

Advanced Apologetics

Defending Christianity in the 21st Century

By Robert Velarde

*But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,
always being prepared to make a defense to any-
one who asks you for a reason for the hope that is
in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”*

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

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"Do to others what you would have them do to you"
(Matthew 7:12).

"The worker is worth his keep" (Matthew 10:10).

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Dear Mom and Dad,

Welcome to the Sonlight family! Thanks for putting your trust in our program. The Instructor's Guide (IG) in your hands is your road map to a successful educational journey this year. Inside you'll find 18 weeks of complete lesson plans – everything you need to teach your children for an entire year.

Before you begin, take a look at the Quick Start page and briefly acquaint yourself with the IG layout. You'll soon discover that we've covered all the information and scheduled all the tasks you and your students need to accomplish on this leg of the journey.

You don't need any special expertise or have to expend extra effort. We've done all the planning for you, so you're free to relax and enjoy the time learning and growing together.

What's on the horizon? Stories that ignite curiosity. Meaningful conversations. Relationship-building interactions. Critical thinking. Character development. Academic excellence. Godly hearts with a concern for the world.

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I pray God's blessings on your family as you embark on this phase of your homeschool adventure. Along the way, may you discover the joy of learning that lasts a lifetime.



Blessings,

Sarita Holzmann, President

P.S. Reach out to us for advice or support anytime at **1-800-903-1675** or main@sonlight.com.

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Sonlight Curriculum® “Advanced Apologetics” Schedule and Notes

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Instructor's Guide Quick Start

The Sonlight Instructor's Guide (IG) is designed to make your educational experience as easy as possible. We have carefully organized the materials to help you and your children get the most out of the subjects covered. This IG includes an entire 18-week schedule, notes, assignments, readings, and other educational activities.



Easy to use

Everything you need is located right after the schedule each week. If a note appears about a concept in a book, it's easy to find it right after the schedule based on the day the relevant reading is scheduled.

To Discuss After You Read

These sections help you hone in on the basics of a book so you can easily know if your children comprehend the material. The questions are numbered to help you reference between the Parent Guide and the Student Guide.

To Discuss After You Read

- 1 When Henry brings food home for his siblings, the author describes the food by its color—i.e., brown bread and yellow cheese; can you think of two foods that are made more specific by describing their color?
- 2 suggestions: white and dark meat (chicken); green beans; yellow beans; yellow tomatoes; yellow squash; etc.

Vocabulary

orphan: a child whose parents are dead.
children's home; an orphanage

Vocabulary

These sections include terms related to cultural literacy and general vocabulary words in one easy-to-find place.

Notes

When relevant, you'll find notes about specific books to help you know why we've selected a particular resource and what we hope children will learn from reading it. Keep an eye on these notes to also provide you with insights on more difficult concepts or content (look for "Note to Mom or Dad").

Note: The Yangtze River is the third longest river in the world. The author talks about "the yellow waters of the Yangtze river." The river carries an enormous amount of silt from higher elevation in Western China. It deposits the silt on the central plains which creates good soil for rice planting. In 2010, the Chinese government completed the Three Gorges Dam across the Yangtze, the world's largest dam. It generates electricity and will hopefully cut down on flood risk. To look for the geographical location of the Yangtze river, see the map on page 10.

Advanced Apologetics—Book List

Titles	Starts in Week
<i>Little Primer on Humble Apologetics</i>	1
<i>Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions</i>	2
<i>Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith</i>	5

Week 1

Date:	Day 1 ¹	Day 2 ²	Day 3 ³	Day 4 ⁴	Day 5 ⁵
Little Primer on Humble Apologetics	pp. 9–21, (stop at “Apologetics as correcting error and misbehavior”)	pp. 21–35	pp. 37–48 (stop at “The Holy Spirit and Prayer”)	pp. 48–61 (stop at “Formal Lectures to Primarily Christian Audiences”)	pp. 61–70
Assignment					Summarize a Chapter

Other Notes

Day 1

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 9–21, (Stop at “Apologetics as correcting error and misbehavior”)

Vocabulary

fledgling: just getting started, immature [p. 9]

Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984): Christian author, theologian, philosopher, speaker, and founder of L’Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. Some of his popular books include *The God Who is There*, *Escape From Reason*, *True Spirituality*, and *Art and the Bible*. [p. 10]

Karl Marx (1818–1883): Coauthor of the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), the primary force behind modern forms of Communism. [p. 11]

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900): German philosopher and author of numerous works including *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He influenced existentialism and is viewed by some as a precursor to postmodern thought. [p. 11]

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980): A French philosopher who promoted existentialism. [p. 11]

