

*Every Believer **Confident**: Apologetics for the Ordinary Christian*

Study Guide

for Individuals and Small Groups

This study guide asks way more questions than can probably be answered in an hour, so do not feel the need to answer all the questions. The goal of this study guide is to take you deeper into the contents of *Every Believer **Confident*** so you can soak in the principles more deeply. The goal of learning the material better is to give you confidence and tools to use when you engage unbelievers with the gospel. I often tell people, if you don't actually put these principles into practice with live conversations with those who don't know Christ, then I have failed. Remember, knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Cor. 8:1).

So, use this study guide to the extent that it helps you. Along the way I will recommend resources that will allow you to dig deeper. You can also refer to the many resources listed in the back of the book. I trust that by reflecting on the chapters of the book your confidence will grow that you can engage any unbeliever you meet in gospel conversation.

Introduction Questions

- As you read my encounter with Karen and Bill in the coffee shop, what are your thoughts? Would you have handled the conversation differently? Did my method of apologetics in that situation give you ideas when you think of engaging unbelievers with the gospel?

- Briefly share how you came to repentance and faith in Christ. This is good practice to learn to share your testimony in sixty seconds or less, if you ever find yourself in a situation where that is all the time you have to clearly communicate how God saved you through faith in Jesus Christ.

- What was your first training in evangelism like? Describe the techniques and tools you were given to engage unbelievers with the gospel. Was it effective at the time? Is it effective now?

- What are the questions you find most intimidating that an unbeliever might ask you if you had a conversation about your faith?

- Josh McDowell was one of the first apologists I encountered, and he helped me see that there are good answers to any legitimate challenge raised against the faith. What apologists or resources have you found to be the most helpful to you as you have learned how to engage unbelievers with the gospel?

- Whenever I have a conversation with unbelievers that touches on the gospel, or what they believe, or spiritual matters, I usually experience great joy that I have been able to share the words of life (John 6:68-69). If you have had fruitful conversations with unbelievers about the gospel, describe the feelings you have experienced afterward.

In the coming chapters of this study guide you will spend a lot of time in the Scriptures. Even though the first two chapters are designed for you to reflect on your own experiences with evangelism and apologetics, the rest of the chapters explore and then apply what God says in His Word about defending and sharing the Christian faith.

Chapter 1 Questions: Understanding Apologetics

In this chapter we explore the basics of *apologetics*. What does the word mean, anyway? Some people mistakenly believe that it is a call to apologize for Christian beliefs. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Christians who receive the Bible as the revelation of God about himself and our world, we accept the teaching of Scripture as it is—the very Word of God. We believe it, submit to it, and stand on it without apology. And we stand with fellow believers since the time of the apostles in confessing the truth of the Christian faith without wavering.

- Some Christians find certain doctrines to be barely tolerable or regretfully necessary. Yet, our belief in Christianity is more than a mere intellectual assent. It is a wholehearted embrace of what God says because he is all-knowing and all-wise, even when we don't know why they are true. What do you think might be some of the beliefs for which some Christians feel we must apologize?

- The term “apologetics” arose in a legal setting, meaning to defend oneself from false charges. Read the following verses and summarize the use of the word in each passage:
 - Acts 22:1 _____
 - Acts 24:10 _____
 - Acts 25:8, 16 _____
 - Acts 26:1-2, 24 _____
 - Philippians 1:7, 16 _____
- The definition of apologetics given by William Edgar on p.23 of *Every Believer Confident* includes the idea of *persuasion*. Does apologetics take on a new meaning for you if persuasion is the end goal, rather than trying to defeat someone in a debate or shutting them up? How so?

- How far would you get in sharing the gospel with your unbelieving acquaintances if you were not able to answer their questions and objections about the gospel? Would any of them listen to you present a five-minute monologue on the gospel without interrupting?

In the next section of Chapter One the different approaches to apologetics are explained. While at first glance the approaches may seem identical, there are marked differences in how they approach engagement with unbelievers.

- Explain the problem with the concept of “evidence” and “proof” as it is usually understood:

- Although the various approaches to apologetics have great value, what is the problem with them as a method for engaging unbelievers with the gospel (p. 28)?

- Define a presupposition (p. 30):

- List two of the basic presuppositions of the Christian faith (p. 31):

- Did you find the sample conversation on pp. 32-34 helpful to understanding presuppositionalism? Why or why not?

Chapter 2 Questions: The Biblical Warrant for Apologetics

The foundation for defending the truth of the Christian faith is found in the actions of God throughout Scripture where he defends his glory and supremacy. This reminds us that God’s greatest concern is that all people everywhere would understand and be confronted with the truth of who He is and what he has done to save those made in his image.

- Consider Scott Oliphint’s definition of apologetics as “premeditated evangelism” (p. 39). How does this definition help you think about the need to prepare to engage unbelievers with the gospel?

- Read Genesis 3:9-24. Looking at this momentous event through the lens of God defending his glory, explain how the actions of God in reaction to Adam and Eve’s sin are all part of defending the truth of God and His glory:

- Read the following passages in Exodus and explain the cumulative concern that God had that His name would be glorified through Israel’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt through the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart and the plagues:
 - 3:15; 6:7; 7:3, 5
 - 8:18-19; 9:16
 - 10:1-2; 11:9

- Read the following verses in 1 Samuel 17 and describe David’s primary concern entering the battle with Goliath:
 - v. 24-27
 - v. 31-37
 - v. 45-47

- Read the following passages in Isaiah and record what God says about other so-called “gods” in comparison to his supremacy:
 - 41:23-24, 29
 - 42:8
 - 43:10-13
 - 44:6-20
 - 45:5-7, 20-22
 - 46:5-11

- In 1 Peter 3:13-14 Peter writes to believers facing persecution. He encourages them not to fear, despite the suffering they may face. What could they do to stop being overpowered by fear? Hint: see v. 12.

- Peter begins his exhortation in 1 Peter. 3:15-16 with a command to “set apart” or “honor” Jesus Christ as Lord (supreme God) in their hearts. What do you think it would take to do that in a way that your thinking was entirely guided by that truth? What practices would you need to adopt, what habits would you need to form, and what influences would you need to reject to have a heart and mind centered on devotion to Christ’s authority?

- Christians are exhorted to *be prepared* to give an answer or make a defense of the truth of Christianity. In what area of life do you feel most prepared and least prepared (Ex. Camping, power outage, zombie apocalypse, pandemic, economic downturn, blizzard, etc.)

- On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being completely unprepared and 10 being a Super Apologist, how prepared are you to answer the questions and objections to Christianity that unbelievers in your life might raise? _____
- What are the questions or objections you feel most unprepared to answer?

- Peter says we should be prepared to give a reason for the *hope* in us. Hope is the expectation that something in the future will make everything right and will provide the greatest happiness. What are some of the things in which people place their hope misguidedly?

