Introduction to Apologetics

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What is apologetics?

* **Apologetics:** “A ministry designed to help unbelievers overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion, and believers to remove doubts that hinder spiritual growth.” - J.P. Moreland
  + This is a ministry all Christians are called to perform
* 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
* What’s really at stake in our lives doesn’t have to do with the flesh, but rather, our mental lives – our hearts.
  + The heart drives and organizes your life.
  + The heart can take your life in a direction to or from building the kingdom of God.
* We can impact someone’s life by affecting someone mentally, through thought, beliefs and emotions.
  + This is done through cooperation with the Holy Spirit

Purpose of apologetics

* Apologetics is for evangelism and discipleship
  + Apologetics for evangelism: help them to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ
  + Apologetics for discipleship: help people to grow in the fruit of the Spirt; help others to grow in the likeness of Christ and live how Jesus teaches us to live
* Apologetics only works by the Holy Spirit
  + It is only by the grace of God that any apologetic action bears fruit.

**Evangelism**

* Ephesians 1:13-14: In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guaranteeof our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
  + When you received the gospel, it was through the work of the holy spirit. The Holy Spirit worked to seal you with Christ in his kingdom, serving King Jesus
  + This is not because of human action, but because of the Holy Spirit’s work.
  + The Holy Spirit guides you to a point of conversion and works your conversion inside of you

**Discipleship**

* Galatians 5:16-18: But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
  + When receive the gospel, we have forgiveness of sins and Christ’s righteousness
  + We have teachings of Jesus. We have taken on Jesus as our full-time teacher
    - We become apprentices of Jesus.
* We have the Holy Spirit working within us to enable us to live how Jesus lived.
  + We need help to continue to live in this flourishing life
    - Jesus is our tutor.
  + We need the Holy Spirit working to change us as we cooperate with Jesus’ teachings.
    - The Holy Spirit changes our dispositions and beliefs. We live more emotionally health lives.
    - We have living water overflowing within us.

How do we do apologetics?

* Intentionally put somebody in a circumstance where they can respond to the Holy Spirit either through conversion, or to grow spiritually and live how Jesus teaches us to live – in obedience and love to God.
* **Apologetic actions**
  + Give somebody an argument
    - A question about the nature of Christianity (ie: why does evil exist, how do people who grew up differently have an opportunity to experience Jesus, etc.)
    - Provide an argument
      * Use sentences to respond to what the Holy Spirit is doing inside of you
  + Intentionally show grace and mercy
  + Invitation to a local church gathering
  + It doesn’t matter what the circumstance is. Intentionally put someone in a circumstance where they have an opportunity to respond to the Holy Spirit.

Circumstances according to gifts and context

Put someone in circumstances according to…

1. **Our gifts**

* Consider your gifts and put you self in a circumstance that involves this gift
  + Arguments
  + Hospitality
  + Showing mercy
  + Giving in abundance/extreme acts of charity
* A common misconception is that apologetics requires arguments and requires a certain intellect.
  + We’ve all been created differently – we are all different parts of the body of Christ
  + Bodies need to be diverse in order to build the kingdom of God.
* We are all called to perform apologetics – it’s a ministry for everybody.
  + We perform apologetics according to the kind of body part that we are

1. **The kind of person we’re ministering to**

* Consider the differences in ministering to a senior college student in a philosophy major vs. ministering to someone in their fifties, who is an accountant, and just lost a loved one.
  + These two live a different life, and have different life experiences
* 1 Cor 9:19-23: For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.
  + Paul meets people where they’re at.
  + He doesn’t compromise his life or testimony in order to reach people. Rather, he meets the person/understands the person/finds common ground with that person, and then creates circumstances where that person has an opportunity to respond to the gospel.
  + Become all things to all people to craft these opportunities to the person’s context/life experiences.
* Exercise: Read Acts 13, 14, and 17.
  + How does Paul shift his ministry approach based on different demographics?
* Understand how we need to change according to our circumstances and the people we’re encountering as we do apologetics.

Summary

* Apologetics is a ministry designed to help unbelievers overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion, and believers to remove doubts that hinder spiritual growth
* We put people in circumstances to respond to the gospel – it’s all about circumstances.
* We put people in circumstances according to our gifts and according to the person they are
* Apologetics is a ministry for everyone.
* You are equipped to perform apologetics through the work of the Holy Spirit inside you.