

Introduction

Visual Aid

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Convention Introduction

- Welcome to our third annual HS & MS Youth Summer Apologetics Convention
- This is our third year holding this convention in June with a focus on Apologetics

Introduction to Apologetics

- Can anyone remind me of what the word "Apologetics" means? **To give a defense**
- And this comes from Scripture in 1 Peter 3:15 - "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" - **give a defense** in Greek is ἀπολογία - "Apologia" - the root of the word Apologetics
- The first year, we took a very high level and a very classical apologetics approach - We discussed Evolution, Big Bang Theory, the Resurrection, Authenticity of the Bible, etc.
- Last year, we decided to focus on a fundamental concept in Christianity and in Apologetics which is Truth - and we took it through two topics: Homosexuality and Feminism/Abortion
- This year, we are going back to basics and our theme is Biblical Apologetics

Levels of Apologetics

- As we discuss every year, there are three levels of Apologetics that we can categorize:
 - Level 1 - Does God Exist?
 - At this level, you will be talking to someone who is atheist or agnostic, who does not believe that God exists in the first place
 - Here is a lot of Philosophical Arguments, as well as Scientific Arguments
 - If you are talking at this level, are you going to quote the Bible? For example, can you say "Well God exists because Genesis 1:1 says "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"? Definitely not because you are dealing with people who don't believe in Scripture.
 - Level 2 - God Exists. Which God?
 - At this level, you may be talking to someone of another religion who believes that there is a god or multiple gods, or you may be talking to an agnostic who isn't sure yet if God exists or not.
 - Here we have Comparative Theology, Biblical Apologetics
 - At this level, you generally can't use Bible verses to support your arguments

- Level 3 - God Exists. The Christian God. Apostolic or non-apostolic Christianity?
 - At this level, you are talking to Protestants.
 - Here we have discussions about sacraments, intercession, Church Authority, salvation, etc.
 - At this level you will mostly be dealing in Bible Verses and Patristic writings
- We can fit all our previous topics in this structure
 - Evolution and Big Bang Theory are Scientific Arguments at Level 1
 - The Resurrection is a Level 2 topic
 - Truth is a Level 1 Philosophical Arguments topic
 - This year, we will focus on Biblical Apologetics which falls under Level 2

Introduction to Biblical Apologetics

- Defense of the text, context, interpretation, themes of the Scripture
- It involves knowledge in a vast range of domains
 - Biblical Studies
 - Biblical Languages
 - Biblical History and Archaeology
 - Biblical Texts and Manuscripts
 - Philosophy
 - Science History
- It is not Biblical Exegesis
 - It is not about asking "how can I benefit from this story" or "what can I apply in my life from the Bible"
- It is not Biblical Theology
 - It is not so concerned with knowing WHO God is

The Bible

- What is the Bible?
 - To some people, the Bible is just another book that goes on their shelf - they might even consider it a classic like "Romeo and Juliet"
 - To Christians, the Bible is the word of God
 - To Atheists, the Bible is a "book of fairy tales"
- The Uniqueness of the Bible
 - Unique in its Time Span
 - The Bible is exceptional in comparison to other literary and historical works in that it was written and assembled over a vast number of generations (~1500 years),
 - Unique in its Geographical Production
 - The Bible did not just come out of one place, but parts of it come from several different places: from Rome, from Egypt, from Mesopotamia and of course from Israel
 - Unique in its Authorship
 - Authored by approximately 40 different people

