

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Biblical Illiteracy in the Context of Christian Apologetics:
A Response to A Growing Concern at Faith Baptist Church of Tyler Texas

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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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Dr. Thomas G. Spotts, Mentor

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This thesis project addresses Biblical Illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics: A response to a growing concern at Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. The focal point of this project is to rectify Biblical Illiteracy in the Context of Christian Apologetics. Pastors across America have not identified that their congregations are uninformed on the basics of Christian Apologetics.

This doctoral thesis project aims to give Pastors a structured format for reducing biblical illiteracy in Christian Apologetics with their congregation by providing a curriculum that can be taught and assessed. The methodological approach will be a focus group intervention. This doctoral thesis project will influence Pastors who desire to see two Bible passages demonstrated in their congregations' lives. The first Scripture is in 2 Peter 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." The second Scripture is 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be ready to give an answer to every man who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." This thesis project will equip Pastors with a working format to combat biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics for their congregations.

Keywords: Christian Apologetics, Biblical Illiteracy, Defense, Curriculum,

Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Ministry Context	2
Problem Presented	7
Purpose Statement.....	8
Basic Assumptions.....	12
Definitions.....	13
Limitations	14
Delimitations.....	14
Thesis Statement	15
CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	17
Literature Review.....	18
Theological Foundation	34
Theoretical Foundation	45
How Apologetics Equips Believers	48
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	50
The Intervention Design	51
Biblical Illiteracy	51
Apologetic Illiteracy	52
The Intervention Design Explained	53
The Methodology Style.....	54
D.Min. Thesis Project Questionnaire.....	56
D.Min. Thesis Project Survey	56
Curriculum Outline	57
Curriculum Objective.....	58
Implementation of the Intervention Design	67
Planning Questions: Primary Questions	68
Planning Questions: Secondary Questions	72
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	75
Pre-Test & Post-Test Charts	75
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	96
The Importance of this Research	96
The Power of Curriculum	96
The Intervention Process.....	98
The Relevancy of This Study.....	99
The Results.....	101
The Takeaway	103
Bibliography	106
Appendix A: Christian Apologetic Curriculum.....	114
Appendix B: IRB Approval	143

List Of Abbreviation

FBCOTT

Faith Baptist Church of Tyler Texas

D. Min.

Doctor of Ministry

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Biblical illiteracy is the inability to read and comprehend the Scriptures. Christian Apologetics is a call to defend the Christian faith. This thesis project aims to rectify biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics within the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. I will address the following topics: What is biblical illiteracy? What is Christian Apologetics? Why is learning Christian Apologetics vital for Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas? This thesis project will also aim to give a biblical solution to the ministry problem by developing a Christian apologetics curriculum to prepare the members of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, to become better defenders of the Christian Faith.

The process of this thesis project will evaluate how biblically illiterate this congregation is in the context of Christian Apologetics. After examining the congregants' biblical knowledge, developing a curriculum will immediately follow. The curriculum aims to give this congregation the essential fundamentals of Christian Apologetics. The curriculum will explain Christian apologetic issues that Christians should be able to defend. Such topics include: Does God exist? Why can the Bible be trusted? What makes the Christian religion right? How do we know the resurrection was accurate? How do we know the certainty of heaven & hell as real places?

Though we live in a world of skepticism and doubt, the researcher desires to equip FBCT by decreasing their biblical illiteracy in Christian Apologetics and develop this congregation to defend the Christian faith with a desire to will people to Christ with their knowledge of the Word of God.

Ministry Context

Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, is the ministry used to provide a sample audience for this project. This congregation's history is as follows: Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, was organized on April 4, 2016, under the spiritual leadership of Rev. Maurice F. McMillion. This congregation is a part of three national bodies: the National Baptist Convention USA, the Texas Baptist General Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

This congregation's mission follows Jesus Christ's great commission in Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."

Since its existence, Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, has helped families, led unbelievers to Christ, and baptized those who came to Christ by faith. The Church will continue to exist for the sole purpose of being the Church Christ has mandated us to be. The goal of this ministry is to disciple individuals with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ministry context issue is that FBCTT members are biblically illiterate in Christian Apologetics. The researcher feels a deep passion for educating this congregation in this area of biblical illiteracy. Below are three scholarly articles addressing biblical illiteracy, one aspect of the ministry context problem.

According to Albert Mohler Jr., biblical illiteracy refers to the lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible among individuals and communities, particularly within the context of the Church. It shows a significant deficiency in familiarity with the Bible's content, themes, and teachings.

Mohler emphasizes that biblical illiteracy is a grave problem that demands serious attention. He states that the level of biblical illiteracy among Christians is alarming and that it is also on the rise. This lack of knowledge has severe implications for the faith and practice of believers. Mohler argues that biblical illiteracy hinders the formation of a biblical worldview and undermines the ability of Christians to live according to the teachings of Scripture.

He points to various surveys and statistics that reveal the extent of biblical illiteracy. For instance, he highlights that many Christians struggle to name the four Gospels or identify the disciples. Moreover, many individuals hold mistaken beliefs about biblical events and characters, demonstrating a need for essential knowledge. Mohler asserts that this widespread biblical illiteracy among Christians contributes to compromise, confusion, and a departure from biblical truths in various areas of life, including ethics and theology.

In summary, according to Albert Mohler Jr., biblical illiteracy is a fundamental problem characterized by a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Bible. Its prevalence among Christians is concerning and has far-reaching implications for their faith and practice.¹

Biblical illiteracy is a growing problem in America, according to Kenneth Berding, a professor of New Testament at Biola's Talbot School of Theology. He noted that students today know even less about the Bible than those 15 years ago. In Biola University's magazine article, Berding described the problem as a famine and warned that Christians are "starving ourselves to death" by not knowing basic facts about the Bible. A 2014 Barna Group and the American Bible Society report found that while 81% of U.S. adults consider themselves knowledgeable about the Bible, less than half could name the first five books.²

¹ Albert Mohler Jr., "Biblical Illiteracy: A Crisis in America," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 14-23.

² Kenneth Berding, "Famine in the Land: A Warning About Biblical Ignorance," *Biola Magazine* (Spring 2016): 14-17.

Ken Braddy's article on Discipline in an Age of Biblical Illiteracy, which Lifeway Research published, states that Biblical illiteracy is a significant problem in the United States, founded on Christian principles. Surveys show that only 20% of Americans have read the Bible, and a third never read it alone. This lack of Bible reading has led to a lack of biblical doctrine, with many Americans holding erroneous beliefs about Christianity. For example, some believe that the Bible teaches that God helps those who help themselves, which is not biblical. Others believe that Jesus was a good moral teacher but not the Son of God, contrary to the Bible's teaching.

To address this issue, churches should encourage daily Bible reading, study, and application of God's Word and use various methods to teach biblical literacy. Some churches have Bible-reading plans that guide people through the Bible in a year or less. Others have small-group Bible studies where people can discuss and apply what they have learned. Still, others have sermons that explain biblical passages in detail.

In addition, churches should teach biblical literacy in age-appropriate ways. Children can learn Bible stories through Sunday school classes, vacation Bible school, and children's Church. Teens can learn biblical doctrine through youth group meetings, retreats, and camps. Adults can learn biblical theology through classes, seminars, and conferences. By encouraging biblical literacy, churches can help their members grow in their faith, avoid false teachings, and become more effective witnesses to Christ.³

In his article "The Problem of Biblical Illiteracy," Richard J. Krejcir addresses how biblical illiteracy leads to false teachings, mindless speculations, and misguided pursuits among

³ LifeWay Research, "Discipling in an Age of Biblical Illiteracy," LifeWay Research, July 10, 2017. <http://research.lifeway.com/2017/07/10/discipling-in-an-age-of-biblical-illiteracy/>.

Christians. Krejcir emphasizes the importance of being loyal and obedient to Jesus' word and preparing for His coming through faith formation. Krejcir writes that faulty models of biblical interpretation are leading to an increase in bad, false teaching in the Church and on the airways. Christians are turning away from the Bible for spiritual nourishment, opting instead for "feel good" books or the teachings of false prophets on T.V. Bible studies and small groups that delve into God's Word and challenge Christians to transform their lives are shrinking or absent from most churches. Even pastors are too busy to read the Bible, leading from pride and presumption. Christians are overwhelmed with life, work, and family, leaving the Bible as the last place for solutions. This has led to a loss of instruction and spiritual formation in many American churches, leaving Christians spiritually bankrupt and the community with wrong models of Christ. Krejcir concludes by stating what biblical illiteracy creates. Biblical illiteracy creates false teaching, as charismatic but fraudulent Bible teachers say whatever they want, and we believe them due to our lack of knowledge. It also leads to mindless speculations, causing many Christians to miss the main point of Matthew 24 and resulting in a faithless church with shallow Christians and incompetent leaders. It keeps us away from God and His blessings. To hear God clearly, we must listen to His voice in the Bible.⁴

The other ministry context issue is biblical illiteracy in the context of Christianity. Apologetics. The ministry needs to gain biblical knowledge in Christian Apologetics. The researcher suggests two scholarly articles that emphasize the significance of Christian Apologetics in equipping the congregation.

Tim Barnett's article "Why Apologetics?" states that Apologetics is pre-evangelism to the culture and post-evangelism to the Church. Becoming a Christian intensifies the challenges to

⁴ Richard J. Krejcir, "What is Biblical Illiteracy and Why Is It Important?" Into Thy Word, accessed June 10, 2023. <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=68993&columnid=3801>.

faith, and Apologetics plays a crucial role in providing solutions. Approximately three in five young people disconnect from their Church by the age of fifteen. To curb this trend, we need to equip young people with Apologetics. David Kinnaman's research shows that each of the six reasons why young people leave the Church relates to Apologetics. The Church needs to take the life of the mind more seriously and equip young people to understand and defend their faith.

Barnett points out that three dominant philosophies - relativism, pluralism, and naturalism - deeply saturate the culture. These philosophies respectively assert that there is no absolute truth, that all views are equally valid, and that there is no supernatural truth. Given this cultural climate, evangelism presents a challenge. Christians often face questions like "How can Jesus be the only way?" and "Has science proven that miracles are impossible?" These questions grow out of the soil of a secular worldview. Apologetics responds to these questions at the worldview level. The Bible commands Apologetics, and the culture demands it.⁵

In his article, Maggie Hendrick addresses the need for Apologetics in the local Church. Hendrick explains that Apologetics has many benefits for the local Church, such as equipping believers, helping them hold their faith firm, and encouraging them to love God with their minds. It strengthens faith and helps us stand firm. Additionally, it is a helpful tool to be used simultaneously with Bible Study and preaching to produce richer study and preaching.⁶

The researcher of FBCTT desires to prepare this congregation to be biblically literate in Christian Apologetics for these reasons. In 1 Peter 5:2, the apostle Peter charges those who take oversight of the flock of God to feed them, meaning to nourish and supply the requisites for the soul's needs. This will manage the biblical illiteracy of the congregation. Additionally, in 1 Peter

⁵ T. Barnett, "Why Apologetics?" Accessed June 10, 2023. <https://www.str.org/w/why-apologetics-?>

⁶ Maggie Hendrick, "The Need for Apologetics in the Local Church," CrossExamined.org, accessed June 10, 2023, <https://crossexamined.org/the-need-for-apologetics-in-the-local-church/>.

3:15, Peter charges us always to be ready to answer every man who asks for a reason about our hope, which will manage the apologetic aspect of the congregation. Even though we live in these uncertain times, God gave a charge for the Church to prepare itself.

Problem Presented

The researcher of the FBCTT noticed a need for more apologetics literacy within the congregation for the past four years. This stipulation does not mean that the assembly does not understand the basics of the Bible. This means a need for more Biblical illiteracy in this area regarding Christian Apologetics. Statistically speaking, congregants are not fully aware of what Christian apologetics is, how to do Christian Apologetics, or why Christian Apologetics is vital to the local Church; this is a problem for several reasons.

The researcher feels that Christian Apologetics is vital to the congregation. According to apologist and philosopher Douglas Groothuis, "First, we should consider some objections to Christianity. Then, we will look at ways of addressing them in the Church. Some issues concerning Christianity are perennial, such as the existence of God, the deity of Christ, and the reliability of the Bible. Of course, the gospel must always be explained and defended as the only answer to our estrangement from a holy God because of our sins.

Besides the timeless topics of Apologetics, the Church should also assume matters of contemporary concern, such as the LGBTQ philosophy and social movements. Many souls, particularly millennials, reject Christianity because it endorses heterosexual monogamy as the norm for sexuality. Others try to warp Christianity to accommodate same-sex marriage, Scripture's teaching, and other unbiblical sexual arrangements. Great care must be taken with this

carefully and prayerfully explained to remove obstacles to the gospel. Gender is not a matter of choice, but a given category, rooted in our biology and status as creature's male or female."⁷

The Pastor's duty as the under-shepherd is to prepare the flock of God to combat false teachings in the World and the Church. The Word of God has mandated the Pastor to feed the flock of God. According to 1 Peter 5:2-4, the word feed in this text means "to nourish" the community of God. How does a shepherd feed the flock of God? With the Word of God. The Word of God is full of Christian Apologetics to stand against false teachings. According to 1 Peter 3:15, They should always be ready to answer everyone who asks them to give a reason for the hope in us with meekness and fear. For this reason, every Pastor should prepare their congregation for this cause to be defenders of their faith.

The Church serves as an institute that leads out for the souls of men. God established the Church to be the pillar of evangelism and Apologetics. As Pastors, we must actively prepare the people of God to evangelize through Apologetics. There is no desire for evangelism when this Discipline is not taught to the local assembly. The problem is that there is evidence of biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics at Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas.

Purpose Statement

This D.Min. action research project aims to help develop the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, members to become more vigorous defenders of the faith. After considering the problem of this congregation, the purpose is to develop a curriculum that will equip the congregation to become biblically literate in the context of Christian Apologetics.

This D.Min. action research project is the view of believers in biblical times who saw the need to defend their faith. This practice is a biblical call to evangelize the World with the gospel

⁷ Douglas Groothuis, "Apologetics in the Local Church," accessed March 1, 2019. <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/church/apologetics-in-the-local-church/>

of Jesus Christ. Equipping FBCT to become biblically literate will decrease the statistics of people who are biblical illiterate in the context of Christian Apologetics. The culture forever changes, causing many to lose hope in the Church and the gospel.

Teaching Apologetics to this congregation will enable them to give reasons for their hope. Christian Apologetics must be viewed from three aspects to show the need for the Church's equipping.

Apologetics provides proof: There are people worldwide and even in the Church who struggle with believing in God, the Church, the Bible, the gospel, and even Christianity. These challenges of unbelief are in the believers and the unbeliever.

Apologetics is for defense: Pastors should teach Apologetics to their leaders and congregants because Apologetics answers unbelief objections. How do we combat the skepticism that challenges our faith? It is with Christian Apologetics. Throughout Paul's writings, we find him defending the faith. One passage of Scripture is in 1 Corinthians 15:12-21. In this passage, the apostle Paul defends the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the futuristic resurrection of the dead in Christ.

The Corinthian Church struggled with believing that there would be a bodily resurrection. It was easy for them to think that Jesus rose from the dead, but a bodily resurrection for those who died in the Lord was hard to believe. The apostle Paul went into resurrection defense. Paul says if there is no bodily resurrection, then Christ has not resurrected, and if that is the case, the gospel he was preaching, and the faith believers have are useless (1 Cor. 15:17).

Furthermore, if Christ did not arise from the dead, he is undoubtedly not the victorious Savior; he has not conquered sin. Paul gave a valid apologetic defense for his claim for a futuristic resurrection for the believers in Christ (1 Cor. 15:21).

Apologetics is for offense: The Church has and will continue to face ridiculous unbelieving thoughts (1 Cor. 1:18-2:16). Apologetics is not just for defending the faith; it also attacks falsehood. Non-Christian thinkers are not Christians and do not think biblically, and the Church must prepare to expose such foolishness for what it is.

These three types of Apologetics complement each other. These three aspects of Christian Apologetics give this D.Min. action research project more purpose. The researcher of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, is trying to prepare this congregation to provide apologetic proof, be ready apologetically to defend the faith, and apologetically offend foolish thinking.

Another aspect of this D.Min. action research project is preparing the Church for the cultural shift. The Church has and is hiding from the shifting culture. Therefore, this could be a factor of the Church not apologetically preparing to oversee the cultural shift. The Church must awaken itself to the realities of a shifting culture that no longer believes in biblical truth. There is a danger of needing to prepare for this shifting culture.

In which ways has the culture shifted? Culture shift does not result from a specific event. Instead, it derives from the experience of encountering new ways of doing things that challenge the fundamental belief that your way of doing things is the "correct" way. In Russell Moore's book, *"Onward: Engaging the culture without losing the Gospel."* He shares what has shifted culturally. The first thing he stated that is changing is Christianity, the Church is changing, **Christianity is Changing.**

Moore: "Christianity is changing too, though not in the ways that some in the wider culture hope and some in the older generation fear. Many recognize that the younger generation of evangelical Christians, especially pastors and other leaders, seem different from their culture-warrior predecessors. Because of this, many assume that this wing of the Church is headed left,

especially on the contentious questions of sexual morality, which are at the root of the most contested issues of abortion, marriage/family, and even, increasingly, religious liberty and church/state relations. Now, it is true that newer generations of American evangelicals are interested in more than just the culture war issues of the past. Many actively engage in orphan care, ecological stewardship, human trafficking, racial justice, prison reform, poverty, abortion, marriage, etc."

The Church is Changing

Moore: "These churches are often deeply culturally engaged in music and the arts." ⁸

The suggestive results are that the Church will start drifting away from the truth to be relevant to a changing culture. The validity of the gospel will start negotiating to be applicable. The gospel alone is relevant. The Church will desire stability over obedience, meaning keeping a constant flow of bodies and bucks; therefore, challenging people to live out the Great Commission is compromised, and churches that desire comfortable stability will formulate a structure to ensure that change does not happen. It becomes more about the bylaws than the Bible.

P. T. Forsyth was a Scottish Congregationalist minister and theologian at the turn of the twentieth century. He argues that when the Church was at its most effective in history, "she did not lead the World, nor echo it; she confronted it because of cultural changes. The Church is to change the culture, not the culture-changing the Church."⁹

The hope is that this D.Min. action research project will help other pastors see the need to bring back biblical literacy into the Body of Christ, especially in the context of Christian

⁸ Russell Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing), 19-21.

⁹ Timothy Keller, *preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New et al.: Penguin Random House), 96.

Apologetics; this aspect can never happen unless this is exposed in general. Though this D.Min. action research project has a narrow approach to a local congregation, it will give a broader awakening to the masses seeking to develop defenders of the faith.

Basic Assumptions

The assumption of this research is as follows: First, the researcher will assume that the congregation is biblically illiterate in Christian Apologetics. This religious Discipline is not typically discussed nor taught within the Black Baptist Church.¹⁰ Second, the researcher will assume that the participating members, who remain anonymous, will give appropriate and accurate answers to the best of their ability. These individuals will not be ashamed to admit their biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics. Third, the researcher will assume, based on these participating individuals' age bracket, their longevity in being a Christian and being a part of the local Church will have some knowledge of Christian Apologetics. Fourth, the researcher will assume that this congregation would become stronger defenders of faith by implementing this action research project.

This project will challenge this congregation to learn the basics of Christian Apologetics from a structured biblical curriculum. Another assumption is that as these individuals are taught from this curriculum, they will encourage others in their families, communities, and workplaces to engage in dialogue and share their learning.

This action research project will give this congregation an essential understanding of Christian Apologetics. This study of Christian Apologetics will make this congregation's intellectual defenders of the faith while feeling justified in their beliefs. Instead, we will exercise intellectual persuasion in helping others.

¹⁰ Jasmine Homes, "Rethinking Apologetics for the Black Church," accessed March 14, 2023. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/july-web-only/rethinking-apologetics-for-black-church.html>

Definitions

This action research project will utilize the following definitions throughout the thesis:

Apologetics- Apologetics is the Discipline that deals with a rational defense of the Christian faith. It comes from the Greek word apologia, which means to give a reason or defense.¹¹

Atheism- Atheism is the denial of the existence of God ¹²

Biblical Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely accurate and never false in all it affirms, whether related to doctrine or ethics or the social, physical, or life sciences.¹³

Biblical Illiteracy- Biblical literacy involves a deeper awareness of the meaning of what is in the Bible.

Christianity- Christianity is the religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christian – Christian is the name by which followers of Jesus Christ are now generally known among themselves and in the World achieved its preeminence only gradually. According to Acts 11:26, the name originated in Antioch.¹⁴

Convert – Convert is someone who has come to Christ or become a Christian.¹⁵

Church- A called-out body of baptized believers.

Curriculum - A subject comprising a course of study.

Discipleship- A journey of intentional decisions leading to maturity in your relationship with Jesus so that you become more like Him in your attitudes, focus, and behavior. It requires a commitment from the potential disciple and the disciple-makers.¹⁶

Evangelism – Evangelism is Spreading the Christian gospel through witnessing.

¹¹ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1999), 35.

¹² Morgan W. Christopher, and Robert A. Peterson, *A Concise Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic 2020), 11.

¹³ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), 112.

¹⁴ Ibid., 234.

¹⁵ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶ Jayson Bradley, “What is Discipleship and How Does it Happen,” Christian Community and Discipleship, accessed May 30, 2022. <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/discipleship/what-is-discipleship.html>

Monotheism – Monotheism is the belief that there is only one God.¹⁷

Postmodernism – Postmodernism is a skeptical worldview founded as a reaction to modernism, which is suspicious of metanarratives and teaches that ultimate reality is inaccessible, knowledge is a social construct, and truth claims are political power plays.¹⁸

Preaching – Preaching is communicating the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.¹⁹

Skepticism- Skepticism is an attitude that doubts the truth of something.

Worldview- Worldview is the way someone views the World. As a Christian, the Scripture determines the World.

Limitations

This D.Min. action research project may yield some limitations, such as participants may fear participating in this research project. The time limit in completing this thesis project could become a factor, and the researcher could run out of time. Some individuals may not want to participate in this study project because they need to gain knowledge of Christian Apologetics. Participants dropping out of the focus group or interviews is another limitation. This study takes place during a pandemic, and because of the pandemic, the study could shift from action research to academic research. Other limitations of this study could yield flaws and shortcomings resulting from the unavailability of resources, sample sizes, and flawed methodology. The researcher realizes that no study is flawless or inclusive of all aspects.

Delimitations

This D. Min action research project is at the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, in Tyler. The Church's address is 322 West Front St., Tyler, Texas 75701, in the heart of the Azalea District. The number of projected participants for this study is about twenty-five people. The

¹⁷ Ibid., 788.

¹⁸ Jeff Myers and David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times* (Manitou et al.: Summit Ministries, 2015), 76.

¹⁹ David Noel Freedman, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company), 846.

projected age group will vary from thirty to sixty years of age. The curriculum is formulated to a 10th-grade level for reading and comprehension. The material needs to be more extensive in formulating the curriculum for this project. The first focus group will assess the knowledge of the participants. The second focus group will evaluate the participants' knowledge after they learn the curriculum to identify their progress.

Thesis Statement

If a curriculum were to be developed in Christian apologetics, the results could yield stronger defenders of the faith for the members of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. It is no guarantee that the results will produce stronger defenders of the faith for the members of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. However, once this curriculum has been implemented and carried out throughout the congregation of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, it is with great anticipation that it will equip this congregation with the essential tools for defending their faith. The expectancy related to this D.Min. action research project results is that it is the expectation that Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, will learn how to defend the following skeptical questions. Questions such as: How do you know God exists? Why do Christians trust the Bible? How could a good God allow so much evil, pain, and suffering? How can they trust Christianity?

Today, people are raising complex and penetrating questions about faith, God, and the Bible more than ever. Therefore, a well-thought-out curriculum must be designed, developed, and distributed throughout this congregation to become loyal defenders of the faith.

Though the results may or may not yield what the researcher anticipates, the benefit of this D.Min. action research project is worth completing. The curriculum will be biblically, theologically, and apologetically sound. It will be developed for the average congregation of any

size, especially if the interest is to see Church members become more robust defenders of the faith and intend to evangelize by winning souls for the kingdom of God.

Suppose this action research project gives evidence of this epidemic case of biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics within Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. An indication of this action research could help Pastors of location churches can identify this same problem within their congregations. Then this research can offer a solution to combating biblical illiteracy and biblical illiteracy in Christian Apologetics.

CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This D.Min. action research project's conceptual framework will start by assessing the participants' knowledge with questions to determine the sample group's knowledge of Christian Apologetics. Not only will the assessment assess their knowledge of Christian apologetics, but it will also give the Pastor directions on how to approach the development of the curriculum for intended learning. The questions asked are from Mark Mittelberg's book, *"The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask."* Mark Mittelberg is a best-selling author, sought-after speaker, and a leading strategist in evangelism and apologetics-oriented outreach. Mark's book, "The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask," is based on a survey of 1000 Christians commissioned through the Barna Organization and deals with the ten issues that believers most want to avoid—but must not! The researcher selected this book because it presents fundamental apologetic and biblical questions and answers.

After formulating the questions, the researcher will consult with participants on the assessment results. The researcher will share his objectives for teaching these participants to prepare them for the developed curriculum. The consultation process with the sample audience is critical to the project. The shared results with the participants will show their level of biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics.

The next step is to develop the curriculum. The curriculum developed is in the format of an inductive study. It will be biblically structured, apologetically arranged, theologically organized, and evangelistically driven. The curriculum's core has a twofold purpose. First, it develops defenders of Faith. Second, it develops seekers of souls for the Kingdom of God.

