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TRAINING CHURCH MEMBERS TO INTEGRATE
APOLOGETICS WITH EVANGELISM AT
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF
WALTON, KENTUCKY

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APOLOGETICS WITH EVANGELISM AT
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To Jamie,
who has faithfully supported,
loved, and encouraged me in life and ministry.

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PREFACE

This project was made possible only because of the encouragement, prayers, and guidance from several important people. In his providence, God ensured that I would be surrounded by godly men and women who believed in and challenged me throughout every stage of this project.

Without the loving support and encouragement from my wife and our children, I would not have made it to this point. God has graciously blessed me with a godly wife who has endured every test and trial along the way to ensure my success in completing my doctorate. I am eternally grateful for the love and patience that she has poured into my life. In addition to my wife, our children have encouraged me to be disciplined in completing this project. As they have expressed their excitement at the idea of their father receiving the title of doctor, I was motivated to remain disciplined and complete this project. As a father, my goal has been to simply make them proud.

In addition to her loving and encouraging words, my grandmother, Sally Francis, has made this project possible through her financial support. Along with her family's trust fund, the Kavanagh Educational Trust, my grandmother made it possible for me to pay for both my tuition and books. Her love has been demonstrated in a very real and tangible way and will forever be recorded in my heart.

If it were not for my editors, Jacqueline Hawkins, Sandy Adams, and Josh Landrum, I would have not have made it past the first chapter. Each one was willing to offer guidance, feedback, and open criticism of my work. Their comments, critiques, and suggestions caused me to think through each element of this project. I thank God for their willingness to help me through this difficult and rewarding project.

Finally, I am thankful for the guidance and mentorship of my faculty supervisor Adam Greenway. His willingness to give direction from his wealth of knowledge in apologetics and evangelism has assisted and challenged me at every stage of this project. I am certain that his investment in my education, life, and ministry will pay great dividends for our Lord's Kingdom.

Thomas William Francis, Jr.

Walton, Kentucky

December, 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip members of First Baptist Church in Walton, Kentucky, to boldly share the gospel of Jesus Christ by training them in apologetics and evangelism. Additionally, this project provides a reproducible program to be used by other churches to implement evangelism training.

Goals

The goals for this project were divided into four categories: knowledge goals, attitude goals, skills goals, and my personal goal. The first set of goals was focused on what this project intended to teach the participants. The believers who participated would grow in their knowledge and understanding of the questions that unbelievers are asking about Christianity and Theism. Furthermore, believers would be informed in basic apologetics and personal evangelism, such as how to share their faith in Christ with those who are raising questions about the validity of Christianity's claims. The primary goal was to educate believers through sermons, lectures, reading, and practicum in how apologetics can be used in personal evangelism.

The second set of goals focused on a change in the attitude of the church toward evangelism and unbelievers. At the beginning of the project, the congregation was given a survey that asked questions about how they feel about non-Christians, evangelism, and apologetics. The survey sought to gauge the attitude of the congregation towards evangelism giving specific attention to their attitudes about personal evangelism and unbelievers. In order to impact the entire congregation, five weeks of this project

were dedicated to a sermon series on the scriptural imperatives of evangelism and apologetics. Furthermore, by empowering believers to effectively share the gospel of Christ, this project helped to remove the fear of witnessing that comes from not knowing how to evangelize. To measure the change in attitude, the church was surveyed with the same questions at the end of the sermon series. Additionally, the fifteen participants were surveyed at the end of the project to evaluate the difference between their attitudes as opposed to those who only heard the five sermons. The principal goal was to change indifferent attitudes toward non-Christians to feelings of compassion for those who are lost without Christ.

Training believers to be skilled in the use of apologetics as a bridge to sharing the message of Christ was another essential goal of this project. Since very few of our members regularly share the gospel with unbelievers, it was beneficial for the participants to be trained in personal evangelism. The goal was that members who complete the project would be skilled in both basic apologetics and personal evangelism.

The final goal was my personal goal. By working through this project I planned to become a leader who is proficient and effective in equipping believers to share the gospel. My passion is to see unbelievers who were once hostile to the gospel be converted as followers of Jesus Christ. Equipping others to effectively share the gospel has enabled me to multiply the impact of my ministry. To measure this goal, I interviewed the participants and encouraged them to be as honest as possible with me about the effectiveness of the training.

Ministry Context

First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky, is located in an area commonly known as Northern Kentucky. Boone County has experienced steady growth due to its proximity to the city of Cincinnati. Walton is approximately thirty miles south of

Cincinnati, Ohio. With easy access to both Interstates 71 and 75, the community is rapidly changing from rural to suburban.

Nearly 150 years ago, leaders from Concord, Crittenden, New Bethel, Big Bone, and Banklick Baptist Churches organized a meeting for the purpose of planting a church in southeastern Boone County. On August 9, 1866, the Baptist Church of Jesus Christ was organized and chartered in Walton, Kentucky. The church would eventually be known as the First Baptist Church of Walton. From the beginning, the church has been involved in local and foreign missions. By 1867, the church had already begun to raise money for home missions in the amount of seven dollars and fifty cents. Additionally, in 1882, the church organized a Sunday school to reach unchurched children in the community. Finally, in 1896, the church launched the Woman's Missionary Union to educate and equip believers to support home and foreign missions.

Over the past century and half, First Baptist has had a passion for reaching unbelievers with the gospel. This passion led the church to grow and prosper, reaching its apex under the leadership of Rev. Joseph R. Tackett (1955-1967). After the departure of Pastor Tackett, the church plateaued, with short seasons of growth in attendance and financial viability until the year 2000. During the past ten years, the church has slowly declined in attendance and baptisms.

During the past decade, the population within a five mile radius of the church has grown more than 31 percent. The rapid growth is projected to slow over the next five years to around 11.5 percent.¹ On the one hand, the community is growing in population and wealth with a nearly 25 percent increase in the average annual household income. Conversely, the community is growing younger. With 45 percent of the community under the age of 34, the values, religious beliefs, and direction of the community continue

¹ESRI Business Information Solutions Inc., *U.S. Bureau of the Census*. 2000 Census of Population and Housing forecasts for 2010 and 2015.

to change.² With the addition of several new subdivisions and numerous contractors who continue to build new homes, the 25 to 34 year old age group has grown by more than 34 percent.³

Walton and the surrounding area is over 95 percent Caucasian, with a growing Hispanic minority that is projected to double over the next five years.⁴ The membership of First Baptist Church is primarily Caucasian; however, the church has one multi-culture family, an Asian child who was adopted, an African-American intern, and one Hispanic woman.

After five consecutive years of decline in baptisms and worship attendance, the leadership of the church decided it was time for change. After the deacons asked the pastor to leave, all of the ministerial staff resigned and left the community. Seeking direction and not wanting the church to continue to decline and eventually close, the members called Tom Townsend to serve as interim pastor. Townsend led the church through the process of refocusing on missions and evangelism. During his tenure, the church brought in consultants from the Kentucky Baptist Convention to assist the congregation in resolving the conflicts and developing tangible goals for the future.

In December 2009, the church called me as the new pastor. During the interview process, it became apparent that for years the church had been lacking evangelistic leadership. Conversion and transfer growth have been down substantially over the previous ten years, with a rapid decline in the past five years. First Baptist had only 29 baptisms and 36 transfers of letter since 2005. During this five-year period the baptism ratio was approximately 50 to 1. For every 50 active members, the church was only baptizing 1 person a year, with the average number of baptisms per year being less

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

than 6. According to church growth expert Thom Rainer, a healthy and growing church should have a ratio of less than 20 to 1, with at least 24 baptisms a year.⁵ Even worse, the baptism numbers had fallen off drastically in the previous three years with only 11. The drop in baptisms over that three year period had pushed the church ratio to nearly 100 to 1. Additionally, in the previous two years, the church has had only 4 new members through transfer growth. Not only was the church not reaching the community, members were leaving in large numbers because of conflict and lack of vision on the part of the leadership.

In February 2010, the church gathered on a Sunday night to hear the pastor's analysis and evangelism strategy for the next three years. The strategy called for some radical changes to be made, as well as the addition of new staff. The congregation unanimously adopted the strategy and began to implement the plan right away. A new staff position was created for an associate pastor of student ministries who would oversee ministry from newborns to college age students. Creating a coherent ministry that focused on training members to serve in student ministries, as well as discipling the children at every stage of life, were the main responsibilities for the new associate pastor.

Since February 2010, the church has created numerous ways to track and follow up on visitors. A new website allows visitors to fill out information before they attend. This information is then forwarded to the staff who then provide the information to the welcome center volunteers. One welcome center was added several months after the new strategy, and second center was added a year later. Visitors are encouraged to fill out cards by offering them gifts at the welcome center. The next week, the visitors receive between 10 and 15 cards in the mail, as well as emails and phone calls from the ministerial staff. This method has allowed the church to add over 100 new members to the church in the past two years.

⁵Thom Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 20-21.

The church is doing a great job of attracting Christians who are looking for a congregation that is serious about evangelism and discipleship; however, the church has not been as effective at reaching the unchurched and lost in the community. Since January 2010, the church has baptized 39 new believers. Nearly 3,000 gospel tracts, Bibles, and information bags have been handed out in the community with little response. While the church has dramatically grown in Sunday school and worship attendance, the church is still not reaching a significant number of lost people in the community. Currently, the church is involved in nearly a dozen evangelistic projects and ministries in the surrounding community. These evangelistic efforts have produced larger attendance numbers in the youth and children's ministries but have not yielded substantial conversions and baptisms.

Recently, the church participated in an anonymous theological survey that revealed nearly 40 percent of the adults surveyed did not believe that Jesus Christ was the only way for a person to be saved. The survey was required as part of the applied ministry portion of the Doctor of Ministry program at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The results of the survey revealed some of the reasons that the church is not reaching lost people. Since the survey, all new leaders are required to interview with one of the pastors concerning their conversion and doctrinal position. Furthermore, existing leaders have been questioned about their doctrinal positions, which have led to some stepping down from leadership and teaching responsibilities. Currently the church requires all new members to go through a "Baptist Basics" class with the pastor before joining the church. Along with this class, the leadership is developing a curriculum that would train new and prospective leaders in the essential doctrines of Christianity.

Furthermore, the theological survey included questions about missions and evangelism. Nearly half of the adults surveyed believed that evangelism is not a mandate for all believers. This response, coupled with the fact that nearly twenty-five percent believed that all religions are essentially the same, has led to a climate where evangelism

is not seen as essential by all. On the other hand, many in the church have expressed a desire to be more evangelistic and have willingly participated in the church's outreach ministries. Many who have been interviewed by the pastor have expressed a desire for evangelism training that would help them share their faith in Christ with atheistic and agnostic family and friends. Additionally, several church members have expressed brokenness over children and grandchildren who have walked away from the faith because of unanswered questions about God, Jesus, Christianity, and the Bible.

The church's ineffectiveness in evangelism is rooted in years without sound biblical preaching and teaching and no lifestyle and personal evangelism being modeled by leadership. In the past, the church has not been equipped to defend what they believe, because as a whole the church was not sure what they believed. Adding to the problem of not fully understanding what they believe, the body at large has been infected with liberal theology, open theism, easy believism, and universalism. Furthermore, the church has lacked a leader who demonstrated for the congregation a model of personal evangelism.

Several ministries have been added and modified to ensure that sound doctrine is being taught to all ages. The pulpit ministry is focused on expository preaching that challenges members to know and live according to God's Word. The Sunday school department, mission programs, and Wednesday night ministries have all been modified to ensure that orthodox and biblical Christianity is being taught in a relevant and age appropriate manner. This project has served to bridge the teaching ministries to the evangelistic ministries of the church.

Rationale

The rationale for this project is based on the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19),⁶ the imperative to "make a defense to everyone

⁶Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15), and the call to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). Apologetics and evangelism are not options in the Christian life, but are necessary elements of living in obedience to the Word of God. It is the responsibility of church leadership to equip the members to carry out the work of evangelism and ministry (Eph. 4:11). Unfortunately, the paradigm has been reversed where leadership is expected to do the work while members stand aside and cheer them on. Furthermore, those members who are attempting to engage the culture are struggling to find relevant and effective ways to share the gospel. For the most part, many of them are attempting to share the gospel with those who do not hold a Judeo-Christian worldview. As the culture around the church has continued to change, so have beliefs about God, the Bible, and Jesus.

First Baptist Church is not reaching a significant number of unbelievers in the surrounding community, but the problem is not a lack of desire on the part of the church. The issue is instead a lack of training. If the church is allowed to become comfortable with reaching a very small number of unbelievers, it will revert to the status quo of failure disguised as faithfulness. Members who desire to live in obedience to the Great Commandment (Luke 10:27) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) lack the necessary training to effectively defend the Christian faith. The ability to defend what they believe will empower members to effectively answer the questions and objections to Christianity. This project served to equip Christians to use questions and objections as a bridge to sharing the gospel in a culturally relevant way that remains faithful the Bible.

Definitions and Limitations

The purpose of this project was to equip Christians to confidently share the gospel of Jesus Christ with neighbors, friends, and family. The *gospel* is the good news that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was born into humanity, lived a perfect life, died on the cross as a sacrificial death, and after three days was resurrected from the

grave. The gospel begins with an orthodox⁷ understanding of humanity's fall into sin. In Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve are tempted and deceived by the serpent to disobey God. At the heart of the temptation was an appeal to their intellectual appetite. Satan was offering what they believed was a form of godhood, or to be like God. It appears that the first couple did not fully realize that the only way they would be like God was in knowing good and evil. By choosing to sin, Adam and Eve consciously and willfully disobeyed God which resulted in their eyes being opened to their nakedness.

Immediately, their relationship with God was transformed from fellowship to fear, and the God, whom they knew as innocent beings, in their fallen state was one to be feared. As a result of original sin all of humanity has had imputed to them this fallen and sinful nature (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). The bad news is that in Adam all have sinned (Rom 5:12) and deserve death (Rom 3:23). In direct contrast to the bad news of judgment and condemnation, the good news offers hope. Salvation is made possible because God became a man (John 1:14), lived the perfect life (2 Cor 5:21) and offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind (Rom 5:18). Those who repent of their sins (Mark 1:15), believe that Jesus Christ died for their transgressions and resurrected from the grave (1 Cor 15:3-4), and confess him as Lord and Savior (Rom 10:9-10) will become children of God (John 1:12).

Additionally, this project sought to train believers to use the objections of unbelievers as a means to make a case for the Christian faith. The discipline known as apologetics is based on 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." The original Greek phrase that is sometimes translated "make a defense" or "give an answer" is the word *apologia*, which

⁷Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 24. Allison defines orthodoxy as what the New Testament refers to as "sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1), that which rightly reflects in summary form all the teaching of Scripture and which the church is bound to believe and obey.

means “a speech of defense.”⁸ Thus, *apologetics* is a mandate for all Christians to defend the faith in response to questions, objections, and attacks. In a postmodern world, the church must use apologetics as one way to undergird its evangelism ministry. Norman Geisler contends that “the artificial separation of evangelism from apologetics must end. Many evangelistic methods die when those evangelized ask questions related to apologetics.”⁹

Evangelism can be defined simply as a Christian sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with an unbeliever. This project requires a fuller definition in order that the reader will have a better understanding of what is involved in evangelism. The Lausanne Covenant contends that evangelism is spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world.¹⁰

The above definition presupposes those being evangelized are theist, or those who believe in a god. No definition, however, can adequately provide a paradigm that takes into consideration every worldview. For the purpose of this project, the Lausanne definition will provide a working description of evangelism.

Due to the depth of material covered this project was limited to adults and youth who are in high school who will commit to participate for the entire fifteen weeks.

⁸Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 18.

⁹*Ibid.*, 404.

¹⁰The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, “The Lausanne Covenant” [on-line]; accessed 9 March 2011; available from <http://www.lausanne.org>; Internet.

Since part of the project required each participant to go with the pastor to share the gospel with people in the community, the number of participants was limited to fifteen.

The project was limited to fifteen weeks to meet the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry in Evangelism and Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. This limitation meant that this project could not deal with every answer and objection to the Christian faith. Instead, this project focused on four key objections: (1) the existence of God, (2) the historical reliability and inspiration of the Bible, (3) the deity and exclusivity of Jesus Christ, and (4) the problem of evil.

Research Methodology

The research methodology included pre-, mid-, and post-project surveys, interviews, sermons, assigned reading, lectures, and practicum. The pre-project surveys were used to determine each participant's level of biblical knowledge of basic doctrines, evangelism and apologetics. Each participant was interviewed before the project to ensure that he or she is willing to commit to each aspect of the training. Prior to the project, a portion of the congregation was given a survey to evaluate their attitude towards apoplectics, evangelism, and unbelievers. After the five week sermon series, the members were given the same survey to track whether their attitudes have changed as a result of the preaching series. The fifteen participants were given both of the previous surveys as well as one at the end of the apologetic evangelism training.

During the fifteen weeks, participants were asked to attend Sunday morning worship, as well as the training sessions during weeks 7 through 13. Following the seven-week class, each participant was assigned a time during week 14 to go with the pastor to observe and participate in personal evangelism. The week of practicum allowed the pastor to observe the believers putting into practice what they have learned in the course. Having the pastor with them ensured that even if the class member began to stumble in the presentation, someone was there to assist him or her in presenting the

gospel. The final week involved a post-project survey and interview with the pastor. During the interview the class member was encouraged to share what he or she learned, as well as recommendations for the class in the future.

To ensure the project would continue to impact and equip believers at First Baptist Church of Walton, each member of the class was asked to verbally commit to mentoring a fellow believer in apologetic evangelism after completing the training. The long-term success of this project hinges on believers who have been equipped to share Christ teaching others to do likewise.

Conclusion

This project was designed to offer a biblically based approach for training believers to confidently communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though the surveys, sermons, seminars, and interviews are all structured to fit within a fifteen-week training period, all of them contributed to the goal of equipping believers to use apologetics as a bridge to sharing the good news.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR IMPLEMENTING APOLOGETIC EVANGELISM TRAINING

The separation of apologetics and evangelism has created a stifled Christian witness. In *When Apologetics Was Evangelism*, James Holding states, “What we call ‘apologetics’ was, in fact, what the apostolic church would have called ‘evangelism.’”¹ Two millennia after the founding of the church, in a world where postmodernity has taught individuals to doubt, or at least question every truth claim, Christians who are not trained to offer logical and biblical answers will not be taken seriously. The vast majority of atheists, agnostics, and non-religious persons assume that religion cannot offer answers to life’s most basic questions.

