

The background of the entire image is a close-up of a stone wall. It features a central vertical column of red bricks, while the sections on either side are made of light-colored, tan or beige stones. The stones have a rough, textured appearance with visible mortar joints.

Apologetics Workshop:

Learning to defend the Christian Faith

Agenda

Friday, July 30, 7–9 p.m.

- Session 1:** **The problem with Christianity**
Christianity holds to absolute truths in a world that is increasingly relativistic.
- Session 2:** **The authority for Christianity**
Christians claim the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. But what does that mean? And how can we know the Bible is true?

Saturday, July 31, 8 a.m.–noon

- Session 3:** **The Christ of Christianity**
Virtually every major world religion has an exalted place for Jesus. But which Jesus is the real One?
- Session 4:** **The wolves of Christianity**
Jesus and the apostles warned that ravenous wolves would scatter the flock. But how can we see through sheep's clothing to identify false prophets?
- Session 5:** **The defense of Christianity**
Christianity is under increasing attack from atheists, leaders of other religions, and even lukewarm professors of the Christian faith. What are some tactics we can use to effectively engage critics in conversation?

Preface

Newsweek magazine recently reported that “the Christian God ... is less of a force in American politics and culture than at any other time in recent memory.” Perhaps one reason is that Christianity holds to absolute truths in a society that is increasingly relativistic. When Christians hold fast to their convictions they may come under withering attacks from proponents of other faiths, secularists, or even the new breed of “angry atheists” who insist that our nation – indeed our world – would be better off with no religion at all.

Even more troubling is the realization that the church faces greater threats from *within* – for example, from those who relish “arguments and every high minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4-5); “deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1); false teachers who tickle our ears (2 Tim. 4:3); and false prophets who come to us with “cleverly contrived myths” (2 Peter 1:16).

For followers of Jesus there has never been a more important time to know what we believe, why we believe, and how to share our faith with an increasingly skeptical – and lost – world. The apostle Peter urges us to “set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Apologetics 101 is designed for laypersons who want to be better equipped to share their faith over the back fence, across the lunch counter, or in the next cubicle. This workshop lays the groundwork for defending the Christian faith by addressing a number of key questions:

- What is Christian apologetics and why should it matter to me?
- How do I know the Bible is true?
- Who’s the real Jesus?
- What do Muslims, Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses believe?
- How can I identify false teachers?
- And what are some tactics for sharing my faith with people who don’t share my faith?

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What is Christian Apologetics?

Christian apologetics is the field of study concerned with the systematic defense of the Christian faith. More simply put, it is a reasonable defense of Christianity. The term “apologetics” is derived from the classical Greek word *apologia* and was used in a legal sense: The prosecution delivered the *kategoria* and the defendant replied with an *apologia*, or a formal speech to counter the charges. The verb form *apologeomai* means “to make a defense.” The Christian apologist is engaged in defending Christianity’s claims to the truth.

In scripture, the apostle Paul uses the term *apologia* in his speech to Agrippa when he says, “I consider myself fortunate ... that today I am going to make a *defense* before you” (Acts 26:2). Paul uses a similar term in his letter to the Philippians (Phil. 1:7, 16). And Peter tells believers they should be ready to give a *defense* or *answer* for their faith in 1 Peter 3:15. The term is used in a negative sense in Romans 1:20, where Paul says those who reject the revelation of God in creation are “without *excuse*.”

WHY CHRISTIANITY IS A REASONABLE FAITH

Christian apologists throughout the centuries have appealed to eyewitness accounts (specifically having to do with the person and work of Christ), as well as to scripture, history, philosophy, archaeology and other disciplines. Many have suffered martyrs’ deaths, not because they clung foolishly to a blind faith, but because they were fully convinced of the truth of Christianity based on careful examination of the evidence.

Consider how these passages of scripture exhort Christians to use reason in defending their faith:

- **2 Cor. 10:4-5:** ...*since the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (Christianity is rational)*
- **1 Thess. 5:21:** ...*but test all things. Hold on to what is good. (Christianity is testable)*
- **Titus 1:9:** ...*holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it. (Christianity is practical)*
- **1 Peter 3:15:** ...*but set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (Christianity is powerful)*
- **Jude 3:** *Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write and exhort you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all. (Christianity is durable)*

WHY APOLOGETICS MATTERS

There are at least three reasons apologetics is essential to Christians:

- **Our faith depends on it.** Christianity holds to absolute truths in a world that is increasingly relativistic. William A. Dembski, research professor in philosophy at

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and author of *The Design Revolution*, comments: “It’s worth remembering that until two centuries ago, most people in the West saw the Resurrection of Jesus in historically the same light as other events of antiquity, such as the murder of Julius Caesar. The Resurrection and Caesar’s murder were both regarded as equally factual and historical. Unfortunately, in the two hundred years since the Enlightenment, Christians have steadily retreated from seeing their faith as rationally compelling. Instead of being apologists for the faith, we have become apologetic about it” (Foreword to *5 Minute Apologist*, p. 11). The Bible tells us to love God with all our “minds” (Matt. 22:37). Emotions and experiences are important gifts of God, but they are not compelling reasons for trusting in Christ, Muhammad, the Buddha, Krishna, Joseph Smith, or anyone else. We should be as the Bereans who, upon hearing of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection, “welcomed the message (of Paul and Silas) with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.... Consequently, many of them believed” (Acts 17:10-12).

