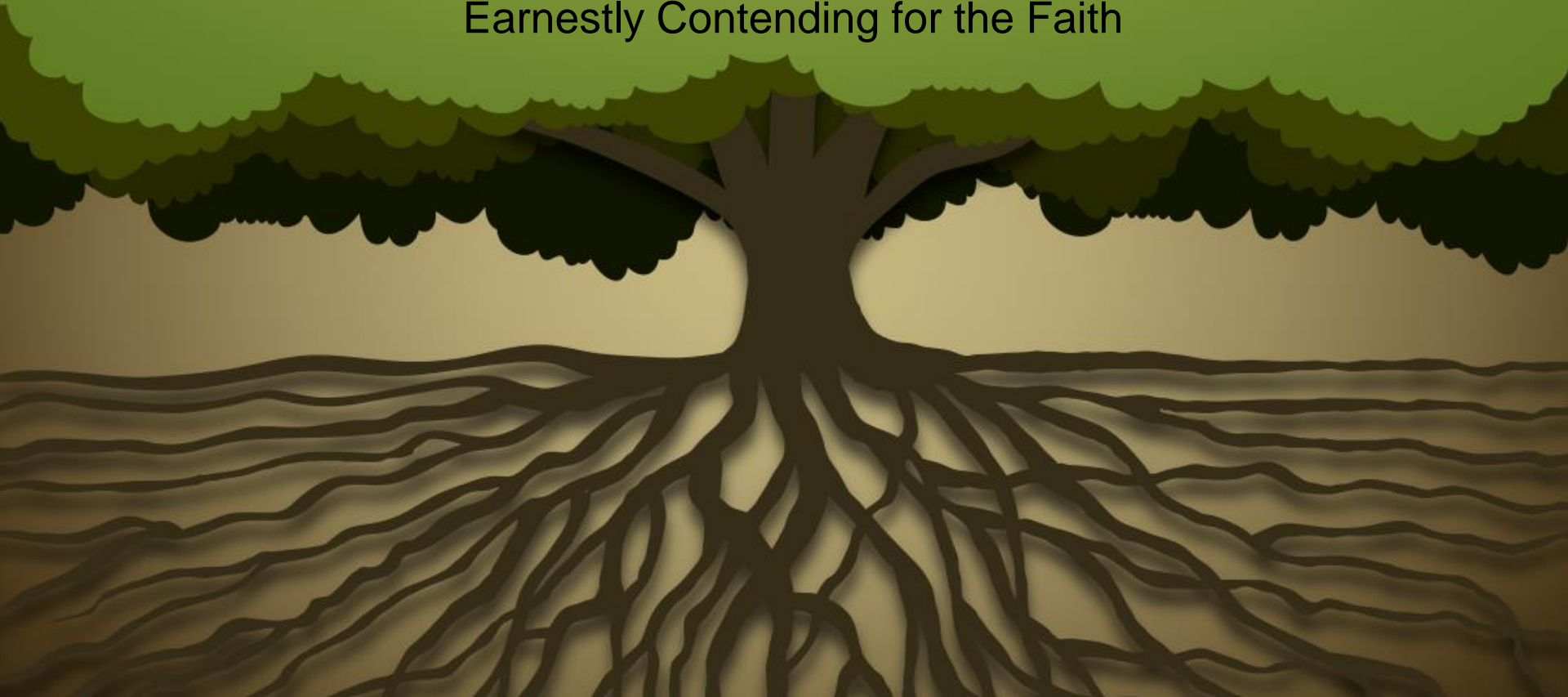


Arbor Foundations

A SOLID BASE TO BUILD UPON

Lesson 26: Apologetics
Earnestly Contending for the Faith



OUTLINE

- Key Idea / Biblical Basis
- Purpose(s) of Apologetics
- An Important Distinction
- Three Major Schools of Thought
- Deep Dives
- So What?

BIBLICAL BASIS

And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, **and always be ready to give a defense (apologian) to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you**, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

– 1 Peter 3:13-17

PURPOSES OF APOLOGETICS

1. To demonstrate what is plainly declared in scripture, that man is without excuse for his unbelief. (Romans 1:18-20)
2. To show unbelievers that the Christian faith is reasonable and does not require that the faithful abandon reason, logic, truth, etc.
3. To bolster the faith of Christians, who are prone to doubt or spiritual depression and/or surrounded by persuasive unbelief.

The central task of Christian Apologetics is to show that the Christian faith is:

1. Consistent with the world of observation.
2. Rationally and logically robust.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Apologetics is fundamentally about **showing the Christian faith to be true**, not about knowing that it is true. That is, no argument for the rationality of Christian belief can form the *basis* on which the truth of the faith is established.

Why this distinction?

Ultimately, the only reason we believe at all is because the Spirit has renewed and transformed our hearts and minds, causing the blind to see the glory of Christ and the truth of the Gospel.

