

# Apologetics & Questioning Evangelism

## Apologetics - Defending and Declaring the Evidence for Biblical Christianity

*"<sup>15</sup> ...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it [Greek - "apologia"]. <sup>16</sup> But do this in a gentle and respectful way..."* 1 Peter 3:15-16 NLT

### Questioning Evangelism

Recommended Reading: *Questioning Evangelism—Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did*, by Randy Newman.

Author Randy Newman has worked with Campus Crusade for Christ (now named CRU) for over twenty years. He is presently a senior fellow for apologetics and evangelism with The C. S. Lewis Institute and blogs about evangelism and other topics at [connectionpoint.us](http://connectionpoint.us).

Newman was raised Jewish and offers a uniquely rabbinical outlook on evangelism. He argues that asking questions and starting meaningful conversations is a far better method for sharing the gospel than prepared memorized presentations.

*Questioning Evangelism* has 280 pages with thirteen chapters in addition to an epilogue and study guide. The chapters are grouped in three parts:

- Part 1: Why Ask Questions?
- Part 2: What Questions Are People Asking?
- Part 3: Why Aren't Questions and Answers Enough?

Q1. *What questions about your faith have people asked you?*

### The Advantages of Questioning Evangelism

The benefits of asking questions versus a direct response are addressed in chapter one, titled, "Why are questions better than answers?" Some reasons for why questions can be better than answers are...

#### 1. It is the example of Jesus.

Newman wrote, "I once did a study of how Jesus answered every question that was asked of him in all four Gospels. Answering a question with a question was the norm. A clear, concise, direct answer was a rarity." (p. 27)

Mark 10:17-18 NLT

*"<sup>17</sup> As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>18</sup> 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus asked. 'Only God is truly good.'"*

Q2. *What question did Jesus ask to respond to a question? Why do you think he asked this question?*

Matthew 22:15, 17-22 NLT

*"<sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees met together to plot how to trap Jesus into saying something for which he could be*

*arrested." <sup>17</sup> 'Now tell us what you think about this: Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' <sup>18</sup> But Jesus knew their evil motives. 'You hypocrites!' he said. 'Why are you trying to trap me? <sup>19</sup> Here, show me the coin used for the tax.' When they handed him a Roman coin, <sup>20</sup> he asked, '**Whose picture and title are stamped on it?**' <sup>21</sup> 'Caesar's,' they replied. 'Well, then,' he said, 'give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.' <sup>22</sup> His reply amazed them, and they went away.'"*

Q3. *What question did Jesus ask to respond to a question? Why do you think he asked this question?*

Matthew 12:9-12 NLT

*"<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus went over to their synagogue, <sup>10</sup> where he noticed a man with a deformed hand. The Pharisees asked Jesus, 'Does the law permit a person to work by healing on the Sabbath?' (They were hoping he would say yes, so they could bring charges against him.) <sup>11</sup> And he answered, '**If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn't you work to pull it out? Of course you would.**' <sup>12</sup> And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.'"*

Q4. *What question did Jesus ask to respond to a question? Why do you think he asked this question?*

#### 2. It engages the person's mind and urges them to consider an alternate perspective.

Newman wrote, "At times (far too many, I'm afraid), I've answered questions with biblically accurate, logically sound, epistemologically watertight answers, only to see questions shrug their shoulders. My answer, it seemed, only further confirmed their opinion that Christians are simpletons. My answers had, in fact, hardened them in their unbelief rather than soften them toward faith. I realized that, instead of moving people closer to a salvation decision, an answer can push them further away. Rather than engaging their minds or urging them to consider an alternate perspective, an answer can give them ammunition for future attacks against the gospel. So I started answering questions with questions, and have gained far better results." (p.27).

Q5 *Why do you think it is better to engage the person's mind in thinking about an alternate perspective rather than give them a quick simple response?*

### 3. It brings to the surface the questioner's assumptions.

When people ask questions about the Bible or Christianity, many times they have already developed an assumption. Maybe they assume that the Bible is a corrupted book written only by men and has been changed through the centuries, or several other assumptions. Asking questions can uncover these assumptions.