- **Our witness depends on it.** Every major world religion and every major cult of Christianity has a high view of Jesus yet fails to properly answer the question Jesus asked in Matthew 16:15: “Who do you say that I am?” Muslims, for example, teach that Jesus was a prophet, but they deny His deity and substitutionary death on the cross. Many Hindus readily accept Jesus into their pantheon of 330 million gods yet refuse to accept His uniqueness as the eternal Son of God. Mormons insist that Jesus was a man who became a god. If we truly believe, as Peter did, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), we need to know what that means and why it’s true.
- **Our future depends on it.** Christianity is under attack on many fronts – from atheists who mock it (*The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins; *God is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens) to charlatans who fleece the flock rather than feed it (see 1 Peter 5:2-3; 2 Peter 2). The apostle Paul warns that in the days before Christ’s return people will “depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). He further warns that a time is coming when people will “not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will accumulate teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In fact, Paul says there will be widespread apostasy (a standing apart from the truth) before the return of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:3).

“Never do we see a call to obedience and worship grounded merely on an appeal to blind, isolated faith,” writes Scott Pruett. “It is always set in the context of historical actions and objective knowledge; and God has given us an ample and defensible testimony of these things in which we are to invest our faith” (*What is apologetics?* www.lifeway.com/apologetics). Dembski summarizes it well: “Yes, our salvation is ultimately due to the grace of God. But every act of divine grace presupposes the means of grace by which God makes His grace real to us. Christian apologetics is one such means of grace” (*ibid.*, p. 12).

How do I know the Bible is true?

Seven reasons to trust the scriptures

Reason	Rationale
1. The documents	While the autographs, or original manuscripts, of the Bible have not survived the ravages of time, no other book from the ancient world has more, earlier, or more accurately copied manuscripts than the Bible. For example, we have 25,000 – 30,000 handwritten copies of the New Testament, 5,700 of them in Greek. Even if there were no copies of these biblical texts, we could reconstruct the entire New Testaments from the writings of the ancient church fathers, who quoted from the New Testament more than one million times. In addition, the existing Bible manuscripts are relatively older than other ancient documents, dating closer to the time of the originals, thus lending credence to their reliability. Finally, while these documents vary somewhat as they have been copied over the years, nearly all of the variants are minor, and none of them challenges a single doctrine of the Christian faith.
2. The scribes	The 40 men who penned the scriptures over a period of more than 1,000 years insisted that their message came from God. Many were persecuted, or even martyred, for their faith. The authors of the Bible claimed to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The prophets ascribed their message to God. Phrases such as “Thus saith the Lord,” “God said,” and “the Word of the Lord came to me” are found hundreds of times in the Bible. The apostle Paul declared that “All Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Peter referred to the writings of Paul as “Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). Even non-Christian ancient writings attest to the truthfulness of the eyewitness accounts of Christ.
3. Fulfilled prophecy	The Old Testament features nearly 300 prophecies of the Messiah, the latest of which dates to more than 400 years before the birth of Jesus, who fulfilled every Messianic prophecy except those pertaining to His glorious future return. Many of these ancient prophecies are highly detailed, making it impossible – apart from divine intervention – for one man to fulfill them all. Yet Jesus did, confirming His identity as the Messiah (or Christ) and providing exceptional evidence for the reliability of scripture. Among the Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus are: His virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-21); His birthplace in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-7); His miracle-working authority (Isa. 35:5-6; Matt. 9:35); His rejection by the Jews (Ps. 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7); His suffering and death (Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Matt. 27:27ff); His resurrection (Ps. 16:10; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8); His ascension into heaven (Ps. 68:18; Acts 1:9); and His place today at the Father’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:3).

