

7. The Five Characteristics of Outstanding Apologetics.¹⁴

a. Revelational.

(1) Sticky statement.

(a) Our number one source of truth is Scripture.

(2) Theme verse.

(a) **Ac 17:2-3** 2 Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he *reasoned* with them *from the Scriptures*, 3 *explaining* and *proving* that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Messiah.

(3) Truths.

(a) Apologetics does not compete with or replace Scripture, it stands upon it.

1) Beware of focussing attention on apologetics to the neglect of Scripture.

(b) Scripture is so important to Christianity, that without it, I would not be a Christian.

(c) We are to come to a place where we trust Scripture more than we trust our own reason and experience. This is *not* a foolish trust.

1) Some things in the Bible we must take on faith, but the parts of the Bible that are corroborated by evidence give us a basis for that faith.

2) We believe people who have always told us the truth. So it is with the Bible.

(d) Scripture is self-authenticating.

(e) Scripture offers a good answer for every difficult philosophical question humanity has raised.

b. Rational.

(1) Sticky statement.

(a) God is logical and rational, and he has made us to be logical and rational.

(2) The logic/reason of God.

(a) Jesus himself is the “logic” of God.

1) **Jn 1:1** 1 In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God.

(b) The word “because” is found 1276 in the ESV Bible.

1) The word “reason” is found 61 times.

2) The Greek word λόγος is found 330 times in the NT.

(c) God’s revelation appeals to the laws of logic like the:

1) Law of identity.

a) In **logic**, the law of identity states that each thing is identical with itself. It is the first of the historical **three laws of thought**.

b) **Ex 3:14** 14 God said to Moses, I Am who I Am. And he said, Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.

2) Law of noncontradiction.

a) In **logic**, the law of non-contradiction states that contradictory propositions cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time. The two propositions “p is the case” and “p is not the case” are **mutually exclusive**.

¹⁴ Steve Kumar.

- b) **Ex 20:16** 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- c) God does not contradict himself in the Bible. The doctrine of dispensations explains some of the apparent contradictions.
- 3) Law of excluded middle.
 - a) In **logic**, the law of excluded middle states that for every **proposition**, **either** this proposition or its **negation** is **true**.
 - b) **Mt 21:24-27** 24 Jesus answered [Jewish leaders], I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man? And they discussed it among themselves saying, If we say, From heaven, he will say to us, Why then did you not believe him? 26 But if we say, From man, we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet. 27 So they answered Jesus, We do not know. And he said to them, Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.
- (d) Both love and logic are consistent with God's character.
 - 1) "Why do you think God is just as pleased to use a good argument as a warm expression of love? Because both love and reason are consistent with God's own character."¹⁵
 - 2) God's love is logical, and his logic is loving. God's character is multifaceted *and* unified.
- (3) The logic/reason of man (though fallen).
 - (a) Reason isn't everything.
 - 1) Man's reason is fundamentally flawed by sin.
 - a) **Ro 1:18-23** 18 The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ...21 For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
 - 2) The minds of unbelievers are blinded by evil.
 - a) **2 Co 4:3-4** 3 ...Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God.
 - 3) The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God.
 - a) **1 Co 2:14** 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
 - 4) People often make decisions for reasons other than logic.
 - a) "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of."¹⁶
 - b) "What makes one regard philosophers half mistrustfully and half mockingly is not that one again and again detects how innocent they are...but that they display altogether insufficient honesty. ...They pose

¹⁵ Gregory Koukl, *Tactics*, 36.

¹⁶ Blaise Pascal.

- as having discovered and attained their real opinions through the self-evolution of a cold, pure, divinely unperturbed dialectic... while what happens at bottom is that a prejudice, a notion, an ‘inspiration,’ generally a desire of the heart sifted and made abstract, is defended by them with reasons sought after the event.”¹⁷
- c) “Like many of my classmates at Chicago, I knew lots of T. S. Eliot by heart. I was attracted by Eliot’s suggestions that only committed Christians... could overcome their unhealthy preoccupation with their private obsessions, and so serve their fellow humans with proper humility. But a prideful inability to believe what I was saying when I recited the General Confession gradually led me to give up my awkward attempts to get religion. So I fell back on absolutist philosophy.... [Platonism] had all the advantages of religion, without requiring the humility that Christianity demanded, and of which I am apparently incapable.”¹⁸
- d) Thomas Aquinas did not sufficiently emphasise the fallenness of man’s reason.
- (b) Nevertheless, as apologists we can and should appeal to reason.
- 1) We still are thoughtful, rational beings who respond to evidence. People are rational.
 - a) This is true even in our postmodern age when reason is downgraded. People still use logic and reason, and they always will.
 - 2) **Ac 19:8-10** 8 [Paul] entered the synagogue and for three months *spoke* boldly, *reasoning* and *persuading* them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, *reasoning* daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.
 - 3) Youth are relativistic when it comes to ethics, values, and religion, but not relativistic about science, maths, and technology. This is in keeping with Francis A. Schaffer’s two stories analogy.
- (4) The logic/reason of the universe (even though fallen).
- (a) If the universe were inherently illogical, there would be no basis for any philosophical or scientific discourse.
 - (b) The believer and unbeliever share some common ground because the universe is rational.
 - 1) “The Christian affirms common ground. Our individual and cultural presuppositions do not keep us from communicating clearly and effectively with others morally different from us. We affirm that common ground exists between believer and unbeliever because both are

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers,” in *Beyond and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1990) 36.

