

Week One: Give An Answer: How to Forgive like a Christian, and Why

Readings: Romans 14:1-12 // Matthew 18:21-35 // 1 Peter 3:13-22

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.”

What is Forgiveness?

Merriam-Webster says that forgiveness is “to cease to feel resentment against an offender” or “to grant relief from payment of debt.”

What is the difference between forgiveness and acknowledging guilt?

When someone wrongs you and apologizes but does not stop doing what they apologized for they are unrepentant. Their apology is part of a cycle of assuaging their guilt, but is not real, therefore saying “I forgive you” may be true on your part, but to them it’s merely acknowledging their guilt without changing the behavior. You know when someone is truly repentant because they change their behavior after being forgiven.

How should we deal with one who is unrepentant?

There is potential for change of heart that pleases God. Forgiveness is releasing someone, not denying our pain or the realities of outcomes. We cannot minimize the event, saying our pain really didn’t matter or wasn’t all that bad, because when we do, we cannot forgive because our context is cloudy. Our feelings matter to God! We get to share with God the fact that this event happened and state the negative impact their actions or attitudes brought into our life. We are called to forgive even though we may not forget, and not wish on another what they did to us.

Today’s takeaway about Forgiving Like a Christian: Jesus’ instruction about forgiveness is to not to say how many times is too many for the forgiven to be forgiving, but how forgiving the forgiven need to be.

Meditations for the Week

1. We forgive because we were forgiven. Matthew 18:21-35 is when Jesus shares the parable of the unmerciful servant who, despite being forgiven his large debt, went about demanding small debts owed him be paid, or else. He missed the heart of forgiveness. We are to forgive because we have been forgiven.
2. We all need forgiveness. Romans 3:23 tells us that we ALL have fallen. We are ALL in need of forgiveness. At the cross we find that we are all broken and incapable of saving ourselves. Who do you need to forgive this week?
3. God forgives us as we forgive others. Maybe one of the most challenging teachings is that we are forgiven when we forgive. See Matthew 6:15, Luke 6:37. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus lays out one of the most difficult, and life changing teachings of his ministry. “But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Matthew 6:15