

Gary Zacharias: Apologetics For Life
Topics Prepared

NOTE: I have listed below the topics I can speak on. Most of them are 30-40 minutes in length for one class session. A few can be extended over two-three more class sessions with additional information. These are indicated below.

General Apologetics

1. Apologetics and Tactics--Is it OK for Christians to use apologetics and arguments if God saves people? How do we become better defenders of the faith? What tactics can we use? What are good resources? **[one-three class sessions]**
2. What Does It Mean To Be An Ambassador?-- 2 Corinthians 5:20 challenges us to be ambassadors for God. What should that look like? How can we prepare to be the best representatives for Christ in this skeptical world?
3. Worldview Thinking--What is a worldview and why is it important today? What other worldview competes with Christianity? How can we become people who use this worldview thinking every day instead of just on Sunday?
4. Critical Thinking for Christians--We live in a society today that doesn't value clear thinking. What are the characteristics of someone who doesn't think clearly? How does this contrast with a critical thinker?

God

1. The Existence of God--What are good arguments for God's existence? How does the problem of evil actually end up arguing for a God? Why do so many reasonable people reject the idea of God? **[one-three class sessions]**
2. Is God a Moral Monster?--Atheists complain that the God of the Old Testament is arrogant, cruel, petty, and wrathful. They say He engaged in ethnic cleansing by ordering all Canaanites to be wiped out. They say the Old Testament is full of silly laws, that women are treated as second-class citizens, that God ordained slavery. What is the true picture?
3. Signposts to God--Atheists think they have good answers to the realities of life. But do they? What clues are there for everyone to see that lead to the conclusion that there is a God?

Jesus

1. The Resurrection of Jesus-- What good reasons do we have in believing the Resurrection story of Jesus? What are alternative theories about his death and resurrection? Could it be that the disciples were hallucinating? Can we trust the source material for this story?
2. The Uniqueness of Jesus-- How is the documentary evidence for Jesus different than the documentary evidence for other religious leaders? What claims

did Jesus make about himself that were unique? What are the implications of his claims?

The Bible

1. The Bible (An Overview)--Do we really know the overall story of the Bible, including its geography, history, and books? Can we connect it to the secular world it came out of? Do Christians realize the order of the books doesn't reflect the history of the story it tells?
2. The Bible Beyond Theology--Are there valid reasons to defend Bible reading today? Why should the non-Christian consider reading the Bible? Can we encourage Bible reading without scaring off those who know very little about it?
3. Can We Trust the Gospels?--Did Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John really write the books named after them? When were they written? Why are there four gospels? Were they actually written much later by the church in a power grab to create a Jesus it wanted?
4. Interlocking Gospels-- Why do forgeries look different from the original gospels? How do many passages in the Gospels demonstrate interlocking evidence that they were written by eyewitnesses?
5. Is the Old Testament Reliable?--Was Moses accurate in his description of the patriarchs? Do we have any evidence the children of Israel were in Egypt? What about their conquest of the Promised Land--any proof for that? Was David a real person? Did the Bible get it right regarding the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians? **[one-three class sessions]**
6. Messianic Prophecies--At Christmas we all hear certain Old Testament prophecies that promise a coming Messiah, but do we really understand them? How did ancient Jewish rabbis see these prophecies? How do Jews today understand them?
7. Paul's Letters: A New Way to Substantiate the Gospels--Scholars are exploring new ways to get back to the historical Jesus by using Paul's letters. What have they discovered about the creeds and hymns found in his letters that corroborate the four gospels? How close to the life of Jesus do these creeds take us?
8. Psalms as Literature: Pure Poetry--How can we get more out of the poetry of the Bible, especially the book of Psalms? How does poetry work and how can we put this knowledge to use when we read poetic works in the Bible?
9. Reading the Bible for All It's Worth--We often read the Bible without realizing it is not only God's word, but it is also literature. Good literature does so much for us. How can we read the Bible and appreciate it more by using imagination as we would for other literary masterpieces? **[one-three class sessions]**
10. Three Views of Creation--What are the three leading views on the Genesis account of the creation of the universe, the earth, and the human race? How do the supporters of each view understand the relevant Bible

passages both in the Old and New Testaments? Why is this important?
[one-three class sessions]

History

1. America's Godly Heritage--Many critics today downplay the role of Christianity during our colonial and revolutionary period. Were the Founding Fathers really deists? What was the intent of the Founding Fathers? What was the purpose of the First Amendment?
2. Da Vinci Code--Dan Brown brought up a lot of charges against Christianity and the gospels in his wildly successful novel. Did Constantine create the Christianity we follow today? Did the Council of Nicaea manufacture a belief in the divinity of Jesus? Are there other “gospels” that tell a more accurate story of Jesus?
3. Legacy of the Pilgrims and Puritans--We are told today that the early Christian colonists who settled America were terrible people—anti-intellectual, anti-science, undemocratic. Is that true? What valuable gifts did they pass along to us today?
4. The Real Story of Christianity--Many myths about Christianity circulate today: the Crusades were an aggressive war against peaceful Muslims, Christians killed millions in the Inquisition, missionaries ruined native cultures, science fought for freedom against an oppressive church, Christianity engaged in and approved of slavery. It's time for the truth. **[one-two class sessions]**

Science

1. Evolution vs. Creation--What are the implications if evolution is true? What's the difference between micro and macro evolution? What theories have been put forward to explain the origin of life and how well are they doing? What are some basic problems with evolution?
2. Recent Scientific Discoveries--What are recent scientific discoveries revealing about the origin of the universe, the origin of life, the history of life on earth, and the origin of humanity? How do they demonstrate a weakening in support for evolution and other naturalistic theories? **[one-three class sessions]**
3. Science, Christianity and Scientism--Why did modern science arise out of Christianity? Did Christians persecute Galileo? Were any of the early scientists Christian? What happened during the Enlightenment to cause a rift between science and Christianity? How is Christianity still relevant today in regards to science? What is scientism, and what are some of the problems with it as a viewpoint?

