

HOW TO DO PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICS

INTRODUCTION

- Remember the task of presuppositional apologetics
 - 📖 **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** ~ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,
- The controversy between a believer and an unbeliever is really a controversy between two completely different systems of thought
- The goal is always to push the unbeliever back to their presuppositions and deal with the issues at that level
- Appeals to logic, evidence, and personality may be necessary but ultimately what is needed is a complete attack on the underlying presuppositions of the unbeliever's system of thought
- Remember the thought pattern of the unbeliever:
 - a. The unbeliever is made in the image of God and is therefore inescapably religious. His heart testifies to him as well as the revelation around him that God exists and has a certain character (Rom 1:18)
 - b. He has exchanged the truth of God for a lie and is therefore a fool for suppressing that truth (Rom 1:22)
 - c. He chooses to serve the creature rather than the Creator and is committed to his own ways of thought
 - d. He hates true knowledge when it is presented to him
 - e. He has a culpable ignorance because he is without an excuse (Rom 1:20)
 - f. His unbelief is not ignorance but refusal to submit to the truth
 - g. He will deny any need for the Bible as essential to understanding God, himself, and the world
 - h. He has complete confidence in his ability to reason himself to true knowledge
 - i. He will only accept what he can decide to be true through his own reason
 - j. He will reject biblical truth
- These presuppositions must be lovingly confronted

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE APOLOGIST

1. He must have a proper attitude
 - 📖 **Ephesians 4:15** ~ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him
 - 📖 **2 Timothy 2:23-26** ~ But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
 - 📖 **1 Peter 3:15** ~ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence

📖 **Colossians 4:5-6** ~ Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

2. He must have a proper starting point – the Word of God and urging the thinking of God’s thoughts after Him

- The Word of God is our authority and forms the foundation of our defense
- The Bible is our foundation; Every man knows the truth, but chooses to deny it
- The Scriptures are completely sufficient for all of life

📖 **Psalms 19:7-9** ~ The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.

📖 **2 Timothy 3:16-17** ~ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

📖 **Hebrews 4:12** ~ For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

3. He must have a proper method

- Working on the unbeliever’s unacknowledged presuppositions and firmly grounded in his own presuppositions, the believer must cast down every exalted thought against the knowledge of God
- The unbeliever’s “independence” must be repeatedly challenged
- Realizing that the unbeliever is holding down the truth in unrighteousness, the believer must reject the foolish presuppositions of the unbeliever and show him what God says in His Word
- The unbeliever’s presuppositions must be attacked and he must be lovingly shown to be a fool

4. His goal must be the unconditional surrender of the unbeliever without compromise of the truth

- The Creator-creature distinction must be maintained by keeping the discussion on the vertical plane and not just the horizontal
- The unbeliever must be led from independence to dependence by appealing to him to recognize that he has been made in God’s image and has clear revelation of God has his creator

THE EXAMPLE OF ACTS 17:22-32

1. All men are inherently religious - vs. 22
2. This “religion” is defective – vs. 23
3. We must declare that God will not tolerate their ignorance – vs. 23
4. The natural revelation in Creation and His sovereignty over creation condemn men – vs. 24-26
5. The unbeliever misinterprets this revelation – vs. 27
6. Every unbeliever has an inescapable sense of deity – vs. 28-29

7. Men should be called to accountability and repentance – vs. 30-31
8. God has give ample evidence of His claim – vs. 31-32

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Focus on presuppositional issues


- It can be very easy to get caught up in dealing with the complex details of their belief system.
- Rather, we must focus on the presuppositional issues: what is reality?, the existence of God, what is truth, what is man, how do we know right from wrong?
- Sometimes the conversations will be very short
- If we cannot come to terms on the presuppositions then to talk about details of their religion or worldview is rather worthless.


2. Don't be intimidated by their worldview and its complexity

- The farther you get away from the truth the more complicated things become.
- Some of the worldviews and their accompanying religions are extremely complex and difficult to understand.
- The key is to know the truth and to be able to share that effectively.
- Although it is helpful to have some basic understanding about worldviews, you do not need to be an expert on every single aspect of them in order to “give an answer for the hope that lies within you.”
- It is helpful to ask appropriate questions and learn what they believe.

3. Start with the Bible as the standard of all faith and practice

- This is the most critical issue—you must share the truths of the Word of God.
- You may say, wait a minute, none of the other worldviews believe in special revelation from God or that it has any authority.
- That's right. But God's Word is powerful whether or not an individual acknowledges its authority...God still uses it
- The Word of God must be the starting point...Do not feel as if you must or can rationally argue someone into the kingdom.
- Just share the truth over and over with them and keep coming back to that...God will use His Word.

 **James 1:18** ~ In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

 **1 Peter 1:23** ~ for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

- All reasoning is circular but not all circular reasoning is valid
- Memorize key passages
- Don't be timid or intimidated
- Show the love and power of Christ in your words and actions

4. Ask questions and insist on answers
 - Ask the unbeliever why do you believe that way? By what standard or criteria do you evaluate the truth or existence of God?
 - Make him declare his position while listening closely as to how to challenge it
 - Develop a keen ability to recognize sin while listening
5. Do not let the unbeliever control the conversation
 - Return the issue to the Garden of Eden where the issue is man versus God
 - Confront him with the truth
6. Challenge the foolishness of the unbeliever wherever you see it
 - Expose and challenge the independence (*autonomy*) of the sinful man and call for repentance and dependence upon God
 - If he is certain that he is right and that Christianity is wrong, show him that he has not and cannot know enough to be sure - he has become his own god and made a choice
 - Show him that he is being a fool to reject the God of the Bible (Prov 26:4-5)
7. Do not let the discussion reduce to conflicting equal positions – “that’s what you believe” – explain biblically what the unbeliever is doing to the truth
8. Refute the unbeliever and bring him back to the Gospel to show them the hope in Christ
 - Make the issue of the Gospel more than just heaven and hell
 - Make it serving God versus serving yourself or obedience verses disobedience
 - The only hope for unbelievers is the Gospel – thus, they must understand their sin, that it is an offense against a holy God, and that Christ died as their substitute
9. Attack the foundation of sinful thoughts and attitudes bringing down the entire superstructure of thoughts and deeds
10. Develop discernment
11. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit
 - Never fall into the error of thinking that you can rationally win this person into the kingdom—even with the Word of God.
 - Only the Spirit of God can do that. Certainly He can use you, but you are dependent on Him rather than Him being dependent on you!
12. Call the person to repentance and faith
13. Emphasize Prayer

📖 **2 Corinthians 4:4** ~ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- Ultimately, all the false worldviews are a lie of Satan to confuse and blind the minds of the unbelieving.
- You are in a spiritual battle for the souls of men, thus you must use the weapons of spiritual warfare and your prayers are a critical part of that battle.

“Prayer is the ultimate apologetic weapon”
(John Frame, *Apologetics to the Glory of God*, p.202)