Albert Camus (1913–1960): A French journalist, writer, and philosopher who promoted existentialism. [p. 11]

panorama: full and wide view. [p. 13]

benighted: unenlightened, in intellectual darkness. [p. 16] **exegesis:** a term used in biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) that refers to drawing out what is in a text and properly interpreting it (exegeting it). [p. 18]

quintessential: worth imitating. [p. 19]

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: Many Christian apologists don’t emphasize the relational aspects of defending the faith, instead concentrating on the “nuts and bolts” of apologetics, such as arguments, the importance of reasoning, and responding to criticisms of the faith. Sire, however, points out that relationships are important to apologetics. Do you agree with his approach? Why or why not? [p. 13]
- Q: What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “I have become all things to all people”? [p. 21]

The opening paragraph describes the biblical events recorded in Acts 2. [p. 9]

Sire’s fourth point, derived from 1 Peter 3:15, is key to his overall premise that the defense of the faith requires certain character traits, namely humility and “living a truly godly life.” This is summed up in the final sentence on page 16, which continues to page 17: “a humble holy life ... is far more significant than one’s ability to fashion and present a verbal apologetic for that life.” This is not to say that humility and holiness should result in ignoring intellectual arguments for faith, as Sire later will offer several lines of reasoning for Christianity, but to emphasize the need for one’s character and disposition as being foundational to apologetics. [p. 16]

Sire again notes that Paul “began with the Jewish population.” The reason for this approach is the fact that the Jewish people were anticipating and awaiting the arrival of a deliverer—the Messiah (the Christ). They already believed in one God, the nature of human sin, and were in many ways “ready” to hear the message of the gospel. Moreover, the majority of the first Christians were overwhelmingly Jewish and did not consider themselves as

starting a new religion or even a sect. For Jewish believers in Jesus, such as Paul, they saw their beliefs as being a natural outgrowth of their Jewish faith. Given this context, it made sense for the first Christians to reach out to fellow Jews. We could also add that these early believers in Jesus who came from Jewish backgrounds did not particularly see themselves as “becoming Christians,” as though Christianity were already an established term. [p. 19]

Sire’s points on this page are insightful. An apologist must be sensitive to the audience they are addressing, noting the context, circumstances, cultural factors, and more involved in the given situation. Following this understanding, an apologist can wisely adapt to any given situation they find themselves in. Biblically speaking, there does not appear to be one ultimate method or system to implement when it comes to evangelism or apologetics. Obviously, the truth is proclaimed, but how one presents it and defends it appears to vary depending on the context and other circumstances. [p. 20]

Day 2

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 21–35

Vocabulary

epistemological: relating to epistemology, the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge. [p. 23]

christocentric: Christ centered. [p. 24]

ontological: having to do with being and the nature of being; sometimes used in reference to metaphysics, which addresses questions about ultimate reality. [p. 24]

Synoptic Gospels: Synoptic means “seeing together” and refers to the many similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, suggesting that these gospels had one or more sources in common. Being notably different in its content and structure, John is not part of the synoptics. [p. 25]

winsome: appealing, pleasant. [p. 26]

C.S. Lewis (1898–1963): By profession an expert in medieval and renaissance literature with Oxford then Cambridge, Lewis is best remembered as a popular defender of the Christian faith via works such as *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*, and for his works of fiction, such as *The Screwtape Letters* and the seven-volume *Chronicles of Narnia*. [p. 30]

Yahweh: One way to write the name of God as recorded in the Old Testament. There is no way to exactly pronounce the name of God as represented by four letters in the Hebrew because it contains no vowels. Jehovah, for instance, is another form of the name. YHWH or JHWH are two ways of transliterating the Hebrew name of God using English letters. The four letters are called the *tetragrammaton* (meaning “four letters” in Greek). [p. 26]

To Discuss After You Read

Q: How would you explain what it means to “take every thought captive to obey Christ”? [p. 22]

Q: How would you respond to the objections raised on this page? Was Hitler “just doing his thing” in seeking to eliminate the Jewish people? Is slavery ever justified? Is it acceptable to send children to certain death? [p. 28]

There is some debate today among Christians as to whether or not we should continue to use phrases relating to warfare, such as “Christian soldiers” or “weapons of warfare” or “crusaders” in relation to Christianity. In some situations, the use of such phrases is interpreted as offensive or even militant. It is important to note that biblical Christianity in no way advocates violence or warfare in relation to gaining converts. Instead, the New Testament pattern is one of gentle persuasion, sharing evidence and reasons for faith. Nevertheless, the New Testament does contain military imagery at times, but we must be careful to understand the underlying points being made by using such language, as well as the context. In Paul’s day, given the Roman control of the region, military imagery would make sense. It was something everyday people could relate to, as they were keenly aware of Roman military presence. Given this context, New Testament usage of military imagery makes sense. Whether or not Christians should continue to use such imagery is a matter of debate and not one that we claim to know the answer to, but it’s something to consider and keep in mind. [p. 22]

