

What is Apologetics?

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Welcome to our class on Christian Apologetics. We are going to cover a lot of ground in the next five hours. We're going to discuss the nature of apologetics, the nature of truth, how we defend truth in an age when people deny there is objective truth. We'll be looking at the nature of the Christian worldview and the arguments for God's existence, the arguments for the deity and resurrection of Jesus. We'll be looking at some objections to the Christian faith, such as the problem of evil and the fact that there's so many religions, how can we say Christianity is the one true religion?

So we have a long ways to go, but we should begin with what is apologetics? Now that word can put people off sometimes because they think of apologizing. And we don't want to say, I'm sorry I'm a Christian. Or I'm sorry I believe all these wild and crazy things. But apologetics simply means to defend the truth of Christianity rationally and to show its importance for all of life, for time and for eternity. So this is very much part of God's mission to the world.

The world needs to be set right before God because of our rebellion against our Creator, because of the sad realities of sin. So God's mission is to restore the knowledge of God by bringing reconciliation and restoration to people through the gospel. And Jesus told us to take the gospel to the whole world, to teach the nations what He had taught His disciples. So really the mission of God is to bring the whole Bible to the whole world that people would believe and obey and find grace and peace and wisdom in all their lives, every aspect of their lives.

So this involves, certainly explaining what Christianity is and proclaiming it—not simply here are some ideas that are interesting or you might find meaningful—but proclaiming it as the truth

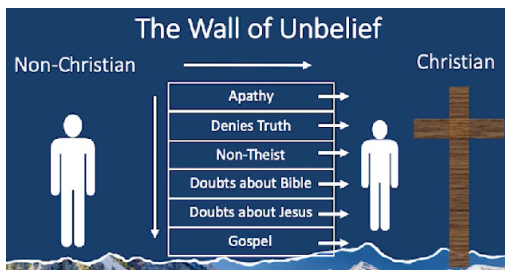
that Christ is the way and the truth and life. And then also, and this is where apologetics comes in, defending it as true and saying there are good and sufficient reasons to believe that there is a God, that Christ is the way that the Bible is God's Word, God's true communication to us.

So let me tell you a bit about why I'm doing this class. I converted at age nineteen after some interest in Eastern religions and Western philosophy and was quite interested in some aspects of the paranormal and the occult. And through reading, Søren Kierkegaard, the Christian philosopher, and through some pretty remarkable events, dreams, and coincidences, I confessed Christ as Lord in a group of people in 1976. And a friend of mine at the time said, Doug, if you become a Christian, you won't think anymore, you won't care about looking into other viewpoints, you'll just have blind faith. And I think I've proven my friend wrong in the last forty-three plus years because I've explored all the major worldviews, all the religions.

I have gotten my degrees in philosophy, including a PhD in philosophy. And I've written widely on new age religious thought, on various non-Christian religions, on atheism, skepticism, and really, you name it. So part of my mission or my calling is to explain, defend, and apply the Christian message to the world and to build up the church in the knowledge of the truth. So as I sometimes put it, it's almost like I've attempted to disprove Christianity for the last forty plus years by considering the most relevant challenges to the Christian faith, and I haven't been able to disprove it so far. Now, I don't want to say that I have perfect answers to every question.

I still have questions, I rethink matters, but I think given the last forty or so years and given my teaching and preaching and writing and conversations and evangelism, that I have a strong confidence that the Christian message is true and the most important truth that anyone could ever know. So we defend this great message of Christianity, of salvation through God's grace in Christ through this discipline of apologetics.

So if you want a formal definition, I say that apologetics is the defense of Christianity as objectively true, compellingly rational, and pertinent to all of life. Or you might say existentially relevant to the whole of life. So let's talk a bit about the biblical basis for apologetics. The purpose of apologetics is certainly to bring unbelievers to belief, to faith in Christ, to know Him and to



confess Him as Lord and to follow Him. And to provide intellectual satisfaction because people have questions about, is there a God, is Jesus the way, are there problems within the Bible and so on. And these are all legitimate questions. And also, apologetics can help people who do confess Christ to have a stronger, richer, deeper Christian faith. And biblically, faith is not believing in the teeth of the evidence. It's not really hoping something outrageous is true on the off chance that it is true. Biblical faith simply means to believe the gospel, to believe Scripture, and to commit oneself on the basis of that belief. It doesn't have to be pitted against reason by any means.

As I'll say in a minute, we have a reason, we have many reasons for the hope that is within us. One way of looking at apologetics is demonstrated in this little slide. And that is that unbelievers have a wall between themselves and the cross. So the first part of the wall, the highest part, might just be apathy, people don't care. So we need to say, no, this is a claim about eternal life and about the forgiveness of sins, you should at least look into it.

Some people may deny that truth can be known at all, or truth is just relative to the person or to the community. So we have to deal with that. Or someone might say, well, I'm a little bit concerned, I think there's truth, but I'm not even sure there is a God. So there, we need to give some good, solid, strong arguments for the existence of God, which we will. And then if someone says, alright, I believe there is a creator, designer God, but I'm not sure about the New Testament, maybe it's been corrupted.

So we address the historical apologetics related to that. And someone at that point could say, well, okay, I see the Bible, the New Testament for now, has something to say, it's not historically ridiculous, it could be trusted, but I'm not sure about Jesus. Maybe He was just a great teacher or maybe He was a guru or something. So then we give a good argument for Jesus as the God-Man, the one who takes away our sins, the one who rose from the dead. And of course, we want to get to the point of the gospel, where people confess Christ as Lord, realize they need to be forgiven of their sin and realize they need a new life—they need to repent and turn completely. So you might view apologetics as removing those obstacles or taking those bricks in the wall out so people can walk over to the cross.