Q6. *What are some assumptions people have about Jesus, God, the Bible, or Christianity? Why is it helpful to uncover their assumptions?*

### 4. It takes the pressure off the person witnessing and places the pressure on a somewhat hostile or arrogant skeptic.

Newman wrote, "Shifting the burden of the response is important because as long as we're on the defensive, the questioners are not really wrestling with issues. They're just watching us squirm." (29).

Luke 20:1-8 NLT

*"1 One day as Jesus was teaching the people and preaching the Good News in the Temple, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. 2 They demanded, 'By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?' 3 'Let me ask you a question first,' he replied. 4 'Did John's authority to baptize come from heaven, or was it merely human?'*

*5 They talked it over among themselves. 'If we say it was from heaven, he will ask why we didn't believe John. 6 But if we say it was merely human, the people will stone us because they are convinced John was a prophet.' 7 So they finally replied that they didn't know. 8 And Jesus responded, 'Then I won't tell you by what authority I do these things.'"*

Q7. *What motive did the priests and teachers have in asking Jesus their question? What question did Jesus ask in reply? What did Jesus accomplish with his question?*

### 5. It brings new concepts into a clearer focus for consideration and encourages acceptance by the one asking questions.

Newman wrote about a conversation he had with some college students. One skeptical student asked, "So, I suppose you think all those sincere followers of other religions are going to hell!" Newman responded with a simple question, "Do you believe in hell?" The student paused as if he had never seriously considered the possibility. He was puzzled. The table had been turned on him. He was being challenged when he thought he was the challenger. Newman asked a series of other questions to challenge the thinking of the students, such as, "Do you think anyone goes to hell? Is Hitler in hell?" "How do you think God decides who goes to heaven and who goes to hell? Does God grade on a curve?" (p. 28)

Newman wrote, "Responding to a question with a question paves the way for a concept that the questioner might not

otherwise consider. When I ask my dormitory interrogators if they believed in hell, I paved the way for the concept of divine judgment. Many ideas that are central to our gospel message—God's holiness, people's sinfulness, Christ's atoning work on the cross, and people's responsibility—are alien today for many people. Questions bring these concepts into clearer focus for consideration and even acceptance." (p. 30).

Q8. *What are some biblical concepts that are foreign to many people today? What questions could you ask them to help them think about these concepts?*

### 6. It alleviates some hostility when people ask questions that are really attacks in disguise; it reflects the hostility.

Newman wrote, "When people ask questions that are really attacks in disguise, responding with a question reflects the heat. People usually don't like the temperature and tend to adjust the thermostat accordingly, which helps create a more productive conversation." (p. 30)

Q9. *Has anyone ever questioned your faith in a condescending tone? If so, explain the situation? Or, if someone in the future should question your faith in a condescending tone, how do you think you would respond?*

### Conclusion

Newman concludes, "To be sure, a direct answer is at times preferable. Some questionnaires are sincere and would benefit most from a clear, concise statement of what the Bible says. On quite a few occasions, Jesus didn't beat around the bush... But more and more we should hold back our answer, and with a question, pave the way to receptivity." (p. 31)

The author wrote that evangelism today requires three skills—(1) declaring the gospel by clearly and concisely articulating the salvation message. (2) Defending the gospel by anticipating the questions of people and answering them in a logical sequence. (3) Dialoguing the gospel.

Newman wrote, "...this is where Questioning Evangelism fits in—[it] is built upon the foundation of declaring and defending the gospel... **Often neglected, difficult to master, but absolutely essential, this skill of giving and taking—asking questions and bouncing ideas back and forth—might be just what our postmodern audience needs.** We need all three skills if we're to be Christ's ambassadors in the twenty-first century." (pp. 14-15).

Q10. *What are your biggest takeaways from this study? In what ways is questioning evangelism important to apologetics?*