- The hope to which Peter refers is the confidence of our salvation through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. How does that relate to our defense of the truth of the gospel?

- We are told to do all this in a spirit of gentleness and respect (fear). Why is it hard to engage unbelievers with the gospel and answer their objections with this demeanor?

- We must maintain a clear conscience if we are to share the gospel with power. This means we cannot harbor sinful practices but must repent of our sin consistently and strive to live in obedience to God. The reason this is important is that if our lives are hypocritical, our testimony to the gospel is undermined. How can we tell someone that Jesus can deliver them from the penalty of sin when we delight in sinful practices ourselves? Describe what it takes to maintain a clear conscience:

- What part of 1 Peter 3:15-16 is hardest for you and why?

Chapter 3 Questions: The Power of Apologetics

In a gospel conversation with an unbeliever, each of us tries to present his case based on the authority he believes is greater. Unbelief must be based on a finite and flawed source. The Christian argues from the authority of God revealed in His Word. We must maintain this confidence in the face of convincing arguments from unbelievers, knowing that when scrutinized by the living and active Word of God those convincing arguments will be shown to be contradictory, irrational, and unlivable.

- List some reasons why many people in the world do not consider the Bible to be a legitimate source of truth in the search for truth.

- In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul tells us that the message of the cross (the gospel) is perceived differently depending on whether a person has believed it or not. List the two perceptions of the gospel in this verse:

- Verse 19 begins with the word “for,” indicating that the perception of the gospel by the world as folly is a result of judgment on those who reject it. Look up the following verses in their contexts and summarize what each teaches about God’s dealings with the so-called wise men of the world.
 - Isaiah 29:14
 - Job 5:12-13
 - Jeremiah 8:9
 - Matthew 11:25

- Verse 20 begins a taunt by God against the unregenerate who believe themselves to be wise in their rejection of God’s wisdom in the gospel. The response is silence. In the presence of God all supposed wise men and smart alecks (debaters) are exposed as foolish and empty. This is a common theme in 1 Corinthians. Summarize what Paul says in other references to the wisdom of the world:
 - 1 Corinthians 1:26
 - 1 Corinthians 2:6
 - 1 Corinthians 3:19

- The next few verses teach us that God delights in the simplicity of the message of the cross and the way it confounds the “wise” of the world. He does this because by purely human wisdom and resources God will never be known. The way to know God is through God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. What are some ways you have had to abandon your own opinions about life or about God in light of God’s revelation in Christ and in His Word?

- One of the categories of human wisdom that prevents many from believing the gospel is the inflated promises of science. While science itself is a gift from God to understand and cultivate the world he has given us, many people believe science is the only path to knowledge, and if science cannot prove a claim, then it can’t be true. This is known as *naturalism* or *scientism*, an overreach by science in an attempt to control knowledge. What problems do you see with this distorted view of science?

- One of the reasons that science cannot be the ultimate arbiter of truth claims is that it has limitations. Read the list of limits of science below and choose one that you have seen most clearly. Briefly explain why you chose what you did.
 - Science can only deal with the physical material world. By its definition it cannot render judgment on immaterial reality.

- All scientific data has to be interpreted as it does not come with the interpretation built in. Interpretation of scientific data is imposed on the data to make sense of it, but is not guaranteed to be accurate or true like the data itself.
- Science must constantly revise and rescind its previous pronouncements, despite the fact that what was rescinded was at one time considered “fact”. This is the very nature of scientific progress.
- Science is always done by flawed and finite people who are unavoidably biased and can make mistakes.
- Science must be funded and so is influenced by money. There are innumerable examples of how funding has skewed results and tainted conclusions.
- Scientists disagree all the time about all kinds of things within their own fields and in other fields.
- The catastrophic failure of engineered products, structures, and machines that were designed and approved by scientists and engineers shows that science can fail even when scientists are certain that they are right.

- When we engage unbelievers with the gospel we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts of sin and opens the eyes of unbelievers to the truth. Summarize the following verses that speak of the Holy Spirit’s role in salvation:
 - John 6:63
 - John 16:7-8
 - 1 Corinthians 6:11
 - Titus 3:5

- To keep us from becoming proud and self-reliant in our evangelism God commands us to pray so we are reminded that the power comes from him. For whom are you specifically praying that they would be saved? List some names below.

- Summarize the role of prayer for the salvation of the lost in the following passages:
 - Colossians 4:3-4
 - Philemon 6

- Many people tend to shy away from the word “argument,” because to them it conjures up notions of belligerence and unwanted aggression. The way we use the term in apologetics, however, reflects the classical usage meaning “to make a case for something” or “to seek to persuade.” This form of argumentation is common. We present arguments for why a friend ought to try a restaurant or why our favorite ball team is the best. “Argument” doesn’t have to mean “argumentative.” Describe a time you were persuaded by an argument to try something new or to change your mind about something.

- What do you think are the most persuasive arguments for the Christian faith?

Chapter 4 Questions: Understanding Unbelievers

One of the biggest hindrances for many Christians to sharing the gospel is the fear that they will not be able to make a strong enough case for the truth. For some it is the thought of trying to prove the existence of God. Others fear that the unbeliever will simply not understand concepts of sin and guilt before a holy God. When we come to understand what the Bible says is going on in the hearts and minds of every unbeliever, however, our fear can change to confidence. This chapter explores the eye-opening truth that when we share the truth of the gospel, we are telling the non-Christian something he already knows.

- In his book, *Covenantal Apologetics*, Scott Oliphint sums up Romans 1:18-23 by saying, “Part of what it means to be created in God’s image is that man *inescapably* knows God. It is not simply that he knows *that a god exists*. But, says Paul, man—every man—knows God, the true God, the God who made all things...*every human being on the face of the earth since creation and into eternity* has an ineradicable knowledge of God—a knowledge that is given *through the things that were made...*”¹ What are some of the implications of this truth that man inescapably knows God and that this knowledge cannot be eradicated?

- This passage reminds us that God has made certain truths about Himself known to the unbeliever. Notice the repetition about what unbelievers know and what God has revealed, shown, and made clear. List some of the things unbelievers know according to v. 18-21.

- Verse 20 says that because of this implanted knowledge of God unbelievers have been judged to be “without excuse” before him. The Greek word translated “without excuse” is the word *anapologetous*. This is a composite word made by combining *an* (without) and *apologetos* (apologetic). In other words, the unbeliever has no answer, no defense before God because of his sin because he knows he is a sinner under the wrath of God. If this is true—that every unbeliever you meet lives with the knowledge that he is facing the wrath of God that is deserved—how does this change your view of unbelievers?

¹ K. Scott Oliphint, *Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practice in Defense of Our Faith* (Crossway, 2013), 42. Italics original.

