

What is Street Apologetics?

The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word "apologia," pronounced, "ap-ol-og-ee'-ah." It means, "a verbal defense" or "speech in defense."

It is used eight times in the New Testament, but it is the last verse that is most commonly associated with Christian apologetics (1 Pet. 3:15):

- Acts 22:1
- 1 Cor. 9:3
- Phil. 1:7
- 2 Tim. 4:16
- Acts 25:16
- 2 Cor. 7:11
- Phil. 1:17
- 1 Pet. 3:15

But in your hearts set apart 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, (1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

Therefore, Christian apologetics is that branch of Christianity that deals with answering any and all critics who oppose or question the revelation of God in Christ and the Bible. It encompasses a wide variety of subjects such as history, philosophy, biology, mathematics, evolution, and logic, but it can also consist of simply giving an answer to a question about Jesus or a Bible passage. The latter is by far the most common.

The goal is always to lead someone to Jesus Christ and so the use of apologetics is to be prepared and able to recall information when witnessing on the streets. It is used for pre-evangelism – something that you can use to attract someone to Jesus and open the way for the gospel to be presented. Pre-evangelism can involve (a) refuting false objections to Christianity, (b) refuting non-Christian world views, (c) answering challenges to orthodox biblical Christianity, and (d) clarifying the gospels and Christian doctrines.

When used properly, apologetics will ...

- ... arrive at the gospel message as soon as possible.
- ... display sensitivity and compassion while presenting evidence and arguments.
- ... involve yielding to the Holy Spirit regarding when and how to share the gospel and what approach to use.
- ... rely upon prayers made before, during, and after every meeting.

When used improperly, apologetics will ...

- ... raise questions from people which they already didn't have.
- ... lead someone away from Christ due to pridefully wanting to "win" an argument.
- ... allow the conversation to become a debate on minor issues or doctrine instead of the gospel and more essential doctrines.

Scriptures for Apologetics and Evangelism

We are to defend the truth of Christianity:

1 Peter 3:15 ... But in your hearts set apart 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

We are to refute false teachings and share the truth:

Jude 3b-4 ... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

We are to make disciples and fulfill the "Great Commission":

Matt 28:18-20 ... Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We are empowered for this work by the Holy Spirit:

Acts 1:8 ... But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We are to recognize the power of the Gospel:

Romans 1:16 ... I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

We are to recognize the need for prayer as we evangelize:

Ephesians 6:12 ... For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Preparation for Witnessing

- A) A Surrendered Life. The effectiveness of witnessing is dependent upon daily time spent in the Word of God, time in prayer, and our attitude of submission to the Lord. All of these require us to put aside our busy schedules and give priority to something else – to God. This is also supported by praying for the Holy Spirit to lead us, empower us, and to convict hearts.
- B) Developing a Relationship. It is important to develop a relationship with someone in order to earn the right to share the gospel with him. A helpful memory tool to use in developing relationships is the acrostic C.P.R. Just as the C.P.R. Procedure is used to resuscitate someone and to restore his breathing, likewise we can use the C.P.R. technique to prepare someone to hear the life-giving message of the gospel.

C – Common Ground

P – Portion of Testimony

R – Request Permission to Share

Common Ground – One way to find common ground with someone is to ask about his religious background, so you can gain insights regarding any spiritual involvement and then customize your conversation. For example, if someone thinks he is a “good enough” person to go to heaven, you could begin by sharing that you also believed that before you heard the gospel message.

Portion of Testimony – Sharing a portion of your testimony can generate interest in the subject of God and can encourage the person to share something about his own life. It is a way to identify with him personally. For example, you could share one major change in your life since you came to have a personal relationship with God.

Requesting Permission to Share – Gaining permission to share the gospel is respectful, and it will help you determine whether or not to proceed. If the answer is, “yes,” then the person is likely to listen to your presentation. It is unlikely that he will feel you are imposing upon him or that you are entering a subject where you are unwelcome. For example, you can ask, “Can I share with you how to have a personal relationship with God and be sure that when you die you will go to heaven?”

Paul Before the Crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 21:39 to 22:21).

The apostle Paul's ministry was to preach and defend the gospel. After his conversion, Paul's lifestyle became all about apologetics and so it is good to learn from a “master” apologist. While he preached the same gospel every time, he was sensitive to his audience and the Holy Spirit and changed his approach many times as a result.

In this instance, Paul used the C.P.R. method listed above to build a relationship with the commander so that he could request permission to preach to the gathered Jews. Then to the Jews, he established common ground by using Hebrew and showing them that he was a fellow countryman. During his speech, he spoke a portion of his personal testimony to the people. The results speak for themselves.

- C) Witnessing Tips. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to be a witness for Jesus, to tell other people how they can have a new life for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). Also, it is God alone who has made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6) and so it is vital to listen to the Spirit prior to evangelism and witnessing.

There are various approaches on sharing the gospel, but ultimately it always comes down to the good news that:

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, came from Heaven to Earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, paid for their sins, rose from the dead and is in Heaven now preparing a place for them.

Some witnessing tips are:

- Be aware of any time restrictions.
- Use apologetics as appropriate.
- Avoid dogmatic assertions on controversial issues where Christians disagree.
- Don't be afraid to admit the limitation of your knowledge.
- Share the truth in love.
- Focus on the needs or objections of the person.

Above all, listen carefully to the person to whom you are witnessing to.

- If the person you are witnessing to is emotionally hurting, then show love, concern, and care to that person.
- If that person lives for the moment of pleasure, then warn them of the coming judgment and that all their deeds will be judged.
- If that person has honest questions, then attempt to answer them if you are able.
- If that person is self-willed, then present the gospel and the concept of service.
- If that person believes he will be saved by good works, then explain that our own righteousness falls short of God's requirement.