Reason	Rationale
4. Archaeology	<p>The unearthing of ancient sites has confirmed the accuracy of the biblical record. Noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck states, “As a matter of fact ... it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible” (<i>Rivers in the Desert</i>, p. 31, quoted in <i>Systematic Theology</i>, p. 557). Examples of archaeological confirmations include the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11); Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19); the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6); King David (2 Sam.); and the Assyrian Captivity (Isa. 20). In the New Testament book of Acts alone there are hundreds of archaeological confirmations.</p>
5. Jesus	<p>Jesus claimed to be the Messiah (or Christ), the Son of God and the Son of Man (Matt. 16:16-18; 26:63-64; John 8:58). He was confirmed by acts of God (John 3:2; Acts 2:22) and declared that He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth to rule and to judge (Matt. 28:18; John 5:22). Therefore, His views on the Bible are extremely important. What did Jesus have to say? Norman Geisler writes, “Jesus declared that the Old Testament was <i>divinely authoritative</i> (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10); <i>imperishable</i> (Matt. 5:17-18); <i>infallible</i> (John 10:35); <i>inerrant</i> (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17); <i>historically reliable</i> (Matt. 12:40; 24:37-38); <i>scientifically accurate</i> (Matt. 19:4-5; John 3:12); and <i>ultimately supreme</i> (Matt. 15:3, 6)” (<i>Systematic Theology</i>, p. 559). Jesus also personally affirmed many things that Bible critics deny, for example: 1) God created a literal Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4); Jonah actually was swallowed by a great fish (Matt. 12:40); the whole world was destroyed by a flood in Noah’s day (Matt. 24:36-39); and there was one prophet (not two or three) who wrote all of Isaiah (Mark 7:6-7; Luke 4:17-21).</p>
6. The Holy Spirit	<p>The same Holy Spirit who authored scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) lives in believers’ hearts and “testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Rom. 8:16). This means the Holy Spirit confirms the truth of God’s Word to us. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would convince the lost of their sin of unbelief, of the righteousness of Christ, and of the judgment they will share with Satan if they persist in their unbelief – all clear teachings of scripture (John 16:7-11).</p>
7. The redeemed	<p>The Bible’s life-changing power is widely known through the testimony of those who have come to know Christ. The apostle Paul, once known as a Christ-hating persecutor of the church, declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Peter added, “... you have been born again – not of perishable seed but of imperishable – through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Millions of personal testimonies throughout the ages lend credence to the power of God’s Word to convey truth, convict the spiritually dead of their sins and bring new life through faith in Jesus Christ. As the writer of Hebrews declares, “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).</p>

How do I know the Bible is true?

Addressing eight common objections

Objection	Response
1. No one really knows what the Bible says because the original manuscripts are lost.	True, the “autographs” no longer exist, but a remarkable number of copies do. No other book from the ancient world has more, earlier, or better copied manuscripts than the Bible. More than 6,000 Greek, 10,000 Latin, and 10,000-15,000 other early versions of the New Testament are in existence, some dating to within a generation of the originals. Compare with 643 copies of Homer’s <i>Iliad</i> , with the earliest copies dating 1,000 years <i>after</i> the original.
2. The Bible has been copied so many times, with so many variations, there’s no way to know what was originally scripted.	While it’s true there are variations among the manuscripts – as many as 400,000 by some counts – the vast majority have to do with changes in spelling, grammar, and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. Only about 400 variants in the New Testament manuscripts have any significant bearing on the meaning of the passage, and most of these are noted in the footnotes or margins of modern translations and editions of scripture. The only textual variants that affect more than a sentence or two are John 7:53-8:11 and Mark 16:9-20.
3. The books of the Bible were chosen arbitrarily by councils of men in highly political processes. As a result, they left out some very good books – perhaps some equally inspired writings.	These oft-repeated charges are unfounded. They deny the supernatural inspiration and preservation of scripture and instead emphasize the efforts of men who, it is argued, wanted only to maintain control over the early church. In truth, the Holy Spirit authored scripture through the pens of human agents, managed its preservation and decided which books belong in the canon (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Councils of Christian leaders met in the fourth century and made important decisions about the New Testament based on evidence supporting the books’ inspiration and authority, but in no way did they undermine God’s revelation of Himself in scripture. The God who hangs the stars in space and calls them by name (Isa. 40:26) has no problem guiding the means by which His very words are given to His most precious creation: mankind.
4. It’s silly to assume that one book – the Bible – contains all of God’s truth and that other great writings, from the Vedas to the Book of Mormon, do not come from God.	We must begin with the claims of the documents themselves. The Bible specifically and repeatedly declares itself to be the written Word of God, while the Vedas do not. Even the Book of Mormon is called “another testament of Jesus Christ,” dangerously ignoring a biblical mandate not to add to or take away from the scriptures (Rev. 22:18-19). While many religious writings contain moral and ethical truths, some of which are consistent with scripture, only the Bible claims to be God’s written and complete revelation to mankind. The Bible’s claim to be the Word of God is backed up by unparalleled textual, archaeological, and historical evidence. Most compelling, however, is the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who authored Scripture and who confirms in our human spirits the truth of God’s Word.