THREE MAJOR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

1. **Evidential apologetics** is an approach to Christian apologetics emphasizing the use of evidence to demonstrate that God exists.
2. **Classical apologetics** is a method of apologetics that begins by first employing various theistic arguments to establish the existence of God. Once God's existence has been established, the classical apologist will then move on to present evidence to distinguish Christianity from all other forms of theism
3. **Presuppositionalism** is a school of Christian apologetics that believes the Christian faith is the *only* basis for rational thought. It presupposes that the Bible is divine revelation and attempts to expose flaws in other worldviews. It claims that apart from presuppositions, one could not make sense of any human experience.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHICH APPROACH IS THE BEST ONE?

Ask a presuppositionalist and she'll tell you!

- **An analogy from sports**
- **An exercise!**

DEEP DIVE: DOES GOD EXIST?

Why address this question specifically?

1. It's timely in our cultural moment. (It affects people in our church.)
2. I have personally wrestled with doubt about this issue!
 1. Lord I believe! Help my unbelief!
 2. Doubt is not disbelief! (Thank you Raymon Perron!)
3. Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must **believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who seek him.

Note: Some believers will feel the need to see the Christian faith is logically consistent and comports with their observations of the material world more than others will. This is OK

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

How do we know that God exists?

God has revealed Himself:

1. In the external world (General Revelation)
2. In our internal perception of Him (Sensus Divinitatis)
3. In the Scriptures
4. In the person of Jesus Christ
5. In the ministry of the Holy Spirit
6. In the testimony of Christians

SHOWING THAT GOD EXISTS

EVIDENTIALIST ANSWER

Belief in God makes the best sense of the evidence:

1. Arguments from the fact of a Cosmic Beginning
2. Fine tuning arguments
3. Fulfilled prophecy
4. Biblical archeology
5. The historicity of the Gospels
6. Explicability Arguments

Note:

These arguments are based in what we know, not in our ignorance!

CLASSICAL ANSWER

Logical Arguments for the Existence of God

1. The Cosmological Argument
2. The Ontological Argument
3. The Teleological Argument
4. The Moral Argument
5. The Argument from Contingency
6. The Argument from Beauty
7. The Argument from Meaning.

Combined with evidence, this accumulated force of these arguments combined is compelling.

SYNTHESIS

The accumulated force of evidential and logical arguments combined is very strong.

Faith then, is not a blind leap at all! Rather, faith is trusting that which you have good reason(s) to believe is true.

Belief in God is rational, logically robust, and intellectually satisfying. The Christian faith is not credibly accused of being intellectually lacking. Claims to the contrary are based in *ignorance*, not knowledge. That is why unbelievers often prefer to mock, rather than argue with, Christians.

PRESUPPOSITIONALIST ANSWER

- 1. Everyone views the world through their presuppositions**
 - 1. FACTS DO NOT CHANGE MINDS.**
 1. Luke 16:31 – Abraham and the Rich Man
 2. Do dead men bleed?
- 2. Unbelief involves willing suppression of the truth.**
- 3. Believers start with the presupposition that God exists and that He has revealed Himself truthfully**
 1. Belief in God is the only way to avoid embracing the absurd.
 2. Belief in God is the only rational basis for logic.
 3. Conversely, an unbeliever's worldview prevents him/her from having any justification for methods of logic (such as induction) or even for trusting his/her senses.
 1. Assumptions to the contrary are simply borrowed from a Christian worldview.

PRESUPPOSITIONALIST TECHNIQUE

The method of Presuppositional Apologetics is to ask questions.

1. Establish the position: “What do you believe?”
2. Find the grounding: “How do you know that?”
3. Assume this grounding, then show that the grounding doesn’t support the belief.
4. Alternatively, show that reasoning from that starting point leads inexorably to conclusions which are absurd.
 1. *Reductio ad absurdum*
5. If you ask enough questions, you will find contradictions and absurdities because, ultimately, people must choose between only two options, God and absurdity.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

I do not regard true philosophical atheism as an intellectually valid or even cogent position; in fact, I see it as a fundamentally irrational view of reality, which can be sustained only by a tragic absence of curiosity or a fervently resolute will to believe the absurd. More simply, I am convinced that the case for belief in God is inductively so much stronger than the case for unbelief that true philosophical atheism must be regarded as a superstition, often nurtured by an infantile wish to live in a world proportionate to one's hopes or conceptual limitations... [and is] ultimately indistinguishable from purely magical thinking."

- David Bentley Hart

AN ENCOURAGEMENT

You do not have to be well learned to be wise; God's Spirit will make you wiser than the most erudite unbeliever:

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

- Psalm 119: 99-100

SO WHAT?

God commands us to defend the faith, and he has equipped us with the tools for the task. Evidence and arguments are useful for countering claims that Christianity is based in ignorance.

God has revealed Himself in nature and in Scripture, and we have solid tools to contend for the faith with unbelievers as well as to answer doubts that arise from within ourselves.

Someday, *everyone* you know will be a theist (Philippians 2:10-11). God uses means to produce conviction in the hearts of unbelievers and to bring them to Himself. Your apologetic may be the means God uses to overcome intellectual barriers to genuine belief in the life of someone you know.