



Sustaining the Impact of Your Conference

As you can see, the pre-conference and post-conference recommendations are designed to encourage a culture of every-member evangelism and apologetics. This is probably the only way to sustain the excitement of a conference.

The advantage of this is that the conference can meet appropriate expectations—to reinforce and further ignite a church's commitment to reaching the lost. Too many churches want a conference to establish and maintain a culture that has never before been established. Such a hope is simply not reasonable. **But if a church has already established a culture of concern for the lost, a conference can strengthen and equip members in a way that makes them much more effective.**

I trust your preparation for your upcoming Apologetics for the Church conference goes well, and that my ministry with you will help your church more effectively reach unbelievers for Christ!



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Apologetics for the Church



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**"How You
Can Cultivate
Evangelism in Your
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APOLOGETICS
FOR THE CHURCH

Building a Culture of Evangelism IN YOUR CHURCH



Preparing for an Apologetics Conference

The goal of an apologetics conference or seminar is to increase the confidence and ability of church members to share the gospel effectively with unbelievers. But that is not all. It is also to motivate them to initiate conversations with unbelievers as soon as possible after the conference. Being prepared to evangelize and defend the Christian faith is not enough. Believers must also be moved to actually engage the unbelievers in their lives. Ideally, church members will begin a lifestyle of evangelism powered by continued learning in apologetics through books, videos, and websites.

To make an apologetics conference as effective as possible, a church needs to plan ahead for the time leading up to and following the conference.

Pre-Conference Preparation

People respond differently to the word **apologetics**. Some scratch their heads and wonder what apologizing has to do with Christianity. Others salivate at the thought of being able to silence critics of Christianity in a debate or shouting match. Still others recoil at the thought of arguing with unbelievers, finding the thought distasteful and "mean." How apologetics is presented to a congregation, then, is very important.

Since apologetics is the muscle behind evangelism in a skeptical and antagonistic world, we need to present the concept as a positive, helpful resource to assist Christians to find more confidence in their faith, and to effectively reach their unsaved friends, family members, coworkers, neighbors, and classmates. Consequently, we want to talk about apologetics as we would a firefighter or police officer who arrives on the scene to assist, enforce, and rescue. For anyone who has experienced fear, frustration, or failure in trying to share the gospel, apologetics is the deliverance they hoped for.

This short guide outlines **pre-conference** as well as **post-conference** recommendations.

Igniting Interest Through Biblical Urgency

To help your church members develop interest in the conference, foster a sense of need and urgency—one that can genuinely be met through the event. This doesn't need to be manufactured; Scripture already gives us clear commands to make disciples (**Matt. 28:19–20**), be witnesses (**Acts 1:8**), and be prepared to defend the faith (**1 Pet. 3:15–16**). We've all felt the weight of these commissions, mingled with the frustration of not knowing how to fulfill them. By presenting the apologetics conference as a way to relieve that frustration and support the Great Commission, you can stir meaningful engagement among church members.

Here are several ways to help your church get ready:

1 PREACH A SERIES in Sunday morning services on evangelism and the various New Testament passages that speak of our responsibility to share the gospel with unbelievers. Emphasize the centrality of bearing witness to Jesus in the New Testament as the major focus of evangelism.

2 CONDUCT TRAINING on how to lead an unbeliever to Christ. Many Christians today express confusion about what to say to someone who wants to repent and place their faith in Christ. While this topic is mentioned in the apologetics conference, it is often assumed that church members already know how to lead someone to Christ.

3 INVITE QUESTIONS. Provide a mechanism for church members to submit questions they have about speaking to others about Christ, and questions from unbelievers they don't know how to answer. This can be done in a Sunday School class—or better yet, in a short segment of the Sunday morning service during the weeks leading up to the conference. While some churches have limited time in their services beyond regular programming, a critical part of post-conference follow-up is public testimonies about gospel conversations. Beginning before the conference with a time to field questions can start a tradition of weekly conversations on evangelism. Many churches that see little

growth from conversions overlook that unless evangelism is discussed regularly, it will never become part of the church's culture. By taking time each week to allow congregational participation in sharing their witnessing experiences, a church can continually refresh its vision for evangelism.

4 PROVIDE GOOD BOOKS on evangelism and apologetics for church members and promote their use. Churches with the highest participation in congregational outreach often promote reading solid materials, especially books, among their members.

5 DEDICATE AN ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL class to apologetics in the months leading up to the conference. Rather than duplicating the conference, this reinforces interest in the topic. Apologetics is such a vast field that no short series could ever exhaust or unnecessarily reproduce the helpful material available. Even if only a small portion of the congregation attends the class, interest and excitement for the topic can spread.

6 ENCOURAGE FOCUSED PRAYER. Invite members to make a list of every unbeliever with whom they have a relationship and begin praying for their salvation. By starting this a month or two before the conference, they will often develop a deeper burden for those on their list and a stronger desire to learn how best to reach them with the gospel.

Post-Conference Follow Up

While a conference often sparks excitement and interest in apologetics, like anything else, this can fade over time. It's essential to view the conference as the start of a movement in the church. Your goal should be for the event to begin—or deepen—a culture of evangelism, where church members see witnessing as just as vital to their faith as attending church, taking the Lord's Supper, praying, singing, and reading the Bible. Without a plan to build on that momentum, such a culture is unlikely to form.

1 PROVIDE TIME IN THE WEEKLY WORSHIP SERVICE for people to share faith-sharing experiences from the week. Few things ease Christians' fears about witnessing more than seeing someone like them take a risk and talk to a coworker about Jesus. Sitting in the pew, they might think, "Well, if Sarah can do that at her job, I can certainly do the same at mine!" The idea of turning part of the service over to unpredictable, short testimonies can terrify pastors—and sometimes with good reason. Yes, members may ramble or lose their train of thought. They might even say something incorrect or inappropriate. But with clear instructions and a moderator, this regular time of testimony can powerfully encourage the entire church. By dedicating time each week to this essential part of discipleship and the church's mission, you show that evangelism is a priority in your congregation.

2 PROVIDE A WAY FOR MEMBERS TO GIVE FEEDBACK about the conference. Don't rely solely on casual comments about how much people enjoyed it. Use



What matters after an apologetics conference is not the initial wave of enthusiasm, but the church's evangelistic temperature six months later. You shouldn't expect it to remain constant—everything in nature fluctuates. Evangelistic passion often rises after a positive encounter and dips after a discouraging one or a long stretch without contact with unbelievers. **By maintaining key practices, you can help keep enthusiasm for reaching the lost steady throughout the year.**

a survey to find out which elements were truly helpful—and which weren't. This ensures the conference addressed real needs. It would be a shame to assume people were helped when they weren't—an oversight that could reduce future interest in outreach.

3 IN THE WEEKLY BULLETIN, include helpful apologetics resources each week. Many bulletins have unused space. While not every member will follow up on your suggestions, sharing a link to a quality website or video—or offering a brief review of a helpful apologetics book—can keep interest in the topic alive.

4 EVERY FEW MONTHS, FEATURE A SHORT VIDEO CLIP by an apologist during a Sunday morning service to keep evangelism and apologetics visible in your church culture. Resources such as "The One-Minute Apologist" (oneminuteapologist.com) can offer a quick shot of encouragement to those trying to maintain an evangelistic lifestyle.