Objection	Response
5. The Bible is full of contradictions.	Not so. Consider these guidelines for dealing with Bible difficulties: 1) logic and reason – examine the Bible like other documents; 2) translation – consider the nuances between various English versions; 3) time – take note that some seemingly contradictory statements are separated by years and must be seen in their proper time frames; 4) context – study the chapters and books in which apparent contradictions occur; 5) sense – remember that words and phrases can be used literally or figuratively; 6) quotations – note that many Old Testament passages are paraphrased or summarized in the New Testament, not quoted word for word; 7) perspective – keep in mind that when two or more writers provide separate accounts of the same events, differences in names, numbers, and conversations may be accounted for by each writer’s perspective.
6. The Bible can’t be true because it depicts a different God in the Old Testament and the New Testament.	The Bible is God’s progressive revelation of Himself and must be understood in its complete context. When one reads both the Old and the New Testaments it becomes evident that God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). For example, both testaments tell us that God judges the unrepentant in time and eternity; that He is compassionate and gracious; that He desires a personal relationship with people; and that He is actively engaged in human history. Concerning the Trinity, while the Bible emphatically declares that there is one true and living God (Deut. 6:4; James 2:19), the Old Testament hints at the triune Godhead and the New Testament more fully reveals one God in three persons (see Gen. 1:1-2, 26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 3:16-17; John 1:1, 14; 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; Col. 1:16; 2:9; Heb. 1:8; 1 Peter 1:2).
7. There are so many translations of the Bible today, it’s impossible to know which translation is the right one.	There is an alphabet soup of Bible translations available today, from the KJV to the NJB and the TNIV to the HCSB. This has led some to ask, “Which version is right?” and others to conclude that because there is so much variation between translations, none of them is correct. Keep in mind, however, that the <i>autographs</i> , or original documents, of scripture are inerrant – not the subsequent copies and translations. Even though there are dozens of English translations that differ in varying degrees from one another, we have a high degree of confidence that the source documents from which these versions came are accurate representations of the autographs.
8. There are so many Christian denominations today, it’s clear that Christians can’t agree on what the Bible teaches.	Christian denominations generally developed out of a desire for fellowship and joint ministry between individual churches – a biblical concept (Acts. 11:27-30). There is a rich diversity among Christian denominations today, and the differences between them are not as wide as they appear. Many of the disagreements among Christians are over matters of conscience, such as which day of the week to worship, dietary restrictions, or which translation of the Bible to use (see Rom.14:1-23; 1 Cor.10:23-33), or they focus on lesser points of doctrine, such as church polity or the manner in which missions activities are organized and funded. It should be acknowledged that Christians often have engaged in petty squabbling, internal power struggles and political wrangling. The New Testament implores believers to be gracious toward and forgiving of one another (Eph. 4:32).

In Search of the Real Jesus

Everyone can find the real Jesus by asking three important questions

	What does Jesus say about Himself?	What do the eyewitnesses say?	What do you say?
His origin	He is eternal and uncreated (John 8:58; 17:5; Rev. 1:17-18).	He has always existed and is the uncreated Creator (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16).	
His relationship with God	He is the eternal Son of God and relates to the Father and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 11:25-27; 12:28; Luke 4:18; 23:34, 46; John 8:16-19, 42; 15:26; 16:13-15).	The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are together at Jesus' baptism; Jesus is the Son of God the Father and works in harmony with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; Gal. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3-14).	
His deity	He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit; He calls Himself "I AM" (Mark 14:61-62; John 8:24, 28, 58; 10:30).	He was and is God, co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit; He is the fullness of deity in the flesh and an exact representation of the invisible God; He is the First and the Last; He claims to be God and is recognized as God (John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30-33; 20:28; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 1:17).	
His humanity	He thirsts, suffers, weeps, gets angry, feels joy, dies, and rises from the dead in a physical body (Mark 3:5; Luke 19:41-44; John 11:35; 15:11; 19:28, 30; 20:27).	He is virgin born, adding sinless humanity to His deity; He takes on flesh and blood; His humanity enables Him to serve as our great high priest (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-17).	
His names	"Son of Man" is His favored name; it speaks of His Messianic claims, His eternal existence, and His deity (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 9:6; 12:40; 16:27; 24:27-31; 25:31; Luke 9:26; 12:8; 22:69; John 1:51; 3:14).	He is indeed the "Son of Man" but also is confirmed as the Messiah / Christ, Son of God, and Savior; He is called by dozens of other names including the Almighty, head of the church; Holy and Righteous One; King eternal; Lamb of God; Lord of all; great God and Savior; truth; and the Word of God (John 1:14, 29; 14:6; Acts 3:14; 7:56; 10:36; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Titus 2:13; Rev. 1:8; 19:13).	

	What does Jesus say about Himself?	What do the eyewitnesses say?	What do you say?
His purpose	To seek and save the lost; to pay people's sin debt; to defeat Satan and his works; to offer eternal life (Luke 19:10; 24:7; John 10:10-11; 12:23-33).	To die and rise from the dead in fulfillment of scripture; to save sinners through His death and resurrection and thus reconcile them to God (Rom. 5:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 2:9).	
His proof	He fulfills Messianic prophecies, most notably by rising physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; 26:31-32; Luke 18:31-33; 24:13-27; 36-48; John 2:18-22; 20:24-29).	He fulfills Messianic prophecies, most notably by dying on the cross for mankind's sins and rising physically from the dead (Matt. 1:18-23; 2:1-6; 8:14-17; 12:15-21; 13:34-35; 21:1-5; Mark 15:25-28; John 19:23-24; 31-37; Acts 2:16-36; 1 Cor. 15:1-4).	
His future	After dying on the cross, rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, where He prepares a place for His followers, Jesus says He will return one day for everyone to see; He also will resurrect and judge all people and establish His kingdom on earth (Matt. 24:27-31; 25:31; 26:64; Luke 21:25-28; John 5:28-29; 14:1-3).	He ascends into heaven after His finished work on the cross and will return in the same manner in which He leaves. He will remove His church from the earth prior to His return, bring His followers with Him when He comes in judgment, establish His kingdom on earth, and create new heavens and a new earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-21; 21-22).	
His uniqueness	He is the Messiah / Christ; Son of God, and God the Son; the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last; the only means of salvation (John 8:58; 10:8-11, 24-25; 11:25; 14:6; Rev. 1:8, 17-18; 22:13).	He is the one and only Son of God; divine; the only means of salvation (John 1:1, 14, 18; Acts 4:11-12; Col. 1:16; 2:9; Heb. 1:3).	
His call to us	He calls sinners to hear, believe in Him and receive everlasting life; He invites the weary to rest in Him; He beckons the thirsty to come to Him and drink; He warns of the danger of rejecting Him (Matt. 11:28-30; John 3:16-18; 5:24; 7:37; 8:24).	He calls sinners to receive forgiveness and everlasting life by believing in Him; salvation is by the grace of God through faith, apart from works (Rom. 4:4-5; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).	