Life’s most basic questions form one’s worldview. One may question, “Why am I here?,” “What is my purpose in life?,” and “What awaits me after this life?” Ronald Nash defines a worldview as “a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality.”² *Naturalism*, the “philosophical theory that nature is all that exists,”³ cannot offer meaningful answers to life’s most important questions. Furthermore, naturalistic answers to life’s ultimate questions will inevitably lead one to adopt *nihilism*, advocating

¹James P. Holding, “When Apologetics Was Evangelism,” Christian Research Institute [online]; accessed 7 September 2011; available from <http://www.equip.org/articles/christian-evangelism-apologetics-and-evangelism>, html; Internet

²Ronald H. Nash, *Faith & Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 24.

³C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 79.

that everything is meaningless. Any attempt to evangelize those who have been affected by naturalism or nihilism will require more than just an alternative biblical worldview. Christians must be equipped to demonstrate the hopelessness of these flawed philosophical systems. Even in the midst of adversity and opposition, Christians are commanded to be “ready to make defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15). Evangelistic efforts that are not grounded in apologetics will result in frustration and repel unbelievers.

The following questions are just a few of the objections Christians face when sharing the gospel. How do we know God exists? Can the Bible be trusted? If God is good, then why is there so much evil? Questions such as these should not be perceived as road blocks to proclaiming the good news. Questions, as well as objections, can serve as a bridge for sharing the gospel; therefore, it is imperative that believers be ready to offer answers and deal with objections to the Christian faith.

The nature of evangelism requires Christians to be prepared for confrontations where they will encounter opposing worldviews and ideas. Sharing the gospel with non-Christians must be understood as more than simply exchanging ideas or debating views; it is spiritual warfare. Due to the nature of this warfare, preparation for effective evangelism requires more than biblical and apologetic training; it also demands serious spiritual preparation. Christians who desire to obediently fulfill the mandate of Christ must not underestimate the importance of a personal prayer and devotional life. Hence, the greatest preparation for evangelism is personal Bible study and a robust prayer life.

Preparation for personal evangelism typically involves a professionally packaged program. However, the training programs currently utilized in churches today fail to equip Christians to answer objections concerning the nature and existence of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, and the reliability of the Bible. In the same manner, some Christians do not consider apologetics as an important or necessary element of effective

evangelism.⁴ Addressing the false dichotomy of evangelism and apologetics, Norman Geisler states, “The artificial separation of evangelism from apologetics must end. Many evangelistic methods die when those evangelized ask questions related to apologetics.”⁵ This separation has hindered Christians in presenting the gospel because they are unable to offer reasonable answers to the most common and simplistic objections to the Christian faith. A believer’s preparation and knowledge would in no way be seen as a negation of the sovereignty of God in the work of salvation. Conversely, the sovereign will of God must not be used as an excuse for being unprepared to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers. The responsibility to preach the gospel is united with the requirement to be prepared when given the opportunity; therefore, evangelism training must incorporate apologetics as a means to effectively overcome objections to the gospel.

In order to understand evangelism training, one must understand that evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations and all people. According to J. I. Packer, “Evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners.”⁶ Proclaiming God’s message is accomplished both through mass and personal evangelism. Peter’s preaching at Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-41) is an example of mass evangelism, while Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:34-39) is an instance of one-on-one evangelism. In both cases, Peter’s preaching to the crowd and Phillip’s witnessing to one individual, evangelism took place. Fulfilling

⁴Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 363. Some fideists utterly reject the use of apologetics.

⁵Norman L. Geisler and Chad V. Meister, eds., *Reasons for Faith: Making a Case for the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 404.

⁶J. I. Packer, *Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1961), 41.

the mandate of Christ to “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15) demands that the church use both mass and personal evangelism to share the gospel.

The majority of definitions and methods of evangelism presuppose that the person being evangelized is a theist, or one who at least believes in some form of a god. Inserting apologetics into evangelism does not necessarily require a new definition of evangelism; however, any definition must recognize the essential role of apologetics in a world dominated by *postmodernism*, a philosophical system that questions everything including the existence of truth. Effective evangelism must include a clear case for the existence of God. In his book *Reasonable Faith*, William Lane Craig instructs readers to memorize the arguments supporting the existence of God. Furthermore, Craig believes the results will give Christians “tremendous confidence and boldness in talking about [their] faith with non-believers.”⁷ Furthermore, Craig believes natural theology is essential to effective evangelism because “most unbelievers are ignorant of natural theology and have never confronted a Christian who is ready to offer carefully formulated arguments for his belief in God.”⁸ A good definition of evangelism should create a framework for sharing the gospel with unbelievers who have a theistic worldview as well as those who subscribe to a nontheistic worldview. Such a definition should include the following statements: (1) in some cases evangelism must begin by presenting a case from the laws of logic in order to demonstrate that absolute truth exists and is knowable to those who believe truth is subjective or cannot be known; and (2) in many cases, evangelism will require an argument from natural theology (general revelation) for the existence of God to atheists and agnostics as the foundation for spreading the good news.

⁷William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 190.

⁸Ibid.

Evangelistic efforts that operate solely on the premise that the target audience holds to a Judeo-Christian worldview lack the ability to address objections raised by non-theists. Moreover, as the segments of western society who base their decisions on a Judeo-Christian foundation diminish, churches must find relevant ways to share the gospel. The paradigm must shift from preaching like Peter (Acts 2:14-41), who spoke to a primarily Jewish audience that held to similar philosophical and religious beliefs, to preaching like Paul at Athens (Acts 17:16-34).⁹ Like the Athenians, many westerners have adopted worldviews based upon atheistic, agnostic, or deistic ideas. As modern civilizations become more secularized and skeptical toward religion, and especially hostile towards biblical Christianity, evangelistic efforts must include apologetics. Like Paul at Athens, believers must be prepared to offer a defense of the Christian faith to atheists, agnostics, and deists by first making a case for the existence of the God of Christianity.

This chapter, therefore, will establish a biblical and theological basis for integrating apologetics with evangelism training. First, this chapter will establish the imperative for all believers to participate in evangelism by demonstrating that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded all of his followers to engage all cultures with the gospel (Matt 28:18-20), reversing Christ's original command to his disciples to only go to the house of Israel (Matt 10:5-6). This directive to preach the gospel to all nations, or literally to all ethnicities, does not only apply to Gentiles, but must include both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 1:16; Gal 3:28). In order to demonstrate the Great Commission's universal scope and nature, this chapter will give a detailed explanation of the commission (Matt 28:18-20). In addition, it argues that the command to Christians to make disciples (Matt 28:19),

⁹James P. Holding, "When Apologetics Was Evangelism." According to Holding, Peter's preaching did employ apologetics by presenting three matters of historical record: miracles, the resurrection of Jesus, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He states, "It is on the basis of these three facts that Peter called on his hearers to repent." This author contends that while Peter's preaching was apologetic, his audience held to a similar worldview in that they believed in an all-powerful Creator.

also referred to as winning disciples¹⁰ must be understood to fall to every believer, with the mandate for the pastor-teacher to equip the church to actively participate and take ownership of ministry (Eph 4:11-12).

Throughout Christendom today, two reasons exist for the lack of evangelism. The first is a lack of training on how to properly defend the Christian faith. The second is professionalism creeping into churches, leaving evangelism solely to the paid staff. All believers are called to share the gospel and to make a defense of the Christian faith before an unbelieving and hostile world (1 Pet 3:15). The imperative to make the case for the gospel is accompanied by the mandate to do so in a humble and respectful manner. Apologetic evangelism is not to be viewed as entering into a conflict with people, but rather with ideas, false philosophical systems, and flawed worldviews. As believers understand the conflict for the gospel is not with people, but spiritual warfare over falsehoods, they must converse with respect.

Additionally, Jude teaches that Christian apologetics will include a defense of the gospel by stating believers must “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). It is not enough for the evangelist to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and not understand Christian doctrine. He must know what the gospel is, why people need to hear it, and how to faithfully proclaim it. In other words, the evangelist must be prepared to defend the faith to those who would pervert the purity of the gospel.

Finally, this chapter will use the model of the Apostle Paul in Athens to demonstrate the necessity of establishing the superiority of the theistic worldview to an atheistic, pantheistic, or agnostic culture in order to effectively present the gospel of Jesus

¹⁰Thomas P. Johnston, *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church for Harvest: Voices and Views from the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 5. According to Johnston, the phrase translated “to make disciples” in Matt 28:19 should be translated “to win disciples.” Additionally, he states that the text “speaks of conversion, not of discipleship.”

Christ (Acts 17:16-34). Using the comparison of Paul's sermon in Athens to his teachings in Jewish synagogues (Acts 9:19-22; 13:15-43) and Peter's proclamation at Jerusalem (2:14-41), this chapter will demonstrate an effective way to present the gospel to non-Christians. Since Paul uses natural theology and logic to transition to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this chapter will examine some the major arguments for the existence of God.

The Mandate to Make Disciples: Matthew 28:18-20

After his resurrection and before his ascension, Jesus Christ gave his followers what is known as the Great Commission.¹¹ As recorded in Matthew 28, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I command you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20). As churches minimize or misunderstand the Great Commission, unbiblical attitudes and approaches toward unbelievers result. In order to properly understand the Great Commission, one must be able to answer the following questions: on what authority did Jesus command the conversion of the nations and what did Jesus commission his followers to do?

The Authority of Jesus Christ in the Great Commission

The Great Commission has been identified as Matthew 28:19-20; however, by not including verse 18 in the commission, the foundation is overlooked. John MacArthur states, "Jesus first established His absolute, pervasive authority, because otherwise the command would have seemed hopelessly impossible for the disciples to

¹¹Commentators are divided on whether this gathering included the five hundred mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6. Robert Mounce, *Matthew*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991, 267. Mounce states, "It has been suggested that those who doubted were not the eleven but some of the 'more than five hundred brethren' mentioned in 1 Cor 15:6. That Jesus arranged to meet them there would account for the large group."

fulfill, and they might have ignored it.”¹² Thus, the authority of Christ in the Great Commission should serve as not only the motivation for obedience to the command, but also as a warning against disregarding it. Disobediently, Christ’s instructions, have been taken lightly or simply ignored by many Christians. This disobedience is possibly due to lack of understanding of Christ’s authority, ignorance of the full scope of the imperative to make disciples, or blatant insubordination on the part of Christians. Because of the lack of evangelism on the part of many Christians, one could conclude that there has been a failure to communicate that the Great Commission is a command for all believers, everywhere, at all times. Based upon the authority of Christ, Christians must heed the commission of Jesus to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Christian leaders, pastors, and teachers must proclaim that Jesus’ instructions are not merely a suggestion, but a call that must be obeyed absolutely and sacrificially. Furthermore, Christian leaders must demonstrate obedience to the Great Commission through sacrificially giving to missions, promoting missions education inside the church, participating in local and foreign missions, praying for missionaries, and praying for the thousands of unreached people groups.

Jesus’ authority to commission his followers in conquering the world with the gospel is based upon his person. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus has been given “all authority” (Matt 28:18) to insist that his will be carried out exactly as he prescribes. According to MacArthur, “*Exousia* (authority) refers to the freedom and right to speak and act as one pleases.”¹³ The King James translators selected the word “power” to describe what the Son had received from the Father; however, power does not fully describe the foundation for Jesus’ authority to make such a demand of his followers. Claiming to have “all power” (Matt 28:18 KJV) does not effectively communicate the

¹²John MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 339.

¹³*Ibid.*, 338.

fact that Christ has the absolute right to require obedience to whatsoever he commands. His absolute sovereign authority is not limited to his followers, but is universal in scope. Jesus announces that his authority has no geographic limitations; that is, his jurisdiction has no boundaries. He is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. As the supreme ruler, he has the power to command his followers to carry out whatever he desires. Calvin states, “No ordinary authority would here have been enough, but sovereign and truly divine government out to be possessed by him who commands them to promise eternal life in his name.”¹⁴

The dominion of Jesus Christ is not like the temporal and finite kings whose authority died with them. His authority was “given” (Matt 28:18) to him by the eternal Father whose power and dominion are limitless, and whose kingdom is not limited to any one geographical region. As Creator, God the Father has absolute supremacy over his creation (Isa 44:6-8, 24; 45:5-7), and has given to the Son complete control over all of creation (John 5:22; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 15:28; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:1-3; Rev 5:1-5). Calvin believes the power described by Jesus is what motivates the disciples to attempt the impossible and states, “But when they [learned] that he to whom they owe their services is the Governor of heaven and earth, this alone was abundantly sufficient for preparing them to rise to superior to all opposition.”¹⁵ Subsequently, because there is nothing outside of his sovereign control, including humans, and no geographical boundaries to his kingly reign Christ has the right to command his followers to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). In addition, the disciples are told that Jesus would not leave them alone as they obediently responded to his commands (Matt 28:20), because they would be indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; Acts 1:8).

¹⁴John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, vol. 3, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 381-82.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 382.

The Essential Elements of the Great Commission

The Great Commission appears to offer four essential imperatives for carrying out the Lord's mandate. Reading Matthew 28:19 in an English translation can easily give one the impression that Jesus commanded four equal actions: go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. In the Greek text, however, the one imperative is (*mathēteusate*), or “make disciples,” and the words go, baptize, and teach are important participles that instruct one as to how the commission is to be completed. According to MacArthur, “The specific requirements Jesus gives for making disciples involve three participles: going (rendered here as go), baptizing, and teaching.”¹⁶ Every aspect of the commission is to be obediently carried out; however, misunderstanding the subordinate role of the commands to go, baptize, and teach to the imperative make disciples creates a dysfunctional understanding of the Lord's instructions. One common misunderstanding emphasizes “go” as an immediate command, but considers “make disciples” to be something that takes place over a long period of time. The false separation of the command to “go” and the imperative “make disciples” can easily create an overemphasis on either the going or the making of disciples, when in fact they are inseparable. Commenting on the misunderstanding of the relation between the phrases “go” and “make disciples,” Craig Blomberg states,

Too much is made of it when the disciples' “going” is overly subordinated, so that Jesus' charge is to proselytize merely where one is. Matthew frequently uses “go” as an introductory circumstantial participle that is rightly translated as coordinate to the main verb—here “Go and make” (cf. 2:8; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; 28:7). Too little is made of it when all attention is centered on the command to “go,” as in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions are elevated to a higher status of Christian service than other forms of spiritual activity. To “make disciples of all nations” does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be.¹⁷

¹⁶MacArthur, *Matthew 24-28*, 342.

¹⁷Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library System, 431.

Along with obedience to Christ's commission, believers must recognize that the scope of his command includes every nation (ethnē), or literally, "every ethnicity." Thus, the instruction to make disciples requires believers to be evangelistic in their own communities as well as proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth. When Christians stop participating in both the "going" and the "making disciples," the commission of Christ is violated. The first act of obedience is to "go" and preach the gospel to unbelievers wherever they can be found. "The first requirement," according to MacArthur, "makes clear that the church is not to wait for the world to come to its doors but that it is to go to the world."¹⁸ Obedience to the Great Commission requires believers to be consciously aware of the necessity to share the gospel with unbelievers they encounter in their daily lives. A greater awareness in one's own sphere of influence will help to create a passion for both local and foreign missions, whereas, it is not logistically possible for every member of a local church to leave home and move to a foreign land. A few Christians may not be physically able to participate in door-to-door evangelism; however, every believer can share the gospel with his or her family and friends. Regardless of one's financial or physical condition, all believers are required to participate in local and global missions.

Obedience to Christ's command starts with a willingness to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to every person in every region, but requires more than an enthusiastic heart. Such a commitment will necessitate that believers give of their time, use their spiritual gifts, and give sacrificially and willingly in order for missionaries to be sent around the world. Christianity is essentially an intrinsically missional religion; thus, Christians should naturally see themselves as missionaries.¹⁹

¹⁸MacArthur, *Matthew*, 342.

¹⁹John A. Broadus, *Commentary on Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), 593.

Similar to the decree “to go,” the principles of baptizing and teaching are explicitly linked to the imperative to “make disciples.”²⁰ Christians must refrain from the belief that obedience to the commission is complete when an unbeliever is converted and becomes a follower of Christ. The initial act of going and proclaiming the gospel is what is referred to as the evangelization of non-Christians. Once a person repents of his or her sins and believes in Jesus Christ the Son of God as Lord and Savior, he or she needs to be integrated into a local body of believers. The assimilation of new believers begins with baptism, which constitutes a public testimony stating that they are now committed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this point, Spence states, “the present participle denotes the mode of initiation into discipleship. Make them disciples by baptizing them.”²¹ Within Christendom, there exists a great amount of debate surrounding the proper mode and age for baptism; however, there is nearly universal agreement that baptism serves as one’s inauguration into the church.

New believers must not be left alone, but unfortunately, some proselytes are left to themselves to discover the teachings of Christ. Jesus makes it clear that those who become his followers are to be fully assimilated into the body and completely indoctrinated in his teachings. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says that the process of making disciples continues by “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” Blomberg argues that, “Teaching obedience to all of Jesus’ commands forms the heart of disciple making.” He goes on to say, “If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole counsel of God’s revelation, then the church disobeyed the other part.”²²

²⁰Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, The New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 268. Mounce states, “The Greek verb *mathēteuō* means “to make a learner” (coming, as it does, from *manthanō*, “to learn”). A disciple is not simply one who has been taught but one who continues to learn.”

²¹H. D. M. Spence, *St. Matthew*, The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004), 645.

²²Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ not only entails a commitment to life-long learning, but also an obligation to instruct others in the faith. Fulfilling the commission begins with a clear presentation of the gospel that calls for people to repent and believe, but does not end with a decision to become a disciple. The ongoing education of Christians is an essential component of satisfying Christ's instructions. As MacArthur points out, "The church's mission is not simply to convert but to teach."²³

A detailed examination of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) reveals that the mission of all Christians is to make disciples of every ethnicity (people group) requires the following: (1) evangelizing them with the gospel; (2) baptizing each one into the body of Christ; and (3) teaching them the whole counsel of God. Ignoring or neglecting any component of the Lord's command will have negative consequences on both Christians and unbelievers. When believers do not heed Christ's instructions, they are in danger of God's chastening hand (Heb 12:6), and worse, unbelievers remaining in darkness.

The Mandate to Equip Disciples: Ephesians 4:11-12

For the church to fulfill the mandate of Christ to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) believers must be trained in evangelism. Bryan Chapell states that the Father expects leaders "to use their gifts to equip God's people for the works of service, and these works of service to build up the body."²⁴ In Ephesians 4, Paul establishes the model for equipping Christians for service, stating, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). In order to expand the kingdom of Christ, Paul explained that the building up must be done according to God's plan. As MacArthur points out,

²³MacArthur, *Matthew*, 345.

²⁴Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 191.

