

## **Week Four - Give An Answer: How Do I Know God Won't Reject Me?**

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7 // Philippians 3:2-14 // Matthew 21: 33-46

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."

**If God *wants* everyone to be saved, why *isn't* everyone saved? Rejection. Here's why:**

It is natural and normal for people to reject the Christian faith. Moreover, the Bible isn't shy about telling us that. Regarding the gospel message, Paul says: "Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:22-23). To the Jews back then, a crucified Messiah was a contradiction in terms and still is today. To everyone else, the gospel literally sounds 'moronic'; the Greek term Paul uses (mória) for 'foolishness' is where we get our word for 'moron'.

**What is happening in the temple that's causing Jesus to be so angry?**

The intent of the space in question the day before is relationship. Abraham was promised he would be the father of many nations, not Israel alone. We can't do with these what we do with other parables, we can't put ourselves into it, so we must focus on the relationship aspect. Jesus is asking the leaders how they are treating their own individual and corporate relationships with Yahweh. Calling them to repentance, by seeing what they're doing through the eyes of God. What Nathan did for King David in 2 Samuel 12. Opening their eyes to the reality about themselves they've been denying. They can't claim to know God well yet disobey God so often.

**Today's takeaway:** the distance left by the landowner who sets everything up and then goes to a distant land is that we have been given stewardship of the vineyard called earth, given values to live by that allow us to build real, strong relationships. And God will maintain enough distance to allow us to determine our fruitfulness or make our mistakes. God will continue to call us to right living despite Israel's repeated rejection of God's messengers, the prophets, including Jesus himself.

**Meditations for the Week:**

1. If we do what we can do and let God do what we cannot, our eyes may be opened to all God has prepared for fruitful living.
2. Despite seeking to teach us the ways of life, Jesus continues to suffer question and scorn, quarrel and testing, from those who seek to discredit him.
3. God does not reject as easily as we do. 1 Peter 2:4-5 "And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
4. Psalm 34:17-20 ESV / 894 helpful votes Helpful Not Helpful
5. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
6. How might you be keeping someone from worship or relationship with God? How might you provide gracious hospitality to one seeking Christ?