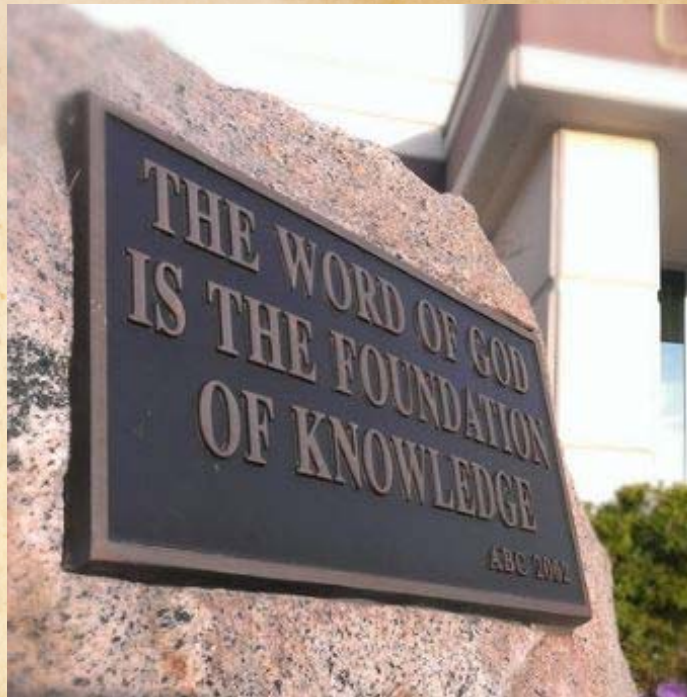


# Weeknight Bible Study

## December 16, 2021

### Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God (Booklet)

United Church of God, SF Bay Area



# Check-In Goals:

1. Fellowship in a Spiritually Uplifting focus in God's Word
2. Hear from All Participants as equally as possible

**Please limit comments to no more than 2 minutes until everyone has had an opportunity to speak.**

3. Discuss / Highlight / Collect Wisdom

## Discussion Topic: Apologetics

#1.

- > It is important to find out where someone is coming from... helps us to dialogue better and makes them feel heard and respected.
- > If they feel respected they are more likely to be receptive to what we have to say.
- > Listen and address in & from the way that are speaking... ask questions in a genuine spirit of inquiry.
- > Be genuinely open to understanding what they believe.
- > We are not to be criticizing or putting anyone down.
- > This is totally different from a debate...
- > In meekness & fear... we are to not be argumentative and we must be careful to represent God appropriately.
- > Goal is to not move someone farther away from God... don't put a stumbling block in front of or offend a "little one"... it is a fearful thing to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around our neck!!
- > Be ready to convey "the hope" in enthusiasm!
- > Present our "reasoned faith"

Discussion Topic

#1 Continued\_Compass Check Apologetics article

<https://www.ucg.org/members/compass-check/compass-check-winter-2021>

# Intro to Apologetics

*Having Conversations  
About Your Faith*

*By Amanda Miller*



# HAVING

a conversation about religion at school or work can be an intimidating task. For many young Christians, the realities they face on social media and IRL point to a society that has become less accepting and tolerant of Christianity.

Christian beliefs, lifestyles and values contradict many prominent voices of the modern world. That being so, it's easy to become defensive or insecure when we hear comments we don't agree with or that simply mock God or our beliefs.

However, having respectful conversations about our faith with others is an important way we can live out our faith, and it is a discipline we should all try to master. So, if you are new to the apologetics world—or have never even heard of the word—let me introduce you to what it is and how it can look in everyday life!

## APOLOGETICS

The word apologetics doesn't mean to make an apology for your faith when someone doesn't agree with what you have to say or what you believe. Apologetics means to give a well-reasoned and graceful defense—an answer to something controversial in your conversations with someone else—in a way that makes sense to them and is relevant to their experiences. As Solomon said in the book of Proverbs, "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!" (Proverbs 15:23, English Standard Version).

In order to practice Christian apologetics in conversations with friends, acquaintances or strangers, it's important that we first understand the depth of another person's beliefs before we make any kind of defense of our own. We can all do this by asking a question as simple as, "What do you mean when you say . . . ?" Of course, it might be a good time to ask a quick, silent prayer in your head for guidance as well!

This question, or any question that seeks to understand someone else before we expect them to understand us, is the key to finding out what kind of barriers someone truly has towards God and Christianity. It's the backbone of effective and meaningful conversations because for some, there are intellectual barriers to God, while

*Having respectful conversations about our faith with others is an important way we can live out our faith.*

others have personal barriers based on their experiences with Christianity, and that's just not something we can assume on the surface.