Literature Review

Biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics is still developing and remains a challenge today. Many people lack a basic understanding of the Bible, Christian apologetics, and its teachings, leading to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Scripture. This can be attributed to various factors, including a lack of emphasis on biblical education in schools and churches, the rise of secularism, and the increasing influence of popular culture.

To address this issue, promote biblical literacy and biblical literacy in Christian Apologetics. The Church should encourage people to engage with the Bible more deeply through Bible study groups, online resources, and other educational initiatives. By increasing biblical literacy, especially in the context of Christian apologetics, we can help people develop a greater understanding of God's Word and develop stronger defenders of the Faith. This literature review will comprehensively and critically analyze the existing literature on topics. It will identify gaps in current knowledge and research, highlighting areas that require further investigation, and yield a further understanding of the subject in the field of this study.

The Purpose of Christian Apologetics

In Voddie Baucham's book *"Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word,"* he addresses Apologetics from an expositional perspective by saying that so often, arguments have been won, but souls have been lost. He stated: "Christian apologetics is not about winning arguments; it is about winning souls."²⁰ Souls are God's primary desire.

Baucham's statement is true, Christian Apologetics is not a religious discipline to learn to win debates. However, Apologetics is used in conjunction with evangelism. Apologetics aims to inform unbelievers, skeptics, and seekers of the Truth, with the Word of God.

²⁰ Voddie Baucham, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 19.

Baucham also stated that Apologetics has waxed and waned in popularity among Christians in America. There has been more emphasis on mercy ministry, social outreach, or church growth. At other times evangelism and Apologetics take center stage. We are amid a surge in the popularity and practice of Apologetics. More and more, Christians are beginning to recognize the need. Apologetics is necessary today because of issues such as biblical illiteracy, post-modern/post-Christian thinking, open opposition to biblical Truth, and the growing presence of opposing religions."²¹

Baucham believes that expositional Preaching is a solid way to combat cultural challenges, and this book teaches that the Bible must be used to combat today's objectives in doing Christian apologetics, making it relevant to the study.

In Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life*. They address how the Church should be ready to teach Apologetics by living an apologetics life as leaders of the Church. Ravi Zacharias stated that Apologetics is not just the intellectual defense of Faith so Christians can feel justified in their beliefs. Instead, Christian's exercise intellectual persuasion to help others come to Faith."²²

Zacharias meant that intellect is part of defending Faith but is not the only component needed within Apologetics. Ravi Zacharias suggests that we use our intellect to persuade the Christian Faith.

In Acts 26:28, King Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian." Agrippa was in a dilemma as to how to answer. He did not want to appear to take Paul's side, lest Festus think he was insane too. However, because Agrippa was a Jew, he could not deny what had been written by the prophets. Therefore, he did not answer Paul's question

²¹ Ibid., 24.

²² Ravi Zacharias, *Is Your Church Ready?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 40.

about whether he believed the prophets. Instead, he jokingly asked Paul, "Are you trying to make me a Christian?" Without joking, Paul said, in effect: "Yes." Paul prayed that Agrippa and everyone in that room might become a Christian just like himself—but without the chains. At that time, Paul was bound with chains.²³ This should be the goal of preparing Christians in the local Church to defend their Faith until it causes unbelievers like King Agrippa to be persuaded by the Word of their testimony.

Leaders in the local Church need to see the need to equip believers to be defenders of their Faith, as Zacharias and Geisler argue that the severe need for this makes this book relevant to this study.

In Mark Mittelberg's book *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask*. Mittelberg's book presents compelling, easy-to-grasp answers to some of the most troubling questions facing Christians today. Mark Mittelberg said this about the purpose of apologetics "Our aim should not be to try satisfying our friends' curiosity regarding each question exhaustively."²⁴

What Mittelberg is saying about the aim of Christian Apologetics is that we are not mandated to answer skeptics who desire to get into debates. Instead, we should desire to defend our Faith with the intention of evangelizing. 1 Peter 3:15 instructs believers to be ready to respond to anyone who questions anything about our Faith. Mittelberg's book is relevant to this study because he gives us the tough questions skeptics are asking. However, he provides solid biblical answers using the methodology of conversation.

²³ Thomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, *The Applied New Testament Commentary* (Colorado: David Cook, 2007), 512.

²⁴ Mark Mittelberg, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask: (With Answers)* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2010), xix.

In Craig Loscalzo's book *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Post-modern World*. Loscalzo discusses how to proclaim Christ in a post-modern world. Here is a book for everyone who wants to proclaim the certainty of God's Word in an era of change. Loscalzo addresses how to proclaim mystery in an age of information, hope in an era of skepticism, confidence in a time of doubt, proclaim the Truth in a climate of relativism, and proclaim Jesus Christ in a post-modern world.

Loscalzo says: "Christian apologetics should have two immediate goals: "(1) to present unbelievers with a viable understanding of Christian faith so they may want to make it theirs, and (2) to instruct, confirm and affirm those who are already believers in the faith."²⁵

Christian Apologetics is not just for reaching unbelievers. Christian Apologetics also helps believers develop an affirming faith so that whenever a believer is defending his or her Faith, they are affirmed in what they believe and can defend why they believe it. Loscalzo's book helps us proclaim the Truth regarding the changes occurring in the world. Yes, we live in an age of information, but when it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches that people cannot hear the gospel without a preacher. Rom. 10:14. Loscalzo's book stands out distinctively from Voddie Baucham's books because while Baucham argues that expositional Preaching is the way to deal with objectivity, Loscalzo offers apologetic Preaching to deal with post-modern times.

In C. S. Lewis's book, *Mere Christianity*, One of the most famous classical Apologetics is C. S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity* which is a collection of three books: *The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*. C. S. Lewis would argue for a reason-based Christianity rather than a faith-based Christianity. Lewis's books are designed to argue that

²⁵ Craig Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Post-modern World* (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2000), 10.

a person's best reasoning should tell them that the weight of evidence favors Christianity and that a reasonable person should be a Christian.²⁶ Lewis's book is relevant to this study because his book gives information about the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and how they apply to our lives.

Jeff Myers contrasts and compares several faiths to Christianity. He provides well-thought-out reasons and proof for the Faith in his book, "*Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics*." In a world where one religion claims to be the true religion, this book is unique and designed for individuals who desire to grow in Christ and Faith. The resource is practical because of the contrasting and comparing of faiths, which makes it a practical apologetics book. Understanding other faiths and their claims is essential to understanding what makes Christianity accurate. Myers' book, "*Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics*," is relevant to this study because it provides a detailed survey of Christian Apologetics, which helps researchers gain an understanding of the Faith.²⁷

Donald T. Williams answers the most pertinent questions that young people are most likely to ask or encounter in today's world in his book, "*The Young Christian's Survival Guide*." This book is an excellent resource for young adults preparing for college. William answers standard questions about God, the Bible, and the Christian Faith that young adults may face.²⁸ This book, "The Young Christian's Survival Guide" by Donald T. Williams, is relevant to this research as it helps young people learn how to defend their Faith in the age of skepticism. Researchers can use this resource to formulate an in-depth aspect of the curriculum.

Apologetics in the Church

²⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: HaperOne, 2015).

²⁷(Jeff Myers, *Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics* (Colorado et al.: David C Cook, 2016), 35.)

²⁸ Donald T. Williams, *The Young Christian's Survival Guide* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 24.

In Ravi Zacharias & Norman Geisler's book *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* Zacharias says: "The sole purpose of preparing the local Church is establishing an apologetics ministry within it. To do such requires that leaders of the local Church be dedicated and have a deep conviction about restoring this biblical role in the local Church." ²⁹ Restoring the biblical role of Apologetics requires leadership, dedication, and deep conviction that God's fundamental call to the Pastor is to nurture the local Church. Zacharias and Geisler's book, *Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life* is relevant to this study as it shows the need for Apologetics in the local Church. The book highlights how it must be in the heart of the leaders of the local Church to see the need for Apologetics and the need to implement Apologetics in the teaching ministries of the local Church.

In Sean McDowell and David Kinnaman's book, *Apologetics for a New Generation: A Biblical and Culturally Relevant Approach to Talking About God*, Sean McDowell expresses that if the Church reaches this generation, the Church must be knowledgeable about racial and cultural distinctions. This subject is essential in trying to reach this new generation. It would only be possible for a connection to happen by knowing the racial and cultural differences. The Church is out of touch with this new generation. In general, Pastors are less informed about the culture they live in than are the people in their churches. The reality is that without the Christian Church's influence in this world, the world will remain brutal. One of the most critical issues the Church faces is racial distinctions. "Apologetics for a new generation must be knowledgeable of the complex racial and cultural distinctions worldwide, and the church must have an impact today."³⁰ This book's relevance to this study is that it offers the researcher and others who will

²⁹ Zacharias, *Is Your Church Ready?* 56.

³⁰ Sean McDowell, *Apologetics for a New Generation: A Biblical and Culturally Relevant Approach to Talking About God* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 189.

use this study a new approach to learning apologetics for a newer generation, enabling congregations to deal with some of the newer issues trending in the culture.

In his book, *The Comprehensive Guide to Apologetics*, Joseph Holden challenges readers to understand and defend the tenets of their Faith. This informative resource covers topics from the evidence for the Bible's reliability to the relationship between science and Faith to the comparisons between Christianity and other worldviews. "In a world of doctrinal decay and the ever-present lure to compromise biblical Truth, we would do well to remind ourselves of the eccentric, uncompromising, camel-hair-wearing desert preacher John the Baptist. The Church needs more uncompromising leaders, faithful believers, and steadfast voices clothed in camel hair!³¹"

In every generation, the Church faces the task of explaining its doctrinal Truth claims from distortions against false doctrinal claims. The discipline of Apologetics did not die in the second century. Instead, it lives on because with each passing generation, wherever Christianity flourishes, so too do distortion, misrepresentation, overemphasis, and outright malicious deceit. The Church's opponents will continue to accuse her of doing evil (1 Peter 3:16). This book's relevance to this study is that it offers the researcher a comprehensive guide in formulating a curriculum to teach what Christian Apologetics is.

R. C. Sproul, in his book, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*, reminds the Church of its generational obligation to uphold the biblical truths from the Word of God. "The Church is always engaging in skepticism that comes with every generation. There is an awareness in listening and seeing how this generation no longer accepts the truth claims that have governed our spiritual lives for years. Therefore, Pastors must equip their local

³¹ Joseph M. Holden, *The Comprehensive Guide to Apologetics* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 19.

congregations because the Church's opponents will continue to accuse and attack the Church in every generation. The Truth is that the declining interest in Apologetics relates to how our culture sees the Truth. Consequently, Scripture has been reduced to a devotional tool that changes lives. So, the Christian apologist assumes a defensive posture to repel false accusations whenever they come."³² R.C. Sproul's book is relevant to this study because he introduces Christian Apologetics, which provides the research with information for the curriculum for teaching FBCTT.

Benson and Morgan's work is top tier in their book, *Exploring Theology: A Guide for Systematic Theology and Apologetics*. The structure of this book asks the theological questions embedded in systematic theology while answering these questions with Apologetics. What is appreciated most about this work is how the authors give thought-provoking questions and challenge the reader to seek their answers. This book's uniqueness is that it comprises three books in one. Book One: The One True God, Book Two: Biblical Faith, and Book Three: Evidence and Truth.³³ This book is a relevant source because it introduces Apologetics and an integration of systematic theology, which work hand in hand with understanding biblical Truth for skeptical concerns.

Douglas Groothuis, a seasoned apologist and philosopher, helps us think through the implications of a church that does not engage in the cultural topics of our day. Groothuis: "Too many churches, however, do not make apologetics part of their teaching, Preaching, or outreach. Some even ridicule it as hostile to Faith. However, reading The Book of Acts, the Church grew through the reasonable defense of Christianity and by signs and wonders. The Holy Spirit was

³² R. C. Sproul, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 15.

³³ Clarence H. Benson and Robert J. Morgan, *Exploring Theology: A Guide for Systematic Theology and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004).

behind Peter's and Stephen's argument that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Paul reasoned with the Greeks and other non-Jewish unbelievers. When he preached in Athens, he gave a profound and intellectually challenging defense of the gospel and called up short the false religions and worldviews of the Athenians (Acts 17:16-32)."³⁴

In Jeff Myer's book *Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics*. Myers writes about a world where one religion claims to be the true religion; Jeff Myers compares several different faiths to Christianity and gives well-thought-out reasons and proof for the Faith. The uniqueness of this book is for those individuals who desire to grow in Christ and Faith. This resource is a practical apologetics book because of the contrasting and comparing of faiths. Understanding what makes Christianity accurate is understanding other faiths and their claims.³⁵

K. Scott Oliphint's book, "The Faithful Apologetics," is centered around his writings about the divine defender. He discusses the art of persuasion, noting that it is not primarily a technique for manipulating circumstances to get what we want. Instead, it runs much deeper than that. Biblical wisdom seeks to take biblical Truth and communicate it in a way that connects to a particular need, idea, or life situation."³⁶ Believers should never intend to use persuasion from a manipulating position when doing Apologetics. Instead, they should use persuasion to inform and inspire unbelievers who desire to hear and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. To believe in Jesus, individuals must first hear about Him. Someone must be sent with the good news before this can happen. When people preach the gospel, they transform hearts and persuade minds that the good news of Jesus Christ is the Truth. Oliphint's book is relevant to the study because he teaches his readers how to properly understand what Apologetics is for and how to use it to win

³⁴ Groothuis, "Apologetics in the Local Church," 2019.
<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/church/apologetics-in-the-local-church/>

³⁵ Myers, *Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics*.

³⁶ Scott Oliphant, K., *The Faithful Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), 31.

souls for Christ and His Kingdom. He emphasizes the importance of not using Apologetics to manipulate people into Christ or to show off one's acquired knowledge.

Preaching & Culture

Voddie Baucham's book *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word* refers to apologetic Preaching and its value to this world by saying, "preaching within itself is designed to nurture the total man. Preaching should never just be done to help people cope with life problems. That is what Christian counseling is for. Preaching should never be used just to motivate people. Though the Word Preaching in biblical Greek is defined as the good news, it is much more than just telling stories. It is the literal inspired Words of God. Preaching has a divine purpose in the earthly realm for man. When Preaching is done from the Scriptures, it is for the following purposes: correcting false teachings, rebuking ungodliness, correcting behavior, and teaching the ways of God. Preaching is about helping people cope or motivating them to try harder. Preaching is an extraordinary act where a man stands suspended between two worlds holding forth truths that must be believed by an audience that, in and of themselves, cannot and will not think unless the world they inhabit is invaded by the world that was and is and is to come."³⁷

Timothy Keller says in his book, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, "To preach the text and the Gospel every time, engage the culture and reach the heart, and cooperate with the Spirit's mission in the world—we preach Christ from all Scripture."³⁸

³⁷ Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 163.

³⁸ Keller, *Preaching*, 23.

Keller's point is that Preaching will have no real engagement for the culture if preachers of the gospel are not preaching the whole counsel of God, which is preaching Christ from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In his book *Preaching to a Post-modern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners*, Graham Johnstone states that "the problem has shifted for those called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ; the real issue is not inerrant text as much as having any authoritative text. The problem is not about what is in the text or, what the original author intended, but the interpretation of the text as understood by the present-day reader."³⁹

Johnstone makes a valid point here. So often, preachers are disconnected during the sermonic presentations because their sermons have no real-life application. Johnstone stated that the battleground has shifted to the real issues. However, he agreed with Clyde Fant and William Pinson on what he conveys as the real battleground related to contextual, cultural Preaching. However, we must recognize inerrant texts, authoritative texts, or the original author's intent. All these things must be considered during the preparation stages without forgetting how to convey these truths transparent yet straightforwardly so that culture can understand.

In his book, *The Power of Preaching: Crafting a Creative Expository Sermon Preaching*. Tony Evans must promote the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ through the proclamation and application of the Word of God. In this way, the Holy Spirit transforms lives as people learn to live all of life under God's rule.⁴⁰

Evans shares how the Holy Spirit and the proclamation and application of the Word of God work together to transform people's lives. This statement aligns with John 15:3, which

³⁹ Graham Johnstone, *Preaching to a Post-modern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Ada: Baker Books, 2001), 88.

⁴⁰ Tony Evans, *The Power of Preaching: Crafting a Creative Expository Sermon* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), 18.

teaches that if the Word is proclaimed and application is understood, the Word of God can clean and transform lives. Preaching also activates Faith. According to Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

In his book *Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Take of Homiletics*, Jay E. Adams. Adams writes how Preaching needs to become more purposeful. This book was written to help preachers and students discover the purpose of Preaching and the ways that the Scriptures inform and direct the preaching task. Preaching with purpose speaks clearly and forcefully to the issue.

Adams said, "A preacher must not preach merely to fulfill a weekly obligation. That his task involves such an obligation is plain, and for him to want to fulfill that obligation faithfully is neither wrong nor unimportant."⁴¹ This State reminds those called by God to this particular task of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Al Fasol, Roy Fish, Steve Gaines, and Ralph West's book *"Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus"* seeks to define what Preaching's purpose is. There is such competitiveness in the pulpit that it can be easy to forget the exact purpose of our calling to proclaim God's salvation through Jesus, who died and now lives. Preaching Evangelistically looks at the different elements of gospel preaching and how they are best used to proclaim Jesus effectively.⁴²

John Piper's book, *"The Supremacy of God in Preaching,"* exemplifies a call to return to a biblical standard for Preaching, which was demonstrated by great preachers of the past like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon. This newly revised and expanded edition is an essential guide for preachers who seek to ignite a revival. Piper has added valuable new material

⁴¹ Jay A. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 3.

⁴² Al Fasol et al., *Preaching Evangelistically: Proclaiming the Saving Message of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2006), 24

reflecting on his thirty-three years of preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church, offering a glimpse of what a lifetime of putting God first has done for the Faith of the hundreds of thousands who have heard him preach over the years.⁴³ John Piper's book, "The Supremacy of God in Preaching," is relevant to this study as it shows what a biblical standard for Preaching is by his views of Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon's sermons that exalt the supremacy of God in their Preaching. Piper's book offers a standard for biblical Preaching.

The Existence of God

In his book, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask*. Mark Mittelberg says, "Many believe in things they do not see or directly experience, with the virtue of love being a great example. However, we see evidence of love through its effects. Similarly, we cannot see God but see evidence of love through its products. Comparably, we cannot see God but believe in him based on our work and the universe."⁴⁴

Apologetics and Preaching are two disciplines that are needed. Apologetics and Preaching help combat the argument of those who believe that God does not exist. Mittelberg says Apologetics and Preaching help skeptics see God's evidence through earthly things and His love for us.

R. C. Sproul's book, *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics*, says, "Christians often object to God's being compared to abstract philosophical views. The God of the Bible has so little in familiar with the gods of philosophy that any comparison is out of order. If Christians reject my approach, I must remind them of one simple fact about God as he is

⁴³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 42.

⁴⁴ Mittelberg, *The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask*, 23.

revealed in Scripture: incomprehensible. That does not mean he is entirely unknowable; instead, it merely means that we can never have complete or exhaustive knowledge of who God is."⁴⁵

Sproul discusses the distinction between our God and other gods that can never measure up. Also, Sproul's statement helps us to know that God is an ever-learning divine being.

In his book, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidence*, Norman Geisler states that "the existence of a personal, moral God is fundamental to all Christian's beliefs. If there is no moral God, there is no moral being against whom we have sinned; therefore, salvation is unnecessary. Furthermore, if there is no God, there could be no acts of God (miracles), and the stories of Jesus can only be understood as fiction or myth."⁴⁶

What Norman Geisler is conveying is the existence of God with purpose. What need would there be for a Savior if there is no God to satisfy a blood sacrifice? Because through the atoning blood sacrifice by Jesus Christ, salvation was provided. If there was no God, why did all of this occur? It is just more infallible proof that God does exist.

Paul Little and James Nyquist's book, *Know What You Believe*, says, "How we view the Bible is crucial because it holds the key to knowing God exists. Furthermore, how can we learn about Him if He does not live? Our finite minds cannot penetrate God's infinity. Job's friend asked him, can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? (Job 11:7). The answers come with a resounding "yes"—through God's self-revelation, the Bible."⁴⁷ Existence cannot be separated from God, which explains why in Apologetics and through Preaching, the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be demonstrated so that people will go back

⁴⁵ Sproul, *Defending Your Faith*, 138.

⁴⁶ Norman Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook On Christian Evidences* (Ada: Baker Books, 2013), 15.

⁴⁷ "Paul Little and James Nyquist, *Know What You Believe* (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2018), 17."

to viewing the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. If the Bible is considered such, then a person will believe that the God of the Bible does exist.

Skepticism

Voddie Baucham's book, *Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word*, says this about skepticism. "Expository Apologetics is an incredible tool for personal encounters with skeptics. As we have seen, this method is designed for honest, meaningful interaction."⁴⁸

Baucham states that this form of Apologetics is a great way to engage with skeptics. Why this form of Apologetics? This form of Apologetics merely applies biblical exposition principles to the art and science of Apologetics.

Norman Geisler's book, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook On Christian Evidence*, says, "Most skeptics have only heard the questions and believed there were no answers. However, we have some great answers to their questions. Christianity is true. That means that reality will always be on its side, and we must find the appropriate evidence to answer any question. Fortunately, Christian thinkers have been answering these questions ever since Paul's time, and we can draw on their knowledge to help us find the answers we want."⁴⁹

In this statement, Norman Geisler helps us understand that we can stand against skeptics and their skepticism without being concerned about questions already answered by Christian apologists.

In his book, *"I Do Not Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist,"* Frank Turek says, "What skeptics only desire to ask are questions they think we, as Christians, do not have answers for. Here is a fact, so many Christians do not know how to answer skeptics with the Word of God or

⁴⁸ Baucham, *Expository Apologetics*, 161.

⁴⁹ Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask*, 11.

other methodologies that Christian Apologists use. The key in dealing with skeptics is to draw on the biblical knowledge of the Word of God. Skeptics view the Bible as a one-sided book written by biased people."⁵⁰

Frank Turek makes a valid point here about skeptics. Skeptics of the Bible often grasp at straws, trying to find a contradiction to justify dismissing the Bible as what it claims to be—the Word of God. Skeptics often use passages from the Bible to prove there is a contradiction. Usually, when a Christian debates with a skeptic, the skeptic will want the Christian to give up their presuppositions and approach the debate "neutrally."

For example, the skeptic may ask the Christian to "prove" a Creator without using the Bible. However, Christians cannot give up their presuppositions because this results in adopting the skeptic's presuppositions, forcing us to answer the argument on their terms. To agree to think like the skeptic is to violate the command of Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 "Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." There is no such thing as achieving "neutrality" in an argument. Jesus clarifies this by saying, "He who is not with Me is against Me" Matthew 12:30.

In their book, *Answering the Skeptics*, Avery Foley and Ken Ham say, "When Christians give up their presuppositions, they are walking into a battle unarmed and unprotected because they no longer have the proper framework of biblical Revelation to interpret evidence and present arguments. If we agree to the terms of the skeptic, we are answering the question following the foolish assumptions of their unbiblical worldview. We are not to do this. "Do not answer a fool according to the terms of his folly, lest you also be like him."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Frank Turek and Norman L. Geisler, *I Do Not Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 1.

⁵¹ Avery Foley and Ken Ham, "Answering the Skeptics," <https://answersingenesis.org/apologetics/answering-the-skeptics/>, April 21, 2015,

In their book, *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answers to Crucial Questions about the Christian Faith*. Geisler and Bocchino write a responsive book for crucial questions about the Christian Faith. This comprehensive and eminently readable survey of the central issues of Christianity provides just the conclusive responses readers desire. There are answers to the most crucial issues of our time, all presented in an easy-to-understand format that helps you remember information for when you will need it most.⁵²

Theological Foundation

The theological foundation for this D.Min. action research project will build its foundation on three premises passages of Scripture. The first passage of Scripture will show why the Pastor of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, conducts this action research. Jeremiah 3:15 (KJV) "And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

Here we see the purpose of God giving Pastors (rulers) to Israel and Judah so that they may feed the Word of God, which is the same charge for everyone who leads God's people. The Pastor is like a shepherd who feeds sheep; a Pastor teaches (feeds) the flock of God.

This same charge is in the New Testament in Acts 20:28 (KJV) "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood." God has always described His people as sheep in the Old and New Testaments. Luke charges the Pastor to feed the Church of God. The word "feed" comes from the Greek Word: *"poimainō"* – properly, to shepherd, caring

⁵² Norman L. Geisler & Peter Bocchino, *Unshakable Foundations: Contemporary Answers to Crucial Questions about the Christian Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2000).

for (protecting) the flock. *Poimainō* is distinct from the Greek word *bóskō*, which means "feeding" spiritually nourish by feeding people the Word of God.⁵³

The second passage of Scripture will state why this D.Min. action research project is necessary for the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV) "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

However, sanctify the Lord God. Following another text, a better translation has, "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord." Be ready always to answer that is not just a reply but a defense (Gr. *Apologia*) of your hope. Peter offers that suffering may be another opportunity to testify of the saving Power of Christ and win over some of the persecutors. The word "hope" refers to Christianity's whole system or philosophy in general and specifically to the attitude of certainty and assurance about the Resurrection and the coming of Christ with meekness and fear. These indicate an attitude of humility toward men and not fear but reverence and worship toward God.⁵⁴

Indirectly, Peter shows us why the Church must prepare congregants to be defenders of the Faith. More than ever, Apologetics is needed in the Church, especially for the next generation. If the Church reaches the next generation, we must prepare the local Church. The time has come for the Church to take a holistic approach to rational and existential Apologetics concerning postmodernism and philosophical postmodernism. The sad commentary is that believers in our local churches are not ready to answer the questions about our hope.