Now let me say right at the beginning, that while apologetics involves using reason and giving evidence and arguments, this is

not something we're trying to do apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and He gives us the virtue to speak the truth in love to unbelievers. But since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, we can aspire to give really compelling and sound arguments to questions that unbelievers have. We're not in the flesh simply by giving an argument for the existence of God or for the deity of Christ. This is something the Holy Spirit can employ to draw people to Christ and to build people up in the faith.

Now classic text on apologetics is from 1 Peter 3:15–16. Peter is writing to a church that has been suffering for the sake of the gospel and he's counseling them on how to walk with Christ. He says at verse 15, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

So this tells us that in apologetics, we need to first of all, have the right orientation to the Lord, "Revere Christ as Lord." So we worship Christ and we trust Christ and we engage in apologetics for His honor and His glory. And it says to be prepared to give an answer for why we believe or have a reason. So there's certainly the aspect of testimony that Christ has changed my life and I want to tell you about it, and that's part of the apologetic. But there are all kinds of other aspects of apologetics than simply giving one's own testimony.

There are lots of reasons and lots of ways of answering unbelievers' questions. And then the verse also says that this should be done from a good character. That this should be done with gentleness and respect. Shouldn't be done through arrogance or a sense of being a know-it-all because that will certainly dissuade people from listening to what we have to say. So we want to be submitted to Christ, filled with the Spirit, be gentle, be humble, and really be as smart and be as knowledgeable as we can about these subjects because this is God's mandate to us to take the truth to the world.

Now some people might not realize that Jesus Himself was an apologist and really a philosopher. And I've written about this in one of my books called *On Jesus*. If you follow Jesus around in the gospels, you'll see that He was often involved with arguments, with disputes, with the religious leaders of the day, with other

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people. And that He's never outargued. He's never flummoxed or puzzled by anybody's questions. So when He is in disputes, like the relationship of Israel to Roman authority in Matthew 22, the idea was that, well you either have to side with Rome and be a traitor to God or overthrow Rome through a revolution.

And so they tell Him, should we pay taxes? They ask Him, pay taxes to Caesar or not? And He says, show me the coin. Whose inscription is on it? And then He follows up by saying, render to God, the things that are God's, and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Now I go into this in more detail in *On Jesus*, but it's really a master stroke of wisdom and knowledge because they thought they had Him backed into a corner where He had to either deny God or advocate a bloody revolution. And He's basically saying, God is above Caesar, but Caesar has his place. So this is simply one demonstration of the wisdom and knowledge of Christ. And He's also, in Matthew 22 asked a question about marriage and the afterlife. If a woman has seven husbands and they all die, who is she married to in the afterlife? And they thought they had Him, that if He believes in a resurrected afterlife, which He did, that He would be in a position where she'd have to be married to all of them or you couldn't decide which one of them it was. And He says, well, you misunderstood. You don't have the giving of marriage in the afterlife, so you made a mistake. You can believe in both the afterlife and in the legitimacy of the laws that relate to marriage here on earth.

So that was another master stroke of wisdom and knowledge. And Jesus Himself famously was asked, what is the greatest commandment? And He said, you shall love the Lord your God with your heart, soul strength and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Now notice He said heart, soul, strength and mind. So the entirety of our being should be dedicated to Christ and His cause to the kingdom, to the church.

The apostle Paul was also a masterful apologist. Of course, theologian, evangelist, church planter, counselor, so many things. But philosophers such as myself, love to go to Acts 17, where Paul is dealing with the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. And he's brought to a very prestigious meeting called the Areopagus and he addresses the crowd. And I don't have time to go into that here, but you see that he understood their philosophy. He was tenacious at continuing to bring the message to anyone he could, even though he had some trouble with the reception of the message previous to that. And he was able to declare the

difference between Christianity and their worldview. He gave an argument against idolatry, and he called people to repent. And some people say, well, Paul failed here because we don't have a letter to the church in Athens. But you can say that if you have a group of philosophers and even a few of them come to Christ after you've given a talk, you're a success, but his talk was quite masterful and it has been a model for many apologists ever since, myself included.

Now, how exactly should we defend the Christian perspective? What is our method? We should defend what the Bible teaches when it's attacked in various ways. So we need to have a good theology. Simply meaning, do we know what the Bible teaches? We don't want to defend something the Bible does not teach. So we need to be students of Scripture; that's necessary. So we want to give logical arguments, we want to give evidence in support of the Christian worldview, and I'll talk more about this idea of worldview in another lecture.

So this involves some critical thinking and some philosophy, and we shouldn't be afraid of that word "philosophy" because Paul says we should not be taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, that's in Colossians 2:8. But he himself engaged the philosophers, obviously in Matthew, rather in Acts 17, and Jesus was a philosopher. So don't be afraid of philosophy, be afraid of false and deceptive philosophy that is based merely on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ.

Now we can talk about apologetics in two basic categories, constructive apologetics, and negative apologetics. They overlap. Constructive apologetics concerns giving positive arguments for the existence of God, from nature, the design of the world, the creation of the world. We give constructive arguments that the New Testament has been preserved through history, through transmission, that it was written by credible authors and so on. We present Christ, His claims, His credentials, His achievements. So we are constructively building a case.

