

Christian Apologetics (Youth)

Week 1: Truth of God

(mainstreamapologetics.org)

*What is Truth? Why is Truth Important? Where do People Find Truth? How do Christians Ascertain Truth?
What is Apologetics? Why is Apologetics Timely?*

A Crisis of Truth

The world's notion of truth is epitomized by Pontious Pilate's retort, "**What is truth?**" (John 18). Daily, our culture echoes Pilate's **disregard** for truth as people grapple with its nature and relevance.

Without the **absolute Truth** of God's Word, people are left the "enlightened" consensus of our day. This consensus will **shipwreck** our lives if we cannot discern God's Truth from the **counterfeit** truths of the world.

Christian Definition of Truth

In a nutshell, God's Word tells us what is true about ...

- **God's nature** (infinite, holy, transcendent),
- **Man's nature** (finite, sinful, wayward), and
- **God's redemptive plan**, the Gospel, restoring man into a right relationship with God.

Truth culminates in the person of **Jesus**, who is the **full expression** on God's Truth (John 14:6, Colossians 2:9).

Prominent Worldviews & Their Shortcomings

WORLDVIEW	TRADITIONAL <1700 AD Christianity	MODERN 1700-1970 Enlightenment Period	POSTMODERN >1970 New Age Movement	BLENDED
SOURCE	God-Centric	Science-Centric	Man-Centric	Non-Centric
TRUTH	Transcendent Objective Absolute	Material Subjective	Sensory Relative	Blending of God-Science-Man Centric Views

Traditional Worldview

The **Traditional** worldview is a **God-Centric** view where **God** is the source of truth and reality as revealed in **God's Word**.

Modern Worldview

The **Modern** worldview is a **Science-Centric** view where **science alone** is the source of truth and reality, **not God**, and where **truth** is revealed by **scientific methods**.

Shortcomings: (1) Science is unreliable, untrustworthy, (2) Science doesn't speak to the deeper, spiritual aspects of our lives.

Postmodern Worldview

The **Postmodern** worldview is a **Man-Centric** view where **man alone** is the source of truth and reality, **not science, not God**, and where truth comes from **sensory perception**.

Shortcomings: (1) Problems with our five senses, (2) Absolute lack of objectivity/certainty.

Blended Worldview

The **Blended** worldview is a **Non-Centric** view where people are **influenced** by all worldviews, and **construct** a **blended worldview** from the **Bible**, and **science**, and **personal** beliefs.

Deconstruction of truth: **ABSOLUTE** Truth → **SUBJECTIVE** truths → **RELATIVE** truths → **NO** truth!

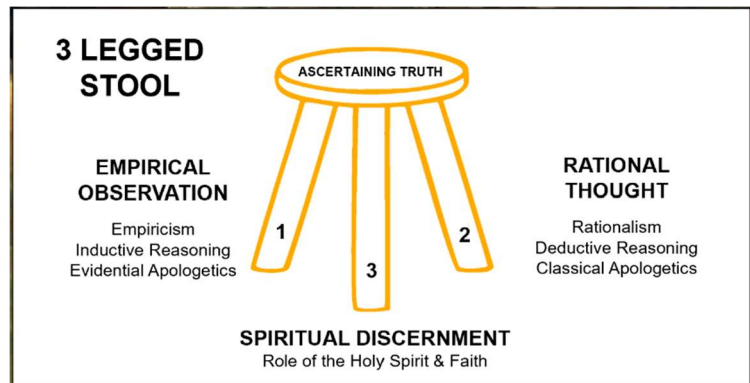
Framework for Ascertaining Truth

With the **guidance** of the Holy Spirit, we can trust our God-given **human faculties** of **observation** and **reason** to draw sound conclusions.

LEG 1: Empirical Observation

Empirical Observation is where we utilize our **five senses** and **empirical methods** to draw conclusions.

- This is based on a system of thinking called **Empiricism** which teaches that **knowledge** is a product of **sensory perception** and **empirical evidence**.
- This process is also referred to as **Inductive Reasoning** where we draw **general** conclusions from **specific** observations using **inference**.
- E.g., “All Dogs Have Four Legs” – I’ve seen **enough** dogs to infer that **all** dogs have four legs even though I have **not seen all** dogs.