Comparing the teachings of Christianity, Islam, Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses

What they say about Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Gospel

What the Bible says about Jesus	What Islam says about Jesus	What Mormonism says about Jesus	What Jehovah's Witnesses say about Jesus
He is the virgin-born Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:35). He is eternal God, the Creator, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Holy Spirit (John 1:1-3, 14; 10:30; Col. 1:15-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 1:1-13). Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), rose physically from the dead (Matt. 12:38-40; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:4-8; 1 Peter 1:18-21) and is coming back physically and visibly one day (Matt. 24:29-31; John 14:3; Titus 2:13; Rev. 19:11-16).	He was one of God's prophets but inferior to Muhammad, who brought Allah's final revelation to man (the Koran). The Koran denies that Jesus is the Son of God, and any Muslim who believes in the deity of Jesus has committed the unforgivable sin called <i>shirk</i> – a sin that will send that person to hell. Muslims do believe Jesus is the Messiah, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life and is coming back one day – to establish Islam throughout the earth. They do not believe He died on the cross but was called to heaven by Allah before His death and perhaps replaced by Judas Iscariot.	Jesus preexisted in heaven as a spirit child of Heavenly Father (Elohim) and one of his goddess wives (as did Lucifer and all human beings). He then took on a human body through sexual relations between Heavenly Father and the virgin Mary (early Mormon teaching). Through his death and resurrection, he paid for Adam's sins and secured general salvation (resurrection) for all people. After rising from the dead, he came to America to preach to the Nephites, the ancestors of Native Americans. He was the bridegroom at the wedding in Cana and perhaps had three wives and numerous children, from whom Joseph Smith, Mormonism's founder, is descended. (more)	Jesus was "the first and direct creation of Jehovah God" (<i>The Truth Shall Make You Free</i> , p. 47). Jesus then created all "other" things (Col. 1:16 <i>New World Translation</i>). "Jehovah took the perfect life of his only-begotten Son and transferred it from heaven to ... the womb of the unmarried girl Mary ... Thus God's Son was conceived or given a start as a human creature ... Jesus' birth on earth was not an incarnation" (<i>From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained</i> , pp. 126-27; <i>What Has Religion Done for Mankind?</i> p. 231). "... the true Scriptures speak of God's Son, the Word, as 'a god.' He is a 'mighty god,' but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah" (<i>The Truth Shall Make You Free</i> , p. 47). (more)

What the Bible says about Jesus	What Islam says about Jesus	What Mormonism says about Jesus (cont)	What Jehovah's Witnesses say about Jesus (cont)
		<p>Jesus is one of three gods in the Mormon godhead, although Mormonism recognizes the Trinity only as one in "purpose," arguing instead for a multitude of gods. Jesus and Heavenly Father have bodies of flesh and bone, making it "impossible for Him [Heavenly Father] to occupy at one time more than one space of such limits" (James E. Talmage, <i>Articles of Faith</i>, p. 43).</p>	<p>"This firstborn from the dead was raised from the grave, not a human creature, but a spirit." (<i>Let God Be True</i>, p. 276)</p> <p>"Jesus returned to earth in 1914, has expelled Satan from Heaven and is proceeding to overthrow Satan's organization, establish the Theocratic Millennial Kingdom, and vindicate the name of Jehovah God. He did not return in a physical form and is invisible as the Logos" (Walter Martin, summarizing the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses in <i>Kingdom of the Cults</i>, p. 52).</p>