⁵³" W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003)."

⁵⁴ Hindson, Ed., *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville et al., 1994), 327.

According to Zacharias: "Restoring the biblical role of apologetics requires leadership, dedication, and a deep conviction that God's fundamental call to Pastor is to nurture the life of the needs of the world."⁵⁵

The third passage of Scripture will state the D. Min action research project's ultimate purpose. (Matthew 28:19-20 KJV) – "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Therefore, because Jesus has all authority, He told His followers to make disciples of all nations. Because Jesus is Lord of the universe, we must go and establish His rule in every corner of the earth. He is the Lord of all nations; therefore, we must go to all nations. Jesus told us to go and make disciples. He told His disciples to teach and preach and make disciples. In verses 18-20, the original Greek text's main verb is the verb "make disciples." The words—"baptizing and teaching"—are verbs. We understand that the most critical element in this "Great Commission" is making disciples. The Church must confirm individual believers in the Faith. We must help them grow into mature Christians. This way, we shall build up the Church to be healthy and faithful to its Lord.

The Church must baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, not three gods. God is triune, and He has three forms or modes of existence. He is God the almighty Creator, maker of Heaven and Earth. He is the Son, Jesus, the incarnation of God, who came to earth to save us from our sins and show us salvation.

⁵⁵ Zacharias and Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready?* 56.

He is also the Holy Spirit, who lives in believers' hearts and gives them a new, eternal spiritual life that will never end. Moreover, to be water baptized in His name means to belong to Him. When we're baptized in His name, we say to the world: "I am God's. I am Christ's" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

In Jesu's earthly ministry, Jesus preached and healed mainly among the Jews (Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24). Having risen from the dead and obtained authority over the universe, He told His disciples to go to all nations. At first, however, they continued to work mainly among the Jews. The disciples themselves were Jews. It took them time to realize that Christ's Church included all nations. God had to send Peter a remarkable vision before he would agree to preach in a Gentile's house.

(Acts 10:9-20). Nevertheless, they spread the Gospel of Christ step by step into the world. Jesus told them, "... you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Thus, it came to pass (Mark 16:15-18). What is the primary job of a disciple? To obey. Jesus told His followers, "Make disciples, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." A disciple who does not obey is no disciple at all." (Luke 14:33).

This Great Commission was given to the eleven disciples and every follower of Jesus right down to the present time. Jesus told those first eleven disciples to teach all the new disciples they made to obey everything I have commanded you—and that, of course, includes the Great Commission itself. Every Christian must obey Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. There are many non-Christians today because many Christians have failed to obey this last excellent command of our Lord (Matthew 28:19-20).

Finally, after giving His disciples their last assignment, Jesus gave them a promise: "I will be with you always." Earlier, Jesus had said to His disciples: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ... Because I live, you also will live. On that day, you will realize that I am in my father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:18-20). Jesus is not only with us; He is also in us. His Holy Spirit lives in us (John 14:17) and gives us the power to be His disciples and witnesses (Acts 1:8). If Jesus is in us, His authority is also in us. The Church was given this power and authority in the universe by Christ. Christ goes with us as believers enter the world; we shall never be alone. "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."⁵⁶ (Matthew 28:20).

Since the first century, people have practiced defending the Faith. In Acts 17:2, they observed a three-day Sabbath. The two weeks represent the time spent reasoning with the Jews in the synagogue, not Paul's total time in Thessalonica. An analysis of the Thessalonian letters reveals that Paul taught them much more doctrine than would have been possible in two or three weeks.⁵⁷ To do Apologetics effectively, one must follow the format of the Apostle Paul in explaining Scripture to those who question our Faith.

This format is also in Acts 8:26-40 with Philip and Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip headed south towards the region of Philistia on the Mediterranean coast. He met another non-Jewish person who responded to his Preaching on the way. This man, a government official from Ethiopia in North Africa, was already one of the God-fearers reading the Old Testament when Philip met him. However, he needed help understanding what he was reading. When Philip explained the Scriptures to him, the man learned the meaning of Jesus' death, became a believer, and then was baptized. The man was overjoyed as he continued his journey homeward and no

⁵⁶ Hale and Thorson, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, 200.

⁵⁷ D. A. Carson, gen. ed., *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1712.

doubt readily spread the good news of Jesus Christ among his fellow Africans. Philip, meanwhile, preached around the towns of Philistia, then moved north along the coast till he came to the provincial capital, Caesarea.⁵⁸

Learning and practicing Apologetics remains a theological foundational aspect, as dealing with false teaching and skepticism is not much different from what Jesus and the first-century Church had to experience. In Jesus' time on earth, He had to deal with people wanting to see signs and wonders in order to believe. So, Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe." (John 4:8). Jesus addressed more persons than just the official when he used the plural "you people." The sentence also meant that Faith based solely on seeing miracles was never enough; it is not so much Faith as sight. One who witnessed a miracle did not so much believe as know. In such cases, the testimony was directly and objectively encountered by one's senses, not through and dependent on another person's tongue or pen. The Samaritans possessed such Faith, but not the Galileans and others. It is worth noting that the miraculous "signs" were also viewed as wonders.⁵⁹

To explain the existence of God and defend it as a critical apologetic issue, Romans 1:20 is credible as a passage of Scripture about how God's existence and divine nature are seen in the natural world. It explains that since the world's creation, God's invisible qualities have been seen through what has been made so that people are without excuse for not recognizing God's existence. Paul's powerful description of general Revelation in Romans 1:19-20 removes any possibility that humankind could claim unfairness on God's part in revealing his wrath against their wickedness. God's eternal power and divine nature are seen and understood from what has

⁵⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Concise Bible Commentary*, rev. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 4.

⁵⁹ Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *The College Press NIV Commentary: John* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1998), 1596.

been made. The signature of God is upon everything he has made and reflects his authorship. Inwardly, humanity is aware of God's glory and moral perfection through the image of God and his law that lies deep in the human heart and is perceived morally. However, since they try to suppress the Truth, they cannot be relied upon to respond intellectually, aesthetically, or morally to God's Revelation in nature. They rebel against him and therefore are distorted in their perception of reality. There is no basis for natural theology by which unredeemed humanity could reconcile itself to God. On the contrary, Paul argues that the gospel is given by special grace to fulfill the role of reconciliation and must be accepted by Faith.⁶⁰

To defend the Truth of Christ's Resurrection as another apologetic issue, one should use 1 Corinthians 15 as a passage of Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul emphasizes the centrality of the Resurrection to the Christian Faith. He reminds the Corinthians of the gospel message he preached to them, including the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Paul argues that the Christian Faith would only be meaningful if Christ had been raised from the dead. He emphasizes that the Resurrection is the foundation of the Christian Faith and that without it, believers would still be in their sins. Additionally, the chapter addresses questions about the nature of the Resurrection, including what kind of body believers will have in the afterlife. Overall, 1 Corinthians 15 is a powerful and essential chapter highlighting the crucial role of the Resurrection in the Christian Faith.

These verses refute the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine that Jesus resurrected from the dead as a spirit. The Apostle Paul declared that without a bodily resurrection of Jesus, there is no gospel, no hope for eternal life, and no meaning in the present life. When appearing to the terrified disciples, thinking they were seeing a ghost (Lk 24:38), Jesus assured them, "A ghost

⁶⁰ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 930.

does not have flesh and bones as you can see, I have" (v. 39). Verse 12 continues where verse 2 left off. Some had turned against Paul and were not holding "firmly to the word" (v. 2) he preached. They had "believed in vain," their faith "useless." Even though they accepted the Preaching that Christ had been raised from the dead (and was still alive), they were saying there was no resurrection of the dead (that is, of dead believers).

Nevertheless, Christ's Resurrection and ours are part of the same plan of God. Jesus said, "'Because I live, you also will live'" (John 14:19). Jesus told Martha, 'I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives [that is, is resurrected after he or she dies] and believes in me will never die (John 11:25–26). Thus, it would follow that if there is no resurrection of the dead, Jesus was a liar and did not rise from the dead. If this were so, then all of Paul's Preaching was useless and meaningless, and so would be the Faith that responded to the Preaching of the gospel.

Not only was Christ a liar if the dead were not raised, but Paul and the apostles were false witnesses, not only to the Resurrection but to the very nature of God, and were bearing witness against God.

Our Faith, our salvation, depends upon the objective, literal fact that Jesus rose from the dead. If He did not rise, then the Cross is meaningless, His death and the shedding of His blood did not atone for our sins, and we are still guilty sinners doomed to eternal Hell. Furthermore, those who have died with their Faith in Jesus are lost forever without hope.

We can apply the reverse of this. Those who deny that Jesus was literally, objectively raised from the dead deny the gospel's fundamental Truth. They are making the Bible, Jesus, the

apostles, and God himself false witnesses. However, they are false witnesses and have no right to call themselves Christians. Whatever Faith they may claim to have been meaningless.⁶¹

The Church must be able to defend the Bible as another apologetic issue by using 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to defend the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is a passage of Scripture that emphasizes the importance of the Bible and its role in the life of a Christian. It states that God inspires all Scripture and is valid for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

This means that the Bible is not just an ordinary book; it is the Word of God and guides living a righteous life. It helps teach us what is right and wrong, correcting us when we are wrong and training us to live in a pleasing way to God.

Therefore, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is often used in Apologetics to defend the authority and reliability of the Bible and to show that it is an essential source of guidance and wisdom for Christians. Those who would learn the things of God, and be assured of them, must know the Holy Scriptures, for they are the Divine Revelation. The age of children is the age to learn, and those who would get authentic learning must get it out of the Scriptures. They must be honest to us, neglected, seldom or never investigated. The Bible is a sure guide to eternal life. The prophets and apostles did not speak from themselves but delivered what they received from God, 2 Pe 1:21. It is profitable for all purposes of the Christian life. It is helpful to all, for all need to be taught, corrected, and reproved. There is something in the Scriptures suitable for every case. We may love our Bibles more and keep closer to them! Then shall we find benefit and gain the happiness promised by Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the main subject of both Testaments. We

⁶¹ Stanley M. Horton, *I & II Corinthians: A Logion Press Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1988), 149.

best oppose error by promoting a solid knowledge of the Word of Truth, and the most incredible kindness we can do to children is to make them early to know the Bible.⁶²

Heaven and Hell are real places that require learning and defense as another apologetic issue. Revelation 21 can be used to defend that Heaven is a real place believers go to after this life. Revelation 21 is a chapter in the Bible that describes the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city that God will create for believers after the world's end. The chapter describes the city as a beautiful and perfect place, with streets of gold and gates made of pearls.

In this city, God will dwell with his people, and there will be no more sadness, pain, or death. The chapter also describes the river of the water of life, which flows through the city, and the tree of life, which bears fruit every month. Overall, Revelation 21 is a vision of the perfect and eternal home that God has prepared for his people, and it provides a powerful image of the hope and joy that believers can look forward to in the afterlife.

So much of Revelation raises more questions than offers answers. Which things are to be taken literally, and which are to be taken metaphorically? What does this city refer to, and what does that character depict? When will this event take place, and who will be affected? Readers of all ages find themselves asking these and other questions time and again throughout the book.

One pattern evident in this chapter's description of the new Heaven and new Earth is the recurring use of numbers with multiples of twelve. Much has been made of the symbolic relevance of this number, primarily that it indicates completeness. At the very least, when God decided to lead His faithful on earth, He did so in the pattern of twelve, such as with the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve disciples. Beyond that, the varied explanations ascribed to the

⁶² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Edited by George Di Lella. Accordance electronic ed. (OakTree et al., 2004), Chapter 3.

symbolic implication of the number twelve appear unpersuasive and, as such, should not import more significance than necessary to the interpretation of the vision.

One thing, however, is sure. Though debates still arise concerning specific details of these last two chapters, the relevance of these disparities is inconsequential compared to the indisputable majesty and splendor contained within these passages. Most commentators agree that the significance of chapters twenty-one and twenty-two rests in the blessed assurance that believers will one day enjoy an eternal inheritance in the glorious presence of the Almighty Father and the Lamb of God.⁶³

Matthew 25:41 and 46 can defend the reality of Hell as a place for unbelievers to go after this life. Matthew 25:41 and 46 describe the final judgment of the world and the consequences of people's actions. The Son of Man now speaks to those on his left side, commanding them to depart from his presence as they are accursed. Their inheritance is the eternal fire initially prepared for the devil and his angels. This is their destiny because when they came across Jesus in need, they did not provide for him. The accursed ones are puzzled by this, asking when they came across the king in need. The king responds that whenever they ignored the least of his brothers, it was as if they had ignored him. The king now speaks to those on his left, commanding them to depart from his presence and into the eternal fire. The eternal fire is described as that place initially prepared for the devil and his angels. The accursed ones join those who rebelled against the Creator long ago.⁶⁴

The D. Min action research project seeks to equip the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, to become effective defenders of the Faith in fulfilling the great commission, as outlined

⁶³ *Practical Christianity Foundation, Revelation: Tribulation and Triumph, The Easy-To-Read Commentary Series* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 327.

⁶⁴ (Douglas Mangum, "Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament," introduced by Leland Ryken (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).)

in Matthew 28:19-20. The project emphasizes that the goal of learning Christian Apologetics is not to show off one's ability to defend the Faith but to win souls for the Kingdom of God through our defense.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework will be based on the problem stated for this thesis project. The Pastor will divide the main problem into two parts to show the research from a theoretical viewpoint.

First Theoretical Viewpoint

The first theoretical viewpoint is biblical illiteracy in the local Church. Christians claim to believe the Bible is God's Word. The Church claims it is God's divinely inspired, inerrant message to us, and it is. The discouragement is from a recent Lifeway Research study that found that only 45 percent of church members read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible—nearly the same number read it daily.⁶⁵

According to researcher Trevor Grundy, he stated "Small groups are vital to combating and changing the epidemic of biblical illiteracy. Grundy stated that the average Christian does not read God's Word, which results in not knowing it. Grundy viewed statistics from the Western World & United Kingdom. The United Kingdom Bible Society surveyed British children and found that 33 percent could not identify familiar Bible stories. According to Grundy, almost 1 in 3 did not choose nativity as part of the Bible, and 59 percent did not know that Jonah being swallowed by the great fish is in the Bible. British parents did not do much better. Around 30 percent of parents do not know Adam and Eve, David and Goliath, or the Good Samaritan in the

⁶⁵ Aaron Earls, "Few Protestant Churchgoers Read the Bible Daily" (July 2019), accessed February 4, 2021. <https://research.lifeway.com/2019/07/02/few-protestant-churchgoers-read-the-bible-daily/>

Bible. The sad commentary is that 27 percent think Superman is a biblical story. More than 1 in 3, about 33 percent, believe the same about fictional figures on tv and in movies. Furthermore, more than half 54 percent believe The Hunger Games is or might be a story from the Bible."⁶⁶

Bob Smietana's research in an article entitled: *"New Research: Americans Believe in Heaven, hell, and a little bit of Heresy."* says it is more than merely not knowing stories from Scripture. Our lack of biblical literacy has led to a lack of biblical understanding. Lifeway Research found that while 67 percent of Americans believe Heaven is a real place, 45 percent think there are many ways to get there, including 1 in 5 evangelical Christians. More than half of evangelicals' 59 percent believe the Holy Spirit is a force and not a personal being, in contrast to Trinity's orthodox biblical teaching of being three Persons in one God. Americans, including many Christians, hold unbiblical views on Hell, sin, salvation, Jesus, humanity, and the Bible."⁶⁷

The annual State of the Bible 2012 survey, conducted by Barna Group on behalf of the American Bible Society, found: The average American—Christian or not—owns at least three Bibles. Furthermore, technology has put Bibles at our fingertips wherever we are—you can download the Bible for free on your smartphone.⁶⁸

In an article by Ed Stetzer entitled: *"The Epidemic of Bible Illiteracy in our Churches."* Says Lifeway Research found that 90 percent of churchgoers desire to please and honor Jesus in all they do. Almost 60 percent agree with the statement, "Throughout the day, I find myself

⁶⁶ Trevor Grundy, "British Children and Adults are Biblically Illiterate," 2014, accessed February 4, 2021. <https://archive.slttrib.com/article.php?id=57512487&itype=CMSID>

⁶⁷ Bob Smietana, "New Research: Americans Believe in Heaven, Hell, and a Little Bit of Heresy," 2014, accessed February 4, 2021. <https://news.lifeway.com/2014/10/28/new-research-americans-believe-in-heaven-hell-and-a-little-bit-of-heresy/>

⁶⁸ The Holland Sentinel, "Religion News: 85 Percent of U.S. Households Own a Bible, 2012, accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.hollandsentinel.com/story/news/2012/04/19/religion-news-85-percent-u/47661548007/>

thinking about biblical truths." It is striking that while most of us desire to please Jesus, few of us take the time to check the Bible to determine if we are doing it. There is a disconnect.⁶⁹

Second Theoretical Viewpoint

The second theoretical aspect is biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics. In the first theoretical viewpoint, the statistics showed the percentage of biblical illiteracy among Christians from the survey taken by Lifeway Research. In this second theoretical viewport, the Pastor will address biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics.

Christian Apologist Brad Huston wrote an article entitled: *Why is Apologetics not taught in the Church?* Huston Says, "Ultimately, the absence of apologetics in the church has to do with intellectual laziness, which is sometimes made a virtue in the name of "faith." The effects of anti-intellectualism in the Church have been disastrous."⁷⁰ In their book *"Is Your Church Ready? Motivating Leaders to Live an Apologetic Life,"* Ravi Zacharias and Norman Geisler said, "The Church should be ready to teach Apologetics by living an apologetic life as leaders of the Church. The sole purpose of preparing the local Church is to establish an apologetics ministry. To do such requires that leaders of the local Church be dedicated and have a deep conviction about restoring this biblical discipline in the local Church."⁷¹

The Church, of course, has been influenced by the overall academic and social environment. J.P. Moreland has provided an excellent analysis of how the Church has forsaken intellectual pursuits such as Apologetics⁷² Huston summarized Moreland's statement by saying:

⁶⁹ Ed Stetzer, "The Epidemic of Bible Illiteracy in Our Churches, 2015, accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/july/epidemic-of-bible-illiteracy-in-our-churches.html>

⁷⁰ Brad Huston, "Why Is Apologetics Not Taught in the Church?" 2011, <https://carm.org/defending-the-faith/why-is-apologetics-not-taught-in-the-church>.

⁷¹ Zacharias and Geisler, *Is Your Church Ready?* 56.

⁷². (J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 20-38.)

"The Christian life became more about the experience than the intellectual assent to the teachings of Christ and the apostles. Without intellectual grounding, many Christians fell prey to the rising philosophical views alleging that only empirical evidence can support truth claims. Higher criticism began to cast doubt on the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Darwinism challenged Christian teachings on the origins of man. The evangelical Church largely responded to these challenges by abandoning rational inquiry altogether. Philosophy was rejected by the fundamentalists, who stood by the Truth of Scripture. On the other hand, mainstream denominations accepted modern philosophy and rejected the inerrancy of Scripture, viewing it as a spiritual guidebook only, not propositional Truth. Instead of engaging the secularists, the fundamentalists retreated to the margins of society. As a result, the Church has largely adopted a blind-faith position regarding the knowledge of spiritual Truth. Rather than Faith being seen as a response to reasoned evidence of the Truth of Christianity's claims, it has become contrary to reason altogether. It amounts to believing despite all the evidence."⁷³

Huston's summarization of Moreland's statement supports what could have caused the Church to withdraw from Apologetics. If these are accountable suggestive reasons, this validates why there is biblical illiteracy in the context of Christian Apologetics within the local Church.

Lifeway Research article written by Doug Powell entitled: *The Use and Abuse of Christian Apologetics*, offers these reasons for how Apologetics equips believers.

How Apologetics Equips Believers

- Apologetics shows that while the Christian Faith cannot be proven by reason, the Christian Faith is not irrational—contrary to reason. This is important because it

⁷³ Huston, "Why Is Apologetics Not Taught in the Church?", 2011, <https://carm.org/defending-the-faith/why-is-apologetics-not-taught-in-the-church>.

demonstrates that Christianity is not simply a personal preference, a function of upbringing, or a worldview supported only by emotional considerations.

- Apologetics answers objections against Faith and seeks to remove misconceptions.
- Christian Apologetics provides evidence and arguments for Christianity and demonstrates the weaknesses of atheism and other belief systems logically incompatible with the historic Christian Faith. It offers something far better to replace these worldviews.⁷⁴

If the Church is going to become apologetically literate, these must become a few suggestive reasons for combating biblical illiteracy in Christian Apologetics. The Church will continue to be challenged by the secular world, which is why the Church must engage in Apologetics to engage this world. The good news is that an interest in Apologetics has increased recently. Seminaries and other institutions of Christian higher education are beginning to teach Apologetics and Christian worldview studies.

⁷⁴ LifeWay Research, "The Use and Abuse of Christian Apologetics," LifeWay Research, November 6, 2019. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2019/11/06/the-use-and-abuse-of-christian-apologetics/>.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Chapter three consists of the intervention design and the implementation of the intervention. Chapter three describes how the researcher of FBCTT addresses the problem defined in chapter one. The background research from chapter two will establish this chapter's theological and theoretical foundation. It appears to be biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics within the membership of FBCTT. This chapter will explain the intervention design related to the FBCTT. This intervention design implementation will describe the intervention plan, the participants, and how the qualitative data will be collected and analyzed. The section will include the consent form, the eight questions, and the rating survey presented to the study group.

The intervention design consists of a focus group called the Christian apologetics group of FBCTT. A focus group session will be held where each participant has selected seven questions to show the problem of biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics.

The researcher interviews each participant. In these interviews, the researcher will ask each participant about their views of the focus group discussion. After each interview, the researcher and the focus group will discuss the seven questions, and the facilitator will answer any questions the participants may have about these questions. The last procedure will be the rating survey. The rating survey is to help with data analysis. The location of the intervention plan will be at the FBCTT. This intervention will be held within the sanctuary of FBCTT.

The researcher will develop a schedule as to when the intervention will commence. Once the researcher receives the notification of IRB approval, the field research will begin. The researcher will inform the participants of the approval from IRB so that the invention project can start. The researcher will announce that the intervention will start after receiving the approval letter. The researcher will also inform the congregation if the Church consents to the invention along with the participants. The study group will complete this within two weeks.

The Intervention Design

The researcher identified the ministry context problem as biblical illiteracy within Christian apologetics. The research problem is to address this issue by creating a well-developed curriculum. Although the researcher acknowledges that a curriculum alone cannot solve the problem, it can serve as a foundation to combat biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics. The researcher's goal is to address the issue of biblical illiteracy by teaching people how to read the Bible personally and corporately while cultivating a love for God and His Word. By highlighting the connection between God's delight in His people and His Word, the researcher hopes to help this congregation grasp the truth of what God wants to do in their lives through Scripture.

Biblical Illiteracy

Although biblical illiteracy is a significant challenge today, it is a manageable problem. This D. Min action research project offers more than just additional material on Christian apologetics issues. It provides practical encouragement to help the participants to overcome personal and corporate struggles with apologetics issues. God calls us to do life together with other Christians, to gather on the Lord's Day, and to scatter for His glory throughout the week. We grow together in the local Church to be sent out to display Christ in the world, make disciples, and bear witness to His glory.

In the 2014 magazine by Biola University, author Kenneth Berding wrote an article on *The Crisis of Biblical Illiteracy* by stating, "Christians used to memorize and meditate on the Bible. We do not do that anymore; in a sense, we are starving ourselves to death. A look at the problem, how we got here, and what needs to change."⁷⁵ Many Christian leaders are sounding the alarm about biblical illiteracy in the Church, as biblical literacy has recently declined in

⁷⁵ Kenneth Berding, *The Crisis of Biblical Illiteracy*, 2014, accessed May 4, 2023.
<https://www.biola.edu/blogs/biola-magazine/2014/the-crisis-of-biblical-illiteracy>

America. Even confessing Christians who claim to hold the Bible in high regard are not immune to this trend, and many of us do not know basic facts about the Bible. This has led to concern among Christian leaders about the state of biblical knowledge in the Church.

Timothy Larsen, a Wheaton College professor, has commented that biblical literacy has continued to decline, and Gallup polls have tracked this descent to a current 'record low.' Michael Vlach, in his article "The 9 Most Important Issues Facing the Evangelical Church," cites "Biblical Illiteracy in the Church" as his final concern and agrees with George Barna's assessment that "the Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy." David Nienhuis, in his article "The Problem of Evangelical Biblical Illiteracy: A View from the Classroom," also laments the loss of general biblical literacy in America and notes that the situation is no better among confessing Christians, even those who claim to hold the Bible in high regard.

Apologetic Illiteracy

Prioritizing biblical literacy and apologetic knowledge is crucial for the Church to engage with the world and fulfill its mission effectively. The Union Baptist Association of Houston, Texas, wrote an article recognizing the importance of apologetic literacy and is taking steps to promote it as a vital need for the local Church. First, apologetics can be a powerful tool for the local Church, providing encouragement and reassurance of the truthfulness and reality of the gospel while also helping to address personal doubts. It is important to remember that apologetics is a tool for edification so that the Church will not fall into the mindset of wielding apologetics like a weapon to prove unbelievers wrong.

Church members inevitably encounter opposition to the Christian faith as they use social media and interact with those outside the Church. Therefore, it is crucial to consider these

questions and answers with pastors and church leaders, making apologetics a great discipline of study to encourage and instruct the local Church and a practical tool for addressing challenges to the faith.