“Attempting to build the church by human means only competes with the work of Christ.”²⁵ In other words, endeavoring to reach unbelievers without properly training the laity to effectively communicate the gospel will hinder the work. The model found in Ephesians 4:11-12 directs those who have been called, gifted and trained to equip others to effectively “preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Three aspects of the training process are identified in Ephesians 4:11-12: the role of the equipper, the responsibility of the laity, and the goal of the training.

The Pastor-Teacher as Equipper

Every Christian is called to serve others for the purpose of sharing the gospel; however, pastors have the unique responsibility of training Christians to evangelize unbelievers to ensure the expansion of Christ’s kingdom. The mandate to train laypersons to fulfill the Great Commission is an essential aspect to pastoral ministry.

Two important aspects of the pastor’s ministry will affect the missional and evangelistic activity of the church. First, for the pastor to fulfill his role in evangelism training, he must first demonstrate a passion for non-Christians and actively engage them with the gospel. Demonstration is vital in the equipping process because people are less likely to join with a leader if his daily life does not model what he teaches. Furthermore, a pastor must be able to teach believers to successfully engage the culture with the message of Christ. This teaching must be based on knowledge the pastor has obtained through study and personal experience. A Christian leader who lacks field experience in evangelism will lack credibility. Thus, for pastors, it is essential that they actively involve themselves in missions and evangelism.

The pastor-teacher must constantly keep the goal of his training church members in mind. Pastors have been given the privilege to lead God’s people to reach

²⁵John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 152.

out to the perishing through the only means of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ. As he faithfully trains the congregation to evangelize, the body of Christ will grow through conversion of lost souls to Christ. Furthermore, by training Christians to evangelize, pastors are fulfilling the mandate of Christ to “teach them all that I have command you” (Matt 28:20).

As pastors prayerfully consider the fact that unbelievers are in a state of condemnation and will perish without Christ (John 3:18), that burden for the lost should motivate pastors to equip as many Christians as possible to proclaim the gospel. Such a burden will be born out of many hours of praying, studying God’s word, and personally evangelizing in the community.

The pastor-teacher has been given the task of calling God’s people to be obedient to the Lord’s Word and thus must equip believers with the gospel of Jesus Christ. To equip means “to prepare or to put right and the phrase carries with it the idea of restoring something to its original condition or to make something complete. The full meaning of the passage is discovered in the two Greek terms *katartismos* which was used to describe the setting of a broken bone and *katartizō* which described the mending of a broken net.”²⁶ A church that is not actively participating in local evangelism as well as global missions is operating like a body with a broken bone. This deficiency might be the result of a lack of training rather than a lack of passion for the lost. Thus, the first step in repairing what has been broken in the church is the pastor’s committed investment of the time and energy required to train believers in evangelism.

Pastor-teachers must understand that evangelism divided from apologetics results in churches fishing with a net gaping with holes. The call to equip necessitates that Christian leaders recognize deficiencies in the church’s outreach, develop a plan to address the holes, and aggressively work to close the holes. In order to put the church on

²⁶ A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 58.

the right track, the pastor-teacher must faithfully and patiently preach the Word of God, declaring the necessity for God's people to faithfully reach out to the lost. Additionally, he must be a man of prayer who intercedes for the lost and on behalf of the congregation, asking the Lord to "send workers into His harvest" (Matt 9:38).

The Role of Laity in Ministry

Christians use a variety of excuses to keep from participating in evangelism. One of the chief excuses Christians give for not participating in outreach is they don't believe they have the gift of evangelism. As Darrell Robinson emphatically declares, "There is no such thing as the gift of evangelism."²⁷ All Christians are called to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) as well as participate in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20). The Bible does not provide any loopholes in the command for those who have been reconciled to Christ (5:17) to serve as ambassadors for Christ (5:20). Ambassadors carry the message of their king to other nations, regions, and peoples in order to expand the king's influence and prestige. Christ requires his followers to serve as his ambassadors by "making an appeal" that unbelievers would be "reconciled to God" (5:20). The proper response to this directive requires that laity submit themselves to evangelism training, and consequently, participate in scheduled church outreaches and evangelistic events, and to engage non-Christian family members, neighbors, co-workers, and people they meet during the routine activities.

The Goal of Ministry Training

As pastors train congregations, they must clearly explain the goal of evangelism. Is church growth the goal, and if so what kind of growth? In light of the Great Commission, the purpose of evangelism is the conversion of souls to the kingdom

²⁷Darrell W. Robinson, "Understanding the Gift of the Evangelist in the Local Church," in *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church for Harvest*, ed. Thomas P. Johnston (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 77.

of Christ, which will in turn involve numerical growth of congregations and the possible need to plant new churches. On one hand, Ephesians 4:11-12 supports the growth of congregations through conversions as the goal of evangelism. Conversely, the goal of equipping in Ephesians appears to be the unity of the church (4:3, 13, 16) which leads to the building up of the body (4:12). When church leaders are passionate about reaching the lost and training Christians to do likewise, the members of the church will embrace the responsibility to proclaim the gospel, uniting the church behind the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission. Genuine unity does more than complement the primary goal; it serves to undergird it. This unity requires every church member to submit to the authority of Christ, embrace his or her role in evangelism, and commit to a common vision of impacting the world with the gospel.

The Mandate to Defend the Faith: 1 Peter 3:15

Speaking about the importance of apologetics, Nancy Pearcey declares that “defending the faith is not only for professionally trained apologists. Not only are Christians obligated to share the gospel with the lost, they also are called to give reasons supporting the credibility of the gospel message.”²⁸ In a postmodern world, defending the Christian faith is more than an academic discipline reserved only for the university or seminary trained believer. According to the apostle Peter, all believers are required to defend the faith as he emphatically says, “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet 3:15). The word “defense” is translated in the NIV as “answer,” which softens the original meaning of the Greek word *apologia*. The word *apologia* was often used to mean a formal or informal defense of self or beliefs. MacArthur gives an example of both the formal judicial use of

²⁸Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 124.

the word in Acts 25:16 and 2 Timothy 4:16, as well an informal example of Paul defending himself in Philippians 1:16.²⁹ The discipline of apologetics derives its name from the Greek word *apologia* and can be defined as a defense of “one’s position or worldview as a means of establishing its validity and integrity.”³⁰

Christians must be ready to engage in philosophical and theological conversations extending to such topics as: epistemology, natural theology, the historicity of the Bible, as well as the deity and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians can no longer subscribe to the anti-intellectualism that has held the church captive since the Second Great Awakening. According to Craig, “Having logically valid, clearly formulated arguments is going to make you look smart and increase your credibility in their eyes, which will only make your witness more effective.”³¹

The Role of Sanctification in Apologetics

One often overlooked, but essential aspect of apologetics is the role of sanctification in the life of the apologist. *Sanctification* is the process by which the Holy Spirit progressively conforms a believer’s mind, will, and emotions to be in line with the person of Christ. The process involves willfully submitting one’s self to the authority of God’s Word as well as the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The primary emphasis of sanctification is surrender to the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. Situations, such as suffering, may tempt believers to doubt. Believers are called to be evangelistic in the midst of all difficulties, and this will require a correct perspective and attitude concerning Christ’s lordship. Jesus’ sovereign promise to never abandon believers must be firmly established in every Christian’s mind (Heb 13:5).

²⁹John MacArthur, *1 Peter, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), 201.

³⁰H. Wayne House and Dennis W. Jowers, *Reason For Our Hope: An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 2.

³¹Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 190.

Setting apart Christ in one's heart is more than an emotional decision; it is a mental verdict. In Romans, Paul instructs the believer to offer him or herself as "a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God" (12:1). He goes on to instruct them on how this takes place, by insisting that they stop allowing themselves to be conformed to the world. Instead, Christians are to "be transformed by the renewing" (12:2) of their minds. The renewing of the mind involves not only rejecting the false ideas and systems of the world, but requires embracing the authority of Scripture. By studying, reflecting upon, and applying the Word of God in one's life, a believer is grounded as to how to think and react to every situation. Furthermore, as believers are saturated by God's Word, they will begin to think, live, and act more like Jesus.

Apologetics is more than debating ideas; it is spiritual warfare, and the believer who is not actively being sanctified by the work of the Spirit of Christ will become frustrated and powerless. Paul declared that he could "do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13) because he had yielded his life to God. Christians who seek to engage unbelievers must first submit themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Imperative to Defend Christianity

Christians will engage in two types of apologetics which are commonly referred to as "offensive (or positive) apologetics and defensive (or negative) apologetics. Offensive apologetics seeks to present a positive case for Christian truth claims, offers evidence to validate the life, ministry, and message of Christ. Defensive apologetics seeks to nullify objections to those claims."³² House and Jowers describe the dual aspects of apologetics using the terms "destructive" and "creative." Destructive apologetics dismantles arguments that are opposed to Christianity. On the other hand, creative apologetics seeks to offer evidence in support of biblical Christianity.³³ Creative

³²Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 23.

³³House and Jowers, *Reason for Our Hope*, 3.

and destructive apologetics should not be understood as independently deployed methods, but instead as interchangeable techniques that one uses to evangelize unbelievers. Thus, Christians must not only be prepared to offer reasons for belief in Christ, but be ready to defend its truth against attacks. In many cases, destructive apologetics will enable a believer to transition to creative apologetics, which will provide an opportunity for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Believers must keep in mind that even though the Bible commands them to defend the faith, apologetics is not an end in itself. Apologetics is a means to make a logical and comprehensive case for Christianity so that the apologist can share the gospel.

The Proper Attitude in Apologetic Evangelism

Commenting on 1 Peter 3:15 Schreiner states, “When believers encounter a hostile world and are challenged concerning their faith, the temptation to respond harshly increases.”³⁴ Realizing the human tendency to lash out or retaliate when persecuted, Peter implores Christians to acknowledge the questions or attacks as an opportunity to share Christ in word and in deed. The directive to defend the faith is coupled with a Christ-like attitude of showing unbelievers respect. Peter instructs Christians to give an account for their faith with a spirit of “gentleness and reverence” (1 Pet 3:15). Gentleness is not weakness, but instead it means not having a dominant or arrogant attitude. Furthermore, reverence is an attitude of respect for God and for one’s fellow man. If a Christian comes under the verbal attack of an unbeliever, he or she is to engage the person with a logical and biblical defense of Christianity, but it must be done in a respectful manner that does not return evil for evil. Responding to a critic with anger or malice will undermine the credibility of the evangelist; however, refusing to take the attacks personally will keep the conversation focused on the facts. Christians must be careful to

³⁴Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 175.

not allow their emotions to deter them from the message and lash out at unbelievers. If the facts of the gospel are not presented or become drowned out through the negative attitude of the evangelist, it is unlikely that the encounter will bear any fruit. Thus, if a Christian reacts with anger, the unbeliever may become even more unwilling to listen to other believers in the future. Explaining this truth, Craig states,

We mustn't be quarrelsome with a non-believer, or we'll only succeed in alienating him. Having solid arguments will actually help you to remain calm in the face of angry attacks because you will realize how misled many people are and will respond to them with compassion. When you have good reasons for what you believe and know the answers to objections to your arguments, then there's just no reason to get hot under the collar.³⁵

The Mandate to Contend for the Faith: Jude 3

On one hand, apologetics involves making a case for Christianity before a hostile and unbelieving world, but on the other hand, the mandate to contend for the faith requires believers to make a case for orthodox Christian doctrine. According to House and Jowers, "Apologetics must not only concern themselves with those who are outside the Christian church but must contend for the faith against those inside the church who would pervert the purity and clarity of the gospel."³⁶

The Christian message has been firmly established in the Word of God, and is not to be changed. In both missions and evangelism, the presentation of the gospel must be communicated in a way that the audience can understand and believe the message without changing any aspect of the gospel. Nevertheless, contextualizing the gospel is not the same as altering the message. The gospel, by nature, is confrontational and because of that fact, some within Christianity have attempted to make it more appealing by softening or worse, deleting aspects of the message. Additionally, as House and Jowers state, "Often the teaching of Christian leaders in liberal denominations and

³⁵Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 190.

³⁶House and Jowers, *Reason for Our Hope*, 14.

heretical groups on the fringe of the Christian movement is more successful in leading Christians astray than pseudo-Christians cults, world religions, or movements like the Jesus Seminar.”³⁷ In contrast, the book of Jude encourages believers to take a stand for the “faith which once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). His call is in effect, a battle cry to “contend earnestly” (Jude 3) for sound doctrine against those who would pervert the teachings of Christianity.

The struggle for the purity of the gospel is not a secondary issue. Many people have erroneously held that theology and doctrine have nothing to do with sharing the gospel. This division is baseless because the gospel is founded on theology and is in itself a doctrinal position. A gospel message without a position on the person and work of God is meaningless. Additionally, sharing the gospel with an unbeliever is based on a doctrinal belief that he or she is lost and is in need of a savior. The gospel is steeped in doctrines such as the fall of man, the justice and wrath of God, and substitutionary atonement, to name just a few. Claiming Jesus as the Son of God and asking an unbeliever to repent and believe in him as Lord and Savior is a theological statement. Consequently, believers must not only know Christian doctrine, but must be prepared to defend it.

Explaining Jude’s use of the phrase, “contend earnestly,” Nathaniel Williams states, “It was used with reference to the striving of men in the Greek games to win the prize. As applied to that, it signifies the utmost effort of the will, through nerve and muscle, to overcome all competitors. MacArthur adds, “The verb form is a present infinitive, showing that the Christian struggle is to be continuous.”³⁸ From the beginning believers were given the directive to defend orthodox doctrine and to guard the truth of

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸John MacArthur, *2 Peter & Jude*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 2005), 155.

the gospel. The struggle for doctrinal purity and theological correctness is vitally important and deserves a Christian's full attention. The integrity of the gospel stands at the very center of evangelism.

One component of evangelism involves arguments for the existence of God; however, a biblically based soteriology is essential for a proper gospel presentation. Christian leaders must know and teach sound doctrine. Paul declared that a day was coming when men would not want to hear truth and would instead desire to have their ears tickled with false teachings (2 Tim 4:3-4). Also Percy states, "Every time a minister introduces a biblical teaching, he should also instruct the congregation in ways to defend it against the major objections they are likely to encounter."³⁹ Contending for the purity of the gospel will dictate that Christian leaders not only teach doctrine, but also communicate why it is important and how to defend it.

A Model of Apologetic Evangelism: Acts 17:16-34

The city of Athens had at various times served as the intellectual and religious capital of the ancient world. According to MacArthur, "Athens had been the greatest city in the world. Socrates, his brilliant student Plato, and Plato's student Aristotle, perhaps the greatest and most influential philosopher of all times, taught there. So also did Epicurus, founder of Epicureanism, and Zeno, founder of Stoicism, two dominant philosophies."⁴⁰ As the intellectual capital of the ancient world, Athens was known for its love of new philosophy as well as its religious diversity. According to H. Leo Eddleman, "One estimate maintains that Athens had no fewer than 30,000 idols."⁴¹

³⁹Percy, *Total Truth*, 127.

⁴⁰John MacArthur, *Acts 13-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 129.

⁴¹H. Leo Eddleman, *An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts* (Dallas: Books of Life Publishers, 1974), 244.

Additionally, MacArthur contends that nearly “every public building was dedicated to a god, and statues of gods filled the city.”⁴² Paul’s proclamation of the gospel in the midst of this ancient cosmopolitan city serves as an exceptional model for engaging the postmodern culture of the twenty-first century. His interaction with the Greeks included several universal principles for engaging polytheistic and atheistic cultures. First, he was able to contextualize the message, which allowed him to communicate foreign concepts in a way that his audience could comprehend and apply. Second, he was familiar with the beliefs, customs, and religious practices of his audience. Paul’s familiarity with the Greek poets and philosophers gave him access to their worldviews, aspects of which he used as bridges to sharing the gospel. Finally, before proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, Paul made a case for God using logic and natural theology. In the end, every aspect of Paul’s interaction with the Athenians was a means to sharing the message of the resurrection.

Contextualizing the Gospel

Proclaiming a message which was delivered more than two thousand years ago can be difficult if not impossible if one does not interpret it for a modern audience. “Christians need to learn how to be bilingual, translating the perspective of the gospel into language understood by our culture,” says Percy.⁴³ The truth is the gospel never changes; however, cultures, languages and customs are always fluctuating. Paul’s presentation at the Areopagus is the ideal example of how the message should be communicated to polytheistic, atheistic or agnostic peoples. We witness Paul’s respect for the people and the culture in his compliments to the community for being zealous about religion (Acts 17:22). Furthermore, he shows regard for their beliefs by quoting from several of their poets (17:28). Paul’s commitment to contextualizing the gospel (1

⁴²MacArthur, *Acts 13-28*, 130.

⁴³Percy, *Total Truth*, 67.

Cor 9:22-23) is displayed in missionary efforts to Greeks at Athens. Thus, in the model of Paul's preaching at Athens, believers must recognize the importance of understanding and appreciating the culture as means for effectively preaching the gospel.

Three Evangelistic Methods Compared and Contrasted

When addressing the Jews, Paul, like Peter, would begin with the Old Testament. Both audiences shared a common background, which allowed the Apostles to move directly to Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Both Peter and Paul use the Old Testament prophecies as a basis for proving that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Acts 2:17-20, 25-28, 34-35; 13:33-41). Likewise, both refer to the resurrection as the primary proof that Jesus is the son of God (Acts 2:32; 13:30-31). Each one declares that the resurrection of Jesus was a historical fact by pointing to the eyewitness of the account (Acts 2:32; 13:31). Neither Paul nor Peter included natural theology in their sermons to primarily Jewish audiences, which is logical because the existence of God was a central aspect of both Jewish religion and culture.

Over the past several hundred years, the majority of preaching and witnessing in Europe and America did not need to include arguments from natural theology, as belief in a divine being was inherently part of the culture. God was part of the public square, with Christianity as a centerpiece in schools, civics, and politics. For the most part religion was understood as necessary for a moral and prosperous society. As a result, preaching focused on the need for repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Over the past century, western cultures have shifted drastically from a Judeo-Christian worldview to a more Greco-Roman perspective, removing God and religion from public life.

Fulfilling the mandate of Christ will require believers to study the primary difference between the way Paul addressed the Jews in the synagogues and the way he addressed the Greeks at the Areopagus. Commenting on Paul's sermon at the Areopagus, Dulles says, "This popular type of natural theology prepares for Paul's apologetic to the

cultured Greeks at Athens.”⁴⁴ Dulles believes that Paul begins to adapt his approach after Acts 11 as the focus shifted to the Gentile world. He states, “In chapter 14 [of Acts] Luke begins to show the shape that Christian proclamation took when confronted by paganism.”⁴⁵ Concerning Paul’s approach at Athens, Percy asks, “When Paul addressed secular Greek philosophers in Acts 17, the Stoics and Epicureans on Mars Hill, where did he begin?”⁴⁶ Paul began with what he had left out of his message to the Jews, namely a case for the existence of God. Paul knew that Greek philosophical and religious beliefs did not begin with the eternal and transcendent god of monotheism. Consequently, Paul began by establishing the existence of the Creator.