- Verse 20 tells us that unbelievers know what is invisible about God—his eternal power and divine nature. That is, they are able to clearly perceive that God has power to bring them into judgment and that he is divine. God’s divinity includes a whole cluster of attributes including holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, and sovereignty. Even those who deny God’s existence cannot help themselves in moments of anger, frustration, fear, or confusion from referring to God. Name some ways you have seen unavoidable references to God in such situations (Ex. Taking God’s name in vain, praying in a crisis).

- In order to deal with this ever-present knowledge of God, unbelievers have to daily suppress the knowledge of God. Pages 67-68 describe some of the ways people suppress the knowledge of God. Give some specific examples of how you have seen suppression in unbelievers.

- Suppression of the truth comes with consequences. The first is self-deception. The unbeliever convinces herself of something she knows is not true, or alternately, denies something she knows to be true. Give some specific examples of ways you have seen unbelievers do this.

- Suppression also leads to irrationality—belief in things that no rational person ought to believe. To be rational usually means to have good reasons for holding central beliefs—a desire for some kind of tangible evidence, whether it be revelation from God or the findings of science. Give some examples. Give some examples of irrationality in unbelievers you know.

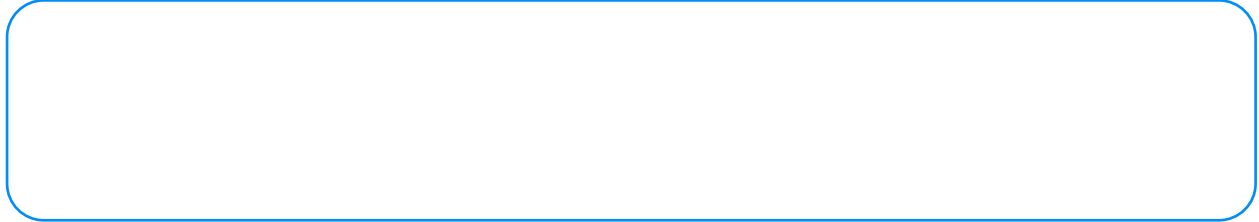
- Finally, suppression leads to idolatry. Verse 22 describes the exchange of the glory of God with lesser created things. The more a person suppresses the knowledge of God, the more the results are demeaning and dehumanizing. Give some examples of idolatry in our world today that have a dehumanizing effect.

- Verses 22-26 describe three exchanges unbelievers make in their rejection of God. They reject glory for an image, truth for a lie, and what is natural for what is unnatural. In the unbelievers you know, what is the most common exchange you see taking place in their lives?

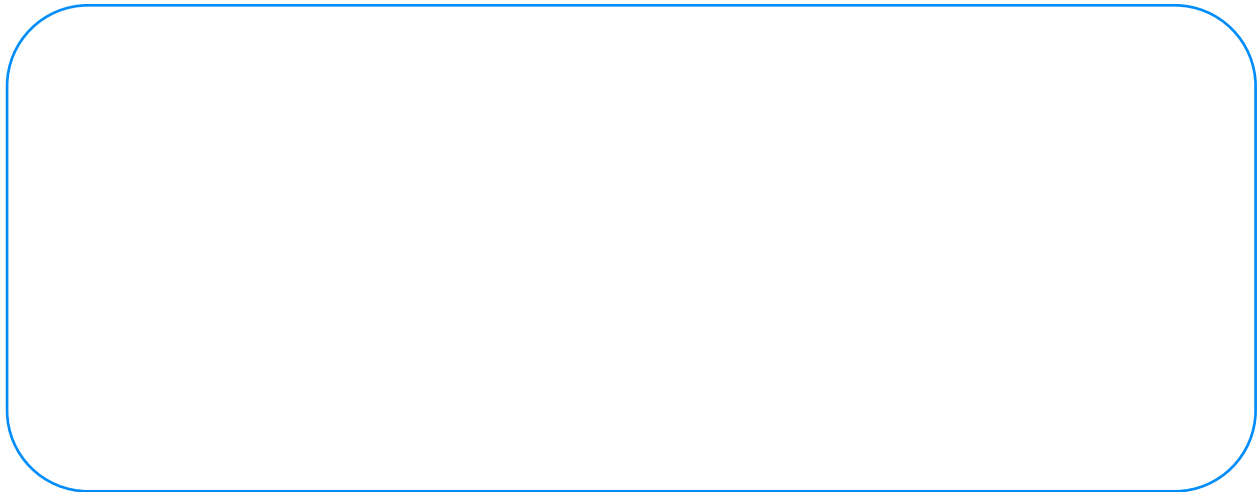
- There is an irony in this passage. In their rejection of God unbelievers worship nature and created beings found in nature (v. 23, 25), yet their suppression leads them beyond nature to practice what is contrary to nature (homosexual relations). In other words, unbelievers will worship anything except the true God, unless the Holy Spirit draws them to Christ. Describe examples of people being willing to believe and worship anything but the true Savior, Jesus Christ.

- In light of these willful exchanges God “hands over” unbelievers to bondage. List the descriptions of to what God delivers unbelievers in verses 24, 26, and 28.

- The end result of suppression and God’s judgment is a degradation of the life God intends for those made in his image. The image of God can be so marred as to make the person almost inhuman. In contrast, Jesus is the ultimate human, showing the glory, dignity, and majesty of humanity untainted by sin. List some aspects of Jesus in his incarnation that show us what true humanity is intended to be, and which can be in our lives through the sanctifying power of God.



- If this chapter describing what is going on in the hearts and minds of every unbeliever is true, how does that change your understanding of unsaved friends, family members, coworkers, neighbors, and acquaintances? Does this change your plans for sharing the gospel with them? In what way?



Chapter 5 Questions: Destroying Strongholds

If Romans 1 accurately describes the heart and mind of every unbeliever, then we need a strategy for engaging them with the gospel that is tactical and effective. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Paul presents a word picture of what engagement with the lost looks like—dismantling fortresses of unbelief and submitting beliefs to the withering gaze of the truth in Christ. In doing so Paul provides a framework for our conversations with unbelievers so we can effectively defend and share the Christian faith.

- Read Proverbs 21:22. In what way are the beliefs and worldview of unbelievers like a fortress in which they trust?

- Read 2 Corinthians 10:1-5. In this passage Paul is defending his apostolic authority against those who would question it. He emphasizes that his authority is rooted in the truth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who had risen from the dead. This message is the “wisdom of God” that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5. And it is opposition to this message that must be destroyed. His rather blunt use of military terms in this chapter reveal the antagonistic character of unbelief to the gospel. What are some of the ways unbelief and our fallen culture are antagonistic to the gospel?