- Unique in its Literary Genres
 - Something like Song of Songs is a single genre (poetry)
 - Something like Exodus is a mix of historical account, laws and instructions, poetry, and other genres
- Unique in its Languages
 - Hebrew
 - Aramaic
 - Greek
- Unique in its Teachings
 - The Bible's message is unique from any other worldview - the message that God is love, God loves us and came down and took our form in order to die for us
- Unique in its Circulation and Translation
 - No other book has been translated as much as the Bible or reached as far as the Bible has
- Unique in its Survival and Resiliency
 - No other written work has been so attacked, scrutinized, persecuted as much as the Bible - by Emperors, Monarchs, Dictators; by Scholars and Intellectuals and Scientists; and yet survived
- Unique in its Impact on Western Civilization
 - Government and Law
 - Science and Education
 - Art, Literature and Music
 - Societal Norms and Values
 - "Almost all of the good things of life that we take for granted bear the stamp of the Bible's influence: marriage, family, names, calendar, institutions of caring, social agencies, education, benefits from science, uplifting books, magnificent works of art and music, freedom, justice, equal rights, the work ethic, virtues of self-reliance and self-discipline" (Pudait and Hefley)

Why did we choose this topic?

- "One reason Christianity has failed to exert much influence on the major intellectual institutions of America is that too many Christians hold their beliefs in an uninformed and precarious fashion. Instead of pursuing answers to the toughest questions an unbelieving world can marshal, they attempt to preserve certainty through ignorance and isolation, relying on platitudes rather than arguments." - Douglas Groothuis, Christian Apologetics
- Many youth these days simply **DO NOT KNOW THEIR BIBLE**
 - If faced with an argument against your Bible, or even against your God, you may not know how to answer it; you may not even know to question it - and it may completely shatter your faith.
 - To be frank, some of the youth don't even know the names of the Bible Books, or don't know where to find them or how the Bible is organized
 - "If you ask them who was Amos or Obadiah, or what is the number of the Prophets or Apostles, they cannot even open their mouth; but for horses and charioteers, they compose excuses more cleverly than sophists or rhetoricians" - "Is it not strange

that those who sit in the marketplace tell the names, and races, and cities and talents of charioteers and dancers, even accurately state the good and bad qualities of horses, while those who assemble in the church understand nothing of what is taking place here and even are ignorant of the number of the sacred Books?" (St John Chrysostom, Homily 32 on John)

- These questions are the **very common** in today's society
 - In a country where the main form of Christianity is Protestantism, and where Protestantism focuses on Sola Scriptura, then it is the "Scriptura" that will be attacked the most
 - You may have some of these questions; you may have doubts... or you may run into people who have doubts
- Understanding your Bible can be key to engaging you in the Bible
 - Many youth say they don't read the Scripture because they don't understand it - and some of the passages we'll be talking about today are those difficult to understand passages.
 - Let this be an opportunity for you to overcome some difficult passages, learn some of the strategies that we use to understand these difficult passages, and make your reading of Scripture more enjoyable and more intellectually stimulating (if it's not already).

Stations

- In Station 1, you will be re-introduced to your Bible
 - How many books are there in the Old and New Testaments?
 - How are the books organized?
 - Why are some of our Orthodox books missing from the printed bibles?
 - What are the different versions of the Bible?
- In Station 2, you will learn where your Bible comes from. You'll be visiting a museum and taking a look at three exhibits: Manuscripts, Translations and Canonization.
 - What is canonization?
 - Who decided which books go into the OT and the NT?
 - What about translation? Do things get lost in translation? Are some translations better than others?
 - Where did chapters and verses come from?
 - How do we know that we have the right words that were actually spoken by Christ?
- In the second half of the day, we'll focus more on some of the arguments that usually come up against the Bible
- In Station 3, we'll focus on whether the gospels contradict each other
 - Why are some stories in some gospels and not others?
 - Why are the Synoptic Gospels so similar?
 - Why might one gospel be missing details that another one has?
 - What are the differences between the Gospels?
 - Do these things affect the authenticity of the Gospels?
- In Station 4, we'll focus on whether the Old Testament contradicts the New Testament
 - Is God of the Old Testament different from God in the New Testament?
 - Why did God send a flood in the days of Noah and wipe out mankind?

- Why did God say "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" in the OT and then take it back in the NT?
 - What does it mean that God hardened Pharaoh's heart?
 - Finally, our craft will relate to the canonization of Scripture and you'll understand why after taking Stations 1 and 2
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