Arguments for the Existence of God

As Paul made the case for the existence of God, he sought to find common ground with his audience in their culture. His knowledge of the Greek poets demonstrates how important it is for Christians to understand the beliefs of the culture that they seek to reach for Christ. According to Dulles, Paul’s use of the Greek poets Epimenides and Aratus demonstrates that “God is intimately near to each man.”⁴⁷ Like Paul, believers must recognize “in an age of increasing atheism and agnosticism,” says Craig, “we cannot afford to forgo an apologetic for this most of all Christian beliefs: the existence of God.”⁴⁸

Like Paul, believers must be prepared to use natural theology as a primer for presenting a case for the resurrected Jesus. The three primary arguments for the existence of God that can be easily assimilated into a gospel presentation are the

⁴⁴Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 10.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Percy, *Total Truth*, 89.

⁴⁷Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, 11.

⁴⁸Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 196.

cosmological, the teleological, and the moral. The cosmological argument forces unbelievers to answer the question of the first cause. Since the universe had a beginning, it had to have a cause. The most plausible explanation for the first cause is an uncaused divine being. The teleological argument challenges the atheist with the complexity of the universe and the obvious design of life. The only plausible answer to the complex and orderly structure of the universe is a divine designer. Finally, the moral argument confronts the unbeliever with the question of right and wrong. If there is no absolute standard established by a perfect and holy God, then there is simply no basis for referring to something as evil. Thus, even the question of evil can be used to establish the existence of God. While it is unlikely that every situation will call for presenting evidence for the existence of God, believers must be prepared when the situation arises.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has established a biblical and theological basis for integrating apologetics in evangelism training by pointing to five passages of the New Testament. In Matthew 28:18-20, all believers are commanded to participate in the work of the Great Commission. Paul's preaching at Athens in Acts 17:16-34 provides a model for evangelizing polytheistic or atheistic cultures. Additionally, Paul's instructions to the church at Ephesus establish the importance of training in ministry. Finally, both Jude 3 and 1 Peter 3:15 call for believers to defend the faith both inside the church and to those on the outside. This list is not an exhaustive study of apologetics in the Bible; however, it does provide a biblical basis for assimilating apologetics into evangelism training.

CHAPTER 3

AN EVALUATION OF MAJOR APOLOGETIC METHODS TO FORMULATE A MODEL TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN EVANGELISM TRAINING

The previous chapter proposed a biblical mandate for integrating apologetics with evangelism. That directive did not provide a comprehensive approach considering the major methods of apologetics. Therefore, this chapter offers a brief survey of the major approaches to apologetics. The field of Christian apologetics lacks a universal taxonomy; according to Steve Cowan, of all the “books on apologetic methodology, no two classify the various methods in exactly the same way.”¹ In other words, the diversity in apologetic approaches is matched only by the assortment of classifications of methods. To understand the different approaches to apologetics, this chapter briefly explains the methods proposed by Geisler in *Christian Apologetics*,² House and Jowers in *Reasons for Our Hope*,³ Cowan in *Five Views on Apologetics*,⁴ Boa and Bowman in *Faith Has Its Reasons*,⁵ and Groothuis in *Christian Apologetics*.⁶

¹Steve B. Cowan, “Introduction,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, eds. Steve B. Cowan and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 9.

²Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2003).

³H. Wayne House and Dennis W. Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011).

⁴Cowan and Gundry, *Five Views on Apologetics*.

⁵Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2001).

⁶Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

In addition to surveying the primary approaches to apologetics, the majority of this chapter outlines how an integrated approach to apologetics will be used in this project. The proposed integrated method will be a hybrid of the classical approach that will, in various places, blend aspects from other leading methods of Christian apologetics. To accomplish this goal, this chapter provides an explanation of how an integrated approach will be employed in evangelistic engagements with unbelievers by members of First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky.

A Survey of Apologetic Taxonomies

Any survey on the taxonomies in apologetics must include the contributions of Norman Geisler. In his book on apologetics, he reviews the philosophical systems that seek to answer the question of God's existence, including *agnosticism*, the belief that humanity's knowledge of God or his existence to be unknowable, and *rationalism*, the belief that the only truth is what is knowable or demonstrated by human reason.⁷ While both methods are used to answer the question concerning the existence or nonexistence of God, neither will be included in the list taken from Geisler's book because both are opposed to supernaturalism as revealed in the Bible. The reader is left with the following approaches: fideism, experientialism, evidentialism, combinationalism, and Geisler's version of classical apologetics.

The paradigm proposed by House and Jowers divides approaches to apologetics into the following four classifications: classical, rational evidential, fideistic/experiential, and presuppositional. The combination of fideism and experientialism is justified by House and Jowers on the basis that both views reject human reason in favor of the experience of faith.⁸

⁷Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 29.

⁸House and Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope*, 42.

Cowan offers a taxonomy that is divided into five leading methods. Classical, evidential, cumulative case, and presuppositional methods are classified as the “big four” because, according to Cowan, these methods are “where the debate has raged in recent years.”⁹ The final addition to the tentative taxonomy is reformed epistemology, whose arrival Cowan calls, “One of the most dramatic developments” in apologetics.¹⁰

Unlike Cowan, who divides the classical and evidential methods, Groothuis combines them into one view in his classification because both are dependent on historical facts. According to Groothuis, the primary difference is that the classical apologist employs arguments for the existence of God to make the intellectual move to Christianity easier, while the evidentialist “either minimizes or dispenses with arguments for the God’s existence from nature and instead opts for a one-step argument for Christianity.”¹¹ In addition to evidentialism, Groothuis’ taxonomy consists of fideism, presuppositionalism, and reformed epistemology.

Finally, Boa and Bowman base their fourfold division of apologetic methods on Edwin Burt’s “four principal methods of pursuing theological questions: the rationalistic, the empirical, the authoritarian, and the intuitive.”¹² Hence, each category is appropriately labeled to coincide with Burt’s division. Boa and Bowman’s categorization includes “classical (rationalistic), evidentialism (empirical), reformed apologetics (authoritarian), and fideism (intuitive).”¹³ Additionally, the authors present an integrated approach to apologetics.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 19.

¹¹Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 69.

¹²Edwin A. Burt, *Types of Religious Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939), 448, quoted in Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2001), 56.

¹³Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 56.

None of the above taxonomies is an exhaustive list of the approaches to apologetics; however, each model covers the most notable classifications. Cowan believes that the fivefold division proposed in his book constitutes “the most-well known and popular argumentative strategies in the scholarly apologetics community.”¹⁴ Based on the taxonomies of the other books mentioned, Cowan’s proposal is accurate. The main variation between Cowan and the other authors is his combination of multiple approaches into one category. For the purposes of this project, the classification of methods will be divided into four categories. The first category is apologetics that employ reason, which is commonly known as the classical approach. Evidential and cumulative case methods are grouped together in apologetics that employ evidence. The reformed view that appeals to revelation as the primary apologetic includes presuppositional and reformed epistemology. Finally, the method that appeals to faith apart from evidence is known as fideism.

An Overview of Major Approaches to Apologetics

Like approaches to personal evangelism, apologetic methods should only be used as a template or a framework for making a case for Christianity. The danger in apologetic evangelism is adopting a method for merely pragmatic reasons. The goal in examining different types of apologetics is not to find the one that works the best, but instead to discover the approaches that are in line with one’s biblical and theological convictions.

Classical

Classical apologetics is a two-step approach. First, the apologist makes a case for the existence of God by means of reason. In the first step, typically no appeal is made to Scripture. Instead, the apologist appeals to reason by using one or more of the major

¹⁴Cowan and Gundry, *Five Views on Apologetics*, 20.

philosophical arguments for the existence of God. The most common theistic arguments are the cosmological, teleological, ontological, and moral.

The cosmological argument makes the claim that everything that has come into existence must have been caused by something greater than itself, since no effect can be greater than the cause. According to this argument, the universe had a beginning. The universe, therefore, must have a cause, and that cause is God. The teleological argument stands upon the complexity of the universe and all that it contains as evidence of design. If the universe has the appearance of design, then it seems to reason there must be a designer. According to classical apologists, the most plausible conclusion to the appearance of design is God.

According to Boa and Bowman, the ontological argument is the “only philosophical theistic proof that reasons in a purely *a priori* fashion.”¹⁵ This approach was first made popular by Anslem the Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century. He believed that a necessary being could not be proven to be impossible because that would contradict what one knows about creation. Furthermore, he claimed that a necessary being’s existence could not be possible and not necessary since that was a self-contradiction.¹⁶ Thus, Anslem concludes that the only plausible explanation is that a necessary being necessarily exists.¹⁷

Finally, apologists employ an argument for the existence of God from morality, which according to Boa and Bowman is “part of a larger argument known as the anthropological argument.”¹⁸ The basic moral argument appeals to certain universal

¹⁵Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has its Reasons*, 117.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 116.

moral standards to make a case for an absolute standard for morality. The goal of the moral argument is to establish that morality is not subjective but objective by appealing to the universal truths like murder and genocide being wrong. The apologists might ask, “Why is it wrong to murder?” When the unbeliever makes an appeal for justice in the case of murder, he or she recognizes the act as unjust because of a universal code of morality. Since evolution has no real or meaningful answers for the basis of morality, the Christian apologist is able to make a case for an absolute standard that can only come from a perfect and holy God.

According to the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*,¹⁹ the second step employed by the classical apologists is to “compile historical evidence to establish such basic truths of Christianity as the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Bible.”²⁰ One of the primary focuses of this second step is an appeal to the resurrection of Jesus as an accurate and historically verified event.²¹ In his or her defense of the Christian faith, the classical apologist uses a combination of reason and historical evidence.

Evidential and Cumulative Case

Since the classical approach employs two steps in apologetics, evidentialism is commonly known as the one step approach. Furthermore, it is the approach to apologetics that “argues that the most significant historical events in Christianity—particularly the resurrection of Jesus—are matters that can be established through proper historical argumentation, even apart from any prior arguments for the existence of

¹⁹Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999).

²⁰Ibid., 154.

²¹For a more detailed look at how the historical evidence of the resurrection is used in classical apologetics, see William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Crossway: Wheaton, 2008).

God.”²² The evidential approach, like cumulative case, appeals to historical evidence to make a case for Christian theism. Proponents of the cumulative case approach will appeal to a broad range of evidence so that if one argument fails to convince an unbeliever or if the evidence is not convincing, the apologetic for Christianity will still be the most plausible worldview. Paul Feinberg contends that an apologetic for the Christian faith is not to be “found in the domain of philosophy or logic, but law, history, and literature.”²³ Both the evidential and the cumulative case apologists appeal to evidence as a credible case for Christianity; thus they are grouped together as evidential approaches.

Presuppositional and Reformed Epistemology

Both presuppositional and reformed epistemology apologetics were propagated by theologians such as Cornelius Van Til and Gordon Haddon Clark due to their theological conviction that the apologist must begin by presupposing Christianity. In the reformed epistemological method, evidence is viewed as unnecessary, and belief in God requires neither evidence nor argument.²⁴ The definition of reformed epistemology offered by House and Jowers can be applied to presuppositional apologetics because both methods contend that “an intellectually responsible person might accept Christianity without first demanding evidence for its truthfulness.”²⁵ Based on this definition, the reformed approach could be identified with fideism; however, unlike fideism, reformed apologetics “requires a person to take seriously (and to rebut) objections to the Christian

²²Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 69.

²³Paul D. Feinberg, “Cumulative Case Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, eds. Steven B. Cowan and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 151.

²⁴Cowan, *5 Views*, 19-20.

²⁵House and Jowers, *Reasons for Hope*, 85.

faith.”²⁶ Both views believe that non-Christian thought is unreasonable; thus, there is no common ground for the Christian to build upon. As a result, the reformed approach does not employ classical arguments for the existence of God. Both reformed epistemology and presuppositional approaches insist that the evangelist begin with the belief that the Christian worldview is correct and that the unbeliever cannot “make sense of the world morally, logically or scientifically, since Christianity alone supplies the required conditions for these areas of life to be intelligible.”²⁷

Fideism

Fideism is the view that faith is exercised apart from evidence. Accordingly, the fideist believes that using human reason in evangelism “constitutes preaching with the wisdom of words, which according to Paul, makes the cross of Christ of no effect.”²⁸ According to Groothuis, “Fideism is an attempt to protect Christian faith against the assaults of reason by means of intellectual insulation and isolation.”²⁹ Since fideism is opposed to the use of reason and evidence, it appears to be of little use in apologetics. Moreover, fideism is hard to classify as an apologetic for Christianity. By rejecting the use of historical apologetics, declaring that philosophy and faith are diametrically opposed, and stating that science does not support Christianity but instead undermines it, fideism is only left with an appeal to experience.³⁰ The basis for our confidence in the Christian faith is our experiencing salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit. The fideist is left with only one defense of Christianity, which is his or her own personal faith.

²⁶Ibid., 85.

²⁷Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 62.

²⁸House and Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope*, 84.

²⁹Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 60.

³⁰Boa and Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons*, 436.

Integrating Approaches to Apologetics with Evangelism

Constructing a rigid and strict method for using apologetics in evangelism is not plausible for this project for several reasons. First, every encounter with an unbeliever is a unique experience that will involve a variety of circumstances, questions, and responses.

Additionally, the notion that only one approach is acceptable limits the evangelist to a prescribed framework that might not work in every situation. For example, an atheist is unlikely to listen to a Christian quote or refer to Scripture. In this case, an appeal to reason, such as is found in the classical approach, will allow the Christian to defend theism without directly appealing to special revelation. Integrating apologetic methods cannot be justified purely for pragmatic reasons; however, an encounter with a non-Christian theist will not require arguments for the existence of God. Instead the evangelist can use the historical or evidential approach. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to find theists who do not reject Christianity for historical reasons but do so for what they believe to be inconsistencies between what Christians claim and how they live. In this instance, aspects of the experiential approach can be integrated. The evangelists can appeal to the self-authenticating work of the Spirit and call the person to repentance and faith in Christ as the only way to experience genuine Christianity.

Furthermore, limiting oneself to merely a single method of apologetics can potentially hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no guarantee that the Holy Spirit has been working in an unbeliever's life; however, it is possible that the Spirit will use apologetics to open the unbeliever's mind to the message of Christ. Thus, it is possible that apologetics can be used by the Spirit of God to remove barriers to faith in Christ. For this reason, Christians must not be limited to just one approach in apologetics. Instead, like the carpenter who employs numerous tools to build a house, evangelists must carefully and discerningly use the appropriate method of apologetics in order to share the gospel. The Christian's commitment is not to the system of apologetics, but to

the directives to defend the faith (1 Pet 3:15) and to make disciples of all ethnic groups (Matt 28:19). Apologetic evangelism training, according to Adam Greenway, should be customized to the needs of the local church's context.³¹ The approach used in this project will do just that; it will be customized to equip the church to combat the primary objections to Christianity in the surrounding community.

An Integrated Approach to Apologetics

When approaching an unbeliever with the goal of sharing the gospel, certain presuppositions are essential in apologetic evangelism. The first presupposition is that God has revealed Himself in both general and special revelation. Natural theology can be used in a ministerial role to special revelation, but on its own does not contain enough information to bring a person to a saving knowledge of the Son of God. The second presupposition is that making a case for the existence of God alone is not enough. Acknowledging the existence of God cannot redeem a person from the effects of the fall (Gen 3), because even the demons acknowledge it (Jas 2:19). Natural theology or general revelation is only a means or a tool to be used to direct the unbeliever to the special revelation of God. The call to make disciples of all ethnicities (Matt 28:19) demands that the evangelist proclaim more than the existence of God. Obedience to the Great Commission requires that Christians proclaim the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture (John 14:6). The third presupposition is that historical evidence—particularly the resurrection of Jesus Christ—is a necessary element of defending the Christian faith. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity fails to be different than other theistic religions. A common objection to Christianity is that dead men do not rise. Thus, making a case for the bodily resurrection of Jesus is equivalent to making a

³¹Adam W. Greenway, "Apologetics: The Key to Revitalizing Personal Evangelism," in *Mobilizing a Great Commission Church for Harvest: Voices and Views from the Southern Baptist Professors of Evangelism Fellowship*, ed. Thomas P. Johnston (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 154.

case for biblical Christianity. The final presupposition is that any objection to Christianity posed by an unbeliever can be an opportunity for sharing the gospel. Arguments against the Christian faith are often self-refuting or based on fundamental misunderstandings about Christianity, and therefore can be used as a means to declare the truth of the gospel (1 Pet 3:15).

Arguments for the Existence of God

An encounter with an atheist or an agnostic will often require a case for the existence of God. At this point, the evangelist must carefully explain to the unbeliever that there are logical reasons to believe that God exists. Many agnostics, those who claim that one cannot possess enough knowledge to determine if God exists or not, do not see their view as self-refuting. Once the evangelist explains that the agnostic claims superior knowledge of God in stating that knowledge of God is unknowable, his argument has been defeated. The agnostic, like the atheist, should be engaged with one of three arguments focused on proving the existence of God. Before explaining the case for theism, it is important to note that any argument for the existence of God is not a fact, but a logical conclusion based on reasons and one's interpretation of the evidence. The primary argument for theism within the classical approach is known as the cosmological argument. As Norman Geisler states, "the cosmological argument is the argument from the beginning of the universe. If the universe had a beginning, then the universe had a cause."³² Additionally, William Lane Craig has popularized a version known as the Kalām cosmological argument, which states,

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.
2. The universe began to exist.

³²Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 75.

3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.³³

The cosmological argument, in all its forms, is built on the premise that everything that had a beginning had a cause, which is substantiated by the Law of Causality.³⁴ The major premise of Geisler's version of the cosmological argument is based on this first principle of causality. *The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* defines the principle of causality as:

1. Every effect has a cause.
2. Every contingent being is caused by another.
3. Every limited being is caused by another.
4. Everything that comes to be is caused by another.
5. Nonbeing cannot cause being.³⁵

Based on what is observable in creation, one can conclude that the first premise of the cosmological argument is "self-evident or reducible to the self-evident."³⁶ To deny the law of causality would require one to deny "the fundamental principle of science, and to deny rationality."³⁷ According to Geisler, this denial would require one to reject the process of rational thinking, which is putting together thoughts (the causes) that result in conclusions (the effects).³⁸ Since the first premise is easily established, in order for the cosmological argument to be logically consistent, the minor premise that the universe had a beginning must be defended.