- Bible scholar Murray Harris notes, “Paul’s campaign strategy was not to ignore, dismiss, or ridicule his opponents’ ideas and arguments, but to ‘demolish’ them by exposing their fallacies...Paul is certainly not denigrating rational thought and logical argumentation. His own letters are replete with careful and convincing argument. It is not ‘reasoning’ as such that is attacked here but fallacious reasoning and conceited argument.”² In your own words describe the difference between ridiculing unbelief and demolishing error by exposing fallacies:

² Harris, M. J. (2005). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: a commentary on the Greek text* (p. 682). Grand Rapids, MI; Milton Keynes, UK: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.; Paternoster Press.

- Second Corinthians 10:4 says that the Christian’s “weapons”—the truth of Jesus Christ in all its fullness—possesses divine power to demolish the intellectual and emotional arguments (the fortresses in which they hide) that unbelievers have constructed against the truth of the gospel. In other words, the truth of the Christian message, when shared effectively, can reduce unbelief to rubble. Have you seen this in action? If so, describe it briefly.

- When an opportunity to talk about spiritual matters arises our tendency is to talk rather than ask questions. Sometimes this arises from nervousness and sometimes from a desire to share the good news of Jesus with someone. This often results in the “gospel burp” the habit of blurting out the whole gospel story before we know much about what the other person believes. Why do you think Christians are hesitant to ask questions about the non-Christian’s beliefs?

- What have you found to be good ways to start a conversation with unbelievers? What have you found to be good ways to turn a conversation to spiritual matters?

- Listening to the answers to the unbeliever’s answers to your questions is key. If your mind is too preoccupied with how you will respond next, you will miss details in their response that may give you more information on their beliefs. What have you found to be effective in listening well when others are speaking?

- The list of short questions on page 85 gives some ideas of how to challenge the beliefs and statements of your conversation partner. They push back to force the other person to provide a rational basis for his beliefs. Have you tried asking questions like these? What has been the result?

- Questions are powerful because they can subvert, or undermine, what people believe. Questions challenge people to justify their beliefs, and they often come to see that they do not have good reasons for their beliefs. This can sometimes result in an abandonment of what they previously held to be true. List some examples from Scripture where questions have undermined or overthrown someone's beliefs.

- On pages 88-96 several strategies are listed to help you remove the bricks of an unbeliever's worldview so the gospel can shine clearly. Which of these strategies seems most effective to you?

- On page 89 we talk about taking the unbeliever's position for the sake of argument. This can be challenging to grasp when you first consider it. It means to pretend that the unbeliever is right about God, truth, morality, meaning, and more and then to imagine all the implications on life in this world. When you do this, regardless of the person's worldview, you will find significant contradictions and problems. This is because only the Christian worldview is coherent, consistent, and rational. We then want to draw the unbeliever's attention to the incoherence, inconsistency, and irrationality of his worldview. For example, what are some of the implications if there is no God and everything came about by blind time and chance?

- In an atheistic, evolutionary worldview, despite the lack of a moral authority and purpose in the universe proponents of this view still often call for people to love others, seek justice, care for the planet, and pursue human flourishing. What questions could you ask to challenge these values?

- Another strategy that is effective is to call the bluff of people who simply make up “facts” for their position or against Christianity. What are some of the bluffs you have heard unbelievers make?

- In light of these strategies offered in this chapter, how confident are you that you could put them into practice in conversations with unbelievers?

Chapter 6 Questions: Getting Them to Jesus

What is the purpose of apologetics? Why do we go to all the trouble of learning how to defend and share the Christian faith? How we answer this question will shape how we interact with unbelievers. We want to be sure our purpose for apologetics is in line with our theology. As a result, we ought to see apologetics as part of the fulfillment of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all people.

- Read Matthew 28:19-20. Explain briefly how apologetics helps to fulfill the Great Commission.

- In what specific ways will the goal of leading people closer to faith in Jesus affect how we interact with unbelievers?

- In 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 Paul uses the metaphor of planting and watering to describe his work as an apostle, apologist, evangelist, and church planter. List three principles from the text that can guide our understanding of evangelism and apologetics.

- Many evangelistic courses teach Christians how to share the gospel, and the goal is to be able to have the time and hearing to present the full story of the gospel with an unbeliever. That doesn't always happen. How does the metaphor of planting and watering encourage you to speak up for Christ when you are in a situation where that is unlikely?

- In a conversation what might be some good indicators that the unbeliever is ready for you to stop answering his objections and to begin to share the truth of the gospel?

- Some people don't believe that Jesus was an actual historical figure. This chapter explains why the evidence for Jesus as a real man who lived in Israel 2000 years ago is rock solid historically. What objections to the historicity of Jesus have you heard?

- On page 104 four criteria of historic authenticity are listed that lead most historians to believe that Jesus truly existed. Which one is most compelling to you and why?

- The point of C.S. Lewis' trilemma about Jesus being a liar, a lunatic, or Lord is that to be honest with historical figures we have to consider all the information we have about them, and not simply believe what we like selectively. Have you heard people try to make Jesus out to be merely a teacher, or conversely a liar or deluded, self-deceived wise man? What arguments do they use to support these ideas?

- Read the following passages and describe the different ways Jesus indicates that he is God.
 - John 3:13-15
 - John 5:15-27
 - John 8:54-59
 - John 10:22-39

- Read the following passages and summarize what they say about Jesus as the promised Messiah.
 - John 5:39-47
 - Luke 24:13-27; 44-47
 - Matthew 5:17-18

- On pages 108-109 several reasons are given for historians' belief in the resurrection accounts. Which one is most compelling to you and why?

- On page 110 the atheistic naturalistic worldview is explored in response to several pressing questions of human existence. What are some further implications if the universe came about by blind time and chance and that there is no inherent purpose or intent in the universe?

- What does the truth of the Christian worldview mean for our identity? Name some specific and practical implications.

- On pages 111-112 the question of what is wrong with the world addresses the broken, fallen nature of life in this age. What are the specific, practical implications of the Christian worldview that the world is not the way it is supposed to be?

- On page 112 we consider the implications of life after death and whether there is final judgment and reward. What are the implications in your life and the life of your town or city, state or nation if there is neither judgment or reward after death?

- How does the focus on getting the unbeliever to Jesus help you as you consider your conversations with friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and classmates?

Chapter 7 Questions: Sharing the Gospel Effectively

Sharing the gospel clearly is critical to an effective encounter with an unbeliever. If I fail to be clear when describing the call to salvation, I may make one of several counterproductive errors. I may so confuse my conversation partner so much that she comes to believe that the gospel is too complex to understand. I may also lead her to believe that she is already justified before God without repentance and faith in Jesus. It is important, then, that my presentation of the good news of Jesus be crystal clear.

- Have you heard vague and confusing presentations of the gospel? What made them vague and confusing?

