

APOLOGETICS - JR. HIGH - PART III Notes

Paul: His Method and Message

In Acts 17 Paul was on the mission field, and ends up in Athens (Athens was the intellectual center of the world at that time. In addition, they were also recognized for their gods. They were polytheistic; they had a god for everything). Paul's is going to draw up on their ignorance of one God and he is going to inform them about that one God.

ACTS 17

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, **his spirit was provoked within him** when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore **he reasoned in the synagogue** with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because **he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.** 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore **we want to know what these things mean.**" 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. 22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, **I perceive** that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as **I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship,** I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 **God, who made the world and everything in it,** since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 **so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him,** though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought **not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone something shaped by art and man's devising.** 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **commands all men everywhere to repent,** 31 because He has appointed a day on which **He will judge the world in righteousness** by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, **some men joined him and believed,** among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Paul's Method and Message of Apologetic Evangelism 8 Principles of Sharing Your Faith

1) Evangelizing should always start with the heart (compassion). (verse 16)

- * His spirit was **provoked** (Gr. "*agitated*", "*irritated*", or "*angered*") within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.
- * When evangelizing, always start with the heart; it starts with compassion.
- * Unless we suffer with or feel the pain with those who are lost, we will never take a step forward to share our faith with others. If you don't care, the words just don't come out. So we should check our hearts;
- * Are we provoked in spirit? Do we care that people do not have Christ? We must have compassion for others.

2) Compassion leads to action, to take that step of faith. (verse 17)

- * He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the gentile worshippers and in the marketplace with those who happened to be there.
- * Compassion leads to action. It leads you to take that step of faith.
- * Notice Paul talked with the Jews and the gentiles (the gentiles comprised of everyone else in the world).
- * (verse 18) "the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers" - Paul was even sharing with the educated ones! Everyone!

3) Present the Gospel message. (verse 18)

- * He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods because he preached to them Jesus and the Resurrection.
- * Present the Gospel the way it was intended! See John 3:16.

4) Don't water down the Gospel message. (verses 19-21)

- * May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. (verse 21) "new thing"
- * The fact that the Gospel is different than what people have heard and what people are expecting is its very attractiveness. Don't water down the Gospel, speak it for what it is!

5) Find a common ground with whom your sharing with. (verses 22-23)

- * I perceive that in all things you are very religious, for I was passing through and found an altar with this inscription "To The Unknown God".
- * Paul takes something from their culture, something they identify with, and he builds his case from that point. Paul has a foundation on which to build from. Paul tailored his starting point at the position of who his people were. Paul spoke with where the pagans were at.
- * You never want to change the message of the Gospel, but you can tailor your method of presentation depending on who you're talking to.

6) Natural revelation - God reveals Himself through nature. (verses 24-30)

- * In verses 24 through 30, Paul answers to them regarding "the unknown God". Paul answers four fundamental questions:
 - a) Where did I come from? - verse 24
 - b) Why am I here? - verses 26-27
 - c) What is God like? - verses 28-29
 - d) What should I do? - verses 30-31

7) **Condemnation - God will judge the world in righteousness.** (verse 31)

- * He will judge the world in righteousness. Condemnation is very important in every Gospel message because Christ died to save us from something; He died to save us from sins and the condemnation and judgment that would be reserved for us if we didn't receive Him.
- * People need to know the consequences of their decisions. Paul wanted them to know there would be a judgment.

8) **Regeneration - being born-again.** (verses 33-34)

- * Some men joined him and believed. Several people were born-again as a result of Paul's witnessing.
- * "he departed" - there is always a time to depart (i.e. if people get violent, argumentative, tempers, etc), because if we are ministering, we are not arguing!

TECHNIQUES FOR ENGAGING IN CONVERSATIONS

THE BASICS

- ❖ We don't want to ridicule or put down anybody, but we do want to challenge them.
- ❖ The Christian takes the initiative by asking questions.
- ❖ Our Goal: Try to get in control of the conversation so that you can manage it.
- ❖ Matthew 22:37 tells us to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." In apologetics, we must use our minds as well as depend on the Holy Spirit!
- ❖ Sometimes when we share our faith, we present it in a way that may turn people away...we must be careful to present it properly. - Jehovah's Witness at my door...I challenged them right away, and the conversation became argumentative...