In order to defend the second premise of the cosmological argument, the apologist can utilize a leading atheistic scientist who believes the universe had a

³³William L. Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 74.

³⁴Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 75.

³⁵Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 120.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 75.

³⁸*Ibid.*

beginning. When Paul preached the gospel to the Greeks at Athens, he quoted pagan poets and philosophers to make a case for the existence of God (Acts 17: 16-32). For example, one of the most well-known naturalists, Stephen Hawking, believes that the universe is not eternal and had a beginning.³⁹ Therefore, if it had a beginning, according to the cosmological argument, it had a cause. Thus, the Christian apologist can use Hawking's conclusion about the universe to make a case for theism. Additionally, the case can be made that if the universe had no beginning then there was no beginning of time. This concept, however, is illogical because an actual infinite regress is impossible. As Craig observes, "If you can't count to infinity, how could you count down from infinity?"⁴⁰ If the universe is eternal, then today would not be possible. Since creation exists in time, and today is the last day in history, then it follows that time began. Based on the observable evidence, the most logical conclusion is that the universe had a beginning, and if there was a beginning there had to be a cause. The cosmological argument gives the evangelist a solid foundation for presenting the God of Christianity.

Another argument the Christian apologist can use for theism is the teleological argument, or argument from design. The design argument seeks to demonstrate the necessity of an intelligent and divine being by calling attention to the fine-tuning of the universe and life. Naturalists might contend that the universe does appear to be designed, but it is the result of chance. By appealing to chance, the naturalist incorrectly proposes the theory that life appeared, flourished, and is sustained by random or accidental events, and that this theory is superior to the design argument. In other words, the naturalist's position is that the appearance of design is only an illusion. Naturalistic philosophical presuppositions are presented as scientific fact and are presented as superior to the

³⁹Stephen W. Hawking, "The Origin of the Universe," Stephen W. Hawking [on-line]; accessed 18 November, 2011; available from <http://www.hawking.org.uk/index.php/lectures/publiclectures/94.html>; Internet.

⁴⁰Craig, *On Guard*, 84.

evidence of design. Scientific evidence, however, can be used to make a compelling case for a divine designer. Defending this argument, Craig offers an example of fine-tuning:

The so-called weak force, one of the four fundamental forces of nature, which operates inside the nucleus of an atom, is so finely tuned that an alteration in its value by even one part out of 10^{100} would have prevented a life-permitting universe! Similarly, a change in the value of the so-called cosmological constant, which drives the acceleration of the universe's expansion, by as little as one part in 10^{120} would have rendered the universe life-prohibiting.⁴¹

Craig's comprehensive example illustrates that the naturalistic worldview, arguing against a divine designer, can be refuted with scientific evidence. Philosophers, such as Craig, are able to recall and employ very detailed and scientific arguments for the existence of God. Most Christians, however, are not as skilled to state such complex arguments when engaging unbelievers. In that case, the evangelist can use the following syllogism:

1. Every design had a designer.
2. The universe has highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.⁴²

The teleological argument can be made through deduction; however, an abductive argument can bolster the case. An abductive argument presents the conclusion of the design argument as the best possible explanation of the evidence as opposed to presenting it as a concrete conclusion. House and Jowers contend that using the design argument abductively will make it more credible to educated unbelievers.⁴³ In fact, it would be unwise to present any theistic argument as fact. Instead, Christians must honestly present their conclusions as the most plausible based on the evidence. Since logic and reason are tools used by fallible and finite creatures, any use of them must be

⁴¹Ibid., 109.

⁴²Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 95.

⁴³House and Jowers, *Reasons for Our Hope*, 266.

only for the purpose of directing an unbeliever to the perfect revelation of God found in Scripture.

The final argument for theism is made by appealing to universal moral standards. The moral argument is not to be used to prove that atheists or non-Christians are immoral, but instead to demonstrate through reason that if God does not exist, then there is no basis for objective values and duties. The moral argument, as presented by Craig states:

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
2. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.⁴⁴

Objections to the moral argument are primarily focused against objective morality. Unbelievers who contend that morality is subjective, or based on one's opinion, typically live as if it is objective. To demonstrate that unbelievers live as if objective values and duties exist, Craig says to ask unbelievers how they feel about the Hindu practice of suttee, a religious ceremony where the widow of the deceased is burned alive.⁴⁵ If no objective moral values exist, then it follows that one cannot denounce any inhumane practices of other cultures or religions as evil. Occasionally, it is possible to find an atheist completely committed to his or her worldview who will not denounce such acts as the holocaust of World War II or the genocides that took place in Rwanda and Sudan. The majority of unbelievers will label these events as evil and unjust, at which point, the evangelist must challenge them to present a basis for why murder and genocide are wrong. The crux of this argument is that without God there is no foundation for declaring any act evil. If, as Geisler and Turek point out, "everyone knows that there are absolute moral obligations,"⁴⁶ then it follows that an absolute moral law exists, originated

⁴⁴Craig, *On Guard*, 129.

⁴⁵Ibid., 141.

⁴⁶Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 171.

by something other than man himself. It is apparent that there is a moral law, and since every law has a law giver, then it is reasonable to state that a moral law giver exists.⁴⁷

The cosmological argument demonstrates that there was a first uncaused cause, and the design argument reveals this uncaused entity must be intelligent; the moral argument demonstrates that this intelligent uncaused cause is also perfectly good. Used together, these three arguments serve as a solid basis for presenting the God of the Bible to unbelievers with the ultimate goal as presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ. The evangelist must use the preceding philosophical case as a bridge to special revelation. Transitioning from a purely philosophical case for theism to the gospel of Christ can be done by employing evidential apologetics. The next step, therefore, is to present historical evidence for the reliability of the New Testament.

Historical Evidence for the Reliability of the New Testament

In evangelistic encounters, it is not uncommon to meet theists who are not followers of Christ because they do not believe that the New Testament is the most reliable source of information on the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Objections are presented in various forms; however, one of the most common is a belief that the authors of the New Testament were not eyewitnesses of the recorded events. Since the New Testament, especially the four Gospels, is the most reliable historical account of the life of Jesus, then it follows that an argument for the reliability of the canonical Gospels will precede a case for the resurrection and divinity of Christ.

To establish the historicity of the New Testament documents, Craig proposes the evangelist use the criteria of authenticity, which are “signs of historical credibility.”⁴⁸ In other words, the evidence will provide strong support that the events recorded in the

⁴⁷Ibid., 171.

⁴⁸Craig, *On Guard*, 194.

Gospels are mostly likely historically accurate. Craig's list includes six criteria; however, only four of these are necessary to present a strong case for the trustworthiness of the New Testament. The first of Craig's criteria asks if the events recorded in the Gospels fit the facts of the time and place. Luke, the historian and author of Luke and Acts, "displays and incredible array of knowledge of local places, names, environmental conditions, customs, and circumstances that befit only an eyewitness contemporary with the time and events,"⁴⁹ according to Geisler and Turek. The accuracy of events, persons, and places demonstrated by Luke and other authors of the New Testament provides ample evidence for the first criterion.

The second criterion for evaluating a historical document requires early and independent sources of the events. The four canonical Gospels along with passages such as Philippians 2:5-7 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, which both appear to be based on Christian creeds and confessions that predate the New Testament, meet the above criteria. Matthew's Gospel is believed to be written by the apostle of the same name, also known as Levi (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14); both Mark and Luke were associates of Apostles and recorded their Gospels within forty years of the events, and the fourth gospel is believed to have been written by the apostle John (John 1:14; 20:30-31). The above passages reveal that early Christians believed that Jesus was the Son of God and that he had bodily and visibly resurrected from the grave. The evidence of multiple and independent sources helps to establish the plausibility of the events recorded in the New Testament.

The third criterion proposed by Craig is the principle of embarrassment. This principle is established through events recorded in the New Testament that portray the disciples as dim-witted doubters who often misunderstand Jesus' teachings and who would eventually abandon him after his arrest. Since these events could possibly be embarrassing to the early church, it is unlikely that the accounts are fabricated.

⁴⁹Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, 256.

Furthermore, events such as Jesus referring to Peter as Satan (Matt 16:23) are not what one would normally expect from a non-eyewitness author who is attempting to perpetrate myths as truth in hope of furthering Christianity. The first people to see the risen Jesus were women (Matt 28:1-10), and not the disciples. Since the testimony of women was not considered reliable by the Jews in the first century, and since the account portrays the disciples as lacking faith, it must be taken serious as being historically accurate.

Furthermore, perhaps the most embarrassing event recorded in the Gospels is the unbelief and fear displayed by the disciples compared to the dedication of the women who remained with Jesus until the end of his life. These events caused humiliation to the Christian community and required greater explanation; thus they are unlikely to have been added at a later date.

While this embarrassment criterion does help establish historically reliable events, the principle cannot be applied in reverse, meaning one cannot claim that an event is not historically accurate if it does not meet the criterion of embarrassment. This third criterion, like the others, assists apologists in making a cumulative case for the reliability of the New Testament.

One of the objections to the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus is the hypothesis that the disciples had sincerely hoped Jesus would resurrect from the grave. That hope is what caused them to believe that he had resurrected even though he was still in the grave. To answer that objection, we can examine Craig's fourth criterion for determining historical reliability, the criterion of dissimilarity, as "the incident is unlike earlier Jewish ideas and/or unlike later Christian ideas."⁵⁰ For example, this objection to the resurrection of Jesus lacks credibility because the argument goes against the first century Jewish theology that understood the resurrection of the dead to be a general resurrection that would occur at the end of the age. Therefore, the individual resurrection

⁵⁰Craig, *On Guard*, 195.

of one Jew would not have been a theological hope of the disciples. To the contrary, the behavior of the disciples after the death of Jesus reveals they had no expectation of his resurrection. The resurrection, like many other theological concepts in the Gospels meets the criterion of dissimilarity.

In addition to meeting Craig's numerous criteria for authenticity, the New Testament's trustworthiness is further established through the abundance and early date of its manuscripts. Wegner states that "there are at least 5,400 known extant fragments or manuscripts of the New Testament text."⁵¹ Geisler agrees and bolsters the case for the historical reliability of the New Testament, when he says, "There is more abundant and accurate manuscript evidence for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world."⁵² Establishing the historical accuracy and overall trustworthiness of the Bible is challenging; however, the antiquity, accuracy, and number of manuscripts for the New Testament will strengthen the argument.

The historical accuracy and credibility of the New Testament help the evangelist establish that the Gospels' accounts are reliable. This allows the evangelist to make a case for the divinity of Christ when he or she encounters a skeptic who refuses to believe that Jesus was anything more than a man. This case can be made by appealing to two lines of evidence: examining the claims that Jesus made about himself as recorded in the Gospels, and evaluating the evidence for Jesus' resurrection as recorded by the eyewitnesses in the Gospels, as well as Paul's apologetic found in 1 Corinthians 15. There are no recorded personal writings of Jesus; thus one must depend upon the New Testament as the primary source for accounts of his ministry.⁵³ Establishing the

⁵¹Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 235.

⁵²Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 306.

⁵³Craig, *On Guard*, 184.

trustworthiness of the New Testament then is a necessary prerequisite before transitioning to the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God. The deity of Christ, as Geisler accurately states, “Is absolutely essential to true Christianity. If it is true, then Christianity is unique and authoritative. If not, then Christianity does not differ in kind from other religions.”⁵⁴ The purpose of all the preceding philosophical and historical arguments was to lay a foundation for presenting the unique and unparalleled fact that Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh (John 1:1-2, 14; 1 John 1:1-2). In order to defend the claim that Jesus announced equality with God, Geisler suggests several claims made by Jesus.⁵⁵

To prove that Jesus claimed to be Jehovah, Geisler compares Old Testament passages that speak exclusively of Jehovah to New Testament passages where Jesus makes statements that appear to make him equal with God. An important note, however, is that cults like Jehovah’s Witnesses attempt to combat this argument by claiming others misunderstood who Jesus was and incorrectly ascribed to him the status of deity. One example of this alleged misunderstanding was when Thomas saw the resurrected Jesus and said, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, Thomas is only recognizing Jesus a special human being who has become like the judges of the Old Testament.⁵⁶ Further the Jehovah’s Witnesses contend that Jesus himself never actually claimed to be God, and dismiss any reference to Scripture that does not directly show that Jesus claimed to be God.

The most convincing evidence that Jesus claimed to be God are his statements that he possessed power and privileges that were ascribed only to Jehovah. Geisler notes,

⁵⁴Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 329.

⁵⁵Ibid., 330-34.

⁵⁶*Reasoning from the Scriptures* (Brooklyn, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 213.

The very things that the Jehovah of the Old Testament claimed for himself Jesus of Nazareth also claimed, as the following verses reveal: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), but the Old Testament declared "Jehovah is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). Jesus claimed to be judge of all men and nations (John 5:27 f. and Matt. 25:31 f.) but Joel, quoting Jehovah, wrote: "for there I will sit to judge all nations round about" (Joel 3:12). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) whereas Isaiah says, "Jehovah will be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (60:19). Jesus claimed in prayer before the Father to share his eternal glory, saying "Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made." But Isaiah quoted Jehovah vowing, "my glory will I not give to another" (42:8).⁵⁷

In direct refutation of the cult's view of Jesus, the New Testament offers evidence that Jesus claimed to be equal with God the Father. The Gospel of John provides the most striking claims of the deity of Christ. In chapter 5 of John, Jesus claims multiple deistic attributes: an intimate knowledge of the Father's work and plans (17, 19, 20); to possess the power to raise the dead (21); to judge the world (22); to receive the same honor as the Father (23); and the ability to grant eternal life (24). The recorded Jewish response was to charge him with blasphemy, which resulted in killing him for claiming equality with the Father. Based on what the Jews heard plainly from the mouth of Jesus, they believed that Jesus was "calling God His own Father," and thus, "making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Clearly, the original audience believed that Jesus was making himself equal with God; if he had not, they would not have accused him of blasphemy and sought his death.

Another convincing proof of the divinity of Jesus is his willingness to be worshipped. Throughout the Old Testament, worship of anyone but God is clearly forbidden (Exod 20:1-4; Deut 5:6-9).⁵⁸ Groothuis accurately notes, "that faithful Jews worshiped God alone, as God has commanded."⁵⁹ In this most hostile climate, one finds Jesus claiming to be God and receiving the adoration and worship that was to be given

⁵⁷Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 331.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 333.

⁵⁹Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 493.

only to God in Judaism. Unlike other surrounding polytheistic cultures that would have allowed for an additional god in their pantheon, the Jewish people believed that only Yahweh could be worshipped (Exod 20:1-3), yet in this strict monotheistic environment on at least nine occasions Jesus accepts worship (Matt 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; John 9:38; 20:28).⁶⁰ In further claims to deity, Jesus requires his followers to pray in his name (John 14:13, 14; 15:7) which is clearly a claim of deity in itself. Based on the previous evidence, there can be little doubt that Jesus, as well as his followers, understood that praying in his name (1 Cor 5:4), along with praying to him (Acts 7:59), was an act of worship.⁶¹

The resurrection of Jesus is further evidence of his deity. While some, like Jehovah's Witnesses, contend that Jesus could not be God because God cannot die, historical orthodox Christianity understands the resurrection as further proof of Christ's deity. The authors of the New Testament appealed to the resurrection as an apologetic for Jesus being the Christ (Acts 2:30-36; Rom 1:3-4; 1 Cor 15:1-28). Having already defended the historical reliability of the New Testament, the apologist can use the empty tomb, the eyewitness testimonies, and the testimony of the adversaries of Christ to make a comprehensive case for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. An argument for the resurrection requires not only an examination of the evidence, but also a plausible explanation of the evidence.⁶² The evangelist must keep in mind the goal is not to simply present the resurrection of Jesus as an historical fact, but more importantly to explain the significance of his conquering death and the grave. The purpose of apologetic evangelism is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, stating that Jesus died for sin, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Cor 15:3-4). As in all preceding arguments,

⁶⁰Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 333.

⁶¹Ibid., 334.

⁶²Craig, *On Guard*, 219.

evidence for the resurrection must be used as a means to present that God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ and died to free mankind from the eternal consequences of sin.

Inside the resurrection argument, the empty tomb is an essential piece of evidence for defending the resurrection of Jesus. Without the empty tomb, the disciples would have had no basis for believing that Jesus was alive. Furthermore, if they had intentionally lied, their enemies could have easily taken people to the tomb that held the body of Jesus.⁶³ The fact that the body of Jesus was never produced, when if he was still in the grave anyone could have taken the short trip to the garden to identify the place where he laid, serves to bolster the claim that he truly did come back to life. The Christian apologist can press the unbeliever for a plausible explanation because of the empty tomb. However, it is important for evangelists to be well versed in the most common objections to the empty tomb such as: the disciples stole the body; the women went to the wrong tomb; Jesus was not really dead but only unconscious (swoon theory); the eyewitnesses were hallucinating; the body was moved, or the disciples simply fabricated the story.

In addition to the evidence of the empty tomb, the eyewitness accounts of the resurrected Christ strengthen the argument that Christ had indeed been resurrected. The account of the women being the first to discover the empty tomb, and subsequently the first to encounter the risen Jesus (Matt 28: 1-10), is unlikely a fabrication of the early church because, in the first century, the Jews did not consider the testimony of women to be reliable, nor did they allow it as evidence in legal matters. Secondly, over five hundred eyewitnesses are recorded as seeing Jesus, in various places, times, and circumstances. The Apostle Paul provides a list of the eyewitness to the resurrected Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15, listing Peter, James, the twelve, a group of five hundred, and himself.

⁶³Ibid., 221.

Finally, the claim made by the adversaries of Jesus is further evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. As Craig states, “The Jewish authorities did not deny the empty tomb but instead entangled themselves in a hopeless series of absurdities trying to explain it away. In other words, the Jewish claim that the disciples had stolen the body presupposes that the body was missing.”⁶⁴ Admitting there was an empty tomb, the Jewish leaders pay the guards to claim that the followers of Jesus stole the body in Matthew 28:11-15. It is unlikely that a group of professional soldiers, facing death if they failed in their mission, could have been overpowered by a group made up primarily of fisherman. Furthermore, the theory that the body was stolen by the disciples does not explain why all of them, except John, were willing to die horrible deaths based upon a lie. When all of the evidence is considered, the most plausible explanation is that God raised Jesus from the dead, thus providing validation of his previous claims of divinity and authority.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the philosophical, historical, and biblical evidence make a strong case that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed God in the flesh (John 1:14). With that said, it follows that one must take seriously his statements about the human condition and the need for repentance and faith to enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:1-21). Understanding and knowledge is not enough for salvation; in fact, Jesus’ claim to be the only way for a person to come to the Father (John 14:6) is significant in light of the evidence of his relation to the Father. This claim by Jesus removes the possibility for either pluralism (all paths lead to God) or universalism (all persons will be saved in the end). The exclusivity found in Jesus Christ’s claim to be the only way to the Father must be taken seriously because if true, the consequences of unbelief are eternal condemnation and

⁶⁴Ibid., 229.

separation from God. The purpose of using apologetics in evangelism must be to bring an unbeliever to the place where he or she is faced with the decision of whether to accept or reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Christian apologist must be prepared to proclaim and defend the biblical truth that “there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

CHAPTER 4

INTEGRATING APOLOGETICS IN EVANGELISM TRAINING

In January 2012, I enlisted ten members of First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky, to participate in this Doctor of Ministry project on integrating apologetics in personal evangelism training. At the completion of the project, only five members had completed both the seminars and the practicum. My objective in this project was to equip the participants to effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ with unbelievers, especially those who are skeptical of Christianity.

