

## **Week Three - Give An Answer: What Would It Take to Change Your Mind About Jesus?**

Readings: Exodus 17:1-7 // Philippians 2:1-13 // Matthew 21:23-32

Series based on 1 Peter 3:15 NIV “But in your hearts revere 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...”

### **What is Apologetics?**

Apologetics is worshipping God with our minds as we defend the Christian faith with logic and evidence that may remove barriers to belief.

From Joshua Johnson: What Apologetics IS and is NOT

Apologetics IS: Worshipping God with our minds, defends the Christian faith with logic and evidence, removes barriers to belief (some call pre-evangelism), ...the science and art of Christian persuasion, any reason why a person believes in Jesus, equips believers to engage hard questions they will face in life, ...connecting faith with science, history, philosophy without sacrificing one or the other, bridges faith with experience, gives believers and unbelievers space to ask questions, investigate holistic discipleship.

Apologetics is NOT: saying “I’m sorry,” ...arguing or bullying people into faith, ...possessing absolute certainty in all theological beliefs, ...debating with people on a stage, ...eliminating the mysterious or the spiritual, ...about winning, ignoring the heart, the spirit, or experiences, ...a purely mental exercise, providing a bubble that prevents questions of the Christian faith, ...cookie cutter explanations.

Five Reasons We Need to be Equipped for Apologetics (from Joshua Johnson);

1. It is biblical, historical, and Jesus and John Wesley used it.
2. It is part of the holiness journey.
3. It is a multi-purpose tool.
4. It demands integrity. [Questions are not accusations; they are opportunities to respond with gentleness and respect. Both require integrity.]
5. It engages the next generation and changing world.

### **How does Jesus teach us to go about explaining the reasons for what we believe?**

Matthew 10:16 – NASB 16 “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so [a]be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.”

The Message: 16 “Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.”

### **Quotes about changing our own mind:**

“Everything in Scripture has the force of law. What it teaches we are to believe; what it commands, we are to do. We should take its wisdom to heart, imitate its heroes, laugh at its jokes, trust its promises, and sing its songs.” – John Frame

“Those who can’t change their minds can’t change anything.” – George Bernard Shaw

### **Why does God ask us to consider changing our mind?**

We are not born understanding God’s plan. We aren’t born knowing who God is. Yet God knew us before we were born. God knit us together in the womb. God knows us. But we have to learn how everything created by God works, and works together, and why. If we are to live an authentic expression of Christianity, having right understanding is vital. Right understanding begins without any assumptions. What you assume about the Bible will direct, and likely determine, the course of your journey. We do not know what we don’t know.

### **How do we deal with our authority problem?**

In the movie U-371, a damaged German sub is taken by the US Navy. As they try to navigate to the safety of a British harbor, a German plane circles the sub, unaware the U-boat has been commandeered by the Americans. The Lieutenant in charge orders the seaman manning the flak gun not to shoot at the plane. Suddenly the plane takes an attack posture, flying straight at the sub. The sailors, convinced they’re about to die, demand the seaman shoot the plane. The Lieutenant commands “hold fire”. He has seconds to determine who his authority is. Who is our authority in matters of faith and practice?

**Today’s takeaway about what it takes to change our mind:** Could a guilty conscience have caused the chief priests and elders to double down on finding fault with him? Do we do the same, trying to find fault with Scripture when the fault is actually in our assumption?

Meditations for the Week:

1. Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
2. Psalm 139:23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
3. 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.
4. Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
5. Are you rewriting (in your mind & heart) passages you should re-read and reconsider?