Now the other kind of apologetics is negative apologetics, and this concerns refuting non-Christian worldviews. So if we look at atheism, we could say, well, atheism gives us a meaningless world. And we know life has some meaning. We know love is better than hate and so on. So there's something wrong with the atheist worldview. We want to critique it. Same would go for pantheism,

that everything is divine, for polytheism, that there are many gods. So we do constructive and negative apologetics depending on what kind of a situation that we're in.

Now, let me talk a bit about what's called apologetic method. Apologists talk a lot about this and there are disputes among apologists. I'm simply going to rule out one approach, which is actually not apologetics at all and give you my approach. There is a perspective on faith and reason called fideism, which means we can't give reasons for what we believe. We simply believe. You could just call this faith-ism. So you never question, you never explore. Now that's just not a biblical view because we find people in Scripture that come to Jesus with questions.

One man came to Him and said, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. And Jesus, this is in Mark 9, Jesus did not condemn the man, but He built up his faith. So we do have good and sufficient reasons as I've said. Now, the approach that I use is called the cumulative case method. So if we're talking about Christianity, we're talking about claims about the origin of the world, the nature of the world, about history, about the human condition, about Jesus. So if we're considering, let's say, does God exist, we look at science primarily, we look at philosophical arguments.

When we talk about the person of Jesus, we don't ignore science by any means, but we're really concerned with history and how documents are preserved through the centuries. So we have different ways in to the truth and we build a case that is multi-faceted. And that's why I wrote a very big book. And my lectures really come out of this book called, *Christian Apologetics*. And my students call it the door stop because it's rather heavy; it can be used for door stop. Also for weight lifting. So I am giving you just a summary of what I say in this book. So it is a overall cumulative case. Think of bringing various witnesses into a courtroom to consider whether someone is guilty or innocent.

So you may have an eyewitness, you may have a character witness, an expert witness from outside. You could have forensic evidence. So you have an overall case that Christianity is true and reasonable and makes more sense of the world than any other religion or philosophy. So what we want to show, basically three things.

That Christianity is internally consistent, that its basic claims do not contradict each other. Secondly, that it is factually accurate,

meaning where the Bible touches humanity in the cosmos, it gets it right. So we're not spinning stories, we're not telling amusing or interesting tales, but we're speaking of historical truth. And then thirdly, we want to show that Christianity is what we could call existentially viable and meaningful. It gives a rational basis for living. It gives us a hope based on reality. We don't have to deny anything deeply human about ourselves to follow Christ and to have a biblical worldview.

So I go into more detail about how we do apologetics in *Christian Apologetics*, but essentially, we make a positive case, we challenge other perspectives logically and evidentially. And then we try to show that Christianity makes sense of the world, it makes sense of human experience and that it fits the facts. We don't have to take any kind of blind leap of faith to be Christians.

What is Truth?

In our first lecture, we talked about the nature of apologetics. We are defending Christianity as objectively true, compellingly rational, and pertinent to the whole of life. We talked about the biblical basis for apologetics to further the mission of God. And we talked a little bit about apologetic method, that we have a variety of arguments that show that the Christian perspective makes more sense of the world and gives more hope than any other perspective.

Now on this lecture, I'd like to talk about the question of truth for doing apologetics. And I'd like to start with a passage from Jesus in John 8, "As Jesus spoke these things, many believed in him. So he said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" So when we defend the truth of Christianity, we have to know what we mean by truth. And we have to be aware of the attacks on the idea of truth. And then also realize that this is a truth that sets people free from bondage to sin, sets people free from futility and hopelessness.

So whenever we defend Christianity, we are defending a set of ideas, but we're also inviting someone into a new way of life. We are inviting them into eternal life, an eternal fellowship with Christ and all the redeemed, but we should always keep that at the forefront of our thinking. This is serious and this is not merely a defense of certain propositions, but an encouragement and an

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- John 8:30-32

Post Truth, Oxford Definition:

"Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

invitation into a new life that is being born again.

So we need to talk about the concept of truth. What is truth? Now in 2016, the Oxford Dictionary said that the word of the year was "post-truth," and their definition was, "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." So this has to do with propaganda and manipulation, which often comes through sound bites, slogans and images. Now, of course, Christians should have nothing to do with this approach since it is the truth of Jesus that sets us free. Or we might consider the older postmodern view of truth, where truth depends on individuals or on cultures, not on the way the world is. So I can have a truth and you could have a different truth.

Now that's not what we are going to defend, obviously, because if we have a message, it's a message to everyone that addresses everyone. And the first word of the gospel of course is "repentance." Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." That's in Matthew 4. So if we are just fine with our own views of truth and our own truths then Jesus couldn't have said "repent" because that is, change your life, experience metanoia, radical change of your understanding of reality in light of what I am and in light of what I am teaching.

Now, Christianity has a particular view of truth. And by the way, I should say, if you're interested, I wrote a book on postmodernism and the postmodernist view of truth about twenty years ago called *Truth Decay*. Consider this verse, this is from 1 Corinthians 15, I have several verses.

"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in our sins...But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."
- 1 Corinthians 15:14, 15, 17, 20

Paul says, after explaining the gospel, "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead [. . .] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins [. . .] But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." That's 1 Corinthians 15 verses 14, 15, 17, and 20. So obviously for the apostle Paul, he's a pretty good authority on the matter, faith should be based on the facts of history.

Paul didn't say, well, we have this idea of a savior, and it gives our community a sense of meaning. And we can invite people into our community to learn our language and learn our rituals. Well, yes,

we are a community of faith if we trust Christ, but only because Christ is who He said He was and only because He died for our sins to atone for our sins against God and because He rose again from the dead.

