

Common Apologetics Questions

Apologetics Question	Assumptions Behind the Question
<p>How can there be a good God with so much obvious suffering in the world? If God is good, he is not God. If God is God, he is not good.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ No good God would want suffering. ▶ Any all-powerful God who allows suffering is not a good guy. ▶ Suffering never produces good. ▶ The best world would be one without any suffering of any kind.
<p>How can Christianity say that Jesus is the only way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All religions say basically the same things, especially in ethics, which is what is most crucial. ▶ What matters most is intensity or sincerity of faith, not its object.
<p>How can God send good people who don't believe in Jesus to Hell?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most people are basically good and deserve the reward of heaven.
<p>Hasn't science (Evolution) disproven much of the Bible and Christianity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Evolution and the Big Bang shows that God wasn't involved in creation. ▶ Genesis is meant to be literal account of creation from Christian perspective: Science has disproven this account.
<p>Why are Christians so arrogant? Why do Christians insist on forcing their way of thinking on others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Truth is relative. What is true and works for you may not be what is true or what works for me.
<p>Isn't Christianity a crutch?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ People shouldn't or don't need crutches. ▶ Only Christians have crutches.
<p>How can you believe in miracles?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Miracles don't happen because God doesn't exist. All that exists is the material world. ▶ God may (or may not) exist, but he doesn't intervene in human affairs.
<p>How can you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The disciples so wanted Jesus to come back that they made it up/hallucinated it
<p>How can Christians believe that Jesus--a good moral teacher--was God?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Jesus was a good moral teacher. ▶ Jesus' disciples advanced the claim that he was God, Jesus' didn't.
<p>What about those who have never heard about Jesus?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ignorance of Jesus implies lack of responsibility for rejecting God.
<p>How can you believe the Bible?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The ancient documents are too unreliable to base my life's beliefs on. ▶ The bible is full of errors and contradictions.
<p>[Your own addition here]</p>	

Jesus and Apologetics

MARK 12: 18-27

Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, **19** ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. **20** There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; **21** and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; **22** none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. **23** In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.’

24 Jesus said to them, ‘Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? **25** For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. **26** And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? **27** He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.’

CONSIDER:

Read, reflect on, and answer the following questions:

- ❶ What are some apologetics questions you’ve been asked?
 - Why would a good God create a world with such unjust suffering?
 - How can Christianity say that Jesus is the only way?
 - How can God send good people who don’t believe in Jesus to Hell?
 - Hasn’t science (Evolution) disproven much of the Bible and Christianity?
 - How can you believe in miracles?

- ❷ What kinds of issues come up?
 - How are they usually posed?
 - Often these questions are posed as *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. The questioner asks the question in such a way that it puts us on the defensive - as if no reasonable person would fail to acknowledge that ... science has disproven God, for example.
 - We can learn from Jesus’ model, if we too 1) know the scriptures, and 2) know the power of God. Often, people will make assumptions about the faith they think we have in the question they ask. If we can identify the assumptions, and correct their impressions, it will be easier to answer their questions.
 - Apologetics isn’t the whole story in evangelism, but it is part of the story.



What do you notice about the question?

- They try to use a *reduction ad absurdum* argument: suppose the opposite of the thing you believe is true, then prove it is absurd to believe this thing.
- They want Jesus to say, “Um, I never thought of it like that before. I guess you are correct—the resurrection is a logical fallacy!”

What strategies does Jesus employ in answering their question?

- Jesus first corrects their faulty assumption: the resurrection is not like earth—people aren’t given in marriage.
- Then he addresses their fundamental issue—the QBQ, question behind the question.
- They really are asking about the resurrection. Jesus presents logic:
 1. God is God of Abraham. (The Scriptures)
 2. God is the God of the living. (the power of God)
 3. Therefore, Abraham is living, hence raised from the dead. (You are quite wrong.)