Religion and Cults

1. Can We Test Religions?--People in our relativistic culture today hesitate to judge religions. They say all religions are the same and there is no way to select one based on true standards. Are they right? Or are there careful, thoughtful, and clear ways we can distinguish between religions and evaluate them?
2. Religions and Cults--People of different religious beliefs are near us at work, in school, and in our neighborhoods. How can we as Christians engage them in serious conversations about their beliefs and ours? Each of these presentations is focused on one religion or cult--Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Hinduism, Buddhism, Scientology, New Age, Christian Science, Atheism/Darwinism/Naturalism. **[one-nine class sessions if we cover all on this list]**

Social Issues

1. Abortion--What are key arguments by the pro-choice side, and, even though they sound good, how do they fail to provide satisfactory support for their side? What are key pro-life points that don't depend on the Bible (something that's helpful in this age that doesn't recognize the importance of the Bible)?
2. Relativism--What aspects of our society are negatively influenced by relativism today? What tactics can we use when confronting a relativist? Is there such a thing as real truth? Why don't people believe in absolute truth today? How can we find truth in spiritual matters if it's all just a lot of opinions?
3. Same-sex Marriage-- Our culture today is pushing hard to convince us that same-sex marriage is fine and that those who oppose it are bigots. What does the Bible really say about homosexuality and same-sex marriage? How can we argue against it without reference to the Bible?
4. Tolerance--How is it a challenge to Christianity? How has tolerance changed in its definition? What are the negative implications of tolerance? What changes has it brought in education, government, society and leisure, the church? How can we combat it?
5. Truth--In our postmodern society we are told there is no objective truth, especially in areas like morality and religion ("That's just your truth"). How can we argue against this view? What are dangers of living in a world without regard for moral/religious truth? How can we search for truth among various religious claims?
6. Women and Ministry--What are two competing views of women in ministry? How much should women be allowed to do in church leadership? What verses in both the Old Testament and the New Testament are used to support each view? **[one-two class sessions]**

7. Transgenderism--What is it, what do transgendered people say about their own lives, what are the problems with it, what do scientific studies tell us about it, and what should our response be as Christians?

Theology

1. Decision Making and the Will of God--Does God have an individual will for our lives in every area (school, job, house, car, etc.)? What are the problems with this belief? How is the wisdom model a better way to handle decisions?
2. Do Good People Go to Heaven?--A popular view is that most of us are pretty good and will go to heaven. But we need to show those who hold this view that being good is not good enough. How can we illustrate this truth?
3. Faith Is Not Wishing--Critics of Christianity today say believers have faith that is much like a leap in the dark. How has faith been misunderstood? What is biblical faith? How can we increase our faith?
4. Hell-- How can a good God torture people in hell forever? What is hell like? Is there such a thing as annihilation rather than everlasting torment? Does God send people there because they do not believe in Jesus? What about those who never heard of Jesus?
5. Is God Just a Crutch?--Some suggest there are emotional and cultural factors which induce commitment to crutches like Jesus. What should our response be? What is a major fallacy with this attack on Christianity?
6. Miracles--Are they in conflict with natural laws? What is the purpose of them in the Bible? What is the relationship of science and miracles? What are key arguments against miracles? Are these valid arguments?
7. Narrow-minded Christians--Jesus claimed to be the way to God. It's not popular today to claim an exclusive religious route to heaven. Christians get called "narrow-minded," or "arrogant." We are often told the parable of the blind men and the elephant. How can we defend ourselves against these attacks? What tactics can we use in a kind way to point out problems with those who disagree with our exclusive claims.
8. The Problem of Evil-- How is evil actually an argument for God? What is the value of evil? Why doesn't God intervene and stop all evil? How is pain "God's megaphone," according to C. S. Lewis? **[one-three class sessions]**
9. The Soul--Is there such a thing as the soul, or are we simply brains and bodies? How could we find out if there is such a thing if the soul cannot be discovered by scientific methods? What are the negative results if we are only our bodies? Can computers become human?
10. Three Steps (A Defense of Christian Basics)--What is a quick way to get across the basic Christian message? Can it be done without memorizing a lot? How can it make sense to a non-believer?
11. What About Those Who Have Never Heard of Jesus?--Many skeptics say it's unfair for God to send people to Hell simply because they never heard of Jesus. What is a good answer to that challenge?

12. The Trinity--Many groups attack the Trinity (Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Mormons, . . .). What are key verses that support the Trinity? What verses have been distorted by those who reject the Trinity? Why is the Trinity so important?
13. Do All Roads Lead to God?--Thanks to the new tolerance, we are told that there are many paths to God and that they are all equally valid. But there are huge problems with this relativistic view.