

The Billy Graham School COMPASS

Navigating Ministry & Missions

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Apologetics and Evangelism

As a young believer over thirty years ago, I was energetic and sometimes rude in doing evangelism. I simply loved telling others about Christ. And, as I reflect on those days, I cannot remember anyone blatantly rejecting the authority I claimed or the message I shared. I recall no one saying to me, "I just don't believe the Bible is true" or "Thanks, but what is right for you is right for you—but not for me." In those days, followers of other faiths seemed to live only in distant lands, and only international missionaries accepted the task of reaching them.



"We must also be prepared for follow-up steps when others reject the story."

Everything has now changed. Not only has the world come to North America, but post-modernism has also promoted skepticism about all religious authorities – including the Bible. No longer can we assume that our saying, "The Bible says," carries any weight with non-believers. Nor can we assume that others perceive a problem with claiming that multiple

roads lead to God – even though each road claims exclusive rights to truth. All of these changes make evangelism even more challenging.

Evangelism always requires telling the gospel story, but we must also be prepared for follow-up steps when others reject the story. There, apologetics come into play. Sometimes, helping others to believe includes guiding them to understand that they are currently following gods that have eyes but cannot see (Psa 115:5). Our goal is to debunk the lies they follow while leading them to the truth.

This edition of the *Compass* is designed to help you prepare for this task. In this edition you will meet two

BGS faculty members who are specialists in apologetics. Dr. Ted Cabal is the general editor of the *Apologetics Bible*, an invaluable tool listed under the "Resources" section of this newsletter. Dr. Adam Greenway wrote the guest column, "The Need for Apologetics." Both of these men are available if

you would like them to provide apologetics training for your church.

Use these resources, read the other articles in this newsletter, and be better equipped to stand for the faith that is ours. I pray that God will use you to lead a non-believer to the truth in Christ.

Chuck Lawless
Dean, The Billy Graham School of
Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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FOR THE TRUTH. FOR THE CHURCH. FOR THE WORLD. FOR THE GLORY OF GOD



Recommended Resources

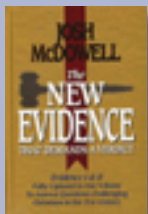
Topic of the Month:

Apologetics



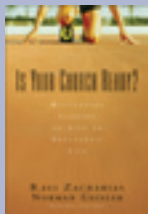
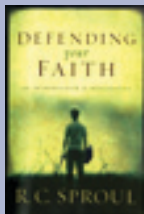
Ted Cabel, gen ed.,
The Apologetics Study Bible

Norman Geisler
& Chad Meister,
Reasons for Faith



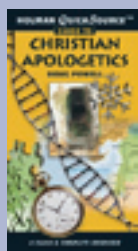
Josh McDowell,
The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict

R.C. Sproul,
Defending Your Faith



Ravi Zacharias &
Norman Geisler,
Is Your Church Ready?

Doug Powell, ed.,
The Holman Quick Source Guide to Christian Apologetics

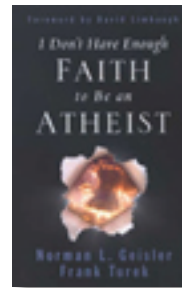


Books can be found at:
Lifeway.com or
Amazon.com

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist

Norman Geisler and Frank Turek explain that every religious worldview, even one that says there is no God, requires faith. As they examine philosophical and scientific evidence for God, they determine that they do not have enough faith to be atheists. They begin by explaining why the truth about reality is knowable. They show evidence that the theistic God exists, explain why miracles are possible, and support the historical reliability of the New Testament. Next, they explain that Jesus is God, supported by fulfilled prophecy, his deeds, and his resurrection. These conclusions lead to their final conclusion that the Bible is the Word of God and everything opposed to it is therefore false.

The book gives evidences and sound arguments for every claim, and it is filled with helpful charts and graphs. The authors' well-structured and well-supported arguments help lead one to agree, "I don't have enough faith to be an atheist." The book is a great tool for Christians to find assurance, to become more equipped to share their faith, and to give to non-Christians seeking answers to the worldview questions.