Some scholars believe John was responding to Gnosticism, which believed, in short, that flesh was bad and only spirit was good. As such, they denied that Jesus came in bodily form, but was in fact a purely spiritual being. Reading 1 John within this context seems to add support to his apologetic against Gnostic views. [p. 23]

The “five intertwining reasons” Sire offers are not to be confused with the “five ways” of Thomas Aquinas, which offer rational insights in support of God’s existence. [p. 24]

The traditional theological way of referring to God’s knowledge of all there is to know is omniscience. [p. 24]

Point four supports Christian pluralism in a philosophical sense, not in the sense of religious pluralism, which is the view that all religions are essentially the same. Philosophical pluralism means that there is more than one “thing” to the universe. In the case of Christianity, the universe consists of God and, as Sire puts it, “the cosmos” (including human beings). The counterpart to philosophical pluralism is philosophical monism, which claims that there is no pluralism to the universe, only a oneness. The Hindu belief system known as Advaita Vedanta, sometimes called nondualistic Hinduism, is an example of a monistic view of reality. For more on the distinctions between pluralism and monism see Norman Geisler’s *Systematic Theology*, which offers more philosophical insights than most systematic theologies. [p. 24]

The claim that God made a universe “that can be known” is sometimes referred to as the argument from intelligibility. As such, it is a sort of design argument for God. The reasoning for this is presented in various ways. For instance, one can make a case for the existence of God on the basis of the intelligibility of the universe or one can argue that because God exists, therefore, the universe is intelligible. Whatever approach is taken, typically the apologist using a form of this reasoning will claim that the better explanation regarding why the universe is intelligible at all is because God must exist, otherwise an impersonal, undirected universe without God would not likely consist of an intelligible universe or even of personal beings capable of reasoning, understanding, or making sense of the universe. [p. 24]

Endnote 8, on page 103, is worth reading, as Sire provides an insightful quote by theologian John Oman. [p. 26]

The “best explanation” reasoning that Sire mentions is formally called abductive reasoning. It is often employed by apologists who favor a cumulative case approach to apologetics, though other types of apologists may also implement forms of a “best explanation” defense. Abductive reasoning is often used by scientists. [p. 33]

Sire mentions the importance of “understanding our culture” in relation to apologetics. Several Christian works on this subject are of value including the following: *All God’s Children and Blue Suede Shoes: Christians and Popular Culture* by Ken Myers, *Culture Matters* by T.M. Moore, and *Culture Making* by Andy Crouch. [p. 33]

Sire stresses that Christianity “works,” but we want to be careful not to only stress the pragmatic aspects of faith. Consequently, we also want to underscore that Christianity is true, meaning that it corresponds to reality. [p. 35]

Day 3

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 37–48
(Stop at “The Holy Spirit and Prayer”)

Vocabulary

Rene Descartes (1596–1650): French philosopher. His ideas are known as Cartesianism. [p. 42]

Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274): Medieval Christian philosopher and theologian known for many works including *Summa Theologica*. His philosophy is known as Thomism. [p. 42]

Augustine (354–430): Great Christian philosopher and theologian, known for works such as *City of God* and *Confessions*. [p. 43]

To Discuss After You Read

- Q: To what extent do you think the Fall of humanity has influenced our ability to reason? Why does Sire think this question is irrelevant to the apologist? [p. 43]
- A: *because the success or failure of any apologetic argument is not in our hands, but depends on the response of the audience*
- Q: What do you make of the cumulative case apologetics that Sire outlines? Does this approach make sense? Why or why not? What apologetic approach, if any, do you see taking place in the New Testament? [p. 46]

Although Sire indicates that “rational arguments” are not often given as reasons for conversion to Christianity, numerous individuals would disagree with this generalization. C.S. Lewis, for instance, came to faith largely as a result of rational arguments, as did many other influential Christians, such as popular author and speaker Lee Strobel. While it is true that some come to faith in Christ without rational arguments, this does not mean that rational arguments have no place in the Christian life or practice. Rational arguments can serve to edify believers and also answer questions that others have, as Sire himself noted in the previous chapter. Still, people are far more than rational beings and we should not neglect other elements that can contribute to someone becoming a Christian. In short, there is no single human approach or method that will guarantee success in apologetics or evangelism. We may have a solid grasp of many rational arguments for why one should believe in God and the reliability of the Bible, but in some instances the person we are interacting with may simply need to hear about God’s love for them through Christ. Such circumstances, however, do not excuse us from knowing and understanding good reasons for faith, as 1 Peter 3:15, for instance, calls us to always be prepared to give an answer. [p. 40]