What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit	What Islam says about the Holy Spirit	What Mormonism says about the Holy Spirit	What Jehovah's Witnesses say about the Holy Spirit
<p>The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the triune Godhead (Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19-20) and is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son (Acts 5:3-4).</p>	<p>Islam denies the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit, as well as the Trinity. Rather, the Koran describes the Holy Spirit as "the angel which brought revelation" (Mualana Muhammad Ali, <i>The Holy Koran with English Translation and Commentary</i>, p. 43). The Koran also calls the Spirit "Gabriel" (2:97) and the "Faithful Spirit" (26:193).</p>	<p>Mormon.org offers this definition of the "Holy Ghost:" "Also called the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, and the Comforter. He witnesses, or testifies of the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and reveals and teaches truth."</p> <p>Sounds orthodox, but historically Mormon leaders have offered more disturbing views of the Holy Spirit. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Father, Son and Holy Spirit "constitute three distinct personages and three Gods" (<i>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</i>, p. 370). • <i>Doctrine and Covenants 130:22</i> declares that the Father has a body of flesh and bones. So does the Son. But the Holy Ghost is "a personage of spirit." • "The Holy Ghost is yet a spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body as the Saviour did or as the gods before them took bodies" (Joseph Smith, April 6, 1843; see <i>Discourses on the Holy Ghost</i> compiled by N.B. Lundwall, p. 73). 	<p>"... The holy spirit is the invisible active force of Almighty God that moves his servants to do his will" (<i>Let God Be True</i>, p. 108).</p> <p>"The Scriptures themselves unite to show that God's holy spirit is not a person but is God's active force by which he accomplishes his purpose and executes his will" (<i>Aid to Bible Understanding</i>, p. 1543).</p> <p>"As for the 'Holy Spirit,' the so-called 'third Person of the Trinity,' we have already seen that it is not a person, but God's active force" (<i>The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life</i>, p. 24).</p>

What the Bible says about the gospel	What Islam says about the gospel	What Mormonism says about the gospel	What Jehovah's Witnesses say about the gospel
<p>Through His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus conquered sin and death, paid our sin debt in full, and provided forgiveness of sins and everlasting life by God's grace through faith in Christ (John 3:16, 5:24; Rom. 4:4-5; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).</p>	<p>The Koran teaches, "Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam" (3:19). This means salvation is achieved only through submission to the teachings of Islam. Forgiveness is based on good works and Allah's choice of mercy.</p> <p>The Muslim's chances for heaven are good if he or she: 1) accepts Allah and his prophet Mohammad; 2) does good works and all that is required of him or her by Allah; and 3) is predestined to Allah's favor.</p> <p>Islam teaches that Christ was neither crucified for our sins nor resurrected; therefore salvation cannot possibly be attained through faith in Christ. In fact, sin is not man's problem. Man is sinful by act only, not by nature. Original sin is viewed as a "lapse" by Adam. Man is not really "fallen" in his nature; he is merely weak and forgetful. Sin is thought of in terms of rejecting right guidance. It can be forgiven through repentance. No atonement is necessary.</p> <p>(more)</p>	<p>Jesus' atonement secured "salvation" (meaning resurrection) for nearly all people, but "men will be punished for their own sins" (<i>Article of Faith #2</i> by Joseph Smith). People may earn "eternal life" (godhood) by "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel," meaning works (<i>Article of Faith #3</i> by Joseph Smith).</p> <p>Godhood is the goal of Mormonism. According to fifth LDS President Lorenzo Snow, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become" (<i>The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow</i>, p. 1).</p> <p>Joseph Smith taught that "you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves ... to inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of God" (<i>History of the Church</i>, vol. 6, p. 306).</p> <p>(more)</p>	<p>"The atonement is a ransom paid to Jehovah God by Christ Jesus and is applicable to all who accept it in righteousness. In brief, the death of Jesus removed the effects of Adam's sin on his offspring and laid the foundation of the New World of righteousness including the Millennium of Christ's reign" (Walter Martin, <i>Kingdom of the Cults</i>, p. 52).</p> <p>"Those people of good will today who avail themselves of the provision and who steadfastly abide in this confidence will find Christ Jesus to be their 'everlasting Father'" (<i>Let God Be True</i>, p. 121).</p> <p>"We have learned that a person could fall away and be judged unfavorably either now or at Armageddon, or during the thousand years of Christ's reign, or at the end of the final test ... into everlasting destruction" (<i>From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained</i>, p. 241).</p> <p>(more)</p>

What the Bible says about the gospel	What Islam says about the gospel (cont)	What Mormonism says about the gospel (cont)	What Jehovah's Witnesses say about the gospel (cont)
	<p>Muslims believe in heaven and hell. Allah predetermines the eternal destiny of each person, and the hope of salvation for the Muslim is based on works, although no Muslim has the absolute assurance of heaven. Islam teaches its followers to prepare for the Day of Judgment, in which each person's good and evil works will be measured, resulting in heaven or hell.</p>	<p>Mormonism teaches that a person is destined for one of six places after death:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outer darkness – reserved for Satan and his demons and the extremely wicked, including apostate Mormons. • Telestial kingdom – the lowest of the three heavens; the wicked will spend eternity here. • Terrestrial kingdom – the second heaven; honorable people and “lukewarm” Mormons will live here. • Celestial kingdom – the highest of the three heavens consisting of three separate levels; the top level is where Mormons hope to be “exalted.” 	<p>“Who and how many are able to enter in (the Kingdom)? The Revelation limits to 144,000 the number that become a part of the Kingdom and stand on heavenly Mount Zion” (<i>Let God Be True</i>, p. 136). The rest of Jehovah's Witnesses, the “other sheep,” hope to be resurrected and live on Paradise Earth.</p>