LEG 2: Rational Thought

Rational Thought is where we utilize **rationality** based on the well-proven **system of logic** to draw conclusions.

- This is based on a system of thinking called **Rationalism** which teaches that **knowledge** is the product of **logic** and **reason**.
- This process is also referred to as **Deductive Reasoning** where we draw **logical** conclusions based on the **laws of formal logic**.
- E.g., “Lucy is a Dog”, therefore, “Lucy has Four Legs” (syllogism).

Complementary

1st leg utilizes our **senses**, while the 2nd leg utilizes our **mind**; our **senses** are the **gateway** to our **minds**.

1st leg **produces** data, while the 2nd leg **derives meaning** from the data.

Together, **Empirical Observation** and **Rational Thought** enable us to come to **sound conclusions** about the world around us.

LEG 3: Spiritual Discernment

The role of the **Holy Spirit** is to ...

- **illuminate** - shines a light on God’s Word (2 Corinthians 4:6, Psalm 119:130)
- **enlighten** - aids our understanding of God’s Word (1 Corinthians 2:13)
- **confirm** - validates God’s Word (1 John 5:6, John 15:26)
- **guide** - applies God’s Word (John 16:13)

The role of **faith** is to “fills in the blanks” or takes the place of evidence **when evidence is absent** (Hebrews 11:1).

- Scientific knowledge is **limited** by the **laws of nature**; the **human mind** is **finite**.
- Whereas God's truth is **broad**er than science because it is **rooted** in His **supernatural** nature.
- The Holy Spirit comes along side us and gives us faith to **trust** God's Word when **evidence** is **absent**.

Apologetics

Definition

At first glance, the word **apologetics** sounds like our English word **apologize**.

- The word **apologetics** derives from the Greek word **apologia** which literally means in the Greek to **speak-way** and **refute** an **accusation** (apo – away, logia – speech).
- In ancient times, an apologetic was a **formal defense** made in a court of law in response to charges and accusations.
- In the religious context, the word apologetics means to **refute** an accusation or to **defend** a belief.

Peter exhorts us to “give an answer” to the **WHAT** question, and “give the reason” to the **WHY** question.

Always be **prepared to give an answer** to everyone who asks you
to **give the reason** for the hope that you have. **1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)**

A good example is how the blind man responded to the Pharisees' question, “Who is Jesus?” (John 9).

ANSWER: “I am certain he is a prophet sent from God
REASON 1: because I am miraculously healed and
REASON 2: because Jesus could not possess the power of healing unless God were with him.”

* Therefore, Christian apologetics is a **reasoned response** to **what** we believe to be true about God, and **why** we believe it based on both **knowledge** and **experience**, ultimately to help people understand and embrace the Christian worldview and respond to God's offer of amazing grace.

Methodology

Harmony of God's Word and Science

As Christians, we endorse the use of **scientific methods** and **empirical evidence** as far as they **support** God's revealed Truth. God's Word is always **primary**, and science, when available, is **secondary**.

- Science is our **friend**, not our **foe**.
- Thomas Aquinas, the first Christian apologist of the 1200's said,

Rationality is recognizing that science **drives us** conclusively and compellingly toward the existence of God.

- What Aquinas is saying is that empirical evidence **confirms** what God's Word **already reveals**. Essentially, scientific evidence **corroborates** God's Word. God's Word and science describe the **same reality**!

A New Enlightenment

Ironically, the **thrust of science** during the Enlightenment period of the 1700's to **discredit** Biblical truth claims, is now serving Christendom to **validate** these same truth claims.

Our message to the world is twofold ...

- (1) The Bible and science describe the **same physical reality** based on modern evidence. They are in **harmony**.
- (2) Since Biblical truth claims are true for things **seen**, the whole of God's Word is true for all things **unseen**.

Note: God's nature and redemptive plan cannot be proven by science and must be accepted by faith.

A new era of **enlightenment** is upon us where God the **Holy Spirit is testifying** to the hearts and minds of people that God's Word is true!