As Sire points out, different Christian apologists approach questions of certitude of their faith in different ways. Those who adhere to a view that is based more on probability tend to follow what is known as evidential apologetics, though not exclusively so. Apologists who take such an approach grant that they cannot be fully certain of their faith, but they argue that the probability that God exists or that Christ rose from the dead, for instance, is incredibly high, so much so that faith makes a lot of sense. For more on different approaches to apologetics see the revised version of *Faith Has Its Reasons* by Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman (Paternoster or IVP editions). [p. 42]

The cumulative case approach that Sire outlines is one of many approaches to apologetics. For other approaches see *Faith Has Its Reasons*, mentioned in our note about page 42. [p. 45]

Day 4

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 48–61
(Stop at “Formal Lectures to Primarily Christian Audiences”)

To Discuss After You Read

There is a danger in apologetics of making it an almost completely human endeavor. We may think that if we just find the right arguments, present them in the “right” way, and convince someone else of the truth, that’s the secret formula for leading someone else to believe. But as Sire notes, “the path to belief is mysterious” [p. 47]. We also would do well to remember the role of the Holy Spirit, as Sire reminds us. Christians who share and defend the faith are not on their own and should never think that they are. Moreover, it is not, strictly speaking, up to us to “make” other people believe as we do. We can seek to humbly persuade others with sound evidence and reasons for faith, but we can’t ever make someone else believe as we do. Keeping in mind the role of the Holy Spirit in apologetics should relieve us of the false burden of thinking that it’s all up to us, on our own steam. This does not mean that we never act. After all, God has called us to be prepared to give answers (1 Peter 3:15), but it means that we are not on our own. [p. 48]

Sire uses the term “preevangelistic” to describe his presentation to a group of largely non-Christian students. Preevangelism, as Sire observes, prepares the ground and sows seeds that will, God willing, bear spiritual fruit at a later time. Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks offer the following differences between evangelism and preevangelism: Evangelism is done by all Christians, but preevangelism is done only when needed; evangelism can take place anytime and anyplace, but preevangelism only takes place when an objection is raised; the content of evangelism is the message of the gospel, while the content of preevangelism is all of Christian doctrine or any issues relevant to it; evangelism is based on God’s special revelation of the gospel, while preevangelism is based on reason; evangelism states the gospel, while preevangelism clarifies Christian teachings; and, finally, the goal of evangelism is faith, but the goal of preevangelism is understanding (*When Skeptics Ask*, chapter 1). [p. 56]

The “freewill defense” in relation to the problem of evil argues that human free will is the root of evil and suffering in the world. In order to allow creatures to exist that truly possess free will, God left open the possibility that free choice could result in evil. But, so goes the argument, the greater good is human freedom. Not all apologists use the freewill defense in relation to the problem of evil, particularly those of a Reformed tradition (see, for instance, the chapter on the problem of evil in *Christian Apologetics* by Douglas Groothuis). [p. 60]

Day 5

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 61–70

Vocabulary

stentorian: loud, powerful, forceful. [p. 63]

taciturn: quiet. [p. 69]

eschatology: the branch of theology concerned with last things, the end times, and the final state of human beings after death. [p. 69]

To Discuss After You Read

The statement, “Two contradictory propositions can’t both be true” is another way of presenting what in logic is called the law of noncontradiction (or sometimes, the law of contradiction). As it is typically put in logic books, the law of noncontradiction is stated as, “Either A or non-A.” As an example, either God exists (A) or God does not exist (non-A). To say that God both exists and does not exist would violate the law of non-contradiction. [p. 64]

Assignment | Summarize a Chapter

Your schedule includes a weekly assignment listed under Day 5. We recommend completing the assignments, but feel free to offer some flexibility if necessary, depending on your situation and schedule. Some weeks’ include assignment options to choose from. In those instances, select only one of the alternatives.

Select chapter 1, 2, 3, or 4 of *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics* and write a one- to two-page summary of it. Include the overall point the author seeks to make in the chapter you select. Note areas where you are in agreement or disagreement with the author and offer reasons for your position. ■

Week 2

Date:	Day 1 ⁶	Day 2 ⁷	Day 3 ⁸	Day 4 ⁹	Day 5 ¹⁰
Little Primer on Humble Apologetics	pp. 71–84	pp. 85–101			
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions			Foreword–chap. 1	chap. 2	chap. 3
Assignment					The Columbo Tactic

Other Notes

Day 1

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 71–84

Vocabulary

Sensus divinitatis: Latin for “sense of the divine,” is a phrase found in John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. [p. 84]

