

Is Apologetics Biblical?

Apologetics - Defending and Declaring the Evidence for Biblical Christianity

"15 ...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it [Greek - "apologia"]. 16 But do this in a gentle and respectful way...." 1 Peter 3:15-16 NLT

The term Apologetics (a-pol-o-get-ics) comes from the Greek word **ἀπολογία**, (ap-ol-og-ee'-ah), which means "speaking in defense."

The dictionary explains Apologetics as the discipline of **defending** a position (usually religious) through the systematic use of reason. The word "apologia" appears 17 times in noun or verb form in the New Testament, and can be translated "defense," "answer," "reason" or "vindication" [see Philippians 1:7, 16; 1 Peter 3:15].

Apologetics In the New Testament

The need for apologetics is not new to our day. It is both biblical and a vital part of the outreach of the early Church. Sean McDowell explains, "The apostles of Christ ministered in a pluralistic culture. They regularly reasoned with both Jews and pagans, trying to persuade them of the truth of Christianity. They appealed to fulfilled prophecy, Jesus' miracles, evidence for creation, and proofs for the resurrection." Sean McDowell, "Introduction: Apologetics for a New Generation," in *Apologetics For A New Generation*, ed. Sean McDowell (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 19-20.

Apologetics author, Doug Powell, writes, "Christian apologetics is neither a new practice nor is it unbiblical. In fact, it is not only modeled in the New Testament, but it is also commanded." *Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics*, (Nashville, Holman Reference, 2006), p.12.

The New Testament is filled with examples of Christian apologetics showing that it is biblical.

• Jesus and Apologetics

John 10:24-25 NLT

*"24 The people surrounded him and asked, 'How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' 25 Jesus replied, 'I have already told you, and you don't believe me. **The proof is the work I do** in my Father's name.'"*

Q2. *How do we know that Jesus did not expect people to blindly believe that he was the Messiah? How does this demonstrate apologetics?*

John 10:37-38 NLT

*"37 Don't believe me unless I carry out my Father's work. 38 But if I do his work, **believe in the evidence of the miraculous works I have done**, even if you don't believe me. Then you will know and understand that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father."*

Q3. *In what way did Jesus offer people an apologetic reason for them to believe he was the Son of God?*

John 12:37, 42 NLT

*"37 But **despite all the miraculous signs** Jesus had done, most of the people still **did not believe** in him."*

*"42 Many people did **believe** in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue."*

Q4. *Based on John 12:37 and 42, what effect did Jesus's miraculous signs (apologetic evidence) have on the people?*

Q5. *If some people are going to reject compelling evidence for the gospel message, why bother to share it?*

John 13:19 NLT

*"I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will **believe** that I am the Messiah."*

John 14:11 NLT

*"Just **believe** that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least **believe** because of the work you have seen me do."*

Q6. *How did Jesus utilize apologetics in John 13:19 and 14:11?*

• Luke and Apologetics

Luke 1:1-4 NLT

*"1 Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. 2 They used the **eyewitness reports circulating among us** from the early disciples. 3 Having **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning, I also have decided to **write an accurate account** for you, most honorable Theophilus, 4 so you **can be certain of the truth** of everything you were taught."*

Q7. *What kind of people did Luke rely on for writing his gospel? (v.2)*

Q9. *What kind of research did Luke do? (v.3)*

Q10. *What two goals did Luke have for his gospel? (vs. 3-4)*

Q11. *How does this show Luke's involvement in apologetics?*

• John and Apologetics

John 20:30-31 NLT

"³⁰ The disciples saw Jesus do many other **miraculous signs** in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹ But **these are written** so that you may **continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah**, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name."

Q12. What did John leave out of his gospel? (v.30)

Q13. Why did John write his gospel? How does this show his use of apologetics? (v.31)

• Peter and Apologetics

1 Peter 3:15 NLT

"¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And **if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.**"

Q14. How did Peter promote apologetics in 1 Peter 3:15?

• Paul and Apologetics

Acts 22:1 NLT

"'Brothers and esteemed fathers,' Paul said, 'listen to me as I offer my **defense** (apologia).'"

Philippians 1:16 NLT

"...for they know I have been appointed to **defend** (apologia) the Good News."

Q15. How do we see apologetics in Paul's ministry?

Philippians 1:7 NLT

"⁷ So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in **defending** (apologia) and **confirming** the truth of the Good News."

Q16. What is the two-part emphasis in Paul's apologetic effort?

Acts 17:2 NLT

"As was **Paul's custom**, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to **reason** with the people."

Q17. What does the word "custom" indicate? What did Paul do with the people? Why is this apologetics?

• Jude and Apologetics

Jude 3 NLT

"³ Dear friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to **defend the faith** that God has entrusted once for all time to his holy people.

Q18. What change of topic did Jude make in his letter? How is apologetics pictured in this verse?

• Apollos and Apologetics

Who was Apollos? His story is in Acts 18:24-19:1. He is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:1, 6; 16:12; Titus 3:13. The *Life Application Study Bible*, tells us, "Apollos was from Alexandria in Egypt, the second most important city in the Roman Empire, and the home of a great university. There was a thriving Jewish population in Alexandria. Apollos was a scholar, orator, and debater; and after his knowledge about Christ was made more complete, God greatly used these gifts to strengthen and encourage the church. Reason is a powerful tool in the right hands and in the right situation. Apollos used the gift of reason to convince many in Greece of the truth of the Good News. You don't have to turn off your mind when you turn to Christ. If you have an ability in logic or debate, use it to bring others to God." (18:27, 28).

Acts 18:27-28 NLT

"²⁷ Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God's grace, had believed. ²⁸ He **refuted** the Jews with **powerful arguments in public debate**. **Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.**"

Q19. How was apologetics a part of the preaching and ministry of Apollos?

Conclusion

Q20. In your own words, how was apologetics involved in first-century Christianity?

Q21. Why do you think apologetics is needed today in our evangelistic and discipleship efforts?

Christian Apologetics author and professor, Douglas Groothuis, wrote, "...Jesus unapologetically engaged in apologetics with his sharpest critics. If he is the model for Christians, we should do so as well. Jesus' apostles and other writers of the New Testament certainly recognized this... Not only do the writers of the New Testament commend apologetics, they engage in it as well—just as their Master did." Douglas Groothuis. *Christian Apologetics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 33-34.

Apologetics is **defending** and **declaring** the evidence for Biblical Christianity. Apologetics is biblical. Apologetics is for us, today.