By: **Kevin Hall**
Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.*

The Need for Apologetics

One could describe the challenge facing contemporary ministry practitioners by quoting the words of Bob Dylan, "The times they are a-changing." Concepts such as postmodernism, moral and ethical relativism, pluralism, and inclusivism were unheard of just a generation ago. Evangelistic strategies are increasingly less effective, and it seems that each new survey about beliefs generates great discussion but produces little tangible change.

The situation is complicated by the fact that a mainstay of modern evangelism—local church training for door-to-door "visitation"—seems to be inadequate to meet all the challenges this new century has brought. While programs like *Evangelism Explosion* and *FAITH* have been used to mobilize many for evangelism, a fundamental assumption underlying such programs is the ability to categorize lost persons based upon their answers to questions like, "If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven or hell?" Any answer that expresses something other than a confession of faith, like a "works" answer, is then met with a transition to share "how the Bible answers this question," followed by a gospel presen-

tation. But what happens when you have a little different scenario, like one recalled by Norman Geisler in his book reviewed above?

Knock, Knock.

"Who's there?" (A man came to the door.)

I stuck out my hand and said, "Hi! My name is Norm Geisler, this is my partner, Ron, and we're from the church at the end of the street."

"I'm Don," the man replied, his eyes quickly sizing us up.

Immediately I jumped into action with question 1: "Don, do you mind if we ask you a spiritual question?"

"No, go ahead," Don said boldly, apparently eager to have a Bible-thumper for dessert.

I laid question 2 on him: "Don, if you were to die tonight and stand before God, and God were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' what would you say?"

Don snapped back, "I'd say to God, 'Why *shouldn't* you let me into your heaven?'"

Gulp . . . he wasn't supposed to say that! I mean, that answer wasn't in the book!

For many believers, the conversation would be over before it really even began—thwarted by this answer of unbelief. Yet (as Geisler illustrates in the book), this does not have to be the case! Apologetics, or the defense of the faith, can and should be an invaluable companion to contemporary evangelism. More often than not, evangelistic dialogues today touch upon issues such as biblical authenticity and accuracy, the existence and nature of God, the reality of heaven and hell, and the deity and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not enough simply to be able to tell others *how* to become a Christian; we must also be able to tell them *why* they should become one. To reach our world, we must have a passion and priority to do not only the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5), but also that of an apologist (1 Pet 3:15). Train your church to do both.

By: **Dr. Adam Greenway**
Assistant Professor of Evangelism and Applied Apologetics; Director of Research Doctoral Studies, Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth; Director of Extension Education and Conferencing, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

CHURCH HEALTH 101



Turning an Inwardly-Focused Church in the Right Direction

Most churches are inwardly focused. No church, though, *decides* to be inwardly focused. Instead, churches default to that position as ministry inside the church consumes the leaders' time. Symptoms of an inwardly focused church include:

- No evangelistic or missions events scheduled over the course of a year
- Fewer guests attending or returning to the church
- Internal struggles that dominate the church
- Few members praying intentionally for non-believers
- Few small groups growing by reaching non-believers

To turn a church around, a first step is to plan some outwardly focused events. That is, *getting a few people to do outreach* (rather than waiting to convince the whole church to turn outward) is the right step. For example, challenge a few members to do servant evangelism projects like offering a free car wash, distributing coins at the laundry, or giving free water at a local park. When a few do outwardly focused events, others will eventually catch their fire. These resources might help you:

Thom Rainer and Chuck Lawless, *Eating the Elephant*
Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness*

PURPOSE SIX

Evangelism is not an easy task – especially when others determine to *reject* the Christian message. Challenge your church to have GOD'S HEART as they pray:

G = Pray that *believers* will appreciate **God's grace**. When we appreciate what God has done for us, we are best prepared to tell others (Eph. 2:8-9)

O = Pray that they will be **obedient** so prayers are not hindered (Isa. 59:1-2).

D = Pray that they will have a **desire** to tell others. How can we keep to ourselves the good news about Jesus? (John 1:40-42)

S = Pray that they will **speak** the gospel boldly and clearly (Eph. 6:18-20, Col. 4:3-4).

