

“What Proof” -Acts 1:1-3

Sunday, January 28, 2024

The message today and next week will feel somewhat different. You might even say that they are two different bookends or the two sides of the road that we are to travel on as Christians when it comes to evangelism. This week is geared much more like an intellectual exercise. Next week will be different. This is one of the several reasons why we preach through entire books of the Bible and don't just pick and choose various texts or topics. This way, the whole counsel of God is touched on and we should be better for it.

Today, we start our study through the NT book of Acts.

Intro to Acts

This is the second of a two-volume set, written by Luke to “Theophilus”

In Luke, he says that he “investigated everything from the beginning, to write an orderly sequence.” It is generally agreed that the Gospel of Mark was part of the source material.

Living Christ: Living God

-equality with the God of the Old Testament.

-testimony of the apostles: would they die for a lie?

“Kingdom of God” was the topic.

-Psalm 2 and 110. Is 53

-Paul's message (Acts 28:23).

-Expanding nature.

“Convincing proofs”

What the text says: he appeared to over 500 people (1Cor 15:6) for a period of 40 days (v3).

Apologetics:

Definition -a defense of the faith.

Classical, Evidential, and Presuppositional as many as 17 different forms. See Dr. Shawn Nelson's article. Classical, Archeological,

Evidentialism says that "there is plenty of sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be." His claims are substantiated. Sean and Steven McDowell are two well known evidential apologists who have written extensively on this subject. Many are also familiar with the work of Lee Strobel, "The Case for Christ" and "The Case for a Creator". Stephen Myer is another name who has defended and popularized "The God Hypothesis" and regularly provides scientific evidence for the existence of God. His organization, The Discovery Institute, continues to put out new and well researched materials concerning the obvious evidence for the existence of God. There is also archaeological evidence.

Presuppositionalism says that "people won't believe the evidence because their reasoning is fallen and we need to preach the gospel praying that God will open their eyes to the truth." Cornelius Van Til is the primary name associated with this school of apologetics.

Reformed Epistemology says that people have an innate sense of the divine (Calvin's "sensus divinitatis" based on Romans 1) and therefore we should argue for them to lean into that and argue that the God of the Bible is the giver of that sense. Dr. Alvin Plantinga is the primary author of this apologetic tool.

Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God (TAG) says that "one cannot even begin to speak intelligently without presupposing the God of the Bible because without Him, the laws of logic do not comport with reality and a person is not within his/her intellectual rights to use the thing that they deny. It is self referentially incoherent." It does not hold itself to the same standards that it requires of others. This was the tool used with excellent precision by the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen.

What to do:

- 1) Be flexible and integrated.

The goal of this project was not to prove which apologetic method is correct. It was rather to discover from laypeople which approach they feel was/is effective for them. I think the data from chapter 5 arguably confirms that a mixed approach is needed. It does show that Reformed Epistemology and Psychological Apologetics are the two most influential apologetics at salvation. And Classical and Psychological Apologetics are the two most influential in keeping a person convinced today. But nearly four out of five people (78.7%) have a different top apologetic today than when they first became convinced Christianity was true. More staggering, almost half (45.4%) had at least one of their greatly valued apologetics at salvation in the bottom of the list for today. Hence, there is a need for a mixed approach over time. - Nelson, *Questionnaire*; p51.

2) Study Apologetics “Always be ready to give an account...” 1Peter 3:15

3) Persuade (2Cor 5:11)

Sometimes as people from the Reformed tradition with an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, we overreact and do not evangelize or give up too easy, or don't see the need for meaningful engagement with people, since God will do what God will do. This is an over correction to the incipient Arminianism and emotionalism of our Charismatic brothers. We should and indeed are commanded to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20.) We can't have a disciple without a convert.

-Imbalance of study vs conversation. Intellectual introvert vs experiential extrovert.

-Imbalance of broad evangelism vs personal evangelism. Confrontation and winsomeness.

What is needed is an incarnational apologetic that takes on the opportunity to serve, confront, lead, and persuade. More pointedly, He has appointed us to be His ambassadors of the gospel and be the ones in our spheres of influence. Even more to the point, we need a gospel apologetic which says, no matter the question, “you know there's a God. Now repent and believe the gospel.” This really is a modified and distilled form of presuppositional apologetics and the Transcendental Argument. It has been put forth by a student of Van Til's Dr. Henry Krammendam.

I'll give you a real-life example. When a man tells me he is leaving the faith, I ask him what the other woman's name is. You see, the issue isn't that they don't know that there is a God or that the Bible is true, it's that they don't like what He has to say about them. They abandon belief for a preferred lifestyle. Intellectual arguments are primarily ammunition for people to live however they want apart from God. They may have emotional or lifestyle conflicts and change their theology to match their evil desires.

Now, you can be more or less combative and confrontational depending on where the person is.

A good model for personal evangelism is as follows: (Credit Bobby Pruitt, Hutto Bible Church)

- 1) Get to know someone *personally*.
- 2) Find out where they are *spiritually*.
- 3) Help them take the *next step*.

4) Pray for the lost by name. Who and how are you praying for (the lost)?

Get after it, then learn what you need to know. On the job training (OTJ).

Books and Authors:

Evidence that Demands a Verdict -McDowell

The Return of the God Hypothesis -Myer

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist –

Lee Strobel -Case for series.

Greg Bahnsen -the “Van Til whisperer” and creator of the Transcendental Argument

Alvin Plantinga's Trilogy -extremely technical analytical philosophy defending Reformed Epistemology.

John Frame -Modern Calvinist Presuppositionalist

Cornelius Van Til -Father of Presuppositional Apologetics

The Canon of Scripture -FF Bruce

The Text of the New Testament -Bruce Metzger

Acts: 1-1-3 “What Proof”

Intro to Acts: This is the _____ of a two-volume set, written by _____ .

I. Living Christ: Living _____

-equality with the God of the _____.

-testimony of the apostles: would they die for a _____?

II. "_____ of God" was the topic.

-Psalm _____. Is 53

- _____ message (Acts 28:23).

nature.

III. "Convincing _____"

He appeared to over _____ people (1Cor 15:6) for a period of 40 days (v3).

IV. Apologetics: A _____ of the faith.

-Evidentialism, McDowell, Strobel, Myer & many others.

-Presuppositionalism, VanTil, Bahnsen, Frame

-Reformed Epistemology, Alvin Plantinga

-Transcendental Argument for the Existence of God (TAG), Bahnsen

What to do:

1) Be _____ and integrated.

2) _____ Apologetics "Always be ready to give an account..." 1Peter 3:15

3) _____ (2Cor 5:11)

-Get to know someone _____.

-Find out where they are *spiritually*.

-Help them take the *next* _____.

4) _____ for the lost strategically and personally.