

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Combatting Secular Humanism: Creating a Strategy to Teach  
Theology and Apologetics to High School Students**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

**Thesis Project Approval Sheet**

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Dr. Jerry Knoblet

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## **Abstract**

### **Combatting Secular Humanism: Creating a Strategy to Teach Theology and Apologetics to High School Students**

In today's society, there are more distractions than ever before. Students graduate from high school and often face worldview attacks from their professors. Many times, students do not have a solid enough understanding of a biblical worldview to respond confidently. The postmodern culture has created a gap between student's emotional need and the intellectual need for a solid biblical foundation. Secular humanism has become a dominating worldview in our culture, and this project will formulate a strategy to teach theology and apologetics to high school students to combat secular humanism. Discipleship is training of a person's mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities, and this project has combined all three to better equip today's youth.

Many youth pastors struggle to incorporate solid theology and apologetics teaching into their programs, many times due to lack of training. This curriculum has a secondary goal of helping youth pastors realize the need for Apologetics as pre-evangelism. The curriculum will help youth pastors recognize the need and realize how easily accessible curriculum like this is.

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## Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Ministry Context</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Problem Presented</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Purpose Statement</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Basic Assumptions</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Definitions</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Limitations</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Delimitations</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Thesis Statement</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Relevance of Apologetics to Youth .....	16
The Attack of Secular Humanism and the Postmodern World..	18
Summary .....	28
<b>Theological Foundations</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Lack of Knowledge.....	30
Love Your God with Everything You Are .....	32
Being Aware of False Teachers .....	33
Taking Thoughts Captive.....	34
The Shema .....	35
Being Ready to Give Answers.....	36
<b>Theoretical Foundations</b> .....	<b>37</b>
Relational .....	38
Apologetics Methods .....	40
Classical Apologetics.....	40
Presuppositional Apologetics.....	41
Evidential Method.....	41
Historical Method .....	42
Summary .....	42
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Intervention Design</b> .....	<b>43</b>
The Setting and Participants in the Project.....	43
<i>Procedure</i> .....	44
Implementation of the Intervention Design .....	46
<i>Participants</i> .....	46
<i>The Instrument</i> .....	48
<i>The Curriculum</i> .....	49
<b>Lesson by Lesson Overview</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Results</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>General Description</b> .....	<b>55</b>
Results of the Project .....	56
Interpretation of the Results.....	66

<b>Answering the Research question.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Review of the Project .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Zoom Teaching.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Personal Reflection .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>74</b>
Conclusion	
Bibliography .....	130
Appendix A: Parental Consent Form.....	75
Appendix B: Consent for Student’s who are 18 or older.....	78
Appendix C: Pre-Test/Post-Test Questionnaire.....	81
Appendix D: The 40Twelve Apologetics Course First Draft .....	82
Appendix E: Second Edition of Curriculum.....	99
IRB Approval.....	129

## Tables

1.1	Average student's score on the ten questions .....	57
1.2	Average student's score on question one.....	59
1.3	Average student's score on question two.....	59
1.4	Average student's score on question three.....	60
1.5	Average student's score on question four.....	61
1.6	Average student's score on question five .....	61
1.7	Average student's score on question six.....	62
1.8	Average student's score on question seven .....	63
1.9	Average student's score on question eight.....	64
2.1	Average student's score on question nine.....	65
2.2	Average student's score on question ten.....	65

## Illustrations

### Figures

1.1	Average student's pre-test and post-test scores.....	58
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## **Abbreviations**

DMIN      *Doctor of Ministry*

LUSOD     *Liberty University School of Divinity*

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This project has long lasting implications for this generation. Students are increasingly stressed out, anxiety-ridden, and distracted. With these distractions comes an ever-increasing population of students leaving the church and attempting to find meaning and purpose in other avenues of life. Students leave high school and enter a world they may not be prepared to face. Professors increasingly challenge what students believe, and this can cause a student to stumble, especially during their freshman year.

This project will research and formulate a methodical plan to stem this epidemic. Norman Geisler writes, “The objections that unbelievers raise are usually not trivial. They often cut deep into the heart of the Christian faith and challenge it's very foundations.”<sup>1</sup> I think that even in the past 15 years of ministry, there has been a decrease in theology and apologetic teaching to high school students. The secular humanistic society has put pressure on the church to look more like the culture rather than Christ.

Indeed, apologist Sean McDowell said, “More than 50 percent of college professors believe the Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precept.”<sup>2</sup> The rise of social media has begun to destroy the fabric of society by turning the human heart more inward than ever before. I know and understand how teens could become addicted to seeing one’s self on an Instagram feed firsthand. The idea of the selfie by its very definition turns the teen to themselves. Habits become a lifestyle, and the lifestyle of the American teen is continuing down a path centered on self.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler., and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask, : A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 19.

Students are also asking questions and not receiving answers from their parents or youth pastors. Nancy Pearcey theorizes, “Churches and parents make a serious mistake by encouraging more devotion (to Scripture or church) by teens to overcome their doubts, rather than allowing their doubts and questions to be voiced and explored.”<sup>3</sup> This has become a problem in the lives of high school students. Unfortunately, many parents and even churches are not equipped to handle the questions that are being asked, and because of this, students’ fears and doubts can go unresolved and festering. This is not to say that Scripture reading and large group gatherings are bad things. Certainly, these are aspects of the Christian experience that should be part of a student’s life. Yet, in the discipleship process, there needs to be more learning by engagement and observation.

In my observation, a major issue in the church is a discipleship method problem, and a large part of this is allowing students the freedom to express their doubts in a safe place where an adult can give answers when needed. The dilemma, at its core, is a faith-development problem; to use religious language, it is a disciple-making problem. The church is not adequately preparing the next generation.<sup>4</sup> Students have fears, doubts, and concerns that if not sufficiently responded to can, these fester in the mind, and as many statistics show, cause them to walk away from church after high school.

### **Ministry Context**

It was this researcher’s original intent to do the project through the Gulf to Lake Baptist Church. However, due to Covid 19 circumstances and an unforeseen Romans 8:28 event, this changed. Instead, the intervention project was done through the Portage Community Church of

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy Pearcey, *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2015), 57-58.

<sup>4</sup> David Kinnaman, and Aly Hawkins. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 21.

Pennsylvania in conjunction with the Portage Fellowship of Christian Athletes led by Jaime Irvin. In January 2018, God provided Portage Community Church with a building free of charge. The church currently has a board consisting of four people. This includes a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer.

In the past year, Portage Community Church has not had a Senior Pastor. Instead, the church has itinerant pastors come in and speak to the congregation. Students, dealing with the idea of change and other emotions, began to come less consistently. This is something I have taken note of, especially with the idea that teens often look to the pastor as a teacher or father figure. This can be harmful if the pastor is considered a metaphorical Jesus rather than students looking to Jesus Himself as their Lord. Another reason for the study is that teens should not feel like they must leave their church if the youth pastor (metaphorical Christ) departs. If Jesus is their Savior and Lord, then in the discipleship process it should be noted that they should use their talents where they are.

### *Central Rituals*

Portage Fellowship of Christian Athletes is led by Jaime Irvin who is also the youth pastor at Portage Community Church. Portage Church has a congregation of less than a hundred on Sundays. The church meets on Sundays with one service, which engages both the adult and student demographic due to the relationships built by Jaime. The general breakdown of service timeline is introduction, worship, message, and concluding song. This is typically the same in every service. The preaching style is topical and engaging. It is more practical than it is a sound exegesis of the biblical text. They celebrate the main holidays observed by most churches across the U.S. During Easter, they celebrate the risen Christ in corporate worship. The children get to

put the eggs in their baskets for Easter and spend quality time as a church family. Christmas is a multi-service remembering of the birth of Christ.

The students apart of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes take part in local missions and evangelism throughout the year. The adult leaders also bring in speakers to inspire and equip the youth to pursue Christ more passionately. Once a year they typically attend a camp where students are in close quarters with each other and by proximity and time, become closer with their team. This is counter to the overall culture of the church in reference to proximity on a consistent basis.

Small groups are discussed as essential but have not been practically applied within the church. There are occasional church dinners and Bible studies, but the focus on small groups is not there. Due to the lack of funds there is no consistent leadership or the adults from a pastoral standpoint. The FCA leadership of the church are very consistent with the students. There are occasional small groups but no consistent mentorship. As with the adult congregation, small groups are not a primary focus, but the leaders do a good job of being present in their lives and programming in a way that promotes spiritual maturity.

The church itself consists primarily of Caucasian Americans, who are middle to upper class. Parents do not seem to show much interest in the faith aspect of their children's lives, at least from my perspective. Around 60 percent of the youth group do not have parents who attend the main church service at Portage Church or any other church. My relationship with the Portage leaders and adults is good and we continue to partner together for student's spiritual growth. As stated earlier it is difficult for the church to disciple adults as the senior leadership is a constant revolving door. Yet the consistency of the adult leaders has kept the students engaged in the student ministry.

Navigating the cultural context and history of the program has given its challenges, but the process of encouraging and challenging students to step up and lead has helped. The program was run specifically by the youth pastor in such a way that delegating with giving authority was not prevalent. The reason this is significant is that all eyes have been on the youth pastor for events, preaching, social media, etc. This may have had a harmful side effect because the students rely too much on one person and not the body of Christ. The positive aspect is the students do get to hear many different speakers and can gain more cultural awareness. From a preaching standpoint the students have been less likely to base their theology from a biased point of view because of the itinerant preaching situation. The relationships, however, made by the youth pastor are ones that will be seemingly lifelong.

### **Problem Presented**

All of this matters because we are seeing a youth exodus from Orthodox Christianity. David Kinnaman writes, “in less than a decade, the proportion of eighteen-to twenty-nine-year old dropouts has increased. Today, nearly two-thirds of all young adults who were once again regular church goers have dropped out at one time or another (64 percent).”<sup>5</sup> The original data was reported in 2011 and, as stated above, has risen 5 percent to the current percentage of 64 percent. The Portage FCA student ministry has not focused on sound doctrine and apologetics but pragmatic, culturally driven, topical messages. Youth pastors typically teach contemporary messages to the current generation, but I believe there is a correlation between the church dropout rate and lack of doctrinal teaching. That is not to say the gospel should not be contextualized; rather, students should be taught the basics of the Christian faith while learning how to own and defend their Christian worldview.

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<sup>5</sup> David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2019), 15.

The current generation is bombarded with constant social media distractions. In what Kinnaman calls the Digital Babylon, where information (and anything we could ever want or need) is instantly available at the godlike swipe of a finger, Almighty God has been squeezed to the margins. Those of us who long to keep Him at the center of our lives constantly fight the centrifugal force of a world spinning us away from Him.<sup>6</sup> Students need an anchor, and this project will attempt to reveal that by answering foundational questions in a nonjudgmental atmosphere, which will help lessen the doubt and fear in students minds as they face a world wrought with trouble and distraction.

Student ministry has always moved with the trends. Youth ministry programming today has a history, which Thomas Bergler details:

Most youth ministries since the 1960's have followed the club model pioneered by Young Life and YFC. Songs, games, skits, and other youth-culture entertainments are followed by talks or discussions that feature simple truths packaged with humor, stories, and other personal testimonies. As they listen to years of simplified messages that emphasize an emotional relationship with Jesus over intellectual content, teenagers learn that a well-articulated belief system is unimportant and might even become an obstacle to authentic faith.<sup>7</sup>

The problem in American culture is that high school students are leaving for college and facing challenges without having been taught how to properly own and defend their faith from a biblical worldview. Kinnaman said, “*UnChristian* reflects outsiders’ most common reaction to the faith; they think Christianity no longer represents what Jesus had in mind, that Christianity in our society is not what it was meant to be.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, there is too little emphasis on doctrine.

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<sup>6</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Bergler, “Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, But Lack a Biblical Worldview,” *Barna Update* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, August 9, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity . . . and Why It Matters*, 2012, accessed July 21, 2020, <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781441200013>.

There is an inadequacy in youth ministry today to teach the deeper truths of the Christian worldview as it relates to the students' lives. Youth pastors are spending more time than ever planning trips or fun events in order to attract students rather than furthering their understanding of how to teach students these necessary critical thinking skills. Students do not feel as though youth ministry is a safe place to ask tough questions because they think that they will be shamed or ostracized. This implies that a fun atmosphere does not always mean a judgment-free or welcoming atmosphere.

The constant attack from the secular world has students searching for their identity in everything related to a screen or a feeling. Kinnaman describes it as a digital Babylon:

We are bombarded in digital Babylon, with unprecedented force and frequency, by conflicting, chaotic messages about what matters most and how to live. The latest blog post, the newest music, the most popular television show, and even the news all do their best to convince us we should care and what to do about it. These messages are constantly changing. We must anchor our search for identity in something deeper and truer, which means we must, like Daniel and his comrades, learn the habits of devotion.<sup>9</sup>

Students are losing their identity in the world, and youth ministry needs to focus on the Word. This is not just a sweeping generalization of all youth ministries, but the predominant youth ministry culture is a type of branding Jesus. Students are taught that Jesus is like a buddy more than the *greatest conceivable being*. Many times, students are being taught Jesus wants our happiness more than our holiness. Salvation, in many students' minds, is the proverbial "get-out-of-hell card," rather than a call to make Jesus Lord of all in their lives.

Another growing issue is the idea that students are to disciple themselves. Youth ministry has branded the name of Jesus well but has not branded the hearts and minds of students with the gospel. Kinnaman explains, "The cultural crosscurrents of branding and individualism exert tremendous pull on today's young Christians. In one Barna study, we discovered that there has

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<sup>9</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, *Faith for Exiles*, 59.

been a shift in American Christianity toward the notion that discipleship is a solo effort, that the best way to grow spiritually is on your own. This trend echoes the cultural refrains at the moment: *You do you. Find yourself by looking within. Speak your truth.*<sup>10</sup>

Secular humanism is a prevalent worldview in this society, and many students are not aware of how to critically assess its coherence. Secular humanism contains no reference to God as the moral authority of the universe. People who are secular humanists either believe that God never existed, that God is dead, or that God is alive but irrelevant. The belief system is humanistic not only because it is man-centered (anthropocentric) versus God-centered (theocentric), but also because it assumes the essential goodness and the theoretical perfectibility of humanity.<sup>11</sup>

The branding of Jesus in youth ministry culture has created a sense of camaraderie around Jesus being a friend and not Jesus being the Lord of all. A follower of Jesus is one who allows the Lordship of Christ into every aspect of their lives. Human nature is sinful, and some leaders have potentially fallen into the trap of secularizing their ministries at the cost of true theology and producing disciples. Contextualization of the gospel is clearly relevant and important especially in cross cultural missions. Yet, in American culture, the emphasis is placed on human happiness, and the gospel is misrepresented, which undermines the Lordship of Christ.

Secular humanism focuses on the uniqueness of each individual and crops out all that human beings have in common. Thus, because each of us is a unique moral agent, secular humanism argues that we have individualized moral codes that are unrelated to a universal standard.<sup>12</sup> Students are inadvertently being taught to focus on the self. God gave humans the

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<sup>10</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, 50.

<sup>11</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Joseph M. Holden. *Living Loud: Defending Your Faith* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Geisler and Holden, 3.

ability to have relationships but also to reason as well. Thus, the importance of this project, as it focuses on coherently understanding and developing a theologically sound and robust biblical worldview.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to create a strategy in theology and apologetics for high school students to respond to secular humanism. In this society, there are more distractions than ever before. Students leave high school, possibly being indifferent, to the faith anyway. Yet, if we were able to provide a solid strategy to combat the doubt placed in their minds by college professors and others, we could potentially retain more young adults. They seem to want their faith to work practically for them. In response to this, we can show them the God who is there versus the God they want to be there or that they have heard was there.

In this project, I intend to survey and test Portage FCA youth group to discover the level of apologetic knowledge they have and then design a training program for them. Students will be given questions they might face from an atheist or humanistic point of view and then will be asked to give a response. This will help assess what they have retained and whether they have been taught sound theology and apologetics.

The ten participants in the project will be encouraged to engage intellectually with what they have been taught and begin to form a more cohesive theological stance in specific areas. Students are made in the imago dei and, therefore, should understand more about their creator to live appropriately in His creation. At times, students need to unlearn what they have been taught and use reason to seek the God who is there. Students in this project will begin to rely more on the Holy Spirit rather than the teaching of any human.

Ken Hamm and Gregg Hall express concern that students are not being taught how to think critically and engage intellectually with thoughts and ideas that are prevalent in this culture. They explain, “We are learning that one of the primary reasons ministries fail to produce a lasting faith in teenagers is because they are not being taught to think... Young people desperately need to be taught to process the rich complexities of life, to probe and test and stretch their faith from the perspective of a Christ-follower.”<sup>13</sup>

The strategy employed in this project will provide a scope and sequence, guiding students through developing a more biblical worldview. Two essential doctrines that students will learn will be the earthly mortality of man and the infinite grace and presence of God. Many students rely on leaders and adult figures to be present, and when these people leave, it seems students’ faith goes with them. A focus of this curriculum will be purpose of each student’s life, which is to bring God glory and find their identity in Him, not the world.

### **Basic Assumptions**

Prior to this project, I had some basic assumptions which affected how I structured the curriculum. First, I assumed that youth ministry that is focused on culture rather than Christ is a major contributing factor of students not becoming disciples. Parents not being adequately disciplined themselves is also a contributing factor. Further, high school students are likely being told that they need to feel their way through each moment rather than relying on truth and reason.

I also assumed that because the students will remain anonymous, they will give appropriate and accurate answers to the best of their ability because they will not fear embarrassment or getting in trouble for something they say. Due to the diverse backgrounds of the students tested, I will likely receive diverse answers. Growth will be different per each

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<sup>13</sup> Ken Hamm and Gregg Hall, *Already Compromised* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2011), 73.

student's foundation from the start of the research. Focusing consistently on the same group of students will help the process of transformation.

Hopefully, this project will challenge what the students have been taught about God in the past and students will be faced with life's decisions. As each participant moves through the curriculum, the Holy Spirit will be working on their hearts so that they shift their priorities. Personally, I have had to prioritize differently as my worldview has changed, and therefore, I have the assumption the students will be faced with the same task.

Another assumption is that the students are in front of screens for significant amounts of time. Kinnaman posits that "the typical fifteen to twenty-three-year-old student spends about seven and a half hours on a screen a day."<sup>14</sup> This means that the participants will likely be more culturally filled rather than spiritually filled. I assume it will be difficult for students to focus during the first few classes, and I will take that into consideration as the curriculum is developed.

Due to the rise of what Kinnaman calls "Digital Babylon," I also assume that students have not been taught critical thinking skills. In youth ministry, the average youth pastor teaches *what* to think but not necessarily *how* to think. In guiding students to engage in philosophy and theology, participants will better understand what a sound argument looks like and will be better equipped to use sound reasoning in their everyday lives. This understanding has led me to begin the study with the Cosmological and Teleological arguments for the existence of God. In doing so, my hope is that they will shape the students' thought process throughout the project.

### **Definitions and Limitations**

Because of the complexity in Theological terminology, the broader terms will be defined in this section of the paper. This will assist and further engage the reader throughout the content

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<sup>14</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, *Faith for Exiles*, 26.

of this paper. Each participant, although currently in church, may not have a church upbringing. This can play a role in the verbiage that one understands in certain social and formal gatherings. This research and curriculum is designed to help the participants gain a more solid understanding in dialogue and practical application in living out the Christian or biblical worldview. Below are definitions or theological terms used in this paper and project.

