

APOLOGETICS

CHAD RAGSDALE
10 SESSIONS

**NEXT
LEVEL**  **ONLINE**

OZARK CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Introduction to Apologetics

Group Discussion Questions

Session 1: What is Apologetics?

1. Have there been moments in your life when you were confronted with questions about your faith? How did you handle those moments? What lingering questions do you still have?
2. After hearing this introduction to apologetics, what excites you about apologetics? Is there anything that scares you about apologetics?
3. Apologetics assumes four things about the Christian faith. What were those four things? Which of those four assumptions do you think is especially “out of step” with our culture today?
4. In the video, Chad said that apologetics is for everyone. Do you agree with this? What are some practical steps that you can take in order to be better prepared to give answers to the questions that a skeptic asks?
5. Memorize 1 Peter 3:15.

Session 2: The Method of Apologetics

1. In the video, Chad talked about several different reasons why people don’t believe. How would you talk to a person who doesn’t believe for emotional or volitional reasons?
2. Can you think of circumstances where an evidential approach would be best? What about a pre-suppositional or experiential approach? When would those approaches work best?
3. Chad said that in practicing apologetics he likes to agree until he has to disagree. What is the benefit of that approach?
4. Asking good questions can be a very effective method of apologetics. Jesus himself liked to answer questions with his own questions. What are some good, clarifying questions that we can ask while defending our faith? Are there any questions that weren’t mentioned in the video which you would add to the list?
5. The last strategy mentioned in the video said to “remember the goal.” What happens to apologetics when we forget the goal?

Session 3: Faith and Doubt

1. If a skeptic asked you to define what you meant by “faith,” what would you say? Give an example of what this kind of faith looks like.
2. Do you agree with the statement that all people live by some sort of faith? Can you think of any examples of people living by “non-religious” faith?
3. Chad talked about external and internal confirmation for faith. External confirmation often looks like apologetic arguments. Internal confirmation often looks like the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Take a moment and voice a prayer for yourself and for a skeptic in your life that the Holy Spirit would bring them to conviction. Always remember, that a person’s belief is not our personal responsibility. We simply want to create an environment where belief is reasonable.
4. The example of marriage was used to illustrate the nature of faith. What was the point of that illustration?

5. The session ended with a note about doubt. Chad gave four points to remember about doubt. Did any of those points resonate with your experience?

Session 4: Truth

1. What are the three different kinds of truth introduced in this session? Have you seen evidence that beliefs about God have been turned into private opinions?
2. It is very popular to say that all religions lead to God. Many Christians have even fallen into this belief. What are the problems with holding that belief?
3. What would you say to a friend who told you that all truth is relative? What would you say to a friend who said that belief in Jesus is fine for you, but not for me?
4. What forces in our life keep us from making Jesus the center?

Session 5: God

1. Before watching this video, if someone asked you why you believe in the existence of God, what would you say?
2. In this session, Chad outlined several arguments for God's existence. In your estimation, what makes an argument for God's existence effective?
3. Of the arguments presented in this video, which one do you think is the most convincing? Why?
4. There are many other arguments that can be made for God's existence. Philosopher Peter Kreeft has a very helpful list on his website:
https://www.peterkreeft.com/topics-more/20_arguments-gods-existence.htm. Additionally, William Lane Craig's website is a wonderful resource. His short video explanations are especially valuable: <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/>. If you are watching these videos in a group setting, visit Kreeft's website and pick out one of his arguments to summarize and share with the group.

Session 6: God (Part 2)

1. Explain what *hebel* means.
2. Read Ecclesiastes 2. What is the relevance of this passage for us today? In what ways do we pursue things that are *hebel* with our lives today?
3. The big argument from this session is that we each have a longing within us for meaning which cannot be satisfied by anything in this world. Why do you suppose this longing provides an argument for the existence of God?
4. Chad ended the video by talking about four "echoes of Eden." What are those echoes of Eden? How do they point us to the need for God?

Session 7: Resurrection

1. Why is the resurrection essential to Christian belief? What does Paul say about this in 1 Corinthians 15?
2. What is a minimal facts approach to the resurrection? A good summary can be found here: <https://crossexamined.org/the-minimal-facts-of-the-resurrection/>. You can also watch this video summary: <https://apologetics.org/videos/gary-habermas-the-minimal-facts-approach-to-the-resurrection/>.
3. Chad listed four minimal facts regarding the resurrection in the session. What are those four facts?

4. What are some of the explanations that skeptics offer in order to explain away these minimal facts? What would you say in response?

Session 8: Suffering

1. This topic is deeply personal. Has there been a moment in your life or in someone's life who is close to you when suffering has led to doubt? How did you address this doubt?
2. Chad said in the session that our first response should not necessarily be apologetics but pastoral. In your experience, what types of things should or should we not say to a person who is experiencing suffering?
3. What is a theodicy? What were the two theodicies explained in this session?
4. Why does rejecting God because of pain and suffering not make any sense?
5. Can you think of experiences in your life where you didn't have a "God's-eye" perspective in the moment, but in hindsight you can see that God was at work?
6. What is most needed from us when we are going through pain and suffering?

Session 9: Scandal

1. What is the problem with rejecting Christianity because it has occasionally led to violence?
2. Chad argued that Christianity is not anti-progress, but has actually led to progress whenever it is introduced into a culture. Can you think of any specific examples of this?
3. What is the difference between science and scientism? As Christians, what should be our relationship with science?
4. Reflect on why religion might need science and why science might need religion.
5. The title of this session is "Scandal." The idea is that there are some things about Christianity that are a scandal to many people today. How do we respond when someone says that religious belief and Christianity in particular are just out of date and should be cast aside?

Session 10: Culture

1. In the session, Chad said that culture is the concrete expression of abstract ideas and values. One of the ways that we engage our culture is to look at what our culture produces and identify what sorts of values are being communicated. Take some time and go through some case studies of things in our culture and identify what they might be communicating. I'll give you a couple of suggestions: social media and professional sports.
2. Have you ever had a moment when you felt disoriented by being in a different culture? Talk about that experience. Have you, as a Christian, ever felt disoriented living in the culture of this world?
3. Chad listed three postures that Christians sometimes adopt towards culture. What are those postures? Can you think of situations where those postures might be appropriate? Can you think of situations where those postures might actually hurt our witness?
4. What does it look like to engage this world as a royal priesthood? How do we do that? What do we need to be cautious about?