

Preparing to Give an Answer: Part I

The Call to Give an Answer

Room For Doubt Seminar – Lowell, IN Church of Christ

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Introduction

- A. The Room For Doubt “Basic Questions” series.¹
 1. Essential Christian claims
 2. Challenging questions
- B. Basic idea (1 Peter 3:15): “... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have....” (NIV)

I. The Need for a Christian Response: The Culture and the Church

A. Popular atheists & skeptics

1. E.g. Richard Dawkins, Evolutionary Biologist, Oxford University: *The God Delusion* (2006).
2. E.g. Christopher Hitchens: *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007).
3. E.g. Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God* (2014); *Forged: Writing in the Name of God—Why the Bible’s Authors Are Not Who We Think they are* (2011).

B. The **Internet** and “high information seekers.”

.... High information seekers with doubts are about two to four times more likely to disconnect from Christianity than other doubters who are not high information seekers.” (Larry Barnett at <https://www.projectnextgen.org>)

C. The **Nones**—religiously unaffiliated.

1. U.S. Adults: 1990 8.1%; 2007 15.3%; 2012 19.3%; 2014 22.8%; 2019 _____ **23.1%**.
2. U.S. Millennials (age 18-29): 2007 22%; 2012 32%.
Today: about _____ **35%**.
3. For every ONE person becoming religious, _____ **FOUR** _____ become Nones.

D. **Atheists**: 13-18 year olds (see the 2018 “Gen Z” report by Barna)

1. “Atheist”: 6% of all adults; 6% of Gen X; 7% of Millennials.
2. “Atheist”: _____ **13%** _____ of Gen Z.

E. **Churched Youth** (Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*).

1. Significantly doubted their faith? _____ **38%**.
2. Can’t ask their most pressing life questions at church? _____ **36%**.
3. At some point, felt like rejecting their parents’ faith? _____ **32%**.
4. No longer active in church in their 20s? _____ **59%**.

¹ For recommended book and website resources, see <https://www.roomfordoubt.com/recommended-resources/>.

II. The Nature of a Christian Response: The Call of God.

A. The **Motive**

1. Not just **WHAT** to believe (“I believe **THAT** ...”) (e.g. Matt 16:16; 1 Pet 3:14–16; Col 2:8; 2 Cor 10:5; 2 Tim 2:24–25; Titus 1:9; Jude 3).
2. The _____ **WHY** of faith.
3. The objective.
 - a. Assent (Matt. 16:15-17; John 20:30-31; Rom. 10:9; 1 John 4:15; Heb. 11:6ab).
 - b. Trust (James 2:19; Matt. 4:1-3; Hebrews 11:1,6c).
 - c. Love (Mark 12:30; Deut 6:4-5; Compare Jesus’ questions to Peter in Matt 16:15–16 and John 21:1–17).

B. The **Message**

1. **1 Peter 3:15** _____ **DEFEND** [*apologia*] the faith. (1 Peter 3:15; Acts 22:1; 24:10; 26:12; Phil 1:7,16). Cf. *dialegomai* (reasoned discussion) in Acts 17:2-3,17; 18:4,19; 19:8-9; 24:12).

1 Peter 3: ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer [*apologia*] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. [NIV]

Phil 1:7b “... whether I [Paul] am in chains or defending [*apologia*] and confirming the gospel, all of you share the affection of Christ Jesus.”

“Perhaps the main function of apologetics is to show that ... [we] have nothing whatsoever for which to apologize” (**Alvin Plantinga**, “Christian Life Partly Lived,” in *Philosophers Who Believe*, ed. Kelly James Clark [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993], 69).

2. **Col. 2:8** “Don’t be taken _____ **CAPTIVE** by deceptive philosophies.”
3. **2 Cor. 10:5** “We _____ **DEMOLISH** arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.”
4. **2 Timothy 2:24-25** “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome but be kind to all . . . with gentleness _____ **CORRECTING** those who are in opposition; if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”
5. **Titus 1:9** “He [an elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and _____ **REFUTE** those who oppose it.”
6. **Jude 3** “Contend earnestly for the faith.”
7. Preaching in the book of Acts (e.g. Acts 2:14-36; 7:1-53; Acts 17:16-34): A *declaration* and a _____ **DEFENSE**.

C. The **Mood**.

1. 1 Pet 3:15 “with gentleness and reverence.”
2. 2 Tim 2:24-25 “not quarrelsome but kind ... with gentleness.”
3. Jude 22 “Have mercy on some, who are doubting.”

D. The **Mode**.

1. **“Negative” Apologetics:** Replying to specific criticisms to show that Christianity is **NOT FALSE**.

- a. E.g. The disciples accused of stealing Jesus’ body (Matt 28:11-15).
- b. E.g. Festus accuses Paul of being insane (Acts 26:22-32).
- c. E.g. The claim that Christians “all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar [the state]” (Acts 17:5-8).
- d. E.g. The problem of evil. Accusation: The reality of evil is inconsistent with the reality of an existing God who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good.

2. **“Positive” Apologetics:** Attempting to show that **Christianity is TRUE**.

- a. **Evidences in nature** (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32).
- b. **Miracles** (1 Kings 18; Ex 10:1-2; Jn 20:30-31; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-20).
 - (1) John 20:30-31 “... these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”
 - (2) Acts 2:22-24 “... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him”
- c. **Fulfilled prophecy** (Lk 24:25-27; Acts 17:2-3; 26:22-23; Deut 18:18-22; Is 7:14; Micah 5:2; Zach 9:9; Is 53; Ps 22:1-8; 16:10).
- d. **The nature and reliability of scripture.**
 - (1) 2 Tim 3:14-17 “... all Scripture is inspired by God”
 - (2) 2 Pet 1:20-21 “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”
 - (3) John 10:34-36 [Jesus]: “... and the Scripture cannot be broken.”
- e. **Social benefits** of the Christian way of life (Titus 3:8; Gal 6:9-10; 1 Tim 5:8).
- f. **Personal experience.**
 - (1) John 9:25-30 “... One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
 - (2) Paul’s testimonies to the Jews (Acts 22), to Felix (Acts 24:10-23) and to Agrippa (Acts 26).

3. **“Neutralizing” Apologetics:** Attempting to show that **other worldviews are INCONSISTENT** or _____

UNLIVABLE.

- a. Biblical connections.
 - (1) 2 Cor 10:5 “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God”
 - (2) Titus 1:9-11 “... able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”
 - (3) Rom 1:21 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
- b. Apologetic advantage: It does not require using _____ **SCRIPTURE** in its method.

E. The **Method**

1. Be _____ **INFORMATIVE**.
2. Be _____ **INQUISITIVE** (see Mark 11:27-33).
 - a. Jesus asked _____ **173** questions.
 - b. For example, see Mark 11:27-33.

²⁷ And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, ²⁸ and they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?” ²⁹ Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” (ESV)

- c. It's just as important to learn good _____ **QUESTIONS** to ask as it is to learn good _____ **ANSWERS** to give.