

Answering Objections to Christianity



Shining Mountains Bible Study Fall 2020

Introduction

Watch a video by one of the four famous proponents of New Atheism, Oxford zoologist Richard Dawkins. In 2004 he published the widely popular book *The God Delusion* and has appeared at college campuses, debates, and TV shows around the world. Write down how you feel as you hear some of his clips over time.

Getting Started

1. Write down the objection to Christianity that has led you most to rethink what you believe.
2. List the challenge against Christianity that has been the toughest for you to give an articulate answer to those in your life.
3. Describe the time in your life that you have felt most attacked as a Christian.

The Study of Apologetics

1 Peter 3:15 - *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,*

The study of apologetics is about the formal defense (*apologia*) of the Christian faith. In practical terms, it deals with, "How do you respond to tough questions about Christianity." Note how the passage above addresses both the what and the how of apologetics.

What would have if Christians in Bozeman fell into one of the two ditches of apologetics?

1. Since “the message of the cross is foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18) and the Spirit’s power matters, “not the wise and persuasive words” (1 Cor. 2:4), we do not engage in apologetics at all.
2. Since “we demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), we use apologetics to win debates and argue people into heaven.

Apologetics in Action

Mark 12:13-27 - Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? 15 Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” 16 They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. 17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

18 Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. 19 “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. 20 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. 21 The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. 22 In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. 23 At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?” 24 Jesus replied, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? 25 When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 26 Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!”

Especially leading up to his passion, the Pharisees and Sadducees, among others, attempted to trap Jesus with debates. Read the account above and fill in the chart that explains how we can learn from Jesus today.

<i>Tactics of the Pharisees & Sadducees</i>	<i>Jesus’ Approach to Objections</i>
<i>Similar Tactics of Critics Today</i>	<i>What Our Approach Can Be</i>

Conclusion

Circle five objections to Christianity that you would like to study more from the following list. Add in any that you would like to study, but are not on here.

1. "There can't be just one true religion. Christianity is arrogant since it claims an absolute exclusivity to its truth statements."
2. "Exclusivity in religions only leads countless wars and strife since it demonizes anyone who holds a different view. Religion has caused so much injustice and violence. The Christian Crusades or the Inquisition in the Middle Ages are indistinguishable from Islamic jihad which caused 9/11."
3. "I hate organized religion, which puts barriers between people. But I'm into spirituality. I can worship God – whether that's he, she, or it – on my own."
4. "Christianity is far too political. It's a country club meant only for Republicans, exclusive to outsiders who are different from their world."
5. "Christianity is a cultural straightjacket which brainwashes its followers. It does not give its followers the freedom to make decisions for themselves but forces its view of reality, morality, and truth on them. Far from advancing society, Christianity only regressively drags us back to the Middle Ages."
6. "Any religion works for someone as long as they are sincere about it and work hard."
7. "Any religion is sociologically-conditioned, i.e., you are a Christian since you grew up in a Christian family in a semi-Christian country. If you were born in Saudi Arabia, you'd be Muslim. Your personal religion depends on your upbringing, not any objective standard."
8. "Christianity is hypocritical. I know many non-Christians who are far more kind and loving than many Christians I know. If God actually saves Christians, why don't they look or act more saved? Christians are the most un-Christian people I know."
9. "Christianity is too sheltered. Children should be left to decide for themselves about religion later on in life. Many people have unfortunately grown up in a brain-washing home."
10. "You cannot expect people to actually evangelize a religious message. That is propaganda which you are forcing on people. If any religion ought to be tolerated, it should only be tolerated in the absolute private sphere. You can believe whatever you want; you simply cannot practice or share it."
11. "Christianity is homophobic, judgmental, demeaning, repressive, and bigoted to gays and others in the LGBT community."
12. "Christianity is misogynistic, i.e, the god of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, oppresses women as less than fully human like men are. It is anti-women's rights."
13. "Christianity has been used to endorse slavery. Passages in the Old Testament show that those 'Christians' in Europe and North America had biblical basis for treating people like property."

14. "Christianity's views of sexual morality are outdated and repressive to any one nowadays. I want freedom from rules and do-s & don't-s."
15. "People are born basically good. The Christian doctrine of sin is outdated. Many non-Christians have done great things for society."
16. "Science has disproven Christianity. Miracles are incompatible with our modern view of the world, and biblical creationism is a prescientific account of the origin of life. Likewise, there is simply no possible way Jesus could have actually risen from the dead. It impossible to be a scientifically literate or intellectual member of society and believe in Christianity literally. The majority of the most scientific and intelligent people of this world reject religion."
17. "The Bible cannot be trusted literally. There are numerous historical inaccuracies, cultural regression, and scribal errors. We can never know what the Bible actually originally said. It has evolved from its mythical beginnings too much since then."
18. "Jesus never claimed to be divine in the Gospels. There were originally many ideas about the human Jesus, and the church suppressed all opposing views and later imported this idea onto the Bible. It was a legend that developed a few hundred years after Jesus of Nazareth, a great prophet among many others, actually lived."
19. "There is simply no objective evidence that God even exists. If someone would actually prove to me – no matter how small – that a god, Jesus, or Allah exists, then I'd believe in that religion. I believe what I can see."
20. "Religion is a crutch for the weak. Only people who are fallen on tough times or need some hope for a supposed afterlife need religion. I, thank you, am doing quite fine right now. You are simply making up some ambiguous comfort for the future to compensate for a present life that just doesn't matter for anything."
21. "How can a loving God send people to hell? Such a vindictive god/God is a primitive deity of the ancient world who requires punishment to appease his wrath. He should have merely forgiven the world without punishing it. Requiring Jesus to die to take away the punishment of hell is equivalent to divine child abuse. I only accept a God of love, not of justice."
22. "God has allowed so much terrible suffering. A good God simply couldn't do that. Either God is all-powerful, OR he is good. If he were all-powerful, he would stop suffering. He cannot logically be both. Even if a good Christian God supposedly exists and allows suffering, he can't be trusted."
23. "With so many denominations and interpretations on the Bible, who are you to say that you are right? How do you know for sure? If Christianity is really true, why isn't there just one Christian religion?"
24. "Grace is too easy. You mean God simply lets people off the hook? That's not very fair. I should at least have to do something."