- Think about the difference between the simple call to repent and believe with calls to dedicate, surrender, and commit your life to Christ. How can these vague terms confuse people?

- Have you heard vague and confusing presentations of the gospel? What made them vague and confusing?

- Sin is a touchy subject in our Western world these days. Many automatically associate any talk of sin with judgmentalism. Yet, one famous psychologist wrote that much of the anxiety and neuroses in the world today can be traced to a vague sense of guilt people experience without knowing why. What hesitations do Christians have in talking about sin when in conversation with unbelievers? How can we talk about sin without unnecessarily offending unbelievers?

- What sins are benign enough in the minds of most people that would be relatively safe to address with a conversation partner? For example, most people are not afraid to admit that they lie.

- Some people feel very loved by family and friends. They may not seem to need to hear a message of love by God. Others have no one in their lives who love them. They would probably be very drawn to a message of love. The truth is, however, part of being made in the image of God is the yearning for union with the divine God who created us. That is, even when we are greatly loved we can still experience a hunger, an emptiness, a longing for more. What aspects and implications of God's love could we share with those who have love? Those who have no love?

- What do you think is at the root of our desire to earn favor with God by our own merit? Pride? Self-righteousness? Control?

- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Describe what God says about people who have not yet believed and what he does to save them.

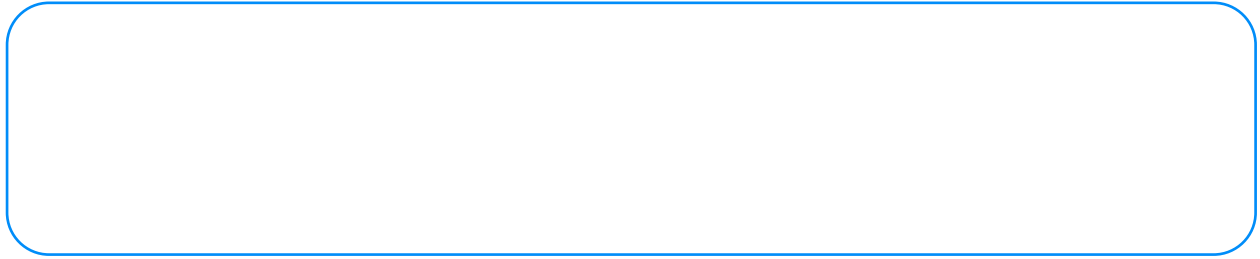
- Grace is unmerited favor. It is the very nature of God to show kindness and love to those who have repented and believed in Jesus. Salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace for the sinner. How does that make you respond as a believer?

- Read Romans 4:1-5. We are told Abraham was justified by faith, not works. This is a reference to Genesis 15:1-6 where God renews his covenant with Abraham (his name was still Abram at this point). The phrase, “and it was counted to him for righteousness” is an accounting term indicating that in God’s reckoning Abraham was righteous. Abraham accessed this righteousness by faith, not works. Justification is the equivalent of a bank loan that has been paid off by someone else so that now your balance is zero, even though you did nothing to pay it. This demonstrates that Jesus’ death and resurrection was retroactive, covering not only the sins of future believers, but past also. Have you ever been forgiven a debt because someone else paid it? Describe the situation.

- Read James 2:14-26. Note especially v. 21 and 23. One says Abraham was justified by works and the other that he was justified by faith. Can you explain this?

- The answer lies in the object of justification. In Romans the emphasis was on Abraham’s salvation and the means by which he was justified. Here he believes and is justified by grace through faith. In James, the emphasis is on the outward manifestation of Abraham’s inner transformation by grace. James is referring to his sacrifice of Isaac, which God stopped at the last second. Abraham was justified in the eyes of the world as a righteous man by his act of sacrifice. In other words, we know Abraham was a righteous person by God’s grace because his works demonstrated it. This shows the necessary connection between faith and works. Salvation does not come by works, but it is always accompanied by works because of the inner transformation of regeneration by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. So, salvation is by grace, but we were saved to do good works (Eph. 2:10). What are the most obvious evidences of the transformation of grace in your life? How has God changed you over the last few years?

- How confident are you that you can present the gospel clearly? What help do you need to be able to do so?



- Write out the basic plan of salvation below in a length that you could present in two minutes or less.



Chapter 8 Questions: Strategies for Effective Apologetic Encounters

Having a strategy for any task makes it more manageable and reduces the stress of tackling the task. This chapter intends to give the reader a number of pointers to make gospel conversations more effective. It gives you things to look for and offers suggestions of what to say in response to objections raised against the Christian faith.

- Now that you are more than halfway through this book what questions do you continue to fear that people will ask you?

- How do the promises of the presence and authority of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit encourage you in reaching the lost?

- What are some common myths and mistaken ideas that people have about the Christian faith?

- On pages 127-128 several suggested responses are given for occasions when you do not know much about the objection raised against the Christian faith? Have you ever had to give one of these responses?

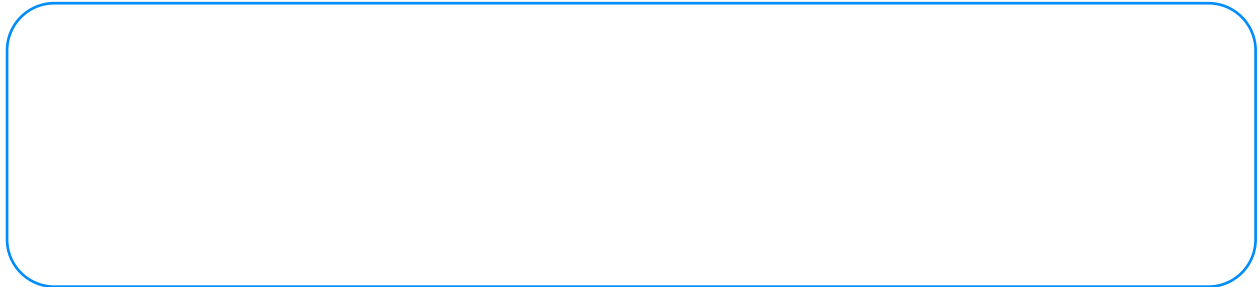
- On pages 129-130 implicit biases are discussed. These are natural reactions to claims to truth or authority. In other words, they are not just reactions to the gospel, but to being told anything that you didn't know before or to being told you are wrong. What can we do to reduce the reactive bias in the people with whom we share the gospel?

- How can you share the gospel in a way that overcomes the “sunk-cost fallacy”?