So believing something doesn't make it so, doesn't make it true. Even if everyone in a culture believes something that's false, it doesn't make it true. If everyone somehow believed tomorrow that the world was flat, it would still be round. So when we talk about the Christian claims, we're talking about a certain view of truth that says, we want to agree with the facts.

We want to recognize what's out there and we want to hold true beliefs. Pascal, one of my favorite philosophers, seventeenth century French philosopher, said, "Truth is so obscure in these days, and lies so well established, that unless we love the truth, we shall never know it." So the orientation of our being has to be right. We need to have a kind of integrity before reality. Christian, non-Christian, everyone. That is, are we willing to be shown wrong if we're believing something that's false?

Are we willing to be corrected if we're thinking or reasoning in any kind of irrational way, or if we've left out important considerations in our deepest beliefs? And I think here about the lament of the great prophet, Isaiah who said, "So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter." That's Isaiah 59:14. And we really face a similar situation today in our post-truth and postmodern kind of situation. So let me talk a bit more about the postmodern conception of truth. Now postmodernism is a diverse, broad philosophy. I'm just trying to distill some basic ideas.

The claim is that truth is not something that is objective. So truth is relative to individuals and to communities, to contexts. So one culture can define reality in one way and then have various ways of speaking about it and various practices. And then another community, let's say in another continent, defines reality very differently, things like religious beliefs, sexual mores, the nature of civil government and so on. And we can't really get to the truth of the matter because truth really is relative to, and it depends on individuals or different contexts.

Now, it's certainly true that if you look at the history of philosophy or if you look at various cultures, people hold various beliefs about whether or not there is a God, what the good life is, the

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- Blaise Pascal

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- Isaiah 59:14

relationship of civil authority to personal responsibility. Sure, we have a plurality of viewpoints, but a plurality of viewpoints doesn't mean that all of them are equally legitimate. We can make mistakes about the nature of the cosmos. You can think that the sun revolves around the earth and a whole culture could believe that, many did for thousands of years, but it's still not true. So we really want to look into the truth of the matter, in any particular claim.

Now, let me say that in the United States and some other countries, we have freedom of speech, freedom of religion, but you also have the freedom to believe something that's wrong. You have the right to be wrong. So nothing I'm going to say about the objective absolute universal truth of Christianity is going to try to deny anybody's right with respect to freedom of religion or freedom of speech, but we've got to come down to more than just what is permissible to believe, let's consider what is true and reasonable and ought to be believed and ought to be followed.

So let me make a brief case against the postmodernist view of truth. This view often refutes itself, destroys itself. So let me give you four statements and show how they destroy themselves. And all four of these statements are said by postmodernists in one way or the other, if it's someone like Derrida or Foucault or Lyotard or Richard Rorty, just to name four leading figures. One would be the claim that all truth is relative, relative to the individual, to the society.

Now you'll notice though, that that statement, "all truth is relative," is not a relative statement because it has the word "all." So it's a universal absolute statement. You're making a universal absolute statement that all truth is relative. And I hope you can see that as a contradiction. So contradiction is a necessary test for truth. If you believe anything that contradicts itself, or if you believe something and reality contradicts it, then it cannot be true. Doesn't matter how many people hold it, doesn't matter how passionate you are about it, doesn't matter how many ads you take out about it.

If you believe something that is contradictory, it cannot be true, and a virtuous person doesn't want to contradict themselves. Here's another one even more direct, there are no absolutes. Nothing is absolutely true for anything, for metaphysics, for morality. Now, obviously you're denying what you're affirming. There are no absolutes. It's not saying there are some, but there are none. But

1. All truth is relative

2. There are no absolutes

3. There is no universal truth

the statement itself is an absolute statement. So once again, it contradicts itself. Here's another one, there is no universal truth, truths are only particular and individual. Now, obviously that is a universal claim that there is no universal truth, contradicts itself, cannot possibly be true. Now here's one that's a little trickier, there are no propositions.

4. There are no propositions

Now a proposition is what an affirmative statement affirms. So if I say, Jesus is Lord, I'm making the proposition that He, in fact, is the Lord of the universe. And you could state that in English, in French, Swahili, but you have the same proposition, Jesus is Lord. Now postmodernists don't like propositions because you can say the same proposition in various languages and be affirming the same thing, and postmodernists want to relativize and contextualize everything to cultures and to various people groups. But when you say there are no propositions, you could say that in French, you could say that in English, you could say that in Swahili.

When you say there are no propositions, you're stating a proposition and propositions are intrinsic to any proper understanding of truth. Now there's another way to refute this view of truth, this basic postmodern view, and that is by showing counter examples of things that we take to be universal and objective truths. So let's consider individual character. We'd say that a moral and political reformer like Martin Luther King is a better person than Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin. And if you want to say, well, that's just your perspective. Say, well, wait a minute, isn't seeking justice through love better than killing people, trying to commit genocide or destroying all the opponents to Marxism in the case of Joseph Stalin? So we make that case, or we say it's better to pursue love and reconciliation than hatred and bitterness. Now, when we say that, yes, it's coming from our lives, our perspective, but we're claiming something that is, in fact, objectively, absolutely, universally true.

So when people say all truth is relative, there are no absolutes, there is no universal truth, et cetera, we can give what are called counter examples. So if you say that all swans are white, all you need to refute that is one counter example, there's a black swan. So if you say everything is relative, everything is contextual, everything is a matter of perspective. All I need to do is give one counter example, but we have a lot of them. So let's consider really briefly the laws of logic.

