

## **Week Two - Give An Answer: Why Don't We Get What We Deserve?**

Readings: Exodus 16:2-15 // Philippians 1:21-30 // Matthew 20:1-16

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 Fair?

Merriam-Webster says that fair is “marked by impartiality and honesty : free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism.”

## What is God’s idea of fairness?

God’s idea of fairness is very different from ours, and that’s a very good thing, because we can’t see the whole picture. God knows all things, all conversations, all actions, and inactions. What is expected of a Christ follower is to understand that God’s idea of fairness comes from something much bigger than our self, and impacts church life, forgiveness, and grace.

## How should we deal with the temptation to be favored?

We have no greater stumbling block than misplaced focus. We can miss the forest for the trees when we focus on how things could be or be used better, yet won’t see all the wonderful reasons we have to be grateful right now. When we focus on what we think we deserve or how life’s struggles are keeping us down, we can make it impossible to see the blessings right in front of us. Count your blessings. Name them one by one. Count your many blessings, see what God has done. You are favored by God because you belong to God.

**Today’s takeaway about what is fair to a Christian:** To answer the questions why we don’t get we deserve requires us to acknowledge that our actions are not the only actions happening in the world. “The Active, Resourceful, Seeking Owner of the Vineyard” is focused on the harvest.

## Meditations for the Week

1. Life is not always fair. It's in the Bible, Ecclesiastes 9:11, NASB 1995 I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. – The Message paraphrase “I took another walk around the neighborhood and realized that on this earth as it is—The race is not always to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor satisfaction to the wise, Nor riches to the smart, Nor grace to the learned. Sooner or later bad luck hits us all.”
2. God expects fairness in business transactions. It's in the Bible, Proverbs 16:11 NASB 1995 A just balance and scales belong to the Lord; All the [a]weights of the bag are His [b]concern. – The Message paraphrase “God cares about honesty in the workplace; your business is his business.” Where might you need to reassess fairness toward others?
3. Fairness is a condition of living in God's kingdom. It's in the Bible, Isaiah 33:15-16 from The Message paraphrase offers great guidance, “The answer’s simple: Live right, speak the truth, despise exploitation, refuse bribes, reject violence, avoid evil amusements. This is how you raise your standard of living! A safe and stable way to live. A nourishing, satisfying way to live.” What condition is your fairness condition in?