H = Pray for *nonbelievers* to have a receptive **heart** to the gospel. Only God can make this happen (Eph. 2:4-5).

E = Pray that their spiritual **eyes** will be opened (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

A = Pray that they will have God's **attitude** toward sin. Repentance is possible only when lost people see their sin as God sees it (Amos 5:14-15).

R = Pray that they will be **released** to believe (Col. 1:13).

T = Pray that their lives will be **transformed** (2 Cor. 5:17).

Source: Charles E. Lawless, Jr., *Serving in Your Church Prayer Ministry*

RESEARCH SHOWS

Research by The Barna Group shows how important apologetics are. Not only are there many who have not accepted Christ, but the majority of people also do not believe the truths of the Bible.

- More than half of all adults (53%) believe that if people are generally good, or do enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven.
- In 2007, more than half of adults (57%) said that the devil, or Satan, is a symbol of evil rather than a living being.
- More than two out of every five adults (41%) believe that Jesus Christ committed sin when he lived on earth.
- Atheists and agnostics comprise 10% of adults nationwide.
- 8% believe that God is the total realization of personal, human potential.

On the other hand, only 3% believe there is no such thing as God. 69% say they believe in God when God is described as the all-powerful, all-knowing, perfect creator of the universe who rules the world today. Our responsibility is to proclaim Christ as the only redeemer and call people to a relationship with him. Only when people believe in him personally will they truly know this God.

Source: The Barna Group, "Barna by Topic" (www.barna.org)

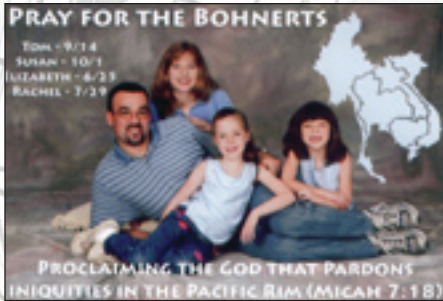
Missionary Matters

Prayer Requests:

- Knowledge and competence for understanding and using the Thai language
- Perseverance to develop relationships with our new Thai friends, including the friendships of the Bohnert girls
- Wisdom, insight, and safety for Tom as he travels and continues his research for his doctorate
- Discernment for helping others develop effective strategies for reaching people groups with the gospel and then discipling them

Tom and Susan Bohnert have lived in Thailand for just over one year. Tom and Susan have three children: Elizabeth, who will be 10 years old in June; Rachel, who will be 9 years old in July; and Micah, who is now 8 months old.

Tom serves as a Regional Research Specialist for the Pacific Rim region. He works with mission agencies and other NGOs to assist them to understand the cultures of mainland Southeast Asia and the Oceanic Islands. He does this by training personnel in skills necessary for doing on-site research, understanding and reaching people groups, and publishing People Group Profile books. These profile books help our friends all over the world to pray more effectively for the approximately 3,000 people groups of the Pacific Rim.



BGS HELPS

The Dehoney Center for Urban Ministry Training

We have recently started a center for training ministers to reach the cities. If you are interested in the center or our Certificate of Urban Ministry, please contact us at UrbanTraining@sbts.edu.

Biblical Church Growth: The Blog and Writings of Dr. Chuck Lawless

Blog, Articles, Books, MP3s, Recommended Resources, Book Reviews, Links
<http://www.biblicalchurchgrowth.com>

Know others who might be interested in receiving this e-newsletter?

Send their contact information to bgsinfo@sbts.edu.

Need a good evangelistic tract?

<http://www.sbts.edu/pdf/GRACE.pdf>

4Truth.net

A great apologetics website to help give a reasoned defense of Christianity
www.4truth.net

The Christian Research Journal

A publication of the Christian Research Institute, which helps equip Christians to defend their faith.
<http://www.equip.org/site/c.mu11LaMNjRE/b.2536405/>

Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

Resources from the ministry of Ravi Zacharias, a globally recognized preacher and apologist
<http://www.rzim.org/USA/home.aspx>

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