The law of identity simply says that something is what it is, and it can't be what it is not. Now that's not a matter of opinion. You can't go to some other country and they say, well, no, we believe something could be exactly what it is and the opposite and still be what it is. Well, people don't think like that because it's really unthinkable. Or you think of a basic argument forms like, if P then Q. P, therefore Q. These are not just ideas that people came up with that may or may not be true, or just are relative to communities, these have to do with the truths of reason.

So the basic idea that I'm looking at here is the idea of antithesis. If something is true, the opposite cannot be true. So I cannot be sixty-three years old right now and also fifty-five years old. That's not a matter of opinion. That's not consensual, perspectival. It's just the way things are. So I haven't gone into it, but I go into it more in my book. But we have the law of identity, the law of noncontradiction, the law of excluded middle, and the law of bivalence. And they all trade on this idea that opposite claims cannot both be true. They do this in one way or the other.

Or we could simply cite cases of moral evil. I talked about the evil of Hitler, as opposed to the goodness of the mission of Martin Luther King, but let's take something that's quite prevalent around the world. Female genital mutilation. This has no positive benefits. It is sadistic. It is an attack on women's femininity, on their bodies, and there's no possible justification.

So this is not just a matter of being a white male or a female Asian, this is the way the world is. So if someone says everything dissolves into this kind of fluid, liquid environment where things change, and we have no rudder and we have no anchor, you could just ask them, do you think female genital mutilation is always wrong? They're probably going to say yes, I do think it is wrong. And if they do, then they can't hold this postmodernist view of truth.

We know that things like torture, sadistic torture are wrong, terrorist attacks against innocent civilians are wrong, human trafficking is wrong. So if we've critiqued and I think we've critiqued it sufficiently, this general postmodern view of truth, then let's talk about the biblical view of truth and let's go into some philosophical elaboration on this. The claim that I'm defending is called the correspondence view of truth, the Bible assumes it. It has really been the backbone in the history of philosophy. Aristotle held it, Plato, Descartes, just about everybody, not

everybody. So let's go back to 1 Corinthians 15:17. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." So Paul is assuming this correspondence view. If you believe that Christ rose from the dead and He did not, then you're wrong. And in fact, you are wrong in a way that shows you are a deceiver and you're also deceived.

So a true statement corresponds or matches reality and false statements do not. Very straightforward and simple. If we think about this all the time, you get pulled over by a policeman and he says, you're going 70 in a 55 zone. And you say, I couldn't because my speedometer said 55. So you've got a debate going and you can't both be right. It's very simple. You go to a doctor and he says, you have diabetes. And you either do or you don't, and you want a competent authority to tell you. You don't say, well, I don't feel like I have diabetes and my friends don't want me to have diabetes, so I don't have it. It's all consensual and a matter of opinion. No, it isn't. Now, if I could just unpack this a little bit more in terms of the correspondence view of truth. You have truth bearers, and you have truth makers. So a truth bearer is simply a statement. If I say, Jesus is Lord, Jesus rose from the dead or something more pedestrian, like I'm a white male of Dutch and Italian ancestry. Those are truth claims. You're staking out part of reality through your statement.

Now for something to be truly true, you need what's called a truth maker. So the truth maker that I am of Dutch and Italian descent is that my father was half Dutch, my mother was 100 percent Italian. That's what makes the statement true. So this has to do with the objective facts that make a statement true. Or if there aren't the corresponding facts, the statement is false. So if I say that I am of Irish ancestry, well, it's simply not the case, at least as far back as I can understand it. And of course, this relates to very commonsensical things, like mathematics, 7 plus 5 is 12. That's not a matter of consensus or opinion. And that statement is true because that's the way things are.

So truth makers are not a matter of personal conviction or group agreement, it's correspondence to reality that makes a statement true. This is true for claims in history. Did Christ rise from the dead? Did Caesar cross the Rubicon? It has to do with matters of science. Can you account for who we are on Darwinism? I'll argue later, you cannot. And this correspondence view of truth certainly relates to specifically religious claims. It relates to any factual claim. So someone might want to say, oh, why couldn't

Buddhism and Christianity both be true? And I'll come back to this later. Well, it has to do with the logic of truth claims.

So Buddhists claim that Buddha was enlightened and that he had the dharma, the teaching. But what you see is that his understanding of reality was very different from that of Jesus. Now Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, known as the Buddha. Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus. Jesus believed there was one true creator God, Buddha either didn't believe in God or was agnostic about it. Jesus said our problem was sin before God, Buddha said our problem was ignorance and grasping and craving and we need to let go of that. So you could not say, and be logical and be factual, that both Buddhism and Christianity are true.

Now, they both could be false if the teachings of Buddha and Jesus are both false and there's something else that's true, let's say Islam. So I'm just talking about the logic of truth claims here. But a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to reality. Now this is not some esoteric matter of academic philosophy, because if I'm sharing the gospel with someone and they say, great, if that gives your life meaning and your Christian friends are awesome, then terrific. But I kind of mix Buddhism and Daoism, so that's all fine.

You see they're viewing religious convictions more in terms of like a super hobby, not something that is true to reality or false to reality. So we need to say, okay, well you found some meaning in Buddhism and Daoism and I find tremendous meaning in Christ and the church, but you know, if what Christ taught is true, then a lot of what you're believing is not true. And don't we want to line up with reality? So when we're talking about the logic of truth claims, especially in Christian apologetics, we want to move it out of the realm of personal taste or preference and into the realm of what is the truth of reality. So maybe I like vanilla ice cream best and you like strawberry ice cream best. There's really no big philosophical argument to be made there, it's a matter of preference. But if we're talking about worldviews and the nature of reality, then we've got to talk about correspondence to reality, we have to talk about truth versus falsity, and we have to affirm that contradictory ideas cannot both be true. So we're really setting the table here to defending the Christian worldview.