## **Glossary**

**apologist.** An apologist is anyone who presents an apology or gives a defense for a position or person under question or consideration. An apologist may give a defense for certain aspects of a given religious faith, or for a myriad of other concepts related to science, philosophy, ethics, and cultural issues.<sup>15</sup>

**Christian.** A person who follows Jesus should thus resolve “that God shall be God to him in all his thinking, feeling and willing- in the entire compass of his life activities, intellectual, moral, and spiritual- throughout all his individual social and religious relations.”<sup>16</sup>

**disciple.** An individual who follows Jesus Christ and His teachings.

**discipleship.** The process of guiding individual disciples to grow in spiritual maturity and to discover and use their gifts, talents, and abilities in fulfillment of Christ’s mission.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, *Faith Has Its Reasons: Integrative Approaches to Defending the Christian Faith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 1.

<sup>16</sup> B.B. Warfield as cited in Philip Graham Ryken. *Christian Worldview: A Student’s Guide* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 82.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Falwell, *Innovate Church* (Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2008), 6.

**GenZ.** This is the generation born after millennials during the time from (1996-2010).

**Post-modernity.** “is the denial of personal objectivity, the uncertainty of knowledge, the death of any all-inclusive explanation, the denial of the inherent goodness of knowledge, the rejection of progress, the supremacy of community-based knowledge, and the belief in objective inquiry”<sup>18</sup>

**secular humanism.** This worldview begins and ends with the individual person. We are all a product of chance, and things such as faith, and superstition, are irrelevant. Truth is relative.

**worldview.** The overall perspective by which one sees the world.

This study will not allow for an exhaustive study of theology and apologetics for high school students due to time. There are many different categories of apologetics, theology, and philosophy, and the time frame for this project will not allow such a study. One of the focuses of the project is to formulate strategically a scope and sequence within this period to gain an understanding of the effectiveness in studying the topics in this order.

This study will not allow me to fix the problem but will allow me to examine it and propose some solutions. Due to the time and topic constraints, I recognize that there will be no final solution, but we will at least have a better understanding of the problem. Students have different backgrounds, and there are other demographic issues that can play a part in a study like this. Therefore, the study will be primarily relevant to the Portage Community Church students and the demographic in Portage, PA. The research will not be inclusive of all high school students. This project will not be an accurate representation of students across the U.S. This

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<sup>18</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 162.

study will not exhaust all subjects within theology and apologetics; rather, the goal is to broaden the students' interest on topics related to these fields.

The project will be limited to students at a church with a Baptist theology. There are many different denominations and, therefore, many different subtleties in teaching doctrine to students. This project will adhere to Baptist doctrine as it relates to concepts such as the Trinity, communion, salvation, and justification. This is important because teaching students to think critically requires the need to teach concepts that cohere when assessed. The theological topics themselves can be difficult to grasp on their own. One goal of this project is to not throw any more stumbling blocks in these students' paths than already exist.

Another limitation to the project is the accuracy of the answers given on the pre- and post-test questionnaires. I believe students will do their best to give accurate and honest answers, but there will inevitably be emotions that play a part in their answers. Students could potentially feel awkward and unprepared, which could affect the level of accuracy in their responses.

### **Delimitations**

This study will focus on a group of 10 students. The students will not be handpicked and will be observing the class by their own choice. The students will be from Portage Community Church, and the curriculum will be developed with this group of students in mind. This group of students will be focused on students from ninth to twelfth grade. This age group was selected because the likely next step for these students is college. The focus on high school will also allow for a higher intellectual level of teaching. There will be small group dialogue, and high school students are typically more conversational in this atmosphere of learning. The research will be done over the course of two and a half months (10 weeks). As the study is not exhaustive, I have selected eight topics in a certain sequence for these 10 weeks. Each lesson builds upon the

last. In our current season, students have a difficult time meeting consistently due to school and athletics, which was a chief consideration in developing this curriculum.

### **Thesis Statement**

This project will create a strategy to teach theology and apologetics to high school students designed to respond to secular humanism.

## Chapter 2

### Conceptual Framework

#### Literature Review

##### *Relevance of Apologetics to Youth*

Objections that unbelievers raise are not usually trivial. In fact, according to Norman Geisler, they often cut deep into the heart of the Christian faith and challenge its very foundations.<sup>19</sup> Geisler clearly presents the gospel in his works while helping people defend their faith. In today's fast food generation, the attention span is much shorter than it used to be. Geisler seemed to take this into account when he was writing. Something that many apologetics authors overlook is the style of writing they use for the culture they are in. Geisler offers this middle ground of eloquence while cutting to the point.

Sean McDowell and David Kinnaman both took this, cut to the point, approach in their writing. McDowell writes, "...more than 50 percent of college professors believe the Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts."<sup>20</sup> Both McDowell and Kinnaman offer a compilation of statistics that can be employed to help leaders impact their ministries. What the research shows is that skepticism is growing. There is a constant bombardment after high school from professors and other worldly influences, who give reasons to believe in worldviews other than Christianity. Kinnaman writes, "Unchristian reflects outsiders most common reaction to the faith; they think Christianity no longer represent what Jesus had in mind, that Christianity in our society is not what it was meant to be."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 19.

<sup>21</sup> David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity--and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 15.

One of the statistics is the growing number of people that believe Christianity today is not what Jesus had in mind. This can lead followers of Christ to believe they need to study more on what early Christians did better than we do it. The distractions that are referred to in the above books are destroying the fabric of society. It drives students further away from each other even when they are in proximity.

What this review has shown is that we have moved away from relying on the perfection of God. Geisler wrote, “Even though the Bible was not verbally dictated by God, the result is as perfectly God’s thoughts as if it had been.”<sup>22</sup> Apologist Josh McDowell (Sean McDowell’s father) says, “The writers themselves were a heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles but belonging to the most diverse walks of life.”<sup>23</sup> It is difficult for people to believe that the Bible is the word of God. Much of what is written on the subject is long and takes patience to pour through. It is possible that if we condense the material and write in a more easily understood way, students may take another look.

One resource for students in this review was *Defending Your Faith* by Norman Geisler and Joseph Holden. The answers were precise and written in an appropriate student focused style. Evidential apologist Gary Habermas approaches it different in this book, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*. While this book is thorough and filled with scholarly information, it is not one that students would take the time to consider. Their entire lives are usually spent mentally running through hoops of their own. This could be the reason why many students believe

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<sup>22</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics: An A to Z Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 4.

Christianity is a blind leap of faith. It is difficult for them to see how God has left evidence for us to follow.

This is where the church should come in. Philosopher J.P. Moreland writes, “One job of the church is to be salty to the world in which it finds itself, so if that world grows salt less, we should look first to the church herself to glean what we can about her contribution to the situation.”<sup>24</sup> This effectively points the reader in the right direction. The church has lost its appeal, not from an entertainment perspective, but from a real perspective. To clarify, students don’t want fake. In a world that throws everything at them, they do not have time for religion to be just one more thing to do.

Another issue is that students seem to be unaware that there are intellectual reasons to believe Jesus is Lord and that Christianity is the only true way to God. The constant flow of secular humanism promoted on TV and in class has muddied the water so many students don’t or can’t take the Bible seriously. Religious pluralism reigns. Science is taught as the truth one should believe rather than what is deemed religious fairy tales. Moreland notes that the average Christian doesn’t even know this struggle is real.

#### *The Attack of Secular Humanism and the Postmodern World*

High school students do not have enough sources directed toward them that are answering the types of questions they have. Secular humanism has overtaken our society, and students don’t even know how to define it. As a church, we need to be on the offensive instead of the defensive and educate our students. We also need to be concise and humble with our approach. We need to bring students up to a solid level of understanding while speaking their language.

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<sup>24</sup> James P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 15.

What about GenZ? Kinnaman and Mark Matlock write about this generation's worldview and compares them with the Babylonian exiles, who were placed into a culture of different gods and a fast-paced lifestyle. This was far from what they were used to. In the process, the Jewish exiles had to adapt. This is what our students must do today. Students have been progressively becoming more secularized without even recognizing it. Most Christians have succumbed to wrongheaded ideas such as:

- You discover the truth about yourself by looking inside yourself.
- You can believe whatever you want as long as those beliefs don't affect society.
- You should pursue the things you desire most.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the growing movement of following what's trendy, students have lost focus on who they are individually and, in turn, who Jesus is to them personally. The church has responded to the identity pressures of our culture by offering young people a Jesus "brand experience" rather than facilitating a transformational experience to find their identity in the person and work of Jesus.<sup>26</sup>

Has secularism really infiltrated our churches? To this, I give a resounding, "Yes!" Harry Blamires claimed that Christians are so secularized that their minds cannot be considered Christian anymore. Christians might possess ethics, practices, and spirituality, but according to Blamires, the most acclaimed thinkers and prophets of our day are non-Christians.<sup>27</sup> Blamires believed that Christians have left the intellectual arena and have retreated more deeply into secularism. He suggested that believers are not more prominent in the realm of our culture today. This, if true, gives credence to the idea that Christians have leaned into their itching ears rather

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<sup>25</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, *Faith for Exiles*, 49-50.

<sup>26</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, 50.

<sup>27</sup> Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1978), 3.

than sound doctrine. Blamires believed that a resurgence in Christian thinking would be what brought believers out of this period of hiding so to speak. Blamires wrote, “It is better to define, establish, and nourish a Christian mind in freedom now, as a positive last effort to bring light and hope to our culture and our civilization, than to have to try to gather the miserable fragments of Christian consciousness after triumphant secularism has finally bulldozed its way through the Church, as a body of thinking men and women.”<sup>28</sup>

Along these lines, R.C. Sproul wrote, “The twentieth century has witnessed a wide assortment of isms including positivism, humanism, relativism, pragmatism, pluralism, and existentialism; and secularism is the umbrella under which they all converge.”<sup>29</sup> Blamires and Sproul seem to argue many different points, one of which being that the idea of relativism becoming the direction of our culture could possibly make rational arguments seem impossible or irrational in themselves. The authors also encourage the notion that every believer should be trained up to defend the biblical worldview.

Geisler and Holden contend that it is of the utmost importance for our students to not only develop a biblical worldview but to be able to defend it properly. They wrote, “It thrust a new ‘ism,’ a new set of beliefs called secular humanism, into the moral educational vacuum . . . . Secular humanism contends that we must be tolerant and nonjudgmental of others and their beliefs- not out of a duty of love our neighbor as ourselves, but because there is no absolute good and bad and, indeed, no moral absolutes whatsoever.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 191.

<sup>29</sup> R.C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Joseph M. Holden, *Living Loud: Defending Your Faith* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 2.

One of the reasons why Geisler and Holden said that secular humanism was important to combat was because of the statistics compiled by William Bennett, the former secretary of education in President Reagan's administration. He found that the declining morality of our country was sweeping the U.S. population. These statistics were compiled between 1960 to 1992:

- SAT scores fell 73 points, even though inflation-adjusted expenditures rose more than 200 percent.
- Violent crime was up 550 percent.
- Births to unwed mothers were up 400 percent.
- The number of unmarried teenagers who gave birth increased 200 percent (40 percent of all teenage pregnancies ended in abortion).
- Abortion occurred to 1 out of every 4 pregnancies — nearly 40 million by 1998 (more than 90 percent of all abortions had nothing to do with rape, incest, or the life of the mother).
- Teenage suicide was up 200 percent.
- Divorce was up 125 percent.<sup>31</sup>

The declining morality that began then is continuing to today. The postmodern secularist mindset has begun to shape the thinking of our young people. It has crept in without ministry leaders pulling the roots up from its ever-increasing hold on society and the Church. Drew Dyck describes six categories of “leavers” from the Christian faith: the Postmodernist, the Recoiler, the modernist, the Neo- Pagan, the Rebel, and the Drifter, which are described below.

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<sup>31</sup> Geisler and Holden, *Living Loud*, 2.

- **The Postmodernist:** Skepticism toward truth claims and any metanarrative.
- **The Recoiler:** Experienced some sort of injustice or unfairness as a child and perceives the world and God as unjust or unfair — not a good God — thus recoiling from God.
- **The Modernist:** Darwinist worldview- scientific naturalism. Believes only things proved by scientific inquiry. Holds a disregard for religious belief.
- **The Neo-Pagan:** New Age spirituality — no belief in God or Satan as described in the Bible. All people are divine and spirit-like. Magic and the rise of Wiccan spirituality is found here.
- **The Rebel:** Just want to have fun — moral laxity. Disregard for rules, ethics, and superiors of any kind.
- **The Drifter:** No real defining moment of leaving the faith, just a slow “drift” away. Their faith was shallow and unimportant to start with.<sup>32</sup>

Kinnaman discovered some interesting statistics about today’s 18-29-year-olds who grew up in the church:

- **22% are Prodigals.** Individuals who do not currently identify as Christian despite having attended a Protestant or Catholic church or having considered themselves to be a Christian as a child or teen.
- **30% are Nomads.** People who identify as Christian but have not attended church during the past month.

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<sup>32</sup> Drew Dyck, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith — and How to bring them Back* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 15-173.

- **38% are Habitual Churchgoers.** Those who describe themselves as Christian and who have attended church at least once in the past month, yet do not meet foundational core beliefs or behaviors associated with being an intentional, engaged disciple.
- **10% are Resilient Disciples:** Christ followers who (1) attend church at least monthly and engage with their church more than just attending worship services; (2) trust firmly in the authority of the Bible; (3) are committed to Jesus personally and affirm he was crucified and raised from the dead to conquer sin and death; and (4) express desire to transform the broader society as an outcome of their faith.<sup>33</sup>

Kinnaman’s statistics are alarming, especially about those who are not resilient disciples. This indicates to me that a strategy for teaching theology and apologetics prior to leaving for college could benefit students. I think that much of what is happening is related to a lack of understanding about the God of the Bible. This is not to imply that students can know everything about an infinite being, but students can know that humanity was made in the imago dei. In order for students to understand the world they live in, they must first get to know the one who created it. When an architect draws out plans for a building, there is no one who understands the plans better than he does. It is the same if the goal is for students to understand themselves and the world around them. Students must go to the architect in order to comprehend the plans.

For there to be change in a student’s life toward a biblical worldview, there must be a transformation of the mind — similar to the Apostle Paul’s radical transformation in Acts. Everything begins in the mind, and every action begins with a thought. Therefore, if there is to

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<sup>33</sup> Kinnaman and Matlock, *Faith for Exiles*, 33.

be a turnaround in the aforementioned statistics, leaders need to teach to the whole student. By doing this, the student sees that they are valued as an image-bearer. Philip Ryken explains, “This brings us back to the value of having a Christian worldview — of seeing the world that way that God sees it. But it brings us back with the recognition that people are whole persons. We are lovers as well as thinkers, and therefore a properly Christian view of the world engages the whole person — body, heart, mind, and soul.”<sup>34</sup>

Ryken asserts that the Christian will live out the biblical lifestyle once the believer has adopted a Christian worldview. He also believes that our desires and thoughts will be focused on the glory of God and not the glory of the individual. In developing a properly Christian worldview through the discipleship of the Christian mind, we are growing our capacity for sacred worship and holy love. We cannot be said truly to have a Christian view of the world unless what we love and what we think are directed to the glory of God and is readily apparent in the way we live in the world.<sup>35</sup>

Churches should encourage learning, but it seems like the opposite has happened. Dean Hardy writes, “It seems as though some churches have a vendetta against scholars. This hostility is likely since most people who criticize Christianity are ‘intellectuals.’ Thus, the community of Christians incorrectly fuses the concept of intelligence with the arrogance of atheism.”<sup>36</sup> The major focus of the book is to teach an introduction to apologetics. As a Bible teacher, Hardy believes that reason and relationship are both important factors to a growing Christian. There is no reason to think students should not be taught how to think as students are taught what to think during school hours. The church should be a place of learning as well.

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<sup>34</sup> Ryken, *Christian Worldview*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Ryken, 28.

<sup>36</sup> Dean Hardy, *Stand Your Ground: An Introductory Text for Apologetics Students* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 7.

Our churches are unfortunately overly populated with people whose minds are going to waste — they may be spiritually regenerate, but their minds have not been converted; they still think like nonbelievers.<sup>37</sup> Christians have been programmed to believe that the life of a Christian in the U.S. is church on Sunday for an hour and a possible meal afterward. The concept of doing life together and being trained as a disciple is an alien notion, only for those who were walking with Jesus during His time on earth. Christian parents are focused on going to church rather than being the church outside the four walls of the church building. Despite their Christian commitment, they remain largely empty selves — passive, sensate, busy, and hurried, incapable of developing an interior life. Such a person is inordinately individualistic, infantile, and narcissistic.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned previously, the mind needs to be transformed into thinking like Christ. This takes time and because of our fast-paced digital Babylonian style of living, there are always excuses to not be intentional in developing a Christ-like mind. For example, Ajith Fernando says:

True enjoyment from relationships comes when they are cultivated. Our relationship with God is often compared with the relationship between a husband and a wife. If a married couple do not spend time conversing with each other, they will not really enjoy their relationship. In the same way, if we do not spend time with God in what we call the spiritual disciplines we will not experience the full-ness of which the Bible speaks.<sup>39</sup>

The postmodern thought of today is a force to be dealt with through prayer. We should strive to teach this generation how to think logically about the world as well as how to live in it. In a very real way, the topic is a life or death one. The biblical worldview holds that there is eternity and only two options of where to spend it. There is a heaven and a hell. Hell is a place of eternal separation from God. Knowing this, it is vital that believers begin to take their call seriously.

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<sup>37</sup> Hardy, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Hardy, 7.

<sup>39</sup> John N. Akers, John H. Armstrong, John D. Woodbridge, and Kevin G. Harney, *This We Believe: The Good News of Jesus Christ for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 166-67.

C.S. Lewis concluded that we all carry out God’s purpose one way or another, but how we serve Him makes a big difference; we have the choice to serve like Judas or like John. Lewis also compels the reader to choose the right direction otherwise it could be us standing in damnation.<sup>40</sup>

In his book *The Sky is Not Falling*, Chuck Colson affirms that adults, including pastors, parents, and teachers, often buy into the notion that kids should discover their own values and that adults should refrain from teaching kids right from wrong; as a result, we are raising a generation of children conditioned to abate all moral absolutes.<sup>41</sup> It isn’t just the students that are living in digital Babylon; it is the parents, as well. Parents are attempting to create the best life for their children by giving them a better home or school or any other materialistic option. By doing these things, their children are missing out on developing the inner qualities that make the better life possible. As previously stated, everything begins with students’ thought lives. If this is the case, then a parent’s priority should be to guide the inner self rather than materialistic things that don’t often impact students in a positive way long term.

James Anderson writes, “Your worldview represents you most fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the universe you inhabit. It reflects how you would answer all the ‘big questions’ of human existence, the fundamental questions we ask about life, the universe, and everything.”<sup>42</sup> Everyone has a worldview, yet many Christians have not developed a biblical one. Everything students do flows from their worldview. What they believe is what they tend to live out. This is a reason why creating a strategy is important for young believers because it gives them a chance to think through the major questions in life and not hinder the development of the

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<sup>40</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 131.

<sup>41</sup> Charles W. Colson, *The Sky Is Not Falling: Living Fearlessly in These Turbulent Times* (Brentwood, TN: Worthy Publishers, 2011), 19.