In the first phase of the project, participants were recruited from the congregation of First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky. During this phase, information about the project was made available through the church bulletin, monthly newsletter, and announcements at the end of the worship services, as well as individual invitations given to members who had already demonstrated an interest in personal evangelism.

Once the participants were recruited, phase 2 was initiated, which included the five-week sermon series. During this phase, the congregation was challenged to consider the biblical commands to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). Furthermore, the church gained a fuller understanding of what the Bible states about evangelism and apologetics (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Pet 3:15; Jude 3), the biblical paradigm for equipping believers to serve in ministry (Eph 4:11-12), and a model of integrating apologetics in evangelism (Acts 17:16-34) from the sermon series.

After completing the sermon series, the small group of participants began six weeks of evangelism training. The classes, which were held on Monday nights for two

hours, included lectures and group discussions. Each class member was encouraged to engage in the discussions and to raise issues or questions they had concerning evangelism as well as objections they had personally encountered when sharing the gospel.

The fourth phase provided an opportunity for the class members to apply all that they had learned in a personal evangelism practicum. This aspect of the project was meant to ensure that this project was more than just another evangelism training that would offer only theoretical knowledge of the subject. Putting into practice what they had learned through both the sermon series and the training classes in the practicum gave the participants real world experience in evangelism. During the practicum, they handed out nearly two hundred gospel tracts and nearly fifty Bibles to students and employees of Northern Kentucky University.

Due to the nature of the interviews, the last two phases of the project overlapped. Those who attended every stage of the project were interviewed individually and as a group. In order to ascertain the true impact of this project on the participants, the group interview took place immediately following the personal evangelism practicum. A week later, the same group was asked to reflect on the project as a whole and evaluate it based on the four primary goals.

Phase 1: Enlistment of Participants

Participation in the project required attending the second morning worship service for the five weeks of the sermon series, attending all six of the training sessions, and being involved in the outreach practicum at Northern Kentucky University. Originally, the total number of participants was limited in order to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to accompany the pastor on the outreach day. Due to the depth of the material covered in the training sessions, the group was limited to adults, with the exception of one mature teenager. The initial goal was to enlist 15 church members in the project; however, due to the subject matter and commitments involved in the project,

many were not willing to participate. Of those who were recruited, all initially agreed to the entire process; however, only half of them finished. All of the participants attended the five sermons on apologetics and evangelism, and all were present the first week of the training. After the first week, however, 2 members dropped out of the training because of a scheduling conflict. At the end of the six seminars the remaining 8 were in agreement to attend the outreach practicum; yet, because of health issues and prior commitments, only 5 were present at the evangelism practicum. Since only 1 female finished the training, my wife accompanied the group during the outreach day.

Phase 2: Sermon Series on the Biblical Mandates to Evangelize Unbelievers

The primary purposes of the sermon series were to educate and to encourage the congregation to obediently respond to the biblical mandates, to be equipped to make disciples, and to engage unbelievers with the gospel (Matt 28:18-20; Eph 4:11-12). To accomplish these purposes, the congregation had to be taught and shown that integrating apologetics with personal evangelism would prepare them to effectively engage a larger spectrum of unbelievers. Moreover, the sermons served as a foundation for the group training and the personal evangelism practicum.

Week 1: The Mandate to Make Disciples

The primary text for the first sermon was Matthew 28:18-20, which is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. In this post-resurrection appearance, Jesus commands his followers to make disciples from every nation. First, they were to actively and intentionally go to where the people were with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel. From there, the followers of Christ were responsible to baptize those who had been converted as an act of obedience to Christ, but also as a means of assimilation into the body of Christ. Finally, the mandate states that those who have come into the

community through profession of faith and then baptism are to be taught to obey all that Christ commanded. In this third component of making disciples, Jesus reveals that this process does not end with the convert's profession or baptism, but instead has just begun.

The responsibility to make disciples is given to all believers and is based on the authority of Christ. As the one who has received all authority in both heaven and earth, Jesus has the right to demand whatever he wills of his followers. Thus, those who are followers of Jesus are to heed his command and go into the world and declare the gospel to all, knowing that ultimately it is not they who will accomplish the commission, but Christ who is working through them. Jesus states that He will be with them, not in some distant memory or sentimental connection, but in a real and present way.

Week 2: The Mandate to Equip Disciples

Since it is the responsibility of all Christians to intentionally and obediently participate in making disciples for the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20), then it logically follows that they must be properly equipped for the task. According to the Apostle Paul, this responsibility has been delegated to church leaders. Writing to the Ephesian church, Paul states that God has given the church numerous offices, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the "equipping of the saints" (4:11).

First Baptist Church had previously adopted a ministry model that viewed the pastor's primary roles as preaching and visiting church members in the hospital. To counteract this view, this second sermon provided the congregation with a biblical basis for the pastor being the primary equipper of the church. This mandate was given by Paul in Ephesians 4:11 and states that the pastor-teacher is to primarily equip the members who are to participate and serve in the ministry and mission work of the church. Freeing up the pastor to train members to engage unbelievers allows the church to multiply its evangelistic impact on the surrounding community. Furthermore, by training a greater

number of Christians to make disciples, the church is empowered to obediently respond to the most ignored aspect of the Great Commission, which is teaching converts to obey all of the Lord's teachings (Matt 28:10).

Week 3: The Mandate to Defend the Faith

It is not uncommon to hear Christians state that they are unwilling to argue about religion because they feel that apologetics are either unbiblical or will drive non-Christians away from the gospel. During the course of this project, some believers stated their disgust towards anyone who would challenge another person's views on God or religion. It would be an understatement to say that fideism had become the dominant apologetic of the church members at First Baptist Church. Thus, I set out to not only dispel the negative attitude towards apologetics, but also to show that Scripture mandates that believers be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15). According to Peter, providing a biblical defense of the faith will require the evangelist to submit to the sanctifying work of Christ and to show a Christ-like spirit when answering unbelievers. He states that first one must "sanctify Christ as Lord" in one's heart. Defending requires that the believer first submit himself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ before attempting to proclaim Christ's lordship to others. Furthermore, Peter states that apologetics, or evangelism for that matter, is to be done in a spirit of humility that shows respect for the other person. Through the sermon, members were taught that apologetics is not just arguing with unbelievers, but instead involves allowing the Spirit of Christ to use them to engage non-Christians with the only message of salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Week 4: The Mandate to Contend for the Faith

Obedience to the Great Commission also requires believers to contend for the purity of the gospel. Jude encouraged the early church to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3). It is essential that every Christian seek to engage unbelievers with a clear understanding of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. At the center of these essential doctrines is an orthodox position on both the person and the work of Jesus Christ. A gospel that presents Jesus as a created being, an angel, or a lower god is not the message preached by the apostles or the early church. Furthermore, a gospel that is not grounded on the penal substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for sinners is insufficient and truly not the good news.

The false dichotomy between theology and missions that exists in many churches requires a presentation of the gospel that is grounded entirely in Scripture and void of the emotional trappings of inclusivism or universalism. Christians must be prepared to both defend the faith to unbelievers and contend for the purity of the message of Christ within the professing community. The battle is not only with those who have changed the message, but also with the individual temptation to change or even soften the gospel in an attempt to make it more appealing to non-Christians. This sermon served to teach the church that she cannot afford to compromise the gospel; there is too much at stake.

Week 5: A Model of Apologetic Evangelism

After reviewing the pre-sermon questionnaire, it was apparent that the majority of the congregation did not have a favorable opinion of defending the Christian faith through natural or philosophical theology. Thus, it was essential to demonstrate that the Bible provides examples of Christians engaging unbelievers with the gospel by first

appealing to natural theology, or making a case for the existence of God from creation, before transitioning to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

When Paul was at Thessalonica, he went to the synagogue and reasoned from the Scriptures giving evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. In that context, Paul's audience believed in the existence, transcendence, and special revelation of God. This common ground was the basis for Paul's preaching and evangelism. After Paul fled both Thessalonica and Berea, he landed in Athens, the city of the philosophers. His encounter there with the Stoics and the Epicureans serves as an example for preaching the gospel in a context that is not monotheistic and does not view Scripture as authoritative or inspired.

Standing in the Areopagus, Paul demonstrates that using natural theology in evangelistic engagements is an acceptable technique for building a bridge to proclaim the gospel. His familiarity with pagan religions and beliefs allowed him to lay a foundation for presenting a case for the existence of God. Cross-cultural evangelism requires Christians to be familiar with the beliefs and practices of the people they seek to convert to Christ. Following Paul's example means that Christians will have to become familiar with the writings and teachings of other religions as well as with popular atheists. Paul, who was a committed missionary, was familiar with the religions, philosophies, and social dynamics of other cultures. By following his example of cross-cultural evangelism, believers will be better equipped to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in hostile settings. After establishing common ground and demonstrating respect for and knowledge of his audience's beliefs, Paul set out to explain how the God of creation has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. In the end, no amount of natural theology or gospel preaching would impress or convince some of Paul's audience. Some, however, did believe and followed Paul (Acts 17: 34). This sermon presented the church with a biblical basis for apologetics being used in evangelistic encounters and served as the primary example in Scripture for this project.

Phase 3: Group Training on Implementing Apologetics in Evangelism

Due to the limitations of a fifteen-week project, the training component was limited to six weeks. To ensure that class members could continue their training in both apologetics and evangelism, they were encouraged to read several books, including *The Universe Next Door*¹ by James Sire, *On Guard*² by William Lane Craig, and *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*³ by J. I. Packer. In addition, they were given an outline of class topics to be discussed throughout the training. Advanced knowledge of lecture topics allowed the participants to be better prepared for the group discussions.

Week 1: Defining the Gospel

The foundation of evangelism is a biblical understanding of salvation. It was not uncommon to hear members of First Baptist give testimonies of salvation that involved a magic or mystical incantation. Though no one in the group agreed with an easy beliefism approach to evangelism, it was still important to biblically define the gospel. In response to false concepts of salvation, the first lecture covered the primary elements of soteriology. The material was primarily taken from Bruce Demarest's book *The Cross and Salvation*.⁴ Due to the time limitation, this lecture was merely an overview of the following topics: foreknowledge, predestination, election, the general and effective call, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, union with Christ, sanctification, preservation and perseverance, and glorification.

¹James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004).

²William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010).

³J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and The Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1961).

⁴Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997).

Class members were also presented with the gospel presentation as found in the *Experiencing God's Grace*⁵ gospel tract. Using the acronym “grace” the participants were able to easily memorize a concise and biblically accurate outline of the gospel. The following outline was presented to and used by the class in personal evangelism:

G – God is our Holy Creator—Gen 1:26-28

R – Rebellion (Because of sin we are broken & fallen)—Gen 3:1-24

A – Atonement (Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross for our sins)—Rom 5:6-8

C – Conversion (Repentance, Faith, & Dedication)—Rom 10:9-10, 13

E – Eternal Life (Given to all who are converted)—John 3:16-18; Rom 6:23⁶

Week 2: Introduction to Apologetics & Worldviews

Since the majority of the class had little to no understanding of either apologetics or worldviews, it was important that both be clearly defined. Apologetics was defined as the defense of the Christian faith. Apologetic evangelism requires believers to defend elements of Christianity such as the deity of Christ and the historicity of the Bible. Conversely, when the apologist is on the offensive, he or she must point out the inconsistencies or self-refuting nature of other religions and worldviews with the goal of demonstrating the superiority of the Christian faith.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of what is meant by the term “worldview,” the class was presented with three definitions, as well as an outline of the basic questions a worldview must answer. The majority of the group was already familiar with the teaching ministry of John MacArthur and his definition served as the primary references for the group. His definition is that a “worldview is, first of all, an explanation and interpretation of the world and second, an application of this view of

⁵ *Experiencing God's Grace* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

⁶ Ibid.

life.”⁷ Additionally the group was challenged to consider a leading scholar on worldview analysis, James Sire, who classifies a worldview as,

a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”⁸

And finally, the class was presented with Ronald Nash’s definition of a worldview as a “conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality.”⁹

To demonstrate how apologetics and worldviews can be implemented in personal evangelism, the class was trained to understand the basic questions that every worldview seeks to answer. According to Sire, there are seven questions that every person’s worldview will seek to answer.¹⁰ The first two questions, “What is really real?” and “What is the nature of that reality?” establish whether any common ground exists between the two parties. Before addressing the incorrect answers to these questions, the class was given the Christian answers to the questions. The answer for the first question is that the God of the Bible is the prime reality, and for the second, that the universe and all of creation exist for His glory. These are not, however, the answers given by atheistic or agnostic unbelievers. Thus, it is important in evangelism to determine how the unbeliever views the world before moving forward in the conversation. If the person does not believe in God, it will be difficult to skip a case for theism and immediately present Jesus as the Son of God who was offered a propitiation for sin.

⁷John MacArthur, ed., *Think Biblically: Recovering a Christian Worldview* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 13.

⁸Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 17.

⁹Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 24.

¹⁰Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 20-21.

Continuing the engagement through worldview questions demonstrates a genuine interest in the person. Furthermore, asking questions such as, “What is a human being?” or “What happens to a person at death?” will give further insight concerning what direction to take in the gospel presentation. Class members were given the example of an atheist who believes that human beings are merely machines that eventually cease to exist. This objection can be challenged concerning the basis for the atheist’s view on morality. At this point, one can introduce another worldview question which is, “How do we know what is right or wrong?” By making a moral argument for the existence of God, the evangelist is able to build a bridge to presenting the biblical view of humanity’s condition and destiny. In addition to the argument from morality, the atheist can be presented with an epistemological question such as, “How can one know anything at all?”

Using what this author has termed as a “Socratic Method” which involves asking specific questions in order to bridge the conversation to the gospel, the participants were given a way to engage unbelievers in an unthreatening way. The following questions served as a general outline used by participants to engage unbelievers about what they believed:

1. Where did we come from?
2. Who are we?
3. Why are we here?
4. How should we live?
5. Where are we going?

By allowing unbelievers to share their beliefs, the evangelists are able to respectfully point out inconsistencies in the non-Christian worldviews and offer Christianity as the only reasonable and consistent alternative. This method is only a means, and was not presented as the only way to share the gospel. Participants were

taught not to be confident in the method of evangelism, but instead to trust in the power of the message (Rom 1:16).

Week 3: Arguments for the Existence of God

In order to prepare the class for evangelistic encounters with atheists, deists, and agnostics, they were introduced to three philosophical arguments for the existence of God. It is vitally important that believers be prepared to answer the objections of unbelievers (1 Peter 3:15). Philosophical answers, however, are not an end in and of themselves. Instead, these arguments must only be used as a means to the end, which is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The foundational philosophical argument used in this class was the Kalam cosmological argument, which states,

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.¹¹

Each participant was encouraged to memorize this syllogism and to consider possible objections to each point. For the most part, the class members had not been formally introduced to any extra-biblical arguments for God's existence. Thus, it was important to examine both the major and minor premises before attempting to claim the conclusion to be reasonable. The major premise is based on what is clearly observed in all of creation, namely that nothing comes into existence without a cause. If this statement is true for everything in creation, then it follows it is true of the creation itself. If one were able to reverse the expansion of the universe, one would eventually end with nothing. Thus, it would be difficult for one to conclude that the universe is eternal. So it follows that since

¹¹William L. Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 74.

the universe had a beginning, it has to have a cause. The theist believes that the first uncaused cause of the all things, including the universe, is God.

Building on the cosmological argument that merely seeks to establish the existence and initial work of a creator, the teleological argument seeks to take the discussion one step further by presenting the creator as intelligent and purposeful. In order to make this case, the evangelists were encouraged to use the following syllogism:

1. Every design had a designer.
2. The universe has highly complex design.
3. Therefore, the universe had a Designer.¹²

It would be an understatement to say that creation is highly complex and has the appearance of design. Unbelievers, however, can be easily blinded to the obvious and will need to be challenged to consider the origins of such design and intentionality in creation. Hence, the participants were challenged to press this point and in so doing transition the conversations to the only real and reasonable answer to the design in creation, which is the God of the Bible.

The moral argument, which was in part included in the presentation of the seven questions every worldview seeks to answer, was addressed in greater detail. This argument, as presented by William Lane Craig states,

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values and duties do not exist.
2. Objective moral values and duties do exist.
3. Therefore, God exists.¹³

By introducing the moral argument, the evangelist is able to build on the previous conclusions by showing that not only is the creator intelligent but that he is also holy.

¹²Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 95.

¹³Craig, *On Guard*, 129.

Again, this argument like the others by itself will not be enough to save an unbeliever from the wrath of God; however, it can be a bridge to the gospel. The class members were told to immediately transition from the moral argument to the fall of mankind (Gen 3). In light of the holiness of God, unbelievers must be challenged to consider their own fallenness. This truth serves as the basis of the gospel and is the ideal transition to presenting the purpose of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

Participants were cautioned to not view any of the above philosophical arguments as an evangelistic presentation. Instead they were instructed to use these arguments to afford them an opportunity to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, which is itself evangelism.

Week 4: The Historical Reliability of the New Testament, and the Deity and Resurrection of Jesus

In many cases, the person being evangelized believes in a supreme being or a god; however, he might be struggling with the truthfulness of the Bible. In other instances where the unbeliever is a theist, she might not believe in the deity of Jesus Christ. In both cases, the evangelist must be prepared to offer a concise case for the trustworthiness of the Bible because the evidence for the divinity of Jesus Christ comes from the testimony in the Bible.

First, to establish the reliability of the Bible, one can appeal to the extra-Biblical evidence found in the writings of non-Christian historians such as Flavius Josephus, Tacitus, Celsus, as well as the Jewish Talmud. Additionally, the trustworthiness of the Bible is supported by the massive number of manuscripts of the New Testament. Finally, Christians must appeal to the eyewitness testimony recorded in the Bible concerning the events surrounding the life of Jesus 3 (John 19:33-35; 20:24-30; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:18-20; 5:30-32; 10:39-40; 1 Pet 5:1; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:1-2).