We've defended apologetics, and I've defended a certain view of truth. And then we will look now at what is the Christian

worldview? What is it that we, in fact, defend?

Worldview

Well, in this session, we're going to talk about what apologetics defends and one way of understanding this is that we defend as true and rational and pertinent, the Christian worldview. So I need to talk a bit about what we mean by worldview and what specifically is the Christian worldview.

So we have to ask ourselves, how do we summarize what we believe? So you might be talking to an unbeliever and they have certain views of Christianity and those views may be wrong. So we need to know what the Bible teaches to present what Christianity actually is. And because so much of apologetics deals with philosophy and argumentation, it's good to be able to summarize Christianity in a philosophically approachable kind of way. And that's what worldviews do. Now I want to make it very clear that the way I'm going to cash out the notion of a worldview is not supposed to substitute for the great creeds and confessions of the church.

We still, I think, need to understand and even recite the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed. This is not meant, worldview is not meant to replace systematic theology or biblical theology. In fact, the idea of a worldview really depends on a theology. But a worldview is kind of a philosophical synopsis of a particular perspective. So you could talk about the worldview of Islam, of Buddhism, of Christianity, the various kinds of worldviews that atheists have, the worldview of skepticism and so on. So a short definition of a worldview—and this should apply to any belief system, not just Christianity—is that it is a set of assumptions about the basic makeup of the world. And many of us really cut our teeth on the whole idea of worldview and worldview evaluation through the work of James Sire in his excellent book, *The Universe Next Door*. And that's really the essence of his understanding of worldview until he started qualifying it and making it so large. But I'm going to give you this basic idea that a worldview is a set of assumptions about the basic makeup of the world.

Now, this could be a perspective where the world is just the physical universe. That's a materialistic worldview, an atheist worldview, or your worldview, your sense of the world, or reality can also involve God and angels and miracles and resurrections and so on.

What is a Worldview?

A. A set of assumptions about the basic makeup of the world

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- A. A set of assumptions about the basic makeup of the world
- B. A philosophy of life, deepest values and understanding of existence

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- B. A philosophy of life, deepest values and understanding of existence
- C. All worldviews cannot be true, given the objectivity of truth

So when I say “world,” I mean your understanding of existence. So it’s a philosophy of life. It has to do with your deepest values and your understandings of existence. Now, given what we said in earlier lectures, it’s pretty obvious that all worldviews cannot be true. So to be an intellectually responsible person, I think we should consider these worldview questions, like, is there a God, do I have a soul, is there an afterlife, what is the good life, and so on.

What is the meaning of ethics? And then try to pursue the truth of the matter through reason. And to simply say, well, people believe different things. The old sixties expression was “different strokes for different folks” or “whatever floats your boat,” that kind of idea, is really a kind of intellectual laziness. In fact, there’s a term for this called “acedia,” it’s where you don’t care about the most important things. But we ought to care about whether our beliefs are true or false, whether we can support what we believe with arguments and evidence. And once we start to shake down and try to figure out, well, what are my core commitments about reality, we’re in this realm of worldview. Now I’m just describing what a worldview is, and I’ll go into more detail in a minute. I’m not saying that people form their worldviews in an entirely logical way. So someone might have been really burned by an evangelical church when they were younger. And they said, I want nothing to do with this. And so I’m just a skeptic, I don’t have any positive beliefs about reality. I just question everything, but I know I don’t want to look into Christianity. Alright, there’s a worldview. Now, is it a well-established, well-reasoned worldview? No, it isn’t. It could be challenged, and it should be challenged. So the idea of a worldview is a way of distilling your most foundational or core beliefs in intellectual terms. But it doesn’t mean that you have reached your conclusions through a sound intellectual process. And moreover, someone’s worldview may be inconsistent.

For thirty years now I’ve had my students in Christian Apologetics interview a non-Christian and ask them about their basic worldview, their basic perspective on life. And the students often find that people hold contradictory beliefs. And some of the people who are interviewed are surprised. They didn’t even know they held contradictory beliefs until the student gently helped them to see that. And I teach my students to be gentle, to show respect to the people they’re interviewing.

Now, what we do in apologetics is defend the Christian worldview is the most rational of the options and the one that is worth

believing. Now you might be in a setting where someone just asks you, what's your basic philosophy of life, and you could give them a summary of it and try to defend and commend Christianity, maybe even invite that person to confess Christ as Lord. But often what we do is we don't deal with worldviews as a whole. Someone may challenge a particular aspect of our worldview, like that Jesus rose from the dead. So we'd say, well, I think there are good reasons to believe in God, from science and from philosophy, so God could raise someone from the dead. Now, the question is historical.

Do we have solid evidence that Jesus did rise from the dead and existential evidence that He changes people's lives through His resurrected reality? So someone is not saying, okay, give me your worldview, they're particularizing it to Jesus. But even when you answer the question about Jesus, you have to put it in a worldview kind of framework.

Now let me emphasize that all religions and all philosophies have worldview commitments. Some people want to make religion into something that really is not very philosophical. It's a matter of tradition and culture and personal experience. And the idea of making truth claims about reality, really doesn't factor into religion. It may factor into technology, it may factor into the questions of history, but religion is not that kind of thing.