<sup>42</sup> James N. Anderson, *What’s Your Worldview? An Interactive Approach to Life’s Big Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12.

inner self. In the U.S. today, the church is more consumer driven than biblically driven. This is not to say that every church is this way. But statistics previously mentioned allude to this idea.

James Smith believes the issues that need to be addressed is the topic of truth and rationality itself. In this new secular age, what must be addressed is not so much what beliefs are available, but rather, what can actually be believed by a thinking, rational person.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the believer should not try to address everything but focus on the main concern. This is an area of focus for the project itself — the concept of a proper scope and sequence geared toward helping students develop a biblical worldview. Students need guidance through a process that sifts through the major questions and lands them on solid ground to focus on the right questions leading to a more biblical perspective.

J. Gresham Machen explains that Christians look at truth similarly to the rest of the population. It is a stance that lends itself to simple faith versus leaning on objective truth. He warns, “If Christian laymen do not become intellectually engaged, then we are in serious danger of losing our youth, in high school and college, Christian teenagers are intellectually assaulted by every manner of non- Christian philosophy conjoined with an overwhelming relativism.”<sup>44</sup>

Students are becoming less and less concerned with propositional truth and becoming more inclined to fall for the trends of what feels right as long as you don’t hurt anyone. There is a constant push to teach students absolute truth in an uncertain relativistic society. So, how should the church respond? Barry Schafer offers a simple yet profound course of action to answer the intellectual skepticism of the day — study the Word. When students engage in and investigate their faith, make personal discoveries, and are given opportunities to put these

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<sup>43</sup> James K. A. Smith, *How Not to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 19.

<sup>44</sup> J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” in *Passionate Conviction*, ed. Paul Copan and William Lane Craig (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 15.

discoveries into practice, they are far less likely to walk away from a life with Christ.<sup>45</sup> Schafer believes in getting back to the basics of studying and not simply reading the Word. Students should be encouraged to investigate the history the setting of the text, and taught to see how it relates to them today. The context is key to any real study of the Word, and students today have missed out on that due to focus on appealing messages rather than staying true to the text. Albert Mohler writes, “Christians who lack biblical knowledge are the products of churches that marginalize biblical knowledge. Bible teaching often now accounts for only a diminishing fraction of the local congregation’s time and attention. The move to small group ministry has certainly increased opportunities for fellowship, but many of these groups never get beyond superficial Bible study.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Summary**

The secular world is attacking on all fronts as students are being tossed to and fro in the sea of skepticism. Based on my research, I think that that we, as leaders, have historically not taught the whole student. The relational and the reasonable should go hand in hand. Students are being systematically programmed to believe that truth is relative, and because they have not been taught how to think logically, they do not know how to sift through intellectual skepticism of the day. The Word of God is not being taught in many Christian churches, and this is a factor in the development of any Christian. The idea that there are fewer devoted Christians and less Bible focused teaching in the U.S. explains why there is a high dropout rate for students leaving the church. Getting back to the basics of teaching a biblical worldview and helping students

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<sup>45</sup> Barry Schafer, *Unleashing God’s Word in Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 14.

<sup>46</sup> Albert Mohler, “The Scandal of biblical Illiteracy: It’s Our Problem,” Christianity.com, accessed June 23, 2020, <http://www.christianity.com/1270946/>.

understand and investigate the Bible is critical for any resurgence in students staying in the church.

### **Theological Foundations**

Systematic theology is essentially a compartmentalizing of different doctrines in the Bible. A few to note are: Theology, Bibliology, Christology, Angelology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Anthropology and Hamartiology. The Bible clearly lets the reader know that as parents and leaders the responsibility to train up children (teens) is critical. Proverbs 22:6 tells the reader to “Train up a child in the way he should go and in keeping with his individual gift or bent, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The lack of parents being disciplined in the past generations has led to students not being encouraged to become better followers of Jesus at home.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding (Proverbs 4:7).” Training takes time which means relationships in one form or another. This is a theological foundation that is critical to this project. Students gain knowledge at school and there are occasions where they gain the ability to apply it, but true understanding comes with time and patience. Teachers and curriculum need to meet students where they are not where they wish they would be. The scope and sequence of a curriculum has an end in mind, but the teacher must have the students current state of mind in mind.

The benefits of studying theology/systematic theology for youth is that “it will help them to grow as Christians, the more they get to know about God and about His Word, about His relationships to the world and mankind, the better they will trust Him.<sup>47</sup> Within the grand story of the Bible the concept of relationship is consistent. When referencing this generation and the lack

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<sup>47</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 29.

of true relationship the major issue is highlighted. Due to social media and the lack of real relationships, the theological foundation of this study is dependent upon Gods concept of training a student to know God more through a more relational approach when it refers to curriculum. Primarily focusing on conversational language when approaching more intense academic subjects regarding apologetics.

### **Lack of Knowledge**

“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.” Hosea 4:6

God judged the nation of Israel for their willful disobedience towards Him. The people were living without true guidance from their Creator and in turn failed to see Gods goodness and in response received just judgment. As punishment for their rejection of knowledge, the priests themselves would be removed from their office by the Lord. Also, because the priests ignored the law, the Lord said He would ignore their children, apparently meaning they would not inherit their father’s office. In this way the future of the priestly line would be cut off.<sup>48</sup>

The line or children of the priests would be punished in this way for the priest’s lack of proper teaching. The people rejected the knowledge of God as Pusey states, “And now, they despised, were disgusted with the knowledge of God, as all do in fact despise and dislike it, who prefer ought besides to it....to reject is willful, conscious, deliberate sin, with a high hand; to forget, an act of negligence.”<sup>49</sup> There is an order to the way God created things in the universe

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<sup>48</sup>Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “Hosea,” eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishers, 2004), 1389.

<sup>49</sup> Albert Barnes and James Murphy, *Hosea-Jonah, Pusey’s Minor Prophets* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Publishers, 1985), 48.

and also people. The most important thing for humankind is to submit to and obey their God. The God of the universe is the greatest conceivable being. He is a jealous God and therefore did not tolerate this willful disobedience with the people He put in charge of teaching His law.

This lack of focus and obedience in many ways is what the church is facing today. The problem is the lack of teaching Gods truth and instead people begin teaching their own version of the truth. This is consistently seen in American or Western Christianity as the Postmodern culture has begun to deteriorate the definition of truth in people’s minds. This slow maneuvering of the deceiver has caused many to rethink what stance they take on the Word of God. As more parents suffer from a lack of sound biblical teaching the children within their homes are also suffering from this lack of obedience by the parents.

*The Deception of Satan in Reference to Truth*

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

Genesis 3:1

One of the most important aspects to this research project is to create a strategy that holds to the truth of God’s Word. Since the beginning the deceiver has been manipulating humanity in cunning ways. In Genesis 3:1, Satan simply asks a question about what God had commanded. It was a tactic that played on the curiosity of Eve. Eve either did not know Gods command very well or did not want to remember it. By contrast, Christ gained victory over Satan by His precise knowledge of God’s Word.<sup>50</sup>

God is perfect and therefore His message is perfect. God cannot lie. Any changing or altering of His word can cause the flesh to critique what God says or be led astray. Complete

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<sup>50</sup> Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, Old Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishers, 2004), 32.

obedience is required for those who follow Jesus and this not for a cosmic power play. It is the command from a loving God who knows He is the best thing for all the universe. God shows us how easily it is for humans to be manipulated into an arrogant way of thinking. This is why God commands Adam and Eve to not eat the fruit. This is why God tells the Israelites to obey the Law and this is why Jesus commands us to love the Lord with our whole selves.

### **Love Your God with Everything You are**

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Luke 10:27

There were 613 Old Testament laws that Jesus funneled in to two descriptive commands that summarized them all. Love God and love people. Love in this instance is sacrificing everything one is for the person you love. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the human race and showed all mankind what it is to love another person. It is to lay down one’s life for another not just in the physical but in every way. David Guzik writes, “It is clear enough what it means to *love God* with all we are, though it is impossible to do completely. But there has been much confusion about what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. This doesn’t mean that we must love ourselves before we can love anyone else; it means that in the same way we take care of ourselves and are concerned about our own interests, we should take care and have concern for the interests of others.”<sup>51</sup>

Two ways this verse applies in reference to this project are completely obeying God and taking the time to teach correct doctrine and defense of the faith as an aspect of loving others. In the Postmodern, GenZ culture truth is more prevalently looked at as relative than previous

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<sup>51</sup> David Guzik, “Luke 10-The Sending of the Seventy,” Enduring Word, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke-10/>.

generations. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is the worldview these students uphold. This contradicts the truth found in the Word of God. Loving others in student ministry means supplying students with the tools needed to develop a solid biblical worldview. Students need to know that God loves them while also understanding different doctrines like suffering and justice, etc.

### **Being Aware of False Teachers**

“The matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and make us slaves.”

Galatians 2:4

In the society students live in today it focuses on inclusivism to the point that it becomes taboo to tell someone something the individual is doing is wrong. As Secular humanism is about the human individual being its own moral agent no one is more wrong than the next if the individual isn't hurting anyone. This thinking has slowly crept in from some decent willed people who wanted to make everyone come together and create a better society. The issue here is the same type situation that Paul faced.

When God sets principals or commands there should be no maneuvering around them as doing so can bring the whole system down. Once individuals believe they are higher than God in any form or fashion the created lets imperfection into the mix of ideas. This only leads to chaos and chaos does not produce order. Currently in America professors and other secular professionals are teaching alternate views than what the Bible holds. Students in the current generation are more emotionally vulnerable than any other generation. It is important to notice when false teachers creep in and correct it before it creates a new false doctrine.

Guzik writes, “It is significant that Paul says these men secretly brought in and came in by stealth. They did not come in with name badges that said, ‘False Brother.’ They did not come in with a purpose statement that said, ‘We have come to spy out your liberty in Jesus, and to bring you into bondage.’ These men probably had the best of intentions, but they were still dangerous men who had to be confronted.”<sup>52</sup> Secular teachers may have the best intentions and yet inadvertently take students down paths contrary to the truth in God’s Word. It is important to be aware of these possibilities because the Bible shapes a Christian’s worldview. Once a believer feels that the Bible is not necessary, the notion that Jesus isn’t necessary begins to creep in.

The Apostle Paul refused to compromise, and it should be a lesson to all who hold the responsibility as parents, teachers, and leaders that teaching the correct doctrine is vitally important. Paul was determined to preserve the law-free gospel for his gentile converts, to resist those who in effect were requiring that they should become Jews in order to become Christians, and that the law-free gospel should remain unimpaired for his gentile converts in Galatia.<sup>53</sup> There are false teachers who seek personal gain over personal obedience to Jesus. Students need to be taught awareness of this possibility so that proper perspective on doctrine remains in the church. The Bible guides the believer and therefore must be handled with care.

### **Taking Thoughts Captive**

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

2 Corinthians 10:5

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<sup>52</sup> Guzik, *Galatians 2- Paul defends the Gospel of Grace*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/galatians-2/>.

<sup>53</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Galatians, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 115.

The world is continuously telling our students and others that the Word of God has no place in the classroom or in the marketplace of academia. Students need to know how to take every thought captive and in doing so understand the Word of God enough to sift out the lies of the enemy. One of the most difficult situations youth pastors deal with today is that many parents do not raise their children with discipleship in mind. This should be a critical objective for every believing parent, but it is not.

The consumer driven Christianity or branded Jesus Christianity as mentioned before has watered down the command to disciple and the cost one considers when following Jesus. Over time, things can break down if they are not constantly maintained. This is essentially what has happened in the U.S. Christian home. Many parents have decided to let the youth pastor handle all aspects of discipleship and the two hours a week they have will not be enough. Training a child to take every thought captive takes discipline and the most impactful way to do this is if it becomes second nature or a natural way of living. The Shema commands the Jewish parents to do just that.

### **The Shema**

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God commands parents to teach their children His ways from an early age. The mind is vulnerable and needs to be guided as a child of God. In other words, parents should not let their child be guided by the world. Humans become like what they put around them and God, who is all knowing, commands the Christian to train their children. This is important for this project as it may be necessary for students to unlearn many of the things they have been taught, primarily that owning one's faith by learning God's Word is essential. Building a solid biblical worldview begins with truly believing God exists and then believing He has revealed Himself through Scripture.

One of the most important things needed for students is the incorporation of learning about God to be a daily part of life not just routine. The moral and biblical education of children is best accomplished in a formal teaching period each day but when the parents, out of concern for their own lives as well as their children's, make God and His word the natural topic of a conversation, it might occur anywhere and anytime during the day.<sup>54</sup> There are many daily things students do as a part of their day and natural conversation about God needs to be an essential one. This curriculum will help students develop a natural way of talking about God daily with themselves and each other.

### **Being Ready to Give an Answer**

“But 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.” 1 Peter 3:15

There is a lack in understanding about what it means to place Jesus as Lord of their lives. Jesus being the Lord of a person's life means Jesus is the master, and all control is surrendered to

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<sup>54</sup> Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 274.

Jesus as King. Students are constantly led by fear while being told not to fear. There is a disconnect on what students are being told. Evangelism is a command by the God of the universe, but many are teaching a gospel that requires nothing from the believer. This has led many to believe salvation is nothing more than a pass to Heaven. If Jesus is the Lord of our lives, then the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This type of fear is essentially being in awe or having reverence for God. Humans lives are in His hands.

Knowing this, students need understanding about the idea of being inspired by the greatness of God to act on His commands. Fear is an emotion and should not lead a believer. This is an aspect of taking every thought captive. Emotions begin in the mind. Students can learn pre-evangelism with using apologetics. This can guide an unbeliever to open the door to hear the gospel with less skeptical intentions. Continuously the call to know the Bible is written throughout the Bible in order to own and defend the faith.

We can be ready to give a defense if we have made ourselves ready in knowing the Bible. Peter knew how important it was to give a defense to everyone who asks you. He had to do this in the situations described in Acts 2:14-39, Acts 3:11-26, Acts 4:8-12, and Acts 5:29-32. In each point of testing, Peter relied on the power of the Holy Spirit and was able to give a defense.<sup>55</sup>

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The theoretical perspective of relationship and culture will be explored during this project. Young people have their own verbiage, and this could be said for every generation. Individuality is key for GenZ. This is the generation's mentality, and yet the young people of this generation are bombarded with secular humanism that promotes the self being as god. This in

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<sup>55</sup> Guzik, *1 Peter 3*, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-peter-3/>.

turn leads to students turning to each other, which means this process leads each student to look to the most popular or powerful of their generation for answers.<sup>56</sup>

## **Relational**

Today's teen lives in a postmodern society. It is debated on exactly what this means, but it has played a part in defining what truth is to our culture. Students have grown up with the worldview that science, mathematics, and technology are real and right. Postmodernism, which promotes the idea of truth being relative, has further emphasized science, mathematics, and technology being the driving forces behind this generation's worldview. As such, GenZ students have used subjective truth as the object of their faith or worldview. One of the major defining statements of this generation is "live your truth." This has defined a generation that has questions but rarely seeks the answers brought about by an apathetic worldview.

Apologetist Sean McDowell writes, "Postmodern ideas do influence the worldview of youth today, but their thinking is most deeply influenced by our predominantly modern, secular culture. This can be seen most clearly by comparing the way they think about religion and ethics with the way they think about science."<sup>57</sup> The relativistic way of thinking has become a stigma of this generation. Things such as morals and ethics are about preference rather than objectivity. The objective of this project is to ultimately see students obey Christ more consistently.

Regarding 1 Peter 3:15, it is heavily emphasized because it is relevant when someone asks questions about hope (which should be the gospel for Christians). Apologetics is defending

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<sup>56</sup> The theoretical foundation for this research project is based off Sean McDowell's research in his book, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Harvest House, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 15.

the faith and yet here we see God giving the reader the idea that being ready after someone has begun a relationship with the person is key. Relational apologetics is the direction the new apologist needs to take when it is about GenZ. With the rise of social media changing the landscape of social relationships, it is even more difficult for a teen to purposely ask a question of this magnitude. Teens have questions but students are turning more inward, and Google has become a type of teacher.

Trust is a major factor for today's teen. It takes more effort and time to break down the metaphorical wall. It is one of the biggest shifts we are seeing with emerging generations. Apologetics is needed, but the apologist isn't necessarily trusted in today's culture. In the 1960's and 1970's, many young people left the church because they (rightly) felt the church was often irrelevant. The critical questions that younger generations had at the time were not being answered. The music and various approaches to preaching and worship were becoming outdated and not speaking to upcoming generations.<sup>58</sup>

While today's teen culture is changing at a fast pace, the approach apologists to teens should be taking is similar. Adaptation is key and is a conceptual foundation for this study. Students today would rather sit in a coffee house and talk about life rather than go to a church building that seems irrelevant to them. This is not a sweeping generalization but does represent a vast majority of GenZ. This study will use the verbiage of this generation and attempt to use conversational language as a starting point to encourage growth. One of the major ideas behind this study is to help students learn how to think and not just what to think.

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<sup>58</sup> McDowell, *Apologetics*, 30.

## **Apologetic Methods**

Apologetics has been an aspect of the Christian life, and in Acts 17:16-34, Paul the Apostle demonstrates how it should be done. Paul fled persecution in Thessalonica and made his way to Athens. Paul spent many years listening and arguing in Jewish synagogues and used what he learned there while he was speaking at Mars Hill. Many Epicurean and stoic philosophers did not understand what Paul was talking about until he used an apologetic method. He used a tactic that found a common ground with those in front of him. Paul used an idol that was worshipped to “the unknown god” and made a connection to Jesus Christ. Paul also used one of the very own poets’ words to help bridge the gap. Not all believed but it led to discourse whereas the opening led to little conversation only mocking. Therefore, it’s important to understand the different types of apologetics methodologies.

### **Classical Apologetics**

The classical method, also known as the two-step method, begins with natural theology by giving evidence for the existence of God first. The method affirms that it is easier for a non-believer to move from a theistic worldview to a specifically Christian one. This first step of classical apologetics also involves drawing the logical inference that if a theistic God exists, miracles are possible; indeed, the greatest miracle of all, creation, is possible.<sup>59</sup> Establishing that a God exists by using logical arguments is a necessity and key to moving on to historical evidence.

In the second step of the classical method, confirmed historical evidence substantiates the truth. For example, the New Testament documents are shown to be historically reliable. The

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<sup>59</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *Big Book of Christian Apologetics - An A to Z Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2012), 29.

apologist also shows that these documents reveal that Jesus claimed to be, and was miraculously proven to be, the Son of God.<sup>60</sup> Classical apologists do not believe historical evidence should be given unless a person believes in God. If someone does not believe in God then logically, they would not believe in miracles, such as the resurrection.

### **Presuppositional Apologetics**

This view affirms that one must defend Christianity from the foundation of certain basic presuppositions. Here, one presupposes the basic truth of Christianity and then proceeds to show that Christianity alone is true.<sup>61</sup> This form of apologetics assumes Christianity is true and does not use the basic arguments for God's existence. In this method, the apologist focuses on showing the falsehood of living reasonably in any other worldview. The presuppositional apologist also believes the unbeliever has their own presuppositions that deter them from believing the Christian worldview, and, therefore, it is the apologist's task to dismantle those false beliefs.

### **Evidential Apologetics**

In this approach, the apologist does not believe it is necessary for one to use rational arguments for God's existence prior to showing evidence such as archeology or other ancient manuscripts. There is a tendency to use archeology as support of the Bible more so than in the classical method. This method overlaps with the classical method but differs in the order in which steps are taken to reach the objective. Some evidentialists appeal to experiential evidence

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<sup>60</sup> Geisler, *Big Book*, 29.

