



NIGHTLIGHT FALL 2023

APOLOGETICS

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Importance of Apologetics
 - God commands us to do it
 - It strengthens our faith
 - We are living in the golden age of apologetics

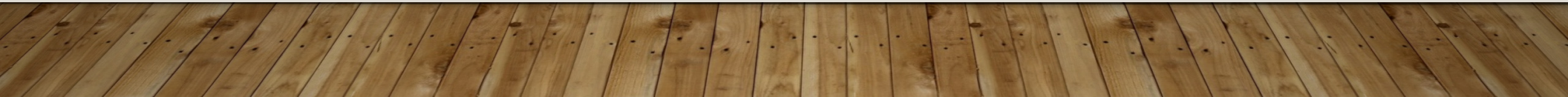
GOALS FOR TONIGHT

- Inform
 1. What is apologetics, and why do we do it?
 2. What are the various approaches to defending our faith, and which one is the best according to Scripture?
- Equip
 1. What are common objections to Christianity, and how can we answer them?

OVERVIEW

- Introducing Apologetics
 - The Definition of Apologetics
 - The Approaches of Apologetics
- Applying Apologetics
 - Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - The Resurrection
 - The Problem of Evil & Suffering
- Resources

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS



INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

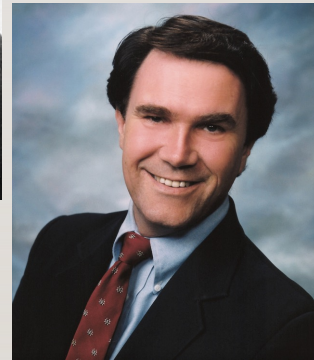
- The Definition of Apologetics
 - A reasonable defense of the Christian faith
 - “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a **defense [apologia]** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” 1 Peter 3:15

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Classical Apologetics

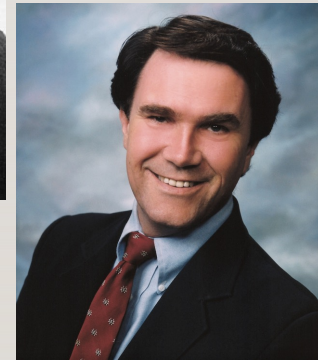
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Major Adherents
 - Cornelius Van Til
 - Greg Bahnsen
 - John Frame



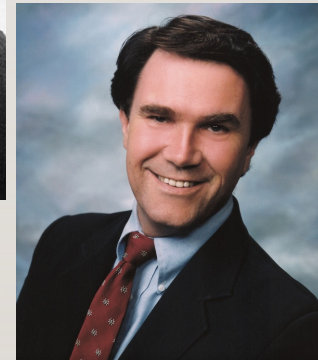
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Main proposition
 - Reasoning does not take place in a vacuum; rather, a person's reasoning is colored by things they already assume, and this determines their knowledge about the world and how they arrive to certain conclusions.
 - Facts are not held objectively, but they are interpreted. There are no brute facts



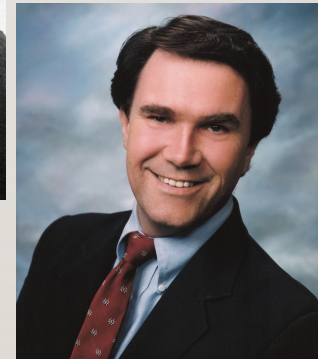
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Major characteristics
 - Takes seriously the corrupting power of sin on human reasoning (Romans 1:18–32)
 - Takes seriously the authority of the Bible
 - Attempts to demonstrate the absurdity of a non-Christian worldview



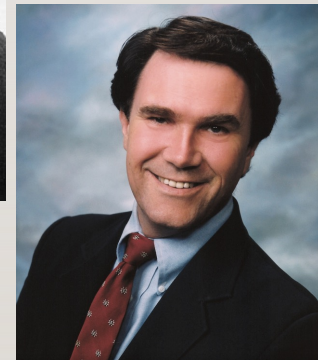
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Major characteristics
 - Don't engage in arguments with unbelievers
 - “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him.” Proverbs 26:4



INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Weaknesses
 - Circular argumentation
 - “Why believe the Bible?
Because the Bible is God’s
Word and says so.”
 - Can be logically unsatisfying
 - Amounts to fideism



INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Presuppositionalism
 - Weaknesses
 - Scripture uses inductive reasoning and evidence in support of faith

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- In the OT:
 - Moses
 - God gets his attention with a bush that is on fire but that does not burn up, evidencing that God is acting (Exod 3:3)
 - God gives Moses and the people several miraculous signs to show them that Moses is His prophet and that His people should follow Him (Exod 4:1–5; 7–11)

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- In the OT:
 - The Prophets
 - Predicted events and performed miracles to prove Yahweh is the One true God
 - Elijah declares a drought (1 Kgs 17:1), and God speaks through Isaiah to predict the future and challenge false gods (Isa 44:7)

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- In the OT:
 - The Prophets
 - Predicted events and performed miracles to prove Yahweh is the One true God
 - Elijah raises the widow's son and defeats the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 17–18)
 - “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.” 1 Kings 17:24.
 - “Now it happened at the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘O Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your slave and I have done all these things at Your word. Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Yahweh, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again.’ Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And all the people saw it and fell on their faces and said, ‘Yahweh, He is God; Yahweh, He is God.’” 1 Kings 18:36–39

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- In the NT:
 - The Gospel writers demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy (Matt 1:22; Luke 24:27; John 5:39)
 - Paul reasons with the Jews while proclaiming the gospel to them: “And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned with them from the Scriptures**, explaining and setting before them that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is that Christ.’ And **some of them were persuaded and joined** Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and not a few of the leading women.” Acts 17:2–4 (see also Acts 17:17; 18:4; 19:8; 28:23–24)
 - The apostles’ perform miracles to validate their message (Acts 9:33–35, 42; 13:12)

INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- In the NT:
 - Jesus Himself
 - Expected the miracles He performed to demonstrate that He was sent from God: “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and continue knowing that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.” John 10:37–38
 - Defends His message with logic and reasoning: “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Matthew 12:25–28

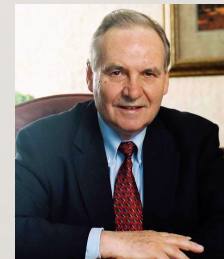
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Classical Apologetics
 - Main Characteristics
 - First prove theism
 - Then prove Christianity



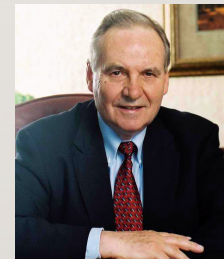
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Classical Apologetics
 - Major Adherents
 - William Lane Craig
 - JP Moreland
 - RC Sproul
 - Norman Geisler



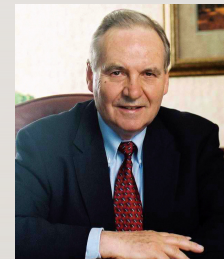
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Classical Apologetics
 - First prove theism
 - Cosmological argument
 - Ontological argument
 - Teleological argument
 - Moral argument



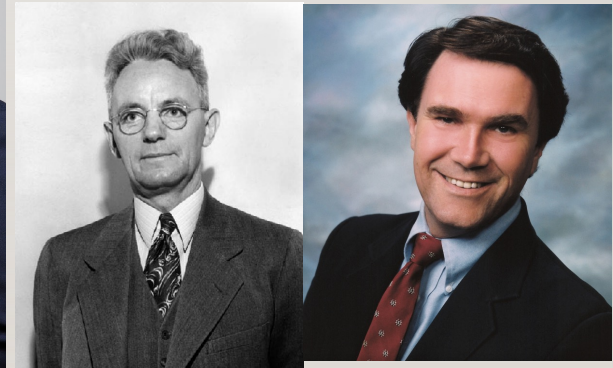
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- The Approaches of Apologetics
 - Classical Apologetics
 - Then prove Christianity
 - Historical evidence
 - Miracles
 - Prophecy
 - Reliability of the Bible
 - Archaeological evidence
 - Extrabiblical sources
 - Sites