The Defense of Christianity

Ground rules and tactics for engaging others in conversation

Ground Rules	Pointers
<p>1. Be ready</p> <p>The apostle Peter urges Christians to “set apart the Messiah as Lord in your hearts, and <i>always be ready</i> to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be ready with your personal testimony, a simple narrative highlighting your life before Christ, how you came to know Christ and your life since receiving Christ. • Be ready with a basic understanding of key Christian doctrines, particularly those regarding Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the gospel. • Be ready with a basic understanding of the key teachings of other faiths.
<p>2. Be gracious</p> <p>Consider the example of Jesus: “They were all speaking well of Him (Jesus) and were amazed by the gracious words that came from His mouth ...” (Luke 4:22). And consider Paul’s exhortation: “Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person” (Col. 4:6).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be kind. Your smile and gentle spirit may disarm your unbelieving friends, especially if they have been the victims of verbal assaults from overzealous Christians. • Be respectful. Understand that your friends are, in all likelihood, as sincere in their beliefs as you are in yours. • Be patient. Spend at least as much time listening as talking.
<p>3. Be clear</p> <p><i>Have a clear head:</i> “Keep a clear head about everything ...” (2 Tim. 4:5). <i>Have a clear conscience:</i> “Pray for us; for we are convinced that we have a clear conscience, wanting to conduct ourselves honorably in everything” (Heb. 13:18; see also Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:16). <i>Have a clear resolve:</i> “Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).</p>	<p><i>Have a clear strategy</i>, which includes: a) taking control; b) staying focused; and c) getting personal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Taking control.</i> Your friends may have a well rehearsed “sales pitch.” Don’t let them lead you through a series of questions you may not be prepared to answer. Instead, you might say, “I’d like to ask <i>you</i> a few questions.” • <i>Staying focused.</i> Your questions could include: Who is Jesus, in your opinion? What did His death accomplish? What is mankind’s biggest problem, and what’s the solution? How does a person receive eternal life? Do you know for certain where you’ll spend eternity? How do you know that? • <i>Getting personal.</i> Tell your friends how you came to realize you were a sinner. Share your belief that Jesus died on the cross to pay your sin debt and rose physically from the dead. Emphasize your gratefulness to God that through Christ’s finished work on the cross you have eternal life – not by your works but by His grace.

Tactics	Conversation Starters
<p>1. Columbo. Dubbed by Gregory Koukl in <i>Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions</i> and named after the affable television detective, the Columbo tactic uses non-threatening questions to shed light on someone's faulty reasoning.</p> <p>Writes Koukl, "The key to the Columbo tactic is to go on the offensive in an inoffensive way by using carefully selected questions to productively advance the conversation. Simply put, never make a statement ... when a question will do the job" (pp. 45, 47).</p>	<p>Using the Columbo tactic means asking clarifying questions.</p> <p>Example 1. <i>Your friend says, "All religions are pretty much the same. We all worship the same God in our own way."</i> <i>Your response could include:</i> "How much have you studied all the religions of the world? What makes you say they're all pretty much the same? Do you think the differences are significant? How do you define God?"</p> <p>Example 2. <i>Your friend says, "You can't legislate morality."</i> <i>Your response could include:</i> "What do you mean by that? How do you define morality?"</p> <p>Do you vote? When you vote for someone, are you expecting your candidate to pass laws reflecting your own point of view? Wouldn't that be forcing your views on others? Can you give me an example of legislation that does not have a moral element to it?"</p>
<p>2. Perry Mason. Named after the hard-charging attorney from the 1950s-60s television drama, this tactic reverses the burden of proof, challenging the person who makes unsubstantiated claims to prove his or her point of view.</p> <p>When someone makes an assertion (or statement of opinion), it's a good idea to ask: Is it <i>possible</i> (could it have happened this way)? Is it <i>plausible</i> (is it reasonable to understand it this way)? And is it <i>probable</i> (is it the best explanation)?</p>	<p>Using the Perry Mason tactic means asking how and why questions.</p> <p>Example 1. <i>Your friend says, "The Bible has been changed so many times no one really knows what was originally written."</i> <i>Your response could include:</i> "How did you come to that conclusion? Can you tell me more about who, specifically, changed the Bible, and when they did it? Why do you think someone would change the Bible? How could someone get away with changing the Bible when there are thousands of ancient manuscripts that seem to prove otherwise?"</p> <p>Example 2. <i>Your friend says, "I'm basically a good person. God would never send me to hell."</i> <i>Your response could include:</i> "How do you define 'good'? Why do you think you're a good person? Can you tell me how you see God? Is He just? Holy? Does He punish any wrongdoing? And if so, how does He distinguish between good and evil?"</p>
<p>3. Joe Friday. Named after the droll L.A. police sergeant in the late 1960s drama "Dragnet," this tactic is a no-nonsense approach to acquire "just the facts, ma'am." Koukl writes that only two things are necessary for this tactic: 1) the awareness that many challenges to Christianity are based on bad information; and 2) knowledge of the facts (p. 176).</p>	<p>Using the Joe Friday tactic means separating fact from fantasy.</p> <p>Example. <i>Your friend says, "More wars have been fought and more blood has been shed in the name of God than any other cause. Religion is the greatest source of evil in the world."</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> "The historical facts show that the greatest evil has always resulted from a denial of God, not belief in Him. <i>The Guinness Book of World Records</i>, for example, shows that carnage of unimaginable proportions resulted not from religion but from institutionalized atheism: 66 million wiped out under Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev; between 32 and 61 million Chinese killed under communist regimes since 1949; 2.7 million Cambodians killed under the Khmer Rouge." (from <i>Tactics</i>, p. 177)</p>

