immaturity with those who are spiritually mature by using the concept of eating meat. Those who are fed meat are considered mature in their relationship with God. Not just that, but they strive after that maturity and knowledge of God. Ask participants if they consider their spiritual nutrition to be *meat* or *milk*. After they think about it for a second ask: *What are some ways in which Christians can gain a better knowledge of their faith?*

The passage in Hebrews paints a clear picture of what Christians should be pursuing. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:14 that he is pursuing a goal. This shows that the Christian life is not one of personal contentment in the knowledge and level of commitment that one has in their relationship, but instead it is a constant pursuit after knowing Christ more. Thus, one can see that apologetics will aid those who are spiritually immature to grow into mature Christians, simply by growing in knowledge about their faith in Jesus Christ.

One can look throughout the Bible and see that the Christian faith is not one of contentment, but it is a constant pursuit after godliness. In order to fully grasp one's faith, one must understand the basics of the faith. If someone cannot answer the question as to why he or she is a Christian, it is imperative that the individual begin to study the truths of God's word.

COMMIT

Distribute the worksheet "Why are you a Christian?" This will help the participants examine their relationship with Christ and help them answer the question "Why are you a Christian?" as it is examined in 1 Peter 3:15. At the end, discuss the questions as a group and allow participants to voice their reasons for being a Christian, as well as their answers to objections that might be raised to Christianity.

- *Why are you a Christian?*
- *Why do you believe in God?*
- *Why do you believe the Bible is true?*
- *Why do you believe Jesus was the Son of God?*

If there is extra time, allow participants to discuss objections to Christianity they have heard from family, friends, and the culture in general, and what are some answers that Christians are able to use to defend their faith in God.

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Session One

Student Handout 1

WHY ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

1. Why are you a Christian?
2. Why do you believe in God?
3. Why do you believe the Bible is true?
4. Why do you believe Jesus was the Son of God?

SAMPLE

If someone does not believe the Bible, how can I explain my faith?

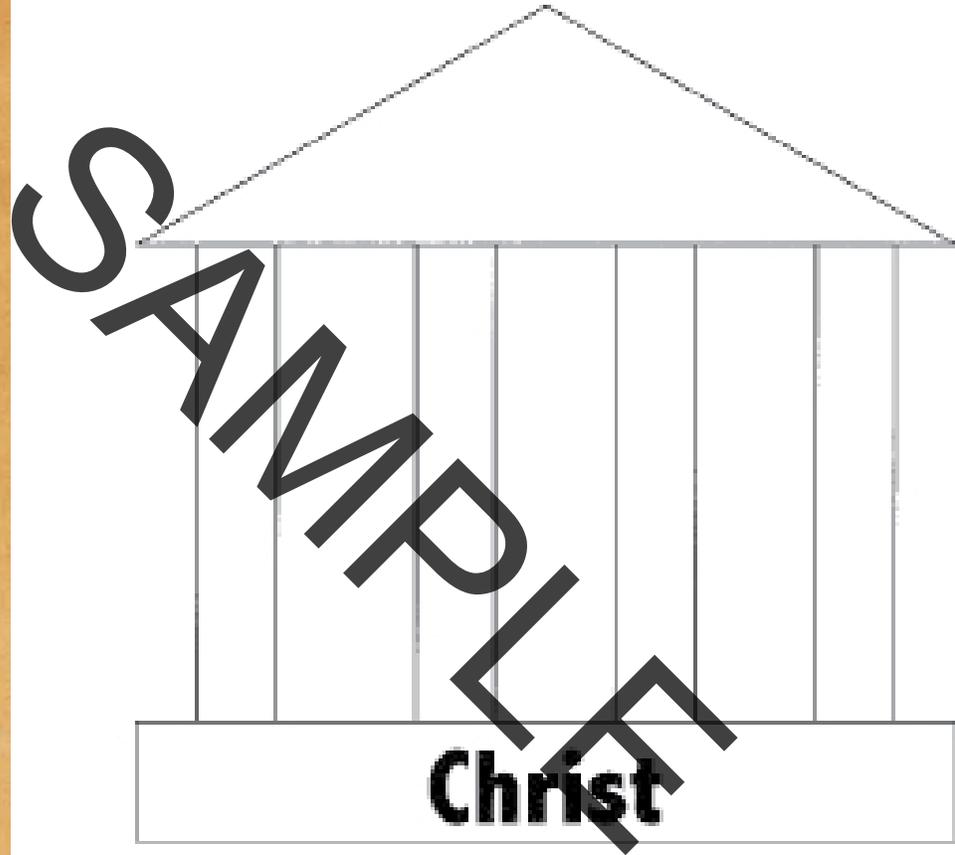
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Session One

Student Handout 2

FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH

The figure below represents Christianity, with Christ as our foundation. The pillars are what represents those essential and basic beliefs of Christianity. As a class, work together to list what are the essential parts of Christianity that aids one in their faith.



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