In Chapter 5, Sire does not mention key arguments based on what is known as natural theology, which seeks to offer arguments for God apart from the Bible. The most popular natural theology arguments are arguments from morality, design, and the origins of the universe. Moral arguments state that if objective moral values exist, the most reasonable explanation is that they are derived from a transcendent moral law giver (God). Design arguments claim that evidence of specific design in the universe indicate that a grand designer must exist (God). Arguments based on the origin of the universe, known as cosmological arguments, make the case that anything that has a beginning has a cause. Since it can be demonstrated both philosophically and scientifically that the universe had a beginning, it must have had a cause. The most likely explanation, it is said, is that God caused the universe to begin. Not all apologists support such natural theology arguments, however. Classical apologists tend to strongly favor the use of natural theology arguments. For a defense of natural theology arguments see the book *In Defense of Natural Theology* (IVP). [p. 73]

A religious experience argument for Christianity can be part of a cumulative case apologetic. In other words, while it cannot stand completely on its own, it can be combined with other lines of reasoning in order to support the whole of the Christian faith. For a brief defense of religious experience see J.P. Moreland’s *Scaling the Secular City*. For a chapter-length treatment see *Christian Apologetics* by Douglas Groothuis. [p. 77]

Another helpful treatment of the problem of evil and suffering is found in *How Long, O Lord?* by D.A. Carson. Also see the chapter on evil by Ronald Nash in *To Everyone An Answer* (IVP). [p. 78]

A key problem with relativistic thinking is that it is self-refuting. The person making the claim that every truth claim is relative does not, presumably, intend that their viewpoint be taken as relative, but as absolute. In addition to the resources Sire lists on this topic see *Relativism* by Francis Beckwith and Greg Koukl. [p. 80]

Day 2

Little Primer on Humble Apologetics | pp. 85–101

To Discuss After You Read

Q: Of Sire’s five basic requirements for being a successful apologist, which one do you find most challenging? What might you do to improve in this area? [p. 94]

A: *answers will vary*

Note the books Sire recommends in footnote 2 in relation to calling. *The Call* by Os Guinness, in particular, is well worth reading. [p. 91]

For more on preevangelism see our note about page 56 in Week 1 Day 4. [p. 98]

Day 3

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Foreword and Chapter 1

Vocabulary

Deepak Chopra: a medical doctor and popular author who promotes various forms of complementary medicine including Ayurveda, an Eastern practice. [p. 13]

amorphous: shapeless. [p. 13]

neo-Darwinism: a term sometimes used to refer to evolution, usually by critics. [p. 14]

anachronism: something that is historically out of place. [p. 14]

D-Day: a term used to refer to a date when a large military operation will start, usually used in reference to World War II when the Allies invaded Normandy on June 6, 1944. Koukl mentions this, but not until page 26. [p. 19]

postmoderns: those who adhere, knowingly or not, to key ideas of the philosophy of postmodernism (there are no absolute truths, no one worldview is right). [p. 19]

pejorative: disparaging. [p. 21]

To Discuss After You Read

Q: Koukl highlights the importance of knowledge, wisdom, and character in relation to representing Christ. Why do you think this is the case? [p.25]

Note Koukl's words in the quote in the middle of the page. Rhetoric—the art of speaking persuasively—plays a key role in our culture, particularly in politics. This does not mean that rhetoric is bad, after all, learning to speak well is a helpful skill. But when rhetoric is tied to important issues, make sure those issues are backed by reasonable insights and intellectual support, not just fancy words. [p. 23]

Koukl uses the phrase “an effective ambassador for Christ.” An ambassador is most commonly known as a representative of one nation to another nation. Obviously, ambassadors must possess a certain degree of tact and diplomacy, but also be able to firmly and accurately represent (and perhaps defend) the views of their nation as needed. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul sometimes used the word “ambassador” in reference to Christians. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, for instance, Paul wrote, “we are ambassadors for Christ,” elsewhere referring to himself as “an ambassador” in Ephesians 6:20. Ambassadors don't go looking for fights—they want diplomacy, not D-Day.

Koukl's approach doesn't mean that he is giving up his firm beliefs in Christianity, but it does mean that his approach is a careful one that seeks to represent Christ well to the world. [p. 24]

Wisdom is one of the four classic Greek virtues, sometimes called the cardinal virtues (the others are fortitude [courage], temperance, and justice). Wisdom is also referred to as prudence or practical wisdom. The three Christian theological virtues are faith, hope, and love. [p. 25]

As Koukl notes in endnote 2, sometimes “offensive apologetics” is known as “positive apologetics.” This is because this approach presents positive evidence in support of Christianity. “Defensive apologetics,” on the other hand, is sometimes referred to as “negative apologetics” because it tends to focus on picking apart other worldviews by showing their weaknesses. [p. 25]

Koukl mentions that we “don't have to be frightened.” This is a good point. Too often Christians are on the retreat in the culture and in relation to the broad “marketplace” of ideas around us. Sometimes this is due to fear, but biblically we are told: “for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV). [p. 28]