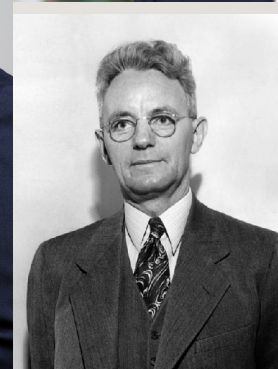
INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- Which approach is the best?
 - A mixed approach
 - We need to present good arguments, evidence, and sound reasoning



INTRODUCING APOLOGETICS

- Which approach is the best?
 - A mixed approach
 - We need to acknowledge that only God can change peoples' hearts
 - Scriptural examples: The nation of Israel and the Pharisees, statements about human nature



APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - The Resurrection
 - The Problem of Evil & Suffering

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - Cosmological argument
 - Teleological argument
 - Moral argument

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - Cosmological argument
 - Everything that begins to exist has a cause of existence stemming all the way back to God
 - Cannot get everything from nothing

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - Teleological Argument
 - From *telos* meaning “end” or “goal”
 - Argument from design
 - Watchmaker/Fine-tuning argument

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - Moral Argument
 - There is objective morality
 - Belief in God provides a better explanation of this than other alternatives

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Existence of God
 - Moral Argument (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)
 - Calvin's *Sensus Divinitatis* and Scripture
 - Creation (Ps 19:1–3)
 - Our hearts and conscience (Rom 1:18–32; 2:14–15)

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - Textual criticism
 - Manuscript evidence
 - We don't have the originals
 - But we have 5600 Greek and IM quotations from the church fathers (1st–5th century AD)
 - 124 manuscripts within 300 years of composition of the NT
 - 12 from 2nd cent
 - 64 from 3rd cent
 - 48 from 4th cent

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

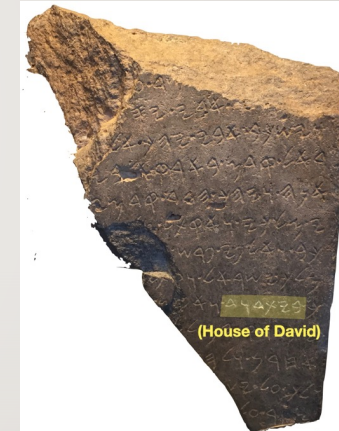
- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - Textual criticism
 - Manuscript evidence
 - Classical authors: Zero from first 300 years of composition
 - Average of existing manuscripts for ancient Greek writers is 20
 - There are 3x more NT manuscripts within the first 200 years than the average Greco-Roman author has in 2,000 years

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - Textual criticism
 - What about the variants?
 - There are hundreds of thousands
 - 99% of them are meaningless (spelling errors, word order)
 - They do not affect essential doctrines
 - We agree on those texts that are inauthentic (e.g., John 8, ending of Mark, I John 5:7 and Trinity)
 - A game of telephone?

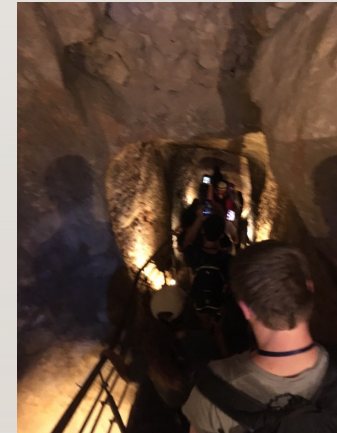
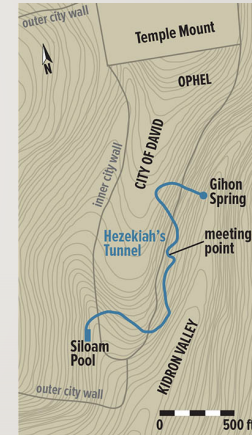
APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Reliability of the Bible
 - Prophecy
 - Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70
 - Destruction of Tyre in Ezek 26
 - Exile and return (Deut 28-29; Isaiah)
 - Archaeological findings (Existence of David and Tel Dan Stele (1993), Hittites, DSS matching with MT)



APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - Archaeological findings
 - Hezekiah's Tunnel
 - “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the tunnel and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?” 2 Kings 20:20



APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - Apparent Contradictions
 - Example: Curse of Jeconiah
 - Problem: Jesus seems to be part of the cursed line
 - Three possible solutions
 - Limited reference to his immediate offspring
 - Virgin Birth
 - Reversal of curse (Zerubbabel)

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Resurrection
 - The tomb of Joseph of Arimathea
 - The empty tomb
 - The appearance to the 500 (1 Cor 15:4–8)
 - The change in the disciples

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

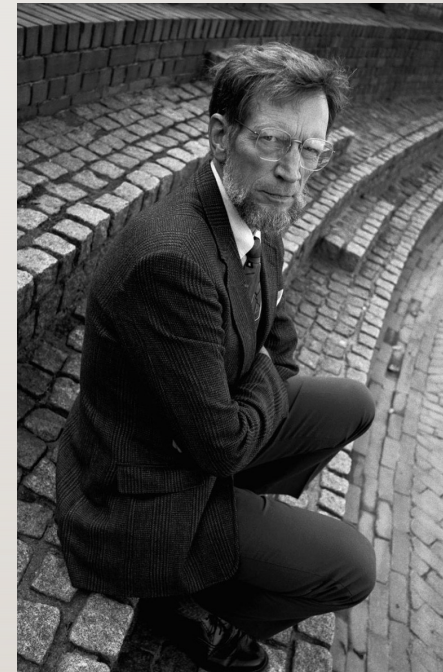
- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Problem of Evil & Suffering
 - 1) God is omnibenevolent (all-good)
 - 2) God is omnipotent (all-powerful)
 - 3) Evil and suffering exist
 - Conclusion: Either God is not good/loving (i.e., He is evil), or He is not all-powerful

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Common Objections and Responses
 - The Problem of Evil & Suffering
 - Greater-Good theodicy
 - God has good purposes for evil in the world
 - Some good purposes are knowable, and some are not. Yet the hiddenness of the good purposes does not prove their nonexistence

VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE

- Greater-Good/Glory View:
 - Alvin Plantinga and a response to the Logical Problem of Evil:
 - Premise 1: God is omnipotent (all-powerful)
 - Underlying Assumption: An omnipotent God *can* prevent evil
 - Premise 2: God is omnibenevolent (all-good)
 - Underlying Assumption: An omnibenevolent God *wants* to prevent evil
 - Premise 3: Evil exists
 - Underlying Assumption: Evil and suffering cannot possibly serve any good purpose

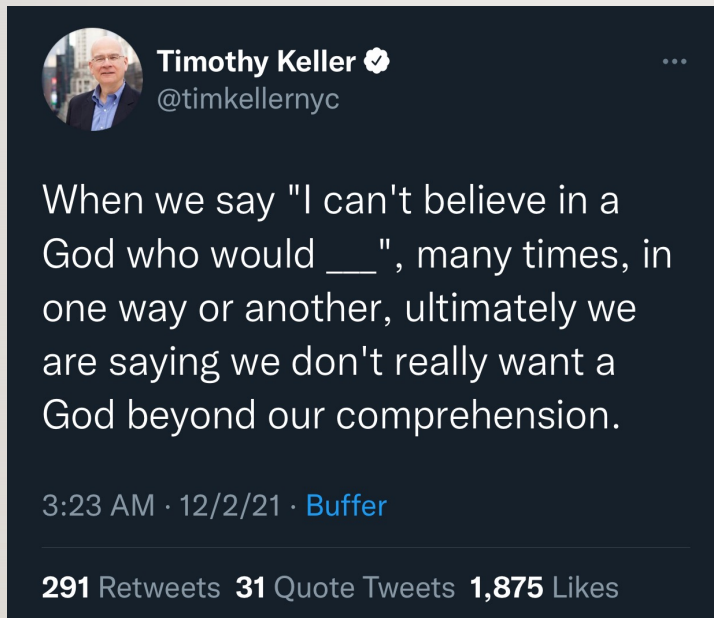



VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE

- Greater-Good/Glory View (other examples):
 - A child getting a shot
 - Man born blind
 - Jesus dying on the cross



VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE

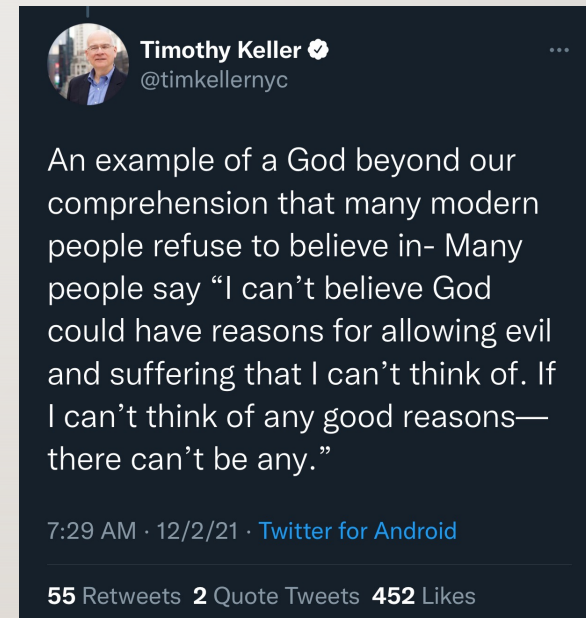



Timothy Keller 
@timkellernyc

When we say "I can't believe in a God who would ___", many times, in one way or another, ultimately we are saying we don't really want a God beyond our comprehension.

3:23 AM · 12/2/21 · [Buffer](#)

291 Retweets **31** Quote Tweets **1,875** Likes



Timothy Keller 
@timkellernyc

An example of a God beyond our comprehension that many modern people refuse to believe in- Many people say "I can't believe God could have reasons for allowing evil and suffering that I can't think of. If I can't think of any good reasons—there can't be any."

7:29 AM · 12/2/21 · [Twitter for Android](#)

55 Retweets **2** Quote Tweets **452** Likes

VARIOUS RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE

- Greater-Good/Glory View
(Response to Objections):
 - Even if God gave us answers for specific instances of evil and suffering in the world, we would most likely not understand them due to our finiteness and limitations as creatures



“And so seated next to my father in the train compartment, I suddenly asked, "Father, what is sexsin?" He turned to look at me, as he always did when answering a question, but to my surprise he said nothing. At last he stood up, lifted his traveling case off the floor and set it on the floor. Will you carry it off the train, Corrie?" he said. I stood up and tugged at it. It was crammed with the watches and spare parts he had purchased that morning. It's too heavy," I said. Yes," he said, "and it would be a pretty poor father who would ask his little girl to carry such a load. It's the same way, Corrie, with knowledge. Some knowledge is too heavy for children. When you are older and stronger, you can bear it. For now you must trust me to carry it for you.”

APPLYING APOLOGETICS

- Final encouragement
 - “The first to state his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.” Proverbs 18:17
 - Just because you don’t have an answer doesn’t mean there isn’t one (excuse the double (triple?) negatives)

RESOURCES

- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis
- *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Sean and Josh McDowell
- *Surviving Religion 101* by Michael Kruger
- *On Guard* by William Lane Craig
- *Tactics* by Greg Koukl

RESOURCES

- Debate between William Lane Craig and Christopher Hitchens on the existence of God
- Debate between Dan Wallace and Bart Ehrman on the reliability of the NT
- Debate between RC Sproul and Greg Bahnsen on classical vs. presup approach
- Lee Strobel Case for Christ on YouTube
- John Lennox on YouTube (existence of God arguments)
- DA Carson *How Long, O Lord?*