Technically, this is called a non-realist view of religion. I'll simply say that that's not true. Study the history of religions. You look at Islam, Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last and final prophet, there is no God but Allah. They're not saying these are beliefs that form a community, but we're not claiming they're objectively true.

When people proclaim the gospel and people were baptized, the confession in the early church was Jesus is Lord. Not, I find Jesus to be meaningful, but I'm not worried whether or not He rose from the dead or whether or not His death paid the penalty for my sin.

So all religions try to claim truth. The issue is whether or not they are successful in doing that, whether the core claims of any religion or philosophy are in fact true. Do we have reasons to believe one worldview over another?

Now there's certainly more to Christianity than putting it as a worldview. We have the whole history of the Christian movement. We have the development of Christian theology. We

have the worship of God and the study of liturgy, of the symbols for Christianity, the cross and so on. We have the dimension of religious experience. Think of Isaiah's experience of God as high and holy and lifted up, recorded in Isaiah 6, or Pascal's night of fire. When he came to terms with God and was so overwhelmed by the presence of God. So the reason why I'm giving this mini apologetic for worldview is that I'm an old guy. And when I was coming up as a philosopher, an apologist, we had to tell everybody about worldview and a lot of people didn't know what it was, but through the teaching of Jim Sire and Francis Schaeffer and others, worldview got on the map for evangelicals. And then I'd say in the last five to ten years, some people have started to criticize it and say, well, there's so much more to Christianity than worldview, or maybe we shouldn't even use the correspondence view of truth.

So what I'm doing as I'm explaining worldview, is giving a miniature apologetic for it as well by making these qualifications. So I'm not giving a reductionist view that the way you really follow Christ is just sit around and develop your worldview all the time. You don't worship, you don't confess your sins. You don't develop your theology beyond the basic worldview questions. I'm not saying that at all. Well, let's talk about what the Christian worldview actually is. So we're talking about a set of self-consistent statements about the nature of reality, a list of truth claims. There are a number of ways of presenting this. I will give you several.

First of all, we could start with our basis for authority about belief. Now for Muslims, that would be the Quran. For Christians, it is certainly the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. So we believe that what the Bible teaches is true, that's pretty straightforward, and that God has inspired the writers of Scripture to say what He wanted them to say to whatever they speak to. And this view is called confluent inspiration. And I want to work on this a little bit because sometimes people have a wrong view of the Bible that keeps them from being Christians.

They'll say things like, the Bible is written by human beings not by God, therefore your claim that its God's word is false. I had someone tell me this a few years ago in a discussion. And I said, well, wait a minute. Yes, human beings wrote it. But the claim is that they were carried along, they were inspired by God to write what He wanted them to write. So God is not going to create a book out of nothing and then throw it down at human beings.

Catagories of Christian Worldview:

1. Source of authority: Bible

Categories of Christian Worldview:

1. Source of authority: Bible
2. Ultimate reality: Triune God

He's a God of history and a God who made people in His own image and a God who communicates, communicates through language, whether spoken or written. So our view that the Bible is the final authority and is the inspired word of God does not somehow take out the human element. But we should derive our worldview from what the Bible teaches. So what does the Bible teach? We could ask this question.

What is the ultimate reality or the most important thing in existence? So the Bible teaches that this, in fact, is God, the creator and designer of the universe, the uncreated, self-existent one. And God is triune. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God in three persons, not three equals one, but three in one. God is eternal. He has no beginning and no end. He is the support of His own existence. This is called self-existence. He doesn't depend on anything outside of Himself to exist.

As Francis Schaeffer used to say that God is infinite and personal, meaning He is unlimited in His goodness and power, infinite. But He is not some kind of abstract principle or substance, He is a personal being. So when God reveals Himself to Moses in Exodus chapter three, He reveals Himself by saying, I Am who I Am. So that's the statement of a personal being, a statement of identity—I Am. And this being speaks. So this being has a mind and can communicate to others, not the impersonal, immoral god of much of Eastern religion. God is holy and just and loving.

So God is not corrupted by sin. He's the source of all goodness and righteousness. John tells us that God is love. God has always been in a loving relationship with Himself, with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And Jesus told us that God so loved the world that He sent His Son, that whoever believes on Him might not perish but have everlasting life. But God is also just, so He's the backbone of morality. His very character defines what is good and right, and true and beautiful. So obviously we need to be redeemed through the love of God, through the work of Christ.

God is also transcendent and imminent. That means that He is other than we are, He is uncreated. He is eternal, He is not to be identified with any finite thing. This is why idolatry is wrong and actually harmful to the idolater. And God is incarnation. Meaning the Word, the Logos of John 1, became flesh and dwelt among us. So God is not a God who is far away and unapproachable, really like the god of Islam or deism, but God has come near as Emmanuel. And He's come near, not merely to reveal who He is in human

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1. Source of authority: Bible
2. Ultimate reality: Triune God
3. Human beings

Categories of Christian Worldview:

1. Source of authority: Bible
2. Ultimate reality: Triune God
3. Human beings
4. Salvation: From God, for Us

Categories of Christian Worldview:

1. Source of authority: Bible
2. Ultimate reality: Triune God
3. Human beings
4. Salvation: From God, for Us
5. Source of morality: God's Character

form, but to redeem human beings who have fallen short of His glory through His life and His death and His resurrection, more about that later. So we have the ultimate reality, is the infinite, personal, triune, incarnational God.