Once the question of historicity has been dealt with, the evangelist can transition to what the Bible says about the person of Jesus Christ. The class members were instructed to keep a list of passages that established the deity of Jesus such as: Matt 28:18-20; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:17-31; 8:56-58; 20:28; Phil 2:5-8; Heb 1:-3. The biblical evidence reveals that the disciples believed that Jesus was God in the flesh. Moreover, Scripture testifies that Jesus himself claimed to be God (John 5:17-31;8:56-58).

In addition to the claims of Jesus Christ to his own divinity, an examination of the evidence surrounding his bodily resurrection from the grave helps to establish a strong case. The class was directed to study and be familiar with the arguments for the resurrection presented by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 15:1-58), as well as the evidence presented by the four canonical Gospels (Matt 27:57-28:20; Mark 15:42-16:12; Luke 23:50-24:53; John 20:1-21:25). Based on both Paul's argument and the evidence presented by the four evangelists, Christians can confidently offer eyewitness testimony to the empty tomb, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the testimony of more than five hundred eyewitnesses.

After presenting the evidence for the reliability of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ, the evangelist must then confront the person with the importance of submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and receiving the salvation that has been offered through his sacrificial death on the cross. It is not enough to present the person and message of Jesus Christ; the evangelist must ask the person to respond to what has been presented. At this point, class members were warned not to shy away from asking an unbeliever to believe in and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. Likewise, they were cautioned to avoid manipulative tactics in an attempt to simply get the unbeliever to recite what has been commonly referred to as the sinner's prayer, which is not found in Scripture. Instead, the evangelists were encouraged to call for a decision and if the

person responded favorably, they were to pray for and give the unbeliever an opportunity to pray to God seeking salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Week 5: The Problem of Evil

One of the primary objections to theism and Christianity is the so-called problem of evil, which is occasionally presented by unbelievers in an attempt to undermine the Christian claim that God is both good and all powerful. Unfortunately, the false dichotomy that God cannot be both all good and all powerful because evil exists has been viewed by many as irrefutable. This claim, however, is neither irrefutable nor logically consistent. In order to prevent the evangelists from getting bogged down in a deep philosophical argument about the nature and existence of evil, they were encouraged to turn the perceived problem on its head by asking the question, “On what basis are you referring to an act as evil?” Or, in other words, how can you classify a person or act as evil without an absolute standard to measure them by? By allowing the unbeliever the opportunity to ponder on what basis he or she was claiming that anything was evil, the evangelists would be given the opportunity to show the necessity of an absolute holy and perfect standard. Such an example and standard is found in the God of the Bible, who, on more than one occasion, claims to be holy (Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16).

When the evangelist realizes that the so-called problem of evil is not an argument against God but for Him, then he or she will be able to turn this objection into an opportunity to make a case for God by using the moral argument, followed by a presentation of the gospel which gives the answer to the problem of evil. This objection should be welcomed because it provides the perfect opportunity for discussing the sinfulness of humanity in light of the holiness of God, both of which are essential elements to a biblically accurate gospel presentation.

Week 6: How to Use Questions and Objections in Evangelism

In the final week of class, each class member was challenged to consider how he or she would react when unbelievers responded to the gospel. Some would be indifferent, others would be negative, but some would be open and possibly respond. Preparing the class for objections was not difficult because throughout the previous five weeks they had been challenged to consider how to handle the objections and questions of unbelievers. At this point, it was crucial to walk through practical ways to transition the conversations from merely a discussion about God to a biblical presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each objection, whether it concerns the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible, or the person of Jesus Christ is an opportunity to present the gospel. If the unbeliever is engaged in a respectful dialogue where both parties are able to state their positions and beliefs, then each encounter can be easily transitioned to the gospel. Each class member was taught to offer the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only answer to humanity's greatest problem, which is sin that has led to the spiritual separation between mankind and God. By answering the objections of unbelievers in a respectful and gracious manner, the participants established some credibility to then present a case for Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation for humanity. In other words, answering their questions and objections will often times create a curiosity on the part of the unbeliever that will allow the Christian to state further what he or she believes about the meaning and purpose of life, as well as the answer to life's biggest questions.

One of the most difficult aspects of personal evangelism is answering the question, "Now what?" Christians who graciously answer the objections of unbelievers and present the claims of Jesus Christ must be willing at any point to transition to the point where the person being evangelized can be challenged to surrender his or her life to Christ. Participants were instructed to directly ask the person to respond by both

privately and publicly repenting of their sinful rebellion and unbelief and by faith turning to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If the unbeliever is hesitant, the Christian can share his or her own conversion experience and commit to walking the non-Christian through the same decision.

Phase 4: Personal Evangelism Practicum at Northern Kentucky University

Northern Kentucky University (NKU) is located in Highland Heights, Kentucky, which is approximately twenty miles from First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky. The school's website states that the university employs more than two thousand faculty members for approximately fifteen thousand students.¹⁴ Currently, the campus is home to the Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM) led by Brian Combs. The BCM hosts numerous bible studies, outreach events, and serves as a hub for Christians as well as unbelievers who are curious about Christianity. Presently, the BCM hosts a Thursday night worship service that gives believers on campus a time and place to worship. Additionally, the worship service provides an opportunity for unbelievers to be engaged with the gospel.

Prior to taking the participants to NKU, my family and I attended one of the Thursday night worship services. The evening included a meal, followed by a time of music, and ended with time for students to hang out and have a gospel-centered dialogue. We were informed that the BCM was in the midst of a campaign to open the gospel dialogue with other groups and ethnicities on campus. The night we attended was focused on the African-American community with special attention given to Christian music produced and performed by young rappers and singers.

¹⁴ Northern Kentucky University [on-line]; accessed 12 June 2012; available from <http://www.nku.edu/about/index.php>; Internet.

Based on this initial visit, it was determined that the outreach practicum should take place several hours before the Thursday night worship gathering at the BCM to ensure that the students and faculty who were contacted could be invited to that evenings' event. Furthermore, during this visit, the BCM director pointed out the highest traffic areas on campus. Based on his advice, we selected three areas to evangelize. The first area was near a common area that students had to pass through to get the parking lot. The area around the dorms was chosen as the second location because of the high concentration of students. To impact the greatest number of students, the target area around the dorms was assigned to two groups with each one covering a different end of the area. Finally, a high traffic area between the dorms and the main buildings was assigned to the fourth group. Based on the amount of traffic in these areas on our preliminary visit, it was plausible that each team could have at least twenty to thirty meaningful contacts.

The Evangelistic Encounters

The participants were divided into four groups and assigned to the predetermined areas of the campus. Each group carried Bibles and gospel literature. After a time of prayer and brief instructions, the groups set out to engage unbelievers with the gospel.

Each encounter was unique. However, only a few contacts were negative or hostile to the groups. For the most part, people who were not interested just simply ignored the group members or they politely declined to stop and talk. Participants had been previously instructed to be gracious to those who showed no interest in conversing about God or Jesus. Reacting negatively toward unbelievers could potentially close the door to future opportunities to engage the person with the gospel.

The majority of the evangelistic encounters were with Catholics, nominal Christians, and Muslims. Most of the Catholics claimed to believe in God and Jesus;

however, many of them admitted that they were not truly committed to their faith. Several of the encounters with Catholics revealed that they had never heard or understood the gospel. None of the Catholics were willing to make a commitment to the message of Christ as it was presented. This reaction demonstrated that to effectively engage Catholics with the gospel, a group of believers would have to commit to having a regular presence on the campus.

Several of the people the groups engaged claimed to be Christians. When pressed on what made them Christians, the majority said either baptism or being a good person. Among this group, there was an openness to hear the gospel presentation; however, none of them were willing to commit at that moment.

The diversity of the campus provided an opportunity for the groups to engage with people from other faiths, as well people from other countries. Of all of the ethnic and religious groups, the Muslim students were the most open to dialoguing about religion. Moreover, all were willing to receive a copy of the Bible, so much so that one of the groups ran out of Bibles. One particular group of Muslims stated that they would be willing to listen to why they should convert to Christianity, if in turn, they were allowed to present reasons why Christians should convert to Islam. After presenting the evidence for the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus' claims to be deity, the Muslims agreed to take more time to consider each aspect of the gospel presentation. Because they were not proficient in speaking English, they asked if it were possible to email information about Christians who had converted to Islam. That evening the Muslims sent an email with video clips about a former Christian pastor who had converted to Islam and now was a cleric and apologist for the religion. After reviewing the video, I sent a response to set up a time to meet and discuss Christianity and Islam again, but the man never responded.

On at least two occasions, self-professed homosexuals were confronted with the gospel. The first was a group of young men who were willing to listen for only a minute or so and then quickly left. Another man, when presented with the gospel, wanted to steer the conversation to the rejection of homosexuality by Christians; however, I refused to deal with the subject before explaining the gospel. After listening to the gospel presentation, the man showed a great deal of interest in what the Bible had to say about forgiveness and salvation. During the remainder of the conversation, we did not talk about homosexuality, and the man agreed to consider the gospel, but was unwilling to commit to anything at that moment. Like the previous evangelistic encounters, the conversations with the homosexuals revealed that to effectively engage them with the gospel, believers would need to be prepared for their feelings of rejection by the Christian community and be determined to stay on topic.

Only one of the interactions with unbelievers became hostile. The two women in our group attempted to engage with the gospel a woman who became extremely aggressive and demanded that they leave the campus housing area. Prior to sending out the groups, the BCM director instructed the two teams that were going to be near the housing to not go into any of the buildings. Remaining outside of the building in the common areas, however, was permitted by the campus authorities. After the women refused to leave, the irate woman called an official at the campus who then instructed her that our group could remain on campus because we had not violated any of the predetermined guidelines.

Lastly, several people who were engaged with the gospel were very open to conversing about religion. When these persons were pressed to why they were so willing to listen to the gospel presentations, several related that other religious groups who had come on campus were pushy and demeaning during their evangelistic efforts. The students and many of the employees welcomed the dialogue, but none of them was

willing to commit to Christ after only the one conversation. It quickly became obvious that in order for this type of evangelistic activity to be effective, a church would need to have a regular presence on the campus.

The Debriefing of Participants

Assessing the impact of evangelistic efforts on the campus after only one visit would be extremely difficult. Measuring the effect the practicum had on the participants, however, could be analyzed if the group was immediately debriefed. Each group member was asked to explain how he or she interacted with unbelievers, giving special attention to how they overcame objections to the gospel. Due to the lack of resistance to the group's presence and to the gospel presentation, only a few engagements required anyone to offer rebuttals to objections. Moreover, the majority of the questions people were asking did not reflect an atheistic mindset. Instead, the primary line of questions revolved around works or being a good person. The lack of objections surprised everyone in the group. The dominant attitude of the participants in the debriefing was shock at how open the students and employees were to listening to the gospel. All agreed that the church needed to establish a regular presence on the campus and continue to engage unbelievers there with the gospel.

In addition, each member was asked how the practicum had affected his or her view of personal evangelism. Every group member confessed that at some level they all had been apprehensive about participating in the practicum. Primarily, they were fearful that the people would be hostile and reject them outright. What they found served to ease their fears and to create a hunger to do more personal evangelism. One man in particular confessed that he had never viewed personal evangelism as his "cup of tea," but after the practicum, he felt more confident in sharing the gospel with unbelievers.

Phase 5: One on One and Small Group Interviews Assessing the Effectiveness of the Evangelism Training and Practicum

The goals for this project were divided into four categories: knowledge goals, attitude goals, skills goals, and my personal goal. In order to determine which, if any, of these goals were achieved, this project included a variety of questionnaires, as well as group and individual interviews. From the outset of this project, the principal goal was to train believers to use apologetics as a bridge to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Pre- and Post-Sermon Questionnaire

The pre-sermon questionnaire was handed out at random to 25 members of First Baptist Church who were in attendance for the first of the five sermons on apologetic evangelism. Additionally, those who had previously agreed to participate in the project were given a pre-sermon survey. All of the participants returned the pre-sermon survey; however, only 10 of the other surveys were correctly filled out and returned.

At the conclusion of the five-week sermon series, the persons who had correctly filled out and returned the pre-sermon survey were given the post-sermon survey. The only significant change between the pre- and post-surveys was a change in the perception of apologetics and the role that the discipline played in evangelism. Prior to the sermon series, the concept of apologetics was somewhat foreign to those surveyed, however, after the sermon series their responses became favorable regarding the use of apologetics, especially philosophical arguments for the existence of God in personal evangelism.

The Pre- and Post-Seminar Questionnaire

At the beginning of the first class, members were given a brief survey regarding their understanding of apologetics and evangelism. Additionally, the questionnaire asked them to state how often they shared their faith with unbelievers, and what fears, if any, they had when proclaiming the gospel to an unbeliever. The pre-seminar interview revealed that all participants were engaging unbelievers on at least a weekly basis, but most felt unequipped to handle the major objections to Christianity. Moreover, all stated that they would feel more comfortable sharing their faith if they had more training.

After six weeks of training, the participants were given the post-seminar survey. The questionnaire revealed that all of the participants felt more adequately trained to evangelize; however, many still had a fear of rejection. The classroom setting could not completely equip the members to deal with the rejection of fear. This fear would be dealt with and overcome during the practicum component.

Post-Training Interviews

To further evaluate and measure if this project accomplished the four original goals the participants were asked the following: (1) “Did your knowledge and understanding of the questions that unbelievers are asking about Christianity and Theism increase?” (2) “After the training and practicum, is your attitude different about those who don't know Christ as Lord?” (3) “After the training, are you more skilled in both basic apologetics and personal evangelism?” (4) “In light of the sermons, seminars, and practicum, evaluate the proficiency and effectiveness of the pastor in equipping believers to share the gospel.” Additionally, the post-training interviews revealed several strengths and one obvious weakness of the project, all of which are covered in chapter 5 of this project.

Conclusion

After fifteen weeks of planning, preaching, teaching, evangelizing, interviewing, and compiling data, it is obvious that this project was more than an academic exercise. The structure of this project allowed the participating members of Frist Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky, to take the initial steps in transitioning from a church that is fearful of personal evangelism to a church that obediently obeys Christ's command to proclaim the gospel to all nations (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). Furthermore, each component of this project provided an opportunity for the theoretical aspects of apologetics and evangelism to be applied to real-world scenarios.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The evaluation includes an examination of the purpose and the goals, as well as the strengths and the weaknesses of each stage of this project. The proposed modifications in this evaluation are based primarily on the weaknesses; however, some of the strengths should also be modified. Finally, before offering any personal reflections, this analysis considers the overall project in light of the theological basis upon which it was built.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the participants to share the gospel of Jesus Christ effectively with unbelievers, especially those who are skeptical of Christianity. Based on the practicum, interviews, the pre- and post-seminar questionnaires, and considering the time limitation of fifteen weeks this project achieved its goal. It would have been more realistic and accurate to set a goal that the members who participated would be introduced to the basics of integrating apologetics with personal evangelism. Participants who completed the project, however, reported in their group and individual interviews that they were now better equipped to evangelize unbelievers. Moreover, the participants all stated that they are more open to having gospel-centered conversations with those who are skeptical of the Christian faith.

In addition to preparing members to engage unbelievers with the gospel, this project served to sharpen the instructor in the discipline of personal evangelism. Throughout the training seminars, new questions and objections were raised, many of

which I did not think would be asked by unbelievers. For example, one member stated that she had a former student who was forced to combat claims that the four evangelists had contradicted one another when writing the Gospels. It was naïve on my part to think that these arguments are reserved for theologians and scholars. What was discovered, however, was that high school and college students are being told that the Bible is not trustworthy because of so-called contradictions in the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. Because others in the group reported hearing similar objections, in future evangelism training, much more attention will be given to resolving the alleged contradictions within the Gospels.

Taking the group to the Northern Kentucky University provided an excellent opportunity to develop my skills in personal evangelism. The objections that one would have expected to hear were never raised. At the same time, issues that this project had not considered arose in nearly every conversation. For the most part, people the group encountered did not raise questions about the existence of God, the reliability of the Bible, or the person of Jesus. Instead, the group consistently dialogued with people who claimed to be religious or at least spiritual, but who were truly ignorant of the gospel. Discovering that most of the students were open to religion was one of the most eye-opening experiences of this project. Furthermore, it was encouraging to witness the curiosity of the students and employees who apparently had never heard the gospel. Taking the group out onto the mission field provided the perfect opportunity for members to witness first-hand how painless it is to share the message of Jesus Christ with unbelievers. The practicum did more to achieve the purpose of this project, for both the instructor and the participants, than the sermons or the lectures combined.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

In order to evaluate the goals of this project, participants were given pre- and post-sermon surveys, pre- and post-training surveys, and interviewed as a group and

individually. While a few of the participants were vague in their responses, others provided a great deal of feedback concerning the impact of this project on their attitudes and abilities both prior to and after the project.

The project's primary goal was to equip the members to integrate apologetics into personal evangelism. According to all who were surveyed, this goal was accomplished. Keeping in mind the limitations of the project, as well as the group's limited knowledge of apologetics in the beginning of the project, it is not difficult to comprehend why participants believed they were now better equipped to share the gospel. It is an overstatement to claim that after fifteen weeks the group is fully equipped and prepared to effectively evangelize unbelievers. However, at the end of the project, members were much more prepared to share the gospel than when they started.

All participants acknowledge that their attitudes had changed to some degree towards apologetics, evangelism, and unbelievers. Prior to the project, several of the members had never heard of apologetics, and others had a negative opinion about the discipline of defending the faith. By the end of the project, all but one person stated that their view of apologetics had changed. One member continued to hold to a fideist mindset, believing that apologetics was unnecessary and that people would respond to or reject the gospel based only on faith. Conversely, the rest of the group expressed excitement that the apologetics component of the training was not likely previous evangelism training programs. Overall, the project was successful in creating not only a favorable attitude toward both apologetics and evangelism, but because of the practicum their attitudes about unbelievers were positively changed. The entire group acknowledged that before the practicum they did not believe non-Christians would be so open to participating in gospel-centered discussions. Interacting with real people provided the ideal scenario for altering the group's perception of how unbelievers would respond to

the gospel. Even though none of the persons evangelized openly committed their lives to Christ, their openness to listen to the gospel served to change the opinions of the group.