Apologetics is an excellent discipline of study to encourage and instruct the local Church and a practical tool for addressing challenges to the faith and dismantling barriers to belief. It can also be used as a tool for evangelism, providing openings for gospel reception. While it can sometimes be a forgotten Christian discipline, its benefit to the individual, the local Church, and the unbelieving world can be immense. So, learning apologetics well and in a spirit of gentleness and love is vital. The Church needs to raise a new generation of Christian apologists passionate about the gospel and ready to defend the faith.

The Intervention Design Explained

The researcher will provide all participants with the required documents containing procedures and guidelines to govern the research. The second document the participants will receive is their consent forms to participate in this D.Min. action research project and the consent to record our sessions. Once these forms are collected, the study group will begin.

The researcher will initiate the intervention by starting a group discussion to determine the participant's knowledge concerning Christian apologetics. During this time, the researcher will listen and answer any questions the participants might have. The researcher will conduct individual interviews with each participant after the group discussion.

The researcher will ask each participant seven questions that he has developed relating to the DMIN thesis project's subject and problem. The researcher will evaluate the individual answers to these questions as part of his qualitative research. After evaluating the answers, the researcher will give the participants a rating survey. Finally, the researcher will analyze the

surveys and formulate a two-month curriculum that answers the questions asked during the focus group discussion.

The Methodology Style

The researcher plans to implement a qualitative research methodology with five common characteristics. These include eliciting understanding and meaning, using the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, systematically seeking answers by examining social settings and individuals, aiming to gather insight into the particulars of the ground framework, and recognizing those exact particulars in another context. Additionally, action research aims to apply a specific solution to a particular problem.

The researcher will utilize qualitative research to collect data, consisting of field notes and recording devices. Field notes and recording devices are tools that the researcher will use to collect qualitative data from participants. If the Church and participants consent, the researcher will record the interviews, questionnaires, and second interviews after the intervention project. The intervention project will only occur once the researcher receives all participants' consent forms. Informed consent is an ethical and legal requirement for research involving human participants. It is the process where participants are advised concerning all aspects of the research, which is essential for deciding. After observing all aspects, the participants can voluntarily confirm participation in this intervention.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a challenge to accommodating this study. However, the group will meet in person while taking the proper precautions given by the CDC guidelines. The researcher will issue the facilitator and participants guidelines during this intervention project. Engaging in dialogue learning establishes a connection and shows the participants' passion. The researcher believes doing the intervention project in person will be more engaging than online.

The researcher plans to share the subject matter with the participants before the group discussion, which will allow them an opportunity to gather their thoughts. Once the participants receive the discussion topics, the researcher will instruct participants to come with a Bible, pen, and paper and prepare to engage in meaningful dialog. He will encourage the participants to discuss the topics in detail and share their views. The researcher anticipates that some may answer the same way, and others may influence others. After this one group discussion, the researcher will share feedback with the group to inform them of any biblical illiteracy they will demonstrate throughout our discussion.

The researcher plans to share the subject matter with the participants before the group discussion, which will allow them an opportunity to gather their thoughts. Once the participants receive the discussion topics, the researcher will instruct participants to come with a Bible, pen, and paper and prepare to engage in meaningful dialog. The researcher will encourage the participants to discuss the topics in detail and share their views. After the group discussion, the researcher will share feedback with the group to inform them of any biblical illiteracy they may have demonstrated throughout the discussion.

The researcher has preselected questions for the interviews. The researcher believes that all Christians should know and answer Christian apologetic questions, as stated in 1 Peter 3:15. These seven questions have been prepared for the participants to give their most knowledgeable answers. The researcher will listen attentively to the participants and their interview answers. Their answers will exhibit three things: first, what knowledge they learned under the Pastor's ministry before the interviews; second, what they acquired from their own Christian experience; and finally, what this D.Min. action research will provide to expand their knowledge.

D.Min. Thesis Project Questionnaire

These questions will be discussed and answered during the focus group and interviews.

1. How can we be sure that God exists, especially when we cannot see, hear or touch him?
2. Why do people trust the Bible, which some believe is based on myths and full of contradictions?
3. Why do some people call Jesus the Son of God, even though many believe he was just a good man and a wise teacher?
4. How can we reconcile the existence of evil, pain, and suffering with the idea of a good God?
5. What makes people trust Christianity as a religion?
6. Do you believe in Heaven and Hell and think God sends some people to Hell?
7. Do you believe that the Resurrection of Jesus was an actual historical event, or do you think it is just a myth?⁷⁶

In the next session, the researcher will provide a rating survey to the participants to gauge their thoughts on the questionnaire. Afterward, the researcher will develop an apologetic curriculum for the congregation. The curriculum will include topics about Christian apologetics, such as the existence of God, why to trust the Bible, and Jesus as the Messiah.

D.Min. Thesis Project Survey

Please rate the following items on a scale of 1-10, with 1-5 indicating poor quality, 6-7 indicating fair quality, and 8-10 indicating excellent quality.

1. How would you rate your answer to question number one?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How would you rate your answer to question number two?
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How would you rate your answer to question number three?

⁷⁶ Mittlberg, "The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask," v-vi.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How would you rate your answer to question number four?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. How would you rate your answer to question number five?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. How would you rate your answer to question number six?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. How would you rate your answer to question number seven?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

This research project will examine questions from an apologetic, biblical, evangelical, and theological perspective. The aim is to present an alternative view of each topic in an organized and systematic manner without being argumentative or quarrelsome. Each question will be answered with biblical support. This study will replace Bible Study on Thursday nights for this D.Min. action research project. The researcher believes this curriculum is essential for the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas (FBCOTT) to combat biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics among its members.

Pastors need tools to convey knowledge to their congregations and to equip them with competencies in the Word of God and Christian apologetics. Congregations need reliable material to use in their study of the Word of God.

Curriculum Outline

Week 1 - Defining the meaning of Christian apologetics and defense for the existence of God.

Week 2 - What is the Bible, and why can we trust in the Bible?

Week 3- Who is Jesus Christ? What makes Him the Son of God?

Week 4 - If God, Why Evil?

Week 5 - What is Christianity? How can you trust Christianity?

Week 6 - Was the Resurrection Real or a Myth?

Week 7 - A study on Heaven and Hell?

Curriculum Objective

Week One

Week one of this course aims to raise students' awareness of the importance of Christian apologetics. The curriculum will cover why Christian apologetics is necessary to defend the Christian faith, as well as evidence for the existence of God.

The researcher will present several reasons why Christian apologetics is necessary. These reasons include: (1) providing a rational and reasonable defense of the Christian faith, (2) removing intellectual barriers that prevent people from coming to faith in Christ, (3) strengthening the faith of believers, and (4) fulfilling a biblical mandate to defend the faith and share the gospel message.

Christian apologetics is necessary for several reasons. First, it helps believers to understand and defend their faith rationally and reasonably. Apologetics answers common objections that skeptics and non-believers often raise, such as "How can you believe in God when there is so much evil in the world?" or "Is not the Bible just a collection of myths and legends?" By learning how to respond to these objections, believers can better articulate and defend their faith.

Second, apologetics can help remove intellectual barriers preventing people from coming to faith in Christ. Many people reject Christianity because they believe that it is irrational. By

presenting a rational and reasonable case for Christianity, apologetics can help to remove these barriers and open the door for people to consider the gospel message.

Third, apologetics can help to strengthen the faith of believers. When believers are confronted with challenging questions or objections to their faith, it can cause them to doubt or waver in their beliefs. By learning how to respond to these challenges, believers can become more confident in their faith and better equipped to share it with others.

Finally, apologetics is necessary because it is a biblical mandate. The apostle Peter exhorts believers to "always be prepared to answer everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). Similarly, the apostle Paul urges believers to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5). By engaging in apologetics, believers are obeying these biblical commands and fulfilling their role as ambassadors for Christ.

Week Two

The objective for week two is to educate learners about the nature of the Bible and to explain why it is the authoritative Word of God. The researcher will present several reasons for what the Bible is and why we can trust it.

The Bible is a collection of 66 books written over approximately 1,500 years by more than 40 authors. Despite its diverse authorship and the fact that it was written for a long time, the Bible presents a unified message pointing to Jesus Christ as the world's Savior.

One reason why we can trust the Bible is because of the evidence for its reliability. The Bible has been remarkably well-preserved over the centuries, with thousands of manuscripts and fragments that date back to within a few decades of the original writings. In addition, the Bible

has been subjected to intense scrutiny by scholars and critics. Nevertheless, it has withstood the test of time and remains a trusted source of spiritual guidance for millions worldwide.

Another reason why we can trust the Bible is because of its internal consistency and coherence. Even though different authors wrote it over a long period, the Bible presents a unified message consistent with itself and with historical and archaeological evidence. The Bible also contains many prophecies fulfilled in remarkable detail, further proving its reliability.

Finally, we can trust the Bible because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus affirmed the authority and reliability of the Old Testament, and he promised that the Holy Spirit would guide his followers into all truth (John 14:26). The New Testament, which Jesus' followers wrote, presents a consistent message that is in harmony with the teachings of Jesus and the Old Testament.

In summary, the Bible is a collection of books that presents a unified message about God's plan of salvation for the world. We can trust the Bible because of its historical reliability, internal consistency and coherence, and the testimony of Jesus Christ and his followers.

Week Three

The objective for week three is to teach who Jesus is and His position as the Son of God. The researcher will present several reasons for who Jesus is and His position as the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Christian faith and is widely regarded as one of the most influential people in history. According to the Bible, Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea to Mary and Joseph and grew up in Nazareth. He began public ministry around 30 and spent the next three years preaching, teaching, and performing miracles throughout Galilee and beyond.

One of the most important aspects of Jesus' identity is his position as the Son of God. The Bible teaches that Jesus is not merely human but fully divine. This means that Jesus is God and man and possesses all of the attributes of a deity, such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

The New Testament presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, or Savior, who was prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' mission was to reconcile humanity to God by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. According to the Bible, Jesus' death on the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice that paid the penalty for the sins of all who believed in him.

In addition to his role as Savior, Jesus is portrayed as a teacher and a moral example. He taught about the nature of God, the importance of loving one's neighbor, and the need for repentance and forgiveness. He also performed many miracles, such as healing the sick and feeding the hungry, demonstrating his divine power and compassion.

Finally, the Bible teaches that Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead and to establish his kingdom on earth. According to the New Testament, Jesus will return in power and glory and reign over a new heaven and earth.

In summary, Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to reconcile humanity to God. He is both God and man, and he is the long-awaited Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of all who would believe in him, and he is coming again to establish his kingdom on earth.

Week Four

The objective for week four is to teach why God is sovereign, and evil exists. The researcher will present why God is sovereign, and evil exists.

God's sovereignty is central to Christian theology and refers to God's absolute power and authority over everything. The Bible teaches that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe and is in control of all things, including human history and the affairs of nations.

One of the most challenging questions in theology is why evil exists in a world governed by a sovereign God. The Bible teaches that God is holy and just and that he cannot tolerate sin. However, it also teaches that humans are fallen and sinful and have rebelled against God's authority. This rebellion results in the world being filled with evil and suffering.

Theologians have grappled with this problem for centuries, and there are many different theories about why God allows evil to exist. One common explanation is that God allows evil to exist to bring about a greater good. For example, the Bible teaches that suffering can produce perseverance, character, and hope in the lives of believers. Another explanation is that God allows evil to exist to preserve human freedom. According to this view, God created human beings with free will, allowing them to make choices, even if they lead to evil.

Another critical aspect of God's sovereignty is his role as judge. The Bible teaches that God will one day judge the world, punish evil, and reward righteousness. This means there will be a final reckoning for all people, and justice will ultimately be served.

In summary, God's sovereignty refers to his absolute power and authority over everything. The existence of evil in the world is a complex problem for theologians, but many believe God allows it to bring about a greater good or preserve human freedom. Finally, the

Bible teaches that God will one day judge the world and that he will punish evil and reward righteousness.

Week Five

The objective for week five is to teach what Christianity is and what makes Christianity unique. The researcher will present several reasons for Christianity and what makes Christianity unique.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life, teachings, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the world's largest religion, with over 2 billion followers. At the heart of Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who came to earth to save humanity from sin and death. According to the Bible, Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, and was crucified on a Roman cross. Three days later, he rose from the dead, demonstrating his power over sin and death.

One of the fundamental teachings of Christianity is the doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that there is one God who exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This means that God is one and three simultaneously, a difficult concept for many people to understand. Another essential aspect of Christianity is believing in salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, all humans are sinners and separated from God. However, through faith in Jesus Christ, people can be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God. This is often referred to as being "born again" or "saved."

Christianity is also unique in its emphasis on love and service to others. Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to

love your neighbor as yourself. Christians believe they are called to love and serve others, especially those poor, marginalized, or oppressed.

Finally, Christianity is unique in its emphasis on the afterlife. According to the Bible, there is a heaven and a hell, and people will spend eternity in one of these places based on their response to Jesus Christ. This means that Christians believe in the importance of living a pleasing life to God so that they will be welcomed into Heaven when they die.

In summary, Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life, teachings, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is unique in its belief in the Trinity, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, emphasis on love and service to others, and emphasis on the afterlife.

Week Six

The objective for week six is to teach about the Resurrection and the evidence that makes the Resurrection authentic. The researcher will present several reasons for the Resurrection and the evidence that makes the Resurrection authentic.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central event of Christianity and is the foundation of the Christian faith. According to the Bible, Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross and was buried in a tomb. However, three days later, he rose from the dead, demonstrating his power over sin and death.

Several lines of evidence support the authenticity of the Resurrection. First, there is the testimony of the eyewitnesses. According to the Bible, Jesus appeared to over 500 people after his Resurrection, including his disciples, family members, and other followers. These people were willing to suffer persecution and even death for their belief in the Resurrection, which suggests that they were convinced of its reality.

Second, there is the empty tomb. According to the Bible, the tomb in which Jesus was buried was empty on the third day. This is significant because if the tomb had not been empty, it would have been easy for the Jewish authorities to refute the claim of the Resurrection. However, there is no evidence that the tomb was empty, suggesting something extraordinary happened.

Third, there is the transformation of the disciples. The disciples of Jesus were initially skeptical of the Resurrection and feared persecution by the Jewish authorities. However, after they claimed to have seen the risen Jesus, they became bold and fearless and were willing to suffer persecution and even death for their belief. This suggests that they were convinced of the reality of the Resurrection.

Fourth, there is the growth of the early Church. The early Christian Church proliferated in the years following the Resurrection, despite persecution by the Roman authorities. This suggests that the early Christians were convinced of the reality of the Resurrection and were willing to risk their lives to spread the message.

Finally, there is the fact that the Resurrection is consistent with the character of Jesus. Jesus was known for his miracles and teachings, consistent with his claim to be the Son of God. The Resurrection is the ultimate miracle consistent with Jesus' claim of power over sin and death. In summary, several lines of evidence support the authenticity of the Resurrection, including the testimony of the eyewitnesses, the empty tomb, the transformation of the disciples, the growth of the early Church, and the consistency of the Resurrection with the character of Jesus.

Week Seven

The objective for week seven is to teach about the reality of Heaven and Hell being real places. The researcher will present several reasons for Heaven and Hell being real places.

Heaven and Hell are believed to be real places by many religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The existence of these places is based on religious texts and teachings, as well as personal experiences and beliefs. Heaven is generally associated with eternal happiness and reward for those who have lived righteous lives. This belief is based on the idea that a higher power or deity rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior. In Christianity, Heaven is a place of eternal life with God, without pain, sorrow, or death.

The belief in Hell is based on the idea that there is a place of eternal punishment for those who have lived wicked lives. This belief is also based on the idea of a higher power or deity who punishes terrible behavior. In Christianity, Hell is described as a place of eternal punishment, with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Several arguments support the reality of Heaven and Hell. First, there are personal experiences and testimonies of people who claim to have had near-death experiences or visions of Heaven and Hell. These experiences are often described as vivid and life-changing and are believed by many to be evidence of the reality of these places.

Second, some religious texts and teachings describe the nature of Heaven and Hell in detail. These texts are often considered divinely inspired and are believed to describe the afterlife accurately.

Third, there is the argument from morality. Many believe that a higher power must reward good behavior and punish bad behavior to maintain a just and moral universe. The existence of Heaven and Hell is seen as evidence of this moral order.

Fourth, there is the argument from design. Many people believe that the universe is too complex and too finely tuned to have arisen by chance and that there must be a higher power that created it. The existence of Heaven and Hell is seen as evidence of this intelligent design.

Finally, there is the argument from personal belief. Many believe in Heaven and Hell based on their faith and experience. They may feel a sense of comfort and security in the belief that there is a higher power that rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior.

In summary, several arguments support the reality of Heaven and Hell, including personal experiences, religious texts and teachings, the argument from morality, the argument from design, and personal belief.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The Tool Phase

The researcher plans to use a recording device and field notes as tools. A recorder will allow the researcher to record detailed and accurate accounts of participants' responses, while the field notes will be taken from the recordings. Additionally, the researcher will use data triangulation to gather data, which allows cross-checking for data accuracy. Field notes will provide a concise description of what selectively took place, and the researcher's notes will be with the other evaluation angles to provide balance requirements in the interpretive process.

The intervention plan's data analysis will bring order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data generated during the research process. After the data collection phase, the researcher will compile the data collected from the notes after each intervention and analyze it to ensure accurate interpretation. All analysis is an act of interpretation, but the primary aim of the analysis is to identify information representing the participants' perspectives, experiences, and knowledge related to apologetics and the intervention

provided. Once the data has been collected, the researcher will transcribe the data from the recording devices and create more field notes.

The Thinking Phase

The thinking phase of this action research aims to sift through the accumulating body of information that emerges from events. A reflective journal is a part of this project to analyze preconceptions during the intervention process. The researcher will record and capture critical insights shared with the group and compare their notes to the facilitator's initial interpretations. The researcher's notes will contain descriptive information and review everything during the analysis. At the end of the single session with the intervention, the participants will review the notes taken and add them to their reflective journals. The journal contains data collected during the single intervention session, and the researcher will take that information from the journal and reflect on it to properly assess each participant's answers. Reviewing the written and recorded data will ensure the researcher assesses all data for ending results. The intervention's outcome measures the intervention's effectiveness, and the researcher can only determine this after teaching the curriculum and the second interview with the participants. The researcher will seek out the participants' expectations about what they learned and if it made a difference regarding their lack of knowledge in Christian apologetics.

Planning Questions: Primary Questions

1. What intervention plan will you use to address the problem?

The researcher of this congregation is using at least two sources to conduct action research on biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics within the FBCTT. These two methods are interviews and questionnaires. An interview is a discussion or conversation between a researcher and a candidate. It is a selection process designed to help a researcher understand the skills,

scrutinize personality and character traits, and check the domain knowledge. In this formal meeting, the researcher asks questions to get information from a candidate. Another purpose an interview serves is that it helps authenticate a candidate's knowledge. The researcher uses this opportunity to investigate a candidate's claim and check whether they can prove their claims related to the research project.

The type of interview this research requires is called a one-on-one interview. It is a conversational interview where the researcher initially drives the agenda, and a candidate asks questions toward the end. Understanding a candidate's experience and domain knowledge is a great interview technique. The format of this interview is called group. In group interviews, a researcher interviews multiple participants at the same time. The interviewer may provide a topic for the group to discuss. During their discussion, an observer rates their performance. Such an interview format helps a researcher understand the differences and nuances in participants' knowledge. It helps the researcher assess participants' interpersonal and communication skills. Usually, in group interviews, the researcher can understand how participants apply their skills, strengths, and knowledge when interacting with others.

The second method is a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research tool featuring questions to collect valuable information from respondents. These instruments include either written or oral questions and comprise an interview-style format. Questionnaires may be qualitative or quantitative. The two sources will serve as the foundation for gathering information about the participants' knowledge of Christian apologetics. With these sources, the researcher will have enough information to evaluate the D.Min. action research project's continuance.

2. Define in detail the actual intervention plan.

First, select FBCTT as the location to conduct this D.Min. action research project. Second, develop and distribute consent forms to the participants. Third, interview each participant. Fourth, give the participants a rating survey to determine their biblical illiteracy level in Christian apologetics. Fifth, evaluate the surveys to determine the curriculum's development after completing the interviews. Sixth, develop a seven-week curriculum to teach the participants and members of FBCTT. Seventh, develop the curriculum. Eighth, re-evaluate the participants with another interview and questionnaire after the seventh week. Ninth, give the participants another rating survey and evaluate the surveys with a new perspective on the developed curriculum taught to the selected participants. Tenth, determine differences in the participants' biblical illiteracy levels regarding Christian apologetics. Eleventh, transcribe the ending results of the study.

3. Specify how the intervention would make a change in your problem.

The intervention change would transition members of FBCTT from biblical illiteracy to biblical literacy in the context of Christian apologetics. The developed curriculum will help members and participants have a solid belief concerning Christian apologetics. This D.Min. action research project intervention should help other pastors and congregations if they utilize this project to educate themselves or their communities in Christian apologetics.

4. How will you inform or involve those in the project?

The researcher will invite those involved in this D.Min. action research project. It will also be announced on a particular Sunday that the congregation of FBCTT is involved in a teaching project that will take place at the Church. The congregation will be informed that this

teaching project is being conducted as a prerequisite for the researcher's D.Min. action research project and doctoral program.

5. Whose approvals will you need?

The researcher will need the approval and consent of the elders of the Church, congregation, and participants to conduct this D.Min. action research project.

6. How will you get the participants' consent?

This D.Min. thesis project provides a consent form for the participants. The paper will state the participants being selected, what the project consists of, and if the potential participants agree to the terms of the consent form, they will be asked to sign the consent form. If the participants refuse to participate, the researcher will seek other members willing to participate.

7. Will you need any other resources or personal preparation, and if so, what?

The researcher will use additional books on Christian apologetics issues to create a more informed curriculum. The researcher desires to create a curriculum that is easy to comprehend and convey.

8. What is currently true regarding the problem you want to address?

The problem with this D.Min. thesis is that members of FBCTT need to be more literate in Christian apologetics. This fact is based on years of pastoral observation and a lack of apologetic preaching and teaching from the present Pastor. The researcher of FBCTT was not introduced to this religious, academic discipline until a few years ago. After learning about this theological discipline, the researcher was led by God to enroll at Liberty University in the

Rawlings School of Divinity D.Min. program concentrating on theology and apologetics to equip himself better to equip the members of FBCTT.

Data triangulation was employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected for this study on biblical illiteracy in Christian Apologetics. Multiple data sources, including interviews, surveys, and document analysis, were utilized to triangulate the data. This approach allowed the study to develop a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. The data were analyzed and interpreted to enable a deeper exploration of the research questions and the development of meaningful conclusions.

Planning Questions: Secondary Questions

1. When and how will you begin the project once IRB approves you?

The timeline for this D.Min. thesis project will be determined based on IRB approval. After the approval by the IRB, the researcher will seek the church members' approval and the participants' consent. The researcher will have individual in-person interviews with the participants and give a rating scale survey at the end of each interview. After these two steps, the researcher will proceed with the rest of the D.Min. thesis project.

2. What will be a reasonable trial period to evaluate your intervention?

For this action research required for the D.Min., a fair trial period would be six months. The researcher is considering time for the following: approval of IRB, support of the Church, participant consent, five in-person interviews, five in-person rating scale surveys, curriculum development, teaching the curriculum, four re-interviews, and four re-rating scale surveys. The

researcher also considers the time allotted for uncertainties hindering any aspect of this D.Min. thesis project.

3. What are your criteria for evaluating, i.e., what do you see as a successful outcome in this intervention?

The first successful outcome of this intervention is that members of FBCTT will increase their knowledge of Christian apologetics and become strong and active defenders of the faith. The second successful outcome is that members will use this knowledge to evangelize the Church's community. The third successful outcome is an African American congregation engaging in a religious discipline not often heard of in the experience of an African American Baptist Church.

4. How will the new approach be compared to the old method or what was done before?

As previously mentioned, the African American Church experience rarely, if ever, mentions this religious discipline. The researcher's approach will be new to this five-year-old congregation. The researcher must be aware of a prior approach in this setting because he was newly introduced to the religious discipline. The researcher's approach is a teaching approach integrated with dialogue learning. FBCTT will embrace the basics of Christian apologetics through dialogue learning.

5. What specific tools will you use to gather data and measure the effects of the intervention?

The researcher at FBCTT will use a purposive sampling method. This method involves selecting units with specific characteristics needed for the sample, making it a non-probability sampling technique. The methodology's goal is to investigate the biblical illiteracy of the

members of FBCOTT, who need to be more knowledgeable about the basics of Christian apologetics. Purposive sampling is a popular method used by researchers.

6. Are you using triangulation? If so, what are they?

The researcher at FBCTT plans to use interviews to collect data at the beginning of this project. The questionnaire presented will also include a discussion. These triangulations will form the basis of this project's sum.