Tactics	Conversation Starters
<p>4. Yogi Berra. Named after the Hall of Fame catcher and manager who spent most of his career with the New York Yankees – and who perhaps is equally famous for his “Yogiisms” such as “It’s déjà vu all over again” and “Always go to other people’s funerals, or else they won’t go to yours” – this tactic seeks out self-refuting views.</p>	<p>Using the Yogi Berra tactic means identifying self-refuting statements.</p> <p>Example 1. <i>Your friend says, “There is no truth.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “Is that statement true?” (If it’s true, then it’s false; if it’s false, then it’s also false.)</p> <p>Example 2. <i>Your friend says, “There is no absolute right or wrong.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “Are you absolutely sure you’re right about that?”</p> <p>Example 3. <i>Your friend says, “You can’t know anything for sure.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “Are you sure about that?”</p>
<p>5. Kramer. Like the quirky neighbor in the 1990s TV sit-com “Seinfeld” who takes a car (and its salesman) on a test drive until the car runs out of gas, this tactic adopts the other person’s point of view and then rides it to its logical – and failed – conclusion.</p> <p>There’s a fancy name for this tactic: <i>reductio ad absurdum</i>. This is a Latin phrase that means to reduce a point to its absurd conclusion or consequence.</p>	<p>The Kramer tactic means adopting someone else’s point of view to show its weaknesses.</p> <p>Example 1. <i>Your friend says, “If Jesus forgives a murderer, then capital punishment is wrong.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “To follow your line of reasoning, it would be wrong for government to punish <i>any</i> criminal activity since Jesus forgives all sins. This seems absurd, especially when the Bible says the purpose of government is to promote good and punish evil. Therefore, even though Jesus might forgive a murderer, that doesn’t mean it’s wrong for government to punish him or her.” (from <i>Tactics</i>, p. 147)</p> <p>Example 2. Jesus used this tactic in Matt. 12:24-28 when the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself,” Jesus argued, carrying the Pharisees’ charge to its logical conclusion. “How then shall his (Satan’s) kingdom stand?”</p>
<p>6. Wayne Gretzky. Named for the hockey legend that was famous not only for knowing where the puck was, but where it was <i>going to be</i>, this tactic is designed to show your friends that their defenses are naturally weak in the face of reason. You score the goal by turning your friends around and getting them to see the folly of their moral relativism.</p> <p>Koukl comments, “Usually a person cannot deny moral truth without immediately affirming it. The minute they say, ‘and it’s wrong to push your morality on me,’ they have sunk their own ship” (p. 125).</p>	<p>The Wayne Gretzky tactic means turning your friend’s defenses around.</p> <p>Example 1. You have made the point that you believe homosexuality is wrong. <i>Your friend says, “I think it’s wrong to condemn anyone for anything.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “Then why are you condemning me for expressing my opinion?”</p> <p>Example 2. <i>Your friend says, “You shouldn’t force your morality on someone else.”</i> <i>Your response could be:</i> “Why not? If you think it’s wrong, then why are you forcing your morality on me right now?”</p>

Recommended Resources

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

5 Minute Apologist:

Maximum Truth in Minimum Time

By Dr. Rick Cornish

Christianity, Cults & Religions:

Compare 17 Religions and Cults with Christianity

By Rose Publishing

Encountering the World of Islam

Edited by Keith E. Swartley

Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions

By John Ankerberg and John Weldon

Encyclopedic Dictionary of Cults, Sects, and World Religions

By George A. Mather, Larry A. Nichols and Alvin W. Schmidt

Kingdom of the Cults

By Walter Martin

Know Why You Believe

By Paul E. Little

Mormonism 101: Examining the Religion of the Latter-day Saints

By Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson

Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses

By Ron Rhodes

So What's the Difference?

A look at 20 Worldviews, Faiths and Religions and How They Compare to Christianity

By Fritz Ridenour

The Case for Faith; The Case for Christ; The Case for the Real Jesus

By Lee Strobel

The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity

By Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner

The Reason for God

By Timothy Keller

Who Made God?

Edited by Ravi Zacharias and Normal Geisler

WEB SITES

www.4truth.net (North American Mission Board)

www.carm.org (Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry)

www.equip.org (Christian Research Institute)

www.leestrobels.com (Investigating Faith with Lee Strobel)

www.encedelivered.net (Rob Phillips' Web site)

www.reasonablefaith.org (William Lane Craig)

www.rzim.org (Ravi Zacharias)

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