GAIN INFORMATION

- * There will be times when you want to share your faith, but you just don't know where/how to start the conversation.
- * You start by asking questions to gain information.
- * It could be as simple as asking somebody about the message they have on their shirt.
- * Suppose I was wearing a shirt that said "There is no God..." How would you respond?
- * Ask questions like:
 - ❖ What do you believe?
 - ❖ Why do you believe it?
 - ❖ How do you know that?
- * Mormon's/Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door every so often. Ask them questions like:
 - ❖ Why are you a Mormon/Muslim/Jehovah's Witness?
 - ❖ If they respond that they were raised that way, ask them if they believe that is a good reason to be a Mormon/Muslim/Jehovah's Witness?
 - ❖ Have they truly found out how/why their religions believe what they do? Does their "holy" books prove themselves to be from God? How so?
 - ❖ Example of Mormon's at my door - formerly a Catholic...

REVERSE THE BURDEN OF PROOF - if you make a claim about something, it's your job to defend that claim...this is called the Burden of Proof.

EXAMPLE #1:

Suppose I am one of your teachers, and I am an atheist. I say to the class, "the Bible is full of errors." [How do you respond?](#)

ANSWER:

- * The teacher is making a claim that the Bible is full of errors. However, the burden of proof is on him because he is making the claim.

- * Ask the teacher why he believes the Bible is full of errors. Make him answer the reason(s) why he believes this and make him point out to you where these “alleged” errors are!
- * HOWEVER, teachers are smart...he may respond to your question by saying something like: “Do you think it isn’t? Can you prove to me that the Bible is true?”
- * Do not take the bait if he turns the burden of proof on you! Instead, respond by saying, “Well teacher, I am just the student here, I am not making any claim at all...I am not saying that the Bible is or isn’t full of errors...but YOU said it was, so I was curious to know if you have any evidence for that?”
- * You see, for too long Christians have taken the burden of proof on ourselves without making the claim to begin with...we must now make those people that claim things about Christianity prove what they believe. Don’t be so quick to defend yourself!
- * Chances are, when you question others about their claims about Christianity, they don’t have a real answer for you because most of the time people repeat what they hear others say without having proof for what they believe in! We must challenge their beliefs!

EXAMPLE #2:

Again, suppose I am one of your teachers. I tell you, “All religions are the same.” [How do you respond to that?](#)

ANSWER:

- * Again, the teacher is making the claim here. The burden of proof is on him.
- * This question is very common among people who don’t know what the different religions believe.
- * Ask your teacher: “In what way are all religions the same?”
- * The statement I told you about religions being the same is not true. Since this is a common statement, I will answer this question...Religions contradict each other; therefore they cannot all be true! Mormonism teaches that there are many gods in existence and that you can become a god. Christianity teaches that there is only one God and you cannot become a god. Islam teaches that Jesus is not God in the flesh where Christianity does. Jesus cannot be both God and not God at the same time. Some religions teach there is a hell and others do not. They cannot all be true. So if they cannot all be true, it cannot be true that all religions are the same!

Two Key Questions To Remember:

1. What do you mean by that?
2. How did you come to that conclusion?

These two questions apply to most claims people make about Christianity...

REMEMBER: When you ask the questions, you bear no burden! The pressure is not on you!

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM OTHERS

- * You may come across somebody who asks you a question, then before you can answer that person, they throw out another question at you, and then another question because they are irritated or are not really listening to you.
- * For this type of person/situation, you need to stop them graciously, and say something like, "You've got some good questions; can we stop here so that I can answer them?"
- * IF they are still irate, you may need to say it was nice listening to you and graciously tell them you are done with the conversation and then leave...**you don't want the conversation to turn into an argument**, especially if that person is angry.

IMPORTANT:

If you get cornered by an argument or a piece of evidence that you don't know how to respond to, and you realize you are stuck, say something like, "this is new to me...I really want to know what your point is, so I can consider it. Tell me exactly what you mean (view) and give me your reasons for it" Then tell them you will think about it. When you say "I'll think about it", you have no obligation (no pressure) to respond. But now you have a chance to gather the information you need to respond!

If someone gives you a good challenge, write it down and do your research so that you will be ready for that one next time!

In the majority of the time, people just repeat what others say, and no one ever challenges them to make sense of what they believe in. Our goal is to give the other people something to think about...to challenge what they hear from others. We need to plant those seeds which brings doubt to their misconceptions!

You will need to practice these techniques in order to become comfortable/confident in using them. Practice with your friends and then try them out...challenge others!

Example of Acts 8:26-31, 34-35 - Phillip & the Ethiopian Eunuch

- ❖ The greatest "apologetic" is knowing the Scriptures!
- ❖ How can we defend our faith if we don't know what the Scriptures say?
- ❖ Study the Bible so that you will be equipped to defend your faith!