Day 4

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 2

To Discuss After You Read

Q: Why does Koukl say that arguing is good? [p. 33]

A: *because it helps us find out what is true and what is false*

Q: What does Koukl mean when he says he wants to “put a stone in someone's shoe”? How might this be helpful to apologetics? [p. 38]

A: *he wants to give people something to think about that they can't ignore; it can get people thinking about important ideas that may in turn lead them to want to know more about Christianity*

For resources on the life of the mind in relation to Christianity see *Love Your God With All Your Mind* by J.P. Moreland and *Habits of the Mind* by James Sire. [p. 32]

Koukl is obviously a gifted apologist, emphasizing what some term preevangelism—preparing the way for someone to be ready to hear the gospel message directly and respond (the task of the evangelist). However, some may fault Koukl for not seeking to “win someone to Christ.” After all, the pages of Acts, for instance, are filled with overt presentations of the gospel and incredible and often immediate positive responses (people commit themselves to Christ). We should keep some points in mind. First, Koukl is not dismissing the ministry of evangelism. Second, our cultural situation is not the same as the situation in Acts. To be sure, there are some general parallels, which is why we can apply the insights of Scripture to our own day even though we are far removed historically from those

times. But our cultural situation has changed dramatically since the time of the Apostles. Note, too, that tremendous responses to the gospel in Acts are often in relation to an audience that is already prepared to hear the gospel. In situations where the audience is not already monotheist in orientation, such as the Jews, things are often different. Paul in Athens, for instance, in Acts 17 is one example. Paul gained a hearing among non-Christian thinkers—the elite philosophers of Athens. Some believed in his message, others wanted to hear more about it, and still others rejected it. But Paul declared the gospel message as part of his apologetic approach. In this sense, some apologetics see evangelism and apologetics as working hand in hand. At any rate, Koukl's emphasis is to teach readers how to winsomely engage those who hold views contrary to Christianity and in that regard he excels. [p. 38]

Koukl observes that in some cases “the fruit is not ripe,” meaning that people are not ready to commit themselves to Christ. Christian thinker Os Guinness once said that far too much of our ministry efforts as Christians are geared toward people who are ripe for harvest and, therefore, ready to make a decision for Christ. But in reality many people in our culture are far away from making such a decision. Many are skeptical, apathetic, agnostic (they don't really know if God even exists or not), or even hostile atheists. In such cases preevangelism (apologetics) makes a lot of sense. [p. 39]

Day 5

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 3

To Discuss After You Read

Q: What are some reasons why Koukl believe that asking questions is a good approach? [p. 45]

A: *it helps him draw people out so they will talk about what they think; asking questions takes pressure off of him; asking questions places the ball in their court; it helps him from jumping to conclusions; it shows he wants to understand other viewpoints*

Koukl's advice offered to a friend about Buddhism fits Koukl's style, but this does not mean that actually taking the time to study another religion is unimportant or a waste of time. Koukl himself, for instance, holds a master's degree in apologetics, which involved the study of other religions. While it's true that “academic” studies of religion may sometimes miss the mark regarding what adherents of a religion actually believe and practice in daily life, this does not mean that having an understanding of religions is pointless. Two good places to start studying other religions from a Christian perspective include *Neighboring Faiths* by Winfried Corduan and *The Compact Guide to World Religions* edited by Dean Halverson. [p. 48]

On Jesus' clever use of logical dialogue see chapter 3, “Jesus' Use of Argument,” in *On Jesus* by Douglas Groot-huis. [p. 49]

The “straw man” error noted by Koukl is also related to what in logic is called an informal fallacy (a logical error). The straw man fallacy is guilty of doing exactly what Koukl briefly mentions—arguing not against the real argument someone holds to, but instead a straw man, which is usually easier to refute than the real argument. [p. 51]

Koukl writes, “People don't know that they mean much of the time. Often they're merely repeating slogans.” A great book addressing some of the popular “slogans” of our culture is *True for You, But Not For Me: Deflating the Slogans That Leave Christians Speechless* by Paul Copan. In it he tackles several slogans, including “Christians Are Intolerant of Other Viewpoints”; “Who Are You to Say Another Culture's Values Are Wrong?”; “If You Grew Up in India, You'd Be a Hindu”; “Jesus Is Just Like Any Other Great Religious Leader”; and many more. [p. 51]

The kalam cosmological argument, sometimes referred to as KCA or simply as the kalam argument, is a variation of many so-called cosmological arguments. It argues, in short, that everything that has a beginning has a cause. By demonstrating that the universe had a beginning, the kalam argument goes on to demonstrate that the best explanation for the cause of the argument is God. It is commonly used by those who accept natural theology arguments—views that make the case for the existence of God apart from the Bible. The foremost contemporary Christian supporter of the kalam argument is philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig. [p. 53]