<sup>61</sup> Geisler, *Big Book*, 31.

in support of Christianity, most often from the changed lives argument. The testimony of those converted to Christianity is offered as evidence of the truth of Christianity.<sup>62</sup>

### **Historical Apologetics**

Historical apologetics is distinct from evidentialist apologetics in its narrow focus, using only one kind of evidence rather than many. It offers a sequential argument. The historical apologist begins with only historical evidence as a basic premise.<sup>63</sup> This method uses ancient historians such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus as a primary tactic. Christianity is rooted in history and, therefore, the apologist can use history to prove Christianity is true. The historical apologist says, “Look to the past to support the truthfulness of Christianity.”<sup>64</sup>

### **Summary**

The formation of this project’s apologetic curriculum will use the classical apologetic method with a focus on establishing the relational side of Christianity. The 10 students who participate in this project will talk with each other about the issues presented in order to teach the whole person. It is crucial for GenZ to understand who they are in Christ but also who they are around and with each other. Students are made in the imago dei and as such will be immersed in what that means and how it applies to them. The uniqueness of their identity in Christ will be explored, and each participant will be allowed to discuss the depths of the mission for which they were created.

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<sup>62</sup> Geisler, *Big Book*, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Geisler, *Big Book*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Geisler, *Living Loud*, 13.

**Chapter 3**  
**Methodology**  
**Intervention Design**

The intervention plan chosen for this project uses the qualitative method of research. There will be four parts to this project which include procedure, participants, instruments, and curriculum. The procedure will cover the detailed order of the project's process. The participants are the students who choose to move forward with the research. The instruments are the pre- and post-test questionnaires given to the students to determine the potential change that occurred throughout the process. The curriculum will be the material taught by the teacher.

In this society, there are more distractions than ever before. Students leave high school and face worldview questions from their professors and others, and many times students do not have a solid enough understanding of a biblical worldview to respond confidently. The postmodern culture has created a gap between student's emotional need and the intellectual need for a solid biblical foundation. Secular humanism has become a dominating worldview in our culture, and this project will formulate a strategy to teach theology and apologetics to high school students to answer secular humanism. Discipleship is training of the mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects in life, and this project has combined all three to better equip today's youth. It also taught students how to own and answer questions to their faith.

**The Setting and Participants in the Project**

This project is designed as a two-day intensive. There are four parts to the project design itself. As noted above, these four parts are the procedure, participants, instruments, and curriculum. This project will give me a better understanding of how teaching a biblical

worldview using theology and apologetics can impact the lives of students facing attacks from secular humanism. The research will be used and adapted for years to come within my future training of students in the local church and abroad. The curriculum will be a staple within the church and possibly taught to parents for their own growth, to give them the ability to teach their children. The positive benefits of this project could impact whole families which in turn will help produce students who leave high school with a stronger biblical worldview.

### **Procedure**

High school students are dropping out of church during college or after graduation at a high rate. The purpose of this project is to be able to alleviate some of their doubt, fear, and questions before they leave for college. The focus is on high school students in order to help them engage intellectually with their God and not just in their relationships before graduation. As a result of the worldwide Pandemic the intervention was changed from in person to online. The other major change was the church through which the intervention would be hosted. Instead of Gulf to Lake Church, it would be Portage Community Church in Pennsylvania that would host. Due to Covid, the researcher and his wife lost their positions in the original church. God made a way to still implement the project.

Ten students will be chosen from the Portage Community Church youth group. Students were asked to read and sign an agreement before participating. Each participant was asked to attend all remote sessions of a two-day study in theology and apologetics via Zoom. Each day consisted of four, 30-minute lessons. After each 30-minute lesson, there would be 15 minutes of discussion. Each day lasted approximately four hours. Each session focused on a different topic. These topics were designed to take the students through a methodical plan to engage them

mentally in order to get a better understanding of the biblical worldview. The first day would include an introduction and pre-test the first hour.

Students had one hour to take the pre-test, which would give me an understanding of the student's background in theology and apologetics. In order to see if the students gained confidence intellectually and emotionally, a confidential questionnaire was used. Due to Covid-19, a virtual classroom in Zoom was used rather than an in-person setting. This allowed for participants to dialogue and learn visually. After completing the questionnaire, students emailed it to me after day one sessions were complete.

Students took a post-test the second day, during the fourth hour before leaving the intensive. Students had one hour to complete it. I asked the students to mute the Zoom call and begin taking the questionnaire while live on zoom so that the I knew students were following the time frame given. This gave me and the participants an understanding of whether the session curriculum encouraged and equipped each student. Students then emailed it to me after day two sessions were complete.

The study was anonymous, and no students had their information presented anywhere that others would know who they were. Also, students had parental consent. Each parent was given a thorough description of the research process. To keep up with each individual test, a coding system was created. Each student was given a number 1-10 to identify the pre- and post-test.

Each pre- and post-test questionnaire was placed in a locked cabinet inside my office. Data was stored in a locked filing cabinet, and I was the only one with access. The pre-test allowed me to gain an understanding of the student's foundation, and the post-test helped me

determine how much each student retained. The criteria by which each student was graded was a five-point scale. Each question was graded by the level of accuracy in the answer.

Each point was given a label: one = poor; two = fair., three = good, four = very good, and five = excellent. After the post-test, each student's score was compiled by adding together the level of accuracy in their answers. I then added the total points of each test and measured the improvement or lack thereof. A reasonable goal was that all students would improve their scores by an average of two points on the above scale on each question.

## **Implementation of the Intervention Design**

### **Participants**

At the beginning of the visionary aspect of the project, it was initially supposed to be conducted in person with the students. Covid-19 began to sweep across the world, and it changed the way Americans did life. This was unforeseen but allowed the researcher to adapt the curriculum to an online format.

I asked students individually if the student would like to be involved in this project. Due to changes in the intervention plan because of Covid-19, the researcher recruited students across the country. I have been able to be a part of ministries across the nation and a few were gracious enough to help with recruiting. The ministry that ended up being the most help was Portage FCA in Portage, Pennsylvania.

This Fellowship of Christian Athletes group consists of male and female athletes and many of them attend Portage Community Church. Unfortunately, only three were able to take the class initially due to scheduling conflicts. The original Zoom class dates were to be June.

Each parent of the student was emailed and contacted through phone to let parents know the reasoning behind the research and get permission. The email contained the procedures for the

project to help parents and participants understand how the process would be enacted. Each student was given an agreement to participate. The student would need to read and sign it in order to participate.

I needed the approval of each students' guardian. Guardians had the right to pull each student out of the project at a given time. Students will be informed of the project's procedures and structure. An agreement to participate document was emailed to each participant for their consent. Each student returned the signed document to me before a set date and time for the facilitator to observe. Each document was safely placed in a locked drawer within the facilitator's office.

Upon completing the CITI training and securing permission from the IRB, I began the project immediately. Research began in June and concluded in July. This was the best time to get students in one place on a consistent basis so that we would avoid school conflicts. An approval letter was sent to families of students getting permission for them to participate in the research. Then, an email was sent out to all participants for confirmation of start date with the instructions for pre-test.

The intervention lasted from June to July 2020. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the entire intervention being done through Zoom, I had to hold multiple opportunities to teach the curriculum. It was difficult to schedule a time where students could slow down and focus for two hours, two days straight. There were three students in the first class, one male student for the second class, and just two students in the third class. Scheduling was the biggest obstacle in the intervention design. All students were asked were asked five to ten questions about their previous interaction with church and apologetics. Each response was documented and

synthesized into information that will be invaluable to youth pastors who choose to use worldview curriculum designed for high school students.

### **The Instrument**

The instrument used in this research process was a questionnaire designed to determine each student's level of understanding in apologetics and theology. The evaluation design was used to research if there were differences in understanding from before and after the project was completed. Though difficult, each student signed on to Zoom and went through two days of teaching for two straight hours each day. They were all given the same questionnaire prior to the class itself. Students had the curriculum available as they took the class to have a visual guide. The curriculum allowed for dialogue, which presented very good questions and thoughts allowing me to think through many ways to improve the curriculum over time. I evaluated each student's answers and then analyzed the results to determine if the curriculum had an impact, whether positive or negative.

Listed below are the specific questions that were asked of each student:

1. In two paragraphs, please write your testimony.
2. Were you raised in a Christian home? Please explain.
3. Have you been taught theology and apologetics before? If so, where and by whom?
4. How much time do you currently spend studying the Bible each week?
5. Do you believe this course has or will help you own and defend your faith? Please explain.
6. What is a worldview, and why is it important to develop a biblical worldview?
7. Why shouldn't my high school friend get an abortion for her unplanned pregnancy?
8. How would you reply to the "Does God exist?" question?

9. How do you know the Bible is reliable?
10. How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
11. Is God a moral monster? Why or why not?
12. What form of evolution do you believe and why?
13. What is salvation and what happens when we are justified?
14. What are seven attributes of God? Please give a brief description of each.
15. How would you lead someone to Christ? What do they need to know and how would you explain it to them?

The first five questions were designed to give me a better understanding of the student's background. Their answers allowed me to see how much influence, negatively or positively, the previous interactions with church culture had impacted the students. Much of what I have studied has led me to believe that many youth ministries are borderline anti-intellectual. If that is the case, it would likely show up in the student's answers. If students were raised in the church culture, the typical assumption is that they have a solid theological understanding.

### **The Curriculum**

In the process of determining what I was going to teach throughout this curriculum, I had a general idea of what needed to be included based off my previous experiences. My research prior to development of the curriculum, though, changed many of those assumptions. Students have been taught what to think in the church culture but not how to think. The information included needed to be imaginative, succinct, and have dialogue built into the design itself. Many teens are afraid to speak about their faith outside the church walls, and I attempted to build a type of short Socratic dialogue within the curriculum.

Along with me, there were two other adults who helped in the editing of the curriculum. These ministry leaders were chosen for their background in ministry but also apologetics. Each is skilled in writing and have impacted the lives of teenagers throughout their ministry.

Lindsey Medenwaldt JD, MPA, MA- Lindsey is the Executive Director of MaMa Bear Apologetics. She is also an editor and author. She is a fourth and fifth grade teacher. Lindsey is a contributor in the Popular Handbook of World Religions ('21). She is an assistant consulting editor for the Christian Research Journal.

Stacey Hanson- Graduated from Erskine Theological Seminary with an MDIV. Stacey is also a Lieutenant Colonel Chaplain in the United States Air Force. He is also the senior pastor of Bremen First.

The participants in this project were high school students, which meant the lessons needed to be tailored to that age group. One thing in the back of my mind was that I think students can handle more than many leaders give them credit for. As such, there is a lot of philosophical material within the pages of the curriculum. One of the motivating factors in the process was trying to break down barriers of doubt. This meant trying to write a curriculum that led students in a more classical apologetics approach. Here is the scope and sequence of the curriculum:

### **Order and Overview of Apologetics Curriculum**

**Chapter One:** What is a worldview?

**Chapter Two:** The Existence of God.

**Chapter Three:** Is the Bible Reliable?

**Chapter Four:** Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

**Chapter Five:** Is God a Moral Monster?

**Chapter Six:** Creation/Evolution

**Chapter Seven:** Salvation/Justification

**Chapter Eight:** The Attributes of God.

A rough draft was created to begin the process of researching what content needed to be in the lessons. This can be found in Appendix Four.

### **Lesson by Lesson Overview**

As noted above, because of the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with summer schedules, each Zoom class varied in size. Class sizes varied between one to three students at a time. Students were given the course material 30 minutes to an hour prior to joining the Zoom call. The reason was so that they would not be tempted to take the pre-test with the notes in hand.

#### *Lesson 1: Course Introduction and Worldview*

At the beginning of each Zoom class, the students were asked if they had any prayer requests and if they would like to pray. Before lesson one began students were to have, on hand, the course curriculum. The first few minutes was a brief discussion of what the course was about and the goals that the curriculum would attempt to achieve. Then we discussed why the topic matters in the scope of reality. Lesson one began with an overview of what a worldview is and how it shapes what we think about the world. The lesson gave an overview of a naturalistic worldview compared to a biblical worldview as it relates to four questions. Those four questions are: Who are we? Where are we? What is wrong? And what is the answer?

#### *Lesson 2: Does God Exist?*

This lesson was a very intriguing one due to the large number of students' friends who do not believe a god exists. The objective of the lesson was to give the students the ability to talk with their friends about the existence of God. As with each lesson there was a why it matters

section. Then we proceeded to discuss two main arguments for the existence of God. The two that were chosen were the Cosmological and Teleological arguments. Each argument was broken down into its premise and conclusion then given support for each premise.

### *Lesson 3: Is the Bible Reliable?*

In the third lesson, the students were given the reason why it matters that the Bible is historically reliable. If the Bible could not be trusted in simple matters like history then there would be no reason to trust it is a solid worldview to place your trust in. There were three main tests that were taught. These were the biographical test, the internal test and the external test. Each test focuses on different things. The biographical test focuses on the amount of manuscripts in circulation and how far removed from the original writings they are. The internal test examines if the writers claim to be eyewitnesses. The external test examines the early church fathers and the findings in archeology.

### *Lesson 4: Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?*

There were four main theories that this lesson debunked as reasons the resurrection did not happen. This was to give the students a sense of confidence that they could respond to critics from a rational perspective instead of using circular reasoning. The four main theories were the conspiracy theory, the apparent death theory, the displaced body theory and the hallucination theory.

### *Lesson 5: Is God a Moral Monster?*

In this lesson the researcher used Epicurus form of the logical problem of evil as a way to explain to students what many atheists or unbelievers believe. As students look at the logical form of the argument, they were taught to see the presuppositions that many people bring into their idea of who God is and why He would allow evil. Students were shown how to look at the

argument logically to find the inconsistencies. Students were also show that the Christian doctrines support the idea that God can exist, and He has sufficient reasons why He allows evil.

#### *Lesson 6: Creation/Evolution*

In lesson six, students were taught the difference between operation science and origin science. This was to help them understand that there are different ways to come to a sound conclusion using to appropriate scientific approaches. Microevolution and macroevolution were also described and explained to show the differences in the major forms of evolution. Students were shown how macroevolution is not observed in our world today, but we do see changes within species.

#### *Lesson 7: Salvation/Justification*

This lesson was an overview of the fall of mankind and the consequences of that fall. Students were taught the result of sin and how there was only one way to pay for mankind's sin. As Adam was the first man, the God-man came as the second Adam and paid for all sin. As a result, through Jesus sacrifice we can be justified in the eyes of God. The last portion of the lesson was dedicated to showing students four easy to remember thoughts on leading someone else to Jesus.

#### *Lesson 8: Attributes of God*

In this lesson students were given seven attributes or characteristics of God. Each attribute was explained and helped students make sense of the God who is there versus the God they might have put together by chance or simply heard could be there. This is important due to the contradicting thoughts on God that have arisen in our society. Each attribute had Scripture to support it and a way each attribute could encourage us.

In hindsight the researcher should have changed the chapter five title due to confusion over the question itself. This will be discussed in chapter four. In summary students were originally given fifteen questions to determine their level of competence in apologetics and theology. Included in this were five questions to research their background and how this could influence their understanding of the topics to be taught. The classical apologetics approach was taken. This was also strategic as apologetics is pre-evangelism and within the curriculum is a chapter on leading others to a saving knowledge of Jesus. The last chapter is to help with a better understanding of the God they or the ones who accept Christ will spend time with.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

This chapter explores all of the data received during the intervention in order to understand if intentional teaching on Theology and Apologetics will lead students to a better understanding of the doctrines. The results will help the researcher prove that the curriculum had or did not have, a positive impact on each student. The intervention will also allow the researcher to see if there was a difference in students answers who grew up in the church and students who typically spend more time in the Bible.

#### **General Description**

The curriculum was supposed to be taught in an eight week, in person format originally. The Covid-19 Pandemic changed everything in a moment's notice. It was difficult to figure out how to implement the project itself in such a short time frame. One of the major factors was teaching philosophical arguments to teens any other way than in person would be difficult. It is already difficult without having to be behind a screen teaching philosophy, but it is especially difficult when the students do not have a background in logic already.

High school students from Pennsylvania were contacted and asked to set up a time with the researcher to take the course through Zoom. Scheduling was difficult because student's schedules were busier during this intervention due to summer beginning. It was also close to the end of school and final exams students had to take. The majority of participants plan to attend college in the U.S. and will experience questions about their faith. It has never been more apparent that students need Theology and Apologetics.

Ten students were originally asked fifteen questions:

1. In two paragraphs please write your testimony.

2. Were you raised in a Christian home? Please explain.
3. Have you been taught Theology and Apologetics before? Where and by whom?
4. How much time do you currently spend studying the Bible each week?
5. Do you believe this course has or will help you own and defend your faith? Please explain.
6. What is a worldview and why is it important to develop a Biblical worldview?
7. Why shouldn't my high school friend get an abortion for her unplanned pregnancy?
8. How would you reply to the "Does God exist" question?
9. How do you know the Bible is reliable?
10. How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
11. Is God a moral monster? Why or why not?
12. What form of evolution do you believe and why?
13. What is salvation and what happens when we are justified?
14. What are 7 attributes of God? Please give a brief description of each.
15. How would you lead someone to Christ? What do they need to know and how would you explain it to them?

Each student was graded on a five-point scale:

<b>Wrong or No Answer</b>	<b>Answered or Novice</b>	<b>Approaching</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>No evidence of meeting objective</b>	<b>Little evidence of meeting objective</b>	<b>Student demonstrates partial mastery of the objective</b>	<b>Student demonstrates mastery of the objective</b>	<b>Student demonstrates mastery of the objective with depth and complexity</b>

### **Results of the Project**

All students were given the 15 questions but were only graded on 10. The final 10 questions were based on the curriculum. The first five were to give me an idea of the student's background. This would help me determine if their prior experiences played a part, whether large or small, in answering well or not. Below is the table of the overall scores of the students from

the before and after tests. The average score went up by at least a point and in a few cases did not go up very much at all.