7. Will you keep a reflective journal to bracket any biases during the project?

The researcher plans to keep a reflective journal throughout the D.Min. project to analyze pre- and post-test observations. By keeping a reflective journal, the researcher will learn the results' effects after this D.Min. project. The journal's results will provide an opportunity to help pastors who use this D.Min. project to teach their congregations the basics of Christian apologetics.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

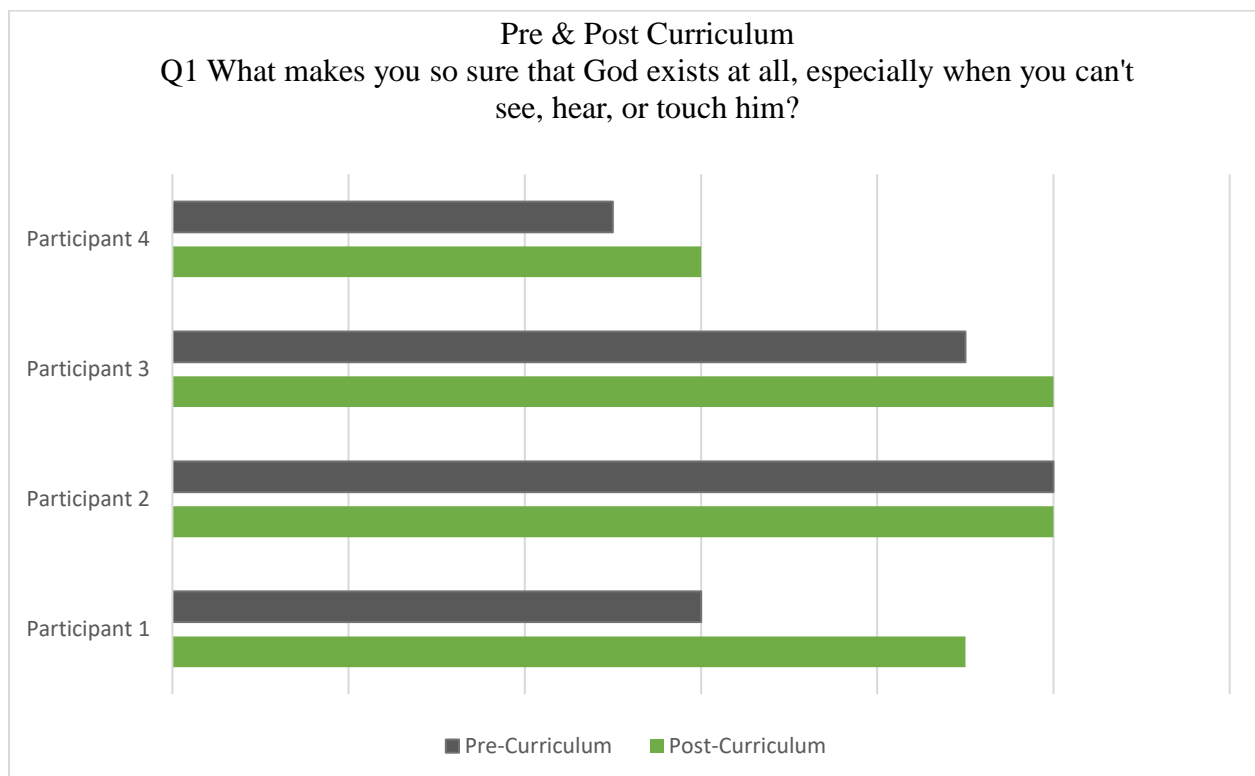
Four members of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, participated in this D.Min. action research project by providing their consent. On July 5, 2021, the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas sanctuary hosted a focus group interview where the participants answered seven questions to the best of their ability without any prior knowledge. The participants were evaluated using a rating survey to rate how they answered each question. The evaluation was conducted without the knowledge of Christian apologetics.

The researcher developed a curriculum centered around the questions asked in the focus group after the interview. This curriculum was taught over eight weeks by the Pastor. After completing the eight-week course, another focus group interview was held on January 13, 2022, in the sanctuary of the Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Tx. The participants were asked the same seven questions as in the first focus group interview on July 5, 2021. The participants provided different answers from the first focus group interview. The participants were given a second interview to answer the same seven questions.

The participants' improved performance in the second focus group interview could be attributed to the curriculum taught over the eight-week course. This improvement may have

impacted their post-rating survey results as well. After evaluating the participants' pre & post-focus-group interviews, the researcher observed the differences in the curriculum. In chapter five, the researcher will present the data results by evaluating each question using a percentages chart and explaining these results. The bar chart will be an excellent tool to visualize the participants' self-ratings before and after the curriculum. It will help to show the improvements made in each question.

This will help the readers understand the bar charts and how to interpret the data. It is essential to understand that the gray bars represent the participants' self-ratings before the curriculum, and the green bars represent their self-ratings after the curriculum. By comparing the gray and green bars, we can see how much the participants' knowledge has improved.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that there are things created in the world that only God created as a result of these things made; it serves as evidence for the existence of God. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 6. In percentage, that is 60%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating the cosmological argument that everything that had an effect first had a cause and that all causes come from God, especially cosmologically. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 reaffirmed their response in the post-interview from what the participant stated in the pre-interview. This participant's apologetic about the existence of God is firmly based on the cosmological argument.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating their belief in the existence of God because of answered prayers. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question with their belief in the existence of God with the teleological design argument as the basis of their faith. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 learned of intelligent design because the curriculum discussed this argument as evidence of the existence of God.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3- answered this question by stating that the things around us serve as a testament to the evidence of God's existence. Participant 3 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3- answered by stating their belief in the existence of God based on the teleological argument. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

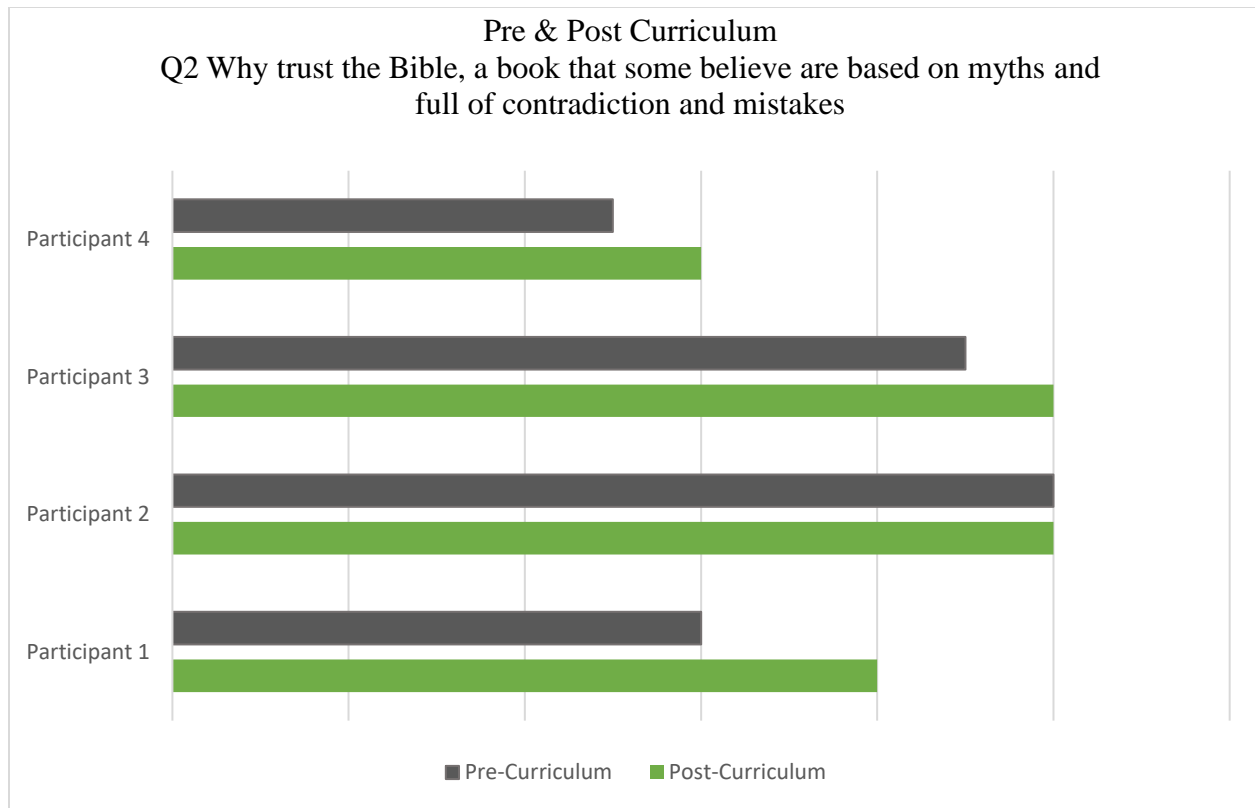
Data Analysis: Participant number 3, in their pre-curriculum answer, answered correctly but not from an apologetical position; neither did the participant know the apologetical terminology as they could use it until after the curriculum exposed these terms.

Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4- answered this question by stating that God exists based on man's design. Which is the anthropological argument. Participant 3 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 5. In percentage, that is 50%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4- answered by stating their belief in the existence of God based on the moral argument. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Data Analysis: Participant number 4 answered correctly in their pre-curriculum answer from an apologetical position; the participant learned the apologetical terminology as they could use it after the curriculum exposed those terms to the participants. This participant used two arguments without knowing the apologetical terms.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that the Bible is a book for instructions in righteousness, and they trust the Bible because they trust God. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 6. In percentage, that is 60%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that they trust the Bible because of the divine inspiration of the Bible. This participant also gave a valid reason for trusting in the Bible, which is the divine inspiration of scripture. This participant pointed out the four gospel writers' similarities in their writings that serve as a testament to scripture's divine inspiration. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 view of why they trust the Bible is more substantial after the curriculum enlightens them about scripture being a book that is the inerrant and the authentic Word of God.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating the reason they trust the Bible is that God's word is alive and active within their own life, its applicable to all, and always it is not just dead pieces of writing; it is backed up, edited, brought into remembrance, and verified by God's Holy Spirit. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating the same answer they gave the first time. Participant 2 post-rated their response on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 could have answered differently. However, the answer given is still correct.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating that the Bible is a book for instructions in righteousness, and they trust Bible because they trust in God.

Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating they trust the because of the divine inspiration of God. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

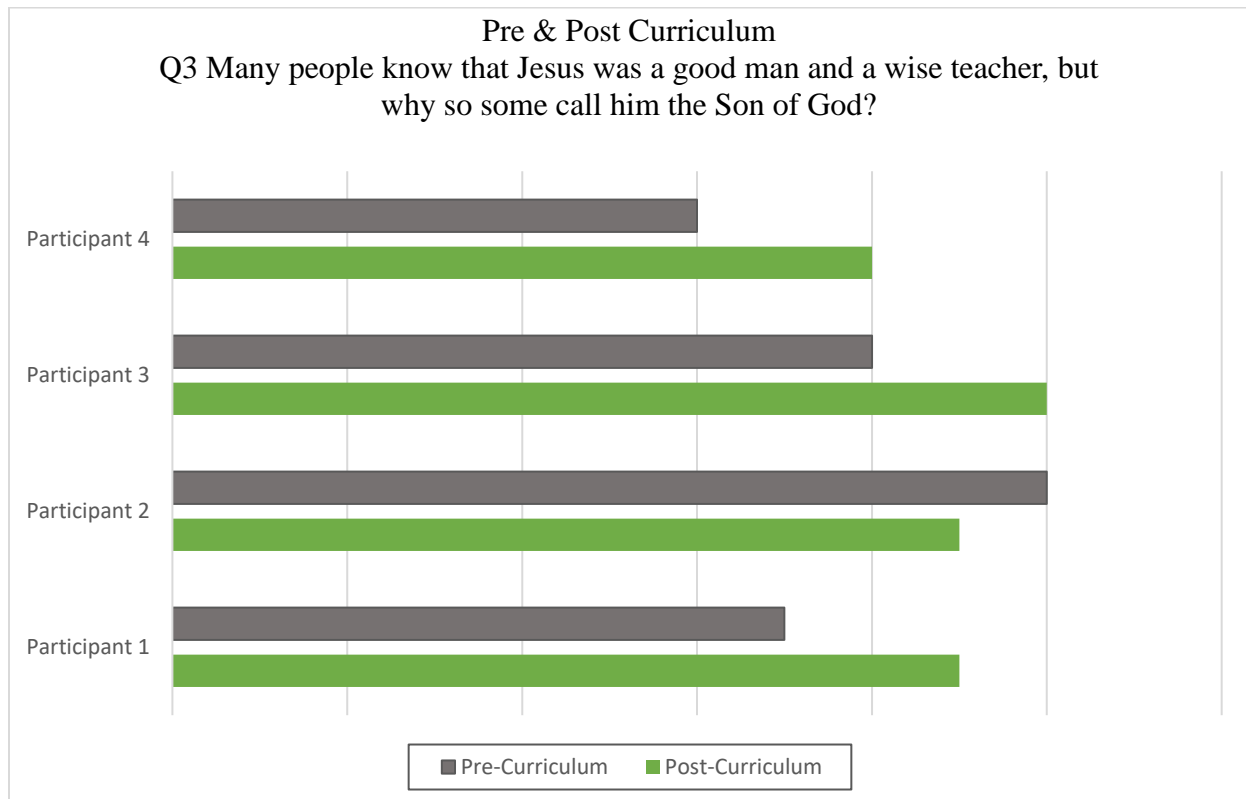
Data Analysis: Participant view of why they trust the Bible is more vital after the curriculum enlightens them about scripture as the inerrant and the authentic Word of God.

Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating they trust the Bible because of the fulfillment of the prophecy that is unfolding today. Participant 4 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 5. In percentage, that is 50%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating they trust the Bible because of the promises in the Word of God and the salvific gift of God as a gift from God. Participant 4 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 50%

Data Analysis: Participant 4 view of why they trust the Bible is a clear view of why all Christians should trust the Word of God because the prophecies that are fore stated are unfolding and because of the promises that God has given to all believers who trust in the supremacy of the Word of God.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that Jesus was the Son of God because of the many times Jesus called on God, His Father. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating Jesus is the Son of God because of biblical evidence of the two being as one. They are equal in essence but different in function. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 views are biblically based and in agreement with the taught curriculum. Both the Pre and Post answer was from what the Bible teaches.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that people call Jesus the Son of God because the Bible declares Jesus as the Son from Genesis to Revelation. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating Jesus is the Son of God because Jesus came from God, God sent him, and Jesus always did the will of God. Jesus often referred to God as Father. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 views align with what the Bible teaches. Also, the participant stated that every New Testament writer refers to Jesus as the "Christ," or Messiah, the Son of God. Matt. 1:1 Mark 1:1 Luke 9:20; John 4:25-26.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating the virgin birth. That is because Jesus was from the seed of God, which makes Him the Son of God. Participant 3 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating the baptism experience of Jesus as proof of Sonship. Matthew 3:16-17 (NLT2) "After his baptism, as Jesus came out of the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. Moreover, a voice from Heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 3 views are biblically based and in agreement with the taught curriculum. Both the Pre and Post answer was from what the Bible teaches.

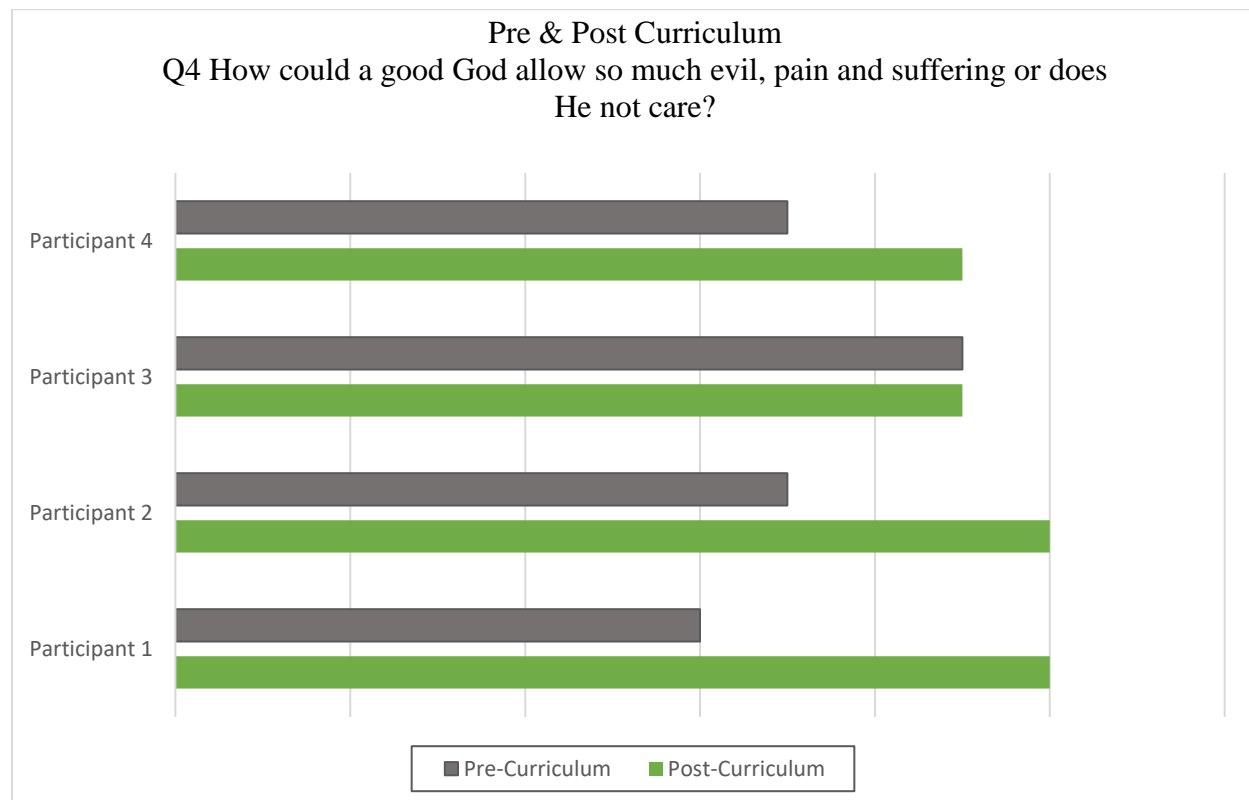
Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that Mary, the mother of Jesus, did not get pregnant by a human being, making Him the Son of God. Participant 4 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 6. In percentage, that is 60%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that Jesus was called the Son of God by the voice that spoke from the heavens. Because the scripture declared Him to be the firstborn, the participant also stated that Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. Participant 4 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: This participant gave answers like the others, but this participant gave more in-depth reasoning for what makes Jesus the Son of God. This participant's knowledgeable

answer is evidence of the curriculum addressing the core reason of what makes Jesus the Son of God.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that God allows these things to happen due to dependence. Without pain and suffering, there would be no need to depend on God. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 6. In percentage, that is 60%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that God gives us free will and is still good even though we deal with sin. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: This participant's pre-curriculum answer was more robust than their post-answer. Their post answer is also correct.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this by stating that God allows suffering because of His sovereignty. It is God's prerogative to allow suffering and pain. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question because we sin why so much evil, pain, and suffering exists in the world. It is not that God allows it per se but because sin exists. Suffering and pain are the results of sin. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10 In percentage that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 2's post-Curriculum answer was more potent because of the curriculum taught. Participant 2 understood that evil exists because sin exists in the world. This is what was conducted from the curriculum.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating that God allows suffering to remind us that the world is imperfect. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this by stating that we learned that evil exists because sin exists. Also, this participant noted that God did not create evil; instead, he gave us a choice. We can choose to follow him or choose sin and evil. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

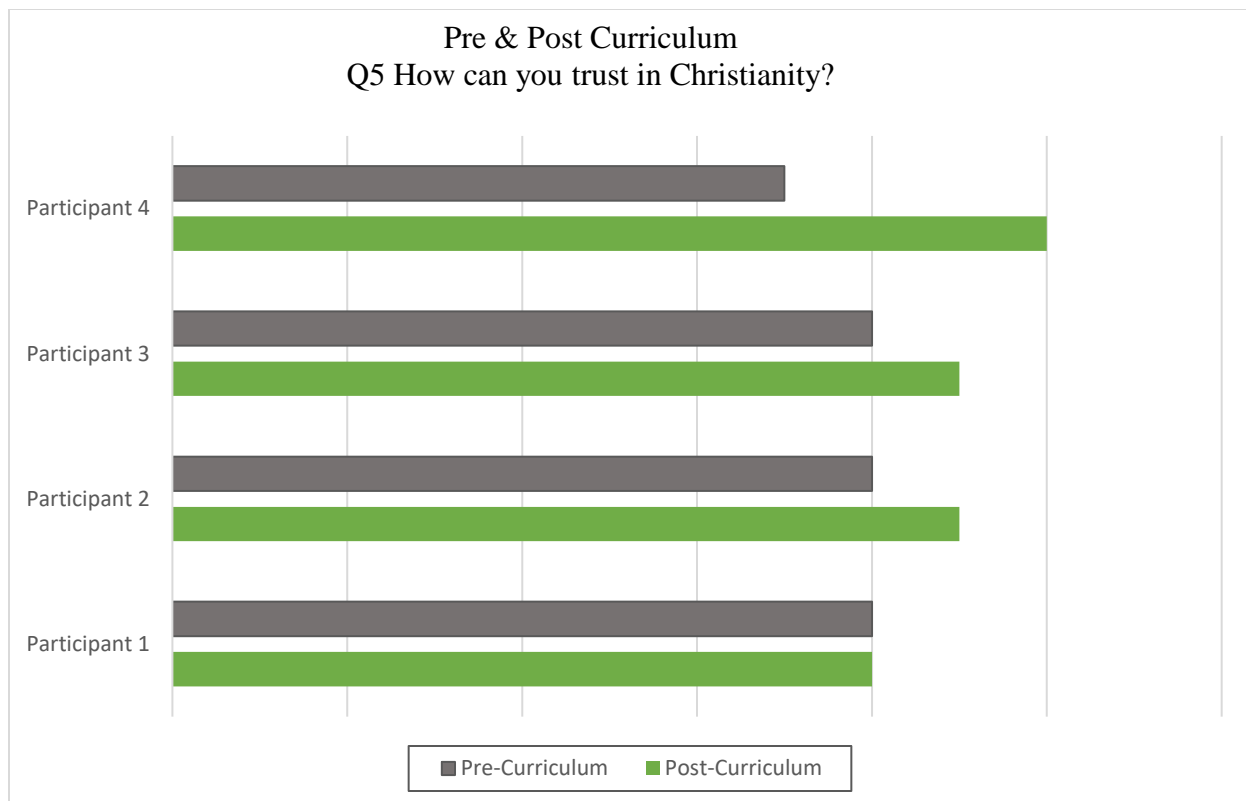
Data Analysis: Participant 3 Post-Curriculum answer was more robust because of the curriculum taught. Participant 3 understood that evil exists because sin exists in the world. This is what was conducted from the curriculum.

Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that God cares, but because of our earthly parents, Adam and Eve's acts of disobedience, sin entered the world, and as a result of this evil, pain, and suffering are the consequences of disobedience. Participant 4 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that God created us to have free will. Evil results from the misuse of our free will. The participant indicated that much of the suffering people face in this world has been caused by humans hurting their fellow humans. That sin also affects nature, and natural calamities happen because we live in a fallen world. Participant 4 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 4 had a solid theological position for their answer. Their answer is also in connection with what was taught in the curriculum.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that they trust Christianity because of what the Bible teaches. Also, their belief in Christianity is supported when a Christian's disposition is Christ-like. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that Christianity can be trusted because of the foundation it was built upon; also, Christianity can be trusted because Jesus alone was free from sin; therefore, he is the only person completely free from sin.

Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 answered this question better after the curriculum was taught. This participant learned that Christianity can be trusted not on the source of others' lives but because Jesus is the only sinless person and because Jesus is the founder of Christianity.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that they trust Christianity because Christianity is about following Jesus Christ. The participant indicated that trusting in Christianity should not be trusted because of the actions of others. Also, they trust in Christianity because of the act of love from the founder of Christianity. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that Christianity is the only religion that God reaches down to man. Christianity is the only religion in that God came down to man. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 answered the same question in their pre-and post-answers. However, believe that Participant 2 had a general idea of this question.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating they trust in Christianity because they trust God. Participant 3 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating they trust in Christianity because of its uniqueness, unlike any other religion, and because of the resurrection of our Lord. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

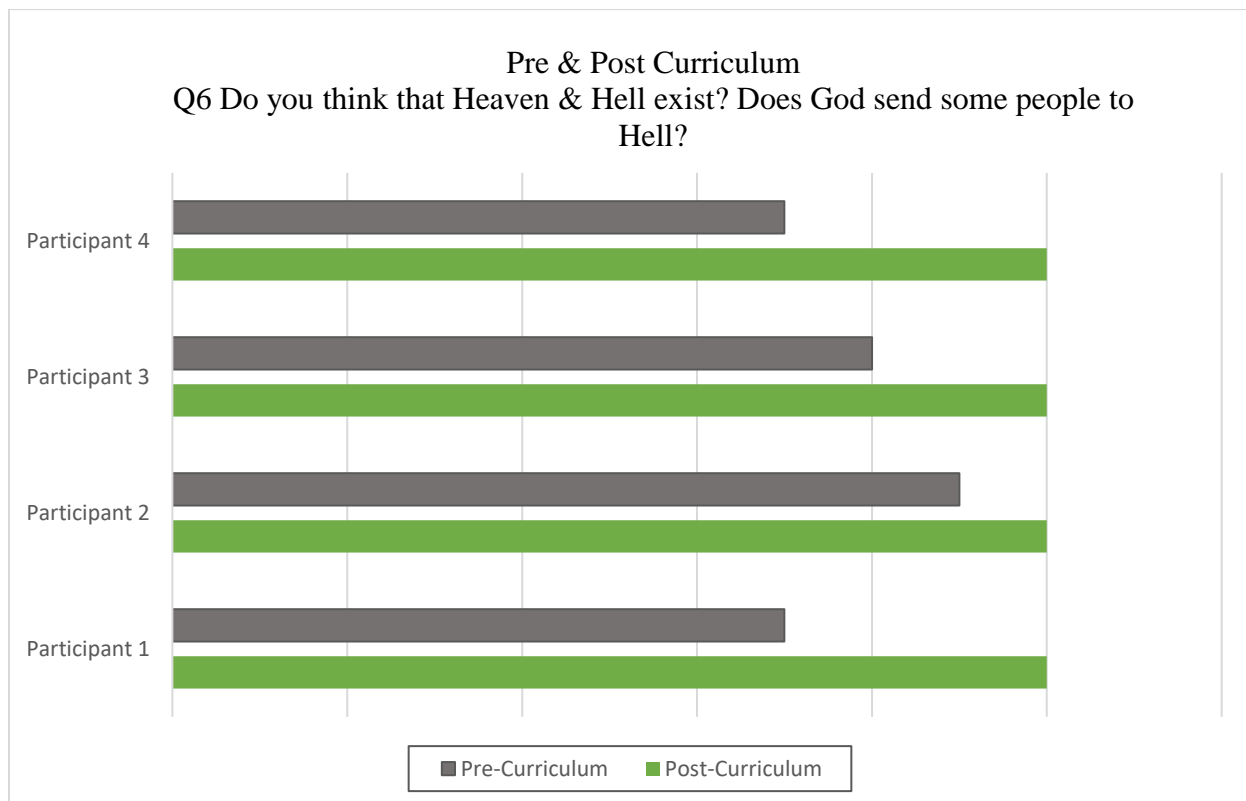
Data Analysis: Participant 3 answered this question with a better knowledge of Christianity because of the curriculum taught. This participant begins to identify other reasons why Christianity can be trusted.

Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating they trust in Christianity because they read the Word of God, their prayer life, and God is answering prayers. Participant 4 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating they trust in Christianity because of the resurrection of our Lord; Christianity does not have a door do not system to appease God. Christianity is proof of who Jesus is and the benefits of the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross. Participant 4 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, which is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 4 answered this question with a better knowledge of Christianity because of the curriculum taught. This participant understood that trusting in Christianity comes from a relationship with Christ, the founder of Christianity.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that God separated the Heavens and Hell and, according to John 14, Jesus is coming back for those who have accepted Him as Lord. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that God created Heaven and hell and sent people neither to Heaven nor hell; instead, it is based on one's free will that determines where an individual will spend eternity. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 answered this question better in the post-curriculum with an understanding that Heaven and hell are real places and only the free will of a person that has been given to every man by God can send you either to Heaven or hell.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 said that Heaven and Hell are real places. This participant also said they strongly believe Heaven exists because God would not require us to accept Jesus as Lord to leave us here. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that the Bible teaches that there is a heaven and a hell; however, hell was not designed for people but the devil and the fallen angels. The participant also stated that going to Heaven or hell is always the believer's choice. God never sends a person to hell or Heaven. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 answered this question better in the post-curriculum interview with an understanding that Heaven and hell are real places and only the free will of a person that has been given to every man by God can send you either to Heaven or hell. Also, the participant strongly believes that God would not require us to accept Jesus as Lord to leave us here on earth. John 14.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating that Heaven and Hell are real places. This participant also said they strongly believe Heaven exists because God would not require us to accept Jesus as Lord to leave us here. Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating that the Bible teaches that there is a heaven and a hell; however, hell was not designed for people but the devil and the fallen angels. The participant also stated that going to Heaven or hell is always the believer's choice. God never sends a person to hell or Heaven. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analyzation: Participant 3 answered this question better in the post-curriculum with an understanding that Heaven and hell are real places and only the free will of a person that has been given to every man by God can send you either to Heaven or hell. Also, the participant strongly believes that God would not require us to accept Jesus as Lord to leave us here on earth. John 14.

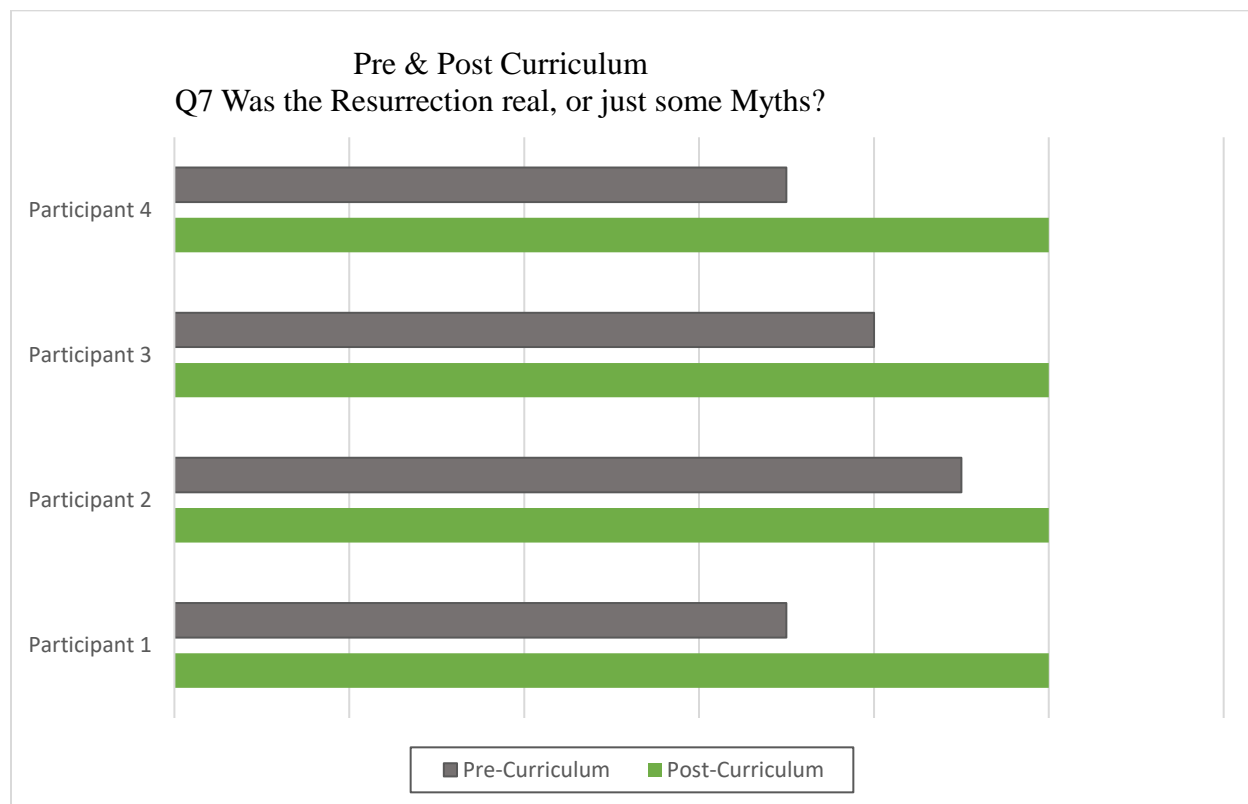
Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that Heaven exists because the model prayer indicates that God was in Heaven. The participant also stated that God

does not send people to hell it is the choice in which they make. The participant used Luke 16:19-31 in stressing that going to hell is by choice. Participant 4 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 6. In percentage, that is 60%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating that the Bible teaches that there is a heaven and a hell. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 5. In percentage, that is 50%

Data Analysis: Participant 4 answered this question better in the pre-curriculum with an understanding that Heaven and hell are real places. Also, the participant used John 14 to press their claim for Heaven. Also, 2 Cor 4:17-18 states that what is unseen is eternal.



Participant 1

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating was real because the Bible teaches the resurrection. Also, the evidence that was left behind is an indication of the

resurrection being real. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 1 answered this question by stating that Christianity's foundation is the resurrection. If Jesus had never rosed, Christianity would have never been established. Participant 1 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9 In percentage, which is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 1 answered this with a firm conviction that the resurrection is accurate based on the evidence given in scripture. Also, it serves as the foundation for Christianity.

Participant 2

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that throughout the Gospels, Jesus himself predicts his betrayal, death, and resurrection: "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" [Matthew 16:21](#) Participant 2 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 8. In percentage, that is 80%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 2 answered this question by stating that the resurrection was real because of the appearance of Jesus to various people. The participant also stated that scripture points out at least ten appearances of Jesus. Participant 2 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 2 answered this with a new knowledge of evidence that proves the resurrection is real. This is a result of the curriculum being taught with efficiency.

Participant 3

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by pointing out that If Christ has not been raised, (1) Christian preaching is useless; (2) Christian faith is useless; (3) Christians are false witnesses about God; (4) Christian faith is futile; (5) Christians are unforgiven and left in their sins; (6) those who have died in Christian hope are lost; and (7) those who hope in Christ are supremely pitiable since their hope ends with this life. In other words, Christianity without a risen Christ is pointless. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7. In percentage, that is 70%. In percentage, that is 70%

Post-Curriculum: Participant 3 answered this question by stating that the disciples preached Jesus Christ's resurrection, knowing they could lose their lives. Also, each place where Jesus appeared, these places still exist today. Participant 3 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 10. In percentage, that is 100%

Data Analysis: Participant 3 answered with some factors taught from the curriculum. Therefore, this participant was able to strongly exhibit creditable answers for both the pre and the post.

Participant 4

Pre-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by stating they believed the resurrection was natural for the following reasons, 1. The empty Tomb 2. The grave clothes are left behind. 3. The appearances after his death. Participant 1 pre-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 7.

Post-Curriculum: Participant 4 answered this question by reinstating their previous answer and stating that if the resurrection was a myth, why do many Christians and other religious people visit the grave site? Participant 4 post-rated their answer on a scale of 1-10 and circled 9. In percentage, that is 90%

Data Analysis: Participant 4 answered this with a firm conviction that the resurrection is accurate based on the evidence given in scripture.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Importance of this Research

The Researcher of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, discovered Christian apologetics and soon realized that the congregation was biblically illiterate in Christian apologetics. The Researcher's passion for becoming a sounder defender of faith inspired the research. After reading *"Is Your Church Ready?"* by Ravi Zacharias, the Researcher was motivated to conduct this research. We are called to "be prepared (always!) to answer everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have," doing this with "gentleness and respect." Unfortunately, many in the Church are not motivated to defend their faith today. As this book points out, several Christians are not ready to give a reason for hope.

This research is essential because it provides a practical method to combat biblical illiteracy in Christian apologetics if a researcher desires to prepare their congregation. Apologetics is not for proving one's intellectual ability but for intellectual persuasion for the cause of souls being saved. Acts 26:28 was the biblical motivating objective for this research because preparing this congregation in Christian apologetics would aid in leading people to Christ. The Apostle Paul put King Agrippa on the spot by asking, "Do you believe in the Scripture, King Agrippa?" Paul answered his question, convinced that the King did believe in the Old Testament Scripture. Paul noticed some interest or conviction in working in Festus and was appealing to him to come forth for Christ. God created the Church as the primary institution of evangelism and apologetics.

The Power of Curriculum

The Researcher created a seven-week curriculum consisting of seven lessons to address the areas of Christian apologetics where the congregation showed signs of biblical illiteracy. The

Researcher believed that a well-designed and well-executed curriculum was essential to the congregation's success in learning Christian apologetics. The Researcher recognized that a curriculum was crucial to addressing this research problem for several reasons.

- **The Curriculum gives structure.** The Researcher and congregation have a systematic structure for what they are being taught and what they will be learning through the Curriculum.
- **The Curriculum Creates Measurable Benchmarks and Learning Outcomes.** Researchers using a high-quality curriculum can easily access, administer, and evaluate assessments. A system with checkpoints and benchmarks helps the Researcher determine how their congregation responds to the lesson plans and where adjustments are necessary.
- **The Curriculum opens the doors for collaboration.** Regular discussions about the Curriculum involve all stakeholders, including the Researcher, other Church leaders, and congregants. This helps identify strengths and gaps that need attention. Researchers can also share best practices, knowledge, and resources with congregants in these discussions.
- **The Curriculum provides measurable targets.** A good curriculum sets measurable outcomes and tracks progress throughout the process to determine whether it is successful. Without specific goals around how your congregants learn, measuring success is not easy.
- **The Curriculum also serves as reference material.** Congregants may often need to remember what they were taught, desire a refresher, or want to refer back to the material.

The Intervention Process

The Researcher's intervention process fell below expectations. The first problem was doing a focus group intervention instead of conducting one-on-one interviews with each participant. The second problem was using the focus group method, which led to participants repeating each other's answers. The Researcher realized that a one-on-one approach would have resulted in different answers.

The Researcher believes that the study should have been done with outsiders, but due to the survey being a ministry context project, the Researcher had to use people within his ministry. The third problem was the need for more dedication from the participants. One participant dropped out, while the others did not study the material for the post-focus group as well as the Researcher would have liked. The final problem in the intervention process was documenting the pre- and post-answers from the participants. If the Researcher had conducted one-on-one interviews instead of a focus group, documenting the results would have been more straightforward.

Although the intervention process fell short of expectations, there were still some successful aspects. The first was the focus group, which demonstrated the participants' biblical literacy in the context of Christian apologetics, as required by the study's title. The second success was seeing how the Curriculum positively impacted the pre- and post-answers from the participants. The final success was the learning, loving, and laughter the participants experienced throughout the intervention process, which ignited a desire to learn more about Christian apologetics.

The Relevancy of This Study

This study is relevant because of the times in which we live. We live in a post-everything world, where one can believe what one wants, there is an idea that we can be our own God, there is no need for morality, and there is skepticism about God, the Bible, Jesus, and even the Church. As Zack Eswine stated in his book *Preaching in a Post-Everything World*, "We must remind ourselves that the components of a culture are rarely 'either this or that.' Generations are complex. A post-everything world is saturated with multiple contexts."

The study was relevant for two reasons, as Craig A. Loscalzo mentions in his book *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World*. Christian apologetics has two immediate goals: (1) to present unbelievers with a viable understanding of the Christian faith so they may want to make it theirs, and (2) to instruct, confirm, and affirm those who already believe in the faith. Alister McGrath states, "The problem is not simply how to make the Christian faith credible to the world, but for Christians to live consistently and coherently under their claims of love and justice. This is not a matter of the world setting the Church's agenda but of the Church fulfilling its own. For the Church to be the Church, it must be concerned in transforming the world, after the likeness of the homeland, as it can."

Another aspect of the study's relevance is the reporting statistics. A survey from 2021 found that only 11% of Americans read the Bible daily. Trends in reading habits over four years showed that many Americans never read the Bible; however, in 2021, this number dropped to 29% of respondents.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Amy Watson, "Frequency of Reading the Bible Among Adults in the United States from 2018 to 2021," July 22, 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/299433/bible-readership-in-the-usa>

Bible readership varies across demographics, with Millennials being the most likely to have ever read the Bible, whereas the most frequent readers were over 70 years old. Older readers favored traditional books, with 91% opting for a print version of the Bible to read over other formats.

Although statistics show that fewer people are reading the Bible, there is still a genuine desire among the American population, with 56% of those asked in 2019 expressing a wish to read it. Attitude changes have not been drastic, but disengagement with the Christian Scripture has been gradual.

Why are fewer people reading the Bible?

Indeed, it is no small undertaking, as the Bible is approximately 1,200 pages long, comparable to the famous epic "Lord of the Rings" series by J.R.R. Tolkien. Other frustrations with the Bible and reasons for disengagement could come from complexities in language or simply not knowing when to use it. Despite these challenges in reading the text, a considerable proportion of the U.S. population considers their belief in God compatible with the Bible's representation.⁷⁸

The most relevant aspect of this study for the Church learning Christian apologetics is learning to use apologetics in its proper place. Christian apologetics has become an effective means of evangelism. Since the Enlightenment, a growing culture of skepticism and cynicism has created a "cultural chasm" that keeps unbelievers from the cross. To get beyond the cultural chasm and face the "cross" chasm so that unbelievers can hear the message of the Gospel, clearing up misunderstandings about God, the Bible, the deity of Christ, the problem of pain, the

⁷⁸ Ibid., 59.

Church, and so on helps this process. An unbeliever hearing the Gospel may seem indifferent, resistant, or hesitant without practical apologetics.⁷⁹

The Results

This study showed that Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, members were biblically illiterate about Christian apologetics. However, after a well-constructed Christian Apologetic Curriculum designed particularly for this Church and its focus group participants, one of the results revealed that many other churches are also biblically illiterate in Christian apologetics, particularly in the African American Church. African American apologist Lisa Field was interviewed and asked, "What are the unique challenges facing the black church today, and where does apologetics fit in?" Lisa Field responded by saying:

Many millennials leave religion because they feel like the Church is not relevant. Millennials are the most well-educated generation of African Americans, and as they become educated, they ask different questions and are exposed to different ideas. In the '60s and '70s, many black churches thought classical apologetics was irrelevant because most black people did not question God and Christianity's existence. Nevertheless, many in this generation are, which is partly why they go to the Hebrew Israelites and syncretism."⁸⁰

Lisa Field's statement validates the need for Christian apologetics to be taught more now than ever. We live in a generation that no longer considers what religious people say as truth. Some researchers desire the truth more than ever. The Church must be ready to give apologetic answers.

Jason K. Allen, in an article entitled "Are you ready to defend the Faith?" stated:

While every generation is called to defend the faith, our generation especially is called to this responsibility. The twenty-first century is the age of apostasy. Theological liberalism has fully metastasized globally. Shipwrecked ministers, undermined faith, dead churches, and dying denominations are in its wake.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁰ Jasmine Holmes, "Rethinking Apologetics for the Black Church," July 18, 2018.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/july-web-only/rethinking-apologetics-for-black-church.html>

In addition to theological liberalism, we are also confronted by social and cultural upheaval. This makes the twenty-first century a uniquely challenging and exhilarating time to minister. "With the sexual revolution now coming in full bloom and the American public having broadly accepted same-sex marriage, pressure for the Church to fold on sexuality, gender, and marriage will only intensify. Orthodoxy has never been popular, and it will be decreasingly so."

"There is an unavoidable collision of worldviews, and the irony is that the more our culture tries to silence us, the more the minister must speak because the Church must be strengthened and warned. Now is the time for the most muscular men to preach the most powerful sermons in the context of the most vital churches. You do not need to be a trained apologist. Though God gifts His Church with such persons, that may not necessarily be your calling. However, you must be ready and willing to study and speak the truths of Scripture in your context and with your abilities."⁸¹

Too many churches do not make apologetics part of their teaching, preaching, or outreach. Some even ridicule it as hostile to faith. However, reading The Book of Acts, the Church grew through the reasonable defense of Christianity and signs and wonders. The Holy Spirit was behind both. Peter and Stephen argued that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. Paul reasoned with the Greeks and other non-Jewish unbelievers. When he preached in Athens, he gave a profound and intellectually challenging defense of the Gospel and called up short the false religions and worldviews of the Athenians (Acts 17:16-32).

⁸¹ Allen, "Are You Ready to Defend the Faith?" <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/are-you-ready-to-defend-the-faith/>

The Need for Christian Apologetics: How Can Apologetics Be Brought into the Church?

First, churches should have a Christian Education ministry that teaches courses on various topics, such as the uniqueness of Christ, the problem of suffering, or the challenge of Islam. Second, churches can sponsor apologetic outreach events in which gifted speakers take on hot topics in apologetics. Third, churches can develop an apologetic team of leaders passionate about Christian apologetics. Fourth, the Pastor should select a month to develop a series of teachings or sermons on Christian apologetic topics. Finally, churches should have a night of Q&A on Christian Apologetic questions that the congregation and community may have, which allows the Pastor and the Apologetic Team to engage with the congregation while fulfilling 1 Peter 3:15 within the local Church.

The Takeaway

- The first takeaway is the reality of biblical illiteracy in the local Church. This research helped to see how biblically illiterate the people were in this subject matter. Every Pastor, at some point in ministry, should desire to see where their congregations are from a biblical literacy perspective.
- The second takeaway is the reality of Christian apologetics being taught in the local Church. Skepticism is in and outside the local Church, and addressing those in the Church and outside the Church is essential. Why is it important to address this from within the congregation? Congregants are the ones that will help in evangelizing the outside, and they must be prepared to give answers to those who ask questions about their hope. Ephesians 4:12 indicates clearly that the point of God calling people to be

apostles, prophets, evangelists, researchers, and teachers is so that every Christian can serve in the way they are called to do, for the building up of the whole body.⁸²

- The third takeaway was seeing the desire of congregants to learn biblical truth. The participants and congregants showed an eagerness of wanting to learn the material that was presented in each class session. This teaches that Pastors cannot assume that people in the congregation are well-versed in biblical knowledge.
- The fourth takeaway is from Chapter 1, the ministry context of the D.Min. Action Research Thesis Project was Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, identified as being biblically illiterate in Christian apologetics. The Researcher saw this as a problem and aimed to address it by developing a curriculum to educate the ministry and equip them to become defenders of the faith.
- The fifth takeaway is from Chapter 2, the literature review. Chapter 2 of the D. Min Action Research Thesis Project provided a literature review that shaped the study. The literature review presented relevant information on Christian apologetic issues and provided insight into the subject matter. The chapter discussed the various sources used in the literature review and how they contributed to developing the research question. The literature review formulated the Curriculum used in teaching Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. The literature was valuable to both the Researcher and the study, providing insight into the subject matter and helping to shape the Curriculum. The theological foundation provided solid biblical support for the Christian apologetic issues addressed in the study and the challenges the Church

⁸² N. T. Wright, *New Testament for Everyone - Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 48.

would face. The theological foundation was essential in providing a solid grounding for the study and ensuring that the Curriculum was firmly rooted in biblical principles. The theoretical foundation allowed the Researcher to provide models that would give justification for the research that was conducted.

- The sixth takeaway is from Chapter 3, the methodology. Chapter 3 allowed the Researcher to design the D. Min Action Research Thesis Project curriculum. The Curriculum included various teaching methods, such as lectures, discussions, and hands-on activities, and was implemented over several months. The effectiveness of the intervention was evaluated through pre-and post-tests and through feedback from the ministry.
- The seventh takeaway is derived from Chapter 4. Chapter 4 of the D. Min Action Research Thesis Project was the results chapter. This chapter allowed the Researcher to present the study's findings, including the pre-and post-test results and the feedback received from the ministry. The chapter provided an analysis of the data collected and discussed the implications of the findings for the Church and future research.
- The final takeaway is Chapter 5, the conclusion. Chapter 5 of the D. Min Action Research Thesis Project was the conclusion chapter. This chapter provided a summary of the study and discussed the implications of the findings for the ministry of Faith Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas. The chapter also discussed the study's limitations and provided recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A.

Christian Apologetic Curriculum



Dr. Maurice F. McMillion, Teacher

Table Content

1. What makes you so sure that God exists at all, especially when you cannot see, hear or touch him?
2. Why trust the Bible, a book that some believe are based on Myths and full of Contradictions?
3. Many people know that Jesus was a good man and a wise teacher, but why do some call him the Son of God?
4. How could a good God allow so much Evil, Pain, and Suffering?
5. How can you trust in Christianity?
6. Do you think that Heaven & Hell exists, and does God send some people to Hell?
7. Was the Resurrection real, or just some Myths?
8. Do you believe that Jesus is coming back? Is there a Second Coming?

Week One – Lesson One

“Defending The Faith & The Existence of God”

What makes you so sure that God exists at all especially when you can't see, hear, or touch him?

1. What is Defending Faith? If we are going to defend our Christian faith effectively, we must first understand exactly what it is. As "Christians," we must follow Christ. He is our "example," the "author and finisher of our faith" ; Heb. 12:2). All evangelical Christians, regardless of church denomination, believe in Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God, and have accepted Him as their Savior and Lord. They seek to obey His Great Commission to all His followers: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Therefore, we ought to teach His "all things" the same way He did. He is our authority for He created and upholds all things (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:3).

Among many other truths which He taught, there are two basic doctrines on which all the others depend. One is the absolute verbal inerrancy of Scripture; the other is the special creation of all things by God in the beginning.

The problem is that many Christians, who *believe* that they believe these truths, disagree on what they mean. Therefore, on the assumption that all who really believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will

accept His authority as to what He understood to be their meaning, let us look first at what He taught about the Bible and then at what He taught about creation.

In the days when He was on earth, He had access only to the Old Testament, of course, but the Gospel records make it clear that He accepted these Scriptures as coming without error from God. He quoted from them often and referred to them even more often, always indicating unequivocally that He accepted their records as true and authoritative.⁸³

2. What is Christian apologetics? Apologetics is the discipline that deals with a rational defense of the Christian faith whether the challenges come from inside or outside the church. The word “*apologetics*” comes from the Greek word *apologia* (1 Petere 3:15), which means to give a reason or defense. Apologetics answers crucial questions that are offensively, and apologetics answers any sincere objection or questions about the Christian Faith that are defensively. There are many good reasons why we need apologetics. First, God Commands the use of apologetics. Second, reason demands a defense. Third, the world needs apologetics.⁸⁴

EXISTENCE OF GOD

3. Does God Exist?

COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Logically speaking the cosmological argument for the existence of God is inductive: the evidence is examined and based on it a conclusion is drawn that God exists. The term *cosmological* comes from the Greek word *cosmos*, meaning “world.” This argument is since a cosmos, or world, exists. Because something cannot come from nothing, there must be an original cause that is the reason for the world’s existence. A man wears a Bulova wristwatch. Although he has never seen a watchmaker, the fact of the existence of the wristwatch suggests there is a Swiss watchmaker who made the watch. The cosmological argument says that every effect must have a cause.

Now for those unfamiliar with the *kalam* cosmological argument, I will provide a brief summary of it. The argument is a simple syllogism:

1. Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

⁸³ Henry Morris, *Defending the Faith: Upholding Biblical Christianity and the Genesis Record* (Green Forest: Master Books, 2018), 2060.