On the charge that believing in God is irrational, see *Is Believing in God Irrational?* by Amy Orr-Ewing. [p. 63]

Assignment | The Columbo Tactic

Practice the Columbo Tactic outlined by Koukl in chapter 3. Since you are just learning the techniques, practice with a Christian friend or with your Mom or Dad. If you are involved in a church youth group, you may ask if you could briefly present the technique and offer a short demonstration of how it works, explaining what it's supposed to accomplish. ■

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Week 3

Date:	Day 1 <small>11</small>	Day 2 <small>12</small>	Day 3 <small>13</small>	Day 4 <small>14</small>	Day 5 <small>15</small>
Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions	chap. 4	chap. 5	chap. 6	chap. 7	chap. 8
Assignment					Self-refuting Statements

Other Notes

Day 1

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 4

To Discuss After You Read

In Koukl's illustration of a house depicting the basic structure of an argument, the walls would formally be called premises or supporting premises. In short, premises are reasons for believing in a conclusion of an argument. [p. 60]

For a book-length response to *The Blind Watchmaker* see *How Blind Is the Watchmaker?* by Neil Broom. [p. 62]

The topic of the origins of flight is an interesting one. For a video exploring this topic see *Flight: The Genius of Birds* by Illustra Media. The origination of flight poses some particular difficulties for naturalist evolution, especially since they must state that flight arose as part of an impersonal, undirected process. Keep in mind, too, that flight is found in birds, mammals (bats), insects, and (in the past) reptiles. [p. 63]

Some recent arguments attempt to support the claim that something can come from nothing, such as *A Universe From Nothing* by theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss. For one response to Krauss see "The New Nothingness" by Dean Halverson in *Christian Research Journal* (2013, Volume 36, Issue 6). [p. 64]

One aspect of Koukl's advice here that may backfire is the possibility that an ungrounded Christian may have serious doubts as a consequence of being overloaded with anti-Christian information and arguments. This is one reason it is important for Christians to know *what* they believe and

why they believe it. Doubt in and of itself is not bad per se, but unanswered doubts can lead to more serious consequences. If you are ever in a situation where you believe someone with an opposing worldview has made some good points, see to it that you track down answers and responses. There is an abundance of literature available, both in print and online, that can help you understand and evaluate common objections to Christianity. [p. 70]

Day 2

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 5

Vocabulary

non sequitur: an argument that doesn't logically follow. [p. 78]

To Discuss After You Read

Sometimes non-Christians will say, "Jesus said, 'Don't judge,' so you shouldn't judge, either" (or something along those lines). Of course, the statement made is itself a judgment since someone is essentially telling you not to judge and, by doing so, is passing judgment on you. It's true that Jesus condemned hypocritical and unjust judgments, but he also said, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24, NIV). In short, there are circumstances where we are called to judge, such as making judgments about right and wrong. For more on this see chapter 3 of *Orthodoxy and Heresy* by Robert Bowman. Koukl also addresses this matter on pages 185–186. [p. 78]

Day 3

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 6

To Discuss After You Read

Anticipating and preparing for opposing viewpoints will obviously require familiarity with differing positions. This means that you will want to study topics in more detail, ensuring that you are familiar with different lines of evidence and support for arguments (what Koukl likens to the walls of a house holding up the roof [the conclusion]). Of course, you cannot expect to anticipate every possible rejoinder that may arise in a conversation. This is where another element of apologetics is important—the ability to think on your feet. For some, this comes naturally, while for others it takes more concentrated effort and practice. Apologist and philosopher Douglas Groothuis likens it to “going to the woodshed,” which is a phrase used by musicians for taking the time necessary to practice your instrument. Similarly, defending the faith will require times in the woodshed—studying, learning, understanding, and practicing. Not everyone is called to serve as a full-time defender of the faith, but all are called to be prepared to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15). [p. 91]

In Koukl’s sample conversation about “twisting” Bible passages the broader application is to know how to interpret the Bible. This will help you make your case for the interpretation you are taking. As such, the study of hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) is often helpful and necessary for apologists to grasp. This does not mean you have to take a graduate level seminary course in hermeneutics or read a textbook on the subject. Start with some basic points about how to interpret the Bible, such as those found in the book *Knowing Scripture* by R.C. Sproul. In addition, it’s also helpful to see examples of how not to interpret the Bible. One of this finest books looking at errors of interpretation is *Scripture Twisting* by James Sire. The examples are somewhat dated, but are nevertheless useful and instructive.