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<p>How can there be a good God with so much obvious suffering in the world? If God is good, he is not God. If God is God, he is not good.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No good God would want suffering. ● Any all-powerful God who allows suffering is not a good guy. ● Suffering never produces good. ● The best world would be one without any suffering of any kind. <p>Think about it: is that what makes for the best literature, the best movies. Suffering in proportion to pleasure--when we never know pain, disappointment, delay or unfulfilled desire we never will know pleasure or joy. CS. Lewis: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: in is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Ultimately: Jesus Christ as the God who suffers: his death doesn't take suffering away, but it is made purposeful, redemptive.</p>
<p>How can Christianity say that Jesus is the only way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All religions say basically the same things, especially in ethics, which is what is most crucial. ● What matters most is intensity or sincerity of faith, not its object. <p>Religions differ widely re: monotheism vs. poly-, nature of God, nature of humanity, nature of sin/alienation, nature of heaven/afterlife, history (cyclical vs. linear). Fundamentally, religions differ on what it takes to approach God. A works approach is common in religions, but Christianity teaches faith apart from any works. Is 64:4: "From ages past no one has heard ... [of] any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him."</p>
<p>How can God send good people who don't believe in Jesus to Hell?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most people are basically good and deserve the reward of heaven. <p>Fails to recognize that even "good" life lived independent of God is the cosmic equivalent of shaking our fists at God and declaring our independence from our maker. We tend to think to highly of our own capacity for good and much to casually of the insult to God's glory that rejection of him actually is.</p>
<p>Hasn't science (Evolution) disproven much of the Bible and Christianity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evolution and the Big Bang shows that God wasn't involved in creation. ● Genesis is meant to be literal account of creation from Christian perspective: Science has disproven this account <p>Science can explain the mechanism of creation but not its purpose. Evolution-theory based atheism is as much a position of faith as is Christian theism, though with much less evidence to support it.</p>
<p>Why are Christians so arrogant? Why do Christians insist on forcing their way of thinking on others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Truth is relative. What is true and works for you may not be what is true or what works for me. <p>Distinguish between truth and values. "This building is beautiful" or "Chocolate chip ice cream is great." These are statements of value, and are relative. "Jesus Christ is God" is either true or it is false--for everyone.</p>
<p>Isn't Christianity a crutch?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People shouldn't or don't need crutches. ● Only Christians have crutches. <p>Everyone has and needs crutches in this sense: unproven assumptions about life that makes it possible to make sense of choices, actions, tragedy and disappointment.</p>

Common Apologetics Questions (Continued)

Apologetics Question	Assumptions Behind the Question
How can you believe in miracles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Miracles don't happen because God doesn't exist. All that exists is the material world. ● God may (or may not) exist, but he doesn't intervene in human affairs. <p>It is a much more rigorous statement of faith to believe that no miracles ever occur, than to believe that at least some of the countless events people claim as miracles actually were God's intervention in human life. Fundamentally, we must talk about the resurrection as the one miracle which is the make/break test for all miracles.</p>
How can you believe that Jesus rose from the dead?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The disciples so wanted Jesus to come back that they made it up/hallucinated it. <p>Why would the disciples have written the gospels in the way they did: they testify to the fact that they looked like fools during the crucifixion and even after the resurrection. If they were making it up, why not just tell it so it seemed that they expected him to rise from the dead (if indeed, that was true)? No, they were not so brilliantly clever as to perpetrate this deception in this way. They didn't expect the resurrection, they were resistant when told of it before Jesus' death, and they didn't believe it when told afterwards. So they couldn't have perpetrated the hoax in this way, or even have mass hallucinations.</p>
How can Christians believe that Jesus--a good moral teacher--was God?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jesus was a good moral teacher. ● Jesus' disciples advanced the claim that he was God, Jesus' didn't. <p>Jesus himself claimed to be equal to God, to be able to forgive sins (committed against God or others). He said, "Before that Abraham was, I am." (Incorrect grammar or a claim of divinity--as it was understood.) Furthermore, this never would have entered his disciples' minds if he hadn't taught them--they were raised as strict Yahwists and would never have ascribed divinity to any human. Jesus claimed to be God, and He was killed because of these claims. No good teacher can claim to be God but be lying. Therefore, Jesus left us with only three conclusions: 1) he was a liar, 2) he was a lunatic, or 3) he was who he said he was, the LORD.</p>
What about those who have never heard about Jesus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ignorance of Jesus implies lack of responsibility for rejecting God. <p>We will not be judged on the basis of what we do not know. Paul says in Romans, "They are without excuse": they see the wonder of creation, and have the advantage of a conscience. They see that a creator made the world and that creator has ethical standards, by which no one lives.</p>
How can you believe the Bible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The ancient documents are too unreliable to base my life's beliefs on. ● The bible is full of errors and contradictions. <p>The manuscript evidence for the NT (back to within a single generation of Jesus' life) is much stronger than that of most of the rest of Greek and Roman history. We are not working off of copies that were hundreds of years after the original writers, but were just decades later than the original writers. Apparent inconsistencies in the gospel records, for example, are evidence that they indeed are different eye-witness accounts. If they agreed down to the minutest detail, one might question their overall historicity. Yet the Bible does not contradict its core teachings: themes run all through scripture in tact--the holiness of God, God's involvement in human history, faith as the response God desires for people who come to him.</p>