## LET'S ILLUSTRATE

First, let's start with an ineffective example of conversational apologetics. Say someone says that he or she doesn't think the Bible was actually inspired by God. If we respond, "Well, the Bible says, 'all Scripture is inspired by God' in 2 Timothy 3:16," this answer is going to fall on deaf ears.



#1continued\_a

*Christianity, like  
the rest, deserves  
to be cross-  
examined and  
respected for  
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others to do so!*

Though this scripture is true, this person is saying he or she is not sure that the Bible is a reliable source. So if we quote a scripture to defend Scripture, we are attempting to convince someone to trust a source by citing the very source they are unsure of. This answer won't make any sense to them, because it causes circular reasoning in their mind.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, if we try to convince someone the Bible is true with all of the historical evidence we can think of to validate the Scriptures, or by telling them that they just need to have faith, we may also lose them because we haven't sought to understand where they are coming from first.

We need to start by asking what makes them skeptical of the Scriptures and help them tackle those doubts first. So for example, if this person explains more of where they are coming from, and you discover that the reason they don't trust the Scriptures is because they believe that all religious texts are pretty much the same, then, any of our previous answers would have been a missed opportunity to reach them where they are at. You see, this person is not wrong for believing that all religions and their texts cannot be equally true. Christianity, like the rest, deserves to be cross-examined and respected for its differences, and we can encourage them to do so!

#1continued\_b



## WHAT'S AT THE HEART

I once had a conversation with a coworker about a personal dilemma she had in believing in God's existence because of the suffering that we experience in life. This conversation began when someone in the breakroom shared an unfortunate event that happened to someone. Out of left field, my coworker vehemently said, "and that's why I don't believe in God, because if God were real or if He cared, He wouldn't let that happen to them."

This topic was obviously relevant to her experiences and had to be addressed tactfully. Having known her for about a year, I felt it was important that she was heard and given an opportunity to hear an explanation for the turmoil and hurt she had experienced in life. As our conversation continued, it was clear that we weren't discussing God's existence, but whether or not He actually cared and deserved to be believed in.

I empathized with her feelings of despair and told her about a child I knew who died very young, and how I still mourn that loss of life—how I still choke up just thinking of it today. Though I do not know why this child had to suffer—only an omniscient God could know—I still believe that it's possible for God to be loving in a world where evil exists.

I explained to her that if God had created a world in which evil could not exist, He would have created a world where humans never had a choice—and by doing so they couldn't have chosen to love. Or, if God truly didn't care, He could have created nothing at all. Nonetheless, because of His sacrifice, way of life and promises He has made, I will hold on to hope that He knows how to restore this world and resolve all of the evil, injustices and suffering that we experience. Our conversation ended respectfully, with a mutual understanding of our differences.

## THE EXAMPLE BEFORE US

When we look at examples of apologetics in the Bible, we see writers who each understood their audiences' cultural roots and addressed the barriers in their ideologies. For example, when writing his gospel account, Matthew used genealogy to defend the bloodline of Jesus Christ to the Jews. By contrast, Mark did not include a genealogical introduction to his gospel account in his appeal to a gentile audience.

Likewise, Luke's writings gave an historical and orderly account of Jesus, which he backed with other eyewitness accounts, just as the Greeks did. But John wrote his gospel account and letters from a theological perspective to address Jesus' testimonies and ideas



that were circulating through his Palestinian-Jewish audience at that time.

Paul preached to citizens of Athens at the Areopagus of their "Unknown God" as the foundation of his witness testimony of Jesus Christ (Acts 17). And Jesus showed Thomas the marks on His hands from the crucifixion when Thomas could not believe based on the reports of others alone (John 20:24-29).

No matter what perspective the audience came from, we see that the ones who preached the gospel before us reached their audience where they were and made a defense for Jesus from there.

Though much of the

Western worldview shares its roots in Christianity, our schools, workplaces and institutions are now predominantly secular—or non-believing by nature. So, in our spiritual conversations with others, remember to ask questions and search out the answers to people's barriers—what it is that holds them back from believing what the Bible says is true. Turn those controversial conversations into meaningful ones.

By doing so, we can demonstrate respect towards their doubts and show love by reaching the hearts and minds of each individual, and effectively use apologetics to make a defense for our faith. **CC**



Amanda Miller has two kiddos, and loves to write in her spare time. As a previous elementary school teacher and former volunteer at Legacy Institute in Thailand, she is passionate about equipping the rising generation in defending our faith.