Strengths of the Project

Based on both the surveys and the interviews, this project's greatest strength was the way it changed participants' attitudes towards the discipline of apologetics. At the beginning of the project, several in the group could not define or state the purpose of apologetics. Even worse, those who knew something about the discipline had a negative opinion about using it in personal evangelism. The group, however, was open to learn and by the end of the fifteen weeks, all but one had drastically different opinions about apologetics as a discipline and about employing it evangelism. The change can be accredited to two aspects of the project. First, the sermon series demonstrated that defending the Christian faith was an imperative, not an option. Second, the questions raised in the training seminars were all answered using both revelation and reason. Answering questions and objections that participants had either heard or raised themselves created a group enthusiasm for Christian apologetics.

In addition to altering the group's attitude about apologetics, the project helped many members overcome their fears about witnessing to unbelievers. During the group interview, one man shared that before completing the training, he was terrified to share the gospel, but now he had gained confidence and would be more willing to witness to non-Christians. After hearing this man's testimony, several others in the group stated that they too had been nervous or afraid of sharing the gospel, but after the project, and especially the practicum, they were now much more comfortable with telling others about Jesus.

The final strength of this project was the interaction with unbelievers that was made possible through the practicum at Northern Kentucky University. Without the opportunity to apply what they had learned, many of the members would not have taken

the next step. Of those who participated in the practicum, all reported that the real interaction with non-Christians forced them to immediately apply what they had learned in the class. Additionally, all of the members who had experienced other evangelism training classes stated that previous programs did not require them to immediately witness to unbelievers. The practical application of apologetics and evangelism made this project more than just another training program that the members would soon forget.

Weaknesses of the Project

Interviews with the members of the project revealed that, due to the nature of the subject matter in this project, the material was at times too in-depth for this training. For the most part, all of the material was simplified in order to provide practical evangelism training that incorporated apologetics as a bridge to sharing the gospel. Many of the members, however, had never heard a philosophical argument for the existence of God and felt that the concepts were difficult to understand. To combat this weakness, the training included easy to remember syllogisms for the cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments.

Additionally, two members stated that the project needed more role-playing before the practical application. One man stated that he was a manager who had led numerous training groups that included role playing. Due to his secular experience in training new employees he knew the value of having people interact in a non-threatening environment before actually entering the field. While the project did incorporate time to discuss how to handle objections to Christianity, it would have been much more effective had it included a break-out session for members to practice sharing the gospel with one another before participating in the outreach day.

Finally, after reviewing the pre and post-sermon series surveys, it was apparent that the second phase had not impacted the church as a whole. While many of the members of the project stated that they were more open to apologetics after the sermon

series, surveys from church members who did not participate in the training showed that they were relatively unchanged in their attitudes and knowledge. One factor that could have caused this problem was that a natural disaster struck the area during the sermon series, which required a message on God's goodness in the midst of suffering and trials. On the other hand, the sermons were only thirty minutes in length compared to the two-hour seminar sessions. To make the needed impact, the sermons should have been forty-five minutes to an hour, or should have taken more than the five weeks allotted in this project.

Project Modifications Needed

If this project were to be duplicated in the future, several enhancements should be made to ensure that it would address the weaknesses and expand upon the strengths. First, the sermon series should either be shortened to allow for more seminars and practicums, or the sermons should be lengthened from thirty minutes to one hour. This modification would allow the instructor to give more attention to the biblical and theological basis for integrating apologetics in evangelism.

Also, taking the advice of one of the members, the project would include a seminar focused on role-playing where each member would have an opportunity to share the gospel in a non-threatening environment. Members would be asked to partner up and take turns playing the parts of evangelist and skeptical unbeliever. Additionally, each seminar could include a time for role-playing to address the specific apologetics arguments that were taught during that session. Following the one on one time, the teams would be asked to interact in front of the entire group, which would allow their presentations to be critiqued by their peers. After evaluating how each member performed in sharing the gospel and overcoming objections, the instructor could partner the more confident members with those who need more instruction with the goal that the teams would stay intact for the practicum.

Due to the success of the practical application phase, the practicum should be expanded. If one day of sharing the gospel had a significant impact on the members, then it follows that they would benefit from two or three days of witnessing. The project included two weeks of practicum, and provided four different dates to accommodate various schedules. The groups, however, all wanted to go on the same day and unfortunately were all only able to go on the last scheduled day. Thus, in the future all four dates should be used to allow for the maximum amount of interaction with unbelievers.

Finally, because of the depth of the material covered, it would be wise to have the participants read some of the material before the classes begin. The seminars would have been far more productive had the members already been familiar with many of the key terms and concepts such as: worldviews, apologetics, and philosophical arguments for the existence of God. By reading and researching the topics ahead of time, the members would have been able to spend more time implementing the concepts instead of simply being introduced to them for the first time. Additionally, in the future this ministry project could include both introductory and intermediate classes. This approach would ensure that the level of material covered would be appropriate for the specific class.

Theological Reflections

This project was built on the biblical basis that all Christians are to actively and aggressively participate in the evangelizing of non-Christians (Matt 28:19-20). None of the phases of this project were an end in and of themselves, but instead worked together as means of training and motivating members of First Baptist Church of Walton, Kentucky, to obediently participate in the Great Commission. While the objective of this project was to train and equip members to share the gospel by implementing apologetics in personal evangelism, the primary goal of all Christian activity is to bring glory to God

(1 Cor 10:31). Thus, by obediently responding the Lord's command to go and proclaim the gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15), the members were actively participating in bringing glory to God.

Multiplication is the key to an effective evangelism program in a local church. In the past, it was not difficult for the pastor to take a few people out to do evangelism in the community. Members were invited to accompany the pastor with the intention of learning how to share their faith in Christ with unbelievers. This project, unlike previous outreach efforts, allowed members to receive both classroom and field training. Additionally, because of the group size not everyone could directly accompany the pastor during each evangelistic encounter. In each group of two, both members had to take initiating conversations with unbelievers. This project forced the members to step out of the role of observer and into the position of evangelist. Moving forward, each member who completed the project can train another Christian on how to share the gospel. By multiplying the amount of people who are equipped to evangelize, the church will be far more effective in its efforts to get the gospel to as many people as possible.

Prior to this project, I believed that the primary work of an apologist was to defend the gospel against the attacks of skeptics. Defending the faith, however, is only one aspect of the role of an apologist. In order to defend the gospel, apologists must first be able to articulate the gospel. As they seek to evangelize unbelievers, they must be focused on clarifying the message. It would be futile simply to defend the Christian faith without clearly presenting Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death as the only means whereby a person can be saved from the wrath of God. Apologists must see themselves as evangelists first because their call is not to win arguments with unbelievers, but to declare Jesus as the only way a person can be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 10:14-17). Ensuring that the gospel is proclaimed to unbelievers must be the motivation for and goal of both the discipline of apologetics as well as the apologists.

Finally, one might be tempted to believe that college campuses are void of any theists who are open to hearing the good news of Jesus Christ. After a few visits and conversations, one will discover that there are a lot of people interested in having a spiritual or religious conversation. Based on first-hand experiences through this project, it has become apparent that a greater amount of attention should be given to knowing and defending the purity of the gospel (Jude 3) than ensuring that every objection or question offered by unbelievers can be answered precisely. According to Paul, the gospel is the power of God to transform an unbeliever (Rom 1:16). While it is important to be ready to give an answer to anyone who questions the Christian faith (1 Pet 3:15), it is equally important to be able to give a clear answer for the hope that one has in Christ. Thus, it is my conviction that before people attempt to study or employ apologetics, they should be certain that they clearly understand and can effectively communicate the gospel message. In no way should one minimize or ignore the role of apologetics in evangelism. Instead, apologetics must be used as a bridge to proclaiming the gospel.

Personal Reflections

After spending months in preparation for this project, plus the actual fifteen weeks of preaching, training, evangelizing, and evaluating, I have once again discovered my passion for the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). First, I realized that I enjoy training and leading Christians to tell others about Jesus. As a pastor, it is frustrating to witness how many members of the church are not interested in telling anyone about the good news of Jesus. This frustration can easily lead to apathy in the areas of evangelism and church growth. This project, however, helped me to discover once again that numerous Christians are interested in proclaiming the gospel; they are just waiting to be equipped. It is my firm conviction that I must continue to offer regularly scheduled classes on personal evangelism that will include both training seminars and practical application.

Throughout the fifteen weeks of this project, I was blessed to watch several members become excited about sharing their faith in Christ. Each week of the seminar phase, members would share their excitement about learning ways to faithfully proclaim the gospel. While it was a blessing to hear their passion for evangelism, it could not compare to the attitudes that were displayed immediately following the practicum. In fact, several weeks later, one member shared with me that he was still using what he had learned in the project to share Jesus with local teenagers. Another man testified that he had learned more about sharing his faith during this project than in his entire Christian life. Witnessing God's work in the lives of each member during and after the project was truly a blessing.

Finally, after everything that I learned through this project, I realize that I still have a great deal to learn about apologetics, evangelism, and leading a group. My goal is to be a life-long learner who is always sharing the knowledge that he has obtained. This project is not the completion of my training in evangelism, but instead is the beginning of a new phase of training. I desire to continue to read, research, listen, and learn from others on how to be more effective in evangelism, and to train others to do likewise.

Conclusion

This project served as the culmination of a three-year process of earning my Doctor of Ministry degree. From beginning to end, I have been challenged by my professors and peers to pursue excellence in serving Christ. During every seminar, I received the necessary training to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Additionally, I was instructed in how to grow the local church by implementing biblical principles. One of those principles, training others to evangelize the lost, was the heart of this project. This project provided the opportunity to implement nearly all that I had learned over the past two years in both the seminars and the applied ministry experience courses. Without this project, the Doctor of Ministry program would have been merely a

theoretical degree on how to reach the nations for Christ. This program and this project, however, were constantly focused on applying the biblical principles in my specific cultural context. I believe that had I not completed this project, the doctoral program would have not had its intended impact on my life and ministry. Only through the process of planning and executing a ministry project did I truly come to appreciate all of the components that go into making a successful ministry.

APPENDIX 1

PRE- AND POST-SERMON SERIES SURVEY

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the attitude of the adult members of First Baptist Church toward apologetics, evangelism, and unbelievers. An analysis of the data will allow the pastor of the church to gauge the effectiveness of the current sermon series. Furthermore, the data will assist the church in determining what changes need to be implemented in the current outreach strategy.

A portion of the adult members of the church will receive a copy of the apologetics and evangelism survey. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the sermon series, this survey will not be anonymous and will require the participants to identify themselves on both the pre- and post-surveys.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to gather opinions about various doctrinal issues with specific attention to apologetics and evangelism. This research is being conducted by Thomas W. Francis Jr. for the purpose of obtaining information for doctoral research. In this research, you will be asked to answer several questions about your personal religious beliefs. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it at any time.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Uncertain			Agree		Strongly Agree

1. _____ Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way for a person to be saved (born again).
2. _____ All believers are to participate in missions.
3. _____ Followers of Christianity, Islam, & Judaism all believe in the same God.
4. _____ People who never hear the gospel can still be saved.
5. _____ All believers are commanded to share their faith in Christ.
6. _____ The Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20) states that believers are to “make disciples” of unbelievers through evangelization, assimilation, and education.
7. _____ Evangelism is a gift that only some people have.
8. _____ There is no evidence for the existence of God apart from the Bible.
9. _____ Followers of religions other than Christianity will be in heaven.
10. _____ All Christians are called to contend for the purity of the gospel message.
11. _____ Arguments for the existence of God can be used in evangelism.
12. _____ All followers of Jesus Christ are commanded to defend the Christian faith.

13. _____ The primary role of the pastor is to equip believers for ministry.
14. _____ Evangelism should only be done by those who have received formal training.
15. _____ Mohammad, Buddha, Confucius, and Joseph Smith were all prophets of God.
16. _____ The primary purpose of the church is missions.
17. _____ Christians must be prepared to answer the objections of unbelievers.
18. _____ Paul quoted pagan philosophers to make a case for the existence of God.
19. _____ The primary purpose of the church is to worship God through His Son Jesus Christ.
20. _____ All Christians are to financially support the church and missions.

APPENDIX 2

PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CLASS PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the biblical and theological knowledge of participants in the evangelism training in apologetics and evangelism. An analysis of the data will allow the pastor of the church to gauge the effectiveness of the six week personal evangelism training. Furthermore, the data will assist the church in determining what changes need to be implemented in the current discipleship strategy.

All participants in the apologetic and evangelism training will receive a copy of the biblical and theological survey. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, this survey will not be anonymous and will require the participants to identify themselves on both the pre- and post-surveys.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to gather opinions about various doctrinal issues with specific attention to apologetics and evangelism. This research is being conducted by Thomas W. Francis Jr. for the purpose of obtaining information for doctoral research. In this research, you will be asked to answer several questions about your biblical and theological knowledge, as well as your personal religious beliefs. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it at any time.

A. General Information

Name: _____

Occupation: _____

Age: _____ Race: _____ Gender: _____

How long have you been a Christian? _____

B. Biblical and Theological Questions:

For each of the following statements answer between 1 – 5

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- 1) ____ The Bible contains errors.
- 2) ____ Jesus is the only way a person can be saved.
- 3) ____ All Christians are commanded to share the gospel with others.
- 4) ____ All religions lead to God.
- 5) ____ Science has disproven the Bible.
- 6) ____ Apologetics is a method to apologize for Christian mistakes.
- 7) ____ God used evolution to create mankind.
- 8) ____ The Bible offers eyewitness accounts of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
- 9) ____ Jesus bodily and literally resurrected from the grave.
- 10) ____ Arguments for the existence of God are logical and reasonable.
- 11) ____ Truth is subjective.
- 12) ____ Truth is relative.
- 13) ____ The Bible commands believers to defend the Christian faith.
- 14) ____ Those who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ are condemned to spend eternity in Hell.
- 15) ____ As a Christian I am responsible to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone I know.
- 16) ____ Apologetics is the practice of defending the Christian faith by responding to questions, objections, and attacks.

C. Evangelism Questions

- 1) How often do you share your faith in Christ with an unbeliever?
 Never Once a year Once a month Once a week Several times a week

- 2) What is the greatest hindrance for you sharing your faith in Christ?
 Fear I don't know enough knowledge I feel unworthy

- 3) The gospel of Jesus Christ includes: (Choose all that apply)
 - i. ____ Good works
 - ii. ____ Repentance
 - iii. ____ Faith
 - iv. ____ Obedience
 - v. ____ Baptism
 - vi. ____ New life
 - vii. ____ Sacraments (The Lord's Supper, Confirmation, etc.)
 - viii. ____ Church membership

- 4) I would share the gospel more if I: (Choose all that apply)
 - i. ____ was trained in evangelism methods.

- ii. ____ had more knowledge of the Bible.
- iii. ____ had answers to the questions unbelievers ask.
- iv. ____ understood how to defend the Christian faith.
- v. ____ was mentored by someone who was effective in sharing the gospel.

APPENDIX 3

SERMON OUTLINES

- Sermon 1 Matthew 28:18-20 “The Mandate to Make Disciples”
- I. The Authority of Jesus Christ in the Great Commission
 - II. The Essential Elements of the Great Commission
- Sermon 2 Ephesians 4:11-12 “The Mandate to Equip Disciples”
- I. The Pastor-Teacher as Equipper
 - II. The Role of Laity in Ministry
 - III. The Goal of Ministry Training
- Sermon 3 1 Peter 3:15 “The Mandate to Defend the Faith”
- I. The Role of Sanctification in Apologetics
 - II. The Imperative to Defend Christianity
 - III. The Proper Attitude in Apologetic Evangelism
- Sermon 4 Jude 3 “The Mandate to Contend for the Faith”
- I. Contending for the Purity of the Gospel
 - II. Committed to Clarity in the Proclamation of the Gospel
- Sermon 5 Acts 17:16-34 “A Model of Apologetic Evangelism”
- I. Contextualizing the Gospel
 - II. Communicating the Gospel Cross-Culturally
 - III. Natural Theology as a Foundation for Preaching the Resurrection

APPENDIX 4

SEMINAR OUTLINES

- Seminar 1 Defining the Gospel
- I. G - God is our Holy Creator—Gen 1:26-28
 - II. R - Rebellion (Because of sin we are broken & fallen)—Gen 3:1-24
 - III. A - Atonement (Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for our sins)—Rom 5:6-8
 - IV. C - Conversion (Repentance, faith, and dedication)—Rom 10:9-10, 13
 - V. E - Eternal Life (Given to all who are converted)—John 3:16-18; Rom 6:23
- Seminar 2 Introduction to Apologetics and Worldviews
- I. Where did we come from?
 - II. Who are we?
 - III. Why are we here?
 - IV. How should we live?
 - V. Where are we going?
- Seminar 3 Arguments for the Existence of God
- I. The Kalam Cosmological Argument
 - II. The Teleological Argument
 - III. The Moral Argument
- Seminar 4 The Historical Reliability of the New Testament, and the Deity and Resurrection of Jesus
- I. Extra-biblical Evidence

- II. Internal Biblical Evidence
- III. The Person of Jesus
- IV. Overcoming Objections to the Deity of Jesus
- V. Overcoming Objections to the Resurrection of Jesus

Seminar 5 The Problem of Evil

- I. The Moral Argument
- II. Turning the Tables: Using the Problem of Evil as an Apologetic for the Existence of God

Seminar 6 How to Use Questions and Objections in Evangelism

- I. Common Questions and Objections
- II. Using Worldview Questions
- III. Using Syllogisms in Apologetic Evangelism

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING CHURCH MEMBERS TO INTEGRATE APOLOGETICS WITH EVANGELISM AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF WALTON, KENTUCKY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
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The purpose of this project was to equip members of First Baptist Church in Walton, Kentucky, to boldly share the gospel of Jesus Christ by training them in apologetics and evangelism. Additionally, this project provides a reproducible program to be used by other churches to implement evangelism training.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the entire project. This overview covers the demographic information of the surrounding community, along with information about the recent history of the church. Moreover, this chapter gives the rationale for offering apologetic evangelism training at First Baptist Church, Walton, Kentucky. Finally, this chapter serves as an outline for the rest of the project and includes project goals and research methodologies.

Chapter 2 provides a biblical and theological basis for apologetics and evangelism. The following passages of Scripture are examined in detail and serve as the basis for the project: Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 17:16-34, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 3:15, and Jude 3.

Chapter 3 evaluates the major taxonomies in apologetics. This chapter evaluates classical, evidential, cumulative case, propositional, experiential, and reformed epistemological apologetics. Additionally, this chapter provides an integrated approach that employs aspects from some of the primary apologetic methods.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the fifteen weeks of this project. This chapter breaks down each phase of this project and includes details about the recruiting, training, and practicum.

Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project. This chapter analyzes the short-term effectiveness of this project on the participants and the trainer. Furthermore, the final chapter includes the strengths and weakness of each phase, as well as suggestions on how to improve this project.

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