

Understanding and Defending the Reasons of our Faith in a World Gone Mad

Session #1

1. Preliminaries:

a. An opening caveat and appeal for patience.

b. Some goals:

- To show that the Bible gives us our apologetic, and we must submit to Scripture and never allow other truth claims to subordinate it. While other apologetic methods may contribute helpful insights or tools, any method that does not begin with God and his revelation is foolish. “The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).
- To demonstrate that there is no neutrality in respect to worldview or matters of faith. All people have pre-beliefs that they accept *prima facie* as true and as unassailable and from which they reason. However, most do not acknowledge or even understand that they do.
- To demonstrate that there is no moral neutrality either. Righteousness and wickedness are the only biblical options. People are either for the Lord or against him, either living in reference to Him or not.
- To show that not knowing God is an moral/ethical issue; It is a matter of the will. It is really a matter of authority and a desire for autonomy. The person who demands evidence for God as a condition for belief in Him is placing himself above God as the one who can judge the evidence and validate or invalidate God's existence (or in some cases to acquit or convict him of wrong).
- To help us see that the madness of our society is not insanity *per se*. It is not without *reason* but is a product of deeply held core beliefs that have far reaching implications for how people will respond to the gospel but also for how they will choose to express themselves.
- To help us see that we should be learning how to confront these deeper core beliefs in order to call people to genuine repentance.
- To strengthen each other's faith by showing that it is not irrational. We are not blindly leaping into the superstitious or simply giving ourselves over to belief in a cosmic “spaghetti monster”.

2. Our call to duty.

a. 1 Peter 3:13-15

- What does it mean to “sanctify Christ as Lord”?
- What are the circumstances of Peter's readers that would necessitate this exhortation?
- How are our circumstances similar?
- What specific result does Peter identify as coming from sanctifying Christ as Lord? (“ready always for an *apologia* to everyone asking you for a *logos*”)
- Are we equipped to give this defense?

b. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

- What are we to tear down?
- What are these things in our context?

c. Colossians 2:8

d. Jude 3

A word of caution to the avid apologist:

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

3. Our problem:

- a. Psalm 1
- b. Romans 12:2

We are all immersed in this mess!

“Most of us do not think about the world in the way we do because we have reasoned from first principles to a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos. Rather, we generally operate on the basis of intuitions that we have often unconsciously absorbed from the culture around us.” Carl Trueman

What are some conforming concepts believed by our culture that, if accepted, may serve to weaken the defense of our faith?

- That objectivity or neutrality is possible.
- That there is a standard of reasoning by which God can be judged.
- That the Bible is an invalid starting place for discussion or debate.
- That “faith” is accepting unreasonable things as true. [Some believe that the more outlandish the proposition, the more faith is needed.]
- That science has debunked Christianity or at least many Christian claims.

- c. Psalm 14:1-3

- 4. Risks of mishearing or misunderstanding: some things we are **not** saying:
 - The biblical label “wicked” does **not** necessarily mean malicious or even behaviorally immoral. It means that a person is rejecting, ignoring, or living without reference to God or refusing to worship Him or give thanks to Him.
 - The term “Fool” is not an insult meant to disparage intelligence but is a biblical description of someone who is turned away from God. It is a moral indictment.
 - To say that someone does not have a *foundation* for morality is not saying they do not have moral standards or even behave morally but that they do not have a coherent *rationale* for any moral standards they might have. They are borrowing them from Christianity.
 - To say that the unbeliever cannot know things *truly* is **not** saying that they cannot or do not know things thoroughly and rightly or that their knowledge cannot be of great benefit.
 - To say that a system or institution is godless, is **not** to say that everything done by them is evil nor is it to say that everyone in them is godless, immoral, or even wrong to be there.

A stark sample of our world’s thinking:

Wherever morality is based on theology, wherever the right is made dependent on divine authority, the most immoral, unjust, infamous things can be justified and established. I can found morality on theology only when I myself have already defined the Divine Being by means of morality... To place anything in God, or to derive anything from God, is nothing more than to withdraw it from the test of reason, to institute it as indubitable, unassailable, sacred, without rendering an account of why. Hence self delusion, if not wicked, insidious design, is at the root of all efforts to establish morality, right, on theology. (Ludwig Feuerbach)