Who are human beings? Well, Scripture gives this tremendous affirmation that we are made in the image and likeness of God. So we are limited and finite, but we find our origin in the being and in the design of God. So we are relational beings. God is relational, God being three in one. We are rational beings. We need rationality to do what God called us to do, that is to have dominion over creation, to cultivate it. And we are creative beings. We're creative in our language, in our architecture and various forms of art and this all models God, so to speak. God is relational. As an infinite personal being, we are relational as finite personal beings. God is an infinitely, an infinite and personal rational being; we are rational, but we are finite. And so it goes.

But of course, the Bible teaches in Genesis 3, and this is elaborated on much in Romans 3, that sin has entered the world, that we are fallen human beings. That human beings rebelled against God. They listen to the voice of deception. And so now we live in a world east of Eden, or as the book of Ecclesiastes puts it, the world under the sun, which is full of heartbreak and disappointment. And the essential problem is this relational break between a holy and just God and His creatures who have turned against Him, who have sinned and fallen short of His glory. So what can be done about this? We've talked about the ultimate reality, the nature of the human, made in God's image, then the problem of humans, the fall, what can be done. Well, Christ comes from God as God to live a perfect life, to live the life we could not live and to pay the penalty for our sin and to free us from the bondage of Satan and to engraft us into the body of Christ.

Now this is an element of apologetics that is not sufficiently emphasized. If we're going to argue that God is real, Christ is Lord, we should follow Christ, then we follow Christ, not as individuals who are apart from other Christians, but we are rather constitutive, integral parts of the body of Christ. So we should worship together, minister to one another, call people into our community, celebrate the reality of Christ through communion and worship and so on.

Another category is the source of morality. God's character is the very source of morality, His eternally stable, good character. And

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1. Source of authority: Bible
2. Ultimate reality: Triuse God
3. Human beings
4. Salvation: From God, for Us
5. Source of morality: God's Character
6. History and the afterlife

He makes this known to human beings through our conscience, whether you've ever had any exposure to the Bible or not. You see that in Romans 2:14–15, that the work of the law is written on the human heart. And so people have a sense of right and wrong, wherever they are. And of course, we have the more specific injunctions and elaborations on what is good in the holy Scripture. So God is the source of authority, He's the source of morality. And another category would be of worldview, history, and the afterlife.

So unlike Eastern worldviews, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism and Daoism, history has meaning and purpose. We don't flee from it into some kind of mystical experience apart from the world or leave the world behind. But God created the world, the space-time universe, He spoke into it, He communicated to our first parents. He sent His prophets. The kingdom of God is working out through history. So history matters. And with Jesus, the kingdom of God comes with new power and new vivacity. And the message of the kingdom is to be made known throughout the world so people should come to Christ on His terms and become members of His body, part of His church. And that we are to be, as Jesus said, the salt and light of the world. But Christianity is not only a "this worldly" religion—this world counts, reconciliation between people counts, beauty counts, goodness counts. Working for justice is an important thing to do, but it's also otherworldly because reality is not exhausted by what we can see and taste and touch and smell and so on. There is an invisible reality of God and angels and demons. And moreover, there is a world to come where God will judge righteously and restore and purge the universe. So Christianity is this amazing combination of the "this worldly"—God created it and it was good. God sent His Son into the world as a full-fledged human being. It is "this worldly," the kingdom of God has played out in history, but there is more than the here and now, there's more than the space-time world. So it's also other worldly. And I don't think any other worldview has that kind of a combination. Another way of talking about worldview is more in story form. And that is you can talk about creation, fall, redemption and restoration.

So God created a good world by His very Word. He said over and over, it was good. Then He says, after creating humans, it was very good. But as I mentioned, humans fell into sin. That's the second act of the play, so to speak, but God pursues human beings. He sends prophets. He eventually sends the Messiah in order that people would be reconciled to God, people would be redeemed and have a new and good life. And then finally is the consummation

where after the second coming of Christ, all things are made good, evil is punished, the good is restored. And we live in what Scripture calls, the new heavens and the new earth.

So you could talk about worldview in terms of answering certain questions by giving statements, or you could do it more in a story form. But really they both overlap. They overlap in terms of propositions made about the story and the story involves proposition. So it's a both/and. It's not a propositional view or a story view, a narrational view. It's both together. And as we defend the Christian worldview, we need to really emphasize that we're not only defending something as true and reasonable, we are inviting people into a new way of life, a new way of knowing one's self, knowing God, knowing others. Jesus said, you must be born again. And the truth will set you free. So we have freedom in Christ. Let me just name four. If we follow Christ, if we have a biblical worldview, if we are born again, then we can be freed significantly from self-deception. We can admit that, yes, we are creatures of God, but we are fallen, and we can confess our sins before God and know that we are forgiven. So we don't have to deceive ourselves.

Secondly, we can be freed significantly from the tyranny of self, that is putting oneself at the center. We can put Christ at the center and serve Him and find our meaning and value and significance in our service to Christ and others, not in building up our own name, our own reputation. We can be freed from self-dependence. We can depend on Christ moment by moment to bring out the best in us and to use the gifts that He has given us. And ultimately we are freed from the fear of death. Christ has overcome death through His own death and resurrection, so we can have hope in the face of death. And I want to emphasize that defending the Christian worldview as objectively true, compellingly rational, and pertinent is a great adventure. And let me quote one of my heroes, Francis Schaeffer. "When we understand our calling, it is not only true, but beautiful—and it should be exciting. It is hard to understand how an orthodox, evangelical, Bible-believing Christian can fail to be excited. The answers in the realm of the intellect should make us overwhelmingly excited. But more than this, we are returned to a personal relationship with the God who is there. If we are unexcited Christians, we should go back and see what is wrong."

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