⁸⁴ Holden, *The Harvest Handbook of Apologetics*, 21.

As in the previous case, the teleological argument is inductive. *Teleological* comes from the Greek word *telos*, meaning “end.” The teleological argument may be defined thus: “Order and useful arrangement in a system imply intelligence and purpose in the organizing cause. The universe is characterized by order and useful arrangement; therefore, the universe has an intelligent and free cause.” The world everywhere evidences intelligence, purpose, and harmony; there must be a master architect behind all this evidence. The psalmist sees the magnificence of God’s creation in the universe and recognizes that it testifies to His existence (Ps. 8:3-4; 19:1-4). God’s harmony is observed throughout the universe and world: the sun being ninety-three million miles distant is precisely right for an adequate climate on earth; the moon’s distance of two hundred forty thousand miles provides tides at a proper level; the earth’s tilt provides the seasons. A conclusion is clear that God, the Master Designer, has created this magnificent universe. The alternative, that the world happened “by chance,” is no more possible than a monkey’s being able to create a work of Shakespeare on a typewriter by haphazard play on the keys.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The anthropological argument, which is also inductive and, is based on the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning “man.” Contrary to the secular humanist who sees man simply as a biological being, the Biblicist sees man as created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). The image of God in man is spiritual, not physical (cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Man is not simply a physical being, but also a moral being with a conscience, intellect, emotion, and will. Chafer states: “There are philosophical and moral features in man’s constitution which may be traced back to find their origin in God...A blind force...could never produce a man with intellect, sensibility, will, conscience, and inherent belief in a Creator.”

MORAL ARGUMENT

The moral argument is related to the anthropological argument (some combine the two) and can be seen as a further consideration of that argument. The moral argument acknowledges that man has an awareness of right and wrong, a sense of morality. Where did this sense of moral justice come from? If man is only a biological creature, why does he have a sense of moral obligation? Recognition of moral standards and concepts cannot be attributed to any evolutionary process. The Biblicist recognizes that God has placed a sense of moral justice within the human race in contradistinction to all other creation. Romans 2:14-15 indicates that Gentiles who have had no revelation of the law have an inner, moral witness placed there by God.

ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The ontological argument, distinct from the preceding arguments, is deductive and a priori; it begins with an assumption and then attempts to prove that assumption. It is less significant than the preceding arguments. The term *ontological* comes from the Greek present participle *ontos* (from the verb *eimi*) and means “being” or “existence.” The ontological argument is philosophical rather than inductive. The argument reasons: “If man could conceive of a Perfect God who does not exist, then he could conceive of someone greater than God himself which is impossible. Therefore, God exists.” The argument rests on the fact that all men have an

awareness of God. Because the concept of God is universal, God must have placed the idea within man. Anselm (1033? -1109) was the first proponent of this view. In the thinking of some, this argument has limited value, and few would affirm the usefulness of the ontological argument.⁸⁵ YouTube Video: God Is in Everything, Even Molecule That Holds Us Together. Start at 2:30

Summary of the Answer:

- We believe in many things that we don't see or directly experience with our senses. The virtue of love, a cold, or the wind being a great example. Yet we see evidence of love through its effects. Similarly, we can't see God, but we can believe in him based on his work in us and in the universe around us.
- **Defense Weapon:** Whatever has a beginning has a cause. Science shows us that the universe had a beginning. It therefore had a cause, one that's outside of itself and is therefore beyond time, space, matter, and physical energy. In other words, that cause has the characteristics of the God of the Bible.
- **Defense Weapon:** Our universe is fine-tuned with astounding "just-so" precision, in ways that make it a place that can support life. The odds of this happening on its own by sheer chance, are vanishingly small and thus point powerfully to an intelligent designer One whom the Bible calls God.

An Amazing Fact: Today, the Earth's axis is tilted 23.5 degrees from the plane of its orbit around the sun. The tilt in Earth's axis is strongly influenced by the way mass is distributed over the planet. Large amounts of land mass and ice sheets in the Northern Hemisphere make Earth top-heavy. If earth did not tilt and orbited in an upright position around the sun, there would be minor variations in temperatures and precipitation throughout each year as Earth moves slightly closer and farther away from the sun. Basically, we would not have any seasons. Today, instead of rotating upright, the Earth's axis is tilted 23.5 degrees. ... The Earth's axis always points in the same direction, so as the planet makes its way around the sun, each hemisphere sees varying amounts of sunlight. The earth rotates once every 23 hours, 56 minutes and 4.09053 seconds, called the sidereal period, and its circumference is roughly 40,075 kilometers. Thus, the surface of the earth at the equator moves at a speed of 460 meters per second--or roughly 1,000 miles per hour.

- **Defense Weapon:** Apart from God there can be no objective moral standards. But we clearly live in a world that has objective moral standards. Therefore, there must be a divine moral lawgiver. We refer to that lawgiver as "God."

⁸⁵ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 183.

Week Two – Lesson 2

“Defending the What is the Bible? Why we trust the Bible?”

Why trust the Bible, a book that some believe are based on Myths and full of Contradictions?

1. What is the Bible? - THE INSPIRATION OF the Bible is of great importance, for all Christian doctrines are developed from the Bible and rest upon it for authority. The conviction that the eternal God has revealed Himself to man has always been central in the Christian faith. Since man could never have discovered God by himself, Christians have always held that God makes Himself known to man supernaturally. The books that form the canon of the Old and New Testaments as originally written are fully inspired and entirely free from error. These books constitute the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

To accept the inspiration of the Bible does not mean that every passage can be explained or understood. There are depths in God’s Book that the mind of man cannot fathom, but far from being indications of weakness or failure, they serve to prove the Bible’s divine origin. If the intelligence of man could master the Bible from beginning to end, it might be justifiable to question its divine origin. God has revealed a sufficient knowledge of His love and grace for believers to have both faith and hope in Him and to be assured that “if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). If Christians study the Bible, not with prejudice and criticism, but with faith in and love for its Author, they will understand its message.

There is a distinction between revelation and inspiration. Revelation is the record of God’s communication through men. Inspiration is God’s power enabling man to record correctly the truth revealed. The word inspiration, used only twice in the English Bible (Job 32:8; 2 Tim. 3:16), means the “inbreathing” of God into man, so that man spoke or wrote God’s revelation of truth with authority and accuracy (2 Pet. 1:21).

Not everything in the Bible has been directly revealed to men. The Bible contains history in the language of men, even of wicked men, but there is no part that is not inspired. The Spirit so directed and influenced the writers that they were kept from any error of fact or doctrine.

However, inspiration does not mean God has given His approval to every recorded statement. The Bible records the lies of Satan (for example, “Ye shall not surely die”) and the misdeeds of many wicked people, some of whom God used to communicate His message. For example, the book of Job contains the truths of Jehovah, the words of Satan, the speech of Elihu, and the arguments of Job and the three friends. Satan, Job, and his three friends did not speak by inspiration of God. They spoke their own opinions. Inspiration means that no one of them is misrepresented, but that each one spoke the words attributed to him in Scripture. The fact that misdeeds like Saul’s slaughter of the priests, David’s numbering of the people, and Herod’s

massacre of the innocents are recorded in the Bible does not imply that God approved of them, but the divine record vouches for the accuracy of these facts.⁸⁶

THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION

Careful study will reveal several different ways God transmitted His Word to people.

Divine Utterances

In both the Old and New Testaments, the exact words of God were reproduced in writing (Exod. 32:16; 1 Chron. 28:19; Dan. 5:5). The children of Israel were highly favored in being permitted to hear God's voice, about which Moses said, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?" (Deut. 4:33). These divine utterances were later recorded on tables of stone by "the finger of God" (Exod. 31:18; Deut. 9:10) and carried in the ark of the covenant. In the New Testament God honored His Son by speaking from heaven at His baptism (Matt. 3:17), at His transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), and before His crucifixion (John 12:28). These divine utterances were carefully and correctly recorded by human writers.

Divine Dictation

God put into the mouths of certain men the very words they should speak and write (Exod. 4:10-15; 34:27; Isa. 8:1, 11-12; Jer. 1:7; 7:27; 13:12; 30:12; Ezek. 3:10-11; 24:2; Hab. 2:2). Peter says that when the prophets wrote about Christ, they had to study the predictions that they themselves wrote, and even then, did not fully understand them (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Even more significantly, Daniel speaks of God's dictation to him: "I heard, but I understood not." In reply to an inquiry for further explanation, God directed, "Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Dan. 12:9). Daniel was given the power to record with infallible accuracy what he heard, although he did not understand it. Yet Daniel was the wise man who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and deciphered the handwriting upon the wall. His recording of God's dictation without understanding it is no inspiration of mere ideas, nor elevation of mind, nor increase of intellectual power. It is a direct and special revelation of truth from God.

Human Expression

A Scripture writer's individuality and literary style in relating divine truth was not destroyed by divine inspiration. For instance, the four Gospel narrators differed in recording what Pilate wrote upon the cross; yet, by a careful comparison of their accounts (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19-20), the exact wording, and what part of it God wished recorded, can be determined. The complete inscription evidently was, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," but the all-important fact recorded by all four writers was that Jesus was "the King of the Jews." This was the statement that displeased the Jews, for they asked Pilate not to write it. The fact was, the Jews quoted accurately the words that applied to the argument and omitted the rest. That is just what the Gospel writers did under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

⁸⁶ Clarence Benson and Robert Morgan, *Exploring Theology a Guide for Systematics Theology and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 200.

The Holy Spirit employed the attention, investigation, memory, personality, logic—in fact, all the faculties of all the writers—and worked through them.⁸⁷

2. Why should I trust the Bible?

We all trust in something. Even the most skeptical among us exercises complete trust in many things. When we stand up, we trust that our legs will hold us. When we sit down, we trust the chair. We trust that, when we inhale, the right amount of oxygen will be present to sustain us. When we go to bed, we trust that the earth will continue its rotation so that morning will come. We have chosen to place trust in these things because of their past reliability. We choose to trust; otherwise, we would live in a constant state of fear and uncertainty.

When it comes to God and the Bible, the same principles apply. We choose what we trust. Faith in God means that we have chosen to trust that He exists, that He is who the Bible says He is, and that our trust—or lack of it—will radically impact our lives and eternity. However, the alternative to faith is not “lack of faith.” To choose against faith in God also requires trust. We must trust that God does not exist, that He cannot be known by us, and that this choice has no impact on our lives and eternity. Denying God’s existence takes an even bigger leap of faith because the questions raised in the Bible still demand to be answered. Those who discount the Bible must supply answers themselves to countless questions with no ready answers, such as those dealing with the meaning of life and the complexity of design seen in the universe. Many who choose to trust something other than the Bible must finally agree with atheist Bertrand Russell, who concluded that, if life beyond the grave is a myth, then life before the grave has no meaning.

When choosing where to place our trust, we must consider the reliability of each option. The Bible makes some startling claims about itself. Some people think they can pick and choose which parts of the Bible they consider true, but the Book itself never gives us that option. It states that it is the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), that it is true (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17), and that it is the guidebook for our lives (Psalm 119:105; Luke 4:4). To trust that this is not true means that everything else the Bible claims is suspect; therefore, claiming the promises while ignoring the commands is irrational.

To declare that the Bible is untrustworthy means we must find another reasonable explanation for its miraculous nature. For example, of the nearly 2,500 prophecies given in the Bible, hundreds or thousands of years beforehand, 2,000 of them have been fulfilled, with the remaining 500+ unfolding with time. The probability of all these prophecies being fulfilled without error is roughly one in 1020000. So, to trust that the Bible is not a miraculous book is mathematically inconsistent.

There are several factors to consider in determining the trustworthiness of the Bible, the first being the oft-challenged statement that the Bible is true because it says it is true. It would indeed be foolish to base trust on that factor alone. We would not hand over our checkbook to a stranger who says we can trust him because he is trustworthy. But we can start with the Bible’s claim of trustworthiness and then look for supporting evidence to validate it.

Helping us trust the Bible are the claims of the writers themselves. The Old Testament authors declared that they spoke the very words of God (Exodus 20:1–4; Deuteronomy 8:3; Isaiah 1:2;

⁸⁷ Ibid., 201

Jeremiah 1:1–13). Certain men were designated by God as prophets, kings, or leaders and were recognized as such by the people they served. The prophets qualified most of their pronouncements with the words, “So says the Lord” (e.g., Jeremiah 45:2; Zechariah 7:13). This declaration was often met with rebellion and persecution (Matthew 23:37; 1 Kings 19:10; Acts 7:52). There was no earthly reason for a prophet to declare unpleasant truths to people who were likely to stone him. Yet, the prophets continued to proclaim their message because they were completely convinced that the Lord held them responsible for representing Him faithfully. The words of the prophets were then recorded for future generations and accepted as the words of God, even by Jesus Himself (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8).

The New Testament authors identify various reasons for writing. Luke, for example, was a respected physician and historian who traveled with Paul on his missionary journeys. He explains the purpose for his book in the first chapter: “Just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:2–4). Luke personally researched the claims about Jesus in order to verify the veracity of the gospel narrative and wrote the twin books of Luke and Acts.

Paul’s letters to the church were received by the intended audience as having come from the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is also critical to note that most of the New Testament authors were martyred for their words. It is highly unlikely that such a wide assortment of men, all claiming a single truth, would suffer extreme persecution and eventually be murdered for words they knew to be a lie.

Another factor helping us trust the Bible is the life-changing impact the Bible has had for thousands of years. The Bible has withstood the attempts of kings, dictators, and whole societies to abolish it and remains the top-selling book of all time. Its words contain a hope not found in any other religious writing and have transformed the lives of millions. Other world religions claim loyal adherence, but the glue that holds most of their faithful is fear, intimidation, or human effort. The Bible promises what no other book does: life, hope, and purpose as a gift from Almighty God. Its words have transformed murderers, tyrants, and nations because the Bible resonates as truth in the deepest part of the human soul (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Bible may be rejected, hated, or ignored, but its impact on those who heed it cannot be discounted.

Ultimately, God has given each of us free will to choose what we believe. But He has also placed His fingerprints all over His creation, and He has written an instruction manual so we would know how to live (Psalm 19:1; 119:11; 1 Peter 2:11–12). His Word has given us ample evidence that it can be trusted, and those who do trust the Bible have a solid foundation upon which to build their lives (see Matthew 7:24–28).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ <https://www.gotquestions.org/trust-the-Bible.html>

Summary

- **Defense Weapon:** The witnesses are reliable because they viewed the same events. The full story showed that there was harmony between the accounts. In the same way, the four Gospels, written by four different men about the same events, also include accounts that at times differ and seem to contradict but in most cases are easy to harmonize.
- **Defense Weapon:** History shows, contrary to that belief, that there was an early and dramatic explosion of devotion to Jesus as the divine Son of God-an explosion that points back to him and his teachings as its source.
- **Defense Weapon:** The New Testament record, including the earliest written as well as the later books, affirms that Jesus was believed to be the Messiah (or Christ), the Son

Week 3 - Lesson 3

“Defending Christ Position as Son of God”

Many people know that Jesus was a good man and a wise teacher, but why do some call him the Son of God?

1. - Who is Jesus Christ?

We must begin by recognizing that knowledge about Jesus Christ is at once the same as and different from knowledge about other subjects. As the spiritual leader of Christianity, Jesus is both the object of knowledge and of faith. He also produces spiritual knowledge through the Holy Spirit in us. Christians universally believe that Jesus is alive now, hundreds of years after His life and death on earth, and that He is in the presence of God the Father in heaven. But this persuasion is certainly a product of what is called saving faith, whereby a person encounters Jesus Christ and, through repentance and faith, is regenerated, becoming a new creation. Knowledge of Jesus as Savior then leads, through experience, to a spiritual apprehension of Jesus' personal existence in the present. In this way, knowledge of Jesus is different from knowledge of other historical figures.

The New Testament writers were committed Christians and wrote from this perspective. This fact was not missed by nineteenth-century liberal theologians, who asserted that the New Testament books could not teach history about Jesus because they were not objective in the modern sense. However, much recent work in hermeneutics has shown that no one writes anything from a neutral or totally objective standpoint. What better perspective could there be than that of Christians writing about Someone they had known in the flesh, who also continued in a resurrected state after His life on earth? This leads, of course, to the issue of historical knowledge of Jesus.

If our inquiry is to be valid, it must also address the historical side of Jesus' existence. In the nineteenth century, a search for the historical Jesus was mounted in an attempt—under severe ant supernaturalistic, higher critical presuppositions—to distill facts liberal scholars felt they could accept and thereby compile a picture of Jesus that could be relevant and understandable to modern persons. These endeavors drove a wedge between the Jesus of history, who supposedly could be known only by means of rationalistic, historical criticism of the Gospels, and the Christ of faith. The latter was viewed as being much larger than the historical Jesus because faith in Him caused the Gospel writers to base their presentation of Jesus on what was preached (the *kerygma*), rather than on the so-called historical facts.

The Son of God

The New Testament recounts few instances when God was heard speaking from heaven. When He did, it was normally to announce something startling. God was zealous to announce that Jesus Christ was His Son. At Jesus' baptism, the heavens opened, and God's voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Elsewhere, the Father declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mark 9:7). Thus, the title conferred from on high to Jesus is *Son of God*.

This title has engendered a great deal of controversy in the history of the church, particularly in the fourth century, when the Arian movement, taking its cue from its leader, Arius, denied the Trinity by arguing that Jesus was a created being. References to Jesus as "the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15) and "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14, KJV) led Arius to argue that Jesus had a beginning in time and was thus a creature. In Arius' mind, if Jesus was begotten, it could only mean that He was not eternal, and if He was not eternal, then He was a creature. Thus, to ascribe deity to Jesus was to be guilty of blasphemy, because it involved the idolatrous worship of a created being. The same controversy exists today between Christian believers and the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, both of whom acknowledge a lofty view of Jesus over angels and other creatures but deny His full deity.

This controversy precipitated in the great ecumenical Council of Nicea. The Nicene Creed provides an interesting answer to the charges of Arianism. The answer is found in the strange statement that Jesus is "begotten, not made." To the Greek, such a statement was a contradiction in terms. In normal terms, *begotten* implies a beginning, but when applied to Jesus, there is a uniqueness to the way in which He is begotten that separates Him from all other creatures. Jesus is called the monogenes, the "only begotten" of the Father. There is a sense in which Jesus and Jesus alone is begotten of the Father. This is what the church was getting at when it spoke of Jesus being eternally begotten—that He was begotten, not made.

This uniqueness is found not only in Jesus' eternal character, but also in the fact that Jesus' sonship carries with it a description of intimacy with the Father. The primary significance of sonship in the New Testament is in its figurative reference to obedience. Thus, to be a son of God biblically is to be one who is in a unique relationship of obedience to the will of God. Likewise, the motif of the firstborn has more to do with preeminence than with biology. The term *begotten* is a Greek word filled with Jewish content. Nicea was not flirting with irrationality

but was being faithful to Scripture by using the strange-sounding formula “begotten, not made.”⁸⁹

Summary of The Answer

- **Defense Weapon:** Many people believe this is what happened: Jesus was a “divine promotion” by his later followers. In other words, today Christians have an exalted view of Jesus that he never claimed for himself.
- **Defense Weapon:** History shows, contrary to that belief, that there was an early and dramatic explosion of devotion of to Jesus as the divine Son of God. An explosion that points back to him and his teachings as its source.
- **Defense Weapon:** The New Testament record, including the earliest written as well as the later books, affirms that Jesus was believed to be the Messiah (or Christ), the Son of God, the Savior, the Lord, and God and that Jesus’ followers trusted in him, prayed to him, worshiped him as such.
- **Defense Weapon:** Jesus taught with authority like no other human, expected loyalty and devotion to himself (along with the Father), and predicted that he would ultimately judge every person based on what they did with his teachings.
- **Defense Weapon:** Jesus made multiple claims to equality with the Father, and he never sought to change the perceptions of his listeners to that end, even when they were hostile and threatening to kill him.
- **Defense Weapon:** Jesus predicted that all his claims would be proven true by his impending death and resurrection and then both events happened (as evidenced by the empty tomb and his appearances to friend and foe alike).

⁸⁹ R.C. Sproul, *Knowledge Bundle - Crucial Questions: Who Is Jesus?*

Week 4 - Lesson 4

*“Defending the Sovereignty of God”
How could a good God allow so much Evil, Pain, and Suffering?*

God wanted to create creatures with free will.

Free will may be used wrongly, and this introduced evil into our world, but God will one day destroy all evil and take those who trust him to heaven forever, thus dwarfing evil into insignificance.

God didn't create evil because evil isn't a thing.

There is no pitch-black, squishy blob somewhere in the universe named Evil. "Evil is not a being, thing, substance or entity." Evil concerns the choices we make and the results of those choices.

For instance, airplanes are not evil, but terrorists used them for evil on 9/11. Viruses and germs, strictly speaking, are not evil because even though they harm, they have no malicious intent. Viruses and germs, however, are a result of the fall of Adam. They are a consequence of his sin.

Evil results from the misuse of our free will

God created creatures who possess free will. The misuse of that free will results in evil.

The existence of free will is obvious—just look at our language.

The simplest argument for free will is observation of how we use words. We praise, blame, command, counsel, exhort and moralize each other. Doing these things to robots is absurd. We do not hold machines morally responsible for what they do, no matter how complicated the machines are. If there is no free will, all moral meaning disappears from language—and from life.

Free will is essential to who we are.

The question is: Why did God give us free will and allow us to misuse it? The question is misleading. One gives polish to a table, or a pony to a schoolboy, but one does not give three sides to a triangle or free will to a human being. Free will is part of our essence. There can be no human being without it. The alternative to free will is not being a human but being an animal or a machine.

It is valuable to make free creatures. After all, who would want a world filled only with robots? A truly free creature, however, can sin. That is what Adam and Eve did.

God cannot give creatures free will and forever prevent them from using it wrongly.

C. S. Lewis: "If you choose to say, 'God can give a creature free-will and at the same time withhold free-will from it,' you have not succeeded in saying *anything* about God: meaningless combinations or words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words 'God can'."

Evil and suffering are related to human sin.

Adam and Eve made a free choice that resulted in their family suffering. They are not some disconnected couple who lived long ago. We are their flesh and blood, and they gave birth to the only thing they could: creatures like themselves—corrupt and corrupting. Adam and Eve reproduced and made creatures like themselves. That is all they could do.

No matter how many examples are presented to us of human suffering and evil, the major recourse is to point to human sinfulness. Children may not have personally sinned (depending on your view of the imputation of Adam's sin) but all Christians agree children were born with a corrupt nature.

God will destroy unrepentant evildoers at the Judgment.

But God will destroy all evil and suffering at the Judgment.

Eternity in heaven will dwarf evil and suffering into insignificance.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 (RSV):

So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Paul speaks literally when he writes "beyond all comparison," because one cannot compare eternal joy to finite human suffering. Our lives here are short (they could have lasted a centillion years) and eternity is forever. To hold even 100 years of suffering against a God who will give us all things to enjoy for eternity would be far worse than holding an inoculation for measles against one's parents. Yet, an inoculation against measles is an infinitely larger fraction of any person's earthly life than a centillion years of suffering would be of eternity.

Humans will joyfully glorify God in heaven because we have learned the horrors of evil on earth.

When we see God face to face, we will be able to glorify God, not out of obedience or coercion, but freely and gladly. We will see the glory of God and experience the wondrous joys of heaven, and we will have seen and known what the lack of those things is like due to our knowledge of evil and suffering here. Because of these experiences, we will simply want to glorify God.

If we hate suffering and evil, then we should hate sin.

Suffering and evil are the results of sin—either our personal sin, the sin of others who might hurt us, or the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, who made a decision that resulted in our expulsion from the Garden of Eden, subjected us to toil, and resulted in the certainty of our death. This is the result of sin. To those who complain about evil and suffering, our reply should be: "Hate sin!" Our problem in understanding why humans suffer is that we diminish the significance and extent of human sinfulness.

A good God would not allow evil.

The formal objection: If God is all good, He would desire to prevent evil. If God is all-powerful, He would be able to prevent evil. But evil exists so either there is no God or God is either not all-powerful or not all-good.

Humility is essential when talking about why God does things.

A three-year-old knows more in comparison to his parents than the smartest adult does in comparison to God.

Although they *may* be right sometimes, what three-year-old doesn't sometimes falsely think his or her parent is unfair? So, assume for the sake of argument that God exists. Clearly, the mental capacity and knowledge of a three-year-old is much closer to his parent's than the smartest adult's is in comparison to God's omniscience. Thus, we should begin any discussion of God's fairness with a great sense of humility.

God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

After Job's children were killed, his riches were plundered, and he himself was covered with boils, his wife encouraged him to "curse God and die." God appears to Job and asks him:

38:4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand... 5 Who marked off its dimensions? 8 Who shut up the sea behind doors... 10 when I fixed limits for it and... 11 said, "This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt"? 12 Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place... 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!"

In other words, we have great reason to be humble when it comes to understanding the ways of God.

God wanted to create creatures possessing free will.

Genesis 2:16-17: And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Who would want to live a life with nothing but computers and robots and other things that lack free will? For all the problems with free-will creatures, their company is considerably more valuable than anything we can think of that doesn't have free will. However, for a creature to be free, it must be possible for it to choose wrongly. In other words, it is impossible for God to create truly free beings and at the same time does not allow them to use their freedom wrongly.