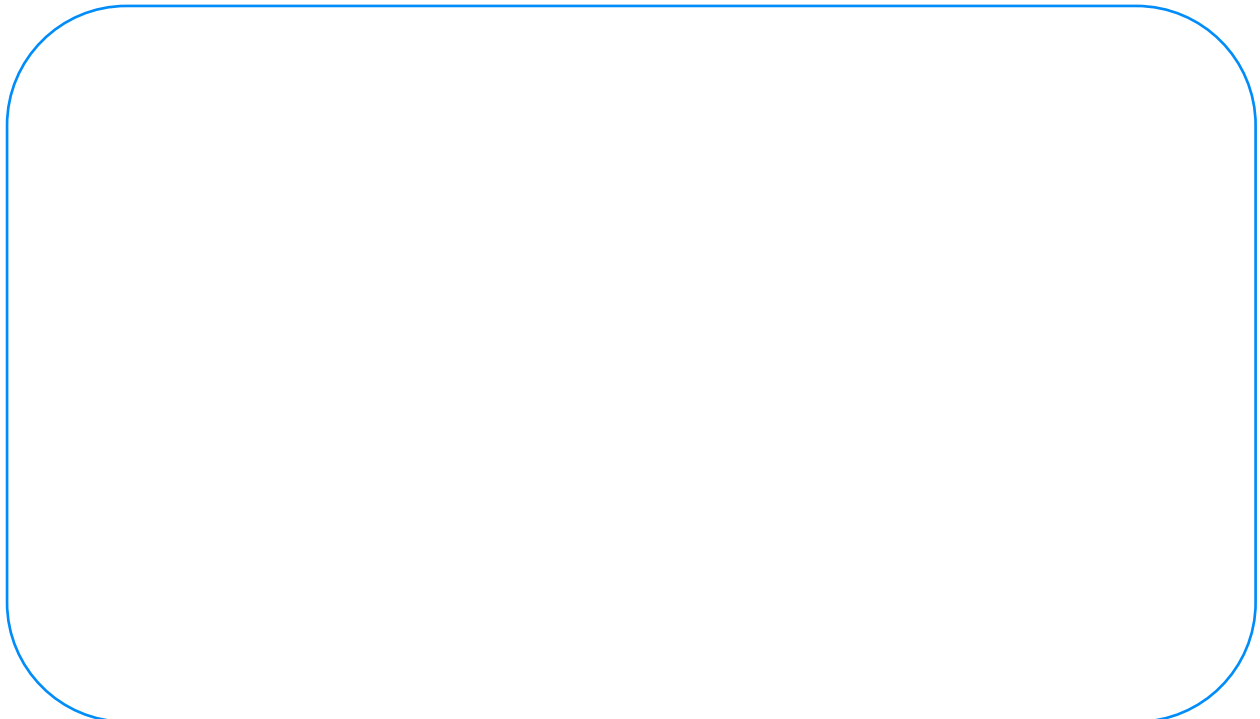
- What are some expressions or varieties of unbelief that contain embarrassing elements or have embarrassing implications?

- What universally held values do the unbelievers you know consider to be important? How can you include those values in a gospel conversation to show the truth, beauty, and goodness of the Christian gospel in comparison to unbelief?

- Assertions are unsupported statements that are often offered when another person doesn't have a sound argument for his position. Recall the questions from page 85 that help us push back on assertions and pressure the other person to provide good reasons for his beliefs. What assertions have you heard unbelievers make against the Christian faith?



- Write down some questions you might ask in response to the following assertions:
 - Science has disproved the Bible
 - All religions are the same
 - There is no proof whatsoever for God
 - Christianity is bad for the world
 - We don't know what the pages of the Bible originally said



Chapter 9 Questions: Basic Logic for Apologetics

To the average person logic may seem like an intimidating topic to discuss. Yet, many of us intuitively sense when someone is being illogical or presenting a fallacious argument. By learning some basics of logic, we can see through bad arguments and present an alternative that is sound. Logic is a natural outworking of God's character and is a hallmark of the gospel.

- List some of the benefits of logic mentioned on pages 132.

- Explain the power of logical fallacies and list one or two that you believed at one time but no longer do.

- Who are some of the authorities to whom Christians appeal improperly when they commit the *appeal to authority* fallacy? Think of leaders, celebrities, authors, actors, thinker, cultural icons, or intellectuals.

- What is the difference between *appealing to an authority* as automatic proof that an idea is correct and appealing to an authority because they make a strong argument for a particular point?

- Read the following verses and summarize the *personal attack* used instead of an argument offered:
 - John 8:39-41
 - Luke 11:14-17
 - 1 Kings 21:1-14
 - Acts 26:24-26

- Read the following verses and note the logical fallacy of *false cause* in each passage:
 - John 9:1-3
 - Jeremiah 44:15-23

- One of the reasons *false cause* happens is that people tend to simplify the cause of an event down to only one factor, when there may be more factors involved, and some of those factors may play a greater part in causing the event than the commonly perceived cause. Look at the false causes listed on page 142 by both Christians and non-Christians. Choose one or two and list the other factors that may have caused the action.

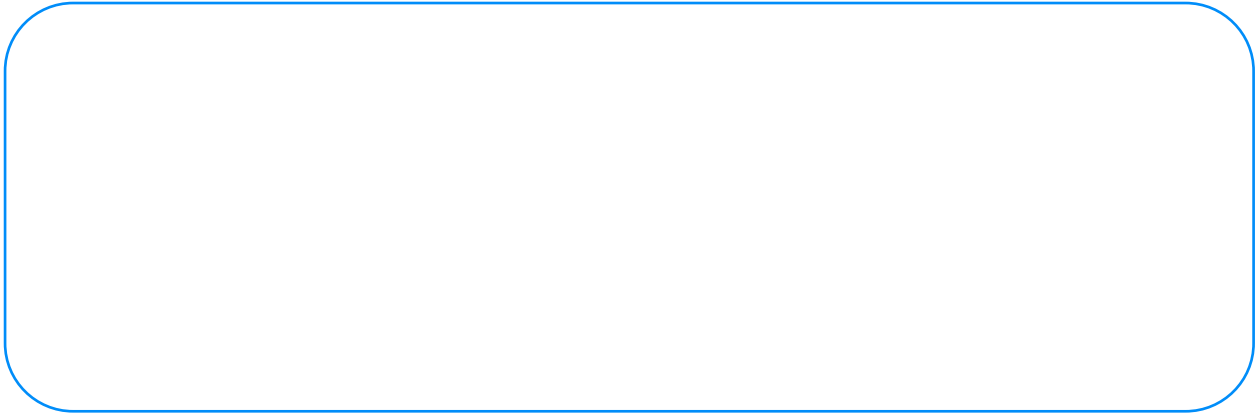
- A number of *false dilemmas* are listed on page 144. Provide other options for each statement to show that the ones listed are not the only possible answers.

- *Hasty generalization* happens when we take one or a few experiences and perceive them to be the way they always happen everywhere. Or I assume that because something happened to me in a certain situation it happens to everyone in the same situation. How have you noticed in yourself the tendency to universalize one occasion or experience?