With that said, one of the most significant points about hermeneutics is understanding the context. This can refer to the immediate context of the text in relation to the surrounding text, as well as, for instance, the cultural context. Another important point is seeking to draw out from the text what the author intended, not reading into the text what we want to find or on the basis of preconceptions we may have. In addition, avoid selectively citing passages without having an understanding of what they mean in context. For specific examples of biblical interpretation that relate to apologetics see *The Apologetics Study Bible*.

A careful reading of Paul’s encounter with the Athenians, as recounted in Acts 17, provides one example of biblical support for Koukl’s advice to establish common ground. Note that Paul begins by essentially complimenting the Athenians (“I see that in every way you are very religious” [verse 22]). He finds common ground in an altar

with an inscription reading, “To an unknown god,” then proceeds to present the Christian message intelligently, charitably, and without compromise. [p. 95]

One difficulty with Koukl’s advice near the bottom of page 96 is that if you yourself are utilizing his tactics, then the person you are in dialogue with may also suggest that you make your points by stating your views directly rather than asking so many questions. If you refuse, then you may be accused of being hypocritical. [p. 96]

How do we know that the Bible manuscripts are so accurate? Briefly, the manuscript evidence in support of both the Old and New Testaments is vast, especially when compared with evidence for other ancient manuscripts. An entire field of study, known as textual criticism, extensively studies ancient documents, including the biblical manuscripts and manuscript fragments. In relation to the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate remarkable accuracy in the manuscripts, demonstrating that much older manuscripts are nearly identical to much more recent manuscripts. This proves that the Old Testament was not changed over the course of centuries in any significant way. In short, the biblical documents are amazingly accurate. For more on this see *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* by F.F. Bruce. For a more recent look at the New Testament manuscript evidence see “The Bibliographic Test Updated” by Clay Jones (*Christian Research Journal*, volume 35, number 3 [2012]). For Old Testament reliability see *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* by Walter Kaiser. [p. 102]

Day 4

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 7

Vocabulary

hari-kari: also known as Seppuku, it is a form of Japanese ritual suicide originally performed under certain conditions by samurai. [p. 107]

Derrida: Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), French postmodern philosopher. [p. 108]

pantheistic monism: (or monistic pantheism) is the view that all reality is infused with one divine impersonal force. It is held, for instance, by Advaita Vedanta Hinduism, but not all forms of Hinduism. [p. 116]

To Discuss After You Read

Helpful introductions to logic may be found in *Love Your God with All Your Mind* by J.P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* by J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult* by Garrett DeWeese and J.P. Moreland, and in *Come, Let Us Reason* by Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks. The (literally) textbook introduction to the topic is *Introduction to Logic* by Irving Copi, Carl Cohen, and Kenneth McMahon. [p. 108]

Paul's warning in Colossians 2:8 is not against all philosophy, rather it is a warning against "hollow and deceptive philosophy" (NIV). Philosophy by definition is the love of wisdom—something God clearly wants us to pursue (see, for instance, Proverbs 8). [p. 113]

Another point to keep in mind about the claim that Western logic is different than Eastern logic is the fact that various factions of Hinduism and Buddhism make arguments against one another that very much adhere to "Western" logic. In other words, in order to make their case for their brand of Hinduism or Buddhism in opposition to other kinds of Hinduism or Buddhism, they must use logic. After all, ultimately they are claiming that their brand of Hinduism or Buddhism is right and other views are wrong. [p. 116]

For supporting views of theistic evolution see the Biologos Foundation. For Christian views opposed to theistic evolution see *Reasons to Believe* (Old Earth) and *Answers in Genesis* (Young Earth). For a view that claims to be agnostic on questions about theistic evolution and the age of the earth, yet argues for a designer, see the Discovery Institute, which supports the Intelligent Design movement. Our goal here is not to champion any one of these views, but to provide you with sources for further study. [p. 116]

Religious pluralism as a view that holds that all religions are equally true or valid is not to be confused with pluralism as an observation about culture, such as the view that America is a pluralistic society made up of many different religions. The first makes a claim about the facts of religions and what they believe (that they are all the same), while the second makes an observation about the make up of a society or culture (that many different beliefs are present in the United States). [p. 118]

Day 5

Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions | Chapter 8

Vocabulary

Iron Curtain: A term referring to the policy of political isolation taken by the Soviet Union after World War II. [p. 121]

Assignment | Self-refuting Statements

Read the entry on "Self-Refuting Statements" on page 43 of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* by Norman Geisler (Baker, 1999). You can find a PDF of the title on-line. What similar insights do you find in the entry that compare well to Koukl's insights in chapter 7 of *Tactics*? What differences or additional insights did you gain from the Geisler material? What is the relationship between self-refuting statements and logic? Write a short paper noting your research findings and conclusions. If you are unable to access a copy of the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, write a one- to two-page summary of chapter 7 of *Tactics* instead. ■

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