For free beings to learn anything natural laws must work in regular ways

Richard Swinburne:

If God is to allow us to acquire knowledge by learning from experience and above all to allow us to choose whether to acquire knowledge at all or even to allow us to have a very well-justified knowledge of the consequences of our actions—knowledge that we need if we are to have a free and efficacious choice between good and bad—he needs to provide natural evils occurring in regular ways in consequence of natural processes. Or rather, he needs to do this if he is not to give us too evident awareness of his presence.

The best way to teach free beings the horror of rebellion is to let them suffer consequences.

Adam and Eve rebelled against God and now we, their descendants, do likewise. What better way could there be to teach free beings the horror of rebellion than to let them suffer the consequences of that rebellion?

Ezekiel 20:39-44:

As for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your fathers. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the Lord, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, O house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.

God *will* one day destroy all those who insist on doing evil.

The "problem of evil"—that a good God would desire to prevent evil and be able to prevent evil but still allow evil—will one day be resolved because God intends to one day destroy all evil.

Matthew 13:41-43 (ESV):

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Eternity in heaven will dwarf our suffering to insignificance.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV):

So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Enduring suffering and evil here prepares us to responsibly inherit God's kingdom.

Romans 8:14-19 (ESV):

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

See also 2 Tim. 2:12, "if we endure, we will also reign with him" and Rev. 22:5, "and they will reign forever and ever."⁹⁰

- **Defense Weapon:** Many times, when people ask this question, they are in great suffering. At that moment they are not looking for a theological treatise; instead, they are asking for empathy, concern, and tangible expressions of love and care. If this seems to be the case, we should hold off with our attempts to answer and simply come alongside to help them through their difficulties.
- **Defense Weapon:** It is important to help our friends see that Jesus himself warned us we would all face trials and suffering. This illustrates that Christianity is a real-world faith that tells the truth about the world we live in.
- **Defense Weapon:** As Christians, we believe in three seemingly incompatible truths. God is good, God is great, and evil is real.

⁹⁰ Prepared Defense by Clay B. Jones

Week 5- Lesson 5

Defending Christianity How can you trust in Christianity?

Is Christianity unique, or is it just one of many roads on the path to Truth? Is Christianity truly unique among the many religions around the world? If it is, what makes it so? Unique among all religions, Christianity makes several claims that others do not. First, all other religions exhort man to reach up to God and grasp hold of Him through their own efforts. Christianity is the only religion where God reaches down to man. Second, other religions are systems of dos and don'ts to appease God, whereas Christianity is a relationship with God. Third, Christianity looks to the Bible as the singular source of Truth. Finally, Christianity is based upon truly the most amazing event in all human history—the resurrection.

As to the first issue, other forms of religion subscribe to a system of works—those we should do and those we should avoid—which will make us “good enough” to please God and merit His favor. Christianity, on the other hand, is based on the biblical principle that we can never be good enough to be in the presence of a perfect, holy God. The Mosaic Law was given to mankind to prove to us that we can't keep it. Galatians 3 describes the purpose of the Law. It is a “tutor” or “schoolmaster” to lead us to Christ because “...by observing the law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16). The impossibility of keeping the Law is revealed in what Jesus called the “first and greatest commandment” in Matthew 22:37: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This would mean loving God with every fiber of our being 24/7, with never a thought for ourselves, an impossible task for anyone. But rather than condemning us as lawbreakers and leaving it at that, God provided a substitute—Jesus Christ—who obeyed the Law perfectly for us. By faith in Him and accepting His work on our behalf, we are justified and made righteous. Here is the crucial difference between Christianity and all other religions.

As to the second point, Christianity is not a religious system, but a relationship with God, one that He initiated and maintains. Christians believe that mankind was created specifically to have a relationship with God, but sin separates all men from Him (Romans 3:23, 5:12). Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ walked this earth, fully God, and yet fully man (Philippians 2:6-11) and died on the cross to restore the relationship that was broken by sin. After His death on the cross, Christ was buried, He rose again, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for believers forever (Hebrews 7:25). The intimacy of this relationship is revealed in two poignant pictures. Now no longer seen as lawbreakers, we have been adopted into God's own family as His children (Ephesians 1:5). Even more intimately, believers are the very “body of Christ” of which He is the head (Ephesians 1:22-23), having been purchased by His blood (Hebrews 9:12). No other religion makes assertions that even begin to approximate this incredible truth.

Another thing that makes Christianity unique is its source of information. All religions have some sort of basis of information that outlines its beliefs and practices, but none have one source of information that makes the claims Christianity does about the Bible—it is the written Word of God, and it is infallible and inerrant and all that is necessary for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16). Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired—literally “God-breathed”—Word of God

and that its teaching is the final authority (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Though there are other religions that use prophecy, none are 100% accurate, as are those in the Bible, and none of them point to someone like Jesus who made incredible claims and performed incredible deeds.

Perhaps the most defining principle of Christianity that makes it truly unique in every way and provides its fundamental basis is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Within Christianity, the resurrection is vitally important, for without it, Christianity does not exist, and our faith is useless (1 Corinthians 15:14). It was Jesus' resurrection that changed the lives of the disciples. After Jesus was crucified, the disciples ran and hid. But when they saw the risen Lord, they knew that all Jesus had said and done proved that He was indeed God in flesh. No other religious leader has died in full view of trained executioners, had a guarded tomb, and then rose three days later to appear to many people. The resurrection is proof of who Jesus is and that He did accomplish what He set out to do: provide the only means of redemption for mankind. Buddha did not rise from the dead. Muhammad did not rise from the dead. Confucius did not rise from the dead. Krishna did not rise from the dead. Only Jesus has physically risen from the dead, walked on water, claimed to be God, and raised others from the dead. He has conquered death. Only in Christianity do we have the person of Christ who claimed to be God, performed many miracles to prove His claim of divinity, died and rose from the dead, and claimed that He alone is "the way the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and that no one comes to the Father except through Him.⁹¹

What Makes Christianity Different?

If you consider yourself a follower of Jesus, here is something to consider: Do you really believe that Jesus is uniquely different and superior to any other person or belief system? And if so, are we arrogant in thinking this? Is faith in Christ just another option in the spiritual smorgasbord set before us? What is wrong with someone choosing a different option?

These are questions that we need to think through as God gives us opportunities to talk with others about Jesus. The Bible is clear about the exclusive claims of Jesus. Do we believe that what it says is true for everyone or just true for us?

In the fall, I was working out in my neighborhood gym and entered a conversation with a student from the University of Central Florida (UCF). I noticed that he had an accent, so I asked him where he was from. He answered that he was from a Middle Eastern nation. He was wearing a cross on his neck, so I asked if he was a Christian. He said yes and that he grew up going to the Catholic Church in his country.

He shared with me a little of what it is like growing up in that part of the world. He began to tell me how in America we don't realize how good we have it. He mentioned to me friends of his from other Middle Eastern countries who daily live with the uncertainty of violence and others that have died from it. I told him that God had used him to remind me of the need to pray for Christians and for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Middle East.

⁹¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christianity-unique.html>

Isn't Christianity Like Any Other Religion?

When I said this, he looked at me and said very politely that he does not usually talk to people about religion. He mentioned that he comes from a region of the world comprised of people from three religious' groups: Jews, Muslims and Christians. These groups share a common history and origin yet there are hostilities and no real hope for peace. He began to say that both the Bible and Koran share many things in common as some of the same people are mentioned in these holy books and revered by both faiths (Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus to name a few).

As he finished, I interjected that this is true but what is said about these people does not always agree. For example, what each faith says about Jesus is radically different. Muslims believe Jesus to be a prophet but not God incarnate. Whereas Christians believe that Jesus is not only a prophet but the Son of the Living God. Muslims do not believe in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead whereas these are the very fundamental truths of the Christian faith. He agreed that this was indeed true.

I went on to tell him that I do not like to talk to people about religion either. He gave me a strange look that seemed to say, "Then what have we been talking about?" I told him that to me religion is centered on man, and it focuses on man's attempts to appease, to find approval, to gain a right standing, or reach God in his own efforts (for instance, the five pillars of Islam or the baptism of Hindus in the Ganges River to wash away their sins). I told him that Christianity is radically different for it not focused on man's efforts but God making a way for people to have a relationship with Him.

Then I began to share with him the simple message of the gospel as I said that all people share these three things in common:

1. Every person who inhabits this planet was created by God (Acts 17:24-26).
2. Every person has sinned against God (Romans 3:23).
3. Every person finds themselves separated from God and deserving His wrath for our rebellion (Romans 6:23a).

Considering this universal human predicament, God has made a way for us to be forgiven of our sins and reconciled to God. In His love, God sent His Son to die for our sins and whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life (John 3; 16).

As I was sharing these points, he was nodding his head in agreement. Yet the conversation would shift to what I said next.

I then said that Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6). At this point he politely said to me that he did not mean to be rude, but he wanted to know what I thought about Buddhism. I said, "Honestly, I don't know a lot about Buddhism but any belief system that lays out any other path to God apart from trusting in Jesus Christ is false." He then said to me (very politely) this is why there is so much tension in the world because just like you claim that Christianity is true, then so can someone else make the same claim about Buddhism or any other religion.

Then he asked me, "What makes Christianity different?"

I came to the gym for a workout. Yet I found myself in a deep spiritual conversation and in need of God's help for what to say next.

1. The Resurrection

The first thing that came to mind and out of my mouth was "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I mentioned to him that there is historical documentation, from both Biblical and non-biblical sources¹, that we can look to as evidence for the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I then told him, although we have historical evidence of Jesus' life and death, his body has never been found. I then began to share with him why the resurrection of Christ from the dead is reasonable to believe. What follows is what God used me to share as we spoke that night.

Some have argued that the disciples stole the body and hid it. I told him I think that this is highly unlikely. When Jesus was arrested by those sent from the Jewish leaders and turned over to the Roman authorities to be crucified his disciples scattered from Him (Mark 14:43-50) and the ringleader Peter denied that he had been with Him (Mark 14:66-72). They were utter cowards who scattered, hid and did not want to be associated with Jesus in His death. Yet seven weeks later we find Peter preaching, along with the other disciples, that Jesus who had been crucified was raised by God from the dead in the very city (Jerusalem) where Jesus was condemned to die (Acts 2:14-36). What changed for these men? What turned them from cowards to courageous? The fact that they had hidden a corpse. Or that these men had seen Jesus after He had risen from the dead (Acts 1:3)?

It is reported that 11 of the 12 apostles suffered violent deaths for their preaching of Jesus Christ and not one of them recanted or renounced their faith. ² It is often said that many people have died for a lie. But how many have died for a lie knowing that it was a lie? If the disciples had stolen the body, then they would have known that the resurrection was a lie. And you would think if that were the case, at least one of them would have recanted their testimony in the face of extreme torture and violent death.

Persecution and death for preaching Christ was true not only for the 12 apostles but for those who received their teaching. It is difficult to believe that these people would willingly die for Jesus Christ if they knew and believed it was a lie. The martyrdom of thousands of these Christians was since they believed the truth of the statements in the Gospels about Jesus and were willing to die as martyrs rather than deny their faith in Him. In the face of Jewish and Roman opposition and persecution, Christianity had spread all throughout the Roman Empire in 300 short years and it has not stopped. I also mentioned that if the Romans and Jews had known where the body of Jesus was all they had to do was wheel it down the street on a cart and Christianity would have died in its inception.

2. The Claims of Jesus about Himself

In addition to the resurrection of Jesus, I began to talk with my new friend about the claims of Jesus Christ about Himself. Some people will say that Jesus never claimed to be God that is only something that others have made up. I mentioned to him that Jesus did not come to a culture of

people that were ignorant about God. He came to the Jewish people who were God's chosen people and monotheistic (one God) in their beliefs. **Jesus did and said things that clearly alluded to His deity which was not missed by the religious leaders He interacted with. Here are four examples of this:**

1. He claimed to have the authority to forgive sin and the religious leaders thought to themselves that He was blaspheming (Mark 2:5-7).
2. He called God His Father and equated His work with the Father's, and they tried all the harder to kill Him (John 5:17, 18).
3. He said that He and the Father are One and they picked up stones to kill Him because they said He was blaspheming (John 10:30-33).
4. He said that He would sit at the right hand of the Mighty One and come on the clouds of heaven and they said He was blaspheming, and they condemned Him to death (Mark 14:61-64).

I mentioned that these are just a few of many examples and that Jesus did not leave it open to debate who He is. I reminded him again that Jesus actually said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6).

At this point, I said to my friend that it is not because people proclaim Jesus to be the only way that has the world so messed up. It is messed up because we have a world full of people who are determining for themselves what is right or wrong with no regard for God. We have denied that there is such a thing as truth (which in and of itself is a truth claim), we have ignored who Jesus claims to be, and have become our own gods. With that being the case, we look at every belief system as being equally valid and right as any other. We act like everything is okay until what someone else believes contradicts what I believe. Our selfishness leads to disputes, conflicts and wars³. At this point he interrupted me, saying that he enjoyed our conversation and would like to hear more but he realized that he was running late to meet a friend. With that we shook hands and said goodbye.

Lastly: Who Do You Say That Jesus Is?

So, when it comes to the real identity of Jesus, we need to ask ourselves, "Who is Jesus?" Let me leave you with a popular quote from C.S. Lewis about the only real options that we have when we answer the question.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his

being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – Mere Christianity

Jesus is either Lord of all or He is Lord of nothing. Look at these words of the Apostle Paul found in the book of Philippians:

“Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

May we as God’s people continue to share Jesus with boldness and love. As the Apostle Peter reminds us, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) As we do this in obedience to our great King, may many calls upon the name of the Lord and be saved (Romans 10:13).⁹²

- **Defense Weapons:**

What is Christianity introduction?

Christianity is the largest world religion now. Because Jesus Christ was a Jew, and so were his twelve disciples. The religion is based principally around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With Christians believing in an only one God, the religion is also monotheistic.

Who are important in Christianity?

Jesus and his relatives

Jesus.

Mary, mother of Jesus.

Joseph.

Brothers of Jesus. James (often identified with James, son of Alphaeus) Joseph (Joses) Judas (Jude) (often identified with Thaddeus) Simon.

Mary of Clopas.

Cleopas (often identified with Alphaeus and Clopas)

Who is the most important figure of Christianity?

⁹² <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/core-christian-beliefs/what-makes-christianity-different.html>

After Jesus, the two most significant figures in Christianity are the apostles Peter and Paul/Saul. Paul takes a leading role in spreading the teachings of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews) in the Roman Empire.

What was the main purpose of Jesus?

Jesus came to earth to preach the Good News – to give people an understanding of the Kingdom of God and the eternal hope that they had through Him.

Why is Jesus' death important?

For them the death of Jesus was part of a divine plan to save humanity. The death and resurrection of this one man is at the very heart of the Christian faith. For Christians it is through Jesus's death that people's broken relationship with God is restored.

Week 6- Lesson 6

Do you think that Heaven & Hell exists, and Does God send some people to Hell?

Is Heaven Real and Does it Exist?

Heaven is indeed a real place. The Bible tells us that heaven is God's throne (Isaiah 66:1; Acts 7:48-49; Matthew 5:34-35). After Jesus' resurrection and appearance on earth to His disciples, "He was taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55-56). "Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Hebrews 9:24). Jesus not only went before us, entering on our behalf, but He is alive and has a present ministry in heaven, serving as our high priest in the true tabernacle made by God (Hebrews 6:19-20; 8:1-2).

We are also told by Jesus Himself that there are many rooms in God's house and that He has gone before us to prepare a place for us. We have the assurance of His word that He will one day come back to earth and take us to where He is in heaven (John 14:1-4). Our belief in an eternal home in heaven is based on an explicit promise of Jesus. Heaven is most definitely a real place. Heaven truly does exist.

When people deny the existence of heaven, they deny not only the written Word of God, but they also deny the innermost longings of their own hearts. Paul addressed this issue in his letter to the Corinthians, encouraging them to cling to the hope of heaven so that they would not lose heart. Although we "groan and sigh" in our earthly state, we have the hope of heaven always before us and are eager to get there (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Paul urged the Corinthians to look forward to their eternal home in heaven, a perspective that would enable them to endure hardships and disappointments in this life. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Just as God has put in men's hearts the knowledge that He exists (Romans 1:19-20), so are we "programmed" to desire heaven. It is the theme of countless books, songs, and works of art. Unfortunately, our sin has barred the way to heaven. Since heaven is the abode of a holy and perfect God, sin has no place there, nor can it be tolerated. Fortunately, God has provided for us the key to open the doors of heaven—Jesus Christ (John 14:6). All who believe in Him and seek forgiveness for sin will find the doors of heaven swung wide open for them. May the future glory of our eternal home motivate us all to serve God faithfully and wholeheartedly. "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart full of assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22).⁹³

Few people object to the existence of heaven on moral grounds. The idea of a rewarding afterlife appeals to most people, particularly since most are convinced, they'll find themselves there (Matthew 7:13-14). Some disbelieve in heaven on spiritual grounds, believing instead in reincarnation or simply oblivion after death. The Bible describes a real, eternal, and aware eternity after death for all people. For those who have trusted in Christ, this state of being is without sickness, death, or pain in the presence of God (Revelation 21:1-4).

Objections to the existence of heaven, on spiritual or religious grounds, are best answered by comparing the truth claims of each faith. Such an effort is beyond the scope of this article.

A more common objection to heaven has less to do with spirituality and more to do with popular culture. Many people turn away from the idea of heaven as a land of fluffy clouds, harps, white robes, and so forth. Others dislike the idea of a never-ending church service. Neither of these views of heaven is a biblically supported concept, so correcting misconceptions is key to removing these objections to the existence of heaven.

The Bible affirms that heaven, defined as "the place where God dwells," does indeed exist. In the Bible, the term *heaven* generally refers to areas beyond the earth. These areas can be the air, outer space, or the realm of God (often called the "highest heaven"). According to the Bible, after the return of Christ, believers will live with God in a New Jerusalem on a reformed Earth. The "heaven" Christians are promised is a restored garden of Eden, not a wispy cloud and a golden instrument.

While we don't know exactly what heaven will be like, the Bible suggests that it won't be static or boring (Revelation 21:23-24). Yes, heaven exists. And, according to the Bible, it will be the most glorious place imaginable.

⁹³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/is-Heaven-real.html>

Is Hell Real and Does Hell Exist

It is interesting that a much higher percentage of people believe in the existence of heaven than believe in the existence of hell. According to the Bible, though, hell is just as real as heaven. The Bible clearly and explicitly teaches that hell is a real place to which the wicked/unbelieving are sent after death. We have all sinned against God ([Romans 3:23](#)). The just punishment for that sin is death ([Romans 6:23](#)). Since all of our sin is ultimately against God ([Psalm 51:4](#)), and since God is an infinite and eternal Being, the punishment for sin, death, must also be infinite and eternal. Hell is this infinite and eternal death which we have earned because of our sin.

Yes, hell exists, according to the Bible. *Note: in the remainder of this article, we will use the term hell to mean, broadly, “place of conscious torment after death.” We realize that hell is technically different from the lake of fire, but we will allow our other articles to describe the differences.*

The Bible speaks of the reality of hell in the same terms as the reality of heaven ([Revelation 20:14–15](#); [21:1–2](#)). In fact, Jesus spent more time warning people about the dangers of hell than He did in comforting them with the hope of heaven. The concept of a real, conscious, forever-and-ever existence in hell is just as biblical as a real, conscious, forever-and-ever existence in heaven. Trying to separate them is simply not possible from a biblical standpoint.

Despite the Bible’s clear teaching of both heaven and hell, it is not unusual for people to believe in the reality of heaven while rejecting the reality of hell. In part, this is due to wishful thinking. It’s easier to accept the idea of a “nice” afterlife, but damnation isn’t quite so appealing. This is the same mistake human beings often make when it comes to substance abuse, dangerous behaviors, and so forth. The assumption that we will get what we want overrides the unpleasant (but rational) view that things might not end well.

Rejection of the existence of hell can also be blamed on inaccurate assumptions about what hell is. Hell is frequently imagined as a burning wasteland, a dungeon full of cauldrons and pitchforks, or an underground city filled with ghosts and goblins. Popular depictions of hell often involve a flaming torture chamber or a spiritual jail where evil things reside—and where good things travel to battle evil. This version of hell does not exist. There is a real place called hell, but it is not the Dante’s *Inferno* image most people think of. Certain details about hell are given in the Bible, but those details do not match the popular myths.

The Bible gives very few particulars about hell. We know that it was originally intended for demonic spiritual beings, not people ([Matthew 25:41](#)). The experience of being in hell is compared to burning ([Mark 9:43](#); [9:48](#); [Matthew 18:9](#); [Luke 16:24](#)). At the same time, hell is compared to darkness ([Matthew 22:13](#)) and associated with intense grief ([Matthew 8:12](#)) and horror ([Mark 9:44](#)).

In short, the Bible tells us only what being in hell is “like”; it does not explicitly say what hell is

or how exactly it functions. What the Bible does make clear is that hell is real, eternal, and to be avoided at all costs (Matthew 5:29–30).⁹⁴

Does God send People to Hell?

The Bible says that God created hell for Satan and the wicked angels who rebelled against Him, but there are people in hell also (Matthew 25:41). Both angelic beings and human beings are in hell for the same reason, sin (Romans 6:23).

Because God is completely righteous and morally perfect (Psalm 18:30), He always does what is right—there is no “darkness” in God, not the smallest speck of imperfection (1 John 1:5). God Himself is the standard for what is right, good, and moral. If it were not for God being the standard of moral perfection, created beings would have nothing to measure themselves against. In other words, if God is perfectly righteous, then anything that falls short of said perfection is sinful, and every human being who has ever lived, since Adam’s fall from grace, has committed sin (Romans 3:23). Because Adam sinned, the entire human race now has a sinful nature (Romans 5:12). But people do not go to hell because of Adam’s sin; they go to hell because of their own sin, which they freely choose (James 1:13–16).

Since God is eternal, immutable, and infinite, and all sins are fundamentally against God, God has decreed the just punishment for sin must also be eternal (Matthew 25:46). There is another aspect to consider, which is that God also created people to live eternally. So, when someone commits a sin against another person, the offended person has also been eternally wronged.

God, therefore, has deemed all who commit sin will go to hell because they have failed to meet His righteous standard; they have broken His Law of moral perfection. If God did not send people to hell for breaking His laws, it could be said that God is not just (Psalm 7:11). A good analogy is a court of law with a judge and a lawbreaker. A just judge will always convict the person who has been found guilty. If that judge did not pursue justice for the crime, he would not be a just judge (Deuteronomy 32:4).

However, the good news is that God is also merciful. In His rich mercy, He made a way for sinners to avoid the punishment of hell by trusting in the atoning work of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9). For Christians, the penalty of sin has been removed and placed upon Christ on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Because of the sacrifice of Christ, God is still just—the sin is punished—yet He is also merciful to all who believe.⁹⁵

Week 7 – Lesson 7

Was the Resurrection real, or just some Myths?

⁹⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/does-hell-exist.html>

⁹⁵ <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-does-God-send-people-to-hell.html>

Scripture presents conclusive evidence that Jesus Christ was in fact resurrected from the dead. Christ's resurrection is recorded in Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; and John 20:1-21:25. The resurrected Christ also appeared in the Book of Acts (Acts 1:1-11). From these passages you can gain several "proofs" of Christ's resurrection. First is the dramatic change in the disciples. They went from a group of men frightened and in hiding to strong, courageous witnesses sharing the gospel throughout the world. What else could explain this dramatic change other than the risen Christ appearing to them?

Second is the life of the apostle Paul. What changed him from being a persecutor of the church into an apostle for the church? It was when the risen Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6). A third convincing proof is the empty tomb. If Christ were not raised, then where is His body? The disciples and others saw the tomb where He was buried. When they returned, His body was not there. Angels declared that He had been raised from the dead as He had promised (Matthew 28:5-7). Fourth, additional evidence of His resurrection is the many people He appeared to (Matthew 28:5, 9, 16-17; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19, 24, 26-29, 21:1-14; Acts 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7).

Another proof of the resurrection of Jesus is the great amount of weight the apostles gave to Jesus' resurrection. A key passage on Christ's resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15. In this chapter, the apostle Paul explains why it is crucial to understand and believe in Christ's resurrection. The resurrection is important for the following reasons: 1) If Christ was not raised from the dead, believers will not be either (1 Corinthians 15:12-15). 2) If Christ was not raised from the dead, His sacrifice for sin was not sufficient (1 Corinthians 15:16-19). Jesus' resurrection proved that His death was accepted by God as the atonement for our sins. If He had simply died and stayed dead, that would indicate His sacrifice was not sufficient. As a result, believers would not be forgiven for their sins, and they would remain dead after they die (1 Corinthians 15:16-19). There would be no such thing as eternal life (John 3:16). "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20 NAS).

Finally, Scripture is clear that all those who believe in Jesus Christ will be raised to eternal life just as He was (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). First Corinthians 15 goes on to describe how Christ's resurrection proves His victory over sin and provides us the power to live victoriously over sin (1 Corinthians 15:24-34). It describes the glorious nature of the resurrection body we will receive (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). It proclaims that, as a result of Christ's resurrection, all who believe in Him have ultimate victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:50-58).

What a glorious truth the resurrection of Christ is! "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). According to the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is most definitely true. The Bible records Christ's resurrection, records that over 500 people witnessed the resurrected Christ, and proceeds to build crucial Christian doctrine on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection.

Appendix B
IRB Approval

April 14, 2021

Maurice F. McMillion

IRB Approval: IRB-FY20-21-805 Title: Biblical Illiteracy in Context of Christian apologetics: A response to a growing concern at Faith Baptist Church of Tyler Texas

Dear Maurice F. McMillion,

We are pleased to inform you that the above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds for the past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

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

Sincerely,

IRB Mentor
Thomas Spotts
Liberty University