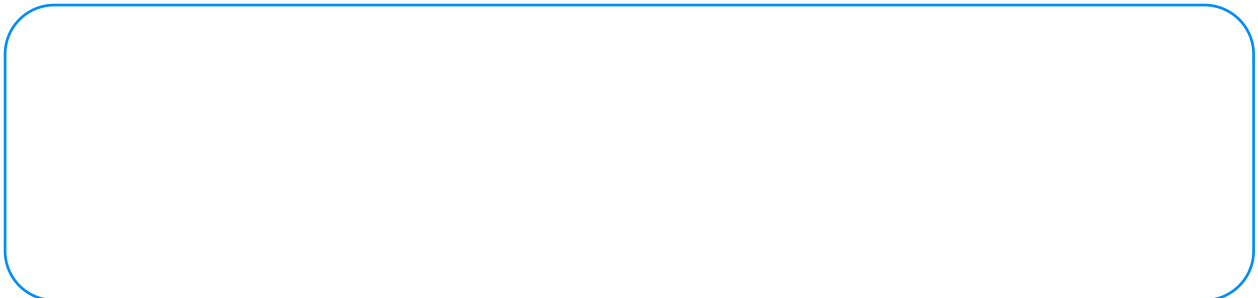
- When we assume to be true what we should have to argue for, we *beg the question*. This is hard to spot in an argument because it often sounds convincing if we are not paying attention. Identify what each argument is begging on p. 146.

- A *faulty analogy* can also be very misleading because analogies have great power to explain something unfamiliar by comparing it with something familiar. The problem with a faulty analogy, however, is that the two items being compared do not share similar properties. For example, to compare love to a garbage heap seems unhelpful to many people because they don't share similarities. But to say love is like a garden resonates with many because of the shared properties of love and a garden. Present a false analogy and a sound analogy for a biblical view of the church.

- *Equivocation* is another fallacy that is hard to detect because it happens very subtly when the meaning of a word changes in an argument. On pages 147-148 the differing sense of the words “faith” and “science” are noted. Explain how the meaning of the following words can change in an argument or be perceived differently by believers and unbelievers.
 - Truth
 - Proof
 - Evidence
 - Man
 - Sin



- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and note the difference between wisdom and folly in the eyes of God and the world.



Chapter 10 Questions: Practical Apologetics

Chapter 10 presents a case study of Igor, the Skeptical Scientist. Read the case study below (Rachel, the Happiest Girl You Ever Did Meet) and list all the ways you could respond to Rachel.

You meet Rachel when you are out to lunch with some mutual friends, Jim and Sarah. She is in her early 20's, just graduated from college and has been working as an accountant for the last few months at a CPA firm. She is one of those people who is vivacious, funny, and loves to get outdoors on the weekend. When the conversation at lunch turned to serious issues of meaning in life and making the world a better place, Rachel smiled and cheerfully shared her personal philosophy of life.

"I think we each need to enjoy life. Too many people are caught up in the problems of the world. Yes, it's good to help others, but you can become miserable if there is no fun in life. The problem is that people don't seek happiness enough. Take those in poverty, for example. Those same people who need all these community services and welfare to help them rarely seem to rise out of their situation. They are too often content to remain in their misery. If they could see all the enjoyment life could bring, maybe they would have something to shoot for."

You challenged Rachel on the meaning of happiness. Her eyes flashed a bit, but she maintained her smile. "Jim and Sarah asked me that same question, but I don't think the answer is that complicated. Happiness depends on the individual. I enjoy gardening and sailing. You might enjoy hiking or biking. Didn't that writer, C. S. Lewis say that our problem is that we are too easily satisfied with our mud pies when we should be shooting for something bigger, like going to the ocean? I agree with him!"

Rachel continued, "Jim and Sarah are very happy in their Christianity, and that is a good thing. I don't think too much about spiritual things. People seem to get agitated and worked up about who is right and who is wrong, which religion is the right one, and so on. We each need to figure out what is right for us, pursue happiness, help others achieve their own happiness, but not at the expense of our own happiness. Everyone needs to take responsibility for herself in this matter."

Rachel's enthusiastic speech was matched by the joy in her eyes and the lightness in her tone. She seemed to pursue life with a vigor, and had a positive outlook on everything. The fact that she was paraplegic and rarely left her wheelchair didn't seem to bother her. In fact, you can't remember the last time you met a Christian with this much carefree happiness.

She continued, "And don't think I haven't thought about death!" Her eyes flashed again, this time more darkly. "But I refuse to dwell on the negative, and live my whole life mourning my accident, or morbidly waiting for death to take me. I'm going to live my life to the fullest, and enjoy every minute of it."

Her smile returned and her brow relaxed. "This is why I don't want to argue about the meaning of life and all that philosophical and religious stuff. I find meaning in doing things that make me happy. I don't need to contemplate meaning and go on a search for it. I experience it on the weekends when I am on the water, and the sun is shining on my face, and the sail has caught the wind, and I smell the salt air, and I hear the seagulls flying above me. That is pure elation to me, and I don't need to worry myself with anything beyond that."

She was practically beaming by now. Jim and Sarah look at you and you can see the sense of helplessness in their eyes. They love Rachel and want to see her become a Christian, but they are not sure how to tell this brilliantly happy young woman that she needs Jesus.

Chapter 11 Questions: The Doctrine of Scripture

The Bible is God’s revelation to mankind about Himself, the world, and people made in his image. It is the starting point of a true understanding of everything. To reject God’s revelation is to reject rationality and sanity. The Bible gives us the foundation and substance of our faith. It ought to be faithfully read by every Christian and preached by every church. The best way to become an effective evangelist and apologist is to know the Scriptures.

- How much of the Bible have you read?

- What works best for your comprehension of the Scriptures—reading or listening to someone read the Bible?

- How much time do you give in an average day to reading or listening to the Bible?

- With what parts of the Bible are you most familiar? Least familiar?

- What do you think of when you hear the word *theology*? Do you see theology as important or unimportant? Why? Describe your level of theological understanding.

- Your apologetic approach should be consistent with your theology because apologetics flows out of theology. What theological truths do you see as most important to the task of apologetics?

- Inspiration and inerrancy describe the source and truthfulness of Scripture. Why is it important that the Scriptures were delivered to men by the Holy Spirit and that they are without error?

- Read Hebrews 4:12-13. Describe a time the words of Scripture exposed sin in your life or revealed something deep in your heart.

- The Bible is a unified collection of 66 books that spans centuries and continents, yet it has a unifying theme that theologian Jim Hamilton summarized as “God’s glory in salvation through judgment.”³ In other words, the theme of the Bible is how God’s glory is magnified through saving his people from their sin by bringing judgment on an innocent sufferer. Name some ways this theme is seen in different portions of the Bible.