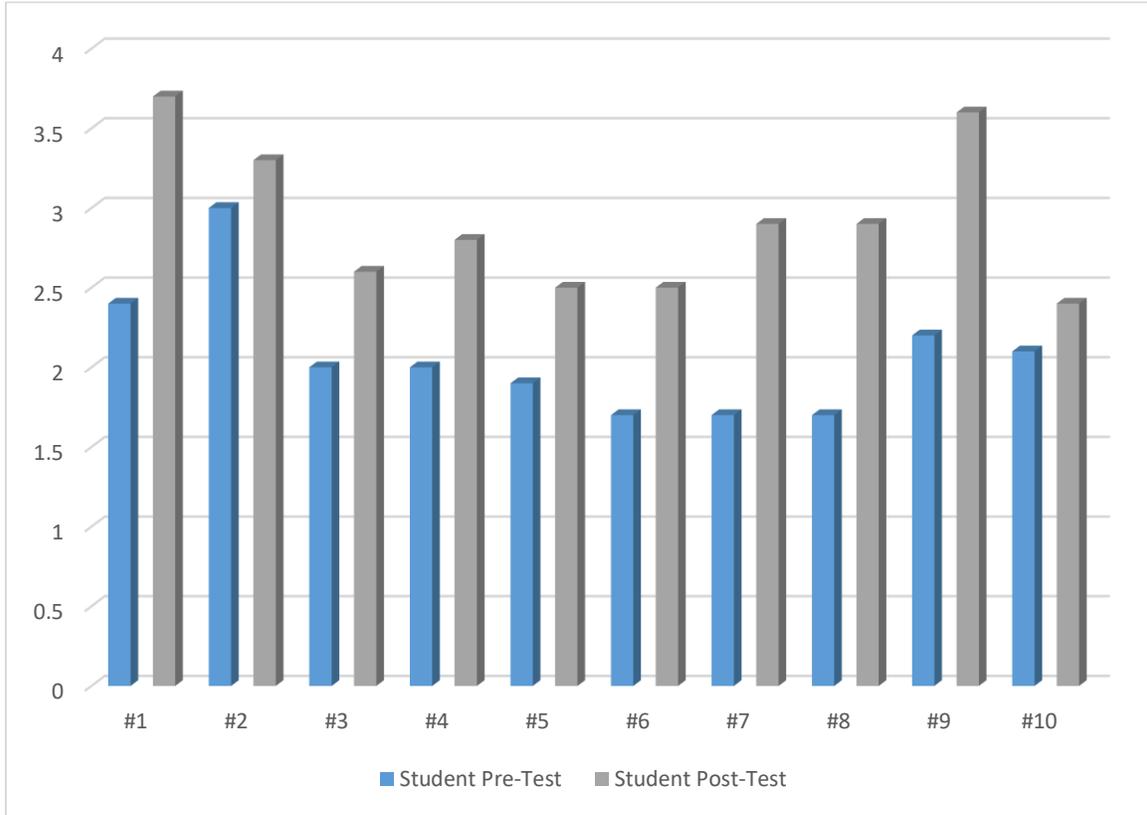
The graded questions are as follows:

1. What is a worldview and why is it important to develop a Biblical worldview?
2. Why shouldn't my high school friend get an abortion for her unplanned pregnancy?
3. How would you reply to the "Does God exist" question?
4. How do you know the Bible is reliable?
5. How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
6. Is God a moral monster? Why or why not?
7. What form of evolution do you believe and why?
8. What is salvation and what happens when we are justified?
9. What are 7 attributes of God? Please give a brief description of each.
10. How would you lead someone to Christ? What do they need to know and how would you explain it to them?

Table 1.1 Average students' scores on the ten questions

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
Student Pre-Test	2.4	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.2	2.1
Student Post-Test	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.9	3.6	2.4

Figure 1.1 Average student's pre-test and post-test scores



In this section, I will analyze the student's overall score as it relates to each question. This will help determine the effectiveness of the lessons. Toward the end of this section, more will be analyzed in reference to the student's prior experiences with Christianity and how it affected students' responses. The only question that was not intentionally taught on was the question regarding abortion. This was a singled-out question to see if the overall curriculum impacted the depth and complexity of their answers prior to teaching the lessons. The first question focuses on worldview.

*Question: What is a worldview and why is it important to develop a biblical worldview?*

Table 1.2 Average student's score on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain in %
2.4	3.7	54.2%

This question had great growth in students understanding of what a worldview is. Most of the students understood that they needed to have a biblical worldview in referencing following Scripture but did not know what a worldview is in general. In looking at the lesson the researcher created for this particular question, the researcher would not change much aside from potentially leaving out the comparison between the naturalist and biblical worldview. This lesson could focus more on simplifying what a worldview is without examining different worldviews. The students themselves enjoy learning about atheism and that belief system but in the short period of time did not seem to grasp the intricacies of that worldview.

*Question: Why shouldn't my high school friend get an abortion?*

Table 1.3 Average student's gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
3.0	3.3	10%

This question was one that I included to help me understand if the students were impacted cognitively by the curriculum enough to be more complex in their answer to abortion. The results were inconclusive as the majority of students have spent years in church, but all had a similar reply. There was slight growth in the complexity of students answers which does lead the

researcher to believe that studying theology and apologetics can influence students critical thinking about other areas of social life. Students in this study believe that abortion is wrong, and that God created each unborn baby with a purpose. The majority would not go so far as to say it was murder. This falls in line with GenZ and trying to be politically correct or not cause offense. This can be beneficial in pre-evangelism as students will be able to find common ground about verbiage in a dialogue with an unbeliever.

*Question: How would you reply to the “Does God exist” question?*

Table 1.4 Average student’s gain on question

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
Question #3	2.0	2.6	30%

For me, this question was one of the most important simply because of personal experience. So many unbelievers have this question and I have used this same material to pave the path for some to accept Jesus as Lord. What I have learned from notes is that students need a class on logic and critical thinking. Students thoroughly enjoyed this lesson as it relates to exciting new information. One of their favorite supports for the Cosmological argument was the philosophical reasoning negating an infinite universe. That being said, in students’ responses, none of that information was retained. Only a few students mentioned a first cause in their answer.

The majority of the answers centered around students alluding to using the information in the curriculum as a response. In notes taken of student’s responses, they felt that they understood the information but not well enough yet to retain or explain it. In asking students to give feedback on how to make the curriculum better, students wanted more time to discuss the

information and more information regarding design in the universe from a scientific perspective. I think that students would be intrigued by this information, but in regard to this particular study, students need a short introduction about the Cosmological and Teleological arguments.

*Question: How do you know the Bible is reliable?*

Table 1.5 Average student’s gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
2.0	2.8	40%

This lesson was interesting for the students. There was a good gain in students’ responses, but the information was new for the students. This led them to have a difficult time retaining the information. So, the feedback was great from students but the amount of information to retain on an essay like response was difficult. In my notes, charts showing the amount of manuscripts for each language and other ancient documents would have been beneficial.

I think that there should be questions at the end of each test for authenticity. This would help the students to retain the names for each test in order to process the information better. Not one student referenced an individual test of authenticity. Students seem to remember a fun fact within a test but did not retain the names categorically.

*Question: How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?*

Table 1.6 Average student’s gain on question five

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
1.9	2.5	31.6%

This was the students' favorite lesson. Most students had not thought about the true significance of Jesus rising from the dead. Students knew that it was important but had not paid much attention to the fact that if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is pointless. There was not as much growth in this section as I thought there would be. Students were intrigued by the conspiracy theories given as a negation of the resurrection and their responses. One would think the more intrigue, the better the understanding.

In my notes, students mentioned that charts and pictures would have been more beneficial in helping show the proximity of the crucifixion site and the burial site. This led me to think about visuals of where Jesus was pierced and the actual medical evaluation from a noted doctor. That being said, when looking at the other answers, it seems too much information cannot be sufficiently retained. My question throughout this question is "how can we help students retain and dialogue about the information?"

One of the other responses from students was to write in the claims of the conspiracies to better understand what they were. This means that students want simple straight-to-the-point answers. Students live in this incredibly fast-paced life and are already faced with more information than they can handle. Regarding an introduction to apologetics, it is becoming evident that concise and compartmentalized study is the appropriate tactic. Students also reminded me that more questions to sort out their thoughts would benefit them.

*Question: Is God a moral monster? Why or why not?*

Table 1.7 Average student's gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
1.7	2.5	47.1%

This question seemed to present the most issues for the students in the way it was worded. I explained the question during the lesson in hope that the answer would benefit greatly in the post-test. This was not the case. It appears that students did have a better response, but it was not as significant as I had hoped for. This section also used a logical form of the argument of suffering. This could have added to the lack of depth in the answer. Like the “Does God exist?” question, this portion could have been shortened and sectioned off by questions, which would have helped me know if students were understanding each section. One of the goals I began with was to see how much information students could memorize or retain. The problem seems to be the construct of the question and the lack of training students had in logic prior to taking the course.

*Question: What form of evolution do you believe and why?*

Table 1.8 Average student’s gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
1.7	2.9	70.6%

This question was one of the more significantly positive responses in the project. I think that the students’ previous familiarity with evolution helped tremendously. However, it was noticeable that they did not understand microevolution very well. This is primarily likely due to public schools teaching from a naturalistic worldview. Yet, students still had enough background to discuss the topic. The basic premise that from a biblical perspective microevolution is more acceptable was what students answered. The complexity in their answers left the question lacking.

The terms “operation science” and “origin science” were new to the students and could have been fleshed out more for them. Again, stopping at the end of each section or new term and

asking questions for understanding would have improved learning. I would, in hindsight, make the lesson more concise and would have asked the students more questions. Then, new terms would have been understood better. The dialogue aspect is something I learned was harder to do through Zoom than in person. It is a blessing to have technology to do the project this way, but it revealed the importance of in-person interaction.

*Question: What is salvation and what happens when we are justified?*

Table 1.9 Average student’s gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
1.7	2.9	70.6%

I was fairly certain students would understand what salvation was and semi-confident the term justification had been on their radar. Students did not seem to have a strong understanding of the term salvation before the class. This is a difficult thing to grasp for any youth minister as our primary goal is to lead students to a saving understanding of Jesus’ death burial and resurrection. As the research has shown, the American youth pastor has seemingly placed emotions or the comfort of students above solid theology and understanding of biblical principles.

This is not to be used as a sweeping generalization of all youth pastors, but the majority fall into this category as more and more students are left to fend for themselves in the field of ideas. One of the major points that stood out to me was the students’ complete lack of knowledge of the term justification. Prior to the lesson, no student had a grasp on this theological term. The lack of understanding of what takes place within these two powerful terms explains a lot in regard to many students not knowing if they are saved or what salvation is. The lesson needs to be shortened and have questions at the end of each section. This is a theme across every lesson.

*Question: What are seven attributes of God? Please give a brief description of each.*

Table 2.1 Average student's gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
2.2	3.6	63.4%

The answers to this question were much better in the post-test than the pre-test. Students had a decent grasp on seven attributes even though their descriptions were lacking. Many students who have been in church for any amount of time knew certain things they attribute to God. Some answered with words like love and grace. The overall takeaway from this lesson is the way the complexity of their answers developed. This could be due to going into more depth about what an attribute is and explaining in-depth what the seven attributes meant. Only one student did not know what an attribute was.

This section was long, but due to most students' previous church experience they seemed to catch on quickly. However, in order to make it more deliberate and concise, I would shorten the lesson and ask more questions, especially if the lesson is being taught in a virtual classroom. One of the most interesting points to note was the students' overall understanding of God's omnipresence. They believed in God being everywhere but not believing evil can be in His presence. The idea that evil can be in God's presence with His permission was eye-opening for them. Psalm 139:7-10 explains that we cannot escape God's presence.

*Question: How would you lead someone to Christ? What do they need to know and how would you explain it to them?*

Table 2.2 Average student's gain on question

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain%
2.1	2.4	14.3%

In my 13 years of youth ministry experience, one of the most important things to get across to students was the need to evangelize. This is because God commands us to tell others about Him. We cannot tell others we love them and not give them the best thing for them, Jesus. In my experience, students typically do not know how to lead someone to Jesus because no one has taught them what people need to know and what salvation is. One of the noticeable points was the lack of biblical knowledge in students' answers. There was not one student who referenced Scripture.

Knowing this, I looked through the curriculum and asked different questions. Lesson Ten had more Scripture in it than any other lesson and seemed like it would be a review for many students. In hindsight, I should have focused on teaching how to lead someone to Christ versus giving the background of the Fall, sin, and the consequences of the Fall. Students' learning is such that if not focused and intentional, they typically shut down and do not recall information that is in the vast array of other thoughts. I thought that it would help them explain to unbelievers a more in-depth reason for why they need a Savior. All it did was jumble together an overview of the biblical narrative rather than being intentional with the question.

**Interpretation of the Results**

The scores overall were not as drastically different as I anticipated. Questions seven, eight, and one seemed indicated the most growth among the students. One of the more curious things I learned was that many of the students had been previously taught apologetics. That does not mean that what they were taught was on the cognitive level of this curriculum or even on the same material. It does make me curious about the curriculum that was taught prior. One specific

student's responses were purposely the same on both the pre- and post-tests. When asked what the reasons for this, the participant said:

I think the reason my answers stayed the same is because I already knew it before the lessons because I was already saved but people who aren't saved that are hearing this for the first time would probably just be confused. I feel like the lessons a good lesson but some other things, if it's their first time hearing them it will be very confusing involving the micro and macro and I feel like my answer makes more sense especially to people who don't have a biblical background.

The issue with this response was that the participant clearly did not understand how to answer many of the questions. This student had been taught apologetics but did not have a grasp on theological concepts nor an understanding of things like micro and macro evolution. This specific student said they "do not believe in any form of evolution." This response was the same before and after the lesson. I think that this is because it is easier to give feel good answers to difficult questions and many students are being taught this. This student did understand salvation but did not understand the term "justification." The student did well in answering how to lead someone to Jesus.

Overall, the lack of time and face-to-face dialogue played a significant role in the quality of learning. Students have been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and I think the negative emotions the students had toward the pandemic played a role in effecting students' attention to detail. The relational or emotional circumstances of this project influenced the outcome, but students did see gain in their responses overall. A more concise and relational approach would serve better in a virtual classroom.

### **Answering the Research Question**

After collecting the data and interpreting the results, I have gained a better understanding of how theology and apologetics impact students. Students are intrigued by the complexity of information apologetics gives, but it is evident students need more critical thinking training in

high school. Below is the response for the main question asked in this research project: will creating a theology and apologetics curriculum help students defend a biblical worldview?

As noted above, students who went through the course did better on their responses than before. There were a few changes I noted that needed to be made to any curriculum created especially when teaching in a virtual classroom. Because I was forced to learn how to accommodate this curriculum for the virtual setting, I think it's better-suited for times like we are in now, when we don't know when we might all be able to gather together in-person. Aside from two students who essentially did not change their before and after answers, eight out of the ten improved. The answer is not an overwhelming yes, but it is a yes when answering the research question.

Ultimately, students should be taught how to own and defend their faith. As leaders, we should be teaching students critical thinking skills earlier in the church. Then, the minister can begin teaching students how to think and students can learn to be better evangelists on the fly. Students learn best when they can interact with a teaching because it is engaging. This curriculum and youth pastors would greatly benefit from taking students outside and using what they have learned in the public square so to speak.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### Review of the Project

The goal of this project was to write and survey the effects of a curriculum that would challenge high school students in the areas of theology and apologetics. Students need instruction on the basics of their faith, especially as the world continues to push secular culture into their lives. The world wants to create the idea that freedom comes from the self, but the Bible lets us know freedom comes from the Savior. The secular world is slowly trying to break ground in the church and water down the gospel being preached. As believers, it is our duty to train students how to critically think through worldview and determine what is true.

Apologist Sean McDowell writes, “Relativism is flourishing in culture, infecting the emerging generation.”<sup>65</sup> In light of the results from the study, it is my determination that youth pastors, leaders, and parents should take a closer look at the data. The culture is trying to destroy the concept of truth which is making its way into the church culture of youth ministry. The need for youth pastors to adapt with the times is influencing the language of the Bible being taught in the pulpit. It is necessary to contextualize appropriately but not if it changes the meaning of Scripture.

The research in this project has clearly shown that students are not being taught theological terminology that I would deem essential. For example, salvation and justification are not just words but concepts that have the weight of the gospel behind them. In the process of practically conducting the research, I have noticed that getting back to simplicity when teaching is significant. Students need to have just one concept taught to them at a time. This means taking

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<sup>65</sup> Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 50.

a subject like salvation and using stories, definitions, and dialogue during teaching so that students can get a better grasp of what they are being taught.

The Bible reveals certain attributes of God, but my research shows that students don't really understand the God who is there. Aside from the fact that God loves students, there isn't much depth to their understanding of the personhood of God. This means that as leaders we are not discipling well. The pastor does not spend much time with students compared with parents or teachers that see them almost every day. This reveals a need to be more intentional in our instruction when we do have them. We should also try to find revolutionary ideas behind real discipleship so that we can further help our students discover truth about God.

The simple fact of the matter is that it takes longer to walk a single student through discipleship and do life with them than it does to preach a message that meets an emotional need in the moment but ultimately misses the depth needed for a lifetime of obeying. Thus, my opinion is that we simply need to do the hard thing, which is to recruit, train, and ask adults to do life daily with a small group of students. This will likely take years but will be well worth it if we are helping students become adults who are dedicated Christians who live out their faith fully and freely share the gospel with others.

In the end, success in establishing the Christian perspective lies within our ability through the Holy Spirit to convince unbelievers of the reality of an intellectual, powerful, and good God.<sup>66</sup> The results from this study have confirmed what I read in preparation of this project. What students need is apologetics and theological training beginning at a young age. The next steps should be evaluating what ages we should begin introducing these concepts, as well as the

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<sup>66</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Joseph M. Holden, *Living Loud: Defending Your Faith* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002) 40.

potential scope and sequence. I also think senior pastors need to begin looking more at this demographic and think about long term changes that will produce better results and more solid disciples.

Brett Kunkle explains that relativism robs Christianity of its relevance for young people; and while believers hold high expectations for their kids in academics and athletics, when it comes to theological training, they drop the bar so low that most of the kids in churches learn only the essential Christian doctrines.<sup>67</sup> This means that it is even more important for senior pastors to begin discipling adults so that they can have more positive influence in the home. Contextualization of the gospel in the U.S. may have gone too far in the consumer-driven culture rather than contextualizing it to bring about a more biblical worldview.

Norman Geisler writes, “An apologist presents various evidences to defend his faith much like a lawyer uses evidence to defend his client in a courtroom.”<sup>68</sup> After learning apologetics and theology, students are more likely to be able present a more reasonable response to critics more accurately and appropriately once they complete this curriculum. The curriculum presented in this research is not a finished product but gives a good starting point in creating different curricula for a variety of groups. This has never been more apparent than during Covid-19. Throughout the creative process, many of my personal biases on what to teach were evident, which will be explained in the next section.

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<sup>67</sup> Brett Kunkle, “Truth Never Gets Old,” in *Apologetics for a New Generation*, ed. Sean McDowell (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2009), 51.

<sup>68</sup> Geisler and Holden, 11.

## **Zoom Teaching**

Another aspect in the implementation of this project was the vehicle used to teach. Due to the current pandemic, it was best for me to use a virtual classroom, Zoom, for this project. People around the world are losing jobs, getting sick, losing loved ones, and suffering from the effects of a situation that could potentially change the way humans forever live life. Covid-19 struck coincidentally during the time I was planning the intervention. It impacted the entire procedural plan and the lives of my family. As stated previously, I lost my job due to Covid-19, which changed the personal aspect of the project.

One of the clearer results of the project was the response from the students in regarding online dialogue versus in-person dialogue. The technical difficulties during the research was plenty. There were times we would be in the middle of a discussion, and Zoom would stop and no one would be able to hear anything. This would lead to having to restart a conversation or have a conversation about where we left off. Students very easily lost their train of thought. I learned to make things more concise while on Zoom and to use more visuals. This should be fleshed out more in future research as to how to use visuals on Zoom or other platforms to teach for better understanding.

## **Personal Reflection**

I have spent most of my life in a sort of mild skeptical mentality. As a child, I was not raised to be a disciple but rather forced to go to church and learn what Christianity was. The problem is nothing was ever fully explained to me. Church was not engaging, and it made no sense. My prayer life was more out of fear and a habitual rehearsed prayer than a need to get close to the God who was there. Discipleship was almost non-existent. What was most evident

was that even though my parents were incredible people, they were not discipled and had no idea how to disciple their children.

