

APOLOGETICS



Keep The Faith

Episode 1 – Introduction

Welcome back to the companion for another new, exciting series for this podcast!

As promised so many weeks and months ago, we are finally going to be looking at how we can defend the faith, as we are called to do in 1 Peter 3:15 – *“in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”*.

The reason this is such a prime passage is that, within it, we see the Greek word *‘apologia’* being used, which means to defend. Apologetics as a discipline has sprung from that, in that a solid knowledge of apologetics allows us to defend the faith.

‘Defend from what?’, you might ask. Good question.

We can pair this scripture with 2 Corinthians 10:5, which says *“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God”*.

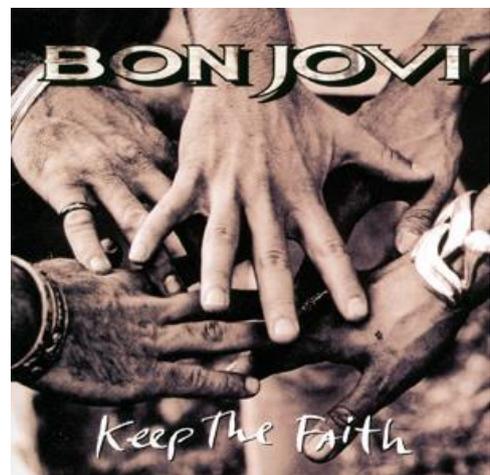
When taken together, we know we need to defend the faith against arguments and lofty opinions which are in opposition to God.

Further to this, though, we can also use this *apologia* to defend our own hearts from pretensions against the knowledge of God. Apologetics is a wonderful way to minister to yourself in moments of trouble and doubt.

Anyway, let’s get on with the subject matter!

Firstly, I’ve called this series ‘Apologetics – Keep the Faith’. I also designed the logo to look very similar to this most awesome of albums. Take a peek of the original...

Courtesy of [Wikimedia](#)



Aside from reminding us of the fantastic Bon Jovi song and album, the title 'Keep the Faith' also serves to give us an insight into why apologetics is so important. As I said above, if you have a good knowledge of the arguments for God's existence, if you know the solid foundation of truth and logic that is available to the Christian, then crises in faith become less frequent and less powerful.

In this episode, I put it this way – who is more likely to remain a Christian when tough times hit? The person whose relationship with and knowledge of God is entirely based on how they feel, or the person who knows God to be real and His promises true, regardless of how they feel?

Probably the latter!

Remember guys, in our lives with Christ we are assured of hard times! It's not a 'maybe' or a 'you never know, could happen' – it's a guarantee.

In John 16:33 Jesus says – *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"*.

You might be wondering if that's really an issue – "surely" you may think, "every Christian knows that God exists?"

This is a good question, and absolutely correct in some senses. Not correct in others.

You see, there's lots of different means, methods and modes of knowledge. There's knowledge you just *know*, there's knowledge you have logical reasons to know, and there's knowledge you can share.

I would argue, and so would a guy called Alvin Plantinga, that every Christian, despite the fact they likely don't realise it, has that first kind of knowledge. The knowledge you just... *know*.

Let me explain what I mean.

If you walk past the window and see a cat in the garden, are you justified in believing there's a cat in the garden? Yes! You can't prove it after the fact, because it's come and gone and happened, but despite the lack of evidence you're perfectly justified in believing you saw that cat.

This is called a *properly basic belief*, and is the foundation of our belief in and knowledge of God. I'm pretty sure we have talked about this before in a Sunday session.

A properly basic belief is a belief you can hold, with perfect justification, in spite of evidence. Here's a little video on Alvin Plantinga, an excellent philosopher, explaining his reformed idea of properly basic beliefs:



The analogies I gave in the podcast, one of which is just above, aren't brilliant to prove this point (for example you might be mistaken that it's a *hawk*, specifically), they're just good illustrations. Allow me to retell the one from the podcast for you now –

Suppose you were to break a rule at school or college, whichever you go to, and were dragged in front of the head teacher, alone with him in his office. Let's say, after you had discussed your crime and the punishment for it, you began to have a general conversation with him – for the sake of argument, let's say you start talking about cricket. He then shows you his cricket bat he keeps in his office, which was signed by Freddie Flintoff, even lets you have a couple of demo swings with it. He then beams with pride as he hands you a picture of his eldest son when he was on trials for the England national cricket squad, which he puts back on his desk when you hand it back.

After this chat with the head teacher, you decide to think about your choices that got you in trouble and take yourself off for a walk in the woods, alone. Unbeknownst to you, while you're on your lengthy walk, your head teacher is murdered in his office – killed by his own cricket bat.

The next day you are dragged into police custody as the prime suspect! This case eventually goes to court and the evidence against you is laid out – you had a motive (he had just disciplined you), you have no alibi (you were on your walk alone), your fingerprints are all over his office, your prints and DNA are on the murder weapon. That's a lot of evidence stacked against you! The jury may even feel that's enough to convict you, to say beyond reasonable doubt that you committed the murder.