³ James W. Hamilton, Jr. *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Crossway, 2010).

- The variety of genres in the Bible makes it one of the greatest literary works in history. What genre from the list on page 169 do you find easiest to understand? Hardest to understand?

- Read 2 Peter 1:16-21. In contrast to the pagan religions of the first century that were shrouded in myth, the New Testament was based on the historical events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as predicted in the Old Testament. What does Peter say about the practical importance of how the Bible was written (see especially v. 19)?

- We speak of the Bible as *sufficient* for understanding salvation, knowing what God wants us to know about Him, and understanding how we are to live in this world. Read the following verses about the sufficiency of Scripture and summarize what they say.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - 2 Peter 1:3
 - Hebrews 1:1-2
 - Revelation 22:18-19

- The *clarity* of Scripture speaks of the way God has communicated in such a way that the primary message of Scripture is readily understandable to any person. Jot down a few ideas from Scripture that you find to be crystal clear (Ex. God loves me).

- The *authority* of Scripture means that the words of the Bible are the very words of God and are to be believed and obeyed. Is it easy for you to submit to the authority of God in the Scriptures or difficult? Why?

- God’s revelation is also *necessary* for at least two reasons. First, to be able to interpret what we experience in general revelation (nature and the events of the world), but second, to know the specifics of God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. We can know some things about God through general revelation, but we cannot know about how to be reconciled to God apart from Scripture. The Bible presents the rich tapestry of the beauty and glory of redemption in Christ. What aspects of the story of redemption do you find most beautiful and glorious and why? (Ex. Reconciliation, redemption, regeneration, justification, forgiveness, mercy, grace, adoption, peace, etc.)

- Read Hebrews 5:11-14. Maturity is measured by discernment. Discernment is developed by practice. Practice consists of knowing and applying the Scriptures to everyday life. How would you rate your spiritual maturity and what do you need to do to grow to greater maturity?

Chapter 12 Questions: The Doctrine of God

It is strange that so few Christians know much about the God they worship. They may know some of his attributes and names, but when it comes to truths like the Trinity or God's personal nature, many struggle to articulate these doctrines clearly. Part of the reason is that God is qualitatively different than we are. He is divine and we are created. Yet, God has revealed much to us about himself. The more we know God truly the better we can worship him truly.

- Which attributes of God are dearest to you?

- Which attributes of God are you least familiar with or confused by?

- Which analogies of the Trinity have you heard or been taught?

- God is divine, infinite, and holy. In contrast, we are creaturely, finite, and fallen. Since God is divine and not created, it should not surprise us that nothing in the created world is an adequate or even accurate illustration of His triune nature. The triune nature of God is entirely unique; therefore, we can explain it as far as God revealed it, but we cannot understand it fully. Does that frustrate you or thrill you?

- Virtually no one questions the divinity of the Father, but plenty of religions and philosophies deny the divinity of the Son. Read the following verses and summarize what they teach about Jesus as God.
 - 2 Peter 1:1
 - Titus 2:13
 - John 5:18

- John 20:28-29

- Read the following verses and summarize what they teach about the Holy Spirit as God.
 - Acts 5:3-4
 - 1 Corinthians 2:10-11
 - 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19
 - Hebrews 9:14

- The Westminster Larger Catechism States, “There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.” This statement clarifies that each of the persons of the Trinity is divine (God), yet each has personal properties that distinguishes Him from the other persons. As a result, we have only one God, yet he has distinctions within himself. This means that before God created the universe, he had a perfect, loving relationship within himself. The Father, Son, and Spirit was complete and shared perfect fellowship. God did not need to create, yet did so out of a great love to share that fellowship with creatures in his image. What does it mean to you that God created you in order to pour out his love upon you, even though he did not need to do so (Rom. 5:5).

- Notice the list of actions on p. 178 that God performs as a personal God. What does it mean to you that God is personal and not impersonal?

- God's aseity means that he needs nothing outside himself but is entirely self-sufficient. Read the following verses and summarize what they say about God's aseity.
 - Job 41:11
 - Psalm 50:11-12
 - Acts 17:24-30

- How does the material in this chapter affect the way we should do apologetics? What difference does it make when we commend and defend the explicitly Christian God, as opposed to a generic deity?

Chapter 13 Questions: The Doctrines of Man and Sin

Unless we understand the biblical teaching about who we are as fallen, sinful people we will easily get the gospel wrong. Holding to the teachings of humans as people made in God's image, and therefore possessing inherent dignity and worth, while at the same time fallen and deserving of condemnation while living in a cursed world provides the most accurate understanding of life as we know it.

- What are some logical implications if humans are simply accidents of nature?

- What are some logical implications if humans are divine beings?

- The Harvard Law Professor, Alan Dershowitz, argues that we can only derive the idea of human rights from one of four sources. Either it comes from God (which he rejects), nature (but nature is cruel and bloody, not empathetic), the government (but that can change as governments and opinion changes), or an unknown source (his preference). The latter three are clearly inadequate reasons to consider humans as possessing dignity. Only in a God who created us in his image do we find adequate reason to value human life and dignity. What impact does that have on how you treat people?

- Our dignity and glory are a reflection of God's original glory. "Worship" means to ascribe the appropriate glory to something. The concept is derived from "worthship," referring to something that was heavy (like gold), and therefore worthy of reverence. What is the connection between our treatment of others and our worship of God?

- The figures on pages 184-185 are designed to show the contrast between a view of man as sharing the same essence and glory of God versus the Christian view of God as wholly other than man, and therefore worthy of worship. Does this contrast make sense to you, and what are the implications of the Christian worldview?

- Even though God is wholly other, he does not leave us ignorant of who he is. Through revelation and the providential working of history God reveals himself so we might know him. He does this by condescending, stooping down to our creaturely level to communicate to us in a way that is clear. Read the following verses and summarize what they say about God's condescension throughout the biblical narrative.
 - Genesis 1:2
 - Genesis 3:8-13
 - Genesis 32:24-32
 - Exodus 3:7-8
 - 1 Kings 8:10-12
 - Matthew 1:23
 - John 1:9-18

- The London Baptist Confession states, "Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body...From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." We sin because we are sinners. How does this truth show that the gospel message of being regenerated by the Holy Spirit from outside ourselves better answer the message of most religions to reform yourself by changing your actions to conform to a moral law?

- If every one of our intellectual and spiritual functions operates wrongly apart from salvation, what impact does that have on how you evangelize? How important is it for you to be growing in your knowledge of sound doctrine in order to be able to identify error and misconceptions in other worldviews so you can answer objections and present the Christian gospel clearly?

- In what areas of Christian doctrine and maturity do you need to grow to become a more useful tool in God's hands to share and defend your faith?

- What was the most helpful or important thing you learned in this study?