As I look back, it was also evident that my parents and others were very concerned when they felt as though they did not do something right as a parent. This led to reacting instead of being humble and learning how to adapt. As a parent myself, I recognize that this is most difficult to do. I am learning that humbling oneself to obey Christ and admitting when one is wrong is a huge characteristic of being a disciple. No parent wants to be wrong, but humility is a must have in the parenting toolbox. Being discipled reveals this as time goes on in the life of a mature Christian. Therefore, at this point of my ministry, it has never been clearer that as adults we need to be counterculture rather than swimming in the river of mediocrity or relativism.

At the beginning of this process, there was a lot of contemplation of the scope and sequence to be used. Much of the curriculum came from my personal experiences of growing up in the church and not knowing Jesus, as well as my 13 years of youth ministry experience. The more research that was done prior to writing the curriculum, the more the classical apologetics approach took shape. Yet, the desire for students to be able to share the gospel was not something this project could cut. It seemed evident that this generation of students has a need for a deeper understanding of the concept of salvation and the depth of depravity that we are all under before salvation.

The literature review revealed a growing trend of churches leading people through a prayer of salvation rather a solid understanding of what salvation is and who one commits to. Jesus is at the center of the teaching of salvation and becomes the one we are beautifully redeemed by. The American church has seemingly lost its sense of urgency to teach the truths of Jesus in many cases and teaching apologetics can bring about change in the culture of “doing

church.” This research has led me to believe that apologetics could be what brings about a revolution from “doing church” to being the church.”

### **Summary**

I have confidence that students need to be taught apologetics and theology in the church. There were limitations to this project, many of which that were unforeseen, but another valuable insight is that there are many more questions to be answered using apologetics. Youth pastors can implement many of the thoughts in this research in their preparation for messages and small group curriculum. One way to use this information is to do a “A Series for Skeptics” series. This could be intriguing for unbelievers, and pastors could bring in apologists to answer questions. This could be beneficial for evangelism and quench the desire to fill the seats at times.

Each leader must evaluate the cultural climate and context they serve in to use apologetics well. Certain contexts will need different questions answered. It is important to get feedback from students about what questions they have and do it in a confidential way. One major lesson that was learned in the project was the necessity for students to feel like it was okay to not know something. To begin prioritizing apologetics in the church is the need to be a “struggle out loud” culture. This means that it is okay to not be okay. People, especially students, feel judged or disliked due to the social media culture. It is constantly about getting likes or followed. This gives a sense of being judged all the time. Teaching apologetics in this generation requires a judgement free zone.

## Appendix A

### Parental Consent

**Title of the Project:** An Apologetic and Theological Strategy for High School Students to Answer Secular Humanism

**Principal Investigator:** Chad Brown

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

Your Student is invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be in grades 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> at the time of study. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to allow your student to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to formulate a theology and apologetics strategy for high school students to answer Secular Humanism, which is a worldview that focuses on the individual and does not put stock in the concept of the biblical God. Many students are leaving the church after high school without developing a biblical worldview. This project will encourage and equip students to be able to answer difficult questions posed by professors and others who do not share a biblical worldview.

#### What will participants be asked to do in this study?

If you agree to allow your student to be in this study, I will ask him or her to do the following things:

1. Attend all remote sessions of a two-day study in theology and apologetics on Zoom. Each day we will consist of four, thirty-minute lessons. After each thirty-minute lesson there will be fifteen minutes of discussion. Each day will last approximately four hours. Each session will focus on a different topic. The first day will include an introduction and pre-test the first hour.
2. Students will have one hour to take the pre-test, which will give the researcher an understanding of the student's background in theology and apologetics. Students will email questionnaire back to researcher after day one sessions are complete.
3. Take a post-test the second day, during the fourth hour before leaving the intensive. Students will have one hour to take post-test. This will give the researcher and the participants an understanding of whether the session curriculum encouraged and

equipped each student. Students will email questionnaire back to researcher after day two sessions are complete.

### **How could participants or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are that each student should be able to own their faith more than when they began. The study can help build confidence towards their God and themselves as they solidify what they believe. Students will be able to present answers to objections others might have towards their faith, and in turn there will be less chance they will leave the church after high school. Academically, students will grow from this project by learning some philosophy and history.

### **What risks might participants experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks your student would encounter in everyday life. As a mandatory reporter, if the researcher sees signs of child abuse, neglect, abuse or intent to harm self or others, it will be reported.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participation in lectures will not be anonymous, it will be confidential. Participant responses on pre and post-tests will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes.
- Data will be stored in a safe under lock and key and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your student to participate will not affect your or his/her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your student to participate, she or he is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.



## Appendix B

### Consent for Students Who are 18 or Older

**Title of the Project:** An Apologetic and Theological Strategy for High School students to Combat Secular Humanism

**Principal Investigator:** Chad Brown

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participants must be in grades 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade at the time of study. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

#### What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to formulate a theology and apologetics strategy for high school students to answer Secular Humanism, which is a worldview that focuses on the individual and does not put stock in the concept of the biblical God. Many students are leaving the church after high school without developing a biblical worldview. This project will encourage and equip students to be able to answer difficult questions posed by professors and others who do not share a biblical worldview.

#### What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Attend all remote sessions of a two-day study in theology and apologetics on Zoom. - Each day we will consist of four, thirty-minute lessons. After each thirty-minute lesson there will be fifteen minutes of discussion. Each day will last approximately four hours. Each session will focus on a different topic. The first day will include an introduction and pre-test the first hour.
2. Students will have one hour to take the pre-test, which will give the researcher an understanding of the student's background in theology and apologetics. Students will email questionnaire back to researcher after day one sessions are complete.
3. Take a post-test the second day, during the fourth hour before leaving the intensive. Students will have one hour to take post-test. This will give the researcher and the participants an understanding of whether the session curriculum encouraged and

equipped each student. Students will email questionnaire back to researcher after day two sessions are complete.

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are that each student should be able to own their faith more than when they began. The study can help build confidence towards their God and themselves as they solidify what they believe. Students will be able to present answers to objections others might have towards their faith and in turn there will be less chance they will leave the Church after high school. Academically students will grow from this project by learning some philosophy and history.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a mandatory reporter, if the researcher sees signs of child abuse, neglect, abuse or intent to harm self or others, it will be reported.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participation in lectures will not be anonymous, it will be confidential. Participant responses on pre- and post-test will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes.
- Data will be stored in a safe under lock and key and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you may choose to not answer any question, or you can withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Chad Brown. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 832-720-9289 or [cjbrown@liberty.edu](mailto:cjbrown@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jerry Knoblet, at [jfknoblet@liberty.edu](mailto:jfknoblet@liberty.edu).

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Pre-Test/Post-Test Questionnaire

1. In two paragraphs please write your testimony.
2. Were you raised in a Christian home? Please explain.
3. Have you been taught Theology and Apologetics before? Where and by whom?
4. How much time do you currently spend studying the Bible each week?
5. Do you believe this course has or will help you own and defend your faith? Please explain.
6. What is a worldview and why is it important to develop a biblical worldview?
7. Why shouldn't my high school friend get an abortion for her unplanned pregnancy?
8. How would you reply to the "Does God exist" question?
9. How do you know the Bible is reliable?
10. How do you know that Jesus really rose from the dead?
11. Is God a moral monster? Why or why not?
12. What form of evolution do you believe and why?
13. What is salvation and what happens when we are justified?
14. What are 7 attributes of God? Please give a brief description of each.
15. How would you lead someone to Christ? What do they need to know and how would you explain it to them?

## **Appendix D**

### **The 40TWELVE Apologetics Course First Rough Draft**

#### **Purpose:**

The 40twelve Apologetics course is designed to guide high school students through the basics of the Christian faith. It will strategically help them to think through their current worldview and if it aligns with a biblical worldview. Students will also be able to give reasons for holding to a biblical worldview in an ever-growing secular humanistic culture.

#### **Goals:**

1. To equip believers with a basic understanding of worldview
2. To give students a better understanding of a biblical worldview.
3. To give students the ability to defend their faith amongst the other competing worldviews.
4. To equip students to be able to lead others to Jesus Christ.
5. To encourage students to live out a biblical worldview.

#### **Overview:**

In this program students begin by learning what a worldview is. The next step in the classical apologetics approach is to guide students through two logical arguments for the existence of God. The Cosmological and Teleological Arguments will show that it is probable that God does exist and give a better understanding of who this God is. From there each student will learn evidence that the Bible truly is reliable and then tackle the greatest question of them all “did Jesus rise from the dead”? After this, students will learn to give reasons for God allowing evil even though He himself is omnibenevolent.

One of the major debates in the public-school system is over Creation and evolution. Students will learn to give reasons why macroevolution does not give a sufficient answer for the way things are. The first step in becoming a Christian is salvation and, in this program, students

will learn what takes place at salvation and how to lead others to this point themselves. The last section will walk students through seven attributes of God. Many times, students for a sort of mashed potato idea of God and this section will help students understand the God who is there versus the God they might think, or feel is there.

## **Lesson 1**

### **Worldview**

**Cognitive Objective:** The objective of this lesson is for each student to comprehend and dialogue about a biblical worldview.

**Why it Matters?** – A worldview is like a strainer. It acts like a filter to which all questions in life can be filtered through. This will determine what one will accept as truth.

“I think the next generations disconnection stems ultimately from the failure of the church to impart Christianity as a comprehensive way of understanding reality and living fully in today’s culture.”- David Kinnaman

**Key Verse-** Romans 12:2- Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what Gods will is- His good, pleasing and perfect will.

#### **What is a worldview?**

- A mental map we use to navigate reality. Worldviews address the foundational, life shaping questions about reality.
- A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world. "It's any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world and man's relations to God and the world," says David Noebel, author of Understanding the Times.
- The world wants you to find a worldview that fits you. You need to find a worldview that fits the world or reality and corresponds with truth. You might not live what you profess, but you live what you really believe. How we choose to live is rooted in our beliefs. It's not just a mindset it's a "will set".

#### **What Questions Does a Worldview Answer?**

A worldview is a set of beliefs and assumptions that a person uses when interpreting the world around him/her. A worldview deals with issues like . . .

- What are we?
- Were we created or did we evolve?
- What is our purpose in life?

- Does God exist?
- From where do we derive our morals?
- Are there moral absolutes?
- Why is there suffering in the world?

All of these can be broken into four main questions a worldview must be able to answer:

- Who are we?
- Where are we?
- What is wrong?
- What is the answer?

### **Example:**

#### **Materialism: Atheism and Agnosticism**

Who are we? -Materialists believe Humans are beautiful complex systems of matter and electricity who are subjected to a complicated ordering of cause and effect. We are essentially a collection of impulses kind of like a battery.

Where are we? - Atheism and agnosticism deny that anything spiritual exists. They deny that a supernatural being exists and that humans do not have any spiritual aspect to them.

What is wrong? - Materialists believe they can be whatever they see fit while avoiding natural consequences and yet understand this sense of freedom is random and a facade at best. A materialist believes morality is subjective as its predicated upon the self, majority and power.

What is the answer? - They create their own meaning for existence.

#### **How Does This Impact Me?**

- All people have a worldview. Some believe in God, and others do not. Some affirm evolution, and others do not. Some believe there are absolute morals, and others do not. Some worldviews are more refined than others, but all people have them because all people have a set of beliefs through which they view the world.
- A worldview transforms how we relate to all of life.
- It determines our beliefs on important topics like: Abortion, Marriage, War, History, Purpose, Identity and many more.

#### **Snapshot of a Biblical Worldview:**

A biblical worldview means we filter every aspect of life through the Word of God and not the worlds subjective opinions and philosophies.

Who are we? -We are Gods creation made in His image (Imago Dei). We have purpose in fulfilling Gods mission to fill the earth with His glory.

Where are we? -We live in time and space which God spoke into existence for His own glory.

What is wrong? -Satan rebelled against God and manipulated the first man and woman. Man sinned against God and broke the perfect relationship we had with God. God is perfectly holy, and sin separated us from having that perfect relationship with Him. Sin corrupted the entire universe.

What is the answer? -God the Father sent His son Jesus as a sacrifice in our place. The Bible says the penalty of sin is death, so Jesus took our place on the cross. He rose again in our place and defeated death. When we place our faith in what Jesus did for us that we couldn't do we can be saved from eternal separation from God.

**Dialogue: Does your worldview affect how you choose to live? How so?**

**Why do you feel a biblical worldview is most reasonable? If not please explain.**

## Lesson 2

### Does God Exist?

**Cognitive Objective: Students will learn to comprehend and dialogue about the Cosmological and Teleological arguments for the existence of God.**

#### Why It Matters?

- In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth- Genesis 1:1 (Time, Material and Space)- originating cause
- The idea of a personal, moral God is foundational to what Christians believe. There are four major basic arguments for Gods existence. They are all a-posteriori arguments which means they argue from looking at the world and the evidence to determine the result of Gods existence. The cosmological , teleological, moral and ontological arguments. Cosmos means creation. Telos means purpose. Ontos means being.
- If God does not exist the ramifications are enormous. If God does not exist there can be no miracles which means there could be no Jesus rising from the dead for mans sins.
- Many atheists like Carl Sagan say things like, “Carl Sagan said, “The Cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.”

#### What is the Cosmological argument?

The cosmological argument posits that because there is a universe there must have been a cause outside of itself. It is based on the law of causality. This states that every limited or finite thing is caused by something other than itself. The Kalam (Eternal) Argument in its basic form:

Premise 1- The universe had a beginning

Premise 2- Anything that had a beginning must have been caused by something else.

Conclusion- Therefore, the universe was caused by something else

## **Support for Premises**

- The second law of thermodynamics says the universe is running out of usable energy. Which means if something is winding down it must have been wound up. It could not be eternal.
- The second way to show the universe had a starting point is more philosophical. If the universe was infinite then you would have had to pass through an actual infinite amount of real moments to get to this moment. You can use your imagination to say that we can pass through an infinite number of abstract dimensionless points or moments but those would be imaginary thus does not apply in respect to real time. So if the universe was infinite you would have had to pass through an infinite amount of real time moments to get to now which would be logically impossible.
- Also, some might say that if everything that exists needs a cause then shouldn't the same rules apply for God? We solve this by claiming that the biblical God doesn't need a cause. He is the only non-contingent being. He is causeless. Furthermore, the argument presented above states that everything that has a beginning needs a cause. God never began and so the argument stands.

## **What is the Teleological Argument?**

The Argument from Design

This argument argues from a complex design to an intelligent designer

Premise 1- All complex design implies a designer

Premise 2- The universe (especially life) has complex design

Conclusion- Therefore, the universe must have had a designer

## **Support for the Premises**

- If you were walking in the mountains and came across a home in the woods you would believe it didn't create itself. The house has a welcome mat and when you walk in there is a fire burning and food on the stove. There are chairs and furniture throughout the house and pictures of people all around. Our first thought would not be that the house just happened to exist by chance. There is too much design and complexity for it to exist by chance. There is far too much complexity and design in the universe for it to exist by chance.
- Modern science is and has shown that there are constants that are programmed into the fabric of the universe. These constants are so finely tuned that if they were off by a fraction there could be no life anywhere in the universe. Here are a few:
  - Twenty-one percent of oxygen in air is just right for human life.
  - The gravitational force is perfect for life to exist.
  - Expansion rate of the universe is just right for life.

## **Dialogue:**

What are a few scientific proofs the universe is fine-tuned?

What is the main purpose for each one of these arguments?

Grab a partner and recite the premises and conclusion of each argument.

## **Lesson 3**

### **Is the Bible Reliable?**

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn some of the evidence for the Bible's historical accuracy and be able to discuss these evidences.

#### **Why it Matters?**

If the Bible is wrong in matters of historical events, then why would people believe in its spiritual insights. We need to be able to trust it in simple things like history before we ask others to trust it in more complex or complicated things.

What are the tests for authenticity?

#### The Biographical test

- This test determines the amount of manuscripts of a certain document and how far removed they are from the original.
- The NT has more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts
- 32,000 citations in writings of the early church fathers
- Homers Iliad only 643 copies (manuscripts)- earliest manuscripts written 400 years after original
- The ancient manuscripts in Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, etc. which number in the tens of thousands
- The dates of the manuscripts are from the early second century to the Reformation

#### The Internal Test

- Do the writers claim to be eyewitnesses?
- Yes, the biblical authors claim to be eyewitnesses. ‘
- The accounts were extremely detailed.
- If it was myth it would not have been written in the style the Gospels were written in.
- Nine men wrote the New Testament. Could not have written all 27 books independently and had corroborated each other's detailed stories. The authors themselves wrote derogatory things about themselves which alludes to truthful eyewitness.
- 10 out of 12 disciples were tortured and martyred for their belief.
- Early church fathers wrote letters containing quotes from the Bible in the first century. This means there was no time for myth or legend to develop.

- Christians have a book of historical accounts written close to the actual events themselves.

#### The External Evidence

- You could destroy every Bible in the world and we could still reconstruct the New Testament from the Early church fathers quotes of the New Testament.
- There has never been an archeological find that contradicts the Bible. i.e.- High Priest Joseph Caiaphas ossuary,
- The Dead Sea Scrolls found in Qumran in 1947. An entire manuscript of Isaiah written around 100 B.C. was found. Prior to this find the oldest complete copy of Isaiah was from the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The two copies were exactly the same.
- Roman and Jewish historians reference events we find in the Scriptures confirming the historical accuracy. Historians include Seutonius, Tacitus and Josephus.

#### Dialogue

What is the most intriguing evidence for the New Testament reliability?

How does the early church fathers quotes impact your view of the accuracy of biblical translation?

What questions do you still have about the reliability of the New Testament?

### Lesson 4

#### Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

**Cognitive Objective:** Students learn evidence for Jesus rising from the dead and to be able to dialogue with others on the topic.

#### Why it Matters?

If the natural realm is all there is then this means there could not have been miracles. This means Jesus could not have risen from the dead. All of Christianity relies on Jesus defeating death in our place.

#### Empty Tomb

##### 1. Conspiracy Theory

- They did not fake the resurrection.
- No concept of a Messiah being crucified or resurrected

- No one dies or risks being tortured for a lie.
- The Roman seal was broken- A crime punishable by death

## **2. The apparent death theory**

- Roman executioners were professionals
- Even if He was alive He would have died in the sealed tomb.
- If the disciples would have seen a half dead man stumbling out of the tomb they would not have thought He was gloriously risen from the dead.
- The body was wrapped in linens and 100 pounds of spices.

## **3. The displaced body theory**

- Jewish Law prohibited moving a corpse after it was interred (placed in tomb after rites).
- If the disciples would have begun telling people about the resurrection Joseph would have corrected them.
- The criminal graveyard was close to the site of execution.

## **4. The hallucination theory**

- Jesus did not appear just one time but many times.
- He appeared to groups of people not just individuals.
- He appeared to believers and unbelievers.
- This would have led the disciples to believe that Jesus had been transported to Heaven not risen from the dead. This would have been contrary to their beliefs.
- In the ancient world visions of the deceased were not evidence that the persona was alive but evidence that he was dead.

### **Why did they open themselves up for criticism?**

- Usually when people lie they don't mention specifics
- Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Jewish counsel. All detail about him could have been checked on.
- This was the central figure in their potential lie. A member of the Sanhedrin could have easily been debunked.