Here's the question – despite all the evidence stacked against you, are you still justified in believing you did not murder your head teacher? Absolutely! Your experience of the opposite is enough to prove to you, beyond doubt, that you did not kill your head teacher because you were having an introspective walk in the woods!

That is a properly basic belief.

In terms of our Christianity, it is the Holy Spirit which ministers to our souls and affirms that God is real. We can know God is real because we have *experienced* His presence in our lives, hearts and minds.

It doesn't matter what people say to you, it doesn't matter what arguments they present to you, it doesn't matter how much people might belittle or dismiss you. That may all be compelling, and we should certainly take arguments and reason into consideration even when it conflicts with our own beliefs, but none of that is enough to remove the knowledge you have in your heart that you have had an experience of the one true God, via the Holy Spirit, that has changed your entire person.

So, that's one type of knowledge that we all have, but I think it takes someone stating it to truly appreciate it!

The second type of knowledge we mentioned was one with reason and logic behind it. So, whilst a properly basic belief is rational and justified, it isn't one that you can apply logic and reason to in order to minister to yourself mentally.

Imagine someone asked you 'why are you a Christian?'

What would you say?

Here are some of the reasons I've heard in the past:

- My family are Christian
- I was raised a Christian

- I like my church
- Other people have such amazing stories it would be nice if it's true
- It fits my lifestyle

Now, if one of these is the answer you had in mind don't feel bad, these are perfectly respectable answers and probably the most common ones I encounter. You're not alone if this is you.

But consider this – if you have an atheist friend who asks you why you're a Christian, would any of those answers be sufficient to start a conversation or prompt a 'conversion'? Or would they simply brush you off as naïve, uninteresting, perhaps even uninformed or unthinking?

I think potentially the latter.

Here's my go-to answer:

"Because it's true"

Why do people believe anything? Because they believe it's true. Why would anyone, unless they have a strange ideological or emotional motivation to do so, believe something they know isn't true?

You might have motivations that drove you to begin believing something, like your family is Christian, or your church and its congregation are amazing people, but these things aren't enough to maintain belief. Eventually, whether its belief in God or belief in logic or the laws of nature or whatever, in order to continue your belief, you will ask "is this thing I believe actually true?"

This is where apologetics comes in.

Apologetics offers logical and reasonable arguments that make God's existence far more likely than not. This means your faith can be built on a solid foundation of 'this is definitely true' and when hard times hit you aren't tempted to abandon the existence of God because it's hard to reject something that is plainly true (though not impossible, people do it a lot).

Unfortunately, Charles Darwin did not have this kind of knowledge. You likely all know Charles Darwin, but did you know he was, at one point, a theist?

Unfortunately, Charles was faced with the death of his daughter and what he believed was unnecessary evil and suffering in the world, which caused him to abandon his faith.

What if he had this kind of knowledge? Perhaps then he may have never given up on his faith, who knows!

But, if you were to tell a friend you're a Christian because it's true, you also need to share a defence as we're told to do in 1 Peter.

The third type of knowledge is the one we're going to try and focus on helping you develop as this series goes on – the ability to share your knowledge with others.

That will be the focus of the series moving forward, so I'm not going to go into it here and now!

But let me sum up – you already have a knowledge of God based purely on the fact that you have experienced a genuine interaction with God. You also need a logical and reasonable reason to believe! You don't want to believe something without a foundation in truth and you don't want to be unaware of why you believe what you believe. Finally, you need to be able to share those reasons with others! If we can't verbalise and explain why we have this hope within us, we aren't doing what we are told to do in the Bible.

For more, have a look at this video from William Lane Craig:



This isn't strictly related, but if you would like to see him have a go at people like me (youth pastors), just for a laugh, as he explains why apologetics is helpful in this culture, try this:



That's that for episode 1, guys!

Let's look at our scripture for the week.

Matthew 28:18-20 – *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

So, why might this be our scripture this week? This is something called the Great Commission. This is where Jesus leaves us with one final command – go out into the world and make disciples of every nation!

The world we find ourselves in is becoming more and more interested in naturalism and scientism – AKA if you can't give good evidence for something, then it's rejected. God has, unfortunately, been relegated to this category in the mainstream. Most people think a belief in God is something you kind of... grow out of.

As an example, I once had a conversation with my brother-in-law, who is a former altar server at a church. In this chat, I asked him why he gave up on Christianity and now identifies as an atheist. He replied that believing in God is something he has just grown out of. It was nice to believe when he was a kid, but he's not a kid anymore.

Basically, he meant it's a quaint belief for un-thinking and naïve people.

With solid apologetics knowledge and an ability to share it, we can break that stereotype and make Christianity a viable option for intelligent people once again! Isn't that worth the time and effort? I believe it is, to learn to be effective in the great commission.

Hopefully that's fired you up for this series!

Finally – here's our question for the week:

Why are you a Christian?

Find an answer to that question, and work out whether it would lead to more conversation and maybe even to an opportunity for conversion.

That's all for this week, guys!

As always, don't be afraid to get into the youth whatsapp chat and let us know how you are, what you're up to and what you're thinking. Get your prayer requests ready for Thursday and get involved in our Bible study! And you can grab us on Instagram @chawnyouth.

Speak to you next week!