#1continued\_c

## Discussion Topic

### #1. Intro to Apologetics <Scriptures>

Proverbs 15:23 NKJV A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

1 Peter 3:15 NKJV But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

**1Pe 3:15** But<sup>G1161</sup> sanctify<sup>G37</sup> the Lord<sup>G2962</sup> God<sup>G2316</sup> in<sup>G1722</sup> your<sup>G5216</sup> hearts:<sup>G2588</sup> and<sup>G1161</sup> be ready<sup>G2092</sup> always<sup>G104</sup> to give an answer<sup>G4314</sup> <sup>G627</sup> to every man<sup>G3956</sup> that asketh<sup>G154</sup> you<sup>G5209</sup> a reason<sup>G3056</sup> of<sup>G4012</sup> the<sup>G3588</sup> hope<sup>G1680</sup> that is in<sup>G1722</sup> you<sup>G5213</sup> with<sup>G3326</sup> meekness<sup>G4240</sup> and<sup>G2532</sup> fear:<sup>G5401</sup>

Apologia <sup>G627</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/3/15/t\\_conc\\_1154015](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/3/15/t_conc_1154015)

**Total KJV Occurrences: 8**

**Answer, 4** Acts 25:16, 1Co\_9:3, 2Ti\_4:16, **1Pe\_3:15**

**Defence, 3** Acts 22:1, Php\_1:7, Php\_1:17

**Clearing, 1** 2Co\_7:11



## Discussion Topic

#1. Intro to Apologetics <Scriptures Continued>

**Answer, 4 Acts 25:16, 1Co\_9:3, 2Ti\_4:16, 1Pe\_3:15**

Acts 25:16 KJV To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

1 Corinthians 9:3 KJV Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,

2 Timothy 4:16 KJV At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

~ ~ ~

**Defence, 3 Acts 22:1, Php\_1:7, Php\_1:17**

Acts 22:1 KJV Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

Philippians 1:7 KJV Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Philippians 1:17 KJV But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

**Clearing, 1 2Co\_7:11**

2 Corinthians 7:11 KJV For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

## Discussion Topic

What Is Apologetics? [One Minute Apologist Excerpt]

Apologetics means to defend the faith.

#1continued\_d

The word comes from the Greek apologia, meaning “to defend.” We see this word used in 1 Peter 3:15 where Peter says, “always being prepared to make a defense (apologia) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” Let’s unpack this verse and glean a few insights from it.

First,

Peter says, “Always being prepared to make a defense.” In order to make a defense, we must be prepared—or at least be preparing. We need to love the world enough to care about their questions. We can start by tackling the most common objections nonbelievers have to the Christian faith.

Second,

Peter tells us “to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” This inner hope relates to our faith in Jesus Christ. Be ready to talk about the difference Jesus has made in your life. God wants to use our hope to instill hope in others.

## Discussion Topic



What Is Apologetics? Continued [One Minute Apologist Excerpt]

#1continued\_e

Third, Peter tells us to defend our faith with “gentleness and respect.” Regrettably, apologetics has been given a bad rap at times since some apologists come off as arrogant. That’s really unfortunate. And it’s exactly what Peter warns against. He tells us to defend the truth gently and respectfully. Tone matters when communicating truth. Gentleness and respect also go a long way in creating relational harmony.

What you say and how you say it are both crucial. It’s not either/or. It’s truth and love.

The need for apologetics has never been greater. In our pluralistic and secularized culture, we need a batch of Christians who are not only aware of their beliefs, but also get the gist of the beliefs of those around them. This melting pot of beliefs has caused many to question truth altogether. The confusion is systemic, and apologetics can be a great tool for providing some much-needed clarity. So prepare well. And “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

## Discussion Topic

### #2. Booklet section \_Preface <Scriptures> (Continued)

Isaiah 66:2 NKJV For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.

Proverbs 1:7 NKJV The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.

1 Corinthians 3:11 NKJV For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

## Article / Sermon / Reference Recommendations (w/ url links):

### > Fundamental Beliefs Booklet Audio:


url = <https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/posts/fundamental-beliefs-booklet-audio-links-853231>

### > Article: Compass Check Apologetics

url <https://www.ucg.org/members/compass-check/compass-check-winter-2021>

### > Sermon: "Truthing" in Love" by Rick Shabi

Url = <https://www.ucg.org/sermons/truthing-in-love-1>



**~ The End ~  
& FELLOWSHIP :-)**