### **The independent authors like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John claimed to be eyewitnesses.**

- No documented evidence from the first century speaks against the Gospel reports of the resurrection. Historians like Tacitus, Seutonius and Josephus give testimonies matching the Gospel records.
- If eyewitness reports were not based on real accounts how would we have a consistent record of the events?
- If the resurrection did not happen then the story would have been stopped in Jerusalem.

### **Use credible sources**

- Why would they choose women as the first people to witness the resurrection?
- In New Testament time a woman's testimony was viewed as worthless.
- This would have been an embarrassing detail to leave in the story.

### **Save yourself**

- If it was a lie the disciples could have easily recanted their story.
- None of the disciples while facing gruesome torture and persecution denied the story or turned on the other.

### **The Disciples Belief**

- After the crucifixion the disciples were devastated and demoralized.
- As Jews they had no concept of an executed or resurrected Messiah.
- Only a judgement day at the end of the world
- Under Jewish Law Jesus' crucifixion as a criminal would mean that He was under God's curse.
- Even with the threat of death not one recanted
- "I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again"- N.T. Wright - New Testament Scholar

## **Lesson 5**

### **Is God a Moral Monster?**

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn that God has sufficient reasons for allowing evil and will be able to dialogue about the topic.

#### **Why it Matters?**

Many people believe that if God were all loving and all powerful He could and would eliminate evil. This means that there are many who do not follow Jesus because they believe evil is evidence that God does not exist. If you as a student were to provide an answer then maybe it would open the door to lead them to the Lord.

#### **The problem:**

If God is willing to prevent evil but not able,  
Then He is not all powerful,  
If He is able to prevent evil but not willing,  
Then He is not good  
But if He is both willing and able  
How can evil exist?  
If He is neither able nor willing, - Epicurus  
Why call Him God?

What is evil? -Evil is the lack of something that should be there in the relationship between good things.

**Logical form of the Argument:**

1. Its logically impossible for both God and suffering to exist.
2. Suffering exists
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

**There are hidden assumptions to this argument-**

1. If God is all powerful He can create any world He wants.
2. If God is all loving, He prefers a world without suffering.

Ask yourself if this is true?

- What if God wants to create a world with free will?
- It would be logically impossible for God to force someone to choose good or bad.
- Forcing free choices is like making a square circle.
- It's not that God lacks the power to perform the task, its that the task itself is nonsense.
- It may not be possible to create a world populated by people who always freely choose to do moral good.

**Conclusion to the first premise-** the first premise fails.

**Christianity entails doctrines that increase the probability of the coexistence of God and suffering.**

1. The chief purpose in life is not happiness
  - Many believe Gods role is simply to make a comfortable environment for His human pets.
  - The purpose of life is to know God.
  - Suffering can bring about a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God, either on the part of the one who is suffering or those around him.
  - Suffering is one of the ways God can draw people to Himself.
  - Countries that experience the most hardship are usually the ones that experience highest growth rates for Christianity.
2. Mankind is in a state of rebellion against God and His purpose.
3. Gods purpose is not restricted to this life, but spills over beyond the grave into eternal life.
  - Our pain on earth is temporary but our lives with God are forever.
4. The knowledge of God is an incomparable good.
  - Read revelation 21:4 and discuss.

**Lesson 6**

**Creation/Evolution**

**Cognitive Objective:** The student will learn the differences between micro and macro evolution and be able to discuss these differences.

### **Why it Matters?**

The origins of life matters in relation to how anything began at all. If God did not create the world and we are here by random chance, then Christianity is false and our lives here on earth are meaningless aside from what we feel our relative reality is.

### **Operation and Origin Science**

#### **Origin Science**

- Origin science operates like forensic science
- When a police detective observes a dead body they were not there to witness the death. The police scientist gathers clues to piece together what probably happened in the past.
- The forensic scientist uses causality and analogy.

#### **Operation Science**

- Studies the present
- Studies regularities, repeatable events.
- Studies how things continually work

#### **1. Natural and Intelligent causes**

- A waterfall would be caused by natural law
- A hydroelectric plant would have an intelligent cause.
- A rock would be naturally caused but an arrowhead would have an intelligent cause.

#### **2. Origin of first life**

- The past is known by the principle of analogy(uniformity). The present is the key to the past.
- Operation science is only concerned with secondary natural causes.
- The idea that life arose from chance is unscientific.
- Some have calculated this chance to be 1 in  $10^{40,000}$ . That is more atoms than in the whole universe.
- Life cannot arise from nonlife.

### **Two types of evolution compared.**

#### **Microevolution**

- Change *in* kinds
- Change within one kind of bird
- Many fossils to support
- Occurs today
- Can be observed

#### **Macroevolution**

- Change *of* Kinds
- Change from reptile to a bird
- Impossible to occur
- No fossil support
- Does not occur today
- Cannot be observed

### **Problems with Macroevolution**

- It is a scientific fact that basic types of life do not transform into other types of life.
- There is adaptation within a specific kind. i.e. some dogs have short hair and others long. We have never seen a dog transform into a horse.
- The Cambrian explosion. The fossil record shows animals appear fully formed and not in transition.
- Stephen Jay Gould, professor of geology and paleontology at Harvard University says, “All paleontologists know that the fossil record contains precious little in the way of intermediate forms; transitions between major groups are characteristically abrupt.”
- Systemic changes such as ape to human would have to occur at once. The internal system of an animal is such that if changes are not immediate, they will die.
- Example- you can make changes to the color of a car and the exterior. But if you change the size of the pistons then you must make immediate changes to other parts of the system or the car will not function.

## **Lesson 7**

### **Salvation/Justification**

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn what salvation is and what takes place in the act of justification. Students will be able to explain salvation to others.

**Why it matters?** There are millions of people who do not know Jesus. If we sincerely believe Jesus is the only way to Heaven, then it is important to understand salvation and be able to lead others in the understanding of salvation. Jesus commands every believer to verbally spread the Gospel.

#### **The Fall:**

- Genesis 2:17- “God warned Adam that if he disobeyed and ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die.”
- Genesis 3:6- “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

#### **Consequences of the Fall:**

- Adam and Eve died spiritually
- Romans 5:13-21- Sin entered the world through one man
- Ephesians 2:1-3

### **The whole creation is cursed:**

- Genesis 3:17-18

### **What is sin?**

- Falling short: Romans 3:23- “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”
- Iniquity: Isaiah 53:6- “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
- Lawlessness: 1 John 3:4- Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.
- It is breaking Gods law or rebellion against God.

### **The Consequence of sin:**

- Sin separates us from God: Genesis 3:10
- Physical death: Romans 5:12
- Spiritual death: Ephesians 2:12

### **The Result of sin**

- God could not let sin go unpunished
- Romans 6:23- “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”
- God loves His creation: John 3:16- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
- The Big Fix: It is necessary for God to propitiate or satisfy Gods wrath in our place if we are to be saved.
- Romans 3:25-26- “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood-to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- <sup>26</sup>he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

### **Salvation**

- God provides a way out for us
- Christ bore our sins in our place- Isaiah 53:8, Matthew 20:28- “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- Christ died for every man- Hebrews 2:9- “But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

### **Redemption**

- God purchased us back from death with Jesus blood
- Galatians 3:13-14- “Christ bought us with His blood and made us free from the Law. In that way, the Law could not punish us. Christ did this by carrying the load and by being punished instead of us. It is written, “Anyone who hangs on a cross is hated and punished.” <sup>14</sup> Because of the price Christ Jesus paid, the good things that came to

Abraham might come to the people who are not Jews. And by putting our trust in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit He has promised.”

### **What part does man play?**

- Conviction (Holy Spirit)
- Confession of our sins
- Conversion- Ephesians 2:8-9- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.”

### **Justification**

- A person is made righteous or right with God. It is a legal term as to claim someone as not guilty.
- Romans 5:1-2- “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”

### **What does someone need to know to lead someone to Jesus?**

1. You need to know that you have sinned and realize that sin separates you from God.
2. That you want to accept Gods free gift of salvation that is a result of what Jesus did that you could not do for yourself. (death, burial and resurrection)
3. That you want to begin a relationship with God through His son Jesus.
4. In order: confess your sins, *believe in* the fact that Jesus died and rose again in your place and confess He is Lord over your life.
5. Salvation is about having a relationship with Jesus not just going to Heaven. If He is Lord, you will follow Him. So, let the journey begin.

## **Lesson 8**

### **Attributes of God**

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn 7 attributes of God and the importance of knowing the God who is there.

**Why it matters?** As we grow up, we become like what we hear, see, and think about. It is important to filter through all the ideas about God we have been taught to make sure we are getting to know the God of the Bible rather than the God of our emotions.

**Attributes- Gods attributes are the characteristics that help us truly understand who He is.**

### **God is infinite**

**Colossians 1:17 — “And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”**

- God exists undiminished everlastingly into the future, but He has existed identically throughout the infinite past.

- Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- The trinity is uncaused (non-contingent).
- Once a believer realizes that God has demanded his salvation and perseverance from this sin-stained world he can live without fear in the joy that God offers all of His children.

### God is good

**Exodus 34:6-7 — “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.”**

- God is so good that He is the source of goodness; He alone is the rule and measure of what we truly know to be good.
- He is good by nature. God is not good because it is attractive for Him to be so, nor does He follow after some sort of standard for goodness.
- To the Christian, the goodness of the Lord is a security. The Christian knows well that he has been bathed in the death and resurrection of Christ and now stands wholly righteous before God.
- Romans 8:28 tells that “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” This is the believer’s rest and assurance.
- True goodness cannot abide evil. Therefore, God must be just.

### God is Just

**1 Peter 1:17 — “The Father... without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear.”**

- The Father of justice, God is the ultimate judge over the lives and actions of men.
- There seems to be so much injustice in the world (men lie, cheat, steal, and kill all the time with no seeming repercussions), but true justice is not meted out in this earthly realm, but in the true realm (the eternal heavenly realm).
- In God's justice, we can find a comfort for all the wrongs perpetrated against us and against mankind.
- We know that we will receive justice as well.
- That can be scary for one who truly knows his heart's deceitfulness and is not a believer, but the Christian rests in his sweet faith in Christ, knowing that he is judged in Christ (Romans 2:16) and his safety is thus secured.

## God is grace

**Romans 3:24 — “We are being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”**

- Grace is the bestowal of blessing unearned or unmerited.
- When we speak of God's grace, we speak of those wonderful gifts (salvation) that no man deserves but God grants anyway.
- There is what we call “common grace” — this is that grace that God shines upon the elect and the wicked alike. This kind of grace is God's bestowal of non-eternal blessings (health, prosperity, good weather, etc.); in fact, life itself is a gift of common grace to the non-believer since sinful man deserves nothing but death. (Romans 6:23)
- The other kind of grace is that special grace which God demonstrates on those whom he inexplicably chooses to be His people. Just as He did with national Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-8), God chooses His children not because they are more powerful, wise, intelligent, charismatic, pious, handsome, etc., but simply because that is what He wanted.
- This grace is amazing for it relies not at all upon us, but solely upon God and His will, rather than any service or good we are capable to render.

## God is Immutable (Does not change)

**Malachi 3:6 — “For I am the Lord, I do not change.”**

- The fact that God does not change his mind, his characteristics, his plan, or anything else is a security better than any earthly insurance for it guarantees His quality of character and gives security to the believer
- No, God neither changes His plan, His covenants, His prophecies, nor His justice; this lends greatly to His dependability
- If He has saved one of us, that saved person WILL persevere to the end for God has chosen him and will not change his mind.

## God is omnipotent

**Ephesians 1:11 — “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.”**

- God has the unlimited power to accomplish anything that can be accomplished.
- The things God does are neither difficult nor easy for God; they are only either *done* or *not done*. This is because difficulty is a factor that comes about only through the potential for not accomplishing a task.
- Potentials do not apply to Him — only actuals. God's power to do all that He desires is the fuel for the engine of sovereignty, which accomplishes His providence.

- A senseless challenge to God's sovereignty is the question of whether He can make a rock so heavy that he could not lift it. This is a senseless question because the feat requested is not a thing to be accomplished through power, but rather by contradiction of reality.

### **God is omnipresent (everywhere)**

**Psalm 139:7-10 — “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your Spirit? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utter most parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.”**

- Also referred to as “ubiquity” — it means that God is everywhere present in the fullness of His being.
- Being in all locations present in the whole of His being, there is no place we can go and not be in His presence.
- God is not spatial or dimensional in existence as we are.
- Doesn't the Bible say God cannot enter the presence of evil? No. God has appeared on this fallen planet an untold number of times as shown above. Then again, evil cannot enter God's presence without His permission.
- Because God is omnipresent, you and I are never alone. Jesus Christ promises to be with us always and everywhere (Matthew 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit indwells everyone who is a true Christian (Romans 8:9).

**Appendix E**  
**Second Edition of Curriculum**

**The 40TWELVE Apologetics Course**

**Purpose:**

The 40twelve Apologetics course is designed to guide high school students through the basics of the Christian faith. It will strategically help them to think through their current worldview and if it aligns with a biblical worldview. Students will also be able to give reasons for holding to a biblical worldview in an ever-growing secular humanistic culture.

**Goals:**

**After a student has completed the 40Twelve program, he/she will:**

- have a basic understanding of worldview
- have a better understanding of a biblical worldview than they did when they started the program.
- have the ability to defend their faith against competing worldviews.
- be able to lead others to Jesus Christ.
- be encouraged to live out a biblical worldview.

**Overview:**

The 40Twelve program is designed to help students understand worldviews as well as arguments for the existence of God. We will address common questions dealing with the reliability of the Bible, creation, and evolution. Students will learn why they can trust the claims of Christianity and how to evaluate other worldview claims. Finally, students will study the attributes of God so that they can deepen their relationship with Him.

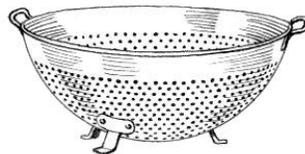
## Lesson 1

### Worldview

**Cognitive Objective:** The objective of this lesson is for each student to understand the biblical worldview.

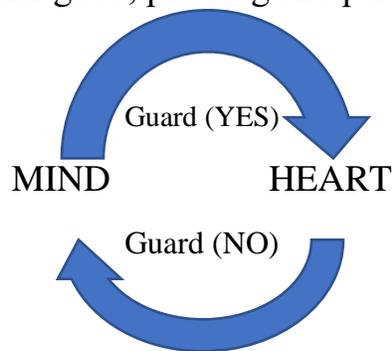
#### Why it Matters

A worldview is like a strainer because it acts like a filter for all questions in life. This will determine what one will accept as truth.



“I think the next generations disconnection stems ultimately from the failure of the church to impart Christianity as a comprehensive way of understanding reality and living fully in today’s culture.” David Kinnaman

**Key Verse:** “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what Gods will is- His good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)



#### What is a worldview?

- A mental map we use to navigate reality. Worldviews address the foundational, life-shaping questions about reality.
- A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world. “It’s any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or

religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world and man's relations to God and the world." David Noebel, author of *Understanding the Times*.

- The world wants you to find a worldview that fits you. You need to find a worldview that fits the world or reality and corresponds with truth.
- You might not live what you profess, but you live what you really believe. How we choose to live is rooted in our beliefs. It's not just a mindset it's a "will set."

### **What Questions Does a Worldview Answer?**

A worldview is a set of beliefs and assumptions that a person uses when interpreting the world around him/her. A worldview deals with issues like . . .

- What are we?
- Were we created or did we evolve?
- What is our purpose in life?
- Does God exist?
- Where do morals come from?
- Are there moral absolutes?
- Why is there suffering in the world?

How would your friends answer these questions? Pick one and discuss.

All of these can be broken down into four key questions that a worldview must be able to answer:

- Who are we?
- Where are we?
- What is wrong?
- What is the answer?

**Let's take a look at an example:**

### **Naturalism: Atheism and Agnosticism<sup>69</sup>**

*Who are we?* Naturalism says humans are beautiful, complex systems of matter and electricity who are subjected to a complicated ordering of cause and effect. In other words, materialists think we are a collection of impulses, kind of like a battery.

*Where are we?* Atheism and agnosticism deny that anything spiritual exists. They deny that a supernatural being exists and that humans do not have any spiritual aspect to them.

*What is wrong?* Naturalists believe they can be whatever they see fit while avoiding natural consequences and yet understand this sense of freedom is random and a facade at best. A naturalist believes morality is subjective as its predicated upon the self, majority and power.

*What is the answer?* They create their own meaning for existence.

### **How Does This Impact Me?**

- A common question is how one person's belief has any impact on another's.
- All people have a worldview. Some believe in God, others do not. Some affirm evolution, others do not. Some believe there are absolute morals, others do not. Some worldviews are more refined than others, but all people have worldviews because all people have a set of beliefs through which they view the world.
- A worldview transforms how we relate to all of life.
- Our worldview determines our beliefs on important topics like abortion, marriage, war, history, purpose, identity, and many more.

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<sup>69</sup> Naturalism is the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted. Most atheists and agnostics are naturalists. Atheists do not believe in God while agnostics that nothing is known or can be known about God.

## **Snapshot of a Biblical Worldview:**

A biblical worldview means we filter every aspect of life through the Bible and not the world's subjective opinions and philosophies.

*Who are we?* We are God's creation made in His image, *imago dei* (Genesis 1:27). We have purpose in fulfilling God's mission to fill the earth with His glory (Psalms 72:19).

*Where are we?* We live in time and space which God spoke into existence for His own glory.

*What is wrong?* Satan rebelled against God and manipulated the first man and woman. Man sinned against God and broke the perfect relationship we had with God. God is perfectly holy, and sin separated us from having that perfect relationship with Him. Sin corrupted the entire universe. (See Ezekiel 28: 12-18 and Genesis 3).

*What is the answer?* God the Father sent His son Jesus as a sacrifice in our place. The Bible says the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), so Jesus took our place on the cross. He rose again in our place and defeated death (Colossians 2:13-15). When we place our faith in what Jesus did for us that we couldn't do on our own, we are saved from eternal separation from God.

## Lesson 2

### Does God Exist?

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn to comprehend and dialogue about the cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God.

#### Why It Matters

- In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth (Genesis 1:1) (Time, Material, and Space) God is the originating cause.
- The idea of a personal, moral God is foundational to what Christians believe. *No other worldview outside of Christianity offers a personal God who loves you no matter what you do.*
- There are four major basic arguments for Gods existence. They are all *aposteriori* arguments, which argue from facts or past events, not from predictions. The cosmological, teleological, moral, and ontological arguments.
  - *Cosmos* means creation.
  - *Telos* means purpose.
- If God does not exist, the ramifications are enormous. If God does not exist, there can be no supernatural events or miracles, which means Jesus could not have risen from the dead for humanity’s sins.
- Many atheists agree with scientist Carl Sagan, who said, “The Cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 10.

## What is the Cosmological Argument?

The cosmological argument posits that because there is a universe there must have been a cause outside of itself. It is based on the law of causality. This states that every limited or finite thing is caused by something other than itself.

Here is the Kalam Cosmological Argument in its basic form:

Premise 1: Anything that begins to exist has a cause.

Premise 2: The universe began to exist.

Therefore, the universe has a cause. (As Christians, we believe that cause is God.)

## Support for the Cosmological Argument

- The second law of thermodynamics says the universe is running out of usable energy, which means if something is winding down it must have been wound up. It could not be eternal.