¹⁸ Richard Rorty, “Wild Orchids and Trotsky,” in *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from American Universities*, ed. Mark Edmundson (New York: Penguin, 1993), 37-38.

creatures, created in God's image, and are recipients of God's general revelation, including his moral law."¹⁹

- (c) The logic of the universe is why evidentiary apologetics is to be preferred above presuppositional apologetics.
- (5) The logic/reason of the Christian faith.
 - (a) Theme verses.
 - 1) **Jn 20:30-31** 30 Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples that are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
 - a) "Men do not believe claims simply because they are made. Our Lord's life, teachings, character, deeds, and words must have been consonant with His great claims. Clearly, for those first Christians, Christ had provided that proof. His teaching, life, and resurrection settled the matter conclusively. This very faith is a proof of the truth of His claims."²⁰
 - 2) **Ac 26:24-26** 24 And as [Paul] was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind. 25 But Paul said, I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking *true and rational words*. 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.
 - 3) **1 Th 1:5** 5 ...Our gospel came to you not only in word (*logos*), but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (*pathos*). You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake (*ethos*).
 - 4) There is a logic to the biblical worldview that rings true. See *Worldviews in Conflict* and *Biblical Worldview*.
 - (6) Implications.
 - (a) As Christians, we must think.
 - 1) "Loving God with the mind is not a passive process. It is not enough to have sentimental religious thoughts. Rather, it involves coming to conclusions about God and his world based on revelation, observation, and careful reflection."²¹
 - (b) God doesn't ask us to adopt a blind faith but a reasoned faith.
 - 1) This is not the Mormon's "burning of the bosom."
 - (c) "It is unbiblical for anyone to say, 'Just believe!'"²²
 - 1) Example: "You ask me how I know he lives. He lives within my heart."²³

¹⁹ Alfred J. Poirier, "Conflicting Worldviews and the Defense of the Faith," Rev. version (2003), 23-24.

²⁰ B. B. Warfield.

²¹ Gregory Koukl, *Tactics*, 32.

²² Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*.

²³ Traditional Christian hymn.

- (d) Because Christianity is a reasonable faith, unbelievers have a right to ask questions.²⁴
 - 1) “Openness-to-examination” is the fundamental mentality of historic Christianity.²⁵
- (e) We are to know and follow the rules of logic when practicing apologetics. See *Logic*.
 - 1) We must acknowledge counterarguments to our position and defend our position against the best of all opposing positions. Don’t set up straw men.
- (f) If one keeps searching with an open, unbiased heart and mind, one will eventually come to the feet of Jesus.
 - 1) Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*.
 - 2) John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*.
 - 3) C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*.
- c. Relational.
 - (1) Sticky statement.
 - (a) Apologetics must be both rational and relational. Add the “el” in rational.
 - (2) Image: a big bear hug.
 - (3) Theme verses.
 - (a) **1 Co 9:19-22** 19 Though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.... 22 I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.
 - (b) **1 Th 1:5** 5 ...Our gospel came to you not only in word (*logos*), but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (*pathos*). You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake (*ethos*).
 - (c) **1 Th 2:8** 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.
 - (4) Truths.
 - (a) Apologetics is about winning people, not winning arguments.
 - 1) **1 Co 13:1** 1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
 - 2) When studying apologetics, does our heart break for the people we are preparing to talk to?
 - (b) People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.
 - 1) Youth are often resistant to mere intellectual arguments.
 - 2) Relationships are the nuts and bolts of spiritual conversations, including apologetics ones.
 - 3) The human brain is physically, biologically, and chemically hardwired to connect with others in relationships. Relationship engenders belief.
 - 4) People receive apologetic arguments when trust is built.
 - a) Example: David Wood and Nabeel Qureshi.
 - 5) Apologetics and persuasion is best done in the context of relationship.
 - a) **Ps 86:11-13** 11 Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. 12 I give thanks to you, O

²⁴ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*.

²⁵ Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, 349.

Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. 13 For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

- 6) Strategies:
 - a) Belong, Believe, Become
 - b) BLESS strategy
 - c) Alpha or Christianity Explored
 - d) D groups
- (c) Even the most logical of people crave relationship.
 - 1) The apologetics audience consists of two groups, the tough minded (logical, propositional, evidential) and the tender minded (artistic, subjective, emotional). Yet, even the most rational of people appreciate relationship.
- (d) People can't ask (1 Pe 3:15) if they don't know us.
 - 1) People who like apologetics socialise with people who like apologetics.
 - 2) The longer we are believers, the less we socialise with unbelievers. It happens unintentionally, but it does happen.
 - 3) Who are your non-Christian friends? When was the last time you hung out with a non-Christian? Who are you praying for regularly that is not a Christian?
- (e) People want and need both reason and relationship, which is a powerful combination that the church has.
 - 1) "Truth without relationships is modernism. Relationships without truth is postmodernism. The world we live in—the great host of people all around us—is desperate for truth that is firmly grasped, grounded, and communicated in the context of relationships."²⁶
 - 2) The church is to be a loving place that also respects people's intelligence.
- d. Relevant.
 - (1) Sticky statement.
 - (a) We must show that we know where unbelievers are coming from.
 - (2) Image: building a bridge.
 - (3) Theme verses.
 - (a) **Ac 17:22-23** 22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: To the unknown god. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.
 - 1) Paul's began with where his audience was at and moved steadily toward the gospel.
 - (b) **Ac 17:27-29** 27 Yet [God] is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for In him we live and move and have our being. As even some of your own poets have said, For we are indeed his offspring. 29 Being then God's offspring....
 - 1) Paul showed awareness of his audience's theological beliefs.

²⁶ Josh McDowell, in Sean McDowell, ed., *Apologetics for a New Generation*, 64.

- a) “They fashioned a tomb for thee, O Holy and high one...But thou art not dead, thou livest and abidest forever, For in thee we live and move and have our being....”²⁷
 - b) “Let us begin with Zeus: never, O men, let us leave him unmentioned. Full of Zeus are all the ways and all the meeting-places of men; the sea and the harbours are full of him. It is with Zeus that every one of us in every way had to do, for we are also his offspring.”²⁸
- (4) Truths.
- (a) We must keep learning what our generation really thinks.
 - 1) “Apologetics should not be merely an academic subject, a new kind of scholasticism. It should be thought out and practiced in the rough and tumble of living contact with the present generation.”²⁹
 - 2) “Practice apologetics in the battles of your generation. ... We can never expect the testimony of a previous generation to be sufficient for our own time.”
 - 3) Take serious the intellectual issues, problems, and questions of your children.³⁰
 - 4) “Follow the itch that people are scratching in your community.”
 - 5) What movies are people watching? What music are people listening to? What video games are people playing? What YouTube channels are people streaming?
 - (b) We must keep learning what our generation really feels.
 - 1) Paul understood not only the beliefs of his culture. He knew their song lyrics.
 - 2) The Official NZ Music Charts: <https://nztop40.co.nz/chart/hotnzsingles>.
 - (c) The best way to understand what our generation believes is to talk with real people, ask them questions, and show genuine interest.
- (5) See John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*.
- e. Redemptive.
- (1) Sticky statement: Apologetics is not an end in itself.
 - (2) Theme verse.
 - (a) **Ac 26:27-29** 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I [Paul] know that you believe. 28 And Agrippa said to Paul, In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian? 29 And Paul said, Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am —except for these chains.
 - (3) Truths.
 - (a) We are aiming to turn 1s (haters), 2s (apathetics), and 3s (seekers) into 4s (believers) and 5s (disciples).

²⁷ Quoted in F. F. Bruce, *Paul: An Apostle of the Heart Set Free*.

²⁸ Epimenides, quoted in Aratus, *Phainomena* 1-5.

²⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 152.

³⁰ Francis A. Schaeffer.

- 1) The goal of apologetics is not to win an argument, but that the people with whom we are in contact may become Christians and then live under the lordship of Christ in the whole spectrum of life.³¹
- (b) Coming to faith in Jesus is never just a matter of apologetical reasoning.
 - 1) The illumination of the Holy Spirit is necessary and crucial. People cannot see, understand, or receive the gospel without the Holy Spirit. See *Illumination*.
 - a) **2 Co 3:16** 16 But at the time when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.
 - b) **Ac 16:14** 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
 - c) "...[A]rgument and evidence play an essential role in our showing Christianity to be true, but a contingent and secondary role in our personally knowing Christianity to be true. The proper ground of our knowing Christianity to be true is the inner work of the Holy Spirit; and in our showing Christianity to be true, it is His role to open the hearts of unbelievers to assent and respond to the reasons we present."³²
- (c) Apologetics is only one component of winning people to Jesus.
 - 1) The life of the Christian is "our final apologetic."³³
 - 2) Getting unbelievers into direct contact with Scripture in the context of relationship is the best strategy. D groups are excellent for this.

³¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 171.

³² William L. Craig, *Reasonable Response*, 315.

³³ Francis A. Schaeffer, in J. Barrs, "Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message."