- The second way to show the universe had a starting point is more philosophical. If the universe was infinite, you would have had to pass through an actual infinite amount of real moments to get to this moment.
  - You could argue that we can pass through an infinite number of abstract dimensionless points or moments, but those would be imaginary so the argument does not apply with respect to real time. So, if the universe was infinite, you would have had to pass through an infinite amount of real time moments to get to now, which would be logically impossible.
- Also, some might say that if everything that exists needs a cause then shouldn't the same rules apply for God? Christians believe that the biblical

God doesn't need a cause. He is the only non-contingent being. He is causeless. Furthermore, the argument presented above states that everything that has a beginning needs a cause. God never began, and so the premise stands.

### **What is the Teleological Argument?**

The teleological argument is an argument from design. It says that there is an intelligent designer who created the complex design. The argument goes like this:

Premise 1: All contingent, complex designs imply a designer.

Premise 2: The universe (especially life) has complex design.

Therefore, the universe must have had a designer.

### **Support for the Teleological Argument**

- If you were walking in the mountains and came across a home in the woods, you would believe it didn't create itself. The house has a welcome mat, and when you walk in, there is a fire burning and food on the stove. There are chairs and furniture throughout the house and pictures of people all around. Our first thought would not be that the house just happened to exist by chance. There is too much design and complexity for it to exist by chance. There is far too much complexity and design in the universe for it to exist by chance.
- Modern science is and has shown that there are constants that are programmed into the fabric of the universe. These constants are so finely tuned that if they were off by a fraction there could be no life anywhere in the universe. Here are a few:
  - Twenty-one percent of oxygen in air is just right for human life.
  - The gravitational force is perfect for life to exist.

- Expansion rate of the universe is just right for life.<sup>71</sup>
  
- Famous atheist Richard Dawkins admits the DNA information in a single cell animal equals that in a thousand sets of an encyclopedia.
  
- If the earth's axial tilt were any greater or less, surface temperatures would be too great.<sup>72</sup>
  
- The position of Jupiter protects life on earth.<sup>73</sup>
  
- “Wherever Physicists look they see examples of fine tuning”- Sir Martin Rees, Professor of Cosmology and Astrophysics at the University of Cambridge.
  
- “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.”- Stephen Hawking, Theoretical Physicist and Cosmologist

## **What do you think?**

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<sup>71</sup> Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 232.

<sup>72</sup> Geisler and Holden, *Living out Loud*, 47.

<sup>73</sup> Geisler and Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, 232.

## Lesson 3

### Is the Bible Reliable?

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn some of the evidence for the Bible's historical accuracy and be able to discuss these evidences.

#### Why it Matters

If the Bible is historically inaccurate, then why would people believe in its spiritual insights? We need to be able to trust it in simple things like history before we ask others to trust it in more complex or complicated things.

#### What are the tests for authenticity?

##### *The Biographical Test*

This test determines the amount of manuscripts of a certain document and how far removed they are from the original.

- The New Testament (NT) has more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts.
- There are 32,000 citations in writings of the early church fathers.
- Compare this with the fact that there are only 643 copies (manuscripts) of Homer's *Iliad*, and the earliest manuscripts were written 400 years after the original.
- The ancient manuscripts of the Bible in Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, etc., number in the tens of thousands.
- The dates of the manuscripts of the Bible are from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the Reformation.

### *The Internal Test*

*This test examines whether the documents themselves claim to be actual history written by eyewitnesses.*

- Do the writers claim to be eyewitnesses? Yes.
- The accounts were extremely detailed.
- If the accounts in the Bible were myths, it would not have been written in the style the Gospels were written in.
- Nine men wrote the NT. They could not have written all 27 books independently and had corroborated each other's detailed stories.
- The authors of the NT wrote derogatory things about themselves which alludes to truthful eyewitness.
- 10 out of 12 disciples were tortured and martyred for their belief.
- Early church fathers wrote letters containing quotes from the Bible in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This means there was no time for myth or legend to develop.
- Christians have a book of historical accounts written close to the actual events themselves.

## *The External Evidence*

*This test examines the early church fathers and findings in archeology.*

- You could destroy every Bible in the world, and we could still reconstruct the NT from the early church fathers' quotes of the NT.
- There has never been an archeological find that contradicts the Bible (i.e., High Priest Joseph Caiaphas ossuary).
- The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Qumran in 1947. An entire manuscript of Isaiah written around 100 B.C. was discovered. Prior to this find, the oldest complete copy of Isaiah was from the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The two copies were exactly the same.
- Roman and Jewish historians reference events we find in the Scriptures confirming the historical accuracy. Historians include Suetonius, Tacitus, and Josephus.

**What do you think?**

**What is the most intriguing evidence for the New Testament's historical reliability?**

## Lesson 4

### Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn evidence about Jesus rising from the dead and be able to dialogue with others on the topic.

#### Why it Matters

If the natural realm is all there is then there could not have been miracles. This means Jesus could not have risen from the dead. All of Christianity relies on Jesus defeating death in our place.

#### The Empty Tomb

##### 1. Conspiracy Theory

CLAIM:

RESPONSES:

- They did not fake the resurrection.
- The Jews could have easily produced the body.
- The Disciples would not have been able to proclaim the story of the resurrection in Jerusalem.
- No concept of a Messiah being crucified or resurrected
- No one dies or risks being tortured for a lie.
- The Roman seal was broken- A crime punishable by death

## **2. The Apparent Death Theory**

CLAIM:

RESPONSES:

- Roman executioners were professionals who didn't make mistakes because if they failed, they would have been killed.
- Even if Jesus was alive, He would have died in the sealed tomb.
- If the disciples would have seen a half dead man stumbling out of the tomb, they would not have thought He was gloriously risen from the dead.
- The body was wrapped in linens and 100 pounds of spices.

## **3. The Displaced Body Theory**

CLAIM:

RESPONSES:

- Jewish law prohibited moving a corpse after it was interred (placed in tomb after rites).
- If the disciples would have begun telling people about the resurrection, Joseph would have corrected them.
- The criminal graveyard was close to the site of execution.

## **4. The Hallucination Theory**

CLAIM:

RESPONSES:

- Jesus did not appear just one time, but many times.
- Jesus appeared to groups of people not just individuals.

- Jesus appeared to believers and unbelievers.
- This would have led the disciples to believe that Jesus had been transported to Heaven, not risen from the dead. This would have been contrary to their beliefs.
- In the ancient world, visions of the deceased were not evidence that the persona was alive but evidence that He was dead.

### **Why did the disciples open themselves up for criticism?**

- Usually when people lie, they don't mention specifics.
- Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Jewish Counsel. All details about him could have been checked.
- Joseph was the central figure in their potential lie. A member of the Sanhedrin could have easily been debunked.

### **The independent authors like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John claimed to be eyewitnesses.**

- No documented evidence from the 1st century speaks against the Gospel reports of the resurrection. Historians like Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus give testimonies matching the Gospel records.
- If eyewitness reports were not based on real accounts, how would we have a consistent record of the events?
- If the resurrection did not happen, the story would have been stopped in Jerusalem.

### **Use credible sources**

- Why would they choose women as the first people to witness the resurrection?

- In New Testament time a woman's testimony was viewed as worthless.
- This would have been an embarrassing detail to include.

### **Save yourself**

- If it was a lie, the disciples could have easily recanted their story.
- None of the disciples, even while facing gruesome torture and persecution, denied the story or turned on the other.

### **The Disciples' Belief**

- After the crucifixion, the disciples were devastated and demoralized.
- As Jews, they had no concept of an executed or resurrected Messiah.
- Under Jewish law, Jesus' crucifixion as a criminal would mean that He was under God's curse.
- Even with the threat of death, not one disciple recanted.
- "I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again." N.T. Wright, New Testament Scholar

## Lesson 5

### Is God a Moral Monster?

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn that God has sufficient reasons for allowing evil and will be able to dialogue about the topic.

#### Why it Matters

Many people believe that if God were all loving and all powerful, He could and would eliminate evil. This means that there are many who do not follow Jesus because they believe evil is evidence that God does not exist. If you as a student were to provide an answer, maybe it would open the door to lead them to the Lord.

#### The problem:

If God is willing to prevent evil but not able,  
Then He is not all powerful,  
If He is able to prevent evil but not willing,  
Then He is not good  
But if He is both willing and able  
How can evil exist?  
If He is neither able nor willing,  
Epicurus, *Why call Him God?*

*What is evil?* Evil is the lack of something that should be present in the relationship between good things.

#### Logical form of the Argument:

Premise 1: It is logically impossible for both God and suffering to exist.

Premise 2: Suffering exists.

Therefore, God does not exist.

#### There are hidden assumptions to this argument:

1. If God is all powerful, He can create any world He wants.
2. If God is all loving, He prefers a world without suffering.

*Ask yourself if this is true?*

- What if God wants to create a world with free will?
- It would be logically impossible for God to force someone to choose good or bad.
- Forcing free choices is like making a square circle.
- It's not that God lacks the power to perform the task, it's that the task itself is nonsense.
- It may not be possible to create a world populated by people who always freely choose to do moral good.

**Therefore, the first premise fails.**

**Christianity entails doctrines that increase the probability of the coexistence of God and suffering.**

1. The chief purpose in life is not happiness
  - Many believe God's role is simply to make a comfortable environment for His human pets.
  - The purpose of life is to know God.
  - Suffering can bring about a deeper, more intimate knowledge of God, either on the part of the one who is suffering or those around Him.
  - Suffering is one of the ways God can draw people to Himself.
  - Countries that experience the most hardship are usually the ones that experience highest growth rates for Christianity.
2. Humanity is in a state of rebellion against God and His purpose.
3. God's purpose is not restricted to this life, but spills over beyond the grave into eternal life.
  - Our pain on earth is temporary, but our lives with God are forever.

The knowledge of God is an incomparable good.

**What do you think?**

**Read Revelation 21:4 and discuss.**

## Lesson 6

### Creation/Evolution

**Cognitive Objective:** The student will learn the differences between micro and macro evolution and be able to discuss these differences.

#### Why it Matters

The origins of life matters in relation to how anything began at all. If God did not create the world and we are here by random chance, then Christianity is false and our lives here on earth are meaningless aside from what we feel our relative reality is.

#### Operation and Origin Science

##### Origin Science

- Origin science operates like forensic science
- When a police detective observes a dead body, keep in mind that they were not there to witness the death. The detective gathers clues to piece together what probably happened.
- The forensic scientist uses causality and analogy.

##### Operation Science

- Studies the present
- Studies regularities, repeatable events
- Studies how things continually work

#### 1. Natural and Intelligent causes

- A waterfall would be caused by natural law.
- A hydroelectric plant would have an intelligent cause.
- A rock would be naturally caused but an arrowhead would have an intelligent cause.

## 2. Origin of first life

- The past is known by the principle of analogy (uniformity). The present is the key to the past.
- Operation science is only concerned with secondary natural causes.
- The idea that life arose from chance is unscientific.
- Some have calculated this chance to be. 1 in  $10^{40,000}$ . That is more atoms than in the whole universe.
- Life cannot arise from non-life.

## Two Types of Evolution Compared

### Microevolution

- Change *in* kinds
- Change within one kind of bird
- Many fossils to support
- Occurs today
- Can be observed

### Macroevolution

- Change *of* kinds
- Change from reptile to a bird
- Impossible to occur
- No fossil support
- Does not occur today
- Cannot be observed

### Problems with Macroevolution

- It is a scientific fact that basic types of life do not transform into other types of life.

- There is adaptation within a specific kind (i.e., Some dogs have short hair and others long. We have never seen a dog transform into a horse.).
- The Cambrian Explosion
  - The fossil record shows animals appear fully formed and not in transition.
- Stephen Jay Gould, professor of geology and paleontology at Harvard University says, “All paleontologists know that the fossil record contains precious little in the way of intermediate forms; transitions between major groups are characteristically abrupt.”
- Systemic changes such as ape to human would have to occur at once. The internal system of an animal is such that if changes are not immediate, they will die.
- **Example:** You can make changes to the color of a car and the exterior. But if you change the size of the pistons, then you must make immediate changes to other parts of the system or the car will not function.

**What do you think?**

## Lesson 7

### Salvation/Justification

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn about salvation and justification. Students will be able to explain salvation to others.

#### **Why it Matters**

There are millions of people who do not know Jesus. If we sincerely believe Jesus is the only way to Heaven, it is important to understand salvation and be able to lead others in the understanding of salvation. Jesus commands every believer to verbally spread the Gospel. (Mark 16:15)

#### **The Fall:**

- “God warned Adam that if he disobeyed and ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die” (Genesis 2:17).
- “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Genesis 3:6).

#### **Consequences of the Fall:**

- Adam and Eve died spiritually.
- Sin entered the world through one man (Romans 5:13-21).
- Ephesians 2:1-3

#### **The whole creation is cursed:**

- Genesis 3:17-18

#### **What is sin?**

- Falling short: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
- Iniquity: “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

- Lawlessness: Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness (John 3:4).
- Sin is breaking God's law or rebellion against God.

### **The Consequence of Sin:**

- Sin separates us from God (Genesis 3:10)
- Physical death (Romans 5:12)
- Spiritual death (Ephesians 2:12)

### **The Result of sin**

- God could not let sin go unpunished.
- “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).
- God loves His creation: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).
- *The Big Fix*: It is necessary for God to propitiate or satisfy Gods wrath in our place if we are to be saved.
- “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood-to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished- he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:25-26).

### **Salvation**

- God provides a way out for us.

- Christ bore our sins in our place (Isaiah 53:8). “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).
- Christ died for every man. “But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9).

## **Redemption**

- God purchased us back from death with Jesus blood.
- “Christ bought us with His blood and made us free from the Law. In that way, the Law could not punish us. Christ did this by carrying the load and by being punished instead of us. It is written, “Anyone who hangs on a cross is hated and punished.”<sup>14</sup> Because of the price Christ Jesus paid, the good things that came to Abraham might come to the people who are not Jews. And by putting our trust in Christ, we receive the Holy Spirit He has promised” (Galatians 3:13-14).

## **What part does man play?**

- Conviction (Holy Spirit)
- Confession of our sins
- Conversion “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## **Justification**

- A person is made righteous or right with God. It is a legal term as to claim someone as not guilty.
- “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access

by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

### **What does someone need to know to lead someone to Jesus?**

1. You need to know that you have sinned and realize that sin separates you from God.
2. You need to know that you want to accept God’s free gift of salvation that is a result of what Jesus did that you could not do for yourself (death, burial, and resurrection).
3. You need to know that you want to begin a relationship with God through His son, Jesus.
4. In other words, confess your sins, *believe in* the fact that Jesus died and rose again in your place, and confess that He is Lord over your life.

Salvation is about having a relationship with Jesus, not just going to Heaven. If He is Lord, you will follow Him. So, let the journey begin.

### **What do you think?**

## Lesson 8

### Attributes of God

**Cognitive Objective:** Students will learn seven attributes of God and the importance of knowing the God who is there.

#### Why it Matters

As we grow up, we become like what we hear, see, and think about. It is important to filter through all the ideas about God we have been taught to make sure we are getting to know the God of the Bible rather than the God of our emotions.

God's attributes are the characteristics that help us truly understand who He is.

#### Attribute 1: God is Infinite

“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17).

- God exists undiminished everlastingly into the future, but He has existed identically throughout the infinite past.
- Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- The Trinity is uncaused (non-contingent).
- Once a believer realizes that God has demanded his or her salvation and perseverance from this sin-stained world, he or she can live without fear in the joy that God offers all His children.

#### Attribute 2: God is Good

“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7).

- God is so good that He is the source of goodness; He alone is the rule and measure of what we truly know to be good.
- He is good by nature. God is not good because it is attractive for Him to be so, nor does He follow some sort of standard for goodness.

- To the Christian, the goodness of the Lord is a security. The Christian knows well that he has been bathed in the death and resurrection of Christ and now stands wholly righteous before God.
- “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is the believer’s assurance.
- True goodness cannot abide with evil. Therefore, God must be just.

### **Attribute 3: God is Just**

“The Father... without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17).

- As the Father of justice, God is the ultimate judge over the lives and actions of humanity.
- There seems to be so much injustice in the world (we lie, cheat, steal, and kill with seemingly no repercussions), but true justice is not seen in this earthly realm, but in the true realm (the eternal heavenly realm).
- In God’s justice, we can find a comfort for all the wrongs perpetrated against us and against mankind.
- We know that we will receive justice, as well.
- That can be scary for one who truly knows his heart's deceitfulness and is not a believer, but the Christian rests in faith in Christ, knowing that judgment is in Christ (Romans 2:16) and eternal safety is thus secured.

### **Attribute 4: God is Gracious**

“We being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

- Grace is the bestowal of blessing unearned or unmerited.
- When we speak of God’s grace, we speak of those wonderful gifts (salvation) that no man deserves but God grants anyway.

- There is what we call “common grace” — this is that grace that God shines upon the elect and the wicked alike. This kind of grace is God's bestowal of non-eternal blessings (health, prosperity, good weather, etc.); in fact, life itself is a gift of common grace to the non-believer since sinful man deserves nothing but death (Romans 6:23).
- The other kind of grace is that special grace which God demonstrates on those whom he inexplicably chooses to be His people. Just as He did with the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-8), God chooses His children not because they are more powerful, wise, intelligent, charismatic, pious, handsome, etc., but simply because that is what He wanted.
- This grace is amazing for it relies not at all upon us, but solely upon God and His will, rather than any service or good we are capable to render.

#### **Attribute 5: God is Immutable (Does not change)**

“For I am the Lord, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6).

- The fact that God does not change his mind, his characteristics, his plan, or anything else is a security better than any earthly insurance for it guarantees His quality of character and gives security to the believer
- No, God neither changes His plan, His covenants, His prophecies, nor His justice; this lends greatly to His dependability
- If He has saved one of us, that saved person WILL persevere to the end for God has chosen him and will not change his mind.

#### **Attribute 6: God is Omnipotent**

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11).

- God has the unlimited power to accomplish anything that can be accomplished.

- The things God does are neither difficult nor easy for God; they are only either *done* or *not done*. This is because difficulty is a factor that comes about only through the potential for not accomplishing a task.
- Potentials do not apply to Him — only actuals. God's power to do all that He desires is the fuel for the engine of sovereignty, which accomplishes His providence.
- A senseless challenge to God's sovereignty is the question of whether He can make a rock so heavy that he could not lift it. This is a senseless question because the feat requested is not a thing to be accomplished through power, but rather by contradiction of reality.

### **Attribute 7: God is Omnipresent (everywhere)**

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your Spirit? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utter most parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” (Psalm 139:7-10)

- Also referred to as “ubiquity” — it means that God is everywhere present in the fullness of His being.
- Being in all locations present in the whole of His being, there is no place we can go and not be in His presence.
- God is not spatial or dimensional in existence like we are.
- Doesn't the Bible say God cannot enter the presence of evil? No. God has appeared on this fallen planet an untold number of times as shown above. Then again, evil cannot enter God's presence without His permission.
- Because God is omnipresent, you and I are never alone. Jesus Christ promises to be with us always and everywhere (Matthew 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit indwells everyone who is a true Christian (Romans 8:9).

**What do you think?**

*June 10, 2020*

*Chad Brown  
Jerry Knoblet*

*Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY19-20-299 Formulating a Strategy to Teach Theology and Apologetics to High School Students to Answer Secular Humanism*

*Dear Chad Brown, Jerry Knoblet:*

*We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: June 10, 2020. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB.*

*These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.*

*Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):*

*7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

*Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.*

*Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.*

*Sincerely,*